OPTIMISM WITHOUT LIMIT: INTELLECTUAL LIFE IN THE AMERICAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT, 1895-1912

by

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(Under the Direction of John Short)

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates networks of informal education, activism, and intellectual participation within the American Socialist movement during its heyday between 1895-1912. This study examines the writings of three American socialists, Samuel Joseph, William Mailly, and Rufus Trimble, to show how they experienced the American socialist project as an *intellectual* movement, one which appealed to its audience through a modernizing discourse of historical teleology, scientific empiricism, and self-education. This study shows how these activists participated in and helped produce a growing, popular American culture of education and intellectualism.

INDEX WORDS: American Socialist Movement. Intellectual Life. Working-Class readers. Print Culture. Education.

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Presidential election of 1912 is often seen as the "high-water mark" of the Socialist Party of America (SPA) as its membership peaked at over 118,000 and the 6% share of votes that year was the highest percentage the party would ever gain. The electoral success of 1912 was the pinnacle of the party's rapid growth in membership and national attention over the previous decade. The SPA's gradual gains in the polls occurred despite intense debate and factionalism within the party across local and national levels. As part of this rapid growth and appeal, the first decade of the twentieth century was a moment of intense intellectual development and debate as socialists across America scrambled to figure out just what this new national labor party was, and what it could achieve. The story of American socialism during this period is partly a story of personalities—of union conference-floor brawls and stirring speeches from figures like Morris Hillquit, Eugene Debs, and the divisive Daniel DeLeon. Thus, this is also a story of their audience—of the many laborers, activists, and sympathizers who worked to spread socialism, and who listened to and engaged with socialist rhetoric on an individual, intellectual level. So, when focusing on the crowd gathered around the socialist stump speech—instead of the stump—one wonders what ideas of American republicanism, socialism, and agitation looked like to the ordinary and less-visible members and activists. What did methods of informal education and amateur socialist intellectual life mean on an individual level? Furthermore, while powerful ideas of 'progressive' and 'evolutionary' science—often in the

form of Social Darwinism—were popular tools of many socialist leaders during this period, to what extent did these more obscure individuals encounter and use such ideas?

This thesis centers around New York City between 1900-1910 and provides a case study of three obscure socialists who participated in the American socialist project intellectually and practically. These three socialists produced public and private writings, and they worked with and supported local laborers—one of our subjects even travelled to inspect successful socialist organizations, first in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and later abroad to Brussels, Belgium. By connecting the surviving fragments of this activism, one can explore how these authors tackled the problem of popularizing socialism and transmitting knowledge to the masses. This study argues that through their engagement with print culture and a vernacular world of ideas and information, these authors experienced the American socialist project as an intellectual movement. This study will not deal directly with American socialism as a political movement but will instead show how socialism appealed to its audience through a modernizing discourse of scientific empiricism, historical teleology, and self-education. This study will further outline how our authors experienced this discourse not simply as a distracting pastime, but as an urgent and vitalizing world of ideas and information, and as individual intellectual pursuit for its own sake.

Although they don't appear to have known each other, these writers' similar interests and activities overlap to provide three distinct angles and samples of experience which help construct a vignette of socialist activism in the early twentieth century. The first writer, Samuel Joseph (1858-1913) was an immigrant cigar maker who lived in Hartford, Connecticut, and provides the voice of an amateur, working-class intellectual who participated from the edges of mainstream socialist discussion. The second writer, William Mailly (1871-1912) grew up "practically without formal schooling," according to one newspaper, and worked as coal miner in Alabama in

the 1890s before rising to become national secretary of the Socialist Party and later a professional journalist.[1] Mailly's early experience in the Alabama coal mines strongly informed his later activism and writings and provided the foundation for his reputation as a sort of working-class hero and self-made intellectual among his contemporaries. It's interesting to note that Mailly and Joseph occupied opposite ends of this print culture, and that Mailly's many polemics, play reviews, and calls to action in labor newspapers were targeted towards readers like Samuel Joseph—informed and passionate workers all over New York City. The third writer is Rufus Trimble (1888-1974), a young, wealthy Columbia undergraduate from 1908-1911, and later Columbia law student from 1911-1914. When Trimble visited a Belgian socialist cooperative in 1911, he interviewed its leaders and reported on the "optimism without limit" which pervaded the crowds of workers there.[2] This optimism and spirit of the Belgian workers coupled with the efficiency of their cooperative was precisely the type of first-hand, educational information Trimble hoped to share with American workers and socialists like Joseph and Mailly.

Through their differences in age, education, class, and personal experience, these three writers present a mosaic of intellectual participation within the socialist movement in the early twentieth century. Their writings show strikingly similar patterns of language, argument, and worldview such that the authors appear connected not simply through political inclination, but also through intellectual style and framework. Their language of scientific empiricism and

[1] William D.P. Bliss with Rudolph M. Binder (Eds.), *The New Cyclopedia of Social Reform* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1908), *Archive.org*, 745.
William Mailly Papers. TAM 010. Box 1. Folder 1. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries, "Death of William Mailly." A large, unlabeled newspaper obituary of Mailly, preserved by his wife Bertha, eulogizes Mailly as a talented socialist who grew up "practically without school education, [he] achieved the editorship of many a Socialist and labor paper." This narrative is repeated in several other obituaries and tributes to Mailly.
[2] Rufus James Trimble Papers. TAM 550. Box 1, Folder 13. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries, "A Report on the Maison du Peuple."

teleology, while certainly gleaned from the wider culture, is also situated at the core of their arguments as a type of intellectual credential. At certain moments in their different persuasive essays, for example, each writer constructs his own historical narrative and timeline to show "history's progressive trend" and to explain their contemporary "days of progress." [3] This teleological language is coupled closely with a select presentation of Western history, beginning perhaps when "Socrates drank the hemlock" or with the appearance of "English serfdom in 950 [AD]."[4] This understanding of history is not only a reflection of the wider culture, but also appears as a type of intellectual merit and cultural capital. Whether the authors' words are aimed at the uninitiated masses or the informed socialist sympathizer, inherent in this language of empiricism and teleology is another, subtler message: this is how a modern intellectual makes an argument and sounds like someone worth listening to. This reflexive element in their writings functions as an exercise in intellectual growth that seems to fulfill a desire not just for self-education, but to participate in and help produce a growing, popular American culture of education and intellectualism. To support this argument, this study will proceed in sections, and begin by surveying some of the current scholarship in this field, and then expand the biographies of our three authors before providing a more detailed case study of each one.

[3] Rufus Trimble, "Manuscript on Cooperatives," 1. Samuel Joseph Papers. TAM.556. Box 1. Folder 7. "Manuscript on the Paris Exhibition," 10

[4] William Mailly, "The Socialist Bugaboo," *Success Magazine*, Volume 11. 1908. http://books.google.com, 500 Rufus Trimble, "Manuscript on Cooperatives"

SECTION 2

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Newspapers and magazines formed the cornerstone of popular, informal methods of education in the early twentieth century, and the radical press was the epicenter of radical American intellectual thought in this period. Historian Toby Higbie's survey of American print culture, "Unschooled but not Uneducated," tells us that "urban workers in the early twentieth century were readers" and that "the modern industrial city was literally awash in text to such an extent that they could not have avoided it if they wished to."[5] Although basic literacy was widespread, formal education was not, and only "10 percent of American 17-year-olds had graduated from high school in 1910."[6] Access to higher education was truly exceptional, and college enrollment in the first decade of the twentieth century stood at 2 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds.[7] American workers seeking leisure and self-improvement avidly consumed print media like "cast-off newspapers, shared magazines and pamphlets, [and] advertisements" while socially "they could learn from coworkers, street speakers, [and] libraries."[8] Newspapers formed the bulk of this print media, and before World War I "there were more than 2,500 daily newspapers in the United States with a total circulation of 28 million."[9] Working-class readers consumed this growing volume of print media, and "made claims to the same sets of knowledge

[5] Frank Tobias Higbie, "Unschooled but not Uneducated: Print, Public Speaking, and the Networks of Informal Working-Class Education, 1900-1940," *Education and the Culture of Print in Modern America* (2010): 105.
[6] Higbie, "Unschooled," 105.
[7] National Center for Educational Statistics, "120 years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait" (US Department of Education, Office of Education Research and Improvement), 1993. 6, 64-65.
[8] Higbie, "Unschooled,"120.
[9] Ibid. 105.

as middle-class intellectuals."[10] Thus, as American workers increasingly aligned themselves into a growing political force, Higbie shows that what often surprised—and threatened—middle-class and upper-class observers was that "out of a variety of informal practices and networks, a movement was educating itself."[11] The present study will investigate some of these "sets of knowledge," and expand on the central importance of informal social and print education to a socialist movement which was "educating itself " in the early twentieth century.

