The Knights Of Labor: Reform Aspects.

The Knights of Labor: Reform Aspects

by

Irwin Murray Marcus

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(Date)

Joseph A. Dowling
(Professor in Charge)

Accepted, _____
(Date)

Special committee directing the doctoral work by Mr. Irwin Murray Marcus:

John Carey
(Chairman)

John M. Haight, Jr.

George Kyte

R. T. Courtwood

Joseph A. Dowling

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An Abstract

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Prior studies of the Knights of Labor have concentrated on such trade union aspects of the Order as organization, strikes and total membership. Consequently, the reform activities of the Order have received only limited attention. The object of this dissertation, therefore, is to examine the reform ideology expressed in social and educational activities, labor solidarity and co-operatives and land reform.

The Knights of Labor joined other organizations in dealing with the social disorganization of nineteenth-century America produced by industrialization and urbanization. The Knights presented a full social program including parades, dances and picnics which attracted large audiences and achieved financial success. The Order also participated in the movement to extend greater educational opportunities to the American people. It provided lectures, libraries and reading rooms for the enlightenment of members who often suffered from limited educational backgrounds.

The Knights of Labor also championed the cause of labor solidarity by welcoming many women, Negroes and unskilled workers into its ranks. Negroes and women not only served as members, but participated in union functions and held leadership posts. This open membership policy achieved noteworthy success, although objections were raised by some members.

More disagreement was evident on the issue of the aims and policies of the Order. On the one hand, some members advocated improving the lot of workers within the existing society through the use of collective bargaining and strikes. The leadership, on the other hand, desired the inauguration of a society based on a more equitable distribution of goods and greater dignity for producers. This goal was to be achieved by means of land reform and the

establishment of co-operatives. These projects had wide appeal because of the opportunities they afforded for independence, security and dignity. However, inadequate funds, poor management and unfair competition doomed the co-operative experiments.

The Knights of Labor achieved only limited success in the performance of purely trade union functions. However, the reform dimension of its operations must be considered before a final judgment of the Order can be delivered. It was more than a trade union, in part it was a club which became the center of members' lives by providing opportunities for recreation and companionship at a time when many Americans felt threatened by atomization and insecurity. Members were recruited irrespective of occupation, sex or race. The Knights effectively performed many of the key functions of a reform organization, including acting as a gadfly and presenting society with a normative vision. The Knights of Labor and the farmers' movement advocated many of the same reform programs: abolition of monopoly, expanded social and educational opportunities and the establishment of a more equitable society. The Order conducted a crusade for a society which would serve all citizens and treat them with dignity. In sum, this reform program is the enduring legacy of the Knights of Labor.

Introduction

This dissertation is designed to supplement, not replace, the available works concerning the Order by adding a discussion and analysis of its reform activities to the traditional story of its trade union activities. The reform activities, although significant in promoting the integration of society during an era dominated by rampant individualism, have been accorded relatively little attention by historians. This study will, therefore, concentrate on the reform segment of the Order's mission: social and educational activities, labor solidarity and co-operatives and land reform. These programs justify placing the Knights within the American reform tradition as well as within the trade union movement.

The Knights of Labor dominated the American labor scene during the 1880's. The organization grew slowly between 1869 and 1879 under hhe leadership of Uriah Stephens. However, a national organization was established in 1878. During the administration of Terence Powderly, between 1879 and 1893, the Order reached its apogee. Expansion quickened when prosperity returned during the 1880's and the veil of secrecy was partially lifted. A series of successful railroad strikes in 1884-1885 and the association in the minds of many workers of the Knights with the eight-hour day movement catapulted membership to a record level of approximately 700,000 by the middle of 1886. However, an employer campaign against the Knights of Labor, disagreements between the rank-and-file and the leadership concerning policy, and the emergence of the American Federation of Labor contributed to the decline of the Order. When Powderly left the helm in 1893 few members remained.

The Knights of Labor conducted many social and educational activities. These programs promoted social integration during a period dominated by the

breakdown of old patterns due to rapid urbanization and industrialization. The Order conducted picnics, dances and parades, and provided reading rooms, libraries and lectures for the enlightenment of members. The Order's advocacy of labor solidarity received its clearest expression in the famous slogan: "An injury to one is the concern of all." In conformity to this doctrine, the Knights organized skilled and unskilled labor, women and men, foreign-born and native-born, Negroes and whites. The organization of Negroes and women will be used to illustrate the implementation of this policy. The establishment of co-operatives was another of the leading goals of the Order. However, Powderly gave his profound allegiance to a land reform program. The Knights advocated these reforms as the principal means of achieving a new society. Both programs provided roads to independence for the producer at a time when their adversaries, the major capitalists, who controlled the political as well as the economic order prevented the use of government to aid the producers. These ephemeral experiments failed primarily because of internal ineffectiveness and external opposition.

This sketch suggests the integral relation of the Knights to the American reform tradition. A common background and basic similarities in programs and activities link the Knights to a number of ante-bellum and late nineteenth-century reform movements. Ante-bellum unionism bequeathed a rich legacy. The Jacksonian labor movement condemned special privilege and advocated curtailment of child labor, extension of public education and the establishment of a ten-hour day. Its successors in the 1840's demanded the abolition of land monopoly, free distribution of public lands solely to actual settlers and the establishment of independent townships. The Grangers, the dominant organ of agrarian reform during the 1870's, sponsored educational

and social activities and agitated for the curtailment of the special privileges of the railroads. The Populists, the farmers' movement of the 1890's, pointed to the inequities of society and demanded ameliorative measures such as land reform, a graduated income tax and government ownership of railroads. Moreover, Negroes temporarily gained a place within the ranks of the Populists.

A number of historians--Ely, Commons, Perlman, Ware, Foner and Grob--have written of the rise and fall of the Knights of Labor. Their investigations provided the basis for the traditional interpretation of the Order. A brief review of this historiography will be helpful in understanding the contribution of the present work.

In 1886 Richard Ely began the study of the American Labor movement. His sketch of the development of labor included a brief discussion of the Knights of Labor. Although he criticized some members and assemblies and disagreed with some of its principles, he professed admiration for the Knights of Labor. Ely, a Christian socialist, supported their general reform program--the union of all trades, education, and producers' cooperatives.[1]

Selig Perlman built upon the pioneer efforts of Ely. He proposed a non-Marxist interpretation of the rise of unionism which stressed job security and wage concessions as the major concern of the worker. Perlman contended that workers were interested in safeguarding their right to hold a job. Only the American Federation of Labor brand of unionism which fought for such bread and butter goals could survive in the American environment. He, therefore,

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1. Richard T. Ely, The Labor Movement in America (New York, 1905), P. VII; Mark Perlman, Labor Union Theories: Background and Development (Evanston, Ill., 1958), pp. 49-54.

considered the program of the Knights of Labor anachronistic. Perlman emphasized the Order's strike activities, its conflict with the trade unions and the failure of its co-operative experiments. In his opinion, Powderly lacked the aggressiveness required to be a successful strike leader. Professor Perlman designated 1888 as the end of the age of middle-class panaceas and the beginning of a period of wage-consciousness in which unions accepted the wage system, felt no prejudice against large, integrated enterprises and sought collective bargaining agreements.[2]

Norman Ware challenged these views. His interpretation emerged from disillusionment with the performance of the American Federation of Labor during the 1920's. Ware criticized the organization for following the erroneous path of craft unionism, which assisted special groups of skilled workers at the expense of labor in general. This policy, acoording to Ware, failed to protect the workers against the impact of industrialization, which destroyed their skills and created huge, privately-owned concentrations of capital. Ware, unlike Perlman, dealt sympathetically with the Knights in his study of the organization. In his opinion the Order contributed one major idea--solidarity--which it proposed to workers as a means of protecting themselves against the impact of industrialization. However, in spite of the appeal of labor solidarity, the organization failed because of Terence Powderly who Ware described as "a windbag."[3]

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2. Perlman, Labor Union Theories, pp. 54, 182; Selig Perlman, A Theory of the Labor Movement (New York, 1928), p. 6; John R. Commons and Associates, History of Labour in the United States, II, (New York, 1926), p. 438.

