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Working to Save the Soul of American Democracy

Anarchist Women in the Great Depression: Rose Pesotta and Dorothy Day

Sue Cirocco

A Thesis in the Field of History

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

This thesis explores how immigrant anarchist women helped shape the labor movement from the mid-1910s until the U.S. entered World War II in 1941. Using a short biography of Rose Pesotta, the highest ranking female labor leader from 1934-1944, this thesis argues that anarchism remained relevant to the labor movement during the interwar period by creatively adapting to harsh realities. A workers' education movement, founded by anarchist women in 1914, de-emphasized the violent tactics of the IWW syndicalists, and adopted Pragmatic philosophy during the 1920s, which appealed widely across the Old Left. As the backlash against radicals came to a crescendo with the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924, these pragmatic anarchists—contrary to traditional immigrant anarchists, who became more insular and insurrectionary—adapted their praxis to suit the conditions, and built alliances with radicals, such as left leaning socialists and communists. They Americanized their socialist message in order to reach what had become a primarily native born industrial workforce by the mid-1930s, in part, by describing themselves as revolutionaries, rather than as anarchists. This allowed them to help usher in the CIO and to see native born striking workers finally adopt their socialist ideals by uniting in solidarity with fellow workers to demand more democratic workplaces. But these mainly white, male workers did so by linking these ideas to America's revolutionary past, rather than the immigrant ghettos where they had originated. During and after World War II, the CIO ingratiated itself to the state and to employers, becoming more and more centralized and bureaucratic, and less democratic.

Later, creative forms of anarchism re-emerged among marginalized groups, but mainly outside the labor unions.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Dr. William Whitham whose knowledge of anarchism, social science and the history of politics, both in America and in the Western World generally, was incredibly helpful. His recommendations to sources, his many tips, insights, patience, and encouragement, during those times when I felt overwhelmed with all my new discoveries both in the archives and in the literature, was invaluable.

I would also like to thank Dr. Ariane Liazos for her kind support and helpful ideas about how to approach the topic of women anarchists during the 1930s as I was preparing the proposal for this project. She not only helped me to see it as worthwhile, she also patiently provided edits and advice as I attempted to do so.

I appreciate the remarkable learning opportunity that Harvard University offers to mid-career students like myself. Every one of the courses I took contributed in some way to this thesis, but those of Dr. Andrew Pope and Dr. Ingrid Overacker on social movements in the 20th century were especially inspiring.

I am indebted to the archivists who manage the well-organized archives at the New York Public Library (NYPL), at the Kheel Center at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and the Marquette University Archives, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. While on one of my visits to the NYPL, I was fortunate to have met Dorothy Day’s granddaughter, Martha Hennessy, who graciously introduced me to the Catholic Worker’s St. Joseph’s House of Hospitality.

Finally, I am thankful for the friends and family who supported me. This includes my sons Kyle and Steven, but most of all, my husband, Anthony Cirocco, my truest friend, and greatest source of encouragement and support throughout this process.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

I wish people would not be so afraid of words, such as the word anarchist. I wish people would study more the early principles on which our country was founded. I wish they would really read and study and discuss as the Russian Jews do on the east side…not to speak of the way the communists do in their worker's schools.

—Dorothy Day, Catholic Worker[1]

This thesis explores anarchism from the perspective of immigrant anarchists who inspired Dorothy Day during the early twentieth century. My primary aim is to help uncover the mostly hidden role that anarchism played in the labor movement, including the rise of the CIO during the Great Depression. I do so by looking at it through the lens of an anarchist Russian Jewish woman, Rose Pesotta, who was born in the Pale of Jewish Settlement in 1896. She emigrated to New York City in 1913 at age seventeen, helped develop and propagate the workers' education movement, which Day alluded to in the quote above, and she became the highest-ranking woman in the labor movement from 1934 to 1944. Day was born, just one year after Pesotta in 1897, in Brooklyn, New York.

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[1] Dorothy Day, "Speaking of Anarchism," *Catholic Worker*, February 1948, sec. On Pilgrimage, DDLW #464, Catholic Worker Collection. Raynor Memorial Libraries, Marquette University, https://thecatholicnewsarchive.org/?a=d&d=CW19480201-01.2.6.

She was raised by nominally protestant parents, who were opposed to all forms of radicalism. But, in the mid-1910s, inspired by the plight of immigrants, she became an anarchist, and later, in the mid-1920s, she also became a devout Catholic.

During the depression, the survival of American democracy in its then current form, was not a foregone conclusion, especially to immigrant radicals who were still in the country at the time. To them, the increasing numbers of Americans who had been reduced to working and living conditions, which stripped them of their human dignity, had also made the threat of fascism in the U. S. as real as it was in Europe then. The most severe economic crisis in American history, which had wrought these conditions, while simultaneously making many industrialist employers even richer, made it impossible for Americans to ignore the glaring inequities and oppression in the workplace, nor how they conflicted with American ideals regarding equality and individual freedom.

The most vexing social problems that threatened democracy manifested in the labor crisis where the battle to save the soul of American democracy took place. This crisis had been brewing for five decades, erupting at times into violent clashes between industrialist employers, sometimes aided by government authorities, and labor unions, where anarchists had always played a highly visible and impactful role.[2]

Yet, the new labor scholarship has, for the most part, relegated the anarchists to the sidelines of this confrontation in the 1930s. This is because most scholars view the period after the U.S. government quashed radicalism in the first Red Scare, as a quiescent

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[2] Elizabeth Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, Kindle, American Social and Political Movements of the Twentieth Century (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017).

one for anarchists, who they believe did not reemerge in a significant way until the civil rights and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s[3]

I first learned of Rose Pesotta in a footnote from an article on immigrant garment workers, which was on the preliminary syllabus for the Spring 2021, HES seminar on Labor and Immigration. The article did not appear on the final syllabus, and we did not discuss it in the seminar, but it prompted me to search out scholarly work on anarchist women in the labor movement during the Great Depression. When I could not find works specifically devoted to this topic, I consulted another Professor, who conducted a seminar on “Ballots and Bibles,” which I took in the Fall of that year. He recommended that I look up Dorothy Day, who I then found had been inspired by, and lived among, immigrant anarchists, much like Rose.

As Day’s excerpt above suggested, her passion for anarchism was influenced mainly by the empathy she developed for the anarchists living in America’s immigrant ghettoes. She became aware of their conditions in high school, by reading Upton Sinclair’s book, *The Jungle,* while living with her family in Chicago. She went on to voraciously read works by Peter Kropotkin, the Russian Revolutionists, and others; and to write an essay for her English class on Kropotkin. She attended the University of Illinois on a scholarship, but dropped out after two years, moved to the Lower East Side of New York, a densely populated immigrant ghetto at the time, and went to work as a

[3] Beverly Gage, “Why Violence Matters: Radicalism, Politics, and Class War in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1, no. 1 (2007): 99-109, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsr.2008.0021, Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, 2298.

reporter for radical newspapers, including *The Liberator, The Masses,* and *The Call*. She recalled that first winter in her 1939 memoir:

> I enjoyed that winter in the slums and have never lived any place else since. If one must dwell in cities I prefer the slums of the poor to the slums of the rich. A tenement is a tenement whether it is on lower Park avenue or upper...It is a strange and wonderful thing, the numbers of radical groups, the various aspects of a movement.[4]

Day became romantically involved with a Jewish immigrant anarchist, Mike Gold, [5] who introduced her to a bohemian lifestyle in Greenwich Village, and who she maintained a lasting friendship with (even after she converted to Catholicism and he converted to Communism).[6] In 1939, she wrote that this had been the time when she became inclined toward the IWW, and to stirring a violent workers' revolution:

> Our function as journalists seemed to be to build up a tremendous indictment against the present system, a daily tale of horror which would have the cumulative effect of forcing the workers to rise in revolution. Our editorial heads trusted in legislation, but we young ones believed that nothing could be done except by revolution, by use of force…The editorials and the leading stories in *The Call* indicated that policy, but they were dull and doctrinaire, and the masses who read the paper could not help but read between the lines the incentive to revolt rather than to sow patiently and build slowly. I know that everything that I wrote, I wrote with the impatience of youth. I was hopeless of gradual change.[7]

Day retained her anarchist views throughout her life. But like many anarchists at the time, including Pesotta, she adapted them as she became influenced by Pragmatic philosophy, which led to her becoming a pacifist. In the mid-1920s she had a child with

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[4] Dorothy Day, *From Union Square to Rome* (Silver Spring, MD: Preservation of the Faith Press, 1939), 67-68.
[5] Gold, who later became a prominent author and Communist, said of that time, "the anarchists were then still a brilliant and fearless revolutionary group in America, and they led the fight in New York." Mike Gold, "Why I Am a Communist (1932)," *New Masses*, September 1932, https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/nm/goldwhyiam35.html. Gold's most influential work, *Jews Without Money* is a fictionalized autobiography about growing up impoverished on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, published in 1930.
[6] Day, *From Union Square to Rome,* 68.
[7] Day, *From Union Square to Rome,* 81.

anarchist, Forest Batterham, in a common law marriage. She had previously been attracted to the Catholic Church because she saw it as the church where immigrants were to be found, and about that time she became aware of the works of William James, philosopher of classical pragmatism.[8]

James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* helped Dorothy sort out her doubts about religion, and what she felt was its inadequate response to the world's social ills.[9] She converted to Catholicism, which stunned not only her family, but also her friends, who were all secular radicals. Batterham lost patience with her religious pursuits, which led to their permanent separation. Although this decision also distanced Dorothy from some of her radical friends, she did maintain relationships with radicals after her conversion.[10]

In 1933, Day, along with anarchist Peter Maurin, co-founded the *Catholic Worker* newspaper and sold copies for a penny a piece. Day purposely chose the name of the

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[8] Historian Leilah Danielson clarifies that although "often misunderstood to mean moderate or sensible, pragmatism is a distinctly modern philosophy which seeks to reconcile idealism and realism by holding that 'truth' emerges out of the dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment, theory and practice, and thus is always subject to change and revision." Leilah Danielson, *American Gandhi: A. J. Muste and the History of Radicalism in the Twentieth Century*, Politics and Culture in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2014), 66, see also note 5 reference to James Livingston, "War and the Intellectuals," 438, and *Pragmatism and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution.*

[9] James, a Harvard Professor of philosophy who was very influential in the development of modern psychology, "did not write as a theologian, but as a philosopher and psychologist interested in the psychology of religion, not to proselytize nor to denigrate it." James was "uninterested in dogmas or institutions. James explored the meaning, and the benefits, which are derived from what he termed 'personal religion' or 'religious consciousness,' from a pragmatic, scientific perspective. James argued that 'God is not known, he is not understood, he is used.'" The questions "Does God really exist? How does he exist? What is he?" were irrelevant to James. "Not God, but life, more life, a larger, richer, more satisfying life, is, in the last analysis, the end of religion," William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, Cambridge Library Collection, Philosophy (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), 505-06.

[10] John Loughery and Blythe Randolph, *Dorothy Day: Dissenting Voice of the American Century*, First Simon & Schuster (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 2.

paper to draw readers from the popular Communist paper, the *Daily Worker*. Day used the proceeds to provide food and housing for the unemployed, which launched the *Catholic Worker* movement. She travelled all over the country, during the surge in labor activism in the 1930s, reporting on labor strikes and corporate abuses. The publication eventually reached 190,000 readers and by 1940, Day had opened more than fifty "houses of hospitality."[11]

Day often described herself as an anarchist, both before and after her conversion to Catholicism in 1927. She was arrested during the Palmer raids of the first Red Scare, while staying at an IWW house. And not long afterward, she lost her job as a reporter for *The Masses* when the government declared the paper unmailable under the espionage act for its radical content. For most of the 1920s, Day anguished over the trials of anarchists Sacco & Vanzetti, and over their executions in 1927. And at the time that she wrote the above words, during America's second Red Scare, in 1948, she had been under investigation by the FBI for at least a decade for espousing radical ideas, such as these.[12]

Anarchism, as Day knew it, is still often misunderstood or misconstrued, which the campaign for her canonization as a saint in the Catholic Church has recently brought to light.[13] The story behind the controversy arising out of this effort is one illustration of the ramifications of the general lack of understanding about anarchism during this period.

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[11] Loughery and Randolph, *Dorothy Day,* 58.
[12] Loughery and Randolph, *Dorothy Day*, 3, Landon R. Y. Storrs, "McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History, July 2, 2015, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.6.
[13] Renee Roden, "Evidence of Dorothy Day's Radical Sainthood Heads to Rome," AP NEWS, December 10, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/religion-new-york-sainthood-timothy-dolan-06cb53148fb7644fce4ba8a99dd341e5.

Some Catholics, who admire Day's radical approach to Christianity, including her granddaughter Martha Hennessey, who is still active in the *Catholic Worker* movement today, are distraught because they believe that Catholic leaders are using the campaign to canonize Day as a saint in the Catholic Church as a way to minimize her radical ideas and practices. These Catholics say that these leaders inaccurately assert that she gave up her radical ideas, and sometimes even claim that she denounced them, when she converted to Catholicism. In other words, to them, these leaders are wrongly suggesting that the church saved Dorothy Day, rather than the other way around.[14]

The scope of this paper is limited to an exploration of anarchism from the perspective of immigrant women who brought radicalism with them to America in the early twentieth century. But as Day's anarchism, which merits its own investigation, indicates, anarchism has emerged in many forms, and it has continued to do so, even drawing the attention of some scholars. At the turn of the twenty first century, a surge in anti-institutional activism generated a renewed interest in the study of anarchism. Although the enthusiastic characterization of this interest by some political theorists and anarchist activists as "a full-blown revival of anarchism,"[15] is perhaps overly optimistic,

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[14] Liam Stack, "Was Dorothy Day Too Left-Wing to Be a Catholic Saint?" *The New York Times,* January 21, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/21/nyregion/dorothy-day-sainthood.html?searchResultPosition=1; Brian Terrell, "As Dorothy Day's Sainthood Cause Advances, This Catholic Worker Won't Be Celebrating," December 7, 2021, https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/dorothy-days-sainthood-cause-advances-catholic-worker-wont-be-celebrating.

[15] David Graeber, "For a New Anarchism," *New Left Review* 13 (2002): 61–74; D. Graeber, "For a New Anarchism," *New Left Review* 13, no. 61 (2002), http:/search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/scholarly-journals/new-anarchism/docview/1301905979/se-2, *The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement* (London: Allen Lane, 2013); Dana M. Williams, "Contemporary Anarchist and Anarchistic Movements," *Sociology Compass* 12, no. 6 (2018): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12582; Uri Gordon, "Anarchism Reloaded," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 12, no. 1 (2007): 29–48, doi.org/10.1080/13569310601095598.

there are instances where scholars have identified themselves as anarchists or aligned with anarchistic ideas and activism, which echoes of some of the radicalized scholars of the 1930s.

For instance, Nobel Laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz supported the ideological goals of the anarchist inspired Occupy Wall Street movement, advocating for upending the American economic system, which he found culpable for worldwide wealth and income inequality. He proposed that wealth be measured not just on a nation's gross domestic product but also on the quality of people's lives.[16] Moreover, classical anarchism has since been linked to a variety of modern interpretations, such as neo-anarchism, as well as intersectional and postmodernist theories. Some scholars have connected it with Black feminists, Indigenous peoples, and queer activists.

One scholar, Andrew Cornell, even found a continuous link in anarchism in the U.S. from 1916, when anarchism was at its apogee, until 1972.[17] However, Cornell's observations, as with the scholarship in general, still leave us with many unanswered questions about anarchism during this period, such as why and how it disappeared and the part that women played in that transition, as well as the implications of the answers to those questions. The premise of Cornell's book, *Unruly Equality,* is that historians must "reckon" with this earlier period in order to understand the continuity between it and the anarchist movements of the twenty first century. However, much of his discussion on the

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[16] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Great Divide: Unequal Societies and What We Can Do about Them* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2015).
[17] Andrew Cornell, *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016).

anarchist movement in the 1930s focused on the publications *Man!* and *Vanguard* and their ideas.

Cornell summed up anarchism in the 1930s, this way:

> Buffeted by constant crises, anarchists devoted little attention to the politics of race, gender, and cultural production, and made few attempts to reassess and update their core political philosophy during these years. Their failure to initiate mass political campaigns, coupled with theoretical stagnation, led to the dissolution of the traditional anarchist movement in the United States by 1940.[18]

The only reference to Pesotta in the chapter which Cornell devotes to this period is in the context of an article published in 1934 by Marcus Graham, editor of *Man!*. In it Graham announced that because union organizers, such as Rose Pesotta, and her friend Anna Sosnofsky, had taken paid positions in the labor unions, they were no longer part of the anarchist community. However, Pesotta wrote a six-page rebuttal to the article, which Cornell does not mention.[19]

Cornell also said very little about Dorothy Day's movement during the 1930s other than to acknowledge her own avowed similarities and affinities with anarchism, and to remark that "The Catholic Worker experiment generated more interest than the traditional schools of anarchism combined, and it pointed the direction the movement would develop in the coming decades," a reference to her radical pacifism in the 1940s.[20] This simple summary does not shed much light, however, on the changes, adaptations, transformations, losses, and gains, which emerged out of anarchists interactions with each other, and with other groups as the political, social and cultural landscape changed during this period.

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[18] Cornell, *Unruly Equality,* 111-12.
[19] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[20] Cornell, *Unruly Inequality,* 133-36.

Because Pesotta was a self-identified anarchist, as well as a prominent female labor leader, which was unusual at the time, she offers an ideal vantage point from which to explore the anarchist community, and the labor movement from the mid-1910s, when syndicalism was at its peak, through the rise of the CIO in the late 1930s, and women's role in it. In order to help answer these questions and learn from them, I traced Pesotta's journey through both communities during this time, investigating the interactions between them, and analyzing the failures and successes of anarchists, as they adapted to the changing political landscape.

I argue that although many of the anarchists, who remained in America, did either retreat into relatively insular lives, or convert to communism, some anarchists, many of whom were women, exerted important political influence at the time, but it has been either overlooked or misconstrued in much of the scholarship due mainly to two factors. The first is the tendency to conflate them with political actors who did not share their ideology, due to misconceptions about their vision for American democracy. Anarchists themselves actually contributed to this confusion by collaborating with political actors who identified with myriad political parties and creeds. And the second is that much of the scholarship has focused primarily on men as political actors, particularly in the old labor history.

The latter tends to limit, an already limited discussion about anarchism, during this period, to the masculinist culture of the IWW syndicalists, which was centered on competitiveness and aggression. This implicitly cedes more legitimacy to this form of political influence, than to the ways which women may have done so during this time. This has foreclosed the opportunity to see ways in which political power may have

actually been enhanced by a balance of both masculine and feminine influences, especially when they collaborated communally, which the success of the 1912 Lawrence textile strike, one of the few successful IWW strikes, which included about 40% women and 20% children, suggested.

I attempt to write women anarchists as political actors back into this historical period in three ways. The first is by considering how the treatment of gender, violence, and power in the historiography has precluded the appearance of anarchist women. The second is by clarifying the perspective of these anarchist women, including how it related to American democracy, in order to facilitate distinguishing it from other political views.

And finally, the third is by examining the ways that anarchist women in the 1930s, who preceded Gandhi and the civil rights movement, actually did exercise power in similar ways. Similar, in the sense that they employed creative, nonviolent direct action that relied on a moral imperative, which was particularly well suited for the circumstances of the era in which they lived. One of my aims is to reframe the relationship of power to violence in the context of Hannah Arendt's claim that "power does not grow out of violence." Even when justified, even when victorious, "violence can never be legitimate," especially, Arendt says, when the victor happens "to enjoy domestically the blessing of constitutional government."[21]

This thesis explores how anarchist women situated themselves at the vanguard of the labor movement during the early twentieth century by investigating the anarchistic

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[21] Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic: Lying in Politics, Civil Disobedience, on Violence, Thoughts on Politics, and Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 150-152.

ideology and praxis of Rose Pesotta. I argue that a group of immigrant women who were anarchists or had anarchistic leanings, created a new version of anarchism by collaborating with socialist American educators to build a workers' education movement in the 1920s. The underpinnings of this movement were rooted in the classical transnational anarchism of the American syndicalist IWW, which sought to achieve social justice through the labor movement.

However, as the exponents of the movement engaged in two dramatic shifts to American life: 1) The unprecedented number of wage earning women, now newly enfranchised, who became politically engaged in the public sphere, and 2) The protracted economic cataclysm which led many Americans to question the proper role of, and perhaps even the viability of, America's foundational institutions, such as the federal government, labor unions, religion, and family life,[22] their ideology and praxis took on a distinctive new shape. It abandoned the competitive, even antagonistic, masculinist culture of the IWW.[23]

Instead, they nurtured ethical, artistic and spiritual sensibilities and took a pragmatic approach to direct action to minimize violent interactions with their employers, and the association of violence with their cause. This pragmatic approach, however, led to tensions with other anarchists, which ultimately split the anarchist movement, when they chose to operate from within hierarchical institutions which anarchists generally agreed had contributed to the dire conditions which many Americans now faced.

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[22] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, Second edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 249.
[23] Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe, "The rise and fall of revolutionary syndicalism," *Mouvement social* 159 (1992): 1.

While their critics claimed that doing so represented a divergence from *pure* anarchism, they argued the reverse, that anarchists who had separated themselves from the real world had actually abandoned the workers' cause for social justice. Eventually the influence of the former group of anarchists faded, while the ideology and praxis of the latter ultimately became an important contributor to the CIO and the1930s labor movement. By linking this movement to the anti-authoritarian and democratic ideals of America's revolutionary past, these anarchists succeeded in finally reaching native born Americans with their socialist message. But in the process, they lost their copyright over those ideas—which manifested as union solidarity and the pursuit of workplace democracy—because they became Americanized.

Historiography: Old Labor History, New Labor History, and Anarchism

This historiography focuses on the scholarly treatment of anarchism and gender in the labor movement during the 1930s and early 1940s and some of the factors that have generally precluded anarchist women from appearing as political actors, or that have led to them being mischaracterized when they do appear. I first look at the problem of conflation that has obscured the political contributions of both anarchists and women. And then I review the scholarship on anarchism as it relates to gender, violence and power that has contributed to a gendered understanding of power generally, but particularly with regard to the labor movement in the early twentieth century.

Then I consider how these (mis)conceptions overall have implicitly assigned a gender to political power that is defined by masculinist characteristics, such as

combativeness, competitiveness, and sometimes violence.[24] Since anarchists appear in the historiography as significant political actors in the old labor history, but women generally do not, I begin with the treatment of anarchists in the old labor history. This will provide not only an understanding of the extent to which political power has been gendered throughout much of twentieth century labor history, but it also provides context about how women, particularly anarchist women, figured into the discourse in the new labor history.

Old Labor History

Most scholarship on the Great Depression during the twentieth century, which still appears in texts today, was framed by the work of historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. who explained the causes, effects and endurance of the Great Depression in terms of how this economic cataclysm shaped, and was shaped by, *great men,* such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the U.S. government's legal, social, and policy interventions.[25] And in labor history, John Commons, with his students from the University of Wisconsin, led the scholarly conversation regarding the "labor question," by similarly emphasizing economics but from the perspective of leaders, institutions, and major events; it was history from above. From this vantage point the Commons school viewed class conflict in

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[24] Gender is used here in the context of Judith Butler's concept of gender as a "reiterated social performance rather than the expression of a prior reality." Butler argues that traditional feminism is wrong to look to a natural, 'essential' notion of the female, or indeed of sex or gender. She questions the category 'woman' and examines 'the masculine' and 'the feminine' in Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 10th Anniversary ed., Repr., Routledge Classics (Florence: Routledge, 2006), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203824979.
[25] Mason B. Williams, "The Great Depression and New Deal—A Historiographical Survey," 26-27, In *The Routledge History of the Twentieth-Century United States, 1st ed*. (New York: Routledge, 2018); Arthur Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt* (London: Heinemann, 1958).

the United States, as a fierce struggle between "the people" and "the powers," and recognized how "controversies over bombings and assassinations helped to shape the political context in which American labor was able to operate."[26]

While the Commons school sought to address the moral and ethical objections raised by the labor movement, its motivations originated not out of concern for the workers, especially radicals, but out of the economic concerns of industrial capitalists. Commons himself expressed *approval* for traditional, or "respectable" craft unionism, dominated by white men of northern and western European descent, and *disapproval* for the radicalism in the inclusive industrial models of unionism, such as the KOL and the IWW, the enclaves of not just immigrants, but anarchism.[27] Their observation that "boom times renewed worker activism and downturns limited it" however simply reinforced tactics already long employed to artificially create hard times, such as over hiring in order to create competitive conditions that drove down wages.

But in the years after the war, discussions about worker violence waned and were replaced by a narrative originating out of the short-lived consensus school that "a relative harmony of interests and ideas had dominated American political life." Scholars argued that those who had supported acts of violence had greatly overestimated America's revolutionary potential and those who responded to them had hysterically overreacted to a nonexistent threat. This exceptionalist interpretation blended well with what became an

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[26] Gage, "Why Violence Matters."
[27] Jon Shelton, "Labor—A Historiographical Survey," In *The Routledge History of the Twentieth-Century United States* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 150; John R. Commons, et al. *History of Labour in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935).

enduring explanation for ideological violence in the United States; that it was "a symptom of European infection," and entirely un-American.[28]

New Labor History

During the social movements of the1960s and 1970s, scholars such as Herbert George Gutman, David Montgomery, and David Brody ushered in the new labor history movement by considering the effects of wide-scale power dynamics on working people and the ways workers influenced social and economic conditions.[29] Montgomery's seminal work, *The Fall of the House of Labor,* included a discussion on the "newcomers from capitalism's periphery," immigrants from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe and Asia, and showed how the resistance of a diverse group of workers, white, black, immigrant, skilled and unskilled, shaped American economics and politics.

Anarchism

During this period classic texts on anarchism also emerged, such as *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* by George Woodcock. Woodcock devotes half of the book to anarchist theory and six classical anarchists, William Godwin, Max

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[28] Gage, "Why Violence Matters."
[29] Shelton, "Labor—A Historiographical Survey," 150-51; Herbert George Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, distributed by Random House, 1976); David Montgomery, "The 'New Unionism' and the Transformation of Workers' Consciousness in America, 1909–22," *Journal of Social History* 7, no. 4 (1974): 509–29, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/7.4.509; David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Paris: Cambridge University Press; Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1987); David Brody, *Labor in Crisis: The Steel Strike of 1919*, 1st ed., Critical Periods of History (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1982).

Stirner, Pierre Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, and Leo Tolstoy. And the second half provides accounts of the rise and fall of anarchist movements.[30] Later Peter Marshall followed up with another, even more comprehensive history that traced anarchism to ancient China and Greece, *Demanding the impossible: a history of anarchism* that likewise described the ideology of the classical anarchists and major anarchist movements.[31] These texts deal to a large extent with anarchist theory.

Few scholars of anarchism, with the notable exceptions of Paul Avrich and Margaret Marsh, went into depth about anarchist's actual practices. Paul Avrich spent nearly thirty years between 1963 and 1991 conducting more than 200 interviews with predominantly European born anarchists throughout the U.S., mostly Jewish and Italian who had been active in their movement in the heyday between the 1880s and the 1930s, all of which he includes in his remarkable work, *Anarchist Portraits*.[32]

Margaret Marsh's work *Anarchist Women, 1870-1920* was groundbreaking because it was the first to explore the anarchism of women. It included a fascinating group made up of: Margaret Anderson, Helena Born, Voltairine de Cleyre, Marie Ganz, Florence Finch Kelly and Mollie Steimer. And it made connections between them and other American radicals, socialists, feminists and Progressives. Professor Marsh was an early contributor to the growth of feminist history in a male-dominated profession that generally neglected women's role in creating libertarian doctrine.[33]

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[30] George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements,* (Peterborough, Ontario, Orchard Park, New York: Broadview Encore Editions, 1963).
[31] Peter H. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010).
[32] Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
[33] Margaret S. Marsh, *Anarchist Women, 1870-1920*, American Civilization (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

In the process, as one reviewer observed, Marsh rescued anarchist women from a caricatured image "too appalling to contemplate: a monster who repudiated her femininity to become a shrieking virago." "Women after all," he said, "had more to liberate themselves from than men. America's most famous anarchist was a woman, but then there was always a tendency to write Emma Goldman off as an untypical eccentric," even though there were many other prominent women "in such movements: Mother Jones, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Ella Reeve Bloor, Rose Pastor Stokes and Charlotte Perkins Gilman."[34]

Melvyn Dubofsky wrote *the* history of the IWW which now foregrounded formerly marginalized workers. However, part of his intent was to refute the characterization of Wobblies as violent. Wobblies, he said, were not destructive bomb throwers, rather they tried to understand capitalist society, and through learning and "revolutionary activism, to develop a better system."[35] But as Historian Beverly Gage argued, by minimizing the Wobblies violent actions, the ideological message they hoped to convey with those violent acts was also lost, thus minimizing their political relevance as well.[36] But we also lose the opportunity to learn from the Wobblies' masculinist culture, and reputation for violence, which undoubtedly contributed to the federal government's violent backlash against them, and to their ultimate downfall.

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[34] Patrick Renshaw, "Review: Margaret Marsh, Anarchist Women, 1870-1920," *Journal of American Studies* 16, no. 2 (August 1982): 284–85, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27554160.
[35] Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, ed. Joseph A. McCartin, abridged (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=p069055.
[36] Gage, "Why Violence Matters."

The last factor that has significantly contributed to the marginalization of anarchists in the scholarship has been the conventional wisdom that anarchism was quiescent after the Red Scare in the 1920s. However, historian Elizabeth Faue's assessment of the state of the labor movement at the time could also be said of the state of anarchist activism as well. Although the labor movement was, as she said, "in a state of disarray" during the 1920s, it was "neither invisible nor inactive." Just as the labor movement experienced "intermittent activism, sustained institution building, and even failed struggles" that provided resources for labor's explosive growth during the 1930s, so too did anarchists treat this as a time to rebuild the movement.[37]

As Leilah Danielson's *American Gandhi: A. J. Muste and the History of Radicalism in the Twentieth Century,* shows that the creation of workers' education programs in labor unions, and in worker colleges were critical to this effort. And A. J. Muste was perhaps the most important figure in this movement during the 1920s. Danielson's work is a fascinating journey through Muste's life as a charismatic leader not only in the labor movement of the early twentieth century, but also in the mid-century peace and civil rights movements. From 1921 through 1933, Muste was "head of Brookwood Labor College, the country's only residential college for workers. He oversaw the development of the movement, teaching philosophy, pedagogy, and curriculum, as well as its expansion to include city labor colleges throughout the country and summer schools for women workers."[38]

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[37] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, 2298.
[38] Leilah Danielson, *American Gandhi: A. J. Muste and the History of Radicalism in the Twentieth Century*, First edition., Politics and Culture in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2014), 4.

"Muste and other labor intellectuals" made "workers' education part of a larger effort to modernize and democratize the labor movement," creating a place for highly impactful anarchist action even during these years of suppression. Danielson shows how "they constructed a method of inquiry and working-class organization that drew upon the pragmatic method, while rejecting liberal citizenship and parliamentarianism as vehicles for social change."[39] For the many young labor activists in the 1920s, such as Rose Pesotta who attended one of Muste's worker summer schools, and also graduated from Brookwood college while Muste was Dean, this training shaped their labor activism. [40]

History with the Politics Left Out

Historian Jon Shelton found that after the civil rights and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, scholars rapidly expanded the bodies of scholarship on "women, African Americans, Latino/as and Asian Americans" and "engaged with new theoretical work in sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and other fields." He observed that many of them "embraced the cultural turn as a key to understanding "class identity, struggle and resistance."[41] And he noted Alice Kessler-Harris' "groundbreaking" work on the economic and cultural effects of "women's move into the waged labor force," and how it "shaped American society."[42]

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[39] Danielson, *American Gandhi,* 4, 131, 196.
[40] Danielson, *American Gandhi* 104, Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,*15, 223-25.
[41] Shelton, "Labor—A Historiographical Survey," 151.
[42] Alice Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable: Three Jewish Women and Their Union," *Labor History* 17, no. 1 (1976): 5–23, https://doi.org/10.1080/00236567608584366; Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Alice Kessler-Harris, "Problems of Coalition-Building: Women and Trade Unions in the 1920s," in *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History*, by Ruth Milkman (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

Ruth Milkman compiled a collection of essays that provided a multifaceted look at the social and cultural experiences of working women, by covering a wide range of topics, including the family wage, the Chicago WTUL from 1904-24, the Lawrence strike of 1912, the Colorado fuel and iron strike in 1913-14, problems of coalition building in the 1920s in the ILGWU, survival strategies among African-American women workers, Southern women in the labor movement, the Ladies' Auxiliary in the CIO, unionized women in state and local government, and feminism in the labor movement since the 1960s.[43]

While all of this new scholarship added important perspectives about the social and cultural experiences of previously overlooked groups, critics of the new social history said that it had become siloed "into isolated ghettos" that neglected the intersections between them. And they further asserted that the exploration of people's political thoughts and actions were limited. They claimed that because this new social history did not make connections to politics and power, it had written "history with the politics left out."[44]

The Problem of Conflation

As scholars began to explore the working lives of Americans, and even as they tried to write the politics back in, the conventional narratives they produced still largely excluded both women and anarchists as significant political actors. For example,

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[43] Milkman, *Women, Work, and Protest*.
[44] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, Second edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Tony Judt, "A Clown in Regal Purple: Social History and the Historians," *History Workshop Journal* 7, no. 1 (1979): 66–94.