Several notable studies have investigated this American working-class activism and intellectual pursuit during this period, although as a field these studies can sometimes appear disjointed due to the often scarce and fragmentary nature of the sources. Annelise Orleck's *Common Sense and a Little Fire, 1900-1985* (1996) weaves together the stories of four Jewish women activists to give these "industrial feminists" and "working-class women…their due as political actors," and to show how these women "organized, demonstrated, lobbied, and ran for office during the first half of this century."[12] Orleck's study is a masterful work of social history and provides an excellent contextualizing and counter-narrative to the present study of American working-class men.

Other studies which follow in a similar fashion include Kate Clifford Larson's "The Saturday Evening Girls," which outlines a small network of library clubs around Boston in the early twentieth century. Larson shows how this modest network of reading groups catered to young, working-class Jewish and Italian women seeking "intellectual and social stimulation" in an era when women's education was controversial and often discouraged.[13] Larry Peterson's

[10] Higbie, 119.
[11] Higbie, 121.
[12] Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire, 1900-1985* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 8-11.
[13] Kate Clifford Larson, "The Saturday Evening Girls: A Progressive Era Library Club and the Intellectual Life of Working Class and Immigrant Girls in Turn-of-the-Century Boston," *Library Quarterly*: University of Chicago (2001): 195.

"The Intellectual World of the IWW" investigates the personal library of his working-class grandfather, the Swedish immigrant John Edwin Peterson who was a lifelong member of the International Workers of the World (IWW) and the Socialist Party. Although John Edwin Peterson left no personal writings about his radicalism, he developed an impressive personal library of some 250 books featuring many of the greatest names in nineteenth and early twentieth-century fiction, nonfiction, and philosophy. Peterson uses this library to outline the world of ideas, interests, and "cultural reality" of radical laborers to show how his grandfather, "and others of his generation, responded to the social and industrial transformations of early twentieth-century America in part by seeking to understand it."[14] With John Edwin as a symbol, Peterson shows how American laborers "seized upon the opportunities that inexpensive books and a working-class press offered" and used this knowledge to coordinate and develop "a thought-out, generalized alternative."[15] The present study will corroborate Peterson's work but from the opposite direction, by analyzing fragments of this working-class "cultural reality" through these writers' response to and participation in this milieu of self-education.

Much of the historiography of the Socialist Party has followed German sociologist Werner Sombart's famous 1906 work, *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?* in trying to explain the various missteps and failures of the American socialist movement. This study will not deal with this now well-covered question, but instead will touch on another vein of the historiography dealing with the conflict between how socialists during this period perceived themselves and how they were and are perceived in American popular culture. Nick Salvatore's work, *Eugene Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (1982) is exemplary of a series of cultural and social studies during the 1980s which aimed to critically reexamine the intellectual and cultural

[14] Larry Peterson, "The Intellectual World of the IWW," *History Workshop Journal* 22, No. 1 (1986): 171.
[15] Peterson, "Intellectual World," 171.

foundations of the Socialist Party of America. Salvatore's biography of Eugene Debs details how Debs's radical labor ideology was not born of alien, un-American influences as many of his critics, both past and present, have claimed. Salvatore shows that Debs's understanding of socialism was instead firmly rooted in American "republicanism," in fundamental ideas like the protection of individual rights and a belief in the power of the vote.[16] The author asserts that Debs, like so many other radicals during this period, was informed by a stereotypical *bourgeois* American upbringing which clashed fiercely with the vast inequities resulting from the massive transformation of American labor and society in the late nineteenth century. Salvatore's work is joined by other similar revisions of the socialist movement like Mari Jo Buhle's *Women and American Socialism* (1981) and Elliot Shore's *Talkin Socialism* (1989) in re-establishing the foundational influence of different threads of American culture within American socialism. [17]

Another distinct point of this intellectual history will be to challenge historiographical discussions of "scientific socialism" which have emphasized its diversions into "race science" and Social Darwinism. In their search to employ science and history the writers examined generally avoid the more stereotypical rhetoric of Social Darwinism and eugenicist thought which often attracted other contemporary thinkers and leaders. While the authors do present hints of racism, they appear largely unconcerned with deeper questions of ethnicity, race, and the reordering of populations. Instead, this study will examine how these writers produced certain intellectual contradictions—such as espousing a teleological, non-racial understanding of 'History' alongside a strong belief in individual agency and the power of scientific "empiricism." This combination complicates certain threads of the historiography on socialist intellectual thought in this period. For example, Mark Pittenger's *American Socialism and Evolutionary*

[16] Nick Salvatore, *Citizen Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1982), xii.

Thought, 1870-1920 (1993) has addressed the more problematic intellectual underpinnings of the American socialist movement. Pittenger argues that although many Americans during the Progressive era were fascinated with science and evolution, "none were more ardently so than socialists." [18] Pittenger's work outlines a "lively theoretical discourse" and "socialist discussion of scientific issues" among prominent Socialists during this period. Pittenger shows how "even the most sophisticated among them, of whatever party faction, tended to fall prey to the Spencerian cosmic evolutionism and teleological optimism" which was even then giving way to "cautious and unpretentious empiricism."[19] One goal of this study will be to illustrate ways in which this "cosmic evolutionism and teleological optimism" appeared to flourish quite separately from the racialist overtones of Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism.

Thomas Leonard's recent work, *Illiberal Reformers* (2016) examines the 'illiberal' side of many liberal Progressive reformers, showing how Progressive-era economists who advocated a stronger American "administrative state" and wage reform were often closely informed by Social Darwinism and theories of eugenics.[20] Although Leonard's study is primarily focused on Social Darwinist thought and its appeal to Progressive economists, he nevertheless strikes upon an important connection between evolutionary thought and the "outsized confidence" it inspired in its adherents and its widespread acceptance among popular American reform movements.[21] Indeed, the collapse of this Progressive technocratic confidence in "scientific expertise" in the face of the horrors of WWI shares many parallels with the disillusionment which underlay the collapse of the American socialist movement during the same moment.[22]

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[18] Mark Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought, 1870-1920* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 3, 10-11.
[19] Pittenger, *American Socialists,* 11.
[20] Thomas Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era*, (Princeton, New Jersey: University of Princeton Press, 2016), x-xii.
[21] Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers*, 201, 12-13.
[22] Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers*, 202.

SECTION 3

BIOGRAPHIES

This study begins with Samuel Joseph, who was born in 1853 in Posen, Prussia, a German territory now part of western Poland. He immigrated to the United States in 1880 and in 1884 married his wife, Minnie Slamowitz, who was born in Posen in 1863. The United States Census report for 1900 indicates that Samuel Joseph worked as a cigar-maker in Hartford, Connecticut, where he and Minnie lived with their six children.[23] Cigarmaking as a skilled trade and profession occupied a privileged rank among the working-class in this period. Historian Gary Mormino, studying Cuban cigarmakers in Ybor City, Florida, writes that, "a special ethos enveloped the profession" and that "cigarmakers thrived in an environment stressing group solidarity and individual mastery of an intricate craft."[24] As a proud and skilled tradesman it is perhaps not surprising that Joseph was also fervently attuned to the intellectual milieu of the growing labor movement, and produced his own writings engaging with this quickly growing world of ideas.