3. Perlman, Labor Union Theories, pp. 109-111; Norman Ware, The Labor Movement in the United States 1860-1895: A Study in Democracy (New York, 1929), pp. XVI, 155-156.

Philip Foner, the author of a continuing multi-volume history of the American labor movement, also criticized the position of Perlman. A Marxist viewpoint led him to present laborers as heroes and capitalists as oppressors. Foner rejected the contention of Perlman that only job-conscious unionism could survive in the United States by pointing to the Congress of Industrial Organizations. He based his analysis of the Knights of Labor on an extensive use of primary material. Foner condemned Powderly for anti-Semitic and anti-Chinese statements and for a lack of sympathy for participants in the Haymarket Affair. In his view the primary factor responsible for the decline of the Knights was the breach between the leadership and the rank-and-file. The leadership became a servant of the employers and, thereby, undermined the advances which resulted from the unity and militant morale of the rank-and-file. The Knights of Labor, according to Foner, made a significant contribution to the American labor movement in the field of labor solidarity.[4]

Gerald Grob, the last scholar to publish a detailed study of the Knights of Labor, analyzes the triumph of trade unionism over reform unionism during the last half of the nineteenth-century. He believes that its leadership, as well as such objectives as the destruction of monopoly, land reform and the introduction of co-operatives, linked the Knights of Labor to earlier reform unionism. The struggle between the Knights and other unions was a clash of fundamentally different ideologies--the Knights of Labor striving to abolish the wage system and the trade unions which accepted the capitalist system including large-scale production units and wage worker status. Grob stated

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4. Philip Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, II, (New York, 1955), pp. 169-170.

that technological advance made the concept of a small producer system obsolete and undermined the goal of the Order. The American Federation of Labor, on the other hand, operated within the American tradition by stressing the importance of immediate material goals.[5]

These historians have thoroughly investigated the trade union aspects of the Order and have offered incisive interpretations of this subject. They have traced its rise and fall and examined its organizational structure, internal and external conflicts, and strike activities. Co-operative experiments have received limited attention, labor solidarity merely passing mention and social activities are virtually ignored. The present study places primary emphasis on the relatively neglected reform activities which were designed to establish a society based on the independence of producers as well as to ameliorate conditions under the prevailing system. This concentration does not constitute a denial of the significance of the trade union aspects, but seeks to supplement current findings by adding a new dimension required for final comprehension and valid appraisal.

It is hoped that this presentation will reveal the significance of the Knights of Labor as a key link in the chain of American reform movements and historians will, therefore, accord the Order a suitable place in the annals of this tradition.[6]

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5. Gerald Grob, Workers and Utopia: A Study of Ideological in the American Labor Movement 1865-1900 (Evanston, Ill., 1961), pp. 38-39, 58-59, 186.

6. The connection between the Knights of Labor and the American reform tradition will be discussed in the last chapter.

Chapter I

The Organizational Aspect

The Knights of Labor developed the heritage left by prior reform organizations. Growth in membership, geographic expansion and the establishment of an organizational structure highlighted their first decade of operation. As the organization reached maturity the latent disagreements of the initial stage became visible. The establishment of goals and the best means of implementing them divided the Order. Two issues--the eight-hour day movement and the strike fund controversy--will be examined in order to illustrate the split between the supporters of reform unionism and advocates of pure and simple trade unionism.

A few organizations, such as the Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations and the New York Workingmen's Party, formulated the basic tenets of the reform doctrine. The Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations, the first association of trade unions, served the interests of Philadelphia workers during the late 1820s.[1] The preamble to its charter included the reasons for the establishment of the organization. The authors of this document expressed the anticipation that by cooperating the evils resulting from "an unequal and excessive accumulation of power in the hands of a few" and "a depreciation of the intrinsic value of human labour" would be ended.[2] The leadership advocated the establishment of a society similar to that later envisaged by the leaders of the Knights of Labor. Louis Arky, the leading historian of the Mechanics' Union, characterized their objectives as an attempt to limit the evils of

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1. Louis H. Arky, "The Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations and the Formation of the Philadelphia Workingmen's Movement," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LXXVI (April, 1952), 144, 148-149.

2. John R. Commons, ed., A Documentary History of American Industrial Society (Cleveland, 1910), V, 84.

incipient capitalism and to establish a small producer system in which the journeyman artisan would have a respectable place in the community.[3]

The New York Workingmen's Party, which lasted from 1829-1832, stressed the demand for some type of public education system. Furthermore, it agitated in behalf of a broad-based reform scheme, one which would gain the adherence of a large number of citizens by articulating the grievances against existing institutions and vested interests espoused by major groups in the community.[4] The Workingmen's Party demanded the elimination of imprisonment for debt, reform of the militia system, elimination of the auction system, and the abolition of chartered monopolies. Its leaders were interested in improving the status of workers in society as well as achieving higher wages and improved working conditions. They championed the cause of social justice and a more perfect democracy, as well as criticizing every kind of social abuse.[5]

The depression which followed the Panic of 1837 caused the demise of almost all labor organizations and led labor to turn its attention to humanitarian reform during the 1840's. The land reform campaign attracted a large following among the laboring element and, in addition, influenced the programs of subsequent labor organizations including the Knights of Labor. George Henry Evans, a leader of the New York Workingmen's Party of the early

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3. Arky, "Mechanics' Union," 169.

4. Walter Hugins, Jacksonian Democracy and the Working Class (Stanford, Calif., 1960), P. 171.

5. Edward Pessen, "The Workingmen's Party Revisited," Labor History, IV (Fall, 1963), 224.

1830's, led the land reform crusade. He conducted an indefatigable agitation under the banner of the National Reform Association during the following decade.

Evans found the roots of the evil which pervaded society in the increasing domination of the public domain by the land monopoly. The cure for this social disease was based on the theory of man's natural right to the soil and required the implementation of his land program which included three cardinal points: equality, inalienability and individuality.[6] The platform of the National Reform Association demanded the establishment of a system based on a Rural Republican Township--"a complete self sustaining economic unit with its own farms, its own traders, and its own mechanics and their shops."[7] Evans stressed the present and future evils of land monopoly and the benefits of land ownership to the farmer.[8] While the farmer would have to toil hard, the waving fields, blossoming orchards and the health and innocence of rural life would constitute a priceless treasure.[9]

The American labor movement emerged from the Civil War determined to establish a general nationwide organization. The formation of the National Labor Union, on August 20, 1866, "for the purpose of effecting a permanent, systematic organization of the wealth producing classes, and devising the best means by which their interests could be served and protected" constituted

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6. Commons, Documentary History (Cleveland, 1910), VII, 293.

7. Norman J. Ware, The Industrial Worker 1840-1860 (Boston, 1924), p. 181.

8. Commons, Documentary History, VII, 299.

9. Ibid., 304.

its most significant manifestation.[10] The organization instituted a campaign for the eight-hour day which resulted in the passage of some inadequate state laws and a national statute which established an eight-hour day for mechanics and laborers employed by the federal government. The leadership also advocated basic reforms of society and the movement formulated a full reform platform: Included were proposals for land reform, banking reform, the establishment of a federal department of labor, the provision of reading rooms, the organization of co-operatives, the eight-hour day and currency reform.