Lizabeth Cohen's seminal work *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* argues that Americans forged a new identity as they overcame their ethnic differences and united in solidarity to support labor unions, the New Deal, and the democratic party. And that their "belief in the potential for 'moral capitalism' born out of the promise of employer's welfarism in the 1920s would shape the political character of workers' union movements in the thirties."[45]

While this analysis provides a useful perspective for understanding how the mainstream labor movement evolved during the 1930s, anarchists receive scant attention which may not reflect their actual influence because anarchists' associations with political parties are not always clear. As one critic observed this may be just a little too "neat and tidy...particularly for a period as rambunctious and contentious as any in American history."[46]

Other scholars tend to blur out anarchists altogether by conflating them with other groups and describing them collectively as radicals, reds, leftists, socialists, or feminists. Historian Beverly Gage found this to be a problem in her work on anarchist violence in America. Historians, she said, encounter a problem of conflation, or lumping together a wide range of groups and ideologies that by some measures had very little in common. "To throw them all together under the term 'radical' is to do just what their enemies did at the time…reds were all one undifferentiated mass."[47]

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[45] Cohen, *Making a New Deal,* 209.
[46] Peter Rachleff, "Lizabeth Cohen. 'Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939' (Book Review)," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (1991): 1307-08.
[47] Gage, "Why Violence Matters, 105.

This happens often with Dorothy Day and Rose Pesotta. They are typically grouped in disparate categories from one another. Dorothy Day is often cast in her role as a Catholic, with her "radicalism" often characterized as an aspect of another life that she wisely set aside.[48] And Rose Pesotta is frequently grouped with other Jewish immigrant women who rose to prominence from the garment industry, and are often described as either "socialists," "feminist socialists," or perhaps generically, as "radicals."[49]

Annelise Orleck does a good job of illustrating this point by showing how politically diverse that women could be, even if at first glance they appeared to share significant common ground. Orleck showed the considerable differences in the political views of four seemingly like-minded women in her comparative biographies of four "industrial feminists." Orleck described their battles on multiple fronts, with employers, the CIO male hierarchy, and with each other since not all of them supported the New Deal.[50]

Gender and Political power

One example of how conflation, metanarratives and the gendering of political power can go hand in hand was a consensus view among scholars who presumed that women would vote relatively uniformly in a block after enfranchisement. When women

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[48] See for example, Stack, "Was Dorothy Day Too Left-Wing to Be a Catholic Saint?"
[49] See for example, Susan A Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Cornell University Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.7591/j.ctvr7f7gr.
[50] Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense & a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965, Second edition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

did not do this, scholars explained it as a lack of interest in the political process generally.[51]

Historian Nancy Cott's important work, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism,* helped to dispel this notion. Cott concluded that women who had previously been presumed to be politically inactive in the 1920s did not actually retreat from feminism but rather from the NWP. Although the NWP had rallied enough women to win the fight for the 19th amendment, afterward it no longer represented the divergent political views of women in general. While the dissension within the NWP was no doubt an important factor, it does not fully explain why so many women did not vote at all.[52]

But, Emma Goldman, in 1911, during the height of her popularity in America, probably did not help by giving her opinion on woman suffrage:

> Needless to say, I am not opposed to woman suffrage on the conventional ground that she is not equal to it. I see neither physical, psychological, nor mental reasons why woman should not have the equal right to vote with man. But that cannot possibly blind me to the absurd notion that woman will accomplish that wherein man has failed.[53]

Regardless of the reasons, Nancy Cott argued that women were still very much interested in exerting their political influence. Cott suggested that many women did so by becoming involved in community associations. And since then, scholarship has been emerging that has explored the connection of this trend during the 1920s and 1930s to the surge in power of the 1930s labor movement, such as historian Elizabeth Faue in

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[51] Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
[52] Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*.
[53] Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1911), 201-206.

Community of Suffering & Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945.[54]

Both Cohen and Faue each said that their work was an attempt to respond to a collective call from new social and labor historians in the 1980s, to not only write the politics back into history, but to also synthesize its siloes. Faue's aim was to help clear up confusion, in the new labor history, that she attributed to the seeming irreconcilability of two models of unionism that generally characterized the scholarship then. One, that concerned itself with the subject of community, was inspired by the work of Herbert Gutman, and the other, that focused on workplace struggle, came from David Montgomery's studies on shopfloor militancy.[55]

Faue's argument connects the two by incorporating women's labor activism at the community level back into the story. Faue shows how labor movement successes of the 1930s rose out of the collaborative efforts of entire communities that included women, but also later led to the movement's decline when women were marginalized from it. Faue starts off her book by pointing out that this was the decade that many at the time thought would finally bring triumph to women's struggle for equality, and that it would come through the strength of the labor movement (not through the electoral process). Faue quotes labor activist and journalist Mary Heaton Vorse saying that "A woman's movement is arising in this country which is among the greatest the world has ever known".[56] However, Faue concludes, the consolidation of power by labor leaders into

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[54] Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering & Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).
[55] Faue, *Community of Suffering & Struggle*, 12, Quoting from Mary Heaton Vorse, *Labor's New Millions* (New York: Modern age books, inc., 1938), 234.
[56] Faue, *Community of Suffering & Struggle*, 21.

bureaucratic enclaves, which led the labor movement away from community action, relegated women to the margins of labor activism.[57]

Faue attributed the downfall of the labor unions to the inattention, or alienation, of women because of male dominance not only in the labor movement but also in labor theory. Faue describes this as "a cultural crisis with roots in the decade of its most dynamic growth," the 1930s.[58] By doing so, Faue essentially argued that the scholarship on this period, endemically assigns masculinist gender traits, which she suggested by using the term "male dominance," to valid political power.[59]

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* Higginbotham showed how black Baptist women used progressive biblical interpretations to draw attention to the gender inequality in black churches that mirrored the gender inequality in the dominant white society.[60] They did this by leveraging the analogous racial theology that black ministers had already espoused for generations under slavery. Higginbotham found that in a society where gender identity was "complicated by a racial system that superimposed 'male' characteristics upon all whites (male and female) and 'feminine characteristics' upon all blacks (male and female)" black Baptist culture responded by muting gender dichotomies in deference to the pursuit of respectability and 'racial uplift.'[61]

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[57] Faue, *Community of Suffering & Struggle*, 25, 250.
[58] Faue, *Community of Suffering & Struggle*, 13.
[59] Butler, *Gender Trouble*.
[60] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).
[61] Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 142.

According to Higginbotham, black women never tolerated a double standard of behavior in men or women. And black men abandoned the feminine connotations traditionally associated with concepts assigned to women, such as self-sacrifice and patience. They viewed them instead as an important source of strength for building a strong denomination.[62]

These black women "accentuated the image of woman as a saving force, rather than woman as a victim. They rejected a model of womanhood that was fragile and passive, just as they deplored a type preoccupied with fashion, gossip, or self-indulgence." Higginbotham concluded that "one could say that the black Baptist church represented a sphere for public deliberation and debate precisely because of women."[63]

Historian Francis Shor's *Masculine Power and Virile Syndicalism: A Gendered Analysis of the IWW in Australia* provides perhaps the best illustration of these concepts applied in an early twentieth century anarchist movement, which in this case was the syndicalist IWW in Australia. Shor observed that a masculinist culture of 'virile syndicalism' arose as a response to combat aggressive capitalists and to contest the respectable reformism of the craft-based labour unions. Perhaps predictably, in this way of life, it also came to be used as a ritualistic test of manhood.[64] But "to the extent that such masculine power was muted by the influence of large numbers of women," as in the strikes that were led by the IWW in the textile industry in the eastern states of America, the Wobblies could achieve momentary success. Shor refers specifically to the successes

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[62] Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 121.
[63] Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 122.
[64] Francis Shor, "Masculine Power and Virile Syndicalism: A Gendered Analysis of the IWW in Australia," *Labour History (Canberra)* no. 63 (1992): 83–99, https://doi.org/10.2307/27509140.

in the Lawrence and Paterson strikes in America that depended especially on the role of "pre-existing women and ethnic networks." Indeed, the 1912 strike at the American Woolen Company in Lawrence Massachusetts, was one of, if not the IWW's most successful campaigns.[65]

For three months, more than 25,000 workers from nearly sixty different ethnic groups, of whom 40 percent were women, and nearly 20 percent children, protested wage cuts. They persisted despite semi-starvation, arrests on trumped up dynamiting charges, the death of a woman protestor, and public accusations of starving their children. When strike organizers responded by arranging to have the children transported by train to sympathetic labor families willing to house them, Margaret Sanger, a trained nurse accompanied the first group to Grand Central Station. In a later attempt to transport more children, state militia and local police arrived at the station and used brute force, beating women and children, to prevent children from boarding. This, however, led to a public outcry.[66]

Skilled organizers, Joe Ettor and Arturo Giovanetti, despite their current imprisonment, helped guide the strike, managing tempers and limiting violence, even when company agents tried to portray workers as dynamiters and assassins. Throughout the campaign, prominent voices drew attention to the cause, such as anarchist Emma Goldman, experienced writer turned labor reporter, Mary Heaton Vorse, leader of the

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[65] Shor, "Masculine Power and Virile Syndicalism," 96.
[66] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement,*1840-1868.

American IWW Big Bill Haywood, and Irish American socialist and IWW leader Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.[67]

Shor did not find such successes in the Australian IWW and he attributes its decline, in part, to the masculinist tendencies which isolated it from important community support systems. Shor also suggests that when some of these men created comparable communal bonding experiences, which allowed them to incorporate the feminine characteristics inherent in them, it not only bonded them, but made them feel empowered. Shor describes the positive responses of transient IWW members to the creation of what he called "gender communalism," which "not only established brotherly bonds of solidarity, but also provided opportunities" to "experience a form of cultural empowerment that signaled to many wandering men that they were more than hired hands or mere cogs in a machine." Shor quotes the American radical journalist John Reed's comment on this cultural aspect of the IWW: "Wherever, in the West, there is an IWW local, you will find an intellectual center - a place where men read philosophy, economics, the latest plays; where art and poetry are discussed and international politics."[68]

This historiography also reflects that, despite the limitations of culturally assigning both masculinity and real power, exclusively or mainly to men, this has not only plagued the labor movement, it has sometimes been reinforced by the scholarly literature as well. In the following chapters I show how both Rose Pesotta and Dorothy

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[67] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement,*1840-1868.
[68] Shor, "Masculine Power and Virile Syndicalism," 96.

Day challenged this gendered notion of power with their influential activism. I analyze how their innovations of anarchistic ideology and praxis contributed to the major labor movement successes of the era, even though they were punctuated by crushing setbacks as this dynamic sometimes squandered those gains.

Historical Background

American anarchism stems from two traditions that originally had little, or no connection, one native and one immigrant. In theory Dorothy Day could be associated with the former and Rose Pesotta with the latter, although as this thesis shows, anarchist ideology was quite fluid during the twentieth century. Many native-born Americans were deeply impacted by the ideas of immigrant anarchists and Dorothy Day is an extraordinary example of this empathic response. The native tradition, which is strongly individualist, traces back to the early nineteenth century writings of Thomas Paine and William Godwin, and the socialist communities built by Josiah Warren. Godwin's writing, (a response to the French Revolution) had a profound effect on American authors, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.[69]

The immigrant anarchist tradition rose out of a split between revolutionaries and reformists in the Socialist Labor Party in 1880 and consisted mostly of German immigrants who had fled a crackdown in Germany. They were theoretical Marxists until the arrival of Johann Most in 1882 who was obsessed with revolutionary violence and the use of dynamite. A large following took root in Chicago growing substantially from 1883

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[69] Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 453-459.

until 1886 when the legendary Haymarket Square tragedy took place (which Most is generally presumed to have played an important part).[70]

While Most's German anarchist community in Chicago subsequently waned and disappeared altogether by 1906, as a result of the sensationalist press and popular fear of anarchist violence, anarchism nevertheless rose among populations of first- and second-generation immigrants residing in the larger cities made up mainly of Jews, Italians, and the Russian refugees from tsarist persecution.[71]

The tradition of these anarchist immigrants was rooted in the ideas of a few classical anarchists, such as Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Leo Tolstoy, and Pierre Proudhon. It emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, about the same time, and sometimes in collaboration (but often fraught) with Marx and his followers, as a response to industrialization and capitalism. Proudhon, the first of this group to declare himself an anarchist, sometimes called the father of anarchism, described it as a rejection of the legitimacy of the State, or any imposition of political authority, hierarchy and domination.[72]

Proudhon sought to establish a state of anarchy, a decentralized and self-regulating society, "a federation of voluntary associations of free and equal individuals." He famously said that "Anarchy is Order." The ultimate goal, according to Proudhon, was "to create a free society" where all human beings can "realize their full potential."[73] Although these two traditions rose independently, anarchists from each tradition mostly

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[70] Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 460-61.
[71] Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 465.
[72] Woodcock, *Anarchism*.
[73] Peter H. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010), 3.

had an affinity with the ideas of the other, and generally agreed with Proudhon's definition, at least ideologically.

But as they put it into practice, any further definition became elusive and innumerable variations developed. Historian Peter Marshall, who wrote a comprehensive history of anarchism, poetically described anarchism as "a river with many currents and eddies, constantly changing and being refreshed by new surges but always moving towards the wide ocean of freedom."[74]

Dorothy Day and Rose Pesotta came from notably different backgrounds, and their respective ideological responses to these conditions appear to be fluid during this period, both converging and diverging from one another in important ways. Yet overall they shared more ideological ground with one another, as anarchists, than they did with the other groups that scholars sometimes lump them in with, such as socialists, communists, or feminists.

One of the most important indicators of this is that neither of them voted or supported parliamentary institutions. As Historian of Anarchism, George Woodcock explained, all anarchists value individual freedom and equality first and foremost. It is in this respect that anarchism is sometimes seen as the ultimate form of democracy. But it is this idea that also leads most anarchists, including Day and Pesotta, to "deny many of the forms and viewpoints of American democracy." This is because it requires individuals to abdicate their own "sovereignty by handing it over to a representative," thus losing control over the decisions that affect their lives. "This is why anarchists [see] voting as an

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[74] Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible,* 3.

act that betrays freedom."[75] This distinguishing practice, however, cannot be attributed to many of the people and groups that scholars often identify Day and Pesotta with. The subject of violence was particularly challenging for anarchists as they considered whether, or if, it was justified. Although the anarchists subsequently engaged in relatively little violence, they did use targeted acts of terrorist style violence that they called "propaganda of the deed" directed mainly at the heads of industry. This led to sensationalized press coverage and struck fear of a pervasive, subversive threat in many Americans, some even fearing impending civil war. For example, "in 1892 the Russian Alexander Berkman attempted unsuccessfully to shoot the financier Henry Clay Frick in reaction to the killing of strikers by Pinkerton men during the Homestead steel strike."[76]

Anarchism continued to captivate the public imagination in the early twentieth century, formative years for Day and Pesotta. Even though Pesotta did not immigrate from Russia until 1913, she kept abreast of the news in America through her older sister who worked in a garment factory in New York city. The newspapers continued to be full of reports and rumors of violence directed at the symbols of American government and business.[77] Both women became admirers of the IWW, and of Emma Goldman, who's lectures they attended.

Emma Goldman was profoundly affected by the Haymarket tragedy, and was ultimately buried next to the Haymarket martyrs. Goldman's association with Johann Most, although short-lived, and her implication in the assassination of President William

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[75] Woodcock, *Anarchism,* 33.
[76] Woodcock, *Anarchism,* 261.
[77] Gage, "Why Violence Matters," 104.

McKinley in 1901 when the assassin Leon Czolgosz claimed to have been inspired by hearing her speak, contributed to her reputation as the most dangerous woman in America.

Goldman denied any involvement in the crime, but neither did she renounce Czolgosz' act. She later attempted to vindicate her anarchistic ideals by launching the monthly publication *Mother Earth* in 1906. Historian Rachel Hui-Shi Hsu found that *Mother Earth* attracted a wide audience that included many from the American middle class and came to be regarded as not only "the leading anarchist journal in the United States," but also, Hsu asserts, was "one of the best produced anywhere in the world."[78]

The IWW was founded in 1905 based on anarchistic principles, with its aim being to "form the structure of the new society from within the shell of the old."[79] The IWW, which drew its vigor from the hard traditions of the American frontier, became the primal force in the nearly two decade long syndicalist movement.[80] It provided an opportunity for unskilled industrial workers, mainly immigrants excluded from joining the craft oriented AFL unions, to join in solidarity in "one big union."[81]

The syndicalists saw class conflict as inevitable, but sought short term gains by operating within the existing system, until the worker's revolution took place. Their long term goal was to overthrow capitalism and institute a collectivized system of worker-managed property. The crucial site of class struggle, not just against the employers, but

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[78] Rachel Hui-Shi Hsu, "Beyond Progressive America: Mother Earth and Its Anarchist World (1906-1918)" (Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins, 2016).
[79] From the preamble to the IWW founding document Jacqueline Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy: The Life and Times of Lucy Parsons, American Radical*, First edition (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 263.
[80] Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 466.
[81] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement,* 358.

also against the entire sociopolitical system buttressing the capitalist economy, was in the trade unions.[82]

Hsu points out that Before 1917, "anarchism was even more appealing than Marxism to radical intellectuals across the globe," greatly inspiring young people as they championed an anti-authoritarian philosophy, and "the causes of social revolution and sexual liberation."[83] At the time, anarchists were among the Bolshevik Revolution's most ardent supporters, but soon became its most outspoken left-wing critics when hundreds of Russian born anarchists, including Goldman and Pesotta's fiancé, Theodore Kushnarev, were deported during the Red Scare and returned to Russia only to face repression and disillusionment.[84]

Anarchist's subsequent clashes with Communists in the IWW and the ILGWU decimated the already severely weakened unions. The Bolshevik's rise in power, the arrival of the Popular Front, and the anti-Fascist movement led to further tensions with Communists that extended into the labor movement during the 1930s and 1940s and would also contribute to anarchist's understanding of, and response to, labor union hierarchy, the New Deal and the democratic party.[85]

Although the labor movement was in a state of disarray in the 1920s after the purge of the anarchists, and the Red Scare, not all scholars believe that it was entirely

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[82] Linden and Thorpe, "The rise and fall of revolutionary syndicalism."
[83] Hui-Chi Rachel Hsu, *Emma Goldman, "Mother Earth," and the Anarchist Awakening*, 1st ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021); Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*.
[84] Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia. 1st ed.* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. Emma Goldman, 1923).
[85] Kenyon Zimmer, "Premature Anti-Communists?: American Anarchism, the Russian Revolution, and Left-Wing Libertarian Anti-Communism, 1917-1939," *Labor (Durham, N.C.)* 6, no. 2 (2009): 45–71, https://doi.org/10.1215/15476715-2008-058.

quiescent. Some see it as the period when the groundwork was laid for the surge in 1930s unionism. This thesis will show that what historian Elizabeth Faue said about the labor movement in general was also true of the anarchists, they were "neither invisible nor inactive in these years."[86]

Significantly, a new generation of women union activists trained to be labor leaders in the School for Workers in Industry at the University of Wisconsin, Brookwood Labor College, and the Bryn Mawr School for Women Workers. By the 1930s, nearly a third of all adult women were in the labor force. The percentage of women who worked grew steadily, and had a disproportionate impact on key industries, for instance, electrical, textile, and automobile plants often employed up to 40 percent women. Many of these new workers were married and had children.[87]

Within garment workers unions, women leaders pursued similar programs in workers' education—among them Fannia Cohn, Pauline Newman, and Rose Schneiderman in the ILGWU, and Agnes Nestor of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW).[88] For the 1930s labor movement, these women leaders proved essential not only to women joining unions but to the support of sit-down strikes, organizing campaigns, relief protests, and get-out-the vote efforts. The 1930s wave of labor organizing provided the first opportunities for a new generation of women leaders to emerge.

Research Methods and Sources

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[86] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement,* 2306.
[87] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement,* loc 2523.
[88] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement,* loc 2523.

In the dynamic political climate of the 1930s labor movement, creative adaptations to old ideas and ways of engaging politically naturally developed. So I attempt in this thesis, as political scientist Michael Freeden suggested, to abandon the idea that any political ideology is fixed and stable even though they all embody some "decontested," or widely accepted values. Rather, he argued, all political ideologies are constantly evolving in response to changing circumstances.[89] This is an idea that is especially relevant to this dynamic period in American history.

To help analyze the changing character and influence of anarchism during the Great Depression, I applied the microhistory approach to a short biography, which I created centered on the anarchistic ideology and praxis of Rose Pesotta. The purpose of a microhistory biography is not to reveal the life of an exceptional person but rather to learn something exceptional about the culture. The microhistory approach is an ideal way to study anarchism because it allows for complexities to be explored that have been difficult to assess in previous labor movement scholarship where metanarratives tend to dominate.[90]

For example, the narrative that describes the working class becoming a unified force in the 1930s by setting aside ethnic differences, joining CIO labor unions and the democratic party, and supporting the New Deal provides useful context that explains that workers united to create CIO labor unions during the 1930s. But it blurs the role of

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[89] Michael Freeden, "The Morphological Analysis of Ideology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, Oxford Handbooks in Politics & International Relations (Oxford University Press, 2013), 115–39, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199585977.013.0034.
[90] S. G. Magnusson, "The Singularization of History: Social History and Microhistory within the Postmodern State of Knowledge," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 3 (March 1, 2003): 701–35, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2003.0054.

anarchists, who had little faith in, and in fact strongly resisted, class and gender based institutional hierarchies in labor unions, and government. Anarchists also tend to collaborate with people from other political ideologies, and the political parties they associate with, which can also obfuscate their influence in social movements.

My investigation lends itself particularly well to the microhistory approach because, in contrast to metanarratives, microhistorians almost always choose *outliers*, "those who some members of society consider to be obscure, strange, and even dangerous." This is because their subjects, as opposed to the average person found in quantitative research, typically "caught the attention of the authorities."[91] This allows them to investigate situations that would otherwise be invisible in the metanarratives and uncover aspects about a person's life that reveal important insights about the larger society, such as how formal institutions maintain power and control people's lives. In this way they learn about the culture through the example of a person's life.

One of the dangers in taking this approach is that outliers may simply be outliers, perhaps eccentrics, who do not necessarily provide insight about the culture. However, Rose Pesotta challenged norms and values that provided the scaffolding for institutions, which in the minds of many Americans were failing them at the time. And she was engaged at the fulcrum of this significant shift, in the heart of the 1930s labor movement. Her vantage point, and her contributions, reveal these changing dynamics, which made an important shift in American life possible.

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[91] Magnusson, "The Singularization of History."

Leandro Zarnow, recognizing the difficulty in measuring how political subjects "operate within inherited institutional frameworks while simultaneously assessing the influence of informal and external political forces," suggested using biographies for exploring sociocultural political history. This approach allows the historian to trace the biographical subject's "advocacy of social change on multiple political fronts…inside and outside political institutions."[92] I investigate, using this short biography, the interactions between the complex institutional hierarchies women anarchists navigated during the tumultuous Great Depression era while concurrently interacting with social movements at the time.

Since microhistorians seek to learn about the culture, rather than "exceptional" individuals, the microhistory approach is more conducive to objective analyses than traditional biographies where historians may become either too enamored with, or judgmental of, their subjects.[93] Although many interesting facts about Pesotta's experience as an anarchist labor activist may arise, the intent of this project is not to write a biography on her life as a noteworthy individual, which has already been done, but to focus on how anarchism influenced her labor activism, and ultimately the labor movement. Hopefully this approach has minimized distracting character assessments, and facilitated a better analysis.

Rose Pesotta, as well as Dorothy Day, left extensive records for preservation in university and library archives, which I have used to help me create a better picture of

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[92] Leandra Zarnow, "Remembering Public Life: Writing Policy into Biography," *Journal of Policy History* 21, no. 4 (2009): 450, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898030609990182.
[93] Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *The Journal of American History (Bloomington, Ind.)* 88, no. 1 (2001): 129–44, https://doi.org/10.2307/2674921.

who they were as political actors. The primary sources for Dorothy Day's biography came from Dorothy Day's two autobiographies, written in 1939 and 1952, and the *Dorothy Day Papers,* comprised of 21.4 cubic feet of diaries, notes, correspondence, manuscripts, unpublished works, newspaper clippings, articles, and Day's FBI file.

These papers are part of the approximately 200 cubic foot Dorothy Day Catholic Worker Collection in the Marquette University Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which has grown significantly since 2000 when the Vatican granted permission to open Day's "cause" for sainthood. While submissions from donors who wish to avoid the controversy over Day's anarchism, which some Catholics believe precludes her eligibility for canonization, were not as useful for this study, others that were included are the *Peter Maurin Papers*, other Catholic Worker associates, and *Catholic Worker* newspaper editions from 1933 to 1944.[94]

The primary sources for Pesotta's biography came from the 2527 linear feet of ILGWU Records, held at the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Martin P. Catherwood Library at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. This archive includes the *Rose Pesotta Papers*, Elaine Leeder Collection, the sources Leeder used in Pesotta's biography. This archive also includes extensive correspondence and

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[94] Day, *From Union Square to Rome*, *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1952); Dorothy Day, *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2008); *Dorothy Day Papers, Peter Maurin Papers,* and *Catholic Worker,* Dorothy Day Catholic - Worker Collection, Raynor Memorial Libraries, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

documentation from key officers of central and local union offices, memorabilia, audiovisual materials and photographs.[95]

Other primary sources used for this thesis include Pesotta's two autobiographies and the *Rose Pesotta Papers*, from the Manuscripts and Archives Division at the New York Public Library, 23.5 linear feet (47 boxes) of documents from 1916 to 1969, including diaries, notes and speeches by Pesotta and others, pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers, clippings, correspondence with family and others, such as Emma Goldman, Powers Hapgood, anarchist refugees, Mollie Steimer and Simin Flechine, papers related to her work on behalf of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, and Spanish Republicans, as well as Spanish Civil War, anarchist, antifascist, and Polish revolutionary posters.[96]

All applicable protocols and policies of Harvard University's Institutional Review Board for the use of human subjects in research has been complied with in this thesis research.

Overview

In the following four chapters I show how the seed of a workers' education movement grew out of the Jewish immigrant ghetto in New York City in the mid-1910s among a group of radical female garment workers, who brought their idealistic vision of

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[95] Leeder, *The Gentle General*, ILGWU Records, 5928; *Rose Pesotta Papers*, Elaine Leeder Collection, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, Martin P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.
[96] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*., *Days of Our Lives* (Boston: Excelsior, c.1958); *Rose Pesotta Papers*, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

American democracy with them from eastern and southern Europe. As the political landscape changed, becoming increasingly threatening during the 1920s and 1930s, we see this movement respond by melding Pragmatic philosophy with its syndicalist vision. As the movement grew, the changes this approach facilitated in labor unionizing methods, ultimately led to the transformation of syndicalism into the CIO.

One of the complicating factors in studying anarchism during this period, particularly with the rising influence of Pragmatist philosophy is how anarchists, and radicals in general, chose to identify themselves. In the era before World War I, charismatic founders of anarchism, such as Peter Kropotkin had given the word *anarchist* cachet by coopting it to represent social justice and order, rather than chaos. But this began to change, especially after the Red Scare, as many radials, including anarchists began to view violent direction action, such as the "propaganda of the deed," as backward and ineffective.[97]

Rather, they came to see themselves as a more modern type of crusader for social justice. Thus, during the 1930s when radicalism was at a high point, ironically, even those who considered themselves syndicalists, and rejected all political affiliations and dogmatic creeds, increasingly eschewed the word anarchist altogether, (as was the case with A. J. Muste). In other words, using the word anarchist to describe social anarchism went out of vogue.

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[97] "Since the eighteenth century, at least, the word anarchy has signified a condition of chaos, disorder, and personal vulnerability owing to the absence of a center of power capable of enforcing rules; it is still frequently used in this way today. In 1840, however, a French radical named Pierre-Joseph Proudhon reclaimed the term anarchy in a fashion similar to the ways in which the word queer and certain racial slurs have, in recent decades, been adopted and given positive connotations by the groups of people they were meant to denigrate." Cornell, *Unruly Equality,* 8.

This helped to facilitate collaboration between various groups across the Old Left, but it makes it difficult to clearly distinguish between them. But because Pesotta consistently identified as an anarchist, while engaging with all the other groups that made up the Old Left, she gives us an opportunity to see how radicalism in general was updated during the 1930s, and the contributions of anarchism to those changes.

In Chapter II, I follow Pesotta in the immigrant anarchist community, and in the ILGWU between 1913, when she first arrived in America at the apogee of the Old Left, until 1922 when it entered its nadir from 1922 until 1933. Pesotta shows us how a workers' education program, founded by anarchist women and rooted in syndicalism, grew into a movement, which served as a counterweight to the splintering of the Old Left during the 1920s. Its emphasis on education and de-emphasis on violent direct action, which dovetailed with Pragmatic philosophy, appealed to radicals, who sought more effective ways of countering the backlash against them at the time.

Pragmatism allowed them to meld the idealism of anarchist syndicalism with the realism of the changing conditions surrounding labor movement engagement at the time. As a result, workers' education evolved in response to the successes and failures of labor activists. For example, in 1921, the movement began to develop labor leaders through the Labor Colleges, notably Brookwood, which used the labor movement itself as a practicum for students, who were expected to participate in it. Thus, the school provided opportunities for students and faculty to creatively develop new tactics in real time.

In fact, this was considered the most important aspect of the learning process in workers' education. Thereby pragmatic labor activists learned not only from the successes of the optimistic unionizing surge, which occurred on the heels of the Russian

revolution, but also from the devastating setbacks that reversed those gains during the Red Scare. Thus the movement produced resources, during this period, which proved invaluable to the labor movement later on.

As Pragmatic philosophy increasingly held sway in the movement, education, and methods seen as being more "modern," such as negotiating with employers and settling strikes with signed agreements, such as the Protocol of Peace, increasingly supplanted violent direct action.

For most of the 1920s, Brookwood served as a model for unifying the left, and it facilitated the development of an extensive network of left leaning radicals. Although the communist incursion reduced the anarchist ranks by about half, early in the 1920s, pragmatic anarchists still often collaborated with Communists, which helped radicalism to keep spreading in the unions.[98] However, as the movement's success attracted the attention of Communists in Moscow, who endorsed, and then adopted the concept, it would increasingly become a center of contention in the latter part of the decade.

In Chapter III, I track Pesotta's journey through the existential crises which anarchists faced from 1924, with the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act, through the depths of the Great Depression, until NIRA was enacted in 1933. By following her as she interacted with these various groups, we see the implications of the different ways each group dealt with the crises which radicals faced at the time. The immigrant anarchist community, which included Pesotta attempted to unify its disparate groups, and to finally

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[98] Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 172, https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/34/monograph/book/40753, nt., 29, Joseph J. Cohen, *Yidish-anarkhistishe bavegung*, 420; Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 59.

expand its base of support among native born Americans by creating an English language publication, *The Road to Freedom*. However, because the only truly unifying topic in this community was the Sacco & Vanzetti case, it ultimately failed to articulate a coherent message and their movement continued to decline.

Although anarchists had cooperated with Communists, and would again in the future, they would do so to a lesser degree, as they became increasingly wary of the Communists motivations and methods. As Comintern became increasingly aggressive with its infiltration of the unions, anarchists, in the ILGWU, including Pesotta, entered into an uneasy alliance with the Socialist Party (SP) in a war to keep the Communists from taking over the unions. This not only cost them what had been a promising movement to gain democratic representation on the General Executive Board (GEB) of the ILGWU, but it also decimated the ILGWU.

Pesotta attended Brookwood from 1926 to 1928, during which time the school tried to maintain its nonpartisan policy. However, in her final school year, conservative students who the school had admitted—despite the fact that they were ideologically opposed to the radicalism of the school, and sought to undermine it—succeeded in doing so. By this point, the AFL, which had come to dominate the Worker's Education Board (WEB)—which was seen at the time as the most critical medium for exerting influence in the labor movement—prompted by these students, used its power to expel Brookwood from the organization in 1929.

At the same time that the AFL accused the school of its Communists leanings, the Communists, ironically accused it of being "class-collaborationist."[99] While the only real victors to emerge from the 1920s were the employers, who successfully deployed the "American Plan," which gave credence to their company-run unions, the school nevertheless proved resilient despite its disaffiliation from the WEB. And its radical students and alumni were increasingly playing important roles in their unions.

In Chapter IV, Pesotta shows us how NIRA signaled a turning point for the anarchist movement, as the rising influence of pragmatists cross-faded with the accelerating decline of traditional anarchism. The act facilitated the rise in prominence of pragmatic anarchists in the labor unions, most notably Pesotta herself. This precipitated a contentious debate between Pesotta, who argued for the pragmatic approach to anarchism, and traditionalist, Marcus Graham, over the core anarchist principle of antistatism. This conflict was complicated by underlying tensions over the challenges which pragmatic anarchists, comprised of many women, posed to traditional cultural and gender norms. As a result, the anarchist movement irreversibly split at this point.