The available sources on Joseph are slim—two letters, some tattered labor newspaper clippings, and three essays totaling twenty-one pages of handwritten text—yet they provide a sketch of a working-class autodidact whose frustration with the social order was perhaps matched by his vibrant array of intellectual interests.[25] Joseph wrote short but spirited essays on

[23] Ancestry.com. *1900 United States Federal Census*. Provo, UT, USA: Operations Inc, 2004. *1900*; Census Place: *Hartford, Connecticut*; Page: 18; Enumeration District: 0150.
[24] Gary Mormino, "The Reader and the Worker: and the Culture of Cigarmaking in Cuba and Florida," *International Labor and Working-Class History* (Fall, 1998): 2.
[25] Samuel Joseph Papers. Box 1. Folder 1. First folder includes a brief note, from a family member, which corroborates the 1900 Census report about Samuel Joseph and his family.

the popular scientific and historical topics of the nineteenth century, such as retelling of the discovery of Neptune and the discovery of fossilized bread in an Egyptian tomb. Through his writings, Joseph, a presumably native German speaker, reveals a skillful control of English and an expansive survey of history, politics, science, and socialism. His longest essay is an erratic compilation of topics from both German and American history, such as James Madison's warnings about the concentration of property by the wealthy and the German Chancellor Bismarck's persecution of German socialists in the 1870s.[26] As a representative symbol, Samuel Joseph's dedication to self-improvement and working-class education matches several characteristics of Antonio Gramsci's "organic intellectual," in the sense that, as a working-class autodidact, Joseph seems to have been devoted to giving "his class homogeneity and awareness of its own function, in the economic field and on the social and political levels."[27] Gramsci's definition is a useful framework for situating Joseph as an exceptional working-class figure who made great efforts to educate his class from within.

The second writer, and best-known among the three, is William Mailly, who was born in Pittsburgh in 1871 to American parents. Information about Mailly's personal life are scarce and appear mostly through short newspaper obituaries and a brief, contemporary entry in the *Encyclopedia of Social Reform* (1903). [28] As a young man, Mailly worked in coal mines in Alabama and Illinois, and briefly as a bookkeeper in Nashville, Tennessee. He first became involved in labor organizing through the United Mine Workers in Alabama in 1893, under the supervision of Mary Harris Jones, "Mother Jones."[29] Following this entrance onto the scene of

[26] Samuel Joseph, "Manuscript on the Paris Exhibition."
[27] John Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (Stanford, CA; Stanford University Press, 1967), 202.
[28] William D.P. Bliss with Rudolph M. Binder, *The New Cyclopedia of Social Reform* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1908), http://Archive.org, 745.
[29] George D Herron, "William Mailly as a Socialist Type," *The Coming Nation: A Journal of Things Done and to be Done* (1912), *Google Books*, google.books.com: 11.

radical labor activism, Mailly rose quickly within the socialist movement, and was elected national secretary of the Socialist Party from 1903 to 1905. After Mailly resigned as Party secretary in 1905 to seek "rest and quiet for himself and his wife," he nevertheless continued his socialist activism as a journalist and editor for several different labor publications.[30] Notably, Mailly served as a founding board member of the Rand School of Social Science in 1906 in New York City.[31] The Rand School was the Socialist Party's pioneering effort at institutionalizing workers' education, proclaiming a "manifesto" to offer its students a curriculum of "scientific teaching" of "economic and political Socialism."[32] Mailly worked as an editor for publications like *The Worker* and *The New York Call*, while also publishing articles in a variety of other newspapers and magazines until his death in 1912.

Mailly's early experience working in coal mines strongly informed his later activism and writings, and also provided the foundation for a reputation as a sort of working-class hero and self-made intellectual among his contemporaries. [33] Indeed, for this study Mailly presents a compelling example of a working-class activist and intellectual who rose from coal mine strikes to a more polished and central position atop the Socialist Party. Mailly's unexpected death in September 1912 was met with a modest wave of national mourning among his fellow socialists and editors, indicated by personal letters to Mailly's wife, Bertha, from figures like socialist leader Morris Hillquit and the prominent journalist Floyd Dell. The feminist labor magazine *The Progressive Woman* also reported in October 1912 that "thousands of people" attended his cremation on Sunday, September 8 in New York.[34]

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[30] William Mailly Papers, "Death of William Mailly."
[31] Algernon Lee, *The Case of the Rand School* (New York: Rand School of Social Science, July 1919), *Archive.org*, http://archive.org, 18.
[32]Algernon Lee. *Rand School*, 1.
[33] William Mailly Papers, "Death of William Mailly."
[34] "A Tribute to William Mailly," *The Progressive Woman*, Volume VI, No. 64 (October 1912), *Google Books*, books.google.com: 12.

The third writer examined is Rufus James Trimble who was born in 1888 in New Jersey. While an undergraduate at Columbia University from 1908-1912, Trimble followed his uncle, Rufus W. Weeks into the American socialist movement.[35] In 1910 Rufus Weeks was a vice president at the New York Life Insurance Company and had prominent connections in the socialist scene of New York City. For example, Socialist party founder Morris Hillquit describes Weeks as a "warm friend" in a 1911 letter of introduction Hillquit wrote for Trimble to visit the Belgian Workers Party. Trimble's uncle commissioned him to investigate and report on different socialist organizations during his summer breaks, leading Trimble to travel to Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1910 and to Brussels, Belgium in 1911. These research trips evidence the keen interest among American socialists to learn from other successful socialist movements, whether domestic or abroad. During his trip to Milwaukee, Trimble's uncle asked him to report back with "daily letters" about the "political conditions" there, and after his trip to Belgium Trimble wrote a manuscript detailing the cooperative organization of the Belgian Workers Party, known as the *Maison du Peuple* (House of the People).[36]

As both a Columbia student and socialist activist Trimble stands out from Joseph and Mailly, neither of whom appear to have had much formal education. Trimble's privileged and rather unusual hybrid position forms an interesting intersection of the avenues of formal and informal education, and, further, provides a useful counter-position from which to view Mailly and Joseph. Trimble's youth and relative inexperience with socialism further distance him from Mailly and Joseph, both of whom were seasoned socialists nearly twice his age at the time of

[35] Rufus Trimble, "Correspondence: Rufus Weeks." In 1910 Rufus Weeks worked as a vice president of New York Life Insurance Company.

[36] Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture* (Harvard University Press, 1967), 305. The *Maison*, completed in 1899, was famous in its own regard as a crowning achievement of turn-of-the-century European Art Nouveau and specifically as a masterpiece of the famed Belgian architect Victor Horta. The *Maison* was demolished in 1965 amid international protest, and its destruction was lamented by Giedion, an art historian, as an "architectural crime."

their own writings. Trimble's writings, and especially his perspectives on socialist organizations should be understood as that of an outsider and novice experiencing political activism and rhetoric with a fresh set of eyes. Trimble's eager activism and study of socialist organizations also helps us understand the extent of the socialist movement's reach and appeal during this period, not just as a political platform for the working class, but as an exciting intellectual movement and world of ideas to be studied and understood. Now that these socialists have been introduced, this study will proceed to examine each author in more detail. These case studies will show how each author's writings are enveloped by a modernizing and self-edifying socialist discourse of teleology and empiricism, a discourse which simultaneously looked abroad, at home, and to the past in a feverish effort to achieve a socialist future in America.