The National Labor Union stressed the implementation of a co-operative system financed by means of a currency reform which would lower the interest rate. William Sylvis, the dominant figure in the organization and its president in 1868-1869, ardently advocated the establishment of co-operatives. He viewed them as "the great lever by which workers could elevate themselves to their proper place in society."[11] Many affiliates organized co-operatives, especially the iron molders union which established a number of foundries. However, after reaching its apogee in 1868 the movement began to decline, primarily because of insufficient funds. One factor which undermined the National Labor Union later plagued the Knights of Labor: The presence of two conflicting philosophies--the politically conscious, humanitarian reformism, and trade unionism.[12] The leadership of both unions supported the reform cause

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10. Commons, Documentary History (Cleveland, 1910), IX, 146.

11. Jonathan Grossman, William Sylvis, Pioneer of American Labor (New York, 1945), P. 193.

12. Joseph G. Rayback, A History of American Labor (New York, 1959), p. 127.

and adhered to the vision of the future expressed in a report prepared by a committee of the National Labor Union: "When worth, not wealth, shall rule mankind; when tyranny and oppression of every character shall be uprooted and destroyed; and when the laborers of America, intelligent, united, and disenthralled shall occupy the proud position which God in his kind providence intended they should occupy."[13]

The Knights of Labor continued and even elaborated on the reform legacy bequeathed by the National Labor Union. The Garment Cutters' Association of Philadelphia served as the spawning ground for the Knights. This organization was formed during the Civil War period to meet the threats posed by the introduction of incompetent workmen by contractors and employer attempts to reduce the wages of tailors.[14] It grew in strength and influence and became a beneficial association after serving the purpose for which it was organized. By 1869, however, the movement had begun to decline and some of the members favored the establishment of a new organization.

After the dissolution of the Garment Cutters' Association on December 9, 1869, a small group of tailors led by Uriah Stephens decided to form a union. Several of them met at the American Hose Company in Philadelphia where they became charter members of the new association. This meeting established a committee to prepare a secret paper which would be a suitable basis for the government of the association, administered a pledge of secrecy and announced the password.[15] The organization adopted the name

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13. Commons, Documentary History, IX, 168.

14. Terence Powderly, Thirty Years of Labor 1859-1889 (Columbus, Ohio, 1889), pp. 132-133.

15. Ibid., p. 137.

"The Knights of Labor" at its third meeting on December 28, 1869. The Knights elected their first regular officers on February 6, 1870, as Uriah Stephens became the presiding officer with the title of Master Workman and James L. Wright was designated Venerable Sage.[16] Terence Powderly, the most significant leader of the Knights described its aims:

> "Stephens and his co-laborers meant to uphold the dignity of labor, and to affirm the nobility of all who earned their daily bread in an honest way, but they swore unending emnity to every form of vice by which the poor were being fleeced for the benefit of the gamblers in the necessaries of life. It was their intention to work for the creation of a healthy public opinion on the subject of labor,--the only creator of values--and to advocate the justice of its receiving a full, complete share of the values, or capital it created."[17]

The views of Uriah Stephens had a marked impact on the early activities of the Order. Stephens favored an organization with a wider scope than a trade union. "He believed it was necessary to bring all wage-workers together in one organization."[18] His affiliation with fraternal orders and his fear of employer discrimination against members of open unions led him to espouse a policy of secrecy and elaborate ritual. An applicant for membership had to affirm that he believed in God and that he gained his bread by the sweat of his brow. After satisfactorily answering all inquiries and thereby gaining admission to the fellowship of the Order the candidate swore that he would obey all its regulations and would never reveal the name or object of the Order.[19]

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16. Ibid., pp. 128-129.

17. Ibid., pp. 149-150.

18. Carroll D. Wright, "An Historical Sketch of the Knights of Labor," Quarterly Journal of Economics, I (January, 1887), 141.

19. Commons, Documentary History, X, 20-21.

Local Assembly 1 of Philadelphia was composed exclusively of garment cutters. However, the use of sojourners, members of another trade interested in the work of the Knights, avoided perpetuation of trade exclusiveness. Sojourners joined the Order with all of the benefits of the association except a voice in deciding trade matters. Their function was to instruct and organize members of their trade.[20] The Order grew very slowly with the second local assembly, the Philadelphia carpenters and caulkers, organizing on July 18, 1872. Following this initial lethargy, the pace increased so that by the end of 1873 more than eighty locals had been established in Philadelphia and the vicinity.[21] This growth indicated the need for a permanent central body. The formation of District Assembly 1 on Christmas Day, 1873, fulfilled this need.[22] The next stage involved the establishment of District Assembly 2 at Camden and the undertaking of work which eventually resulted in the first significant extension of the geographical confines of the Knights. This movement culminated in the formation of District Assembly 3, centered in the Pittsburgh area, on August 8, 1875.[23]

Thereafter, the Order spread rapidly from the major bases in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. These centers, however, failed to co-ordinate their activities and conflict arose over the program and leadership of the Order.

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20. Powderly, Thirty Years, pp. 143-144.

21. Norman J. Ware, The Labor Movement, pp. 29-30.

22. Powderly, Thirty Years, p. 187.

23. Ibid., p. 190.

District Assembly 1 espoused pure and simple unionism and ignored reform activities while District Assembly 3 favored a less conservative and more politically oriented approach.[24] The secrecy issue and the problems caused by growing pains led to the calling of a convention held at Philadelphia on July 3, 1876. The convention, however, represented almost solely the membership from Philadelphia and Reading. It adopted a constitution for a pure and simple trade union organization which would include all trades. The District Assembly 3 Convention, on the other hand, which met at Pittsburgh during May, 1877, dealt with the secrecy issue and resolved that the name and objects of the Order should be made public.

This deadlock was broken when the results of the railroad strikes of 1877 taught labor organizations the necessity of a central organization and strike funds. Frederick Turner, corresponding secretary of District Assembly 1, issued a call for a convention to be held in Reading, Pennsylvania, beginning January 1, 1878, for the principal purpose of forming a central organization and creating a central resistance fund.[25] This convention, the first general meeting, established an organizational structure with three basic components: the Local Assembly, District Assembly, and General Assembly. A minimum of ten members, of which at least three quarters were wage workers, constituted a local assembly. Representatives from at least five local assemblies were necessary for a district assembly which served as the highest

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24. Ware, The Labor Movement, p. 35.

25. Powderly, Thirty Years, pp. 238-239.

tribunal in the district. District assemblies and unattached local assemblies elected delegates to the General Assembly. This national body had full and final jurisdiction and was the highest tribunal in the Order.[26] This structure apparently provided a highly centralized form of organization; in actuality the local assemblies and the district assemblies often possessed a significant degree of autonomy.[27]

The need for flexibility and efficiency caused the subordinate organs to modify their basic organizational structure. Mixed locals, considered the ideal type by the leaders of the Knights, were concentrated in rural and semi-rural areas which lacked a sufficient number of workers of a single trade to establish a trade local. Trade locals, on the other hand, predominated in urban centers. The district assembly initially included all the local assemblies within a specified geographic area. As the membership of the Knights increased, however, it became possible to form homogeneous units called trade districts.[28] These modifications and a series of informal improvisations gave the structural framework greater viability and made it more amenable to the needs of the membership.

The first national convention dealt with other important topics. It elected the first national officers and outlined their duties. Uriah Stephens became Grand Master Workman with the duty of the general superintendence of the Order, Ralph Beamount was elected Grand Worthy Foreman, Charles Litchman became Grand Secretary, and John Laning was chosen as Grand Assistant

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26. Knights of Labor, General Assembly Proceedings, January, 1878, pp. 29, 35-36.

27. Ware, The Labor Movement, p. 63.

28. William C. Birdsall, "The Problem of Structure in the Knights of Labor," Industrial and Labor Relations Review, VI (July, 1953), 538-539.