In Chapter V Pesotta demonstrates the benefits of the pragmatic approach for anarchists, as well as the consequences they experienced due to the concessions which it required. She played an important role in helping the CIO gain union representation for millions of industrial workers, independent of the AFL, thereby significantly improving their working conditions, which was unprecedented since the demise of the IWW. By doing so, she also helped attract anarchists from the younger generation to this labor

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[99] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 108.

movement, even though they had previously been resistant to it. And she finally reached native born workers with the anarchists' socialist message. But she also increasingly adapted her approach, and made consequential compromises, in order to do so.

Pesotta urged union members to allow Communists to remain in the CIO, even though anarchists, including Pesotta herself, had previously battled with them for attempting to control labor unions worldwide from Moscow, even to the point of nearly destroying the unions. And, while nearly all of the anarchist community was rallying to aid the Spanish Republicans, we see Pesotta focused primarily on unionizing native born American industrial workers, who had typically been resistant to the socialist ideals of "Brookwooders" in the past.

For Pesotta, this involved using Brookwood's American approach, which included showing an appreciation for the cultural traditions of American born workers, and using Americanized symbols of unionizing such as the union label. But significantly, she also chose to refer to herself as a revolutionary, rather than as an anarchist. In 1936, during the first major strike for the CIO at the Goodyear plant in Akron, Ohio, we see this approach lead to a new dynamic between Brookwooders, and native born Americans, who finally embrace these ideals by uniting in solidarity and collectively demanding democratic input into their own work lives.

This approach did allow her to reach American born industrial workers with Brookwooders' socialist vision of creating democratic workplaces. However, it also contributed to the disappearance of anarchism in America. These native born striking workers came to see this vision as being rooted in the egalitarian ideals of the American revolution, rather than the immigrant socialism which was foundational to the ideology of

Brookwooders. In both the Goodyear strike, and the General Motors strike which followed the next year, we see native born Americans celebrate their victories as if it was the fourth of July.

Chapter II.

Becoming a Pragmatic Anarchist, 1913-1921

Chapter II follows Rose Pesotta from the time she arrived in New York City, in a wave of immigration, at the height of the Old Left, until 1921 when she attended Bryn Mawr's summer school for women workers. Her journey shows us how a group of anarchistic women garment workers created an education program, with roots in IWW syndicalism, which grew into a movement during this period. The program's emphasis on education and nonviolent direct action, which dovetailed with pragmatic philosophy, increasingly appealed to radicals as the backlash against them escalated from 1919 to 1921. As a result, negotiating with employers, and settling strikes with signed agreements, like the Protocol of Peace, came to be seen as "modern" approaches to unionizing.

The movement inherited a nonpartisan political stance from syndicalism, which helped to unite radicals with various ideological perspectives from across the left leaning spectrum. This anarchist inspired orientation came to serve as a counterweight to the splintering of the Old Left, which began at the turn of the decade. In an increasingly unstable political landscape for radicals in general, the movement's focus on updating methods for engaging in labor activism based on practical realities became increasingly attractive. And as these new methods came to supplant violent direct action, the unions began to look more like the CIO, and less like the IWW.

Apogee of the Old Left

Rose Pesotta grew up in a socialist Bundist family in the Pale of Jewish Settlement in tsarist Russia, and came to New York City in a wave of immigration, which included an influx of many radicals who had fled to America after the failure of the 1905 Russian revolution.[100] Rose's parents had arranged for her to be married without her knowledge or consent, and she had seen America as a way out. "That is not enough," she later recalled believing. "In America things are different." "A decent middle-class girl can work without disgrace."[101]

Rose's older sister Esther had recruited her at ten years old into the revolutionary movement as a carrier of leaflets and allowed her to listen in at secret "reading circles."[102] Rose later described herself then as a "fledgling of the underground," who devoured the publications, and listened avidly to all the speakers, "chewing green apples or berries and linking up any information gained there with what I had read in the garret." This was the attic of their home, where revolutionary literature was hidden, and which she clandestinely found and voraciously read. By fifteen years old Rose was leading "reading circles" herself.[103]

Rose not only learned of Peter Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, she also became aware of current events, including worker uprisings, which

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[100] "The Bund was first comprised primarily of intellectuals and students," but by the turn of the century the movement had spread beyond its early "educational circles," to the Jewish working classes. "Between 1897 and 1904 Jewish workers in Russia and Poland staged more than two thousand strikes, many of them with the support of the Bund, the core of the Russian Jewish socialist movement." "Bund members smuggled contraband literature, held clandestine meetings, and organized demonstrations." Susan A Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2019), 177.
[101] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 9.
[102] Pesotta, *Days of Our Lives*, 69-71.
[103] Pesotta, *Days of Our Lives*, 69-71.

had been censored in the press, and of countless heroines who distributed propaganda, ran printing presses, smuggled arms and fought for social reforms in Russia. She dreamed of becoming a revolutionary woman like Sophia Perovskaya, Sophia Bardina, Essie Helfman, Vera Figner, Maria Spirindonova or Catherine Breshkovskaya, who had abandoned their well-cushioned lives to "go to the people."[104]

Rose also learned that Russia was not the only place of social upheaval, America too had its rebellions, but she was amazed at the freedom of dissent allowed to Americans She "never ceased to marvel that these men and women wrote freely and talked, taught, and lectured, from public platforms, in schools, and in churches. People came openly to their meetings and listened to them, and the police did not seize and take them all to an American counterpart of Siberia."[105] She learned of George Washington and the American Revolution, its Declaration of Independence, and Constitution; of Abraham Lincoln, John Brown, and the war for the abolition of slavery; the battles for women's rights; and the eight-hour day, and more.

After Esther emigrated to America, she wrote to her parents in 1909 about "a strike with twenty thousand girls like herself, all shirtwaist makers," who protested "wage-cuts and unjust working conditions." Rose's "father read aloud" how Esther "had attended a mass meeting where the girls took things in their own hands by voting a 'walkout' in the whole shirtwaist industry of New York,"[106] yet another display of the dissent tolerated in America, which made freedom even possible for young women.[107]

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[104] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 22, 9.
[105] Pesotta, *Days of Our Lives*, 181-185.
[106] Pesotta, *Days of Our Lives*, 169.
[107] Pesotta, *Days of Our Lives*, 217.

Rose saw America as a vast country populated by "all sorts of people" who had freedom to pursue an education, to work, and to participate in a democratic society without retribution. She recalled thinking, "What a wonderful country is America, holding out a welcome to those who, like my sister, want to live in a free world! Everybody can earn a living there." Rose described what she understood of American democracy then:

> A democratic government permitted everybody to get ahead in life, everybody who was willing to work hard. Every four years the people elected their leader, a President who was dressed as plainly as any American male, who traveled about the country without fear, and with whom anybody could shake hands or speak…There were no classes in that free republic. All citizens were equal. There was no discrimination against Jews, and Jewish young people, if they wished, could attend any of the higher institutions of learning in full equality with the Gentiles. Jews could live in any part of the country and own land anywhere in it.[108]

In 1910, 14.9 percent of the U.S. population was foreign-born and by 1920, approximately twenty-five million immigrants made up nearly a quarter of the population. In New York City, 41 percent of the five million inhabitants were foreign-born. Two million of them were Jews, who dominated the garment industry, and 44 percent were women.[109]

Socialism, and its radical anarchist subculture, thrived in the harsh realities that these immigrants encountered in America's densely populated immigrant ghettoes. As Fannia Cohn, Director of Education for the ILGWU explained,

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[108] Pesotta, *Days of Our Lives*, 165.

[109] Elaine J. Leeder, *The Gentle General: Rose Pesotta, Anarchist and Labor Organizer*, SUNY Series in American Labor History (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 14, 22-25; Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 18.

> Many girls came here from a revolutionary background. They were struck by the atmosphere of freedom here. But then they were plunged into the sweatshop. The sweatshop was not only a physical condition, but moral and anti-spiritual. They found there was no Bill of Rights off the street, in the shop. They were thrown out if they mention the Bill of Rights in the shop.[110]

Socialism, and anarchism rose side by side with the labor unions. The 1909 strike of 20,000 garment workers, which Esther had written home about, led to significant growth in ILGWU membership. Local 25, where many of the radical women who led the strike gravitated, had just one hundred members and four dollars in its treasury in 1909, but when Pesotta joined it in 1914, it had more than 10,000 members.[111]

Historian Melvyn Dubofsky described how the Socialist Party (SP) courted the labor unions at the time, with some success. Morris Hillquit, "the nation's most prominent party theorist" (and an AFL partisan) saw them as "the best fields for propaganda in so far as they are organized on the basis of class struggle." From 1909 to 1916, the SP provided support to the ILGWU unions in various ways, such as providing "meeting halls, funds, food, and counsel" during industrial conflicts.[112] In 1914 "both the [ILGWU] and the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union at their annual conventions endorsed" the party. In 1916, "two recently established garment trades' unions," the ACW, and the International Fur Workers' Union, declared their support for the

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[110] Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl,* 179.
[111] On March 25, 1911, The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in Greenwich Village, New York, one of the deadliest industrial disasters in U.S. history, killed 146 immigrant Italian and Jewish garment workers. 123 women and girls and 23 men died either by the fire, smoke inhalation, or by falling to their deaths. Because the doors to the stairwells and exits were locked, a common practice at the time to prevent workers from taking unauthorized breaks and to reduce theft, many of the workers could not escape and jumped from the windows. "The fire led to legislation requiring improved factory conditions and spurred the ILGWU's growth." Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*,1837, https://sites.americanjewisharchives.org/exhibits/aje/details.php?id=694&page=1.
[112] Melvyn Dubofsky, "Success and Failure of Socialism in New York City, 1900-1918: A Case Study," *Labor History* 9, no. 3 (1968): 361–75, https://doi.org/10.1080/00236566808584048.

organization "which stands loyal to the working class, and whose aim is the emancipation of the working class from wage slavery."[113]

While SP candidates did find increasing support in Jewish districts at the time, voting patterns do not provide the best guide to political culture, especially given the large numbers of nonvoting members, such as women and newly arrived immigrants, Furthermore, supporting Socialist candidates was not necessarily an indication of a commitment to radical ideology. The SP competed with more traditional political parties and with the still powerful forces of religious orthodoxy. As Dubofsky points out, New York Socialists had to temper their rhetoric to compete with "reform" candidates.[114] Although neither the SP nor socialism ever fully dominated the political life of the Jewish immigrant community, the socialist movement produced what Dubofsky called a "vital minority."

The hub for this community was the anarchist Ferrer Center where Pesotta soon began attending classes, lectures and social events, along with the three to four hundred other immigrant members and their native-born American teachers. According to Paul Avrich, Kropotkin, was the most widely read and venerated figure in the anarchist movement. "His portrait was hung in anarchist clubs…and a number of anarchist groups adopted his name."[115] Anarchism—a favorite doctrine of the literary and artistic avant-garde—"socialism, syndicalism, revolution, birth control, free love, Cubism, Futurism,

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[113] Dubofsky, "Success and Failure of Socialism in New York City, 1900-1918."
[114] Dubofsky, "The Success and Failure of Socialism in New York City."
[115] Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States*, Course Book, Princeton Legacy Library 309 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 136.

Freudianism, feminism, the New Woman, the New Theater, direct action, and the general strike were all intensely discussed."[116]

The vibrancy and enthusiasm for learning in this immigrant community drew a remarkable series of talented native-born American college-educated dropouts to teach them, when such mingling was still rare, in an effort to join intellectuals with workers in the common cause of building a new society. These instructors came mostly from middle-class backgrounds and were "dissatisfied with the world of their fathers, and repelled by industrial capitalism with its slums and sweatshops and *degradation* of the human spirit."[117] The English instructor at the center said of the students at the time: "To these recent arrivals, hungry for education and culture, the school was a genuine people's university, one deeply rooted in the masses."[118]

Scholars have found that for radical Jewish immigrant women, education served as an essential means of resistance to the social stratifications which not only placed

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[116] The center was named for Francisco Ferrer, founder of rationalist schools in Spain, who became a martyr for anarchists worldwide after his mock trial and execution in 1909. Modern schools were founded in Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, China, and Japan. But "the most extensive Ferrer movement, arose in the U.S., where it endured for more than fifty years." In 1914, the Ferrer center was the hub of "a loose federation of anarchist schools for both children and adults," and of centers of political and social radicalism. Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*, 33, 128.

[117] Nearly all the Ferrer Association and the Ferrer Modern School leaders came from native American backgrounds. Of the founders, only Joseph J. Cohen was an immigrant (and he entered the movement three years after it began). Leonard D. Abbott, who effectively headed the association was from an old well-to-do New England family. Harry Kelly was born in Missouri of Cornish immigrant father and a mother who was descended from the Calverts of Colonial Maryland. The largest financial donor to the Ferrer school in its earliest years was Alden Freeman of East Orange, New Jersey, who participated in ceremonies in honor of his early New England ancestors. "Of the seven principles between 1911 and 1920, four came to the school with B. A. degrees from Columbia, Harvard or Yale (in one case with a Harvard Ph.D. as well), and a fifth, Will Durant, soon went on to complete a Columbia Ph.D." Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*, 115, 137, Veysey and Paul Avrich Collection (Library of Congress) DLC, *The Communal Experience; Anarchist and Mystical Counter-Cultures in America* (New York, Harper & Row, 1973), 77-86, http://archive.org/details/communalexperien0000veys.

[118]Avrich, *The Modern School Movement,* 111.

businessmen in a dominant position in society, but also religious scholars.[119] "A 1904 study … on the Lower East Side [found that] there were 8,616 male students in traditional Jewish supplementary schools, but only 361 girls." But as the Jewish community became aware that middle-class Americans saw women as "more sensitive to religion than men, and expected mothers to teach moral values to their children," they reconsidered the importance of educating Jewish girls so they could transfer "Jewish identity to the younger generation." By 1917 "one-third of the students enrolled in Jewish schools in New York City were female."[120]

It is important to point out here, that although immigrant Jewish women resisted gender divisions, their activism was generally centered on class consciousness, rather than gender. As historian Susan Glenn showed, they lacked a cultural construct which allowed them to claim that they were acting as morally exalted females on behalf of society. Thus, they did not have the sense of moral exceptionalism that undergirded the activism of the reformists, which had been central to the development of the women's movement.[121]

Pesotta had accelerated her own English language education by going to the New York Public Library in Harlem and reading her favorite Russian authors, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Gorky, and Dostoyevsky, first in Russian, and then again in English while it was fresh in her mind. She also read the daily newspapers and magazines and picked up useful phrases. Within a few months she taught herself English, a fifth language after

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[119] Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 209-210.
[120] Paula Hyman, "Eastern European Immigrants in the United States," Jewish Women's Archive, accessed October 5, 2022, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/eastern-european-immigrants-in-united-states.
[121] Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 213-214.

Russian, Ukrainian, Hebrew, and Yiddish.[122] She soon became politically engaged by taking on an increasingly active role in ILGWU local 25, by leading workshops at the center, and by attending Ferrer Association events, such as Emma Goldman's anti-conscription lecture at Madison Square Garden in 1914.[123]

This was before the Russian Revolution and America's entry into the war, when anarchists, syndicalists, and socialists mingled together on friendly terms and it was still possible for diverse types of radicals to find common ground for discussion, such as anticapitalism, antimilitarism, and antiphilistinism, even if they were more theoretical, than practical. These radicals generally "did not take a dogmatic or exclusivist stand on either aesthetic or social issues and imagined themselves at the dawn of an epoch-making revolution, cultural as well as social and political."[124] As Margaret Sanger expressed it:

> A religion without a name was spreading over the country. The converts were liberals, socialists, anarchists, revolutionists of all schools. They were as fixed in their faith in the coming revolution as ever any Primitive Christian in the immediate establishment of the Kingdom of God. It was a final burst of optimism before the crushing disenchantment of the postwar era.[125]

Indeed, scholars have found that socialism filled an emotional and philosophical void for a militant minority of Jewish immigrants as they abandoned traditional religious orthodoxy, and adopted socialism as their touchstone for social justice. For some, socialism supplanted religious orthodoxy.[126] Socialism like the Jewish faith itself, says Moses Rischin, had a messianic quality and can be seen as "Judaism secularized."[127]

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[122] Pesotta, *Days of Our Lives*, 246–7.
[123] Leeder, *The Gentle General*, 24-25, Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*, 128.
[124] Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*, 128.
[125] Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*, 129.
[126] Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl,* 180.
[127] Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl,* 179.

Rose's sister Esther said of her sister *"*Emma [Goldman] helped Rose to believe in anarchism like a rabbi believes in God."[128]

However, as conservative socialists vied with syndicalists for the loyalty of labor, the harmony in the Old Left grew increasingly tenuous. This was illustrated in the hostile dynamic between Hillquit, and IWW leader Bill Haywood, on January 11, 1912, shortly after Haywood was elected to the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the SP and the two of them engaged in a public debate in New York City's Cooper Union. Haywood attacked Hillquit for abandoning the class struggle by supporting the Protocol of Peace,[129] declaring that the Socialists ought to try "a little sabotage in the right place at the proper time."[130] Hillquit said his only response was that "A mere change of structural

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[128] Leeder interview, *The Gentle General, 108*. See also Gerald Sorin. *The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals, 1880-1920*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. Sorin found that radicals were "three times as likely as the overall Jewish population who had lived in the Pale to be the children of rabbis, cantors, or teachers of Hebrew or Talmud." Far from being the marginal personalities that some sociologists have portrayed them as, Sorin believes the "radical immigrants were creatively attempting to forge a new Jewish identity that would combine traditional moral concerns with class consciousness in an urban industrial context. He presents numerous examples of the connection between Jewish ethno-religious values and support for the Socialist party and militant union activities in the early twentieth century. Particularly valuable is the chapter dealing with radical Jewish women, who had to deal with the competing claims of feminism and socialism and significant cultural prescriptions about the proper role and place of women." See also Gerald Sorin, "Rose Pesotta in the Far West the Triumphs and Travails of a Jewish Woman Labor Organizer," *Western States Jewish History* 28, no. 2 (January 1996): 133–43, http://ezpprod1.hul.harvard.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=31h&AN=44838800&site=ehost-live&scope=site

[129] The September 1910 "Protocol of Peace," was the first in a series of agreements, mediated by future Supreme Court Justice, Louis D. Brandeis, between union officials and manufacturers over a three year period, which banned all strikes and lockouts and established arbitration boards to mediate grievances. The Protocol was crafted mainly by "Jewish men on both sides of the bargaining table, manufacturers and the union leaders," whose workers were about seventy percent women, also mostly Jewish. Although the Protocol unionized masses of garment workers, thus "making the ILGWU a bulwark of the new unionism," it eliminated the means of resistance used by female garment workers to achieve this victory, and "excluded them from future negotiations." "'Protocol of Peace.' September 2, 1910. Rare Documents File and Louis Marshall Papers (MS-359), American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. | Significant Documents Illuminating the American Jewish Experience | American Jewish Archives," accessed September 20, 2022.

[130] The SP voted to recall Haywood, by a margin of 2 to 1, in February 1913 for his militant comments and his opposition to electoral politics. Thousands of IWW members and their sympathizers then left the SP. Norma Fain Pratt, *Morris Hillquit: A Political History of an American Jewish Socialist*, Contributions in Political Science No. 20 (Westport.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 106.

forms would not revolutionize the American labor movement as claimed by our extreme industrialists," thereby ignoring the protocol issue which Haywood had raised."[131]

Garment workers let it be known who they favored in the debate. On January 5, 1913, the ILGWU announced to them that additional protocol agreements had been made with their employers without their knowledge, and informed them that they could not vote on whether a general strike would be called. Thousands responded by smashing down the doors of the New York Hippodrome.[132] In St. Mark's Place workers jeered and stomped their feet, and four thousand Italian women rioted at Cooper Union. Others called the protocol a "frame-up" and protested by sitting down on Third Avenue and stopping traffic.[133]

The women militants were angry not only because their drive to democratize the union had been crushed but because the protocol was a mixed blessing. It facilitated organizing (Local 25 shot up to twenty-three thousand members after it was signed), guaranteed a minimum wage for every job in the trade, and gave the Joint Board of Sanitary Control greater power to ensure safe, healthy working conditions in the shops. But it also institutionalized a sex-based division of labor in which only men could be hired to fill the highest paid positions and only women could be placed in the lowest-paid jobs. Further, the protocol guaranteed men higher wages than women even in jobs open to both. Union recognition and a guaranteed minimum wage unquestionably improved

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[131] Morris Hillquit, "What shall the Attitude of the SP Be Toward the Economic Organization of the Workers?" Haywood Debate in *Hillquit Papers*, quoted in Pratt, *Morris Hillquit*, 106.
[132] Orleck, "Part Two. Working Women in Rebellion: The Emergence of Industrial Feminism, 1909-1920," 75-76.
[133] Orleck, "Part Two. Working Women in Rebellion: The Emergence of Industrial Feminism, 1909-1920," 75-76.

the day-to-day conditions under which most shirtwaist and dressmakers labored. But it drastically limited the power of the average worker.[134]

Union members ultimately agreed—resentfully—to support the protocol by a slim majority. Nearly half the women strikers delivered a no-confidence vote to ILGWU leaders. Shop-floor militants angrily said that they "preferred to deal with employers rather than their own members." But the officers ignored the protests, asserting that there was "no real discontent among the workers, only a plot by the IWW."[135]

Workers' Education

This is the climate in which an ILGWU workers' education program emerged the following year in Local 25. Historian Susan Wong described the events, and the motivations of the actors involved, which led to its creation. "Brandeis, the Boston attorney and later justice of the Supreme Court who had negotiated [the]… 'Protocol of Peace,' insisted that the ILGWU conduct an educational campaign to win workers away from the 'radical' ideas they had acquired as a result of 'a generation of miseducation.'"[136] He sought to prevent future strikes, such as those in 1909 and 1910, and make the Protocol work, by educating workers that "arbitration and conciliation, rather than class struggle, were the basis of American unionism." The delegates to the

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[134] Orleck, "Part Two. Working Women in Rebellion: The Emergence of Industrial Feminism, 1909-1920," 75-76.
[135] Orleck, "Part Two. Working Women in Rebellion: The Emergence of Industrial Feminism, 1909-1920," 75-76.
[136] Susan Stone Wong, "From Soul to Strawberries: The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and Workers' Education, 1914-1950," in *Sisterhood and Solidarity: Workers' Education for Women, 1914 - 1984*, by Joyce L. Kornbluh and Mary E. Frederickson (Philadelphia: Temple Univ, 1984), 37–74, https://temple.manifoldapp.org/read/sisterhood-and-solidarity-workers-education-for-women-1914-1984/section/f2469c6a-a4c0-4f84-8079-d13200c7a8b4.

1914 ILGWU convention agreed, “decreeing that the time had come ‘to dwell particularly upon the more solid and preparatory work of education and not to devote much time to the mere superficial forms of agitation and propaganda which have been the main features of our educational work in the past.’”[137]

However, the women who had been most active organizers in Local 25, now demanded that the union be something more than a business organization. They insisted that it have a “soul” as well as a “body,” meaning that they wanted it to provide for the “intellectual” and “emotional” life of its members.[138] So, while “ILGWU President Benjamin Schlesinger initiated a joint program with the Rand School to provide classes in trade union history, methods of organization, and English,” local 25’s GEB laid plans for their own program instead.[139] They recruited Barnard College History Professor, Juliet Poyntz, a self-described suffragist and feminist, and a member of the Daughters of

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[137] Wong, “From Soul to Strawberries: The International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union and Workers’ Education, 1914-1950,” 42; Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, Inc., 1924), 484-85.
[138] Wong, “From Soul to Strawberries: The International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union and Workers’ Education, 1914-1950,” 39, 45, 59, citing Juliet Stuart Poyntz, "The Unity Movement—the Soul of a Union,” *Life and Labor* 7 (June 1917): 96.
[139] Wong. The Rand School of Social Science, founded by the SP, had a comprehensive program of adult lectures and classes based on socialist thought, but to the young radicals in Local 25 the school was seen as dry and conservative compared to the Ferrer Center. Another possible reason for their resistance is that Schlesinger, who was seen by many in the radical rank-and-file as conservative, and was not well liked among them. Avrich, *The Modern School Movement*, 128.

the Revolution, to create the ILGWU-ED.[140] Jewish immigrant, Fannia Cohn, was assigned to collaborate with Poyntz and to recruit workers into the program.[141]

Poyntz and Cohn created a program based on their understanding of the needs of these women. An important factor contributing to this demand was the repulsion nearly all women felt toward the saloons, and other exclusively male enclaves, where union business was conducted.[142] And another was that education to Jewish immigrant women had a special meaning. They viewed it as a tool in the struggle for integration into civic life, a means to become, in immigrant Anzia Yezierska's words, "a person." The quest for education was not limited to Russian Jews, but the cultural orientation of Jewish women figured prominently in the push for expanded union-sponsored courses.[143] Wong found that Poyntz designed the Unity House, a mountain retreat for workers and their families, with these factors in mind. She described it as a "center of spiritual inspiration," a place where:

> The girls grew to realize that a trade union has a very powerful influence beyond the purely economic field. Ties of friendship made then held. Devotion to the ideal of trade unionism acquired then strengthened many a Unity girl to continue

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[140] Born in 1886 to a middle-class family in Omaha, Nebraska, Poyntz was awarded a fellowship by the General Federation of Women's Clubs to study at Oxford and the London School of Economics. She joined the Socialist Party in 1909, and besides teaching history at Barnard and working with the ILGWU, she headed the Rand School's Labor Research Department. Poyntz became radicalized in the ILGWU, eventually joining the Socialist Party. She sided with the communists in the early internecine conflicts over Comintern's incursion in America. In 1934, she went to work in the anti-Nazi Soviet underground, but went missing during Stalin's purges in 1936. Pesotta also believed the Communists were behind Poyntz' disappearance. Some friends thought Poyntz tried to get out. Allegedly, she confessed as much to Carlo Tresca who himself was assassinated in 1943, a still unsolved murder. During the peak of anti-communist hysteria Poyntz became a pawn in hearings and court cases. Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 35; Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers,* 490; "International Ladies Garment Workers Union," Jewish Women's Archive, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/international-ladies-garment-workers-union, Denise Lynn, "The Disappearance of Juliet Stuart Poyntz," *Nursing Clio*, June 13, 2019, https://nursingclio.org/2019/06/13/the-disappearance-of-juliet-stuart-poyntz/.

[141] Cohn became the second, and only female Vice President on the ILGWU GEB from 1916 to 1926. Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers,* 487-88.

[142] Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers*, 485.

[143] Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl,* 218-222.

> her struggle as a chairman of her shop against an ignorant and deceiving employer. The union has found a soul.[144]

In 1917, Poyntz designed the first Unity Center, located in a public school building along the same lines. Union members could attend shop meetings, "join friends for a cup of coffee and a roll in the cafeteria, consult a nurse, listen to a concert, dance or exercise in the gym, take remedial courses, or attend a lecture in Yiddish on the history of the ILGWU. Poyntz realized what such centers could mean to young garment workers. She wrote:"

> The Unity Center seemed to the workers not a public school, but their own home, a home where they found cheer and familiar faces, a beautiful, clean, well ventilated home, well lighted and hung with beautiful pictures, a great change from the dirty, ill ventilated meeting rooms, often above a saloon, where trade unions most usually meet for want of a better place. The very entrance into the public school of a trade union raises it from the position of a social outlaw to that of a vital and recognized social group…It provided a possibility of growth and development of the body and of the mind of the individual worker through his collective organization."[145]

In 1914, when the program began, Pesotta attended night classes in history, politics, physical fitness, and art, and participated in group discussions, which she said helped her develop poise and self-confidence. By 1920, six of New York City's public schools served as "Unity Centers" for the ILGWU.[146] She also attended classes, concerts, plays, and recreational activities at the Unity House.[147]

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[144] Wong, "From Soul to Strawberries: The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and Workers' Education, 1914-1950," 45, note 14; Poyntz, "The Unity Movement—the Soul of a Union, Life and Labor 7 (June 1917): 96; Fannia Cohn, "Unity House," American Federationist 32 (July 1925): 534-36.
[145] Wong, "From Soul to Strawberries: The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and Workers' Education, 1914-1950," 45, note 15; Poyntz, "The Unity Movement—the Soul of a Union," p. 97.
[146] Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers,* 338.
[147] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 12.

The concept appealed not just to the women of Local 25, but to other constituencies as well. For instance, three other ILGWU locals, which were predominately male, created their own programs within the first year or so. Prompted by this activity, the ILGWU created a comprehensive educational program for the entire International in 1916, appointing Cohn as secretary and funding it with $5,000, and in 1918 it renewed its support by doubling its appropriation to $10,000.[148] The convention suggested in its stated objectives that it sought to address Brandeis' past concerns. "The aim of the program would be to enlighten" "the great masses of our organization upon general labor questions" and "on the functions, aims, possibilities and limitations of a trade organization." The report continued,

> They [ILGWU members] are to be taught about the contents of our existing agreements with employers, their rights as well as their obligations under the agreement. In short, this part of the educational system is to enlighten our members upon all matters concerning labor, and make of them a well-disciplined and reliable body of men and women who cannot be misled and incited by anybody who desires to do so.[149]

Buoyed by the movement's success and the revolution in Russia, anarchist members of the ILGWU became increasingly active in their fight for democratic rights in the union. In 1917 Pesotta participated with other members of Local 25 to setup a shop delegate league, which sought democratic representation for rank-and-file members on

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[148] Three male dominated locals created education programs between 1915 and 1916. In 1917, the United Cloth Hat and Cap Maker's Union developed a comprehensive educational program and the Amalgamated set up similar programs in the men's clothing industry. "Progressive unionists and independent radicals throughout the U.S. supported workers' education, especially the needle and clothing trades, but also the machinists, mine workers and railroad brotherhoods, and central labor councils." By 1920, six of New York City's public schools served as ILGWU "Unity Centers," Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 12, Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers,* 338, Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 82.

[149] Wong, "From Soul to Strawberries: The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and Workers' Education, 1914-1950," 42 citing ILGWU, Proceedings (1916), 197-201; Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers,* 488-490.

the GEB. Pesotta wrote in her autobiography that she was proud to have been present at the founding of "A new movement Workers' Education…designed to provide education for union rank-and-file members, to strengthen their effectiveness and develop leaders among them."[150] She believed this had been an essential element of the modern labor movement: "labor's gains in the economic field, mental discipline and knowledge of history and economics become[s] indispensable for unionists living and working in a democracy."[151]

However, not all workers viewed the program in the same way that Pesotta did at the time. In fact, the freedom that the program allowed individuals, and individual groups, in pursuit of their educational goals, created a dangerous dilemma for the labor movement. Young people had a tendency to view the education programs more as an opportunity for personal and intellectual growth and self-improvement than as a means to develop technical expertise as trade unionists. The attendance records for ILGWU-sponsored schools suggest that most rank-and-file members favored literary and general courses such as English, history, economics, and art appreciation rather than courses in industrial or union-related matters.[152] By focusing on the individual needs and desires of workers, the program could be used as a means for attaining class mobility, or for acquiring "knowledge for knowledge's sake," which would perversely serve to undermine, rather than build the labor movement.[153]

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[150] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 15.
[151] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 15.
[152] Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl,* 218-222.
[153] Wong, "From Soul to Strawberries," 45.

The founders themselves addressed these concerns by clearly subordinating the needs of the individual to the program's social aims. In 1921, Cohn provided this succinct description of what the ILGWU-ED envisioned:

> Trade unions—whose members developed, through worker's education, social consciousness, understanding of economics and politics, and the determination to struggle collectively—would bring about the restructuring of American society.[154]

As Wong explained, "by linking progressive, even radical, social change to workers' education," the founder's "demonstrated that education [was not just] a means [of escaping] the working class or as an inculcator of middle-class values and beliefs." Rather, "workers' education would make the worker a better individual. Only the best individuals acting in concert, could create a new order."[155] For example, Cohn insisted that educators keep these objectives in mind when choosing the curriculum:

> The subject for study in workers' classes must be selected with the definite object of giving the students the mental and moral equipment which will best enable them to be useful to their class and which will inspire them to…service to the labor movement…To give such service, we must receive a specialized training which will strengthen and broaden character, develop discrimination, and create in us the ability to form sound judgments when we are confronted with serious problems. Labor is reaching out toward, new life, and educational training such as this is a necessary step toward its attainment.[156]

The ILGWU developed a curriculum that would enable workers to "form sound judgments." "At the Workers' University in the early 1920s, classes in economics, political science, and trade union and industrial history outnumbered those in art, literature, music, and remedial subjects. The ultimate justification for workers' education

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[154] Wong, "From Soul to Strawberries," 47.
[155] Wong, "From Soul to Strawberries," 47.
[156] Arthur Gleason and Bureau of Industrial Research, *Workers' Education* (New York: Bureau of Industrial Research): 1921, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006493175.

was its ability to contribute to the creation of a new and better social order."[157] "Fannia Cohn put it simply:"

> It has always been our conviction that the Labor Movement stands, consciously or unconsciously, for the reconstruction of society. It dreams of a world where economic and social justice will prevail, where the welfare of mankind will be the aim of all activity, where society will be organized as a cooperative commonwealth.[158]

Pragmatism

Yet the program's most important benefits, Cohn insisted, would depend less on knowledge learned in the classroom "as upon practical familiarity with the labor movement and upon the experience derived from active participation in the life of their organization." This view of workers' education dovetailed with that of A. J. Muste, who became head of Brookwood Labor College in 1921, and the de facto leader of the workers education movement during the 1920s. Cohn served on the board of directors, and Pesotta attended the school from 1926 to 1928, which, as we will see, had a significant influence on her labor activism during the 1930s. Muste's philosophy of "labor pragmatism," or "working-class pragmatism," served as the theoretical basis for the workers' education movement which he led in the 1920s.