SECTION 4

INTELLECTUAL LIFE

"Minds of little penetration rest naturally on the surface of things. They do not like to pierce too deep into them for fear of labor or trouble, sometimes still more for fear of truth."
-Joseph Priestly,1797

Samuel Joseph

Joseph Priestly was an eighteenth-century English theologian, chemist, and intellectual who was driven from England into exile in the United States in 1791 for his controversial mixture of scientific rationalism and theology, and his public support of the French Revolution.[37] Priestly makes a brief appearance in Samuel Joseph's 1899 essay, "Manuscript on the Paris Exhibition," in which Joseph accuses Priestly of hypocrisy for allegedly biased critiques of the French intellectual Constantin Volney in the late eighteenth century.[38] Samuel Joseph's presentation of Volney and Priestly is perhaps characteristic of his own intellectual and argumentative style. Joseph frequently discusses historic intellectual figures and their debates, and his presentation of evidence is the most effusive of the three authors in this study. Indeed, Joseph's use of historical and scientific evidence is sometimes so erratic and excessive that his actual argument is quite hard to follow. He crams so many quotations, famous names, and events into his fourteen-page essay that it seems the real point of this evidence is not their immediate relevance, but rather simply as a raw display of his own knowledge and experience. For instance, in Joseph's "Manuscript on the Paris Exhibition" he lists many such names of important figures

[37] Alan Tapper, "Joseph Priestley," *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 252: *British Philosophers 1500–1799*. Eds. Philip B. Dematteis and Peter S. Fosl. Detroit: Gale Group, 2002
[38] Priestly and Volney engaged in a rather vibrant debate over the merits of Volney's history of the world, *Ruins of Empire* (1793).

and constructs strange constellations of evidence, quoting obscure state laws or newspaper articles he has read. An interesting stylistic pattern is Joseph's many generalizations about and informal jabs at the figures he mentions, some of whom—like Edmund Burke and the "persecutionary[sic] eyes" with which he viewed English theologians like Joseph Priestly—were long dead by Joseph's writing in 1899.[39] This type of language seems to be Joseph's personal version of the many similar polemics which formed a staple of contemporary socialist and labor publications.

For example, in his "Manuscript on the Paris Exhibition" Joseph criticizes a journalist from the *New York Journal* who favored Lassallean socialism over Marxian socialism. Joseph cites a large paragraph of text from a US Department of Labor report published in 1893 as a book by the sociologist John Graham Brooks. Joseph says:

> Now if the 'Journal' writer of the 'best kind of socialism' knew something he would have known that socialism was pronounced revolutionary by the S.L.P of Germany in 1875… To one it seems that though ignorant of Mr. Brook's work, the "Journal" praised the "Volkszeitung" because that paper is as yet marching back to Lasalle. This reminds me of an address made by Mr. Alexander Jonas in 1884 at the Lassalle… Germania Assembly Room [in which Jonas also favored Lassalle over Marx]. The audience was confounded….[40]

In this section of his essay, Joseph is criticizing this journalist using a mixture of print sources as well as his own first-hand experience at a socialist assembly he attended some fifteen years earlier. This fluid mix of print evidence and personal experience, brought forth to pan a journalist and promote a certain type of socialism, is exemplary of the motley and vernacular nature of working-class education in this period. In comparison to Joseph, the writings of Rufus Trimble and especially William Mailly are often more polished and straight-forward in their arguments, even when they appear as hand-written drafts and notes—which itself is an

[39] Joseph, "Manuscript on the Paris Exhibition," 12.
[40] Ibid. 3.

interesting difference, as all of Joseph's writings are hand-written, while Trimble and Mailly produced a mixture of hand and typewritten sources.

Joseph's brief surviving correspondence—two short replies from men Joseph wrote to—offer an interesting reverse view of his intellectual ambition and commitment to educating other members of the working class. The first letter is dated June 30, 1898 and authored by Daniel DeLeon, the charismatic and abrasive leader of the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) who was a central figure in American socialism from 1890 until his death in 1914.[41] In his brief letter, DeLeon greets Joseph warmly, and thanks him for sending a personal "manuscript on the A.F. of L" which DeLeon had "used" in writing for his labor paper, *The People.* [42] DeLeon's tone in the letter is interestingly personal; Joseph had sent DeLeon a set of "tip-top cigars," which DeLeon was "puffing at" while writing the letter. DeLeon further assures Joseph that "the few 'initiated;' [the] ones whom I've given [a cigar] here at the office, agree they are tip-top." Deleon concludes by asking Joseph to "remember me to the friends."[43] Already from this brief glimpse, one can observe several important aspects of Joseph's character: his skill and pride as a tradesman, as well as his apparent intellectual capacity and ambition to share his writings with a leading socialist figure. These characteristics are compounded by a second, very similar letter sent to Joseph by one John B. Millikin of the Connecticut Loan Association, a bank in downtown Hartford. A bank employee seems an odd target for socialist support, yet Millikin expresses a deep understanding and sympathy for working-class struggle.

[41] Lumsden, *Red All Over*, 20. DeLeon's theoretical and ideological writings provided much of the intellectual framework for the early Socialist movement. Lumsden notes that he has been called "the most divisive figure in socialism," which is evidenced by his well-known, and vehement disagreements with the other two giants of American Socialism, Morris Hillquit and Eugene Debs.
[42] Samuel Joseph, "Letter from Daniel DeLeon"
[43] Ibid.

Joseph wrote Millikin with an offer to deliver an address about Karl Marx's ideas to a group of unidentified workers, perhaps in a local union. Millikin agrees that "the comrades would do wisely to set apart an evening" to hear Joseph speak. Most of the following letter addresses this problem of working-class education and, like DeLeon, Millikin praises Joseph for his study of Marx, which he says, "ought to be appreciated" because it requires "the closest application and study."[44] Millikin then notes how rare it is to find a figure like Samuel Joseph, saying "it must be a very trying matter to be one like yourself who has the taste for reading and investigation" only to have it "not appreciated as it should be." Yet, Millikin assures Joseph that if "knowledge and mental discipline" are the only "rewards" of this study they should not be "under-estimated."[45] Millikin further sympathizes with Joseph about the difficulties of trying to share 'knowledge' with laborers, saying, "it will always be hard to get manual laborers to do brain work… if this were not so they would not now be the slaves that they are…."[46] Yet, Millikin also reminds Joseph to be patient in his efforts:

> There are some extenuating circumstances in [the workers'] case, however, and they are making progress, a fact which should be borne in mind by all like yourself who are striving for the betterment of humanity.

This mixture of unfamiliar praise, sympathy, and caution coupled with Millikin's somewhat passive salutation—he simply thanks Joseph for writing and wishes him "success"—hints that Joseph's original letter was perhaps unsolicited. If so, this slight difference in familiarity between the Millikin and DeLeon correspondence provides further evidence of informal and fleeting networks of socialist communication, as well as Joseph's ambition to share his ideas with whomever might be interested.

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[44] Samuel Joseph Papers, "Letter from Jno. Millikin"
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

Millikin's reminder to Joseph to avoid condescension and have patience with his fellow workers is perhaps not surprising when read alongside some of Joseph's own writings about international socialism. In an unpublished manuscript, Joseph writes about the political parties and socialist movements in France and Germany during the late 1800s. With respect to France, Joseph dismisses the pluralist party system, saying that three general groups can be identified from the various parties. The first group is the "conservative, strictly capitalist party" which necessarily maintains "full control of the army, the church, [and] the whole forces on finance," in the pursuit of controlling ever more capital and power.[47] The second group are the "parties of all shades and color for the unconscious people to divide themselves into," while the third group is the "socialist labor party, in France like in all other countries, the party of the conscious working man."[48] Joseph here touches on the Marxist critique of the "false consciousness" of the working class—those laborers who have acquiesced to their oppression through the embodiment of the capitalist class' ideology, which itself misleads workers about the true nature of class relations.[49]

Joseph's frustration with those "unconscious people" who had not joined the socialist movement is counteracted by his strong desire to educate and bring about the enlightenment of these same masses. This need to spread the good word is ostensibly the reason for the entire process which Joseph has engaged in, whether it be writing and sending a manuscript to Daniel DeLeon or seeking to address local workers about class conditions. It is perhaps not surprising to find an ardent socialist lamenting wage slavery in an explicitly political writing or to make use of evolution and science to explain politics. But this fixation on intellectual struggle and personal

[47] Samuel Joseph, "Manuscript on the Paris Exhibition"
[48] Ibid.
[49] 'False consciousness,' though useful to superficially explain why some working-class populations did not turn revolutionary, is nevertheless problematic for its condescending tone. The term was not actually used often by Marx or Engels, except in a private letter Engels wrote in 1893—an exception which seems to prove the rule. Instead, Georg Lukács dealt with the term extensively in his 1920 essay *Class Consciousness.*

agency appears in subtler ways in Joseph's historic narrative titled "The Discovery of Neptune," in which the explicitly scientific and natural are conflated with the social and historic.