Secretary.[29] The Reading Convention established a resistance fund by requiring each local assembly to set aside five cents per month per member for this purpose. However, a dispute arose over the disposition of the fund. Some delegates wanted the funds used only for strike purposes while others favored the use of the money to establish co-operatives. After prolonged discussion, the convention decided that the fund should remain intact until January 1, 1880, and then be used according to the determination of the General Assembly.[30]

The convention approved a set of principles embodied in the preamble. This document closely resembled the preamble and platform of the Industrial Brotherhood, an ephemeral organization in operation during the depression of the mid-seventies.[31] The Knights' preamble indicated that the alarming development and aggression of aggregated wealth would, unless checked, result in the pauperization and hopeless degradation of the toiling masses, and that labor must be unified in order to establish a system which would furnish the laborer with the fruits of his toil. The preamble also reflected the Order's support of the establishment of a system in which industrial and moral worth, not wealth, would be the true standard of individual and national greatness and where the toilers secured more of the leisure and other advantages of society. The platform of the Knights of Labor included demands for bureaus of labor statistics, co-operatives, the reserving of public lands for actual

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29. Proceedings, January, 1878, pp. 20-22.

30. Ibid., p. 32.

31. Ware, The Labor Movement, pp. 377-381.

settlers, the repeal of all laws that did not bear equally upon capital and labor. In addition the Order requested a mechanics' lien law, the substitution of arbitration for strikes, the eight-hour day, and equal pay for equal work for both sexes.[32]

The diversity of the planks of the platform permitted factions within the organization to quarrel about the assignment of priorities. The basic division arose over the issue of whether the principal energies of the Order should be utilized in behalf of reform or in the pursuit of a higher standard of living. In other words, should the primary object of the Knights be to improve the worker's standard of living within the framework of the existing society or should the Order strive to establish a society which would provide the producer with the opportunity to lead a meaningful life. The national leadership and a segment of the rank and file, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas, favored the reform approach. Trade unionists and many of the urban members, on the other hand, stressed the utilization of the strike as a means of improving their standard of living. Two issues - strike policy and the eight-hour day campaign - illustrated the priorities established by these factions.[33]

Attempts to establish a central strike fund provide the best insight into the perennial question of strike policy. The issue first emerged at the Reading Convention of 1878 where a committee report on the subject contained the implication that the money in the central Resistance Fund be utilized for

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32. Proceedings, January,1878, pp. 28-29.

33. Gerald Grob, Workers and Utopia, pp. 60-61.

strike purposes. The General Assembly, however, decided to postpone a decision concerning its use. The disposition of the Resistance Fund confronted the General Assembly again in 1880. The recommendations of the General Executive Board supplied the basis for a discussion of the issue. The Board recommended changing the name of the fund from Resistance Fund to Defence Fund and allocating its resources on the basis of ten per cent for organization, ten per cent for education, no more than thirty per cent for the assistance of strikes, and twenty per cent to be retained until the next General Assembly when it would be applied to the purpose deemed most beneficial to the Order.[34] The General Assembly eventually decided to allot ten per cent of the Defence Fund for education, thirty per cent for strikes, and sixty per cent for producers' and consumers' co-operatives.[35] A complicated system of arbitration committees and a paucity of funds constituted additional barriers blocking effective strike resistance.[36] The Report of the General Executive Board in 1881 revealed new difficulties. The document alleged that Charles Litchman, the Grand Secretary, had illegally utilized the Defence Fund to buy a printing press and to pay the general expenses of the Order.[37] In response to this revelation the General Assembly dissolved the fund and credited the per capita account of each local Assembly with the amount it had deposited in the Defence Fund.

This action left the Order in the untenable position of being unable to grant strike aid even in cases of strikes for union recognition. Therefore,

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34. Proceedings, 1880, pp. 186-187.

35. Ibid., p. 246.

36. Ware, The Labor Movement, pp. 122-123. Grob, Workers and Utopia, pp. 49-50.

37. Proceedings, 1881, p. 285.

the delegates attending the next General Assembly instituted a plan which permitted the assessment of the entire membership to support strikes and lockouts for recognition. Although the General Executive Board, in 1883, admonished the membership about the use of strikes, the General Assembly required each local assembly to forward to its district assembly an amount equal to five cents per member per month as an Assistance Fund.[38] This system granted the General Executive Board the sole authority to authorize a strike.

The issue of strike funds reappeared at the meeting of the General Assembly in 1884. This body resolved to continue the fund and to institute new legislation regulating its use. This legislation provided that the district assemblies rather than the General Executive Board would control the fund. District assemblies, however, would be subject to special assessments levied by the Board to aid those district assemblies which had exhausted their funds.[39] This system failed to provide the funds necessary for strikes on a national scale. An unsuccessful attempt was made to overcome this defect by replacing the Assistance Fund with a sinking fund under the control of the General Executive Board.[40]

The strike issue reoccurred at the Cleveland convention of 1886 which established a cumbersome procedure for calling strikes. The strike regulation provided that the General Executive Board must attempt to arbitrate a dispute and, if unsuccessful, call the strike in order for the assembly to obtain outside assistance. All vestiges of centralized control vanished in 1887 when the General Assembly gave permission to any local assembly, district assembly, national trade assembly or state assembly to create and have complete

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38. Ibid., 1883, p. 509.

39. Ibid., 1884, pp. 756-758.

40. Ibid., 1885, p. 92; Ware, The Labor Movement, p. 150.

control over their own assistance fund.[41]

This series of attempts to establish a permanent, centralized strike fund illuminated many of the difficulties besetting the Order. The strong trade unionist faction which conducted the decade-long agitation for effective strike assistance from the central organization faced significant obstacles. One obstacle was the reluctance of the rural element to give financial support to assemblies engaged in strikes. District Master Workman Kirkpatrick of District Assembly 28 in Iowa wrote a letter to the General Executive Board in 1883 notifying them that the district that he represented would not pay assessments to aid the glass workers and that it opposed the use of strikes.[42] During the same year Local Assembly 885 of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, refused to pay the assessment levied to aid the Window Glass Workers' Local Assembly 300 because, in their opinion, the strike was not absolutely necessary and, in addition, the members of Local Assembly 300 earned twice as much as the best paid workers of Local Assembly 885.[43] The action of these assemblies in Iowa graphically expressed the attitude of much of the rural membership toward the support, and even the use, of strikes.

A second factor hindering effective strike assistance was the attitude of Terence Powderly. The reasons for his opposition to strikes needs careful scrutiny. Historical evidence indicated to Powderly the limited usefulness of the technique. The influential labor leaders of the 1860's generally opposed the use of strikes and the outcome of the Railroad Strike of 1877 contributed additional evidence about the lack of effectiveness

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41. Proceedings, 1887, p. 1802.

42. Ibid., 1884, p. 621.

43. Ibid., p. 641.

of strikes. Moreover, strikes could not produce the basic reforms of society which Powderly viewed as essential. They could not achieve his aim--the overthrow of the wage system. The strike would not, according to Powderly, improve the condition of labor and, therefore, the Knights should expend their funds in a way which would produce basic improvements. He favored peaceful methods of settling disputes, especially the use of arbitration.[44] Strikes, Powderly stated, led to the decline of labor organizations and he failed "to see any lasting good in a strike."[45]

The second major issue which split the ranks of the Order was the priority to be accorded to the achievement of the eight-hour day and the best means of reaching the objective. The leaders of the Knights of Labor accorded the demand for the eight-hour day a lesser degree of importance than had their counterparts in the National Labor Union. However, the fourteenth plank of the platform adopted at the Reading Convention in 1878 contained a demand for the "reduction of the hours of labor to eight per day. . ."[46] The Knights, however, took no steps during the next five years specifically designed to secure its enactment, although some resolutions were introduced which dealt with the issue.[47] The delegates to the General Assembly which met at Philadelphia in 1844 passed a resolution on this subject. It proposed "To shorten the hours of labor by a general refusal to work for more than eight hours."[48]

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44. Powderly to Robert Lucas, December 6, 1879. Terence Powderly Letter Books (hereinafter cited as TVPLB). T.V. Powderly, "Strikes and Arbitration," North American Review, CXLII (May, 1886), 506; Journal of United Labor, May 15, 1880, p. 10, August 15, 1880, p. 37, November 15, 1880, p. 65.