Muste was heavily influenced by the Pragmatist philosophers: John Dewey, who was one of his professors at Columbia University, and William James, whose *Varieties of Religious Experience* particularly affected him. From them Muste adopted the notion that

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[157] Wong, "From Soul to Strawberries," 47. See also Cohn's 1921 education vision printed in Gleason and Bureau of Industrial Research, *Workers' Education*.
[158] Wong, "From Soul to Strawberries," 46-47, note 17; Fannia Cohn, "Educational Department of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union," in WEB, Proceedings (1921), 47.

it was possible to be both an idealist and a realist. The ideal of "human brotherhood" and the imperative to bring it to earth, drove Muste's activism, whether that ideal was rooted in Christianity or socialism, or both. Drawing on pragmatic theory, Muste insisted that ideals, to be meaningful, had to be grounded in practical analysis and activity. Muste said, "ultimate values, ideals which are essential, have to operate in some political and economic situation and not in a vacuum, not [in the] abstract."[159]

Therefore, Muste's experiences, and those of other prominent labor activists, such as Sidney Hillman, leader of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers union (ACW), and anarchist William Z. Foster, who led the 1919 Steel strike, during the surge of optimistic unionizing which occurred after the 1917 Russian revolution, heavily influenced the school's ideological orientation. And the potent political atmosphere created by the U.S. government's reaction to immigrants and pacifists during World War I, factored into those experiences prominently. Nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment had been indiscriminately stoked at even the highest levels of American government during the war. President Woodrow Wilson himself in late 1915 and 1916 had attacked "so-called hyphenated Americans":

> There are citizens of the United States, "I blush to admit," Wilson told the Congress in his third annual message, "born under other flags but welcomed under our generous naturalization laws to the full freedom and opportunity of America, who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life….Such creatures of passion, disloyalty, and anarchy must be crushed out…[T]he hand of our power should close over them at once."[160]

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[159] Danielson, *American Gandhi,* 87-90

[160] David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, Galaxy Book GB 709 (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 24, citing United States President Wilson, *The Messages and Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Albert Shaw (New York: G. H. Doran, 1924), I, 151.

According to Avrich, the Italians were the hardest hit group of immigrants and they responded indignantly and violently, by attempting several bombings especially in the spring of 1919.[161] The timing of these acts served to exacerbate an already highly charged atmosphere. In March of that year, Vladimir Lenin had invited workers of the world to unite and join with the Communists. And in May and June, the SP suspended or expelled 70,000 of its nearly 110,000 members for their adherence to Bolshevism.[162]

This series of events precipitated the Red Scare, and as Danielson succinctly summed up, from 1919 to 1921 these "anarchists entered a conspiracy to avenge their repression. The split in the SP left it with rival right and left-wing factions, and the subsequently formed Communist Party (CP) went underground."[163] Nearly all radicals were affected in some way at the time. The Jewish anarchist movement entered a state of crisis in the 1920s. Radical Jews, including a small number of former anarchists such as Foster, and Mike Gold, flocked to the Communist Party in the 1920s and 1930s, comprising an estimated half of its membership.[164]

It significantly affected Pesotta as well. By 1919 the shop delegate league that she, and other anarchists in local 25 created in 1917, had grown into a movement, which was comprised of communist, left-wing socialist, syndicalist, and anarchist members.

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[161] Paul Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Anarchist Background* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 97, 137–162.
[162] This led to the formation of two organizations: the Communist Party of America, comprised mainly of foreign-born federations, and the Communist Labor Party of America, consisting mainly of native-born Americans. They cooperated democratically for a very short time, until the Red Scare, which drove the Communist's underground. Then in1923 a new Workers' Party finally emerged as the sole Communist party in America, but with a membership of only 15,400, Robert Parmet, *The Master of Seventh Avenue: David Dubinsky and the American Labor Movement* (New York: NYU Press, 2005), 23.
[163] Danielson, *American Gandhi,* 81.
[164] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 172, nt., 29; Joseph J. Cohen, *Yidish-anarkhistishe bavegung*, 420; Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 59.

Local 25 had grown to 30,000 members and had become, by far, "the largest single local in the ILGWU, with nearly 25 percent of the international's total membership."[165] But, in 1919 ILGWU President Benjamin Schlesinger called their demand, for democratic representation on the GEB, a "Bolshevik" threat. In a letter to David Dubinsky in 1934, Pesotta recalled what he had said to her at the time, "our late President Schlesinger once told your humble servant to stop this kind of business and go home and get married. I hate to hear that from an employer."[166] Schlesinger broke up Local 25 up into three locals, putting league members under the cloakmakers' union, Local 22. However, splitting up Local 25 ironically served to rapidly spread its radicalism to other locals.[167]

Meanwhile, Muste, a former Social Gospel minister, went from being removed from his pulpit for holding pacifist views in the lead up to the war, to leading what he described as a "turbulent strike of 30,000 textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts."[168] Danielson describes Muste's transformation at the time, "Upon winning the dramatic and bloody strike, Muste assumed leadership of the Amalgamated Textile Workers of America (ATWA), a radical union modeled after Sidney Hillman's ACW."[169] Muste then saw the "forces of postwar reaction…destroy [his] union." By supporting the strike, "he had placed himself on the side of anarchy and violence not only in the eyes of the authorities, but also among many of the liberals and pacifists whom he had previously

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[165] Alice Kessler-Harris, "Problems in Coalition Building," in *Gendering Labor History*, The Working Class in American History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006): 127-129; Orleck, "Part Three. The Activists in Their Prime: The Mainstreaming of Industrial Feminism, 1920-1945," 75-76, 181-183.
[166] Letter RP to DD, then ILGWU President September 30, 1933, Kheel Center, Dubinsky Papers, Box 114.
[167] See discussions in Kessler-Harris, "Problems in Coalition Building,"127-129; Orleck, "Part Three. The Activists in Their Prime: The Mainstreaming of Industrial Feminism, 1920-1945," 75-76, 181-183.
[168] Danielson, *American Gandhi,* 65, citing Muste, "Sketches," 55, Oral Memoir, Reminiscences of Abraham John Muste (1954), Oral History Collection of Columbia University, 363-67.
[169] Danielson, *American Gandhi,* 3.

counted as allies and friends.” Like many other radicals of that era, his politics were shaped by syndicalism, and the labor movement became his “messiah.”[170]

Muste developed a strong commitment to democratic unions, and came to believe that the path to workers’ control was through unionizing and direct action, rather than electoral politics, which is why he did not join the SP even though he identified as a socialist. Like many other labor educators during the 1920s, he was “tired of the factional squabbles of the left and right and sought to make workers’ education independent of any political party or dogmatic creed, in contrast to the educational programs of the Socialist and Communist parties.”[171]

This approach hearkened back to the attempt by the IWW syndicalists to be similarly nonpartisan, and it offered a way to deal with the complex relationships developing among radicals with the introduction of communists into the unions. Foster had been an anarchist, who was present at Brookwood’s formation, spoke highly of the school and was a frequent guest there. In 1920, Foster, along with a handful of Socialists, Communists and former Wobblies founded the Trade Union Education League (TUEL), which was the successor to an earlier program based on a similar philosophy, which Foster had helped start in 1915.[172] But, in 1921 Foster quietly joined the underground CP

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[170] Danielson, *American Gandhi,* 65-66, citing Muste, “Sketches,” 55, Oral Memoir, Reminiscences of Abraham John Muste (1954), Oral History Collection of Columbia University, 363-67.
[171] Danielson, *American Gandhi,* 83.
[172] William Z Foster, “The Principles and Program of the Trade Union Education League,” ed. Tim Davenport, *Labor Herald*, March 1922, https://www.marxists.org/archive/foster/1922/principles.htm, Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: The TUEL to the End of the Gompers Era*, vol. 9 (New York: New York: International Publishers, 1991):118-119, Cedar & Slate, “Brookwood Labor College And Its Impact on the American Labor Movement,” *The Line* (blog), March 12, 2019, https://newbrookwood.wordpress.com/2019/03/12/the-journey-begins/.

upon returning from a fourteen week trip to Russia, where he had attended the Founding Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU).

Foster believed that workers' education, including the leaders it developed, was the key to the labor movement. And he enlisted the aid of the CP because to him the AFL led the most backward labor movement of all the industrialized countries, as evidenced by its failure to affiliate with either the revolutionary Moscow International, or even the more reformist Amsterdam International. Foster wrote, that "upon my return to the United States I had a meeting with the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party, who agreed to support the work of the Trade Union Educational League." As Foster acknowledged at the time, "the League is not an organic section of the Party but is simply endorsed by it."[173] For most of the 1920s Brookwood was able to maintain a workable relationship with the Communists.

Finally, Muste rejected what he saw as the increasingly out-of-touch insurrectionary politics among some syndicalists. These radicals, he said, had fallen "into the formulation of rules, orthodoxies," escaping into "dogmatic radicalism" rather than facing "life and reality."[174]

By the early 1920s, the political landscape had fundamentally changed since Pesotta had arrived in 1913, making the pragmatic philosophy which Muste espoused increasingly appealing to radicals, who had retained their syndicalist vision, but saw more and more obstacles to using the IWW's outdated methods. In a climate where nativism,

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[173] William Z Foster, "The Principles and Program of the Trade Union Educational League," *The Labor Herald*, March 1922, https://www.marxists.org/archive/foster/1922/principles.htm.
[174] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 78-81, citing Muste, "Contradictions the Rebel Faces," in A. J. Muste and Harlan B. Phillips, "Reminiscences of Abraham John Muste" (1954): 142.

and communism were on the rise, the movement's nonviolent, and nonpartisan stance helped it grow, and facilitated the creation of useful alliances. According to Danielson, in 1921, there was enough interest in workers' education for about 200 of its exponents to hold a conference at the New York School for Social Research and establish the "Workers' Education Bureau (WEB), a national clearinghouse for research, teaching, publication, and extension work in workers' education."[175]

Furthermore, leftists throughout the U.S. shared Muste's "interest in workers' education."[176] "Intellectuals, educators, and pacifists joined progressive laborites in support of the school, including Boston's Trade Union College, Felix Frankfurter and Harold Laski of Harvard University, and journalist Arthur Gleason. Historian Charles A. Beard and Bryn Mawr's president M. Carey Thomas, traveled to England together to observe the active labor movement there. Upon their return, Beard taught classes for the Rand School and the ILGWU, while Thomas founded Bryn Mawr's summer school for women workers."[177] which Pesotta, along with 104 other young women from across the country, attended in the summer of 1922.[178]

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[175] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 82.
[176] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 81. Aaron Lecklider estimated that at least twenty-six workers' education enterprises, serving thousand ten students had been established in just two years, and that by 1926 there were more than four hundred active workers' education initiatives in the U.S. "Knowledge Is Power: Women, Workers' Education, and Brainpower in the 1920s," in *Inventing the Egghead* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 69–91, https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812207811.69, note 1 American Federation of Labor Workers Education Bureau (WEB), Workers' Education Directory, Printed Ephemera Collection on Organizations, Box 109, Folder: Workers Education Bureau, n.d., Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives," Arthur Gleason and Bureau of Industrial Research, *Workers' Education* (New York: Bureau of Industrial Research, 1921), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006493175.
[177] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 82.
[178] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*,15.

The political context out of which the workers education movement emerged in 1914, when anarchism was at its height, had changed significantly by the summer of 1922 when Pesotta attended Bryn Mawr. While the original workers' education program was designed to accommodate the needs of anarchist women, who sought to integrate into the political life of the unions and of society in general, by 1922 the movement had created the infrastructure which would allow radicals to develop a nonpartisan coalition, to adapt their direct action tactics interactively with the changing political landscape, and to create a contingent of labor leaders in anticipation of the social revolution, which radicals generally believed would eventually occur in the labor movement. The workers' education movement retained many of the characteristics of syndicalism, and would continue to do so through the 1930s. But the integration of pragmatic philosophy would give it the flexibility to adapt in a political landscape which was increasingly hostile to immigrants, and to radicals, especially anarchists.

Chapter III.

The Lessons of Existential Crises 1922-1933

Chapter III traces Pesotta's journey through the immigrant community, the ILGWU, and Brookwood Labor College, as anarchism entered a defensive period from 1922 to 1933. Her experiences reveal the ramifications of anarchists' varied responses to the existential crises posed on two fronts: Rising nativism, which came to a crescendo with the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924; And the Comintern's increasing incursion into the labor unions. As the movement shrunk due to the defection of many anarchists to communism, and the 1924 act threatened to reduce it even further, the remaining group attempted to unite and build their base of support among native born Americans, and the younger generation of anarchists by producing more English language publications.

However, despite unifying around a couple of key issues, such as their defense of Sacco & Vanzetti, who became symbolic of America's unjust treatment of immigrants through most of the 1920s, and their hatred of the Communists, ideological schisms emerged regarding the role of anarchists in the labor movement, which prevented them from articulating a coherent or compelling vision. Pesotta shows us how that divide widened during this period as traditionalists became increasingly averse to the mainstream labor movement, while anarchists who did work in the labor movement, became more and more inclined to pragmatically update their unionizing tactics.

As a result, the traditional anarchist movement became even more ethnically insular, and hostile to the mainstream labor movement, including the anarchists who participated in it. Meanwhile, the anarchists who did engage in the labor movement

developed a diverse network of alliances among radicals, which sometimes even included communists, and helped lay the groundwork to support a surge in labor activism.

The Immigrant Community

As the immigrant anarchist community faced the existential threat posed by the Immigrant Restriction Act of 1924, it attempted to unify its disparate groups, and finally expand its base of support among native Americans. Emma Goldman had long lamented the ethnic centric character of the anarchist movement in America. In 1908 she said that Jewish anarchists were "still too Jewish, I fear, to really appreciate the great necessity of a widespread agitation in the language of the country they live in."[179]

Pesotta's observations of native-born Americans at Bryn Mawr in the summer of 1922 had revealed to her that she and her comrades in New York had indeed greatly misunderstood them. But this was more than an English language barrier, it had deeper cultural roots than that. While she was at the school, she wrote to a comrade "Really, dear comrade, when I look back into the past, not very long, oh say only two months ago, I find such a change in my thoughts." She explained that she now thought that she and her comrade had not only overestimated the good will of native-born Americans, but also how difficult it would be to educate them on socialist ideals:

> When we came in such a close contact with our American workers when we used to spend sleepless nights discussing our favorite ideal –The future Free Society, when you and I did so honestly believe in the good will of every human being— we very slightly touched the problem of the education of the masses so that they should realize their own misery and take the initiative to devise methods of creating a better system, where happiness, solidarity and real fraternity should

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[179] Leeder, *The Gentle General*, 39, 106, *Road to Freedom,* August, 1925, vol. 3, no. 9, 1 November 1926.

> prevail!...You always disagreed with me, believing that each person is [as] interested in the work for the cause as you are, forgetting for a moment that the past left something for the future generations and that is: religion, custom, traditions which rooted too deep in the minds of those who are still believers and traditional.[180]

Then she repeated, as if for emphasis: "I have learned all this during my stay at Bryn Mawr School for the last two months, more so than in any other place, for the same period. Let me share with you my discoveries." She then explained how she came to her conclusions by first sharing her observations about several students from Tennessee:

> Most of them are timid, have very little knowledge…in plain ordinary every-day life-economics…To them it seems only the great people are to be considered as intelligent, the plain toiler is not to be considered at all: he must work and keep his mouth shut. Most of them are loyal members of the "Y" which has sent them here and is supporting them financially. They know very little of the outside world, but you just tell them in the South the *negro (sic)* is discriminated against, and you will hear them talk: They are born aristocrats and as such they cannot stand criticism of their deeds.[181]

Then she described the "Northern group," who, she said, were openminded, "more or less." She conjectured that because she had heard them talk about unionism, and because some of them were officials in their local unions, that "you could get along with them nice." However, although they had "heard of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, the famine in Russia, of course through their local unions," she wrote, they "do not take an active part in the movement."[182]

Pesotta was surprised to learn that these union members not only knew so little about the very issues which consumed her life in the immigrant community in New York, but also how uninterested they were in knowing about them, even the socialist vision

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[180] RP Letter to Dear Comrade, June 1922, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[181] RP Letter to Dear Comrade, June 1922, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[182] RP Letter to Dear Comrade, June 1922, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.

which, to her was central to the labor movement itself. However, by writing to her comrade, "we very slightly touched the problem of the education of the masses," she suggested that she viewed it as her job, and the job of her comrades, to educate these workers. This was an idea, which she continued to promote in the anarchist community as anarchists faced the existential crisis presented by the Immigration Restriction Act. And she decided to apply to Brookwood Labor College at the time.

In 1924, Pesotta found herself in a newly formed coalition, which emerged out of the Modern School at Stelton and conducted its meetings at the Ferrer Center. It consisted of Jews, Italians, Spaniards, native-born Americans, and a few others, including, the outspoken Galleanist supporter, Shmuel Marcus, and Abe Bluestein, son of prominent anarchist ILGWU member, Max Bluestein, who collectively formed the International Anarchist Group of New York. The group launched what would become the primary English language, anarchist newspaper during the 1920s, *The Road to Freedom,* which is considered to be the successor to Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth.*[183]

Historian Kenyon Zimmer found that the anarchist community made a modest resurgence during this period, and produced an unprecedented number of English language publications. Zimmer quoted Rose's friend Anna Sosnovsky noting "a general revival amongst the Comrades," In January 1925. He also cited an anarchist newspaper which reported that by 1933 it had found "seventy-five anarchist groups across the country." And "a U.S. military intelligence agent," Zimmer said, reported a "keen revival

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[183] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 166, nt.,1, Anna L. Sosnovsky to Mollie Steimer, January 12,1925, folder 29, Senya Fléchine Papers, IISH; Freedom (New York), March 18, 1933; Boehm, U.S. Military Intelligence Reports, reel 24, 0972; Conference Committee for Anarchist Propaganda in English to Joseph J. Cohen, May 1,1939, "Anarchism—Cohen, Joseph J.," Subject Vertical File, Labadie Collection.

of activities among the anarchists on the East Coast." Altogether Zimmer found "some one hundred" functioning groups, and circulation data showing that "from 1925 to 1940 the American anarchist press retained approximately half to three-quarters of its prewar readership." Furthermore, "The spread of multiethnic, English-speaking international groups led to the unprecedented growth of the English-language anarchist press," while the circulation of "Italian language anarchist periodicals" was higher than ever before between 1925 and 1933."[184]

However, despite the emphasis on publishing more English language papers, most of the content was still written from an ethnic centric perspective, which often did not appeal to native born Americans, and sometimes not even the younger generation of anarchists. This was the case with the *Road to Freedom.* Most of its content was written with Jewish, Italian, Russian, and Spanish immigrant groups in mind. From her exile in Europe, Emma Goldman wrote of her disillusionment with the Bolsheviks as well as other international anarchist news, and the paper reflected the anarchists' deepening hatred of Communists and Marxists. And the number one topic, which permeated the pages of the *Road to Freedom,* was the state of Massachusetts' case against Galleanists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.[185]

They were accused of the murder of a payroll master, and his guard who were shot to death during a robbery of a shoe factory in South Braintree Massachusetts on April 15, 1920. But, as Paul Avrich has explained, their culpability in the crimes for which they had been accused, mattered less to most of the millions of people who

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[184] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 166-67.
[185] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 174.

followed the case until the state executed them in 1927, than the fact that they had not received impartial justice.[186] Because the case had raised fundamental questions about America's political and social system, with all its classes, Sacco and Vanzetti became the decade's worldwide symbols of American injustice toward immigrants, particularly in the anarchist community.[187]

Although the group published the paper until 1932, it never articulated a clear vision and began to devolve into fractious conflict as early as 1925. That year, Marcus, who had often engaged contentiously with Pesotta, and others while working on *The Road to Freedom*, left the group in disgust because, he said, the new publication was being "corrupted" by working "hand in hand" with partisans of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime (Free Voice of Labor)*. Marcus and the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* represented opposing poles in the anarchist movement at the time, which had been drifting further apart since the Red Scare.[188]

Marcus, who was described by Historian Kenyon Zimmer as "a fiery revolutionist who called for armed rebellion against the ruling class, then retreated for a time to the multiethnic anarchist colony in rural Stelton, New Jersey where he refused to exploit or

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[186] Massachusetts Governor Michael S. Dukakis proclaimed August 23, 1977, the 50th anniversary of their executions, "Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti Day." Dukakis sidestepped the issue of their innocence or guilt, declaring that "the atmosphere of their trial and appeals was permeated by prejudice against foreigners and hostility toward unorthodox political views." Paul Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Anarchist Background* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 5-6, citing the proclamation from Upton Sinclair's, *Boston*: *A Documentary Novel of the Sacco-Vanzetti Case* (Cambridge: Robert Bentley, 1978), 797-799.

[187] Pesotta served as liaison for the ILGWU on the Sacco and Vanzetti's defense committee where there was constant tension about how to handle the Communists' involvement. Members of the committee felt that the Communists were only interested in publicity for themselves, not for the plight of Sacco and Vanzetti. Leeder, *The Gentle General*, 39, 46, 106, *Road to Freedom,* August, 1925, vol. 3, no. 9, 1 November 1926.

[188] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 35.

harm animals, and became a vegetarian."[189] At Stelton, Marcus associated with subscribers of *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*, (the Summoning of the Unruly), a militant, anti-fascist Italian paper produced by the International Group, [190] to which he sometimes submitted articles, "most of which were English-language appeals on behalf of the condemned anarchists."[191]

The *Fraye Arbeter Shtime,* on the other hand, had been the Jewish anarchist mainstream paper since anarchism's height in the mid-1910s. "Few American anarchist publications had ever approached its peak circulation of thirty thousand copies in 1914, which, according to one estimate, translated to as many as 150,000 readers." Under the editorship of Saul Yanovsky, the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* had rejected propaganda by the deed, and would continue to do so under its subsequent editor, Joseph Cohen.[192]

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[189] "Muste viewed these utopian experiments as, paradoxically, expressions of individualism and anarchism. Civil liberties and decentralization were not ends in themselves but rather part of a larger effort to democratize and demilitarize the politics of the left." If we "profess to conceive of mankind as a family which should live as a family," he commented, "then our only valid objective is the transformation of society, not the building of a shelter for the saints or a secular elite within a corrupt social order, which in effect is assumed to be beyond redemption." Danielson, *American Gandhi,*87-90, citing Muste, "Sketches," in A. J. Muste and Harlan B. Phillips, "Reminiscences of Abraham John Muste" (1954): 412-413, Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 174.
[190]An Italian movement revitalization occured in part by the arrival of anti-Fascist exiles, including anarcho-syndicalist leader Armando Borghi and his companion, poet Virgilia D'Andrea, both of whom lectured across the country. Despite his anarchism, Borghi obtained a visa, while D'Andrea gained entry by legally marrying a comrade in Brooklyn who was a naturalized American citizen. "Dozens or even hundreds of additional, lesser-known anarchists clandestinely entered the United States during Mussolini's rule, defying tightening restrictions on both Italian emigration and American immigration. Among those who came secretly and illegally were Raffaele Schiavina, who had been deported with Luigi Galleani in 1919, and had participated in armed resistance to fascism in Turin, emigrated to France in 1923, and clandestinely returned to New York in 1928. There, under the assumed name Max Sartin, he became editor of *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*." Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*,167, nt,54 nt,55, Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 167-176.
[191] *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* supporters, such as Michael Cohn, similarly "poured their own time and money into the Sacco and Vanzetti cause." "Cohn even authored two pamphlets about the case and published them at his own expense." Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 174.
[192] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 34-35.

Although Cohen founded the Jewish Anarchist Federation in North America in 1921 with twenty-five chapters, by the mid-1920s, postwar conditions led to the paper's circulation slipping to "between seven thousand and ten thousand, a third of its prewar peak."[193] Cohen had become far more pessimistic and conservative than Yanovsky. According to his friend Harry Kelly, by 1924, Cohen had "practically given up the idea of revolution and from all accounts he seems pretty pessimistic over things."[194] "The Jewish Anarchist Federation officially condemned violence and adopted a gradualist, reformist approach, which Shmuel Marcus dismissed as 'Marxian' and 'revisionism.'"[195]

Both factions tried to expand their bases beyond Yiddish-speaking immigrants. Marcus had already abandoned the Yiddish movement to his opponents in order to address "the necessity for the creation of an English-speaking Anarchist movement in the United States," concentrating his energies on the *Anarchist Soviet Bulletin* and *Free Society.*[196] In 1922, Cohen had suggested inserting an English-language page in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, explaining, "I want the children of our Jewish readers to get acquainted with the libertarian ideas and movements." However, when a four-page English supplement, *The Voice of Youth*, was included ten years later, "American-born readers

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[193] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 172-3.
[194] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 173, nt. 35, Harry Kelly to Alexander Berkman, October 10, 1924, folder 43, Berkman Papers.
[195] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 173, nt. 36, Free Society, October 1921; F. S. Graham [Shmuel Marcus] to Max Nettlau, June 28, 1922, folder 502, Nettlau Papers.
[196] *The Anarchist Soviet Bulletin* was a periodical published in New York, NY from April 1919-August 1920. In *Partisans of Freedom: A Study in American Anarchism*, historian William O. Reichert notes that Graham was imprisoned on Ellis Island for issuing the *Anarchist Soviet Bulletin*, Shmuel Marcus, "Anarchist Soviet Bulletin | Libcom.Org," accessed February 01, 2023, https://libcom.org/article/anarchist-soviet-bulletin, Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*.

found it 'old-fashioned and outdated,' and it was discontinued after the Post Office ruled that it constituted a separate publication requiring additional postage."[197]

In 1925 this dissension was reflected in the International Anarchist Group's inability to articulate a clear vision at the Conference it held that summer in Stelton. Pesotta was one of the attendees who discussed "the anarchist attitude toward the labor movement." The outcome of those discussions was a commitment to the labor movement, in which the group resolved to "reaffirm their faith in the labor movement," and insisted on the right to "propagate ideas among the workers, [and] to repudiate all dictatorship by the bureaucratic leadership or political parties."[198]Although the resolution reflected an affirmation of their support for labor movement, who they sought to rebuke, and how that should happen was nebulous.

Given their disparate views, it is not surprising that they would not be able to articulate a coherent vision. Furthermore, none of the methods they had tried in order to reach native born Americans had had much success, mainly because, as Pesotta, had seen at Bryn Mawr, the immigrant anarchists' message, which still focused on ethnic centric issues did not resonate with many native born Americans. The anarchist community was mainly focused on their own pressing concerns, which were expressed, for the most part, in terms of their own ethnic culture.

But the discussions began to reflect Brookwood's influence at the conference the following year, in June1926. This was after Pesotta began attending the school, and the

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[197] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State,* 173, nt. 37, Freedom (London), January 1923, nt.38. Joseph J. Cohen to Max Nettlau, February 26,1922, folder 303, Nettlau Papers, Avrich, Anarchist Voices, 344, Joseph J. Cohen, Yidish-anarkhistishe bavegung, 454.
[198] Leeder, *The Gentle General*, 106, *Road to Freedom,* August, 1925.

International Group held an event at Croton-on-Hudson, the Road to Freedom Camp, where forty to one hundred people attended lectures by prominent educators from the workers' education movement, including A. J. Muste, Harry Kelly, and Arthur Calhoun. Pesotta wrote an article about it, describing the topics covered, which included sociology, economics, literature, cooperation, general strikes, social philosophy, and general tendencies in the anarchist and labor movements.[199]

At the Group's conference held at Stelton three months after the Croton-on-Hudson event, in September 1926, Pesotta now vocalized these concerns. She pointed out that the numbers of anarchists were declining and she commented that she observed little class consciousness in the labor movement. In this state, she asserted, it was doubtful that a militant movement could arise.[200] She was then elected to a resolution committee which led a discussion on what anarchists wanted the labor movement to be. In that resolution, she wrote:

> The difference between European and American workers [is that] in Europe, they are proletariat, here, [there are] shifting classes. The social forces are different here; the labor movement is now stagnant; our idea is to create a new society. We become lost when we take our grievances to the trade unions and bargain with the bosses. We lose our broader view. Anarchists should keep in mind daily that our contact with the worker should be educational.[201]

This resolution reflected a shift from the previous year toward an openness to Pragmatic ideas. The group was now not only expressing their idealistic aims to "create a new society," they also assessed practical realities, such as the lack of class

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[199] Leeder, *The Gentle General*, 106, Pesotta, "Road to Freedom Camp," *Road to Freedom,* vol. 2, no. 11 (August 1926): 8, *Road to Freedom,* vol. 3, no. 8, 1 October 1926.
[200] Leeder, *The Gentle General*, 106, *Road to Freedom,* vol. 3, no. 8, 1 October 1926.
[201] Leeder, *The Gentle General*, 106, *Road to Freedom,* vol. 3, no. 8, 1 October 1926.

consciousness among American born workers and the need to focus on this fundamental weakness more intently, specifically, as their resolution inferred, by promoting workers' education. But it still did not address how to make these ideas relevant to the circumstances of native born Americans. Rather, the group was still focused on the threats to its own community, and to its internal strife.

At the following year's conference, on September 3-4, 1927, a new energetic group was introduced, the Rising Youth Group, founded by a Jewish anarchist couple's twin daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah Goodman who had recently started a newspaper called *Rising Youth*. Bluestein and other young anarchists, mainly the children of prominent anarchist parents, soon joined their efforts.[202] This group was also highly critical of the moderate anarchism and insularity of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime,* but, unlike Marcus' adherents, for the most part, they were advocates of syndicalism, even if only in the IWW's waning form.[203]

Bluestein who had grown up in Stelton and had been a neighbor of Marcus' for a time, was also known for being highly critical of other anarchists. He vented that the anarchist movement was "stagnant, stagnating, submerged, impotent, weak, ineffectual [and] confined in its leadership (speakers, writers etc.) to a few old comrades who have devoted their lives to the Cause, and very ably at that, but comrades, nevertheless, who are OLD, who no longer possess the vitality, the strength and the energy to carry on as they once did."[204] But, the truth was, the youth group did not fare much better. They

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[202] Leeder, *The Gentle General,* 107.
[203] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 186.
[204] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 185, note 106, quote from Abe Coleman [Bluestein] to Alexander Berkman, February 1,1934, folder 62, Berkman Papers.

brought a youthful energy to the group, and most had grown up as English speakers, but their message was not pitched to the audience that they hoped to reach either. Their paper did not last and a series of short-lived ventures followed, until a more enduring enterprise, the Vanguard Group, finally emerged in 1932, founded by Sam Dolgoff and Bluestein, who started the publication, *Vanguard*.[205]

The heterogeneity of the International Group of New York led to constant infighting, and *The Road to Freedom* remained financially insolvent. In 1928, contributor Joseph Spivak complained of "the lack of interest in the English propaganda and the lack of the proper methods of organization," claiming, "There are enough active anarchists in this country to build one of the strongest movements" if only "the insularity of the ethnic anarchist groups" had not prevented their unification. At another anarchist conference convened by the International Group later that year, Hippolyte Havel also lamented the lack of an "American" anarchist movement, noting that instead there existed "a Spanish Anarchist movement, Italian Anarchist movement, a Jewish Anarchist movement, etc."[206]

The group had acknowledged that remaining relevant in the future hinged on whether the movement could communicate in the English language.[207] But many of their "foreign comrades," were still not literate in English, and some did not believe that the "American type" would adopt anarchist ideas. Furthermore, Yiddish and Italian anarchism were deeply embedded in specific ethnic and linguistic communities, which were simply not easy to translate into specific elements of the English-speaking

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[205] Andrew Cornell, *Unruly Equality,*118; Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 186.
[206] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 175.
[207] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 175.

movement. Doing so would have required a fundamental cultural shift. Unable to resolve this dilemma the dissension in the group continued until it was disbanded in 1932, not having developed a coherent message.[208]

From November 1926 until October 1929. Pesotta was general secretary of the *Road to Freedom* and she continued to write for the paper until 1932, but the ongoing, unresolved hostilities compelled her to resign from the secretaryship in 1929. In 1934, Pesotta began a correspondence and friendship with Emma Goldman which lasted until Goldman's death in 1940. And at the time Goldman was distraught over the general decline of the anarchist movement in America, and the dissension among them, so Pesotta found herself explaining her decision to leave the *Road to Freedom*:

> But dearest, our crowd became so bigoted and intolerant that, while working with them, I either have to side exactly with them, and you know their preconceived notion about activities, or else be ostracized. It came to a point several years ago while I was still in New York…I did not resign from the group, Emma, rather than do that I left of my own free volition for California without breaking up the work. But the result was that the group fell apart because people did not agree. They are still fighting around…I wanted to remain in New York but, goodness, the backwardness and the diefness (sic) on the one side and the cock suredness and pugnacity on the other side was appalling. I threw up my hands in despair.[209]

The *Road to Freedom*, did not prove satisfactory to its readers, in part, because its contributors espoused different visions of anarchism and how to achieve it. Moreover, although the group published the paper in English, they had spent much of the decade helping imprisoned or exiled anarchists, and had made little to no headway in reaching native born Americans with their message. A series of "English Propaganda

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[208] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 175, nt., 46; *Road to Freedom*, April 1928; "Minutes of the Road to Freedom Conference Held in New York, Oct. 12th to 14th,1928," folder 1032, Nettlau Papers.