Joseph's narrative titled "The Discovery of Neptune," dated September 1896, was prepared to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of the eighth planet in 1846. The discovery of Neptune stands out in that the planet's cosmic position was mathematically predicted before it was observed in 1846. Joseph points out that Neptune's discovery was celebrated internationally as a "celestial Triumph" and a testament to the power of modern science and mathematics. This discovery also became a confirmation of Newtonian Physics since Uranus' deviated orbit, caused by Neptune's previously-unknown gravitational pull, was finally explained.[50] Indeed, the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery seems to have inspired many other authors to retell the story in books and magazines in 1896, and Joseph's narrative is probably a revision or retelling of one or several such accounts. For example, the Irish astronomer and Cambridge professor Sir Robert Ball published a book titled *The Story of the Heavens* in 1896, and the third chapter is dedicated to "The Discovery of Neptune," and was reprinted in popular magazines, like *Strand Magazine*.[51] Ball's description of course follows the same basic narrative as Joseph, lauding the discovery as a "jubilee" and "one of the most famous astronomical events of modern times." [52] But as we will see, Joseph's narrative is altogether more spirited and creative in its language and analysis. For example, when describing the behavior of the planets, such as the deviation in Uranus' orbit, Joseph personifies this behavior, saying, "Mr. Uranus rebelled against the dictate of his program and slowly digressed from the Track assigned to him,"

[50] Sir Robert Ball, *The Story of the Heavens* (Cassell, United Kingdom, 1896), *Google Books*, books.google.com, 257.
[51] Sir Robert Ball, "The Discovery of Neptune," *The Strand Magazine*. Volume 12. 1896. 161.
[52] Ibid.

which left astronomers no choice but to "find out the reason for this utter disregard of the programme."[53]

When Joseph describes the actual astronomers involved in the search for Neptune he takes a similar approach in his narrative. With British astronomer John Couch Adams, who mathematically predicted Neptune's position, Joseph says that when Adams set out to find the unknown planet, "his whole mind's eye viewed the greatness of the work at once…working patiently, working wonderfully" to complete a task of "untold hardship."[54] Despite this diligence, Adams plays the tragic hero in the narrative, as British astronomers apparently failed to follow up on his calculations in time to beat the French astronomer Urbain Le Verrier, who gained the initial fame and credit for the discovery at the Berlin Observatory. Joseph relates this moment with suspense, saying, "thus a great work seemed like it vanished from the world. But nature asserted herself. This Planet was due and mankind was destined to see him."[55] The rest of the story is unfortunately lost, as the manuscript ends shortly after this sentence. Beyond the immediate details of the narrative, Joseph's version of the discovery of Neptune, coupled with his brief essay on Egyptian bread, helps draw out several important threads from the intellectual milieu of the socialist movement in *fin-de-siècle* America.

Notably, "the Discovery of Neptune" radiates with praise for the power of science and the characteristic *inevitability* of progress—of a Nature which 'asserts' herself and a mankind 'destined' to discover. Simultaneously, the narrative is filled with praise for the individual, for the "expert" who dares to tackle "mountainous work" such as discovering a planet. For Joseph, such a man must be "physically strong enough to sustain the exertions, be energetic, patient, and

[53] Samuel Joseph, "The Discovery of Neptune," 2
[54] Ibid. 2.
[55] Ibid. 3.

enduring." Interestingly, this praise for the stalwart intellectual is reminiscent of the banker John Millikin's praise of Joseph some three years later as someone "who has the mental and physical vigor" to pursue "the difficult reading" of Marxist theory.[56] This motif of rebellious progress also sounds familiar when read against the light of Joseph's "Manuscript on the Paris Exhibition" and the "party of the conscious working man." Thus, when the author speaks of Uranus as a male actor who holds "utter disregard" for "the Track assigned him," perhaps he had more than distant planets in mind.

These connections in language and mindset illustrate well how a specific understanding of history and science intersected to inform Joseph and influence his narrative of scientific discovery into a strange allegory of personal agency. Indeed, Joseph's mixture of cosmic movement and personal rebellion against "imposed duties" and "assigned tracks," produces interesting echoes of the early socialist philosopher Charles Fourier (1772-1837). Fourier proposed a grand scheme to reorder society to fit "laws of Movement" and "passionate attraction" in the same way that Isaac Newton discovered laws of gravitational attraction to govern the cosmos.[57] Like Joseph, Fourier asks questions about the positions of the planets and unknown cosmic bodies, and hints that the answers he has produced form a profound "general theory of Movement" which would unlock humanity's "advent to Social Destiny."[58] Of course, Samuel Joseph does not make such grandiose claims, yet he does conflate the natural with the social, and sees in the movements of nature and science a solution to humanity's progress. Samuel Joseph, in his efforts to spread his ideas and assert his intellectual capacity from the margins, matches Fourier's own assessment of himself as "an unknown, a provincial, a scientific

[56] Samuel Joseph, "Letter from Jno. Millikin."
[57] Charles Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Originally published 1808), 27.
[58] Fourier, *Four Movements*, 26-27

pariah, one of those intruders who… has made the mistake of not being an academician."[59] Socialist intellectual ambition then, in both Fourier and Joseph, perhaps feeds on a certain feeling of obscurity and personal struggle.

From these excerpts a pattern of thought emerges from Joseph's essays, with several essential themes providing the base: individualism that perseveres against an obstructing system and is part of a collective and *inevitable* scientific progress of mankind. Attached to this are Joseph's diverse intellectual interests which span from ancient Egypt and Neptune to evening speeches on Marxian socialism with local laborers. Thus, although the surviving evidence of Samuel Joseph is scant and sporadic, it nevertheless forms a sketch of a working-class, organic intellectual who was fervently engaged with the socialist movement and with a wider America intellectual *milieu.* This small set of short essays, brief correspondence, and tattered labor newspaper clippings evidence his intellectual ambition and drive to understand the present—and prepare for the future—through his own interpretation of the past. These sources also demonstrate, however loosely, Joseph's habit of not only consuming print media, but producing his own versions and sending them off for evaluation, whether solicited or not. As a model of working-class participation, Joseph shows that socialist discourse and intellectual pursuit in this period could appear as active and vibrant among its most obscure and marginal members as it often did in the pages of popular labor publications, and in the crowded union conference halls of New York City.

[59] Fourier, *Four Movements*, 27.

William Mailly

William Mailly wrote many different articles and reviews in the years after his departure as Party secretary in 1905, most of which were appropriately dedicated to promoting socialism or exposing labor issues. Mailly's writings and voice are important to this study because of his background and wide range of experiences within the Socialist Party. Indeed, it is a long journey from the coal mines of Birmingham to an editor's office in New York City. With this experience, added to his work in the Socialist Party administration, we can assume that Mailly's opinions are especially well-informed and that he had an acute understanding of his audience. Indeed, compared to Samuel Joseph, Mailly appears as a sort of advanced, working-class intellectual, one who is no longer an amateur writer but a bona fide, professional socialist thinker and public voice. Indeed, this sentiment was echoed in several of Mailly's obituaries which lamented the untimely loss of a devoted activist and thinker, one who showed great potential as a "well-equipped journalist and lecturer."[60] With this biography and background in mind, this study will look at some of the ways Mailly used this position to advocate for and himself produce working-class education and intellectual engagement.

One persistent thread in his works, especially his theatre reviews, calls for the elevation of American playwriting to a more sophisticated, and educational level. Indeed, several essays appeal to American playwrights to heed this call for the emergence of a "new American drama," written in the "terms of modern life" which focuses on the "secrets of social phenomena and provoke thought and investigation." [61] Indeed, Mailly states several times that such a sophisticated and socially-conscious form of drama can, at the time, only be found "In Europe" through the likes of "Henrik Ibsen… of Norway… Gerhart Hauptmann of Germany, Maxim

[60] "Tribute to William Mailly," *The Progressive Woman*, Volume VI, No. 64 (October 1912): 12.
[61] William Mailly, "The New American Drama," 5. "Drama as a Social Institution," 3.