45. Powderly, North American Review (CXXV) August, 1882, 123.

46. Powderly, Thirty Years, p. 245.

47. Proceedings, 1881, pp. 269, 309; 1882, p. 312.

48. Powderly, Thirty Years, p. 482.

The next phase of the agitation originated within the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada which adopted a resolution at their 1884 convention which stated "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's work from and after May 1, 1886," --and the "incoming Legislative Committee be instructed to extend an invitation to the Knights of Labor to co-operate in the general movement to establish the eight-hour reform."[49] The Federation, however, could not wage a major campaign for the enactment of shorter hours. The organization was declining in strength and, therefore, had to depend on other organizations for implementation of its resolutions. The trade unions failed to respond enthusiastically which meant that the attitude of the Knights of Labor would, in large measure, determine the effectiveness of the movement.

Terence Powderly, although he reaffirmed his belief in an eight-hour day, strongly opposed the use of strikes to attain the objective. His secret circular issued on December 15, 1884, requested the immediate inauguration of a general discussion on the question of the eight-hour day. He outlined his plan for the shorter work day in his communication: "I ask that every assembly take up this question at once. Let each one have its members write short essays on the eight hour question. From the number select the best for publication in the public press of the land, in the local papers, but do not publish them indiscriminately and at different times...."[50] Powderly selected Washington's birthday as the date for the publication of the essays. The issue reappeared at the General Assembly of the Knights in 1885.

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49. Quoted in Ware, The Labor Movement, p. 301. Quoted in John R. Commons, History of Labour in the United States (4 vols.: New York, 1918-1935), II, 377.

50. Powderly, Thirty Years, P. 483.

In the Annual Address of the General Master Workman Powderly stated his opposition to the use of a general strike to inaugurate an eight-hour day on May 1, 1886, and characterized the plan proposed to establish the system as not being the proper one and the date as unsuitable.[51]

Members of the rank and file, on the other hand, gave their strong support to the eight-hour day campaign. Organizers discovered the popularity of the issue and utilized it as an effective organizational device. As the rank and file prepared for the strike Powderly issued another secret circular on March 13, 1886, in which he stated: "No assembly of the Knights of Labor must strike for the eight hour system on May first under the impression that they are obeying orders from headquarters, for such an order was not, and will not, be given. Neither employer nor employee are educated to the needs and necessities for the shorter-hour plan."[52] This position reflected Powderly's adherence to non-militant methods and the primacy he accorded to basic reforms. Furthermore, a competing organization had proposed the plan, the press presented a distorted version of the policy and activities of the Knights and the Southwest Strike had begun. Powderly's circular most likely reduced the participation of members of the Knights of Labor in the strike. The trade unions played a more prominent role than the Order in the eight-hour day campaign of 1886, although thousands of Knights joined.

Approximately 340,000 persons participated in the movement: "190,000 struck, only 42,000 of this number with success, and 150,000 secured shorter

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51. Proceedings, 1885, p. 15.
Powderly, Thirty Years, p. 493.

52. Powderly, Thirty Years, p. 496.

hours without a strike."[53] Chicago, the center of the eight-hour movement, was the scene of a bomb-throwing incident at an anarcho-syndicalist meeting held at Haymarket Square which resulted in a dramatic trial. Although the direct effects of the Haymarket Affair upon the eight-hour movement are difficult to determine,[54] this episode helped to undermine the movement. Although the campaign failed to achieve its objective--the widespread establishment of the eight-hour day--it did succeed in reducing hours and assisting organization.[55]

The leadership of the Knights favored the establishment of the eight-hour day by peaceful means. Powderly supported the plan proposed by Edwin Norton, a Chicago manufacturer, at the special session of the General Assembly held in Cleveland in 1886. In his speech of May 25, Norton stressed the need to settle the shorter hours question by peaceful and harmonious methods and indicated that change must be gradual and achieved through the cooperation of organized business and organized labor, He advocated a plan which provided for the establishment of a nine and one-half hour day in 1887, a nine-hour day the following year, an eight and one-half hour day in 1889, and an eight-hour day during 1890.[56] The regular session of the General Assembly approved the gradual implementation of an eight-hour program favored by Powderly.[57] In 1889 the leaders of the American Federation of Labor sought to

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53. Commons, History of Labour, II, 384-385.

54. Henry David, The History of the Haymarket Affair (New York, 1936), p. 538.

55. Ibid.; p. 539; Philip S. Foner, History of the Labour Movement in the United States (New York, 1955), II, 104.

56. Proceedings, Special Session, 1886, p. 11.

57. Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 76.

gain support from the Knights for its eight-hour campaign. Gompers sent a vague statement to the General Assembly concerning the Federation's plan. Powderly, however, reiterated his support of the Norton Plan. Although the General Assembly eventually passed a resolution promising to give moral support to those trades pressing for a shorter day, the Knights actually granted no assistance to organizations active in the struggle and generally maintained an unfriendly attitude toward the movement of May, 1890.[58]

The issue of the best means of implementing the eight-hour plank of the Order's platform showed the schism within the organization between trade unionists representing the views of many urban workers and the national leaders supported by a large segment of the rural element. Many members of the rank and file supported the eight-hour campaign of 1886 because they considered a shorter work day a significant advance which, justified the use of strikes. Powderly, on the other hand, condemned the movement because he considered long hours merely a symptom rather than the disease and because of his antipathy to the use of strikes. Society needed, Powderly stated, basic reform rather than merely decreased hours. The Order should, therefore, concentrate its major effort on the elimination of the wage system and its placement by a better society.[59] If the Order desired to establish shorter hours it should do so in the "responsible" manner which Powderly outlined in an article in the North American Review:

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58. Proceedings, 1889, p. 8;
Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 77;
Sidney Fine, "The Eight-Hour Day Movement in the United States, 1888-1891, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XL (December, 1953), 451.

59. Marion Cotter Cahill, Shorter Hours (New York, 1932), p. 47.

> To rush the system through would unsettle affairs; and for that reason the Knights of Labor ask for a gradual reduction of the hours of labor, we believe that, unless workmen are educated to understand the full and true reasons why their hours of labor should be reduced, they will not retain what they get; for this reason we appeal to their reasoning powers rather than their powers of endurance in case of a strike. Employers as well as workmen will soon realize that the short work-day will be most beneficial. In any event its introduction will soon be announced. 60

Less controversial and more successful than the participation of the Knights of Labor in the eight-hour day movement was the Order's program of social and educational activities.

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60. T.V. Powderly, "The Plea for Eight Hours," North American Review, CL (April, 1890), 469.

Chapter 2

Social and Educational Activities

Although the speed of industrialization and urbanization increased during the late nineteenth century, some areas of America remained comparatively unaffected by these changes. In these sections many people still suffered from the isolation and loneliness of rural life. On the other hand, many of the new urban residents lived the grim lives of factory workers and slum dwellers. Government agencies failed to lighten these burdens by satisfying the needs of the increasing population for entertainment and enlightenment. An expanding network of private, voluntary associations partially filled this void. The social and educational programs of the Knights of Labor comprise one important aspect of this effort.

Rural conditions convinced many farmers of the need for organization. The farmer encountered special problems. In spite of hard work, plain living and an abundant harvest, he could reap only scant rewards from an increasingly impersonal economic environment.[1] A feeling of isolation due to the distance from neighbors, cities and entertainment aggravated the situation. The farmer's wife, as Hamlin Garland pointed out in one of his novels, experienced the agony of isolation with particular intensity. She had few opportunities to leave the farm; moreover, the town she visited often consisted of a cluster of small-frame houses and stores on the dry prairie beside a railway station.