[209] Marcus was especially notorious for attacking fellow anarchists. And Goldman saw him as a "moral censor and a judge of comrades." Leeder, *The Gentle General,* 80, as quoted in Porter, *Visions on Fire,* 317, RP to EG; March 3, 1934, RPP/NYPL/ SC Goldman, Box 10.

Conferences" conducted by the International Group over the following year established a new weekly paper, *Freedom,* but it collapsed after seventeen months because of chronic financial difficulties, which was likely due to what editor Harry Kelly admitted to, it "did not reach an American audience."[210]

The ILGWU

During the mid-1920s, tensions began to rapidly escalate between anarchists and communists, who had formerly been allies. As the CP increasingly tried to dominate the unions, anarchists, who were alarmed by the reports coming out of Russia from disillusioned comrades, such as Emma Goldman, now entered into an uneasy alliance with the SP to keep the CP out of the unions. The consequences of that engagement, as Pesotta recalled, was that the ILGWU rose to "its highest peak of strength in the Twenties," and then she saw it "go to pieces." She said, "The International's membership goes down, down, down."[211] She wrote that,

> Through much of that decade savage internal strife rages within our organization. This is a result of the Red Trade Union International in Moscow, designed to take over the labor movement of the whole world, and to "liquidate" all the trade unions affiliated with the Amsterdam International. Those of us who do not side with that aim watch with apprehension the fast disintegration of all our past gains.[212]

That civil war devastated the ILGWU, and the shop floor delegate movement with it. When the shop delegate leagues, who were now affiliated with the TUEL, joined the Soviet-controlled RILUs, most non-Communist members promptly withdrew, including

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[210] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 112. Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 175, nt,47, *Freedom* (New York), January 23,1933, Harry Kelly to Max Nettlau, January 14,1935, folder 704, Nettlau Papers.
[211] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 17.
[212] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 16-17.

the anarchists, who had played a leading role from the beginning.[213] And, in an ironic twist, the attempt by the rank-and-file to bring in less conservative leadership, did little to prevent further deleterious effects on the movement.[214]

In February 1923, the ILGWU held a special election and replaced Schlesinger as President of the union with anarchist Morris Sigman, who was respected by the rank and file. However Sigman, understood that his election by both his anarchist comrades and his SP backers was contingent on him eliminating the Communist threat. Upon taking office, he "ruled that the shop delegate leagues constituted dual unions, and he ejected several Communists from the union or deprived them of the right to hold office while dissolving or reorganizing Communist-controlled locals."[215]

Sigman's election was not the only pyrrhic victory for the anarchists. At the union's 1924 convention, Pesotta, whose fiancé "Kushnarev had been briefly imprisoned by the Bolsheviks, had introduced a motion demanding the release of all political prisoners in the Soviet Union, which passed by a vote of 222 to 25."[216] Yet, this served to escalate the war with the Communists even further. As one anarchist said, thereafter "the Russian Revolution was fought out on the streets of New York and in meeting Halls."[217]

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[213] There was "a small but influential Yiddish anarchist cadre within the ILGWU. "A devastating 1924 IWW split" between "decentralists," supported by many anarchists, and "centralists," supported by the CP "left the ILGWU as the anarchist movement's last major union foothold." "A number of veteran unionists had moved up the union's hierarchy by the 1920s, including Bernard Shane, Louis Levy, Joseph Schneider, Mendel (Max) Bluestein, Leibush Frumkin, Nicholas Kirtzman, Morris Sigman, Israel Feinberg. These figures were joined by a younger generation of rank-and-file militants, including Rose Pesotta, Anna Sosnovsky, Rose Mirsky, Sara Rothman, Clara Larsen, Isidore Wisotsky, Israel Ostroff and Simon Farber." Saul Yanovsky became editor of ILGWU's new newspaper, Justice in 1919. Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 169.

[214] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 169, nt. 14; Levine, *Women's Garment Workers*, 352–59.

[215] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 169.

[216] Kushnarev had been deported on the ship, the Buford, along with Emma Goldman and others, in 1919, Leeder, *Gentle General,* 25-30; Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 169.

[217] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 169, quoting anarchist Isidore Wisotsky.

To Pesotta the Communist dominated Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union (NTWIU), was the enemy, intent on "ruling or ruining every labor organization in that field. Some party members," she said, "were instructed to remain with the existing unions, while the rest were assigned to function in the dual union." Pesotta recalled that:

> In the period between 1925 and 1933, the NTWIU succeeded in demoralizing our International, among others, and tearing down every important gain we had made in three decades. Stock tactics of the dual union were to sow distrust in their chosen leadership among the rank and file. Derogatory epithets hurled at decent officials in widely distributed newspapers in various languages were picked up by labor's enemies and used as weapons against unions generally. Discouraged members dropped out of both organizations, crying: "a plague on both your houses!" The employers reaped vast benefit from all this internal dissension.[218]

Indeed, the only real victors during the 1920s were the employers, who took advantage of the industrial depression, and the weakness in the unions caused by the infighting, to implement the "American Plan." Exponents of the plan, who claimed that management run company unions were just fine, succeeded, by depicting labor unions as contrary to American traditions.[219]

But by the early 1930s anarchists in the ILGWU took steps to strengthen their ranks and build new alliances in the ILGWU. For the first time the union assigned Spanish and Greek anarchist dressmakers to be organizers, and Max Bluestein, manager of Local 22, convinced the ILGWU to allow the followers of the dissident former Communist Jay Lovestone to become members of the ILGWU once again. "The Lovestoneites then joined with the anarchists to form a strong 'Progressive' block within the union."[220]

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[218] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 34-35.
[219] Parmet, *The Master of Seventh Avenue*, 23.
[220] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 171-72.

Brookwood Labor College

The workers' education movement, which retained the syndicalist proclivity toward nonpartisanship, provided a forum for radicals to build alliances in the Old Left. And the integration of pragmatic philosophy would give it the flexibility to adapt in the rapidly changing political landscape. In 1926, when Pesotta was in her first year at Brookwood, it almost seemed possible, as Danielson opined, that the college might facilitate "the reconciliation between left and right, and between intellectuals and workers within the movement."[221] She noted that "by 1924 the AFL had endorsed the movement and became formally affiliated with the WEB." Also, the AFL's publication the *American Federationist* began to publish frequent articles on "workers' education, including some by Brookwood faculty and staff."[222] Moreover, "relations with the Communist Party were also relatively harmonious." "Party members attended the college through their unions, Brookwood faculty were invited to teach at the Communist Party's Workers' School in New York, and leaders of the party occasionally lectured at the college."[223]

According to Danielson, "Brookwood's evolving teaching philosophy…was a response to the growing sophistication of capital in the 1920s." Rather than waging "full-scale assault[s] on organized labor," employers now used "gentler methods of paternalistic welfare capitalism," pursuing a "'harmony of interests', between the worker and the company" instead. [224] They did so with "employee representation plans,

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[221] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, "Pragmatism and 'Transcendent Vision'," 91.
[222] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, "Pragmatism and 'Transcendent Vision'," 87.
[223] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, "Pragmatism and 'Transcendent Vision'," 91.
[224] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, "Pragmatism and 'Transcendent Vision'," 91.

(‘company unionism’), fringe benefits and higher wages, as well as through educational and cultural programs,” the personnel management counterpart to Frederick Winslow Taylor’s efficient and rational approach to production management.[225] Danielson notes that Muste was deeply concerned about these developments:

> “The boss is not afraid of education,” Muste often pointed out. Newly formed schools of business management “used expert service of all kinds” to train managers in the skills of industrial efficiency, de-skilling, and company unionism. Unless the labor movement shed its residual anti-intellectualism, he warned, the social sciences would continue to be used in antilabor ways.[226]

As Brookwood showed signs of moving beyond its experimental phase, and becoming a permanent institution based on progressive radicalism, it began to pose a real *challenge* to industrialist employers, and to conservative elements in the AFL, which now dominated the WEB. Their attacks on Muste and his supporters ultimately led to Brookwood being disaffiliated from the WEB in January 1929, which was a crushing setback for the college.[227]

Although Brookwood lost this battle, it revealed that the nonpartisan values of the school had become deeply instilled in its student body and that those students were, for the most part, committed to the school’s syndicalist ideals, particularly of anti-authoritarianism. That radicals from a variety of political orientations, and dogmatic creeds, crossed over these barriers to collaborate in support of those ideals is illustrated in the conflict which precipitated this event.

It arose during Pesotta’s second year at Brookwood, 1927-1928 when the school admitted several students from conservative backgrounds, who deeply resented the

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[225] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, “Pragmatism and ‘Transcendent Vision’,” 92.
[226] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, “Pragmatism and ‘Transcendent Vision’,” 92.
[227] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, “Pragmatism and ‘Transcendent Vision’,” 113-116.

radicalism of some of their peers; resentments which were heavily tinged with anti-Semitism and misogyny.[228] One of them was a miner who opposed John Brophy's "Save-the-Union Movement." He had published an account of a fractious UMWA conference where the subject was hotly debated, which named the Brookwood students who attended the conference, and accused them of being communists.[229]

The movement was an ill-fated attempt by John Brophy, who was aided by key UMW leaders such as Powers Hapgood[230] and Adolph Germer[231] to unseat John L. Lewis, as president of the UMW in its1926 election. Those who supported Brophy, including Pesotta, believed that Brophy actually would have won the election, if Lewis had not tampered with the election.[232] Germer reconciled with Lewis, but Brophy and Hapgood did not, which earned them prominence in the union, but also the unenviable enmity of Lewis, who expelled them from the UMW.[233]

Pesotta was more critical of Lewis than any other individual who appeared in her autobiography. In her account of the 1935 AFL convention in Atlantic City, Pesotta described Lewis' appeal to radical unionists, who were attempting to set up a committee to represent industrial workers in the AFL at the time, as disingenuous and

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[228] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 108-09.
[229] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 108-09.
[230] Ann Schofield described Hapgood as a "crown prince of the left." "His uncles were Norman Hapgood, a progressive drama critic, and Hutchins Hapgood, a writer, reformer, and a close friend of Emma Goldman. Hapgood, like his father and uncles attended Harvard." Ann Schofield, *To Do & to Be: Portraits of Four Women Activists, 1893-1986* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 132.
[231] Adolph Germer, "Archival Resources in Wisconsin: Descriptive Finding Aids: Biography/History," accessed December 14, 2022, https://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi/f/findaid/findaid-idx?c=wiarchives;view=reslist;subview=standard;didno=uw-whs-us00125a;focusrgn=bioghist;cc=wiarchives;byte=723291325.
[232] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 180.
[233] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 108-09; Schofield, *To Do & to Be*, 132.

manipulative.[234] It was in this context that Pesotta recalled how she viewed Lewis' expulsion of the miners who led the save the union movement in 1926:

> Lewis was upholding the progressive side in Atlantic City and the Communists were chanting hosannas to his name, but I recalled that in his own union he was supreme dictator, Communists being barred from membership, and that those who disagreed with John L. were expelled and had to shift elsewhere. The Lewis dynasty had long demanded unqualified obedience.[235]

Pesotta saw Lewis, who was a republican until 1932, not only as dictatorial, but also as an ineffective union leader, unless there was an economic or political incentive for him personally. She recalled that he neglected the needs of union members: "Miners going to union meetings often had to walk nine miles before they were clear of company ground…The Miner's Policy Committee must have discussed this problem time after time and demanded that the UMW leaders bring pressure on the A F of L to work out a solution." She sized up Lewis this way:

> Looking at him realistically, I saw the man as a consistent conservative Republican, who might at any time support the Democrats if it meant gain for his organization or fame for himself. I could not accept his vocal concern for the mass-production workers as altruistic. [236]

To Pesotta, Lewis' leftist challengers were her allies, regardless of their political or ideological leanings, which often differed. For instance, Pesotta was then engaged in a bitter battle with the Communists over control of the ILGWU, yet many of the miners in the movement were communists. And Pesotta was secular, as was the case with most radicals at the time, but John Brophy was a devout Catholic. Both Hapgood and Germer

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[234] Pesotta characterized Lewis as a manipulative, dictatorial tyrant, and was more critical of him than any other individual in her account of the labor movement, *Bread Upon the Waters.*
[235] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 180.
[236] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 180.

were prominent SP members, but Pesotta, an anarchist, eschewed the electoral system.[237] In fact, Pesotta had worked side by side with Hapgood and his future wife Mary Donavon (also a prominent SP member) for several years on the defense committee for Sacco & Vanzetti in Boston before they were executed in August of 1927.[238]

Pesotta's perspective was a reflection of the school's nonpartisan stance, and commitment to syndicalist ideals in general. All of Brookwood's faculty, and most of its student body, which was comprised of labor activists from across the left leaning spectrum, supported the save the miners movement.[239]Although none of the Brookwood faculty and board of directors were communists, their commitment to the free exchange of ideas meant that they refused to discriminate against Communists, much to the AFL's chagrin.[240] The graduating class at Brookwood that year, which included Pesotta, voted to bar the offending student from their final seminar on the grounds that he could not be trusted, while the handful of conservative students left the school and refused to attend graduation ceremonies.[241]

Brookwood's faculty and most of its students maintained an essentially anarchistic stance, in that they allowed for unconstrained freedom of expression, regardless of political orientation. However, as this conflict illustrated, "pure" anarchistic praxis was ethereal, meaning it dissipated when anarchists attempted to make it concrete in real world circumstances. The school's reticence to infringe on the freedom of any

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[237] William J. Shepherd, "The Archivist's Nook: John Brophy – A Pennsylvania Miner's Life – What's Up," Catholic University of America, August 27, 2019, https://www.lib.cua.edu/wordpress/newsevents/11777/; Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters*, 180.
[238] Rose Pesotta Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library."
[239] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 108-09; Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 180.
[240] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 108.
[241] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 108-09.

political group to express its views—even in order to protect the school's egalitarian aims—had paradoxically put the school's very existence at risk.

The reality was that achieving the egalitarian ideals inherent in anarchism inevitably required some level of rulemaking and enforcement, which paradoxically meant that it also required compromising anarchism's antiauthoritarian ideal. Pesotta revealed, in a letter that she wrote in 1934, that she ultimately reconciled with this dilemma by being willing to compromise pure anarchistic values, and allow for some rule making, but only to the extent that it protected her own personal freedom: "The principle which I hold dearer than anything else in the world is FREEDOM, which I interpret thus: my freedom ends where your freedom begins, this is the cardinal principle of anarchism."[242]

However, there were practical limitations on pragmatic anarchists' ability to impose such limits on the powerful institutions they came to rely on, such as the AFL, the SP, and the CP, even if they built nonpartisan alliances in the radical community. Resisting these institutions was a dangerous endeavor, which was compounded because those institutions had different political agendas, which were sometimes diametrically opposed.

For instance, the disaffected conservative students in this conflict instigated a campaign by the AFL to disaffiliate Brookwood from the WEB, which cut off the schools' critical connections with AFL unions, which had been an important way for it to propagate the school's ideas. And the AFL had done so by claiming that the school was

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[242] RP to "My dear New Yorker," January 18, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.

too radical, specifically accusing it of being communist.[243] Ironically, at the same time, the communist paper, the *Daily Worker* vilified Brookwood for being "class-collaborationist."[244]

Despite the risks which working in the mainstream labor movement posed, pragmatic anarchists, saw it as imperative. First of all, to them, it was the most effective means of stirring the social revolution, especially considering the fate of the IWW, which was quickly waning. Moreover, they saw their involvement as necessary to help prevent the Communists from taking over the labor movement. And finally, they felt that the traditional anarchist movement had not come up with any better alternatives.

During the 1920s, these views had created a schism in the traditional anarchist movement over how it should respond to rising nativism and communism, even though the two groups agreed that reaching native born workers with their socialist ideas was critical. Their inability to develop a coherent ideological message, however, ultimately precluded them from achieving that goal. As the traditional anarchist movement declined, tensions built between these two factions, and pragmatic anarchists, like Pesotta, built a growing network of radicals, many of whom were connected with Brookwood or identified with its ideology.

The school responded to the controversy with the AFL by attempting to reinvigorate the labor movement with the militant spirit it had had in the 1910s, which the AFL had all but stamped out. The AFL had made it clear to Brookwood that it would not tolerate dissenters. Furthermore, it had consistently demonstrated its unwillingness to

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243 Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 108-09.
244 Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 108.

organize the unorganized. So the leaders of the school sought to fight the "business unionism," of the AFL, which had become beholden to "capitalist culture," by focusing on developing a new militant "labor culture," which attended to the needs of the workers, from the perspective of the workers who they organized.

But it would appeal not just to immigrant workers, as it had in the earliest workers' education programs, but to native born workers as well, who had been increasingly taking industrial jobs since The Immigration Act of 1924. Muste began to advocate for an "American approach," to labor unionizing. This point of view framed the struggles of the working class as the "third revolution" in American history, the first being against the British and the second against slavery. Muste criticized radicals for their "lack of roots in American soil."[245] Even though patriotism, and sentimental nationalism repelled Muste, he believed that adapting to the ideological conditions which radicals faced was a prerequisite to their involvement in the American labor movement. In 1931, he wrote:

> With capitalism organized all over the world, the labor movement must also be international, but the American section will have to be built by the courage, solidarity and brains of American workers. Nobody else can do the job here, any more than we can do the job somewhere else.[246]

Muste issued a sixteen-point "Challenge to Progressives," a rallying cry to radicals opposed to both the "Communist tactics" and the "reactionary" policies of the AFL, to aggressively organize industrial workers, with special attention to women workers, Black workers, and immigrant groups. The Challenge called them to resist

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[245] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 172-175.
[246] Danielson, *American Gandhi,* 54, citing A. J. Muste in 1931.

antilabor laws, campaign for social insurance and other reforms, form a labor party, recognize the Soviet Union, oppose American imperialism and militarism and working-class internationalism, "since capitalism is internationally organized and conditions of work in one country directly affect workers in other lands."[247]

AFL leadership predictably, denounced the Challenge, and so did the CP, which was ironic because the Communists were now also advocating for the American approach. But the sixteen points generated considerable discussion in liberal, left, and labor circles, which led to the founding of the Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA), and Brookwood began to attract more radicals to its student body, as well as the attention of mainstream newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and the *World,* as well as eliciting favorable responses in the labor and radical press. The left wing of the SP strongly supported it, including Norman Thomas, who in the *New Leader,* commented that the 'Challenge' was significant not for its program, which was not new, but because it had appeared in *Labor Age,* which had "standing with organized workers." He called on fellow Socialists to study the statement and to actively support it, which many leading Socialists did.[248]

The most enthusiastic responses came from students, alumni, and faculty of labor colleges and extension programs, who had been exposed to the views of the pragmatic idealists, and were frustrated in their attempts to modernize their unions. J. C. Kennedy, the director of Seattle Labor College, who became an instructor of economics at Brookwood in 1929, commented that the

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[247] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 117.
[248] Danielson *American Gandhi*, 122.

> Challenge to Progressives …expresses the sentiments of thousands of active workers in and out of the Labor Movement all over the country. It has become increasingly apparent…that we could not rally our forces around the banner of the Communist Party, because of its dogmatic spirit, autocratic form of organization and inability to comprehend the psychology of the American worker. At the same time, it had become equally clear that the AFL leadership had become so thoroughly capitalistic in its outlook that it was unable to build a movement sufficiently strong to cope with American capitalism. [249]

Muste's biographer argued that although rarely acknowledged in historical accounts of the Socialist Party, the sixteen points and the subsequently formed CPLA became the fulcrum for the emergence of the "Militants," the group of younger Socialists who shook up the party in the 1930s with their demands for greater militancy and criticism of the party's parliamentarianism."[250] Pesotta was one of those militants. But she was not a Socialist, but rather one of the anarchists who remained active in the mainstream labor movement throughout the 1920s, as the anarchist movement splintered.

While the traditional anarchist movement continued its decline, and the ILGWU ended the decade nearly decimated, this small group of pragmatic anarchists developed an important network of allies in the labor movement, during this period, which consisted mainly of left-wing socialists. The lessons that they learned working together in the 1920s, and the labor culture which they helped foster, proved critical to the surge in unionizing during the 1930s. Some of the most prominent activists of the 1930s would emerge from the ferment at Brookwood, including Pesotta. Ultimately, the college's influence on the labor movement was so great that Historian Steven Fraser called it a

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[249] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 122.
[250] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 122.

"cadre school for the CIO."[251] Years later when Pesotta encountered Brookwood friends on labor's battlefields in Flint and Akron, it was as though they were realizing the goal she had set at Brookwood: to become "a handle to the tools."[252]

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[251] Schofield, *To Do & to Be*, 124, note 31, reference to Steven Fraser, "*Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York, 1991): 332. See also Richard J. Altenbaugh, *Education for Struggle: The American Labor Colleges of the 1920s and 1930s* (Philadelphia, 1990); Charles F. Howlett, "Brookwood Labor College and Worker Commitment to Social Reform," *Mid-America* 61 (January 1979):47-66. Richard J. Altenbaugh comments on the leadership of Brookside alumni like Pesotta, Len De Caux, Frank Winn, and the Reuther brothers at the famous Flint sit-down strike in 1936-37. Altenbaugh writes, "What unfolded at Flint assumed all of the characteristics of a textbook version of a strike as taught at the labor colleges," 256.

[252] RP to Mollie Steimer, March 23, 1925, Archives of the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands as cited by Schofield, *To Do & to Be*, 124, note 33.

Chapter IV.

Anarchism and the State

The enactment of NIRA, the first law enacted under the New Deal, in June 1933 precipitated a dramatic surge in labor activism, and changed the political landscape. The ramifications of that shift for the anarchist movement was that it led to the irreconcilable split of the movement into two factions: the traditionalists, who considered themselves "purists," and pragmatists, who were inclined to update their ideology to suit the circumstances they encountered. The debate which brought their conflict to a climax centered primarily on their differences over their respective interpretations of the anarchist ideal of antistatism, but it was also colored by shifting cultural and gender norms at the time.

NIRA

A defining aspect of anarchism is its oppositional stance toward the state and to hierarchical institutions in general. On this, pragmatic and traditional anarchists found common ground, at least theoretically. But after the enactment of NIRA, the views of these two groups sharply diverged on what form that opposition should take. The latter group, which included Pesotta and others like her, worked in the mainstream labor movement and took advantage of NIRA to unionize even more workers, despite its significant downsides. While the traditionalists, which included Marcus and his adherents, who viewed the former group as being complicit in the government's "fascist

scheme," did not. Rather they remained ethnically centric, becoming increasingly insular and hostile not only to the state, but sometimes to other anarchist comrades as well.[253]

Some of the ideas of the two groups aligned. They both saw strikes as the workers' only reliable source of political power, and each one credited worker militance rather than the NIRA for the strike surge in the early 1930s. Both consistently regarded NIRA as more of a danger to the labor movement than a benefit, although to differing degrees. While pragmatic anarchists took advantage of NIRA's acknowledgement of workers' right to join a union, they did so while issuing warnings about its pitfalls.[254]

Initially, they were not alone in their skepticism, which was widespread not just in the unions, including among conservative officials, but also in employer groups. The purpose of the act was to stabilize the economy by fixing prices and wages in industry wide codes of "fair competition." And the main concern by all the groups effected was how the boards, which the NRA was authorized to establish, would arbitrate the process between employers and the unions as they created the code.[255]

The ILGWU's official publication *Justice* reported that employers were creating their own associations "for the purpose of railroading through a code that would allow them to continue imposing sweatshop conditions on workers."[256] Unions, on the other hand hoped to establish higher standards by negotiating directly with employers before

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[253] Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 187, nt,117, Man!, January 1934. In fact, as we have seen, Pesotta was quite skeptical of the National Recovery Act; see detailed analysis by Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism*, Goldstein-Goren Series in American Jewish History 1 (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2011), 194.
[254] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1, RP quoting Marcus Graham.
[255] "Our Documents - National Industrial Recovery Act (1933)," accessed April 23, 2021, https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=66.
[256] Katz, *All Together Different,* 193.

the NRA hearings. In fact, Dubinsky agreed to move up the date of the strike in anticipation of the NRA creating a code of hours and wages, which would take effect as soon as the end of August.[257]

But, as Historian Daniel Katz has shown, this began to change after the 1933 strike victories, which is when Dubinsky became more optimistic about the NRA. Then he, and others on the GEB began to credit the NIRA for being the reason that 60,000 dressmakers, nearly the entire workforce, went out on strike in 1933. They now said, "that their ability to claim that the President wants you to join a union was the single most important factor in labor's upsurge."[258] Katz likened Dubinsky, who embraced the NRA as a way to rationalize building an alliance "with liberal politicians and manufacturers who made it easier for him to stabilize the union," to the ILGWU leaders who had similarly welcomed the "Protocols of Peace a generation earlier." Katz observed that Dubinsky increasingly "toned down his already mild socialist rhetoric in return for state guarantees protecting the rights of unions."[259]

However, anarchist union organizers, and their allies, who had closer links to rank-and-file organizing were concerned about the tendency of Dubinsky and other GEB members to increasingly overvalue the new state interventions and to dismiss the

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[257] Katz, *All Together Different,*193.
[258] Katz, *All Together Different,*192, nt,76 ILGWU, "Report and Proceedings of the 1934 ILGWU Convention," 8–13. Irving Bernstein, The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933–1941 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 30–36. Bernstein takes Dubinsky, John L. Lewis, William Green, and Dan Tobin at their word. But, as this chapter shows, Dubinsky had a philosophical and strategic interest in reinventing the narrative of labor's revival.
[259] Katz, *All Together Different,* 196.

importance of militant local movements.[260] For Pesotta, the NIRA, from the start, was a mixed blessing. She had seen the NIRA help embolden workers to strike, including several immigrant Mexican women dressmakers, who she had worked alongside in the spring of 1933. When the act passed, they requested that the ILGWU send Pesotta to L.A. to help them establish a local union.

But to Pesotta, the downsides far outweighed the benefits of the act. It legitimized company unions and allowed employers to sometimes dominate the bureaucratically overburdened NRA boards. She had had to overcome daunting challenges in L.A., which she felt were only exacerbated by NIRA. At the time, native born American union members considered Mexican immigrant women to be unorganizable. And L.A. was dominated by business and civic leaders who had been intransigently opposed to labor since the McNamara bombing of the L.A. Times building in 1910. These leaders were backed by the L.A. times and the L.A. Police Department's notorious "Red Squad." [261] Furthermore, communists were entrenched in the weakened, male dominated cloakmakers' union. And on top of all that, Pesotta found that the manufacturers were working hand-in-hand with the new NRA board.[262]

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[260] Katz, *All Together Different,*192, nt,76 ILGWU, "Report and Proceedings of the 1934 ILGWU Convention," 8–13; Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933–1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 30–36. Bernstein takes Dubinsky, John L. Lewis, William Green, and Dan Tobin at their word. But, as this chapter shows, Dubinsky had a philosophical and strategic interest in reinventing the narrative of labor's revival.

[261] "Between 1907 and 1911, the United States was hit by the longest period of sustained terrorism in its history. Of more than 200 bombings that were carried out during this period, the most shocking was the dynamiting of the *Los Angeles Times* building" by two union members, brothers John J. and James Barnabas McNamara on October 1, 1910, which killed twenty-one people. Lew Irwin, *Deadly Times: The 1910 Bombing of the Los Angeles Times and America's Forgotten Decade of Terror* (Guilford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, an imprint of Globe Pequot Press, 2013).

[262] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 23.

Pesotta achieved several notable milestones in L.A. in a relatively short time. She established a dressmakers' union in L.A. for the first time in the ILGWU's history. And she did so by employing creative new tactics. She recruited Mexican garment workers on radio stations broadcasting out of Tijuana, Mexico. And she gained public sympathy for immigrant garment workers, despite the preponderance of native born American's in L.A., while simultaneously thwarting the Red Squad, by rounding up three hundred of the striker's children, already in costume for a Halloween party, and marching them around the garment center in two-by-two formation. The scene attracted countless reporters and photographers, backed up traffic, and antagonized Captain "Red" Hynes, of the L.A. Police Department's notorious "Red Squad," who indignantly said, "You always would embarrass me."[263]

Another milestone she achieved was settling the strike by obtaining signed agreements with employers. This was especially critical in L.A. at the time since the NIRA granted legitimacy to company unions. Significantly, she obtained more than 60 such agreements with L.A. employers.[264] By contrast, the leaders of the male dominated cloakmaker's union, who Dubinsky referred to as "the backbone of the union," in L.A. had not yet obtained any signed contracts.[265] Pesotta, in keeping with her Brookwood training, had come to see this as backward, and out of step with the modern workplace, which she associated with the downfall of the IWW:

> The IWW was marked for failure, because of fundamental weaknesses in tactics. Loosely organized, it never got a tangible hold on its membership; and contemptuous of the business world's methods, it had no signed contracts. Thus

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[263] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 42.
[264] Katz, *All Together Different*, 194.
[265] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 23.

> the gains it made through hard-fought strikes were necessarily only temporary. Its attitude toward the future, though idealistic, was visionary and not practical.[266]

Pesotta also focused on setting up Brookwood's new type of "labor culture." "She created a commissary for strikers and their families, and later she added a relief store to provide weekly groceries."[267] And she established a multicultural education program, which she described:

> We hope to win the members through educational work which has already begun. We hold classes in public speaking and parliamentary law, and later we shall hold regular classes in labor problems, labor literature, etc., in both languages, English and Spanish. We are also planning to hold social gatherings giving our members a chance to learn that a trade union is not all discussion but play and merriment as well. The girls will add color to these affairs—they all own evening gowns and dancing shoes.[268]

Nonetheless, NIRA had a negative effect on the outcome of the strike, confirming Pesotta's fears about the law, which only increased her resolve to resist it. The strike had brought employers to the bargaining table, and workers had won recognition for their union, but the newly established L.A. NRA board had allowed employers to manipulate the arbitration process and unnecessarily extend the strike until the end of the season. This impacted the strikers' ability to negotiate more favorable terms, and caused many workers to lose their jobs.[269]

WTUL officials, such as Rose Schneiderman, who had helped garment workers lead the 1909 strike, but had since that time become Roosevelt administration advisors, were now praising the NRA codes. Schneiderman called them "the Magna Charta of the

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[266] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 148.
[267] Katz, *All Together Different*, 194.
[268] Katz, *All Together Different*, 193, nt.; Rose Pesotta, "The Revolt of Los Angeles Dressmakers," *Justice*, January 1934, 21.
[269] Katz, *All Together Different*, 195; Orleck, "The Activists in Their Prime: The Mainstreaming of Industrial Feminism, 1920-1945," 46.

working woman," characterizing them as "the most thrilling thing that has happened in my lifetime." But Pesotta continued to condemn the codes. Witnessing how badly they were abused in L. A. and then later in Seattle, she complained "the women are satisfied that the N.R.A. gave them 35 hours and better wages, why pay dues to a union that does nothing for the workers?"[270]

From Pesotta's perspective, the NIRA had far less influence in the uprisings than it had been credited with. She argued rather that it was young militants, acting in Philadelphia before the NIRA was enacted, who had actually inspired the massive New York strike in August:[271]

> In the spring of 1933 the garment workers of notorious open-shop Philadelphia, driven by sheer intuition that the time is ripe for reorganization, quit work marching out in a spontaneous strike. This was a signal. That "wash-out" as we called the Philadelphia general strike was ample proof that the courage and militancy of the girls is still strong." Incidentally, this strike preceded with several months the NRA.[272]

Katz found that "Pesotta emphasized that the codes only established meaningful terms and conditions of employment if manufacturers were pressured by militant

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[270] Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable," 17, New York Evening *Journal*, October 24, 1933, 15 (clipping in R.S., A97), RP to David Dubinsky, February 1, 1935, Kheel Center, Dubinsky Papers, Box 114.

[271] The GEB described Local 50's May 9, 1933 walkout of 5,000 workers of numerous ethnicities, as a "Rising from the dead." The local had been a woefully weak organization that had not struck since 1921.Yet, it was a huge success. It was settled in one day and gave the dressmakers a 10 percent wage increase, a forty-hour week, and union recognition. The GEB's report at the time suggests that the GEB shared Pesotta's view by saying that, subsequent to the Philadelphia strike, the "newly confident ILGWU, subsequently waged campaigns simultaneously in nearly 60 cities." Parmet, *The Master of Seventh Avenue*, 91, nt,30, ILGWU, Report of the GEB, Twenty-second Convention, 1934, 72-73, Dubinsky and Raskin, David Dubinsky, 109-111, Minutes of the GEB, October 7, 1933, 6; Danish, World of David Dubinsky,75.