Gorki of Russia… and G. Bernard Shaw and John Galesworthy of England" among many others.[62] In a longer essay, titled "The Drama as a Social Factor" Mailly outlines his own version of drama in human history, saying :

> As a result of this general lack of education, few people today realize that the theater of to-day is the latest development of an institution which had its beginnings in the most primitive times of the human race; that it is a creature of evolution just as every other human institution is.[63]

This history begins with the "Greek Drama," and includes the "Medieval Age," and the "Elizabethan Age," before reaching the early twentieth century.[64] Across these essays, Mailly uses this timeline to advocate for a heightening of American drama to function "as a medium for progress and universal enlightenment" in the twentieth century.[65] Mailly seems to have frequently acted on his own calls to action, as several of his own play reviews attempt to revise older plays, and to review them with a focus on social tension and reform. Mailly presents this same argument in a theatre review he wrote around this same time in *The Arena*, a liberal, reform-minded magazine which ran from 1889-1909.

The 39th volume of *Arena* is filled with literary reviews and articles on politics and science written by a long list of judges and professors, as well as several women. Mailly's review of Henrik Ibsen's play *The Master Builder* (1893) appears in a somewhat more typical liberal bourgeois setting than his essay in the business magazine *Success*. Mailly's review is sophisticated and his analysis evocative of several intellectual themes which dominated the international stage at the turn of the century. For example, Mailly claims that when "read in the light of modern psychology" the *Master Builder* should be praised for "pronouncing" old themes

[62] Mailly, "The New American Drama," 5.
[63] Mailly, "The Drama as a Social Factor," 2.
[64] Ibid. 2.
[65] Ibid. 13.

"in the terms of our modern life."[66] He goes on to analyze the "ego" and "soul" of the protagonist, a character possessed by "a power to will," a "mighty inextricable force which propels him forward to supremacy." [67] Mailly here uses an interesting reversal of Friedrich Nietzsche's "will to power" to criticize the main character's selfishness, an architect named Halvard Solness. Mailly appropriately notes that this selfishness and desire for power ultimately ruin Solness. These threads of Nietzsche are further compounded by overtly socialist sympathies, with the author stating, "[if] ever Ibsen showed that the fate of the individual is bound up with that of his fellows, and that none can escape his responsibility to society, it is in this play."[68]

While Mailly lambasts the main character for his selfish 'ego' and 'will,' he lauds the play's younger characters, especially the "younger generation" which "sustains and supplants the old."[69] Summarizing the play's message, Mailly states, "ever the race replenishes itself, dispensing with that which is superfluous and injurious, retaining that which is needful and strengthening."[70] This evolutionary rhetoric is as close as Mailly gets in the review to what might be considered eugenicist language. Mailly's conception of race in the review presents a binary of an intellectual, progressive, and "needful" race which must, by some inexorable law, replace an older "injurious" race. Also interesting in Mailly's writing here is how he wraps his review in the language of the "modern," as he understands it. By 1908, *The Master Builder* was 15 years old and Ibsen himself had died in 1906. Mailly insists the play should perhaps be reinterpreted and read "in the light of modern psychology," through terms like the "ego," the "soul," and the "power to will." However, Mailly does not further define his understanding of these terms. This

[66] William Mailly, "Henrik Ibsen's Master Builder," *The Arena, Volume 39*, 1908. Reproduced in *Readers' Guide Retrospective: 1890-1982 (H.W. Wilson), Google Books*, books.google.com, 160.
[67] Mailly, 161.
[68] Ibid. 160.
[69] Ibid. 163.
[70] Ibid. 164.

is perhaps because he felt he did not need to, since he presents his review as being written in the language and "terms" of "our modern world." Thus, he can safely assume his "modern," informed audience in *The Arena* will understand him. This commitment to popularizing education also led Mailly to publish articles in magazines and newspapers outside of the explicitly socialist and progressive, to broaden the reach of his message.

One such example was William Mailly's lengthy 1908 essay, "The Socialist Bugaboo," which also offers an excellent view into the obstacles of popular reception facing the socialist movement during this period. This essay also offers a strong example of the rhetoric socialists used to make their message appealing to the uninitiated. Mailly opens the essay with a laundry list of popular and cliché phrases which were used to attack the socialist movement:

> Socialism is foreign and un-American; Socialism is responsible for the increase in divorces; Socialism causes 'race-suicide,' Socialism inspires strikes and bloodshed and murder conspiracies. Socialism is seducing working men away religion, etc.[71]

Mailly goes on to define fear-mongering, anti-socialist criticisms as all that is anti-modern and atavistic, but also something that at its heart is not new in human history, saying, "[since] the time when the aboriginal created an image of dread and horror which embodied his own fears of the unknown, mankind has been haunted by bugaboos."[72] Mailly further states that "Progress has always had to battle with the dread of the unseen" and that this progress necessarily results in "reaction" which is the "offspring of fear." To justify this historical battle between progress and reaction, Mailly establishes a list of famous martyrs and reactions to progress. Reaching back to

[71] Mailly, "The Socialist Bugaboo," *Success Magazine,* Volume 11, (1908), *Google Books,* books.google.com: 1. The phrase race-suicide is an interesting addition here. The term is originally traced to the sociologist Edward Ross (1866-1951) but was most prominently used by Teddy Roosevelt in letters and a 1905 speech "On American Motherhood," when he infamously criticized 'American' mothers for failing to keep up with the higher birth-rates of European immigrants. Roosevelt denounced birth-control or "willful sterility" as leading to the extinction of the Anglo-Saxon race through 'race-suicide.' See, Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Race, and Eugenics at the Turn of the Century* (University of California Press. 2001), 11-12.
[72] Mailly, "Bugaboo," 500.

when "Socrates drank the hemlock," Mailly creates a short list which includes when "Christ was crucified, Bruno was burned at the stake, [and] Columbus was ridiculed and persecuted," all for supposedly pushing too progressive an agenda. The list finishes by saying "James Hargreaves had his revolutionary spinning Jenny smashed by his neighbors in 1767" as well as when "[Elijah] Lovejoy was mobbed and killed in Alton, Illinois—all of these were sacrificial offerings to the bugaboos of their respective times."[73]

In this way, Mailly essentially cherry-picks a list of alleged "sacrificial offerings" of progress, which he uses to establish a trajectory in Western history of staunch, violent opposition to revolutionary and progressive ideas. This reactionary legacy stretches all the way back to 399 BC with Socrates' forced-suicide. Implicit in this trajectory again is the essentially *inevitable* nature of this historical progress—from Socrates to Christ, to the Industrial Revolution and abolition, the idea is that the martyrs always won out over the violent reaction of the 'bugaboo.' Mailly's argument in this piece stands out from his other writings and from more typical socialist writings in that it largely avoids making arguments about political economy—in the first nine pages of the manuscript Mailly doesn't advocate or mention any form of social upheaval or economic reorganization except when talking about the backlash against socialism. He is instead making an argument about human nature, founded upon some of the most popular and well-known scientific, religious, and cultural moments in Western history. It is only near the end of the essay that Mailly brings his argument closer to home and lets political economy make an appeal. He lines up the American Revolution, the abolition, and the socialist movement as a series of three movements which all stem "from the issue of property." Here Mailly appeals to

[73] "James Hargreaves," *The 17th and 18th Centuries: Dictionary of World Biography, Volume 4* (Routledge, 2013), *Google Books*, books.google.com, 623. James Hargreaves was the British inventor of the spinning Jenny in 1764, one of the earliest developments in industrial manufacturing. Elijah Lovejoy was a Presbyterian minister who was killed by a pro-slavery mob in Alton, Illinois in 1837 for his abolitionist publications and sermons.

American history and the vaunted struggle for liberty against tyranny and oppression, while reinterpreting this struggle through a more socialist lens.