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1. Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform from Bryan to F.D.R. (New York, 1955), pp. 57-58.

Loneliness and monotony pervaded the lives of the average western farmer and his family.[2]

In the 1870's the Patrons of Husbandry, or Grange, as it is commonly called, expanded the social opportunities of farm families. Regular meetings of the local granges usually included a literary and musical program and an opportunity for games and general conversation. Many granges erected halls which served as meeting sites. In addition to regular meetings, picnics and festivals were frequently held.[3] The Farm Alliances, the dominant farmer organization of the following decade, also conducted a social program which included picnics and box suppers.[4]

Assemblies of the Knights of Labor in rural areas tried to meet the social needs of their members. Their programs were so numerous that only a sample will be presented to illustrate their geographic dispersion and variety of format. A picnic in Calhoun, Missouri, in July, 1885, attracted 7,000 people.[5] On Labor Day of 1887 the Knights presented the finest parade ever witnessed in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, and then held the largest and

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2. Solon Buck, The Granger Movement, A Study of Agricultural Organization and Its Political, Economic and Social Manifestations 1870-1880 (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1913), P. 279; Hamlin Garland, Main-Travelled Roads (New York, 1899), pp. 249-259.

3. Buck, Granger Movement, p. 280.

4. John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt, A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (Minneapolis, 1931), pp. 128-129.

5. John Swinton's Paper, July 5, 1885.

and most orderly picnic ever staged there.[6] Local Assembly 1480 of Hammonton, New Jersey, celebrated the dedication of its new hall on May 18, 1888, by presenting a program of vocal and instrumental music interspersed with readings and recitations. Over 200 persons attended the meeting.[7] Local Assembly 5075 held its first annual picnic in Natchez, Mississippi, in May, 1888; the first public demonstration of any kind that the Knights ever made in the town. The "...day was lovely, the weather cool and pleasant, and the crowd the largest that for many years congregated in the park at Lansdowne..." The program of sports and games included bicycle racing, three-legged races and foot races. In addition, dancing continued until midnight in the spacious pavilion. Approximately 1,600 people attended the picnic.[8] In June, 1888, St. James, Louisiana, hosted its first labor demonstration. The program, held under the auspices of Local Assembly 10,877, consisted of dancing, a parade, and a picnic. "It was a perfect success and left a good impression upon the minds of the citizens, many of whom had hitherto been opposed to the Order."[9]

The urban blight of the expanding metropolitan centers also required the attention of the Knights.[10] The polarization of American society,

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6. The Journal of United Labor, November 5, 1887, p. 2520.

7. Ibid., May 26, 1888, p. 2635.

8. Ibid., June 9, 1888, p. 2644.

9. Ibid., June 30, 1888, p. 2655.

10. Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Sr., The Rise of the City 1878-1898 (New York, 1933), p. 79.

described by Edward Bellamy in Looking Backward appeared most prominently in the juxtaposition of wealth and poverty in the burgeoning urban centers.[11] New York, generally considered the foremost city in the nation, illustrated this condition. "Against the splendors of Fifth Avenue and the show places of the metropolis had to be set the rocky wastes of Shantytown...Contrasting with the pillared citadels of wealth in Wall Street was a nearby slum section, a festering spot of poverty and immorality, finding a tawdry outlet for its life in the notorious Bowery."[12] Charles F. Wingate, a sanitary engineer, testified before the Blain Committee concerning housing conditions in New York City. He stated that damp cellars, inadequate plumbing and unsatisfactory ventilation contriubted to the high incidence of illness among workingmen. An extract from a report of the Board of Health, presented by Wingate, listed overcrowding and filth as major factors contributing to the death rate of the city.[13] Jacob Riis described the filth, overcrowding and high infant mortality rate of "the Bend."[14] A Brooklyn physician referred to New York tenement houses as probably the worst in the world.[15]

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11. Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward 2000-1887 (Boston, 1887), pp. 10-13.

12. Schlesinger, Rise of the City, p. 84.

13. Report of the [Education and Labor] Committee of the Senate upon the Relations between Labor and Capital, and Testimony Taken by the Committee, 4 vols., Washington, 1885, vol. 2, pp. 1039-1040, 1050; Journal of United Labor (April 2, 1887), p. 2342.

14. Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives (New York, 1891), pp. 46-48.

15. Senate Committee on Labor, vol.2, p. 1217.

In Chicago similar conditions prevailed on a smaller scale. Squalor and splendor, wealth and poverty, stockyard stench and fresh lake air jostled the senses of the observer.[16] Newcomers of the lowest income group lived in overcrowded, filthy conditions. As late as the mid 1880's many people lacked adequate toilet facilities. The prevalence of rickets in children and the high incidence of child mortality reflected the effects of slum living. During the last decade of the century the slum population of Chicago became the second largest in the nation.[17]

During the late nineteenth century the increased tempo of industrialization, urbanization and immigration accentuated the stress, tension and insecurity in non-rural America as an increasing number of people failed the "success test" imposed by society. Unlike the pattern of a society in which each person had a prescribed place in the total life drama and had his personal dignity assured by membership in an integrated society, satisfactory performance in a minor position failed to meet the American standard of success. American society expected its members to demonstrate upward economic mobility and judged them on the basis of reaching goals defined primarily in pecuniary terms. The equilibrium between mobility, the welfare of man as an independent individual, and status, the individual's welfare as a member of the community, was thereby thrown out

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16. Bessie Louise Pierce, A History of Chicago, III (New York, 1957), pp. 58-59; Schlesinger, Rise of the City, p. 86.

17. Pierce, Chicago, III, pp. 53-56.

of balance.[18]

In this situation, the forces of social reintegration lacked vitality. The establishment of voluntary associations indicated the desire of many individuals for a sense of community. The formation of fraternal orders was one manifestation of this movement. However, reform organizations, often with features of a fraternal order, also made substantial contributions.[19]

The Knights of Labor met some of these needs through its social activities programs in metropolitan centers. Many events were conducted in the New York City area. The John Swinton Assembly of Bridgeport, Connecticut, presented a concert soiree in May, 1886. This performance attracted more than 3,000 people.[20] A picnic held in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1886 drew a crowd of 6,000 to 7,000.[21] In January, 1899, the Building Contractors Assembly, District Assembly 253, celebrated its tenth anniversary with a grand entertainment and ball in New York City. The program included refined vaudeville, dancing and the presentation of a gold watch and chain to Worthy District Master Workman Henry Hicks.[22] The Chicago area served as the site of many activities including one of the largest social meetings staged by the Order. This event was held on August 13, 1886, before a crowd estimated

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18. David M. Potter, People of Plenty Economic Abundance and the American Character (Chicago, 1954), pp. 91-92, 103-110.

19. Rowland Berthoff, "The American Social Order: A Conservative Hypothesis," American Historical Review (April, 1960), 500, 507-508.

20. John Swinton's Paper, May 7, 1886.

21. Ibid., July 4, 1886.

22. The Journal of the Knights of Labor, March, 1899.

at 15,000 to 20,000. The program included an open-air mass meeting, in addition to a number of sports and games which were enjoyed by large crowds.[23] A picnic given by Local Assembly 7700 in August, 1886, attracted 3,000 people.[24] On December 15, 1886, a grand prize ball presented by Derrickmen's Assembly cleared $300.15.[25] The 1886 reunion of the Knights of Labor of Illinois was attended by 3,000 people. The program consisted of many kinds of amusements, including dancing.[26]

Many people outside the major metropolitan centers also lived hard lives. Industrial workers often worked long hours, received low wages and lived under the recurrent threat of layoffs during slack times.[27] The grievances reported by employees in a Massachusetts mill town may illustrate the type of conditions encountered by the less fortunate industrial workers. Fall River operatives complained about inadequate wages, the use of child labor and the lack of a thorough enforcement of the ten-hour day statute.[28] Excessively high production quotas, the requirement that spinners clean and oil their machines and the poor quality of gaslight used in the mills also incurred their disfavor.[29] Robert Howard, a Fall River labor leader, testified that he "did

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23. Knights of Labor, August 14, 1886, p. 10.