[272] Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism*, Goldstein-Goren Series in American Jewish History 1 (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 193, nt,79; Rose Pesotta, "Address to the 13th Convention of the Free Federation of Labor at Mayaguez, Puerto Rico in September 1934," YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Bund Archives, ILGWU collection, file 23. Katz's note, "Rose Pesotta eloquently encapsulated the militant and feminist spirit of the1933 generation."

dressmakers." She said, that if it had been left to the manufacturers, the codes would degrade factory conditions even further. Pesotta "argued that [they] 'supplemented but by no means supplant the collective agreements.' She warned that section 7(a) 'became an effective tool in the hands of the open shop company-union bosses, who used it and have planted more company unions than the labor movement ever knew before.'" In fact, as Pesotta well understood from her own experiences the NRA often hurt more than it helped garment workers.[273]

These views were widely held, not just by anarchists, but by many union leaders at the local level. "During the August 1933 strike, the New York Joint Board of Dressmakers, which included Dressmakers' Local 22, Italian Dressmakers' Local 89, Cutters' Local 10, and Pressers' Local 60, issued a newsletter" with similar warnings. "In the first issue of the *Organizer*, the joint board reprinted section 7a of the NIRA," encouraging workers to exercise their right to join a union, and cautioning them to "read clause 7 carefully." The paper told them that, "In the final analysis the workers will receive only as much as they have the power to command."[274]

Strikes and union membership, including independent unions, grew concurrently with increasing disillusionment of the legislation and its administration. By March, 1934, the ILGWU GEB reported its membership had grown to "about 165,000," having raised its rank within the AFL to third place from twenty-third. The ILGWU had created fifty-six new locals, and was engaged in fourteen organizing campaigns. As employers

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[273] Katz, *All Together Different,*194, nt., 81; Pesotta, "Address to the 13th Convention of the Free Federation of Labor at Mayaguez."
[274] Katz, *All Together Different,* 193-94, note 80; Organizer 1, no. 1 (n.d.), Kheel Center, ILGWU Records, collection 5780/14, box 20, file 1.

increasingly abused the NRA throughout 1934, by promoting company unions, not only did criticism of the NRA mount, 1,470,000 workers went out on strike.[275]

Pesotta was consistently opposed to government and AFL leaders' intervention in strikes. She frequently contended that they occurred in spite of, and sometimes because of the actions of government and AFL officials, who she saw as complicit in employer's schemes to exploit NIRA. Pesotta was often critical of President Roosevelt, who publicly "proposed a 'truce' between labor and capital, encouraging workers to allow the mechanism of the NRA to replace the disruptive act of striking," "calling for a voluntary pledge" not to go "out on strike."[276]

Pesotta, who spent a considerable amount of time on the Embarcadero, San Francisco's historic waterfront, during the dockworkers strike, recalled how "all the AFL unions supported the strike," yet AFL President William Green attempted to "discredit it," by saying "it was only of local character, possessing no national significance."[277] Green had repudiated the unauthorized conflict in San Francisco, stating that "the strikers, if they win, win a moral victory, but, if they lose, they lose all."[278]

Pesotta asserted that these actions by AFL and government leaders actually stirred the emergence of many nascent unions, which were independent of the AFL, such as those in the rubber and auto industries, and to the dynamic which subsequently emerged between workers and both government and AFL officials. In Flint, GM's citadel, she reported that there was a succession of revolts by auto workers in 1933. "Three

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[275] Parmet, *The Master of Seventh Avenue*, 93-95.
[276] Katz, *All Together Different,* 192-97, note 85, 85; Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Sunday Radio Address," September 30, 1934.
[277] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 89-90.
[278] Parmet, *The Master of Seventh Avenue*, 81.

independent unions were formed… - the Mechanics' Educational Society of America, the Associated Automobile Workers, and the Automobile Industrial Workers' Association." Others included the battle-scarred IWW, and the Communist-led Auto Workers' Union; all of which Pesotta said, "aroused the interest of the AFL."[279]

She recalled that a general strike had been planned by autoworkers, but then "postponed" at President Roosevelt's request, similar to his attempt to subdue dockworkers in San Francisco:

> The 'settlement' arrangement proved a Greek gift to the workers, for it added to the NRA Code a section providing for 'proportional representation,' for A F of L unions, independent unions, and company unions, on all committees for collective bargaining and adjustment of grievances. Thus company unions were given the same recognition as legitimate unions by the national government.[280]

As she put it, "Although the general strike plan had been ditched by the President's 'intervention,' automobile strikes occurred that year in at least nine cities."[281]

Like Pesotta, Charles Zimmerman, spokesman for the Communist anti-Stalinists of the Lovestone group, had no faith in NIRA. He even presented a report opposing Dubinsky's support of it at the ILGWU 1934 convention. Zimmerman regarded not only the NRA but the New Deal in general as "a Fascist idea." He spoke at length, from the platform, (much to Dubinsky's chagrin), about how the NRA was "a very grave challenge to trade unionism," suggesting that within NRA "circles" talk favored the conversion of "unions into government agencies," which to Zimmerman was "a tendency

[279] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 231.
[280] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 231.
[281] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 231.

which bears within itself the seeds of Fascism."[282] He vigorously warned against capitulating to government pressure to relinquish the right to strike:

> The reckless and uncritical enthusiasm with which this proposal has been hailed in some quarters is certainly not the attitude likely to bring any good to the trade unions…The strike is a weapon that labor must always have at its command and be ready to use it if its voice is to be listened to with respect in the councils of the employers…Even when it comes to enforcing decisions of the NRA boards of government bodies, where such decisions are unfavorable to the employers, the threat of a strike has been found to bring better and quicker results than official prosecution which the employers usually and with good reason regard as an empty threat. The workers cannot, therefore, afford to surrender, even through (sic) voluntarily, temporarily or indirectly, the only weapon that has proved of any value to them.[283]

Pesotta, as an anarchist, was very wary of government intervention, including the NIRA. But she was not opposed to taking advantage of the government's acknowledgement of the worker's right to join a union, which did embolden workers to not only join unions, but also to strike, which to her was their best weapon for improving working conditions.. Nor had she had qualms for the past decade and a half about being reimbursed for her work in organizing garment workers for the ILGWU.

Simon Pure Anarchism

But Marcus, the infamous critic of anarchists, did not share Pesotta's views, and now that he saw them becoming influential in the anarchist community, he set out to publicly denounce her for them.[284] Although Pesotta had been working as an ILGWU

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[282] Parmet, *The Master of Seventh Avenue*, 100-101.
[283] Katz, *All Together Different,* 192-97, note 86, Local 22 press release, October 3, 1934, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Bund Archives, ILGWU collection, file 49.
[284] Graham was notorious for attacking fellow anarchists, including Emma Goldman when she published her autobiography in 1938. Goldman also saw him as a "moral censor and a judge of comrades." Leeder, *The Gentle General,* 80, as quoted in Porter, *Visions on Fire,* 317.

union organizer, on and off since 1917, her recent success, and that of the ILGWU in general had given her a high profile in the labor movement, and had attracted Marcus' attention. As Zimmer pointed out, the ILGWU, which had approximately 200,000 members at the time, (of whom eighty to ninety percent were women), held the anarchist movement's "last major union foothold."[285]

A number of male, veteran unionists had moved up the union's hierarchy by the 1920s, including Bernard Shane, Louis Levy, Joseph Schneider, Mendel (Max) Bluestein, Leibush Frumkin, Nicholas Kirtzman, Morris Sigman, and Israel Feinberg. But those figures were joined during that period by a rising generation of rank-and-file militants who were mostly women, including Rose Pesotta, Anna Sosnovsky, Rose Mirsky, Sara Rothman, Clara Larsen, Isidore Wisotsky, Israel Ostroff, and Simon Farber.[286]

As Pesotta was settling the strike in L.A., unbeknownst to her, Marcus had stopped by the strike headquarters she had set up in L.A. to look things over. He was now using the pseudonym Marcus Graham, and was the editor of *Man!* Anarchism scholar, Hillary Lazar provided a historical account of the publication. It was established in January 1933 after "Vincenzo Ferrero, former editor of the San Francisco based, Italian-American anarchist periodical *L'Emancipazione* recruited" Marcus to help create "an English-language version of, and successor to that earlier paper." "*Man!* now linked the New York, Paterson, New Jersey, and San Francisco anarchist groups."[287]

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[285] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 169.
[286] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 169.
[287] Hillary Lazar, "Connecting Our Struggles: Border Politics, Antifascism, and Lessons from the Trials of Ferrero, Sallitto, and Graham by Hillary Lazar," *The Institute for Anarchist Studies* (blog), November 19, 2019, https://anarchiststudies.org/connecting-our-struggles-border-politics-antifascism-and-lessons-from-the-trials-of-ferrero-sallitto-and-graham/.

L'Emancipazione was an outgrowth of the International Group, which "Ferrero co-founded in 1927" as "a way to bring together the numerous multi-ethnic anarchist communities in the San Francisco Bay Area—including Chinese, Mexican, French, Russian, and Italian groups." And "it was modeled, in part, on the International Group of New York," and the *Road to Freedom,* but especially *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*.[288] Despite Marcus' abrasive personality, he was a good choice, in that, he was an experienced editor, and his politics aligned so closely with Ferrero's that some critics described the new publication as "an Italian paper with English vocabulary."[289]

Man! condemned the rise of statism, regardless of its form, whether fascist, Stalinist, or the welfare state, but did not advocate any program of action beyond spontaneous individual and mass rebellion. Rather, the paper took on a proto-green, primitivist, even millenarian type of tone, which opted for a "planless anarchy."[290] *Man!* promoted the individualist, and insurrectionary form of Galleanist anarchism.[291] To Graham, the ideal revolutionary was a poet. For, who, he asked, "has it been in the history of mankind that rebelled foremost against the compromise of idealism to practicability—if not its greatest poets?"[292]

Graham anticipated a devastating second world war. During a lecture in Albany New York in 1931, Graham declared,

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[288] Lazar, "Connecting Our Struggles."
[289] Lazar, "Connecting Our Struggles'; Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 187.
[290] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 116-17, nt., 21, 23. See Graham "What Ought to Be the Anarchist Attitude towards the Machine?," *Man!* March, 1934, 3, reference to "Machine Age Doom of Man, Poet Asserts—Marcus Graham Finds Civilization of Today Sterile—Speaks in Albany Tonight at Workman's Circle Institute," *Albany News,* December 18, 1931. newspaper clipping, Vertical File: Marcus, Shmuel, Lectures, Labadie Collection.
[291] Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 187.
[292] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 115.

> Out of these ruins humanity will evolve the pre-ancient, more experienced man, a self-reliant individual, striving to bring back the ancient civilization of the artisan, working out his destiny for the principles of voluntary cooperation, which in turn can only come through understanding, toleration and respect between human beings.[293]

Cornell found that "like other papers in this … tradition," it was strongly "anticapitalist, but it rejected the labor movement" altogether, even revolutionary syndicalism. Graham said that "the organized labor movement throughout the world is by its very nature and purpose a protective barrier against any spontaneous revolutionary action that may arise from among the exploited toilers." In Graham's mind, "whether affiliated with the revolutionary Spanish organization Confederacion Nacional de Trabajadores (CNT) or the liberal AFL, they were by nature authoritarian."[294]

With the exception of coal miners in Kentucky, who were engaged in a series of bloody wildcat strikes at the time, and who Graham described as "fierce," sincere," and "brave," he denounced union organizers.[295] The paper persistently criticized and antagonized union leaders. It praised San Francisco's 1934 general strike, but condemned the "deceitful mis-leaders" of the unions involved, who called off the strike after four days and advised workers to submit to arbitration, for "selling out" their members and averting a potentially revolutionary situation.[296] But he had a particular disdain for

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[293] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 117, citing "Machine Age Doom of Man, Poet Asserts."
[294] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 115, nt. 12. In stating this position, *Man!* received protest resolutions from the Free Society Group of Chicago, the Spanish Anarchist Groups of the United States, and the Spanish CNT. See "Can Organization be Anti-Authoritarian?," Man! June-July 1934.
[295] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 116.
[296] Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 187, nt,119, Man!, August 1934; Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 114-15.

anarchist union organizers, who he accused of participating in the government's "fascist scheme," meaning the NIRA.[297] In January1934, Graham announced to readers:

> Rose Pesotta has accepted a paid position to aid…in bringing back to power the same discredited officialdom of the International Garment Workers Union which she had at one time denounced and exposed as a band of careerists and crooks.[298]

Graham likewise criticized Pesotta's friend Anna Sosnovsky for accepting a "paid position," which, he said, "anarchists had long denounced as corrupting." "In mentioning these two instances," Graham explained, "*Man!* wishes to show that the Anarchist movement holds no brief for such desertions from Anarchist principles. On the contrary, it stands ready at all times to expose and denounce them."[299] The following month Graham published an article where he wrote:

> Whenever and wherever individual anarchists deviate from the cause and accept paid official jobs, they cease by such very acts to be part of the anarchist movement, which has at all times an uncompromising ideal to live for and to fight for.[300]

Pesotta responded by writing a scathing six-page letter to Hippolyte Havel, former editor of the *Road to Freedom,* who had written a less abrasive, yet sympathetic response to Graham's article, which Graham had printed in *Man!* Pesotta's letter nicely articulates her pragmatic anarchist perspective, and it also reveals how tensions over cultural and gender norms were interwoven in the conflict and complicated the dynamic in ways which probably increased the likelihood of a split in the movement. Pesotta expressed her

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[297] Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 187, nt,117, Man!, January 1934. In fact, as we have seen, Pesotta was quite skeptical of the National Recovery Act. See detailed analysis by Daniel Katz, *All Together Different*, 194.
[298] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 115, citing Graham, "Anarchists and the Labor Movement," *Man!,* January, 1934, 3-4.
[299] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 115.
[300] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1, RP quoting Marcus Graham.

disappointment in Havel for "represent[ing] the SIMON*PURE brand of anarchism." "[I] felt you of all comrades, knowing the idiosyncrasies of its editor should not have entered into a controversy with him."[301] She started off by casting anarchists, such as herself and Sosnovsky as militant heroes of human rights, who had rescued L.A. from its more than two-decade long intransigence to labor, which she blamed on the type of violent direct action that Graham and his adherents romanticized, (even though he did not openly endorse it):[302]

> During the recent garment workers general strike in the city of Los Angeles-where Trade Unions are taboo since the famous McNamara case, this mass-revolt against intolerable conditions won the respect and admiration of all, a strike that will be recorded in the annals of labor history for recognition of human rights.[303]

She then accused Graham of acting just as the "Jesuits and communists" who ostracize "heretics, or those who fail to comply with the official ruling of the high tribunal." And she questioned Grahams' motives for making such "flimsy charges," which suggested that "only since the inauguration of the N.R.A. we anarchists succumbed to the delusion and joined the labor movement."[304] Pesotta implied, less than subtly, that she believed that Graham's assertion of his authority over her and Sosnovsky was based, to some degree, on traditional cultural gender norms, by peppering her protest with derisive allusions to Graham's intelligence and his manhood. She started off by writing: "May I remind you that the editor of the MAN, if indeed he calls himself MAN,

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[301] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1, RP quoting Marcus Graham.
[302] Katz, *All Together Different,* 188.
[303] Between 1907 and 1911, the United States was hit by the longest period of sustained terrorism in its history. Of more than 200 bombings that were carried out during this period, the most shocking was the dynamiting of the *Los Angeles Times* building by two union members, brothers John J. and James Barnabas McNamara on October 1, 1910, which killed twenty-one people. Lew Irwin, *Deadly Times: The 1910 Bombing of the Los Angeles Times and America's Forgotten Decade of Terror* (Guilford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, an imprint of Globe Pequot Press, 2013).
[304] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1, RP quoting Marcus Graham.

knows full well that since 1917 Anna Sosnofsky, myself and several other comrade garment workers, are very active in our local trade unions," and that sometimes "expenses are paid while serving as organizers."[305] In driving home her point that they were indeed anarchists, she hinted that Graham and his cohorts were less intelligent, and less "manly" than anarchist women:

> No dear comrade Hippolyte I do not expect the editor of MAN nor any other man to hold brief for my activities in the labor movement. Nor do we myself and comrade Anna Sosnofsky consider ourselves out of the Anarchist movement. We have come to the workers at their requests to help them in a crisis, and we have done as much as it was phisically (sic) possible for any human being to do in such time. Yes it requires courage and conviction to work now among the people, unfortunately the editor of MAN will never understand this-courage and stamina were omitted by nature from his phisical (sic) make-up.[306]

Pesotta articulated the reasons Graham's legalistic view was problematic for her, beginning with its inherent contradictions to socialist ideals, which were also fundamental to anarchist philosophy. She wrote that,

> Living in a capitalist society we understand that all anarchists have to compromise at one time or another. I have known some very uncompromising anarchists who refused to be exploited by the capitalists—hence they lived on the labor of their brethren—other anarchists, who knowing that by this method they will not abolish capitalism, worked and supported their more idealistic, uncompromising comrades.[307]

The underlying presumptions in Pesotta's argument were twofold. The first was that the ultimate mission of anarchism was to achieve social justice. And secondly, anarchists should adapt to the circumstances in which they found themselves, even if that meant changing their approach in order to do so. She argued that since they were already "slaving as the rest do, we might as well also propagate a new system of society, a

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[305] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[306] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[307] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.

society that will give them equality." Since this could only happen when the workers themselves worked for such a change, it made no practical sense to her to "tell them to sit and wait for the millennium when the editor of MAN will finally pronounce them free."[308]

Pesotta argued that ignoring practical realities had dangerous implications, such as allowing authoritarians to takeover, and left the job of guarding against those threats to others. She pointed out that while Graham and his cohorts, "sit back and wait until the Bolsheviks, the Fascists, and all other riff-raff will bleed the people to their doom," anarchists like her and Sosnovsky were "trying to carry out in practice what he, an envious uncompromising Anarchist, is dreaming of in his seclusion." "We have come to the workers at their requests to help them in a crisis, and we have as much as it was phisically (sic) possible for any human being to do in such time."[309]

Pesotta's view was that participating in the labor movement was consistent with the spirit of anarchism's founders, which emphasized the social nature of humans:

> I still hold that anarchism is a human philosophy; we must have intercourse with human beings, we must actively participate in all social events. We must be among the people and teach them our ideal in practice, instead of fostering hatred and distrust we must be ready at any time to work and teach the workers to use their own initiative instead of following in blind obedience, if we consider the labor movement as a means to an end-we shall work within this labor movement to attain our goal.[310]

She pointed out that "Peter Kropotkin said he would join the syndicalist movement to work among the masses if he were young. Not having such a movement in this century, would he refuse to participate in the existing movement and abstain to work

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[308] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[309] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[310] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.

among the masses?”[311] Finally, she tried to appeal to Havel’s common sense, to convince him to accept the realities of the modern world.

> I quite agree with you comrade Hippolyte that Trade Unions are capitalistic organizations. For that matter every institution under the present system by the nature of its very existence is capitalistic. Does that imply that we have to [go] out into the wilderness and grow cabbage on some deserted farm to shake-off this capitalistic order? Is this the teaching of Bakunin, Kropotkin and the rest of our founders of Anarchism? Or shall we work and live among the people, among the very downtrodden rabble for whom our ideal is the very thing? Isn’t it a fact that anarchism is based on the human side of life and the workers are human?[312]

Pesotta ends the letter emphatically, in the same vein:

> We are not afraid at all times to criticize their tactics, if criticism is warranted…We maintain this same stand to date, and are known as the ANARCHISTS in our local unions…Let half-baked intellectuals, who have outlived their usefulness take a back seat and bark and condemn. We who are alive and virile, we who dare and do when others hide in their obscurity, we who are not afraid of criticising others and are being criticized, teaching and learning while doing-we shall go on with our activities![313]

Despite her vehement argument, Pesotta nonetheless appears to have been troubled herself about whether she was betraying her anarchist beliefs, especially now that her political influence was rising in the mainstream labor movement. As Graham pointed out, she had been openly critical of union officials, such as Dubinsky, who had previously been a radical member of the Bund, for developing blind spots in their social vision as they rose in the ranks. That month, Rose wrote to Emma that she was contemplating leaving her position as an organizer.

But Emma dissuaded her from doing so. The anarchist movement as she had known it, before the Red Scare, was nearly decimated, and its future rested on dedicated

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[311] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[312] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[313] RP to Hippolyte Havel, February 10, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.

young anarchists like Rose. This reality became all too clear when Pesotta came up short after a diligent search for someone to help get Emma a U.S. Visa. Rose had reported back to Goldman: "Unfortunately some [have] become too old, at times feebleminded...Others turned into the newly formed groups which you and I despise."[314]

Emma, having landed harshly since her exile from America in 1919, was more flexible than Rose's strident critics, and encouraged her to continue in her role:

> [It would be] folly for you to give up your position. But after all one doesn't live by bread alone. However, I would not for worlds want to influence you in any direction. The material issue does count. Each one has to decide for himself (sic) whether he (sic) is willing to launch out on the desperate road of material anxiety and insecurity.[315]

Emma, who had been unable to "earn a sou in Europe or Canada," advised caution: "Knowing what to expect I dare not suggest to you or any other comrade to cut himself loose from whatever material certainties he has and consecrate (sic) on our work which means starvation all the time besides danger."[316]

Whether prompted by Graham or not, becoming a paid, high ranking union official herself, did concern Rose. In another letter to Emma, two months later, Rose wrote, "I want you to know that it isn't pecuniary motives that keep me to this missionary work" "On the contrary I was drafted against my will and daily I pray that they recall me. I could very well earn my living in the factory with much more ease and comfort."[317] In May, several of her anarchist comrades, who were delegates at the ILGWU convention enthusiastically pushed for her nomination as a Vice President of the GEB. However,

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[314] RP to EG, March 3, 1934, RPP/NYPL/ SC Goldman, Box 10.
[315] RP to EG, January 31, 1934, RPP/NYPL/ SC Goldman, Box 10.
[316] RP to EG, January 31, 1934, RPP/NYPL/ SC Goldman, Box 10.
[317] RP to EG, March 3, 1934, RPP/NYPL/ SC Goldman, Box 10.

upon being elected to the position, which made her the only woman on the board out of 24 vice presidents, she became distressed.

Rose wrote in her diary that day, "The greatest misfortune happened to me this morning…I feel as if I lost my independence, cried the whole day."[318] She later recalled that day as "one of the most unhappy days of my life, I felt hot and cold at the same time. It seemed as if I were being dragged down by some dread force—like a swimmer caught in an undertow. I wanted to cry out in protest, but my throat felt paralyzed."[319]

She accepted the position reluctantly and then only on a temporary basis, often telling new members that she was a worker just like them. In a letter to another friend several months later she wrote,

> I still consider myself an anarchist-organizing the most exploited, most backward people on earth. If anyone says I am deviating from anarchism, I will tell him that this is *my way* to work for a new society.[320]

Pesotta's ability to access the resources of a large industrial union, which allowed her to come to Graham's aid a few weeks later, likely complicated matters further:

> On April 11 [1934], immigration officials 'ransacked' the homes of Ferrero and [his associate Domenico] Sallitto, arresting both men for violating Red Scare era 'criminal anarchy' statutes by providing office space to *Man!*... A board of review recommended both men be deported to Italy, despite the likelihood that, as anti-fascists, they would be jailed, if not executed, by Mussolini's government upon repatriation. Anarchists, led by Graham, attempted to raise two thousand dollars in bail money to free the men pending an appeal; but given the period's chastening conditions they fell far short.…Despite being publicly castigated by *Man!* only months earlier, Pesotta phoned her union's joint board, which posted bail for both men the next morning. Sallitto and Ferrero accepted the money despite their belief that unions only hurt the anarchist movement.[321]

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[318] RP Diary, June 9, 1934, RPP/NYPL/1934 Diary, Box 15.
[319] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 101.
[320] RP to Emil Olay, September, 1934, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[321] This story is summarized here by Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 117-18, nt. 28 citing Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices,*148.

However, the irony of how events transpired likely stung. Even though the ideas that *Man!* articulated did not translate into tangible support for those views, even among *Man's* own readership, the paper never tempered its position on unionism.[322]

The International Anarchist Group's Polish, Russian, and Chinese anarcho-syndicalists, did not share Graham's view on anarchist union organizers. When Pesotta visited San Francisco in 1934, members of Pingshe, with whom she had corresponded as secretary of New York's International Group, introduced her to a group of female Chinese garment workers, establishing the ILGWU's first contacts in San Francisco's Chinatown. This connection paved the way for a groundbreaking ILGWU-led Chinese garment strike four years later, which Pingshe actively supported, but *Man!* ignored.[323]

Moreover, by late 1935, the younger generation of anarchists began to show signs that they might be willing to compromise. Bluestein issued a pamphlet which reiterated his argument "that a complete solution required revolution." However, he also "proposed a program to fight 'for some measure of security from starvation.' First [he asserted], workers should demand 'prevailing wages' for the unemployed and publicly employed, paid for by the wealthy."[324]

Next, Bluestein argued that anarchists "needed to 'get back into industry,'[to fight] for shorter hours with no reduction in pay, as a means to spread out the work. [Bluestein believed that] winning these reforms required the courage to break the law: 'Let the unemployed show a little more respect for their persons and a lot less for private

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[322] Cornell in *Unruly Equality*, 117-18, nt. 28, citing Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices,*148.
[323] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 65–77, Zimmer, "The Whole World Is Our Country," 187, nt118, Jane Mee Wong, "Pingshe: Retrieving an Asian American Anarchist Tradition," *Amerasia Journal* 34, no. 1 (2008): 133–51, 142,145–46.
[324] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 128.

property, and the government and the wealthy will also begin to fear and respect their strength.'"[325] Thus, even a cofounder of the Vanguard Group, had acknowledged that despite the persistent, onerous depression, the demise of "capitalism was not imminent, and the federal government [could be] a legitimate target from which anarchists might wring concessions, assuming they did so using disruptive, direct- action tactics rather than elections and lobbying."[326]

However, "getting back into industry" remained anathema to Graham. In late 1934, he wrote, "As it appears to me, the gravest of danger for mankind lies in the continued immense growth of industrialization of life to the point where the individual loses more and more of his significance as a self-reliant, self-creative and self-ingenuitive [sic] human being." Graham blamed the depression on overproduction brought about by technological advances, not just in the U.S., but in many other countries as well. Seeing war (somewhat presciently) as the only way to absorb this excess, Graham exhorted his readers to "Abandon the cities; leave them as monuments to the folly of man."[327]

The debate between Pesotta and Graham offers some perspective on how two poles of the traditional anarchist movement responded to the significant changes in the political landscape at the time. Traditional anarchists such as Graham became increasingly insular and hostile toward not just the state and the rise of fascism in the world, but also to their own comrades who they saw as capitulating to the encroachment of the government into the lives of working people.

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[325] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 128.
[326] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 128.
[327] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 128.

For anarchists, such as Pesotta, the compromises they made gave them critical access to the masses of workers, and to a wide network of other radicals to collaborate with. They saw this as the only realistic way of resisting the dangers posed not just by employers and the AFL, but also by New Deal legislation. As a result, the anarchist movement split, rather than solving for its dwindling base of support among either the younger generation of anarchists, whose direction was still uncertain, or among native born Americans.

Chapter V.

Anarchism and the CIO

During the mid to late 1930s, anarchists, such as Pesotta, who had embraced Brookwood's pragmatic approach to labor activism, and had collaborated with a wide array of radicals, now contributed to the largest wave of industrial unionism in America since the height of IWW syndicalism in the mid-1910s. And they helped to usher in the CIO, a movement which presented the first real challenge to industrial employers, and to the conservative leaders in the AFL, since that time. Moreover, these anarchists used the CIO as a means for resisting FDR's hold on power, and for attracting a new generation of anarchists to the labor movement.[328]

However, they did so by making even more compromises, such as: Collaborating with Communists, whose goal was to control all labor unions from Moscow, even though anarchists had previously battled Communists for this very reason, even to the point of nearly destroying the unions; and Americanizing their socialist message in order to make it appealing to native born industrial workers, although it would no longer be associated with anarchism nor the immigrant experience where it originated from.

Right after the AFL convention in Atlantic City, in October 1935, the heads of eight industrial unions, under pressure from their increasingly radicalized membership, which now included many Communists, formed the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), to focus specifically on the needs of industrial workers. As a result,

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[328] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,*182.

by 1937, union membership grew by more than two-and-a-half times from 2,689,000 to 7,001,000, consisting mostly of industrial workers. The biggest leap in union membership occurred between 1936 and 1937 when it jumped by 75 percent in a single year.[329]

This was the period of the great CIO sit-down strikes where workers occupied the plants rather than walking out and the CIO went from being a committee of the AFL, to a large industrial union in its own right, which competed with the AFL for union members.[330] The tidal wave of strikes began with rubber tire workers, at Goodyear in Akron, Ohio, which Pesotta helped lead. She referred to this strike as the "acid test" for the CIO, which triggered a wave of strikes across the automobile industry.[331]

Native Born Americans

Anarchists had struggled to reach native born Americans with their socialist message in the past. But as Brookwooders, with their evolving perspectives on labor unionizing, engaged with an industrial workforce, which was now predominantly native born, and suffering under depraved conditions during the depression, a new dynamic emerged. The result was a cultural shift, in which, native born industrial workers came to identify as members of the working class, united in solidarity for social justice, just as anarchists had long hoped that native born Americans would do. However, they did so by

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[329] Sidney Fine, *Sit-down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937*, 2nd Edition, with a new foreword by Kim Moody (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), xi, note 1; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Membership—2018," News Release, January 18, 2019, USDL-19–0079, table 3, Gerald Mayer, "Union Membership Trends in the United States," Cornell University ILR School, Digital Commons@ ILR 2004, 23,
https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1176&contexrt=key_workplace.
[330] Sidney Fine, *Sit-down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937*, 23.
[331] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 182.

seeing the militant socialism of Brookwooders and other radicals at the time, including the Communists, as being rooted in American revolutionary ideals, rather than in immigrant radicalism, which had actually spawned industrial unionism in the first place.

By 1933, the traditional anarchist movement still had not united its own ranks, nor had it made much headway in reaching native born Americans, even in the labor movement. Pragmatists like Pesotta often saw native born Americans as being just as intransigently entrenched in their individualism and cultural traditions, and drawn to violent direct action, as traditional anarchists were. Rose had relied on workers' education, which was now standard practice in the ILGWU, to develop class consciousness among workers. She established a workers' education program in each of her organizing campaigns to help overcome the biases she saw. But it was still an uphill battle for her to overcome the cultural perspectives which fueled those biases.

While in L. A., Pesotta found that nearly all the native-born union members she met thought that "Mexican women could never be organized." Most were skeptical, she said, because they believed Mexicans would "work for a pittance and could endure any sort of treatment." This is why, they told her, L.A. garment manufacturers preferred to hire Mexicans.[332] Pesotta recalled disagreeing with them and contending instead that,

> Mexican dressmakers were normal humans, who simply needed honest and intelligent guidance…I had worked with them the previous spring and we had got along well…Several of those women are greatly respected by their own people. Give them an intensive training in elementary trade unionism, and it won't be long before they are up to the rest of the ILGWU organizing staff.[333]

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[332] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 20-21.
[333] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 20-21.

Pesotta created a program which offered these workers the same type of help she had sought for herself as a recent immigrant, which did motivate them. However, it did little to soften the entrenched biases of many native-born workers, including prejudices that she felt were directed at her personally as well. She complained to Max Danish, editor of the ILGWU publication, *Justice,* that American born workers "hate Spaniards and Jews. All bosses to their opinion are Jews and all Jews are bosses, hence they are doubly hated. The American element also despises Jews as Bolsheviks." She hoped that the strike would prove not only how committed and disciplined immigrant women were in organizing and striking, but also the benefits of having them join in solidarity in the union, thus giving the American "race conscious workers ... a dose ... that will last them a lifetime."[334]

A complicating aspect of dealing with the biases of native-born Americans is that Pesotta felt that she not only had to battle divisive ethnic and/or gender biases with local union members, but also with Dubinsky at headquarters, who she often sparred with, for exhibiting similar biases, despite the fact that they both came from a Bundist background. For instance, after being in L.A. just two weeks, Pesotta sent Dubinsky an update which provocatively claimed that these women might become the backbone of the union:

> might as well learn it now, that next to the Italians the next largest Latin group in our union will be the Spanish-Mexican dressmakers. They are coming in numbers, after our successful campaign in their press, radio and every other channel." She said, "We got them because we are the only AMERICANS who take them into the organization as our equals. They might become the backbone of the union on the west coast.[335]

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[334] RP to Max Danish, December 15, 1933, RPP/NYPL/DC Box 1.
[335] DD to RP, 9.28.1933, RPP/NYPL/GC Box 1.