Mailly's essay was published in several formats but the first of these publications appears to be the August 1908 issue of *Success* magazine. *Success* was not a socialist or even a radical political magazine, but rather, as its name suggests, a magazine dedicated to providing information on business and personal growth.[74] The editor of the August issue included a caption alongside Mailly's article which reads somewhat like a disclaimer. The caption explains that socialist parties have become very popular in Europe, while the American Socialist Party has "quadrupled" in membership in the four years since 1904. The editor continues, most newspapers "are… busily confusing our minds" about socialism, with the result that "the man on the street vaguely associates it with long hair and nitroglycerin." To combat this misinformation, *Success* magazine "asked Mr. Mailly to explain the thing as he sees it, because he managed the Socialist Campaign of 1904, and he ought to know." This caption captures well the very public sentiment Mailly is addressing; the stereotype of the 'bomb-throwing anarchist' against a backdrop of rising working-class popularity. At this point in the essay, Mailly's descriptions of anti-socialism adopts a somewhat racial tone, describing how reactionaries force the "impatient race" to wait for the "old [fogies]" to catch up.[75] Indeed, interesting in this classic 'old vs. new' debate is that Mailly identifies what might be called 'intellectual' races: the progressive vs. the reactionary. Although Mailly deploys this evolutionary language about a battle between two races, he does not assign actual racialized characteristic to these two groups. Instead, this

[74] "Orison Swett Marden," *Success Magazine*, www.success.com/articles. *Success* still publishes in print and online today. The publication's website gives a brief history of the magazine, and its founder Orison Swett Marden, who was an original influence of later self-help authors like Napoleon Hill, who authored the immensely popular *Think and Grow Rich* (1937).
[75] Mailly, "Bugaboo," 500.

language of evolution and progress, although certainly informed by contemporary understandings of race, does not seem preoccupied with it to the extent that many eugenicists and Social Darwinists often were.

Rufus Trimble

As an undergraduate at Columbia in 1910, Rufus Trimble was quite active in the Columbia chapter of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, and his notes and letters reveal musings about potential readings for an upcoming meeting as well as speakers to schedule, like the socialist intellectual John Spargo. One letter, a reply from the American Wholesale Cooperative in New York City, details Trimble's efforts to study successful socialist organizations and cooperatives even on the local level. The cooperative's general manager thanks Trimble for inquiring about the cooperative, but writes, "we are getting so many inquiries from all parts of the country asking for our system that we cannot, in justice to our members, give this free of charge."[76] Rather, the GM told Trimble that they would gladly send "an outfit" detailing the cooperative, and if Trimble found it "entirely satisfactory" he could then send them the service fee of one dollar.[77] This short letter is only a fragment of correspondence but it gives interesting evidence that Rufus Trimble was far from alone in his interest and investigation into socialist cooperatives in this period.

During his first trip to study socialism in Milwaukee in July 1910, Trimble wrote a letter to the esteemed muckraking journalist, Ray Stannard Baker (1870-1946) whom he quite admired, and asked for a word of advice.[78] A rough draft of Trimble's letter to Baker, complete

[76] Trimble Papers, "General Manager to Mr. Trimble"
[77] Ibid.
[78] Merrill D. Peterson. *The President and his Biographer: Woodrow Wilson and Ray Stannard Baker* (University of Virginia Press, 2007). Ray Stannard Baker pioneered investigative journalism, or muckraking, while writing for

with crossed out words and corrections, explains that Trimble's uncle, Rufus Weeks, sent Trimble to Milwaukee "to cover the socialist and [undiscernible adjective] political situation and outlook in [the] city" and to write back "daily letters" and updates.[79] Trimble, feeling unsure of himself and "swamped" as a mere "undergraduate," asks Baker if he has any "hints" about "uncovering fundamental facts." [80] Baker responded quite favorably, lamenting that he couldn't "[help] adequately in a letter." The key, Baker says, is not to approach the matter as a "socialist, a Presbyterian or an optimist," but to "go as an investigator, seeking what is exactly the fact of the case" and "dig in." [81]

On one hand, Baker's answer to Rufus Trimble is rather redundant and obvious—if one wishes to investigate a socialist collective, one should approach it "as an investigator seeking the facts." Yet, from Trimble's perspective, as a young student and admirer seeking to emulate one of the Progressive Era's leading journalists, Baker's response probably had quite the impact. Baker also comforts Trimble's anxieties, saying that journalistic skill only comes with long "training and practice," encouraging Trimble that one can never "see too many people, nor recite too many notes."[82] In some ways Trimble's training as a young intellectual and socialist bears a slender thread of resemblance to Samuel Joseph's, in that both reached out to a network of socialist sympathizers to learn how to connect with the working-class, how to educate and understand them. Trimble's letter to Baker also shows the power and popular appeal which

McClure's Magazine alongside Ida Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens at the turn of the century. Baker worked with Theodore Roosevelt ahead of the Hepburn Act in 1906, which granted the ICC rate-limiting powers over railroads. Roosevelt's subsequent "Muckrake Speech" on March 17, 1906, led to a falling out between himself and Baker, as Baker, Tarbell, and Steffens objected to being labeled "muckrakers." Baker went on to work closely with Woodrow Wilson, and the seventh and eighth volumes of his official biography, *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters,* won the 1940 Pulitzer Prize for Biography or Autobiography.

[79] Rufus Trimble, "Rufus J. Trimble to Mr. Baker."
[80] Trimble Papers, "Ray Stannard Baker to Mr. Trimble."
[81] Ibid.
[82] Trimble Papers, "Ray Stannard Baker to Mr. Trimble."

surrounded print media in this period, especially the sort of muckraking, progressive and investigative style of journalism which Ray Stannard Baker pioneered. Trimble took Baker's words to heart, and in his account of his visit to the Belgian Workers Party a year later in 1911, he says he roamed "from the highest to the lowest level" of the collective, "asking fool questions" to whoever would lend him an ear.[83]

During his trip to Belgium, Rufus Trimble wrote letters home to family describing the trip and the Belgian socialist movement, as well as an analysis of the "Co-operative" organization used by the Belgian Workers Party. Indeed, the primary reason for Trimble's travel was to study the very successful system of socialist co-operatives in Brussels, which were centered around the large, four-story iron building known as the *Maison du Peuple* (House of the People). Trimble's account of his stay near the *Maison* celebrates the "comradery and fraternity" and lively atmosphere of the crowds, from the families in the coffee shops on the complex's ground floor to the workers' march which passed his hotel singing "revolutionary songs" like *L'International* and *The Marseillaise*. Indeed, he captures the activities and atmosphere of the co-operative in a small paragraph titled "Optimism without limit." He begins, "there is real happiness among those who resort to the Maison" because everyone is either a socialist or in sympathy with the movement. When you walk through the crowds, Trimble says:

> Listen and you will hear little pessimism, but a great deal of the good time that is coming, the beautiful future when the Toiler will be free. Fatuous? Perhaps. This optimism reaches out and touches the neighborhood.

Trimble's description here is exemplary of his general tone towards socialism throughout his writings; he is clearly interested and enthusiastic yet retains a certain skepticism of the idealism and optimism which intertwines the movement, opting instead to report as an 'investigator' or

[83] Rufus Trimble, "Report on the Maison du Peuple," 5

curious intellectual observer. During his visit to the Maison, Trimble also captured the popular spirit in a series of five photographs which he later sent to his uncle Rufus. The photos detail the crowds in the streets outside the Maison to the north and west. One photo shows a group of women as an apparent attempt to capture the gender-egalitarianism of the Maison, with the photo's label asking the viewer to "notice [the] women and girls."

This description of the Belgian co-op elicits the strong idealism common among many socialists and the ardent belief that collective and cooperative organization was an essential step towards producing an economic system more beneficial to workers. Trimble's description of the Maison focuses intently on how this atmosphere pervades the entirety of the structure, and that the idealism should not be misunderstood, saying "from the highest to the lowest floors is real comraderie [sic]" and that when he went through the offices asking, "fool questions" as a "stranger from the U.S." he was explained everything he asked. Trimble notes how "when the day's work is done (and they do it-never fear) they… take an English-French Reader and [throw] at him all they [had] learned of his language in their leisure rooms."[84]
Cooperative Belgian socialism, then, through Trimble's eyes, is vibrant and cosmopolitan, opening at a moment's notice to outsiders and inquiry. This idealistic and receptive nature does not detract from the practical utility of the entire process of the co-operative— "never fear," Trimble intones, the socialists get real work done.