24. Ibid., August 21, 1886, p. 6.

25. Ibid., December 23, 1886, p. 10.

26. Ibid., September 11, 1886, p. 6.

27. Ray Ginger, Age of Excess, The United States from 1877 to 1914. (New York, 1965), pp. 55-56.

28. Thirteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of the Statistics of Labor of Massachusetts, 1882, pp. 202-301, 329; Senate Committee on Labor, vol. 1, pp. 75-76.

29. Thirteenth Annual Report, pp. 304, 307, 309.

not think that labor saving machinery has been the slightest aid to operatives... The tendency has been not only to reduce wages, but also to dismiss help."[30] Operatives also condemned the use of the blacklist and the requirement that employees give ten days' notice before leaving or lose ten days' wages.[31] Finally, they accused manufacturers of cheating in the spinning and weaving rooms by taking advantage of the length of cuts and the numbers of the yarn spun.[32] Delegates selected by the workers to express their grievances failed to receive the attention and respect of the employers.[33] In spite of these conditions, most respondents to a questionnaire of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor of Massachusetts indicated that no programs to improve the condition of the operatives were being considered.[34]

Employees criticized employer attitudes as well as working conditions. Many employers regarded the operative as a machine, a mule or a spindle rather than a human being.[35] An official of the Knights of Labor testified that in many of those larger institutions "...the men are looked upon as nothing more than parts of the machinery that they work."[36] A deepening chasm separated the employer and employee, especially in New England, where the old idea of mobility

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30. Senate Committee on Labor, vol. 1, p. 642.

31. Ibid., pp. 79-80, 652; Thirteenth Annual Report, pp. 328-345.

32. Thirteenth Annual Report, p. 354.

33. Ibid., pp. 358-359, 364.

34. Ibid., p. 383.

35. Ibid., p. 378.

36. Senate Committee on Labor, vol. 1, p. 219.

disappeared.[37] The paucity of social intercourse between the classes also illustrated the increasing class rigidification.[38]

Many mill workers also lacked satisfactory housing. Although some of the tenements were quite attractive, others suffered from inadequate sanitary conditions, a lack of running water and excessive dirt. Residents complained about the strong stench, especially during warm weather.[39] Hot, crowded tenements had a demoralizing effect on the children.

Many workers sought diversion and respite from their hard, dull lives. The modern answers--movies, automobiles and radios--were unavailable.[40] To some the saloon seemed the best answer to their problems. It served as a poor man's club, satisfying the thirst for sociability as well as the thirst for drink.[41] The Knights of Labor also responded to the challenge presented by these social needs by means of a varied social program.

District Assembly 30, the major affiliate of the Order in Massachusetts, conducted many social activities. It established a special Picnic Committee to make arrangements for picnics held under its auspices.[42] However, local assemblies assumed most of the burden in this social sphere. The Haverhill

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37. Ibid., pp. 49, 756-757.

38. Ibid., pp. 49, 219, 578, 758.

39. Ibid., p. 63; Thirteenth Annual Report, pp. 272-273, 278-279.

40. Ware, The Labor Movement, P. XVI.

41. Raymond Calkins, Substitutes for the Saloon (Boston, 1901), p. viii.

42. The Labor Leader, June 1, 1888; June 1, 1889.

Knights held a celebration on Labor Day of 1887 highlighted by a grand parade during the morning and a full schedule of activities including boating, dancing and speeches later in the day.[43] On the evening of January 4, 1889, Local Assembly 6800 held their annual ball. It was a social and financial success and led to a new interest in the organization.[44] A month later Local Assembly 5433 celebrated its third anniversary by presenting a concert, supper and ball.[45] These and other social events sponsored by the Knights attracted large crowds and achieved financial success.[46]

Assemblies of the Knights throughout the nation presented social events. The programs of some of these affiliates will be used to indicate their diversity and success. Stephen Assembly of Trenton, New Jersey, established a Picnic Committee to handle that popular activity.[47] The Knights held a successful bazaar in 1885 in order to raise money to erect a labor temple.[48] The Order often made elaborate preparations for Labor Day festivities which usually included a parade and picnic.[49] The Knights in the Detroit area, in addition to providing the usual social programs, specialized

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43. Ibid., August 20, August 27, 1887.

44. Ibid., January 12, 1889.

45. Ibid., February 16, 1889.

46. Ibid., January 15, August 13, November 19, December 10, 1887, March 3, 1888.

47. Knights of Labor, Minutes of the Stephen Assembly, August 7, August 31, 1888.

48. John Swinton's Paper, December 31, 1885.

49. Stephen Assembly, August 30, September 6, 1889, July 21, July 28, 1893.

in conducting excursions. For example, in 1886 the Kalamazoo branch and Powderly Assembly 7606 sponsored separate and joint excursions.[50] The Knights of Labor predominated in the impressive Labor Day parade of 1886 conducted by workers in Detroit. "The procession included 10,000 men and marched for two hours through the principal streets."[51] The socially active Florence Nightingale Assembly 3102 presented entertainments, conducted socials and held excursions as well as participating in Labor Day parades.[52] The weekly meetings of the Knights in St. Paul, Minnesota, provided opportunities for social gatherings as well as forums for the discussion of trade problems. The members in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area also held special events including balls and picnics. A picnic held by the Minneapolis Knights attracted a crowd of 10,000 people.[53] The Denver Knights also conducted many successful social events. For example, in August, 1884, they held a grand picnic which included dancing, footracing and a football game. "The whole affair was a perfect success in all respects, and the Knights of this city have gained the reputation as the givers of picnics par excellence."[54]

During the nineteenth century the impact of technological change aggravated by enormous migration, immigration and social mobility contributed to the dislocation of the social order. This development increased the hardships of workers, many of whom also suffered from oppressive working and living conditions and declining status. Many workers and lonely farm families sought an opportunity

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50. The Labor Leaf, June 2, July 7, July 21, 1886.

51. Knights of Labor, September 11, 1886, p. 4.

52. The Labor Leaf, January 26, 1887; The Advance and Labor Leaf, May 4, 1889.

53. John Swinton's Paper, March 1, 1885, August 22, 1886; Knights of Labor, September 18, 1886, p. 7; George B. Engberg, "The Knights of Labor in Minnesota," Minnesota History, XXII (December, 1941), p. 376.

54. The Labor Enquirer, September 1, 1883, August 2, 1884.

for solidarity and entertainment. Although saloons, fraternal orders and farm organizations partially met this need, some people found the security and sociability they desired in the assemblies of the Knights of Labor. Many units provided varied programs of social activities. Picnics, dances and excursions obtained enthusiastic public response and achieved financial success.[55]

Educational programs also received approbation. According to the Knights, workers needed education in order to assume positions of responsibility in society. This interest in education reflected the concern of the nation. Between the American Revolution and the Civil War the emergence of the United States as an independent self-governing nation led to the realization that a free society required an enlightened citizenry. As suffrage expanded during the early nineteenth century the common man needed to join the ranks of the educated. Many institutions developed to satisfy these demands. Mechanics' institutes, public libraries and adult evening schools contributed to the dissemination of knowledge. However, the lyceum played a particularly vital role. These associations promoted the self-improvement of its members through lectures and discussions. The lyceum movement also helped to mobilize public opinion in favor of tax-supported public schools.[56]

During the late nineteenth century the expansiveness of American society was reflected in the adult education movement as well as the economy. Many new institutional forms were established including agricultural education,

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55. Berthoff, "The American Social Order," p. 500; Ralph H. Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought: An Intellectual History since 1815 (New York, 1940), pp. 192-194.