On her next assignment in Seattle, Pesotta complained to Dubinsky that she was having a "hell of a job" with the workers who she described as, “the100% American white daughters of the sturdy pioneers. They are all members of bridge clubs, card clubs, lodges, etc. Class consciousness is as remote from their thoughts as any idea that smacks with radicalism.”[336]

Although the city was founded by immigrants and most of its 375,000 residents were immigrants at the time, she said, they nevertheless regarded “later comers as outsiders. ‘Rugged individualists,’ their motto was ‘Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost!’”[337] Pesotta described the job of establishing a union in Seattle as a “herculean task.”[338] In a letter to Emma, she wrote: “Nothing matters to these complacent wage earners. They shower abuse, sent to jail, kick and fight with me, just like they did years ago, regardless of the years of change, regardless of the powerful organization that is there to help them.”[339]

Rose felt she had hit an impasse, and lamented to Emma:

> Did not our dear comrades Peter Kropotkin and his associates overestimate the goodwill and cooperation of the poor and downtrodden? Wasn’t it a little superficial to maintain that all the good qualities rest with wage earners and everything evil part of the ruling class? For years I have worked among the working class. I have seen those susceptible to propaganda and those who have eyes and ears shut against us. I have had all opportunities to give these people education and enlightenment and still I find the road very, very, hard.[340]

At first, Emma was despondent too but then her outlook changed, as she considered that the economic decline might portend an imminent Marxist revolution. She

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[336] RP to DD, February 6,1935, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 1.
[337] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,*140.
[338] Leeder, *The Gentle General,* 109.
[339] RP to EG, July 31, 1935, RPP/NYPL/ SC Goldman, Box 10.
[340] RP to EG, March 7, 1935, RPP/NYPL/ SC Goldman, Box 10.

reminded Rose that until 1929 there had really been no proletariat in the United States. Workers were not conscious of the fact that they were part of a "special class," and, in fact, were resistant to any idea that would make them "aware that his (sic) house was built on sand." Moreover, American labor had mainly focused on bread and butter issues, showing no real concern for fundamental social changes.[341]

But, since then, Goldman said, she had seen promising changes. Now, she said, there was a "tremendous awakening in the States" and that "the very things I propagated and for which I have been driven from pillar to post have now entered the lives of millions as a matter of course." She noted that in every country which had a revolution, the "intellectual and cultural advancement preceded the economic. So too is progress in America." Emma felt that there was really no need for despair, even though she might feel it sometimes because she could not be in the United States to participate. She still thought that the international anarchist movement had focused too much on immigrant groups, and failed to educate native-born workers. But she asserted that "…the forge iron has never been hotter and redder than now."[342]

In some respects, Emma's prediction was accurate. The conditions of the Great Depression had provided fertile ground for a workers' uprising, the CIO would emerge just two months after she wrote this letter. But as Rose had found, there were still deeply rooted cultural differences between native born Americans, and the immigrant anarchist community which Emma had been a part of in America before 1919, which precluded a social revolution, as Emma had envisioned it, from arising in America.

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[341] EG to RP, August 31, 1935, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 10.
[342] EG to RP, August 31, 1935, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 10.

The Rise of the CIO

As the CIO emerged, many striking American born industrial workers would adopt socialist ideals, which had been important to Emma and other anarchists. But the anarchist influence on the CIO would come from pragmatists who made some surprising compromises in order to do so. For instance, Rose not only collaborated with Communists, but she also Americanized her message, which included abandoning the word anarchist to describe herself to strikers, and by identifying as a revolutionary instead. These types of actions eventually led to pragmatic anarchism fading in America, about the same time that traditional anarchism disappeared.

While the dire conditions for native born Americans, who increasingly took industrial jobs in the depths of the depression, was an important factor in the surge of strikes in the 1930s, Goldman, had overestimated her own contribution to it. Her notoriety had drawn large crowds to her lectures, but that had not translated into a corresponding increase in native born converts to the cause, as she herself lamented. As she observed, there had been an "intellectual and cultural advancement," preceding this "awakening in the states." However, it was prompted by pragmatic radicals who developed updated methods, in workers' education programs such as Brookwood's, and in the Communist worker schools, to supplant the violent direct-action tactics of the previous generation. Among these new methods was the fostering of a labor culture which would attract workers to the unions, including the American approach.

As traditional anarchists faded into ethnic insularity, anarchists like Pesotta, who worked in the labor unions and identified more and more with "Brookwooders," melded American anarchism with the emerging CIO, which was comprised of radicals from

across the left leaning spectrum, including socialists, communists, and anarchists. Many Brookwooders, who all considered themselves socialists and revolutionaries, became prominent leaders in the nascent CIO, such as John Brophy, a Brookwood board member and longtime friend of Muste. (In a shrewd political move Lewis had brought Brophy back into the AFL to head the CIO, as soon as the committee was set up.)

The school tried to remain independent of the AFL, and of all political parties and dogmas, but the political climate for radicals had become increasingly complex, especially as the CP, who had their own worker's schools, continued to compete with socialists, of varying stripes, for control of the labor unions. (Although some socialists, such as Muste eschewed electoral politics, others were members of the SP, and now some supported FDR.)[343] In fact, Muste departed Brookwood in 1933 over a controversy he had with the board, whose members included Brophy and Cohn at the time.

Muste had insisted that the school provide support and resources to the CPLA, but the board, which still had no Communists among them despite their growing influence in the labor movement, saw the CPLA, which had increasingly aligned with the Trotskyites, as a decidedly political organization with dangerously dogmatic tendencies. Muste was a great loss to the school, which closed four years later in 1937, especially because he did not play a significant role in the emergence of the CIO.[344]

But Muste's ideas continued to influence those who did, including Pesotta, who saw Muste in Akron just as the contract was being negotiated with Goodyear. She

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[343] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 172-175.
[344] "Dean Heads Bolt at Labor College," *New York Times*, March 7, 1933, Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 225, Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 172-175.

recalled saying to him at the time, "A.J., you trained us at Brookwood to organize the mass production workers. You laid stress on both the practical and ethical sides. And you never let us forget that when strikes are settled, they must be settled honorably. I won't fail your teaching now."[345]

The CIO sought to establish itself on a firm footing by bringing labor organizers, who were known to be "heavy hitters" in the labor movement, into Akron. Pesotta was one of the four key CIO organizers who were urgently called to guide the young, inexperienced, and as Pesotta described them, "vulnerable" union leaders of the nascent, independent unions at Goodyear in Akron. Germer, who Brophy had sent to Akron as the first CIO representative there, was Rose's initial CIO contact on Feb 11, 1936.[346] Another, who arrived about the same time was Leo Krzycki, a Brookwood affiliate and a founder and vice president of the ACW, who was also an SP executive committee member, and chairman during the 1930s.[347] And Hapgood was the fourth. With their militant, and diverse, backgrounds, these four served as an inspiration to the striking workers, and represented a significant threat to Goodyear, who controlled most of the press in Akron.

Pesotta recalled that when she saw the first edition of the *Times-Press* at headquarters the next morning, two pictures of Hapgood and two of her were on the front page, and two weeks later "the company's union publication, the *Wingfoot Clan,* came

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[345] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 225, Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 172-175.
[346] Adolph Germer, "Archival Resources in Wisconsin: Descriptive Finding Aids: Biography/History," accessed December 14, 2022, https://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi/f/findaid/findaid-idx?c=wiarchives;view=reslist;subview=standard;didno=uw-whs-us00125a;focusrgn=bioghist;cc=wiarchives;byte=723291325.
[347] "Collection: Don Binkowski Papers | ArchivesSpace@Wayne," accessed November 22, 2022, https://archives.wayne.edu/repositories/2/resources/1645.

out with a full-page attack on Germer, Krzycki, Hapgood, John Brophy, and myself, headed in big black letters: OUTSIDE AGITATORS TAKE OVER STRIKE LEADERSHIP."

Pesotta remembered that the company "wouldn't admit that Powers Hapgood was 'a real radical,' because of his family and Harvard background, and it [called] him an 'intellectual pink,' which Powers, she wrote, always regarded that as 'one of the most damaging things that could be said about a labor organizer.'"[348] The four of them developed a camaraderie at Akron, and became a tight-knit foursome, who were at times dubbed the "four musketeers," or the "four horsemen."[349] After the successful strike settlement with Goodyear, the leaders of the nascent United Auto Workers union (UAW), travelled to Akron to ask them to prepare to lead a strike at General Motors in Flint, Michigan. The four of them agreed to do so, even though they knew John Lewis had his sights set on the Steel industry at the time. The GM strike erupted nine months later, in early 1937.[350]

The rubber workers in Akron, as with autoworkers in Flint, Michigan, were comprised of both second and third generation descendants of southern and eastern European immigrants, and of native-born Americans who had lost their livelihood during the depression and who had migrated there from southern states. Pesotta described these

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[348] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters*, 214.
[349] The "Four Horsemen" (an allusion to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse) appears to be a play on words. It was also the "nickname given by the press to four conservative members of the United States Supreme Court during the 1932–1937 terms, who opposed FDR's New Deal agenda." Howard Ball, *Hugo L. Black: Cold Steel Warrior,* New York: Oxford University Press (2006), ISBN 978-0-19-507814-5, Carol E. Jenson, "New Deal" in Kermit L. Hall (ed.). *Oxford Companion to the United States Supreme Court. Oxford University Press,* (1992).
[350] Pesotta, "Rose Pesotta Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library."

workers as "automatons in the merciless conveyer-belt production system, who faced the prospect of being burned out before they were 40 by the speed-up's terrible grind."[351] Pesotta recalled, that while on a tour of the eleven-mile-long picket line, she had heard "hill-billy" music coming from many of the shanties and tents and stopped at one to inquire where they hailed from. They told her that,

> They had come from various states-Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Virginia, and the Carolinas. Frequently, I heard them boasting about their respective states…Largely of American stock, their names testified to English and Scotch ancestry in the main, with a sprinkling of Irish and Welsh. They included many ex-coal miners, a considerable percentage of former tenant farmers, and others who had come to Ohio because they found themselves jobless or dispossessed as a result of the depression.[352]

Goodyear had been taking full advantage of the economic conditions to enrich its profits, by slashing wages, increasing hours, and driving faster production. Pesotta said that "to the 50,000 or more workers in the five big rubber factories there—the other four being Firestone, Goodrich, General, Mohawk…*Speed-up* was Akron's other name." [353] This destroyed many worker's health, but they barely made enough money for food, let alone healthcare.[354] Genora Johnson Dollinger described similar conditions in Flint:

> We had a large influx of workers come into the city from the deep South. They came north to find jobs because there was no work back home. They came with their furniture strapped on old jalopies and they'd move into the cheapest housing that they could find. They were very poor.[355]

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[351] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,*228.
[352] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 205.
[353] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 197.
[354] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 200.
[355] Christopher Phelps, Genora Dollinger, and Susan Rosenthal, "Striking Flint: Genora (Johnson) Dollinger Remembers the 1936-37 General Motors Sit-Down Strike," *Labour* 41, no. 41 (1998): 286–88, https://doi.org/10.2307/25144252; *With Babies and Banners: Story of the Women's Emergency Brigade*, Award Winning Film & Video (New York, N.Y.: New Day Films, 1990).

She recalled “several cases of men cracking up completely and taking a wrench and striking their foremen,” whereupon they were sentenced to an insane asylum in Pontiac, Michigan. “Many of them wound up in beer gardens,” trying to forget their problems and their aches and pains. She said that they used to say “Once you pass the gates of General Motors, forget about the United States Constitution. Workers had no rights when they entered that plant.”[356]

Dollinger was leader of the Women’s Emergency Brigade, who was dubbed the “Joan of Arc,” of the labor movement. She said that “men with stop watches” timed the workers to see if they could “squeeze one or two more operations in.” Many men experienced medical problems because they couldn’t go to the rest room when they needed to. Furthermore, “practically all the foremen expected workers to bring them turkeys on Thanksgiving and gifts for Christmas and repair their motor cars and even paint their house.” They felt like slaves, but if they tried to organize, she said, “management hired lip-readers to watch the men talk to each other.” If they met outside the plant they often “didn't get home without getting a beating by GM-hired thugs.”[357]

Understandably, the tension was dangerously high, and the cultural orientation of the men, based on Pesotta’s past encounters with native born Americans, does not, on the surface, appear to have boded well for her success in helping them get through the strike. A violent clash with police had been narrowly averted the day Pesotta arrived, and she described the atmosphere in Akron as highly combustible:

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[356] Phelps, Dollinger, and Rosenthal, “Striking Flint.”
[357] Christopher Phelps, Genora Dollinger, and Susan Rosenthal, “Striking Flint: Genora (Johnson) Dollinger Remembers the 1936-37 General Motors Sit-Down Strike,” *Labour* 41, no. 41 (1998): 286–88, https://doi.org/10.2307/25144252; *With Babies and Banners: Story of the Women’s Emergency Brigade*, Award Winning Film & Video (New York, N.Y.: New Day Films, 1990).

> Watching and listening to the men in the shanties and in union headquarters, I was glad they were on our side of the fight. Some of the names recalled long-fought feuds in the Southern mountains. Here, it was obvious, were numerous hot-heads. Hence the vital necessity of wise leadership, for in its absence, an unforeseen contingency might impel them to desperate action.[358]

One such "hot head," "Skip" Oharra, who saw himself as a leader, "gloried in the title of 'Field Marshal.'" Pesotta said he "personally conducted" a tour of the picket-line, in cars driven by strikers, for herself and several other labor leaders.[359] "He was a small wiry fellow with a chunk of chewing tobacco always in his right cheek. Only six months before, I was told, he had been an aggressive leader of the Ku Klux Klan[360] in Akron. Many other strikers had been Klansmen…"[361]

When Oharra took them back to strike headquarters, she saw a stack of rifles in the office and asked what they were for. He said, "Just let them try to open the plant gates, or break up the picket lines, and there'll be a revolution." Pesotta recalled that "we were standing on the brink of a smoking volcano, which at any time might erupt."[362] She found that Oharra's cultural orientation was not an anomaly, many union members had been steeped in Klan culture. While arranging a local theatrical performance for strikers and their families, she "learned from one of the strikers' wives that she 'knew this theatre well. Our Klan glee club used to meet here.'

"Klan?" I echoed with a poker face, "What Klan?"

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[358] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 205.
[359] With her was Sherman H. Dalrymple, URWA president, Thomas F. Burns, Frank Grillo, N. H. Eagle, head of the Mohawk local in Akron and member of the URW GEB, John Owens, Ohio district president of the UMW, Germer, Star, and Hapgood, Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 205.
[360] Woodrow Wilson, the Supreme Court and other government luminaries previewed "Birth of a Nation," the American silent epic drama film directed by D. W. Griffith at the White House in 1915. Their favorable comments helped gave rise to the Ku Klux Klan throughout the 1920s. It receded in the 1930s. Alexis Clark*, How "The Birth of a Nation" Revived the Ku Klux Klan, HISTORY, https://www.history.com/news/kkk-birth-of-a-nation-film.*
[361] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 195-227.
[362] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 205.

> "The Ku Klux Klan"
> "What kind of organization was that?" I asked still without a smile.
> "A social and educational society" she rejoined in the manner of one explaining a local custom to an outsider.[363]

The irony in Emma's prediction is that this was not the leftist revolution which she had imagined, but "something more inchoate, with different populations, ideologies, identities, and desires involved in it. This group understood 'revolution' very differently from her and although it was militant and rebellious, it was as yet unclear which direction it was headed in."[364]

Pesotta had consciously tried to help build a collaborative labor culture, in Akron, which crossed ethnic lines. She recounted her efforts to build the moral of these native born workers by appealing to their culture, much as she had done with immigrant workers she had organized, such as the Mexican immigrant women in L.A., where she had had so much organizing success. For instance, as head of entertainment in Akron, she often held events that highlighted the popular hill-billy music.

Pesotta recalled that although the Klan had since disintegrated, "some beliefs still remained," But now that she felt she had built a rapport with these workers, she tried to correct those notions.[365] She remembered, "Once I deliberately ran full tilt into one of their aversions." A worker in one of the shanties had asked "What nationality are you? Spanish, Italian, French?" When she responded that she was none of those, "I'm a full-blooded Hebrew," she recalled their embarrassed, even stunned reaction. "Why are you so surprised?" she asked, "You probably thought all Jews were bankers, millionaires,

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[363] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 211.
[364] William Whitham, February, 2023.
[365] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 211.

exploiters, bloodsuckers. They're not. I'm a wage earner, like yourselves; and there are millions like me in the United States who work for a living." She recalled them admitting that this was exactly what they had thought. Hapgood, who was with her, chimed in, pointing out that not all businesses were run by Jews, not Ford, J.P. Morgan, Firestone or Rockefeller, and not all Jews were financiers and exploiters, which she recalled led to a lengthy discussion. In later visits to this post she remembered them being especially cordial to her.[366]

She later detailed several instances of the men expressing confidence in, and placing reliance on her judgement, even with regard to the final settlement terms. On one tour of the shanties, (a daily routine for the CIO leaders), she recalled that some of the men were discussing previous, disappointing strikes, when one of them optimistically commented, "Now things are different. With you from the Lady Garment Workers, and the men from the miners, we'll build a real union here."[367]

In another instance, about two weeks into the strike, Edward F. McGrady, Assistant U.S. Secretary of Labor, had suggested to local union leaders that the strikers return to work and settle the strike by arbitration. Pesotta recalled that "it was evident that some of the strikers were ready to do almost anything if the agreement reached with the company was not satisfactory," and she was certain this arrangement was not.[368] So when a young union leader started to announce it to the workers, Pesotta interrupted him to prevent him from doing so. She recalled that he not only gave her the floor, but he, and

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[366] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 212.
[367] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 206.
[368] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 208-10.

the other strike leaders took her advice, and tabled the McGrady plan. Later, the subject was inadvertently mentioned in a strike meeting, whereupon she recalled, “a great chorus shouted “‘No!’ and thousands of voices began singing: ‘*No, No a Thousand Times No, I’d Rather Be Dead Than a Scab!’*”[369]

But Pesotta needed no such validation, in advance, for them to take her counsel. When the final draft of the contract was under review, she remembered one of the influential rank and file men, Bill Carney, who later became New Jersey regional director for the CIO, asking her opinion of it. Pesotta recalled telling him that the contract looked as good as any she had negotiated; To which he responded, “Well, I guess if it was good enough for the garment workers…it will be good enough for the rubber workers.”[370] The harsh conditions at the plant, combined with the efforts of these disparate groups to validate one another’s cultural experiences, appeared to have created an alchemy which transformed the dynamic between them.

Anarchism and Politics

Pesotta’s experiences illustrate why the political alliances of anarchists appear to be fluid, and sometimes even incongruent with their goal to resist authoritarians. Although her primary goal was to advance the cause of workers through the labor movement, anarchists, who participated in the movement, were inevitably drawn into the political milieu when they made alliances with groups who were aligned with political parties, such as the SP or the CP.

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[369] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 208-10.
[370] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 224-228.

The victory in Akron proved to be a critical juncture for the CIO, which triggered such political maneuvering at the United Auto Workers of America union's (UAW)'s second Convention, which was held in South Bend, Indiana on April 27, 1936, a little over month after the strike was settled. Pesotta, who played a prominent role at the convention, aligned with the communists, despite their authoritarian aims, which she had demonstrated on many occasions that she strongly objected to, because for her they served as a counterweight to what she saw as FDR's even more dangerous hold on power.

Despite the victory in Akron, the labor movement as a whole, even with New Deal interventions, had not yet reached the level of unionizing success that the movement had achieved during the mid-1910s. Although the NLRA went well beyond NIRA (which by now had been deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court) in the legal protection that it afforded to unionization and collective bargaining, employers like GM had effectively blocked its effectiveness, and there were widespread doubts about its constitutionality too. Union membership had risen from just under three million in 1933 to approximately 3.6 million in 1934 (from 5.8 percent of the civilian labor force to 6.9 percent), with most of the gains coming from coal miners and garment workers. But the number of unionists did not increase much in 1935, and even though those numbers picked up somewhat in 1936, the slightly more than four million union members that

year, constituted just 7.6 percent of the civilian labor force, which was below the corresponding figure for 1925.[371]

To the radicals who were now in control of the CIO and the UAW, the time seemed ripe to test their theory that they could only achieve major unionizing success by daring to challenge one or more of the three major industrialists. As it turned out, they chose to target GM's citadel in Flint, Michigan. The fate of the UAW and of industrial unionism in general rested upon the outcome of this strike.[372]

Pesotta recalled that several visitors had come in to Akron, from Detroit, Cleveland, and Toledo, including Homer Martin, Walter P. Reuther, and George F. Addes, who were connected with the small but promising UAW.[373] Pesotta wrote that "They were greatly inspired by the outcome of the rubber workers' strike. 'We'll be next,' said Martin, the UAW vice-president. 'Will you come and help us? We said we would," referring to herself and the other three CIO leaders she had worked with in Akron.[374]

The CIO began to gather its radical forces, build on the momentum of the Akron success, and prepared to battle its most formidable foes, which included, but were not limited to GM. They also set out to break the chokehold of the AFL, and many UAW and

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[371] Sidney Fine, *Sit-down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937*, 2nd Edition, with a new foreword by Kim Moody (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), 195-99, citing Milton Derber, "Growth and Expansion," in Milton Derber and Edwin Young, eds., *Labor and the New Deal* (Madison, 1957): 7–9, Irving Bernstein, "The Growth of American Unions," *American Economic Review,* XLIV (June 1954): 303.
[372] Fine, *Sit-Down*, 98-99.
[373] Martin, then 34, had been a Baptist minister in Kansas City, Missouri, his congregation including many employees of the General Motors plant there. Because of sermons dealing with the social struggle, he was removed by the board of deacons, and went to work in a Chevrolet factory, where he was elected president of the federal local union. Later he was appointed vice-president of the UAW by William Green. Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 234.
[374] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 227.

CIO members, including Pesotta, also sought to resist FDR's hold on power. The showdown would occur at the Convention in South Bend. Their first goal was to wrest control from the AFL by replacing Francis J. Dillon, who was William Green's provisionally appointed president to the CIO, and install their own leaders.[375]

Martin asked Pesotta to speak at a series of mass-meetings, along with Krzycki, to round up a sizeable number of delegates, who were both "intelligent and willing to risk losing their jobs" for the convention.[376] Due to the recruiting efforts of Krzycki and herself the convention was dominated by radical delegates, whose primary aim was to prepare for the GM strike. They achieved the first goal by ousting Dillon and installing their own slate of radical leadership.

Then the delegates mandated that an educational department be established based on the ILGWU-ED, as well as a competently staffed research division, and a newspaper. In the subsequent months Pesotta and the others kept in close touch with the UAW, helping them to implement this mandate, gain momentum, and prepare for the strike against GM.[377] Dollinger, who joined the Socialist Party, and who played an important role in Flint during this approximate eight-month preparation period described the hurdles they encountered as they readied themselves:

> Many revolutionaries, so-called, talk about 'spontaneous combustion of the workers.' I can't see that at all, because it took time for the organizers in various plants of this whole General Motors empire to talk to the workers and to bring them to classes -- to make some contact -- create a bond. You had to trust your fellow worker if you were going to be an active union member because we had an

[375] Fine, *Sit-Down*, 89-91.
[376] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,*228.
[377] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 235.

> awful lot of spies in there, a lot of people who would get special favor for squealing on somebody else.[378]

She recalled working with Roy Reuther, a Socialist like her, who Brookwood had sent to Flint to organize the UAW in early 1936. He was on the faculty at the time, had attended the Wisconsin School for Workers, and had organized several workers' education projects. Dollinger said, they laid a solid groundwork with the first brave people. "Our newspaper, *The Socialist Call*, was distributed widely as an aid to our recruitment of GM workers into the Socialist Party."[379]

She said they held on-going classes in labor history, public speaking, and parliamentary procedure, which were very important because they "produced many capable people."[380] As they grew, she said that many speakers came from Brookwood, who held lectures in the basement of the biggest Methodist church and in the Masonic Temple, mainly on socialism, but also on labor history and current political events. She said they "were very popular…we would get three and four hundred people at some of our meetings."[381]

Although Pesotta, as an anarchist, did not promote any particular political party, and had no political aspirations of her own, she did pursue a political agenda, which was to diffuse the impact of political actors who she thought were most likely to disrupt their goal of leading a successful strike against GM. And she, along with many others at the convention did not see the Communists as posing a significant risk to achieving that aim. When a resolution was put forward at the convention to oust the Communists from the

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[378] Phelps, Dollinger, and Rosenthal, "Striking Flint."
[379] Phelps, Dollinger, and Rosenthal, "Striking Flint."
[380] Phelps, Dollinger, and Rosenthal, "Striking Flint."
[381] Phelps, Dollinger, and Rosenthal, "Striking Flint."

CIO altogether, which generated a heated debate, Pesotta vigorously defended them, and the resolution did not prevail.[382]

Many Socialists at the time sympathized with the Communist perspective, which according to Historian Sidney Fine, should not be interpreted as a "Communist plot," because their aims did not conflict with the "organizational interests of the UAW." Rather, Fine found that "workers struck because of their grievances against management—the strike 'emanated from the conditions,' to quote Roy Reuther—rather than from any desire to promote Communist objectives, and the Communists do not appear to have made any serious effort to politicize the dispute." Fine argued that the GM strike undoubtedly strengthened the position of the Communists and their allies within the UAW, but their principal contribution, he said, was in helping to develop a powerful union that would eventually drive the Stalinists from its ranks rather than in imbuing the strikers with revolutionary fervor or converting them to Communism.[383]

Pesotta made an impassioned speech for unity at the convention on May Day eve, which was ostensibly apolitical, but her political agenda is nevertheless reflected in it too. Because many others in her audience, particularly the Communists, agreed with her view that not just Green, but also FDR, posed a significant threat to their goal of unionizing GM's industrial workers, based on their past experiences with both of them, her not so apolitical appeal, which follows, resonated with most of the group:

> Regardless of the faults of Communism, I argued, our nation was confronted by an even greater danger—Fascism, whatever it might be called on American soil. I pleaded with the delegates to end political conflict among themselves. A trade

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[382] Fine, *Sit-Down*, 89-91.

[383] Fine, *Sit-Down*, 409-11, quoting R. Reuther interview, 20; Ross, "The Natural History of the Strike," in Kornhauser *et al.,* eds., *Industrial Conflict,* 29–30.

> union was primarily an economic organization; members must work together for the good of all despite their political differences.[384]

Pesotta's reference to the threat of "Fascism, whatever it might be called on American soil," suggested that she saw FDR's ambitious expansion of the executive office, and his popularity, as being yet another manifestation of the proliferation of totalitarian threats appearing in the world at the time. The convention endorsed Roosevelt, but with strong reservations. In fact, on the initial vote they did not. Rather, the delegates approved a Communist party-line resolution calling for the establishment of a farmer-labor party, and refused to endorse Roosevelt for a second term. But when Germer pointed out that the UAW's failure to support Roosevelt "would be a boon to the Liberty League,"[385] the question was reopened on the convention floor and eventually the resolution to endorse FDR was approved. But it was far from being a ringing endorsement.

For Pesotta, as an anarchist, her choice of political allies was often limited to the lesser of two evils. Her aim was not to advance a specific ideology, not even anarchism, but rather to help keep the political balance from shifting too far in favor of any political group becoming dominant and overly authoritarian. And she did so by shifting those political alliances as quickly, and as often, as the political climate changed.[386]

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[384] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 235.
[385] This was a political organization consisting primarily of wealthy business elites and prominent political figures who were for the most part conservatives opposed to FDR's New Deal, Rodney P. Carlisle, *Encyclopedia of Politics: The Left and the Right. Volume 1, The Left* (Thousand Oaks, CA; London, U.K.: Sage Publications, 2005): 510, http://archive.org/details/encyclopediaofpo0000carl.
[386] Fine, *Sit-Down*, 89-91.

Call Me a Revolutionary

Anarchists, who had struggled to find ways to reach American born workers with their socialist message, increasingly abandoned the word anarchist to describe their ideology. While this did allow them to do so, it also led to the disappearance of anarchism. American born industrial workers came to adopt the anarchists' socialist vision, of creating democratic workplaces, as an idea which was rooted in America's revolutionary past, rather than as one which emerged out of the immigrant struggle, thus Americanizing, or coopting, this socialist ideal.

Pesotta felt she had had revelatory experiences in Akron about how to reach native born American workers with the anarchist's socialist message. She came to see her role as attending to the threats posed to their communities, and to their culture, and in recognizing what it meant to be a revolutionary from their perspective. But it also meant couching this message in broad terms which would appeal to a diverse group of radicals and associating those ideas with relatable, American symbols of revolution.

For instance, Pesotta, referred to herself as a revolutionary in Akron and joined in the celebration with strikers when they reached a favorable settlement with Goodyear on March 20, 1936, which she compared to the celebration held in Akron at the end of World War I. She wrote that thousands "began a spontaneous march through the business district, heading for strike headquarters. Their joy was unbounded. Not since Armistice Day in 1918 had there been such jubilation in Akron."[387]

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[387] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 226.

The militaristic scene in Flint, which Pesotta saw when she was called to the strike in early January 1937, was conducive to this type of messaging. When she arrived, the camps were organized in an orderly, regimental fashion with clearly marked posts. The "plant was heavily guarded inside and outside" to keep out strike-breakers and "to protect the building and its contents," especially the dies. No liquor was permitted, nor was smoking allowed on any of the production floors. This was the setting in which she saw new members lined up to register and sign the following unity pledge:

> Each man promised to buy only union-made goods whenever possible; never to discriminate against a fellow worker, or wrong him or see him wronged, 'if it is in my power to prevent it;' to 'subordinate every selfish impulse to the task of elevating the material, intellectual, and moral condition of the automobile worker;' and to 'be respectful in word and action to every woman.'[388]

Pesotta was deeply impressed by the pledge. It captured the aspirations of a wide range of radicals, not just those of anarchists, such as the romantic ideal of American democracy, which she had brought with her from Russia, but also the dreams of native-born GM strikers, who saw themselves as a new kind of American revolutionary, fighting to achieve democratic workplaces by uniting in solidarity with other workers.

As this demonstration of unity threatened GM's stronghold, the company ramped up its militaristic response. Pesotta described the scene by early February as a war zone.

> In the strike zone the scene was war-like. Naked machine-guns mounted in the streets commanded every approach to the three plants—Fisher Body No. 1. And No. 2 and Chevrolet No. 4. National Guardsmen stood on duty with fixed bayonets, steel helmets on their heads, mufflers protecting their ears and throats from the bitter winds.[389]

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[388] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 237.
[389] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 241.

Arrest threats, specifically naming Pesotta and the other leaders, military intervention, and vigilantism increased. The workers' comparatively limited resources increased their sense of solidarity with one another, which, as the unity pledge suggested, included the entire community.

When the police showed up to gas bomb the buildings, drive the men out, and take the main gate, the Emergency Women's Brigade surprised them by running to the buildings and breaking the windows to let the gas escape. They then locked arms as they confronted the police, some with their children in tow. This resulted in favorable press coverage, especially since the organizers had allowed only hand-picked journalists, such as Mary Heaton Vorst, Josephine Herbst, and Dorothy Day into the plant. And they won the support of many liberal politicians.[390]

The thrill of defeating the behemoth industrialist, GM, led to an even more patriotic victory celebration than Pesotta had witnessed in Akron. After 44 days of having its operations at a near standstill, "producing [just] 1,500 cars a week in contrast to 53,000 in mid-December[, and with] nearly all of its 200,000 employees … either on strike or … prevented from working because essential parts were unavailable," GM capitulated.[391] Pesotta described the celebration in Flint, which she also participated in, when the GM strike was settled in 1937:

> When the main gate of No. 1 was thrown open, they came out singing, led by their band, and with many carrying American flags. Tremendous cheers went up as they emerged—cheers for the strikers, for the union…At Chevy 4 the sit-downers were massed on an outside stairway. They lingered there to sing *Solidarity Forever,* while flags waved, toy balloons floated through the air, and colored paper streamers and confetti were thrown in every direction. Newspaper

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[390] *With Babies and Banners: Story of the Women's Emergency Brigade*.
[391] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 241.

> photographers took flashlight pictures, news-reel cameramen ground their machines on top of trucks, and flares lighted up the faces of the crowd. Then the parade continued to Fisher Body No. 1, where the scene was repeated…Tens of thousands of workers from other towns poured in to join the celebration. These people sang and joked and laughed and cried, deliriously joyful. Never had anything like this been seen in Flint. To great numbers of workers, the UAW victory was more important than the ending of World War I, for it meant a freedom they had never known before. No longer would they be afraid to join unions…I realized suddenly that my face was wet. Tears of gladness were streaming down my cheeks.[392]

While these American born workers were adopting an Americanized socialist vision of worker unity and democratic workplaces, Pesotta was beginning to identify not only as an anarchist, (within the anarchist community) but also as a revolutionary (when she was with native born workers). Given the climate in Akron at the time, this suggested to the strikers that her militant spirit was rooted in America's revolutionary history, rather than in her own immigrant past. And Rose continued to use the American approach in her campaigns, until she stopped working as a union organizer for the ILGWU in 1941.

That year Rose once again organized workers in Los Angeles, but this time the workers were mainly native born, "dust bowlers," who had migrated from the southern plains to California during the depression. When she finalized the contract with their particularly intransigent employer, the Mode-O-Day company, Pesotta recalled that "Some of them had tears in their eyes as they looked at this document, which marked a new chapter in history for them. 'I think,' said Geneva Schell, 'that I have some idea of how the signers of the Declaration of Independence felt.'"[393]

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[392] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 252.
[393] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 365.

While Pesotta was still in Akron, she responded to a letter which Abe Bluestein had written her, which explained why she identified herself to the strikers as a revolutionary, rather than as an anarchist. The correspondence between Rose and Abe revealed that the younger generation of anarchists, who had previously favored a traditional approach to anarchism, were now also becoming inclined toward Americanizing their message, even though most anarchists were focused mainly on supporting the Republicans in Spain at the time.

The recently elected Republicans, who were then under threat by General Francisco Franco and the Nationalists, had a tenuous hold on power. Anarchists hoped that the events transpiring in Spain might lead to redemption for the Russian revolution. Later that year, after the military's attempted coup in the summer of 1936, Goldman became deeply involved in the Spanish Civil War and the emergence of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), an anarcho-syndicalist union influential in implementing anarchist principles in Spain. Nearly all anarchists were involved in the effort in some way. Many went to Spain, or wished they could, including Rose's close friend, Anna Sosnovsky.[394] Rose supported the Spanish Republicans by raising funds, and after the GM strike in Flint ended, she went there for a few weeks with Goldman.[395]

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[394] Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 199 nt., 165; Anna Sosnovsky to Rose Pesotta, n.d., folder 62,box 3, Rose Pesotta Papers, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, Cornell; *Unruly Equality*, 136-141.