When Trimble arrived back in the United States he set out to formally detail the mechanics and economics of the Maison and of cooperative socialism. This report on the trip was apparently intended as a sort of guidebook for American socialists, like his uncle Rufus Weeks, seeking to establish this type of commonwealth organization. In this didactic spirit,

[84] Rufus Trimble, "Co-Operation," 1.

Trimble prefaces his description with a crash-course on the history of working-class struggle in the Western world. In a brief series of notes, Trimble details a genealogy of oppression beginning with the Greek city-states of Athens and Corinth and their regional control of their neighbors. The Romans are listed as the natural heirs of this system before the timeline jumps ahead to the appearance of European serfdom during the middle ages. At this point, Trimble traces the early beginnings of a European working-class consciousness, listing a slow progression of strikes, beginning with "journeymen girdleworkers in Breslau in 1329," followed closely by French tanners in Paris who "struck for higher wages in 1349" among several others. Another jump is made, to "American bakers [who struck] in 1741 in New York" as Trimble seeks to establish a transition in labor relations "whose principle object is the improvement of the conditions of employment [and to substitute] common rules for unregulated competition."[85]

Trimble interrupts this timeline with a short note about its benefits, saying, "If I had sufficient time one could gain great knowledge to be used for prognostication from the study of this History."[86] Considering that all of this is included as a sort of introduction or preface to the actual report on the inner workings of a cooperative organization, there are several important points to note about Trimble's intent and style. Most clearly, Trimble establishes a historical vein of progressive working-class development to provide a foundation and context for the contemporaneous struggle between Capital and Labor in a similar manner to both Joseph and Mailly. Trimble's choice of sources is telling—he creates a clear line connecting the current Western struggle to a classical Greco-Roman tradition of a minority Patrician class which ruled over a majority Plebeian-Slave class. The call for prognostication indicates that a close study of

[85] Rufus Trimble, "Co-Operation," 2.
[86] Ibid.

this evolution in Western labor relations can be used to predict and even plan the coming working-class revolution.

In another of Trimble's writings, there is a brief, typewritten manuscript titled "Utopian Education," which was listed in the file with the manuscript on the cooperative movement. In this short piece Trimble again discusses ideas about the "betterment of humanity," but this time he engages with the French Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile or on Education*, and its ideas about the use of nature in society and education. In handwritten notes accompanying this piece, Trimble scribbles, "There is no external authority but God and Nature, Society can only apply as foreman" and below that he writes, "a return to nature is a return to simplicity… a return to reality." In his own words, Trimble utilizes Rousseau in a critique of modern education, saying:

> The highest ideal of which man's finite mind can conceive… is the development of the human race to a higher plane of existence. Such also, so far as our scientific study of matter, life, and spirituality can show us, is the purpose of nature's continually progressive trend.[87]

This quote shows that, like Mailly and Joseph, Trimble's discussion of education and progress is largely absent of racial or eugenicist undertones—it is "the human race," which concerns our author here, not certain ethnicities or nationalities. Trimble's discussion also produces many of the same contradictions seen with Joseph and Mailly, notably that this inevitable trend of progress also maintains an essential need for individual agency and action.

The available evidence for Rufus Trimble is not as scarce as for Samuel Joseph but is nevertheless quite fragmentary. For instance, after the writings and personal correspondence dated 1911, the next available correspondence from Trimble is dated April 26, 1950, and is written to his cousin Helen, whom he apparently has only just met. Somewhat ironically, the

[87] Rufus Trimble, "Huxley on Education"

letter opens by saying, “I will try to cover the family news of myself and Harry [Trimble’s brother] of about 40 years in a few paragraphs.”[88] Trimble reveals a substantial family history of Ivy League-educated physicians and lawyers and seems to have left his socialist sympathies behind. After graduating from Columbia Law School in 1914, he practiced law privately in Texas for many years before beginning work in 1934 as “Assistant General Counsel” at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Thus, Trimble’s experience with the Socialist Party appears to have been a brief stint or fascination, instead of the seemingly lifelong commitments of Joseph and Mailly. Nevertheless, the surviving evidence depicts a young university student’s lively and sophisticated involvement with the rhetoric and workings of socialist organizations during the height of socialism’s political strength.

[88] Rufus Trimble, “Letter to Cousin Helen,” 1

SECTION 5

CONCLUSION

That the [Socialist Labor Party] cleansed may enter the next century with that vigor of pure soul, mind, and body which can give our class movement, is my hope.
Samuel Joseph, 1899 [89]

Such literature must be held up to a Satanic light and read backwards…if this is not done the historian may be led to judge the 18th century most harshly for some of the things which made life endurable for the common people.
E.P. Thompson, 1966 [90]

When William Mailly died unexpectedly in September 1912 at the age of 41, his close friend, the Christian Socialist reformer George Herron, eulogized him in the popular socialist publication *The Coming Nation* with an article titled, "William Mailly as a Socialist Type." Herron positively gushes with praise for Mailly, remembering his "fervor" and "joy of energy" as a "spiritual tonic [and] a dispeller of pessimism."[91] Herron laments that in life Mailly's spirit and joy was surrounded by a bitterly divided and embattled Socialist Party, saying "we have a spirit of science…but we have no science of spirit." Herron was, of course, correct to lament the bitter divisions which ran through the Socialist Party on the eve of its momentous showing in the 1912 election. But underneath this narrative of spectacular failure and unrealized working-class political potential, run threads of very real working-class intellectual stimulation, production, and activism which the Socialist Party cultivated and harbored.

[89] Samuel Joseph, "Manuscript on the Paris Exhibition."
[90] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 58.
[91] George D Herron, "William Mailly as a Socialist Type," *The Coming Nation: A Journal of Things Done and to be Done* (1912), *Google Books*: 11.

This "spirit of science," of ideas, education, and investigation pervade the writings of the three authors examined here, such that it seems fundamental to their worldview and understanding of history as a progressive tool. When one deconstructs these writers' arguments and language, one glimpses how the American socialist movement, aside from its political platforms and promises, appealed to its audience as an *intellectual* movement—as a modernizing discourse and potent mixture of scientific empiricism, historical teleology, and self-education. We can see that our authors embedded themselves within this burgeoning culture of print media and education, and made claims to the cultural capital it offered in the form of intellectual merit and authority. Indeed, whether it be through the privileged, formal institutions which produced Rufus Trimble or the world of newspapers, public talks, and personal correspondence which produced Samuel Joseph and William Mailly, we can see how both avenues of information were successful, and at times overlapped to spread ideas and engender political discussion and radicalism in the early twentieth century.

None of these writers presents themselves as a product of any one philosopher, or intellectual thread, but rather their ideas and writings appear as an amalgamation of overlapping trends. Furthermore, they do not present their progressive mindset as somehow unique to socialism but rather they variously argue that socialism *itself* is both validated by and proof of this "progressive trend" in history. In this way, when Samuel Joseph writes about rebellious planets and nature as an active force, and when William Mailly and Rufus Trimble each create a historical timeline of events to legitimize contemporary socialism, their different arguments and shared language should be viewed in part as evidence of a broader, burgeoning American culture of intellectualism and popular education. At the foundation of each author's argument is an urgent desire to tap into this modern American intellectual discourse of history and science, and

to use these rhetorical tools to make their own socialist arguments persuasive and present themselves as authentic, modern intellectuals.

It is important to note that while these writers participate in this discourse and use its framework to argue for the reordering of American political economy, they do not argue for a reordering of the American population. Instead, their writings show that in an era when Spencerian eugenics and ideas of race science filled the public lexicon, "cosmic evolutionism and teleological optimism" could and did thrive separately within the socialist movement. Joseph, Mailly, and Trimble evidence a diverse range of intellectual production and participation within the socialist movement, and their writings, activism and experience help us more clearly situate the intellectual milieu of *fin-de-siècle* American socialism within a broader, growing culture of popular education, history, science, and intellectual life.

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