[395] Bluestein also went to Spain in 1937, working as an English language correspondent for the CNT-FAI in Barcelona where he encountered Emma Goldman. He ended up harshly criticizing the movement for selling out to the Communists and returned to America, much to Goldman's dismay. Several letters were exchanged on the matter between Goldman and RP, and others during the winter of 1937-38, in RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 10.

Bluestein, who was editor of *Vanguard* at the time, had written to Rose during the strike, regarding some pamphlets on Spain, which he had asked her to sell more than a year earlier, when she was working in Seattle.[396] Bluestein had been advocating anarcho-syndicalism, but only in the form of the moribund IWW. The paper rejected mainstream labor unions, including the ILGWU and the CIO, for being bureaucratic and undemocratic. Furthermore, a couple of years earlier when members of the ILGWU's "Progressive" block approached the Vanguard Group to recruit organizers, they were rebuffed on the grounds that the union was "not revolutionary."[397]

In 1933, the ILGWU, which in its weakened state had fallen under the influence of organized crime, launched an effort to reorganize the union "on a new, clean basis," which included initiating an intensive membership campaign. Pesotta had taken a leave of absence from her job as a dressmaker to serve as secretary and general assistant to Giacomo Di Nola, lead organizer in Brooklyn, which, she said, was then "gangster-infested," and regarded by ILGWU organizers as the "Siberia of the Greater City."[398] The union invited "five leftist youth organizations, including the Young People's Socialist League and the Vanguard Group (but not the communist youth groups), to serve as volunteer organizers during the campaign."[399]

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[396] RP to Abe Bluestein, March 11, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.

[397] In recalling that time later in his life, Bluestein said his criticisms "provoked Anna Sosnovsky to call him an anarcho-bolshevik." Lacking sensitivity, he had bluntly asked Harry Kelly, "You have given your life to the anarchist movement. Don't you think in view of the movement's decline, that your life has been a failure?" Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*, 239, interview with Abe Bluestein, April 15, 1972, RP to Abe Bluestein, March 11, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2, Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, 186, nt,110 citing, Vanguard, April 1932, February 1933; Avrich, Anarchist Voices, 451.

[398] Pesotta, *Bread upon the Waters*, 2-3.

[399] S. Morrison a.k.a. Sidney Soloman, "The I.L.G.W.U. Calls Upon Youth," *Vanguard* 1., no. 6 (February 1933): 8–11, https://libcom.org/article/vanguard-vol-1-no-6-february-1933.

Vanguard Group member, Sidney Soloman, recalled that all the invited groups participated, with the exception of the Vanguard Group. "At a meeting convened by Dubinsky, Vanguard members declared their approval of the organizing drive in principle. However, they demanded that the ILGWU leadership first create a document committing the union to 'full worker's democracy within the union,' 'complete dissociation from any political clique,' organization on industrial rather than craft lines, and development of revolutionary anticapitalist goals. The officials at the table politely agreed to give the proposal 'careful consideration,' then quietly dropped Vanguard from the campaign," which ultimately succeeded without the group.[400]

However, the political landscape had changed significantly in three years' time. The labor movement had not looked this radical since the heyday of the IWW in the mid-1910s. This made the CIO's adaptations more palatable to the younger generation, who came to temper their previous views. When Pesotta responded to Abe, on March 11, 1936, it was just 9 days before Goodyear capitulated to the CIO with a settlement favorable to the striking workers. Pesotta offered to pay Abe for the pamphlets, explaining that she could not sell them because, she wrote, "the people were not yet ready to read anything on their own union let alone on Spain." They were "excellent," she said, "but not for use among the broad masses of people with whom I come in daily contact, Abe."[401]

Then Pesotta shared her new outlook on American born workers, and how she thought he could reach them with their socialist ideas. She explained that they needed

[400] S. Morrison (a.k.a. Sidney Soloman), "The I.L.G.W.U. Calls Upon Youth."
[401] RP to Abe Bluestein, March 11, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.

something that was more relevant to their own circumstances, "something that would make a 'home run,' that would set them a-thinking." Just that week, Pesotta explained, she had "had an opportunity to speak to several thousand workers in the Rubber Industry." "They all feel that I belong to them" she wrote, because, unlike the communists, who pressured them to join the CP, she had told them how they could solve their own problems by "mingling with workers of all nationalities, all creeds, all colors, languages etc." She wrote, Abe, "I am telling you this from experience…when I tell them that I am not a 'communist' but a revolutionary the workers are interested to know who is a revolutionary and not a communist (of the Daily Worker type)." By doing this, she told Abe, she had found "them most [receptive] to our ideas," and they wanted to find about more about it.[402]

But "Where?," she asked, "Not in Man! And not in the Vanguard as it is at present." She urged him, and the other young anarchists, to make this their highest priority, and "to think in terms of the present and in terms of *this* country's needs." "Our place is now among the working masses—they should learn what anarchism is from those who are among them and not from those who bring to them distorted ideas."[403] She then went on to share her own idea, with an offer to collaborate:

> Hence I came to the conclusion that if you and the others with you are in earnest build up an anarchist press--pamphlets will come later. We need a weekly, Abe, a newspaper that could enlighten the workers on their own daily problems, not urging them to build a Labor Party, not asking them to join the party etc., but telling them what they could do for their own good…It is most urgent that we have a press, a paper for the reading pubic, not for a few ultra-rrrrrevolutionaries.

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[402] RP to Abe Bluestein, March 11, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.
[403] RP to Abe Bluestein, March 11, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.

> We have a tremendous field to work—we need the people and the press to help us.[404]

Rose told him that she felt it was imperative that they collaborate, and then she brought up Graham's affront, "some of our comrades when they entered the labor movement in official capacities—were either kicked by the rest of the anarchists into the reactionary ranks—or became so themselves." She told Abe that she had not changed her mind, but if *they* had had "a new realization," she would be willing to work with them again because this was the only way that they could rebuild the anarchist's strength. Most important, she insisted, "is the Manifesto—it must be anarchist in principle, but not bombastic—our older and young comrades to go it over carefully—for it might make us or break us, I mean in the sense of getting the support of the masses."[405]

Bluestein responded with surprising enthusiasm: "I am in full agreement with you that pamphlets are not enough, and that the Vanguard falls far short from performing the function of reaching the workers. Frankly, that is why I have separated myself from it for more than a year, over precisely that question." Abe wrote that he felt he could help put out a weekly paper "<u>for the workers</u>… given the support of the comrades in the unions." "First of all, such a paper would reflect the life and struggles of the unions in this country."[406]

Rose, who had already started talking about the idea to others in their network, excitedly replied to Abe the next day:

> Evidently we, young and old, anarchists began to feel that we have something in common (thank goodness), and our minds work in the same direction… They are ready to listen to us—believe it or not and we must, must must do it now! My

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[404] RP to Abe Bluestein, March 11, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.
[405] RP to Abe Bluestein, March 11, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.
[406] Abe Bluestein to RP, April 13, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.

> plan is simple and all agree with me…Anna Sosnofsky, your own dad, Levy…Everybody is ready and willing to contribute according to his or her abilities. Now is the time to work together Abe. Are you game! I am![407]

She wrote that she already had a number of people willing to distribute the paper: "So Abe get going…we must give them something."[408] Thus began a mentoring friendship between Rose and Abe, in which she continued to emphasize the 'American approach,' and he and the other anarchists who helped him start the new paper, *Challenge,* participated in the mainstream labor movement and regularly sought out feedback from Rose and other anarchists engaged in the movement.[409] For example, a week later Rose sent feedback to Abe on what he had sent her, saying, "it is good material and should be read by everybody." But then she added:

> Unfortunately Abe you made the same mistake our comrades are repeatedly making, namely [you] printed the pamphlet without a union label. You might consider it trite, but I had them displayed on the table at the Brookwood Chautauqua and the first question asked was: where is the union label?[410] If you expect to sell this material to workers who need a labor union, you better consider very seriously union labor to work on the pamphlets.[411]

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[407] RP to Abe Bluestein, April 14, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.
[408] RP to Abe Bluestein, April 14, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.
[409] Morris Brodie, "Rebel Youths: English-Language Anarchist Periodicals of the Great Depression, 1932–1939," *Radical Americas* 3, no. 1 (November 30, 2018): 9, doi=10.14324/111.444.ra.2018.v3.1.012.
[410] On 20 July 1933, General Hugh S. Johnson, head of the NRA, proclaimed the Blue Eagle emblem the symbol of U.S. industrial recovery. All who accepted FDR's special Code of Fair Competition could display a poster that reproduced the blue eagle with the motto "Member N.R.A. We Do Our Part." The "invalidation of the compulsory code system on 5 September 1935 led to the abolition of the emblem and the prohibition of its future use as a symbol." Sidney Fine, *The Automobile under the Blue Eagle* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001107806
[411] Chautauqua was an adult education and social movement in the U.S. that peaked in popularity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chautauqua assemblies expanded and spread throughout rural America until the mid-1920s. The Chautauqua brought entertainment and culture for the whole community, with speakers, teachers, musicians, showmen, preachers, and specialists of the day. Case Victoria and Case Robert Ormond, *We Called It Culture The Story Of Chautauqua* (New York: Double Day And Company Inc, 1948), http://archive.org/details/wecalleditcultur008228mbp; RP to Abe Bluestein, April 21, 1936, RPP/NYPL/GC, Box 2.

Challenge "was focused, more than any other anarchist paper since World War I, on being relevant to left leaning working people."[412] Rose funded the first edition of the paper herself,[413] and later the ILGWU and ACW helped keep it afloat.[414]

Having witnessed the rise of the CIO, with its much more radical look, and the benefits it produced for workers, these influential members of the younger generation of anarchists were now compelled to reconsider their position on engaging in the mainstream labor unions. And they began recruiting native born Americans to it, just as Pesotta was doing, even if that meant adopting the CIO's unorthodox, methods, including Americanizing their message. Some even came to see their earlier resistance to pragmatic adaptations of anarchism as a missed opportunity for the labor movement.

Reflecting back on his experiences forty years later, Sidney Soloman, one of Bluestein's earliest recruits, considered Vanguard's reluctance to engage in the campaign to help the ILGWU fend off racketeers in 1933, to be the group's biggest error. He said, "It was this failure to act that led to the collapse of our group and of the anarchist movement in New York." In Soloman's opinion, "the group had [put] the cart before the horse" by assuming "that action required theoretical closure, rather than seeing theory and organizing work as" an interactive, and frequently iterative, process. He thought that they had mistaken "their goals for preconditions of participation. Rather than viewing the organizing drive as an opportunity for anarchists to influence others, they rejected the

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[412]Andrew Cornell, "A World Without Oppressors," (New York: New York University, 2011): 308.
[413] Brodie, "Rebel Youths," note 82.
[414]Andrew Cornell, "A World Without Oppressors," (New York: New York University, 2011), 308; Avrich, *Anarchist Voices,* 453; Bluestein, Oral History, C-5 to C-7, Labadie Collection (LC), Bluestein, Oral History, H-8 to H-10, H-19, K-36, LC.

chance to discuss and debate ideas with fellow workers, believing that accepting union decisions would intolerably compromise their own principles."[415]

This was the major difference that separated the two anarchist groups, who ultimately could not reconcile their differences after NIRA was enacted. The pragmatist's willingness to interact in the prevailing political landscape and make compromises based on those experiences had allowed them to participate in, and influence the shape of the largest surge in labor activism in two decades. They finally achieved the anarchists' goal to reach native born workers with their socialist message, and they helped to unionize one of the most consequential industrial sectors in America. And they had even helped serve as guideposts to the encroachment of what they had seen as dangerously authoritarian ideas rising in America. But to do so, they had collaborated with political actors, who were authoritarians themselves, and who were essentially their enemies. And, in the end, they had obscured their own identity as anarchists as well.

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[415] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 118-122, Avrich, *Anarchist Voices,* 451.

Conclusion

By the time the U.S. entered World War II, the segment of the anarchist movement, which had worked in the industrial labor unions during the interwar period, had helped re-build a new form of syndicalism, which also embodied socialist ideals. This meant that they saw masses of workers unite in solidarity and demand democratic workplaces from their employers. But the growth of that movement was stunted by the war. These anarchists had realized just a fraction of their ambitious aims, which were limited to a constituency of mostly native born male workers in the industrial sector. Ironically, these workers became the beneficiaries of a movement, which was initiated by immigrant anarchist women.

Anarchism, as it had manifested during the interwar period, dissipated by the end of the war. The new world of industrial relations, which the pragmatic form of anarchism had helped give birth to, emerged from that period drained of the anarchistic spirit which it had originated from. American anarchism later emerged in new contexts, which would appeal to constituencies, who had been relegated to the periphery of the labor unions—with its limited beneficiaries—including Black Americans, women, white middle-class college age students, Indigenous Americans, and others.

In 1913, in a wave of immigration with millions of other radicals, Rose Pesotta, and many others like her, brought a vision of American democracy with them to the U.S., which romanticized the egalitarian opportunities possible, even for women who were wage earners. Despite, or perhaps because of, the harsh realities that they encountered working and living in America's ghettoes, this was a high point for radicalism, including IWW syndicalism and anarchism. Immigrants such as Pesotta, who became anarchists in

New York City, enthusiastically built a workers' education movement, which spread socialist ideals, rooted in syndicalism, through the industrial labor movement nationwide. And the Russian revolution infused it with even more optimism, and further fueled its growth from 1917 to 1919.

The rising nativism during World War I, and the Bolshevik takeover in Russia, completely changed the political atmosphere by the turn of the decade and precipitated the first Red Scare. This left anarchists, and radicals in general, with far fewer means of realizing their socialist aims, and with difficult choices to make, which led to divergences in the anarchist community. Starting in 1919, many responded to Lenin's call to join the Communists in a worldwide workers' uprising. Others adhered to more traditional views and saw themselves as purists, and opposed the Communists, as well as the fascists. They retreated into ethnic insularity in anticipation of a spontaneous, millennial type of revolution, while idealizing direct action methods, which were at least as violently inclined as those of the IWW syndicalists.

However, unlike the purists, anarchists, such as Pesotta felt that the demise of the IWW, left them with no other option than to participate in the mainstream labor movement, which inevitably required compromises, including collaborating with their enemies, such as the AFL, the federal government, (particularly after the enactment of NIRA), and the Communists. They had done so by incorporating Pragmatic philosophy into anarchist ideology, which appealed to a wide spectrum of radicals and spread through the labor movement via workers' education programs.

During the 1930s, the influence of the traditionalists from the immigrant anarchist movement declined precipitously. Yet the anarchists who adopted pragmatism by

engaging in the workers' education movement—which developed labor leaders at Labor colleges, such as Brookwood—made significant contributions to the surge in labor activism, and to the emergence of the CIO, which was far more radical than the AFL at the time. Pesotta saw strikers in Akron, comprised mostly of native born American men, who had previously been resistant to Brookwooders' socialist aims, finally embrace them by uniting in solidarity with fellow workers to demand workplace democracy.

Anarchists had made consequential compromises in order to see this happen, such as Americanizing their message. For instance, during the first major CIO strike in Akron in1936, Pesotta began to describe herself as a revolutionary, rather than as an anarchist, to striking workers. As a result, unionists who came to adopt Brookwooders' socialist ideas, did so by viewing them as being rooted in America's revolutionary past, rather than in the immigrant communities where they had originated from. Upon obtaining a favorable settlement with Goodyear, and to an even greater extent, with the General Motors settlement the following year, striking workers, and their entire communities, celebrated worker solidarity, and workplace independence, as if they had achieved victories in the name of American ideals of egalitarianism and independence.

Although World War II created an environment, which, in some ways echoed of the first World War, it changed the political landscape in ways which elicited new responses from anarchists. Like the earlier war, expressing anti-war sentiment, which included participating in strikes against employers, was once again widely viewed as being un-American. Most anarchists had opposed World War I, but they mostly

supported World War II.[416] Both Rose and Dorothy had attended Emma Goldman's anti-conscription rally in Madison Square Garden in 1914. In fact, this was the reason the U.S. later deported many anarchists, including Goldman in 1919.

As Abe Bluestein recalled, initially World War II struck many anarchists, who were still disillusioned over the defeat of the Spanish anarchists, differently. Deciding whether, or not to support the war, was particularly difficult, especially for those who were Jews and/or pragmatists. As Bluestein said, "With the outbreak of the Second World War we faced a great dilemma. As antimilitarists we could not support the war, but we regarded Hitler and fascism as the greater danger."[417] Contributions to anarchist publications had fallen to almost nothing following the civil war in Spain, and both *Vanguard* and *Challenge* succumbed to their mounting debts and ceased publication in 1939.[418]

Pesotta recognized that the job of organizing the unorganized remained mostly incomplete, and that these conditions posed new dangers for obtaining democratic workplaces. But she also realized that this political landscape required her to reconsider her own approach for propagating her socialist ideals. She wrote in her memoirs in1944:

> Unfortunately only about one fifth of the nation's working population is organized into unions, but millions of non-union wage earners have benefited from organized labor's insistence upon decent living standards for all. Those millions remain opposed or indifferent to unions through sheer ignorance of their merits. Fifty-five million workers in industry and agriculture, including about 17,000,000 women, have kept vital supplies streaming in unprecedented quantity to the United Nations, who are at death grips with the Axis powers…Immediately after

[416] Cornell, *Unruly Equality,* 150.
[417] Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*, quoting Abe Bluestein, December 9, 1972, 241.
[418] Andrew Cornell, "'For a World Without Oppressors:' U.S. Anarchism from the Palmer Raids to the Sixties" (Ph.D., United States -- New York, New York University), accessed January 28, 2022, 309, https://www.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/861477368/abstract/6BDFE27F43364E57PQ/1.

> we entered the war organized labor relinquished its strongest weapon—the right to strike—for the duration.[419]

Rose decided to stop organizing for the ILGWU the day that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. She returned to work in a garment factory in New York, and observed the changes occurring in the labor movement, while writing an account of her experiences in it, which was published in 1944. Her term expired on the GEB that year and she declined another one, which she partially explained in the book:

> After Pearl Harbor I gave up organizing and returned to work at a sewing machine on the production line in a New York garment factory…At the 1944 convention of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, held in Boston in May and June, I declined to accept a fourth term on the General Executive Board. Speaking from the platform on this question, I contended that the organization ought to reconsider its old established rule of having only a single woman in its high council. Ten years in office had made it clear to me that a lone woman vice-president could not adequately represent the women who now make up 85 percent of the International's membership of 305,000.[420]

What she witnessed during those three years appears to have influenced her decision. The labor movement, including the CIO, turned in a direction which was diametrically opposed to the anarchists' vision. As defense production ramped up, the demand for labor soared. The war, rather than the New Deal, reduced unemployment, which in 1939, was still at 17 percent. It declined to 14.5 per cent in 1940, and in 1941 it fell to less than 10 percent.[421] The rise in unemployment led to a concurrent increase in union membership during the war, but most union leaders made no-strike pledges with employers, for which they were rewarded with representation on government committees.

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[419] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 396.
[420] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 395.
[421] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement,* loc 2837-2878.

For instance, the former Bundist radical, and president of the ACW, Sidney Hillman, who became a vice president of the CIO, began to weigh in on vital defense matters.[422]

Although the CIO had emerged as a new and powerful industrial labor movement through grassroots campaigns and community-based unionism, these types of capitulations during the war, allowed a federally mediated system of labor relations to prevail and take root, which required that labor lose its social movement character and acquire the habits of institutions. Laborites soon learned that their civil liberties were as imperiled as they had been during the First World War, creating an environment which would lead to another, even more protracted Red Scare. During the war, labor unions pursued—and lost—court cases that argued that picketing was a form of free speech.[423]

The retribution against wildcat strikes were severe, particularly those by the coal miners. But Pesotta felt they had good reasons for doing so. She wrote that,

> The coal miners, who staged the largest of the war time strikes, had strong reason for walking out. Beside the low wages paid them…they had to buy their groceries and other necessities from company stores in the mining towns, at exorbitant prices; in some instances those prices had risen 100 percent since 1941…To my mind, too, painfully little space was given in the daily press to recent coal mine disasters in which miners perished through underground fires or explosions.[424]

Indeed, Historian Elizabeth Faue also found that, "neither the newspapers nor the labor board" acknowledged that in 1943, the "casualty numbers for coal miners and defense workers outnumbered combat injuries and deaths." By the end of the war, "nearly 140,000 workers were killed in defense production. More than a half million were permanently disabled." But amidst the "calls for wartime sacrifice and patriotic

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[422] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement,* loc 2891.
[423] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement,* loc 2905.
[424] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 397.

participation," all collective bargaining had to be "moderate, reasoned, and fairly invisible." Workers, who had brothers, husbands, and sons in the fight were especially receptive to these calls.[425]

Although employers were rarely attacked for driving a hard bargain on government contracts, when labor complained about dangerous working conditions or wages that did not keep pace with inflation, it provoked charges of opportunism, greed, and even treason.[426] Pesotta described the consequences of the miners' strike:

> Various labor leaders joined reactionaries in assailing the miners for striking…Soon after the coal strike Congress passed the Smith-Connally bill, which provided drastic penalties for persons promoting or encouraging strikes in essential industries in war time. Under this law the government can "seize any war manufacturing or production facilities threatened with or suffering from strikes." Sponsored by Representative Howard W. Smith of Virginia, and Senator Tom Connally of Texas, both Democrats and both anti-labor, that bill's passage marked the beginning of an organized effort to wreck bona fide unions through legislation. [427]

Although Rose greatly sympathized with those who participated in, or supported the war effort, especially those with family serving in it, since she had lost two of her own brothers during the war, she was deeply concerned about the rise in militarism in America.[428] She wrote at the time:

> A bill recently introduced provides for a year of military training and four years' reserve service for every male citizen and alien resident, at the age of 19. Another bill calls for the induction into military service for one year at the age of 17 or immediately upon graduation from high school, and subsequent reserve service for eight years. Thus some legislators in Washington are paving the way for a standing army…In the event of a strike, the younger strikers could be called up for service and forced to serve as strikebreakers in uniform against their own brothers and fathers and against their own economic interests. Such things have happened in other countries under dictatorships, against which our youth has been

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[425] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, 2905.
[426] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, 2905.
[427] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 397.
[428] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 404.

> sent to wage the present war. Compulsory military training is conducive to waging wars rather than to the maintenance of peace.[429]

Under this new system, unions required routinized communications, protocols for democratic action, tools of political power, and agreements that must be honored, even if they stifled free expression and action. For workers who joined the CIO, a regular paycheck, health insurance, and a pension were significant factors, which contributed to the entrenchment of the rigors of this system.[430]

As organized labor became anchored in institutions, which derived their economic and political power through negotiations and the electoral process, it lost its connections with local communities. Women workers, ethnic and racial minorities, the unemployed, agricultural and domestic labor, and unorganized workers became marginal to the labor movement's primary agenda. Large labor institutions were now concerned mostly about retaining their membership, protecting the rights of unionized workers, and in improving the pay, benefits and conditions of union workplaces.[431]

As Faue pointed out, "although the labor movement drew on the strength of ethnic, racial, and community organizations, it emphasized the 'gospel of unity and unionism.'" For most union members, this meant that despite the long standing divisions among workers, they were now required to "submerge" them "under the language of the labor movement." However, these differences "are not rooted only in cultural preferences, but in structural inequalities and social practices."[432]

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[429] Pesotta, *Bread Upon the Waters,* 399.
[430] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, 2824.
[431] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, 2960.
[432] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, 2960.

While the CIO demanded equal pay, it did not consider that demanding seniority rights hurt, rather than helped, women and minority workers. Nor did labor leaders did take into account that employers classified jobs by race and gender, "because they shared many of the same prejudices. Even the symbols of the labor movement in action—the iconography of male workers and the language of fraternal solidarity—excluded the majority of the working class. Solidarity was defined in relatively narrow terms and portrayed in the mainstream press—as well as in labor and leftist newspapers—as male and white."[433]

Rose appears to have pragmatically considered the best use of her time and talents under these circumstances, given that she had become so well-known. She went on many speaking engagements, helped transition refugees of the holocaust, participated in Histadrut, the Jewish labor movement in America, and visited fellow laborites at the Amsterdam International. She wrote to a friend, while she was writing the book, that she was doing so for the benefit of "the women whom I organized and their like."[434] In 1945, the book was in its third printing, and by 1952 had been translated into Spanish, German, Japanese, and was required reading in many U.S. labor classes.[435] In this way she reached an even wider audience, drawing attention to her own narrative, which she had struggled to do in the male dominated ILGWU GEB.

Many of the same anarchists who had produced "*Vanguard, Spanish Revolution,* and *Challenge* began to publish periodicals during and after the Second World War in the

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[433] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, 2960.
[434] RP to Sue Adams, November 11, 1943, RPP/NYPL/GC/Box 5.
[435] John H. M. Laslett and Mary Tyler, *The ILGWU in Los Angeles, 1907-1988* (Inglewood, CA: Ten Star Press, 1989),135. Warner Brothers expressed interest in turning the book into a feature length film, although it was never made, Leeder, *The Gentle General,* 154.

form of *Why?* (1942–7), which later became *Resistance* (1947–54)."[436] When Historian Paul Avrich interviewed Abe in 1972, Bluestein said that the Challenge Group dissolved during the war, but that he never abandoned the anarchist cause, and he retained his anarchist ideals. During the 1940s, the *Why?* Group, and many anarchists in general, once again embraced the anarchists' traditional antiwar stance.[437] In the following quote from that interview, Bluestein articulated the nonviolent, pragmatist orientation, which he settled on, and which suggested that for Abe, the question mark, raised earlier by the traditionalists still hung over the legitimacy of its pragmatic bent:

> I don't think that a violent upheaval can ever break the chains of dictatorship and lead to real freedom. Spain showed that the libertarian tradition is deeply rooted and has vast constructive possibilities. But I've never accepted class struggle as the explanation of historical development, nor any theory of violent confrontations. Rather I see history as a slow, tortuous climb by humanity striving toward liberty and brotherhood. But men have themselves been responsible for their own sufferings over the centuries because of their ignorance, prejudices, and fear of the unknown and unfamiliar. Thus the answers lie primarily in education—"freedom through education," as Elizabeth Ferm put it. All my life I have put my faith in trade unions, cooperatives, and education as constructive channels. Is this inconsistent with anarchism?[438]

Abe's reflections hint at the new directions anarchism would take after the war. It would emerge in contexts outside the labor unions, and its roots in the immigrant community, and include new ideas and new constituencies, such as white middle-class college students. Andrew Cornell found that "during the 1940s and 1950s, anarchists served as a hinge," which linked radical pacifists, such as Dorothy Day and A. J. Muste, with avant-garde artists and writers, who drew on developing social theories to "broaden the anarchist critique of power beyond [its] traditional focus on class oppression, while

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[436] Brodie, "Rebel Youths," 11, 18. nt.144 Cornell, "For a World Without Oppressors," 324, 347, 374, 386.
[437] Cornell, "For a World Without Oppressors," 345, 349-56.
[438] Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*, quoting Abe Bluestein, December 9, 1972. 241.

activists and artists explored nonviolent and representational techniques of self and social transformation."[439]

"These 'practical anarchists,' sought to prefigure the world they hoped to live in, rather than wait until after a revolution that now seemed impossibly far off." They developed "new political analyses, strategies, institutions, and aesthetics that shaped the Beat Generation, the civil rights movement, the second wave of feminism, the 1960s counterculture, and the New Left."[440] Until the ends of their respective lives, both Dorothy Day, whose movement attracted many college students, and Rose Pesotta, continued to participate not just in the labor movement, but also in new radical movements as well, such as anti-war protests, and the March on Washington in August, 1963, which they both attended.

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[439] Cornell, Andrew. *Unruly Equality*, 148.
[440] Cornell, Andrew. *Unruly Equality*, 148.

Appendix

Definition of Terms

American Federation of Labor (*AFL)* the largest longstanding labor union which catered to craft unionists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was made up primarily of white men of Northern and Western European descent.[441]

Anarchism. A philosophy based on the liberty of the individual and the power of the collective of individuals who honor the obligation to provide mutual aid to one another. It resists all unnecessary authoritarian and hierarchical social institutions, such as capitalism and the centralized nation-state, in favor of cooperative, horizontal, and egalitarian relationships. Most anarchists consider Pierre Proudhon (1809-1865) the father of anarchism.[442]

Catholic Worker Movement. It originated when anarchist Catholic laypersons, Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin co-founded the *Catholic Worker* newspaper in 1933, using sales proceeds to provide shelter to the unemployed.[443]

Congress for Industrial Organization (CIO). A Communist led organization that originated as the Committee for Industrial Organization in the AFL in order to better represent industrial workers, but broke away from the AFL in 1935 under John Lewis' leadership. The CIO attracted many African American workers in the late 1930s.[444]

Knights of Labor (KOL). It was the earliest national industrial union operating during the 1880s.[445]

International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) founded in 1900, often referred to as the "International." By the time of World War I had 90,000 and was the largest, most influential AFL union in which women made up the majority of the members.[446]

General Executive Board (GEB) of the ILGWU is the General Executive Board of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. It consisted of 24 Vice Presidents, 23 of

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[441] Elizabeth Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, American Social and Political Movements of the Twentieth Century (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017): loc 689.
[442] Proudhon, *Proudhon*.
[443] "Catholic Worker Movement," https://www.catholicworker.org/.
[444] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, loc 2714; Bruce Nelson, "Class, Race and Democracy in the CIO: The 'New' Labor History Meets the 'Wages of Whiteness,'" *International Review of Social History* 41, no. 3 (1996): 351–74, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859000114051.
[445] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, loc 833.
[446] John H. M. Laslett, "Gender, Class, or Ethno-Cultural Struggle? The Problematic Relationship between Rose Pesotta and the Los Angeles ILGWU," *California History* 72, no. 1 (1993): 20–39, https://doi.org/10.2307/25177324.

whom were men between 1933-1944, except for Rose Pesotta although 85% of ILGWU's members were women.[447]

International Workers of the World (IWW) is a labor union founded in the U.S. in 1905 on principles based on anarchistic ideology. It is part of a worldwide syndicalist movement.[448]

National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 (NIRA) New Deal labor protection legislation. Section 7(a) of the act was widely interpreted to provide employees with the right to organize into unions, and to strike.[449]

National Recovery Administration (NRA) was formed by the Roosevelt administration in 1933 to restore the economy through industrial codes with production quotas, wage and hour formulas, and employee representation in company run unions.[450]

National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (NLRA) or the Wagner Act, written by Senator Robert F. Wagner guarantees private sector employees the right to organize into trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and take collective action such as strikes. It also banned company unions.[451]

National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) was established to enforce the Wagner Act.[452]

National Woman's Party (NWP) led by Alice Paul, came to be associated with feminism, especially after the 19th amendment, and was most effective in organizing the women's suffrage movement.[453]

National Women's Trade Union League of America (NWTUL) (1903-1950). The NWTUL helped organize successful strikes, especially in collaboration with the ILGWU in its early years. But it increasingly focused on legislative reforms in the 1920s, under

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[447] Laslett, "Gender, Class, or Ethno-Cultural Struggle?"

[448] Jacqueline Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy: The Life and Times of Lucy Parsons, American Radical*, First edition (New York: Basic Books, 2017): 264; David Montgomery, "The 'New Unionism' and the Transformation of Workers' Consciousness in America, 1909–22," *Journal of Social History* 7, no. 4 (1974): 509–29, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/7.4.509; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

[449] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, loc 2664.

[450] On 20 July 1933, Hugh S. Johnson, the head of the NRA, proclaimed the Blue Eagle emblem, a blue-colored representation of the American Indian thunderbird with outspread wings, the symbol of U.S. industrial recovery. All who accepted President FDR's special Code of Fair Competition could display a poster that reproduced the blue eagle with the motto "Member N.R.A. We Do Our Part." The invalidation of the compulsory code system on 5 September 1935 led to the abolition of the emblem and the prohibition of its future use as a symbol, Sidney Fine, *The Automobile under the Blue Eagle.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001107806, Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, loc 2649.

[451] Faue, Rethinking the American Labor Movement, loc 2714.

[452] Faue, *Rethinking the American Labor Movement*, loc 2714.

[453] Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987): 57-81.

the leadership of women such as Rose Schneiderman, who had a particularly close relationship with the Roosevelt administration through Eleanor Roosevelt, a member of the NWTUL since 1923.[454]

Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union (NTWIU) A communist led industrial union that opposed the craft-oriented AFL. It separated from the ILGWU in1928, but rejoined it during the Popular Front period of reconciliation in 1934.[455]

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[454] Faue, Rethinking the American Labor Movement, loc 2521, Annelise Orleck, "The Activists in Their Prime: The Mainstreaming of Industrial Feminism, 1920-1945," in *Common Sense & a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965*, Second edition., Gender & American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 113-168.
[455] Victor G. Devinatz, "The Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union: The Theory and Practice of Building a Red Industrial Union during Third Period Communism, 1928-1934," *Nature, Society, and Thought* 19, no. 3 (July 2006): 261-294, 383-384, https://www.proquest.com/docview/220293993/abstract/D9003A25BDD34B02PQ/1.

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