56. Malcolm S. Knowles, The Adult Education Movement in the United States (New York, 1962), pp. 12, 15, 16-18, 33.

workers' education, summer schools and settlement houses. However, Chautauqua seems to have had the greatest impact. The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle provided an integrated core program of adult education which included courses of reading in literature, history, religion and science. The summer educational program also proved very popular. In addition to its formal educational program, Chautauqua also presented lecture series, concerts and plays. Circuit Chautauqua, a commercial imitation, achieved its greatest success in the Middle West. Lectures were the backbone of this program. Orators conveyed information and high-minded sentiments to receptive audiences.[57]

Labor and farm organizations also provided educational services. The National Labor Union urged the establishment of mechanics' institutes, lyceums and reading rooms.[58] Oliver H. Kelley, founder of the Grange, advocated the establishment of libraries and museums as a means of spreading knowledge among the nation's farmers.[59] At regular meetings members of the local granges obtained experience in public speaking and the use of parliamentary procedure. Many units established libraries, held book sales and promoted newspaper reading.[60] The Farm Alliances developed circulating libraries, published newspapers and encouraged discussions at local meetings thereby creating an intellectual ferment which widened the horizons of members.[61]

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57. Ibid., pp. 36-38, 74; Jesse L. Hurlbut, The Story of Chautauqua (New York, 1921), pp. 118-119; Paul W. Glad, The Trumpet Soundeth - William Jennings Bryan and His Democracy, 1896-1912 (Lincoln, 1960), pp. 16-19.

58. Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 19.

59. Buck, Granger Movement, p. 52.

60. Ibid., pp. 285, 287.

61. Hicks, Populist Revolt, pp. 129-130.

The Knights of Labor offered similar opportunities for intellectual growth. The operation of the organization was a form of educational experience. Regular meetings included periods for discussion of personal grievances as well as the exposition of the program of the Knights. The membership analyzed the issues of wages, hours and working conditions in addition to debating the merits of strikes, boycotts and arbitration as techniques for achieving their demands. Moreover, they elected officers and chose delegates to represent the local assembly at the district assembly level. Terence Powderly recounted in his autobiography a special educational feature used by some assemblies during the early period of organization. One of the aims of the Knights was that each member should be able to write his full name. Each individual had to sign a card before he could gain admission to the inner sanctuary. This device, Powderly stated, caused over one hundred men to take a course so that they could learn the rudiments of reading and writing.[62]

Newspapers provided another important educational tool. The Knights of Labor published an official newspaper to inform members about the general activities of the organization and to obtain some conception of "grass roots" opinion on the vital issues of the period by means of the letters to the editor column. The Journal of United Labor served as the official organ until 1890 when the name of the newspaper was changed to The Journal of the Knights of Labor. In addition, various district assemblies extended their support to the local labor press. For example, District Assembly 24, the Chicago area affiliate, gave its hearty support to the newspaper Knights of Labor.[63]

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62. Terence Powderly, The Path I Trod (New York, 1940), pp. 53-54.

63. Knights of Labor, August 14, 1886, p. 1.

The Order established at various organizational levels a mechanism which gave workers the opportunity to obtain knowledge.[64] The construction of meeting places constituted part of this effort. "Labor halls gave the order an air of importance, stability, and permanence that served a psychological as well as a practical purpose."[65] The Order constructed numerous labor halls throughout the country particularly during the middle and late 1880's with its Middle West affiliates especially active. Assemblies in Minnesota built a number of halls which became centers for labor activity. District Assembly 79 of St. Paul had one of the handsomest halls in the city, according to John Swinton's Paper.[66] On May 29, 1887, the cornerstone of the new Knights of Labor temple in Minneapolis was laid with appropriate ceremonies.[67] By 1888 another labor temple had been erected in Minneapolis.[68] Michigan affiliates in Detroit, Standish and North Muskegon opened labor halls.[69] Pennsylvania branches also acquired suitable sanctuaries. For example, District Assembly 1 erected a new headquarters and the Knights of Rouseville purchased the Masonic Hall.[70]

Many assemblies also established libraries and reading rooms. A reading room was established in Northampton, Massachusetts.[71] The Knights in

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64. Foner, Labor Movement, II, p. 75.

65. Engberg, "The Knights of Labor in Minnesota," p. 370.

66. John Swinton's Paper, October 24, 1886.

67. Ibid., June 5, 1887.

68. The Journal of United Labor, December 27, 1888, p. 2760.

69. The Labor Leaf, February 26, 1887; The Journal of United Labor, June 9, 1888, p. 2642; April 11, 1889, p. 2820.

70. John Swinton's Paper, Aug. 1, 1886; The Labor Leaf, December 8, 1886.

71. John Swinton's Paper, April 18, 1886.

Manchester, New Hampshire, operated a coffee house with a large reading room attached.[72] Local Assembly 9357 of Sandy Hill, New York, reported in May, 1889, that after going through a crisis, conditions had improved, the membership having established a library and reading room.[73] The Eureka Assembly 8133 of Portland, Oregon, opened a free reading room.[74]

A leading educational feature of the Knights' program was the presentation of lectures. On May 10, 1887, almost 3,000 people attended a lecture delivered by Terence V. Powderly in Denver, Colorado.[75] Ralph Beaumont, General Lecturer of the Knights of Labor addressed a crowd of almost 2,000 workmen in Boston in October, 1888.[76] A free lecture presented by John O'Keefe in Atlantic City, Virginia, in September, 1888, attracted a large, enthusiastic and attentive audience.[77] In addition to the individual lectures and the lecture series sponsored by local assemblies, the national organization conducted a lecture bureau which assigned leading figures in the Order to speak on key issues at the request of affiliates.

The Knights also conducted schools. For example, a school of science was established in Washington early in 1887.[78] The Labor Leaf of January 11

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72. The Labor Leader, February 17, 1887.

73. The Journal of United Labor, May 16, 1889, p. 2844.

74. The Labor Leaf, October 20, 1886.

75. John Swinton's Paper, May 22, 1887.

76. The Labor Leader, October 6, 1888.

77. The Journal of United Labor, September 13, 1888, p. 2699.

78. The Labor Leaf, January 5, 1887.

1887, announced that the Knights in Penacock, New Hampshire, were establishing an evening school for members in order to provide free instruction in penmanship, letter writing and commercial arithmetic.[79]

However, the most interesting facet of the educational program of the Order was an idea that was presented long after the demise of the Knights as a major reform organization. The proposal was included in the Annual Report of the General-Secretary Treasurer issued in 1899. He suggested the establishment of a school of civics. The plan was based ontthe premise that man must develop his intellect in order to achieve the great objective of human endeavor--the attainment of the highest degree of human happiness. The institute would provide, according to Secretary-Treasurer Hayes, a three year course in the fields of sociology, political economy and civics. A post graduate program was contemplated for those individuals who desired to become organizers. The Committee on the State of the Order heartily recommended the adoption of the plan to establish the school of civics. However, there does not appear to be any record of the implementation of the Report of the Secretary-Treasurer.[80]

The educational program of the Knights of Labor made a contribution to the expansion of educational opportunity during the late nineteenth century. It offered adults an apparatus for continuing education on a formal and informal basis. The Knights published an official newspaper, established labor halls and provided reading rooms and libraries. Their schools widened intellectual horizons, their lectures attracted large audiences, and their social activities provided an opportunity for relaxation and companionship. By providing entertainment and enlightenment the social and educational programs of the Knights of Labor met basic human needs often left unsatisfied by other institutions.

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79. Ibid., January 19, 1887.

80. Proceedings, 1899, pp. 24-25, 31-50, 75.

Chapter III

Child and Female Labor

Children and women faced special and difficult problems as members of the labor force which often resulted in their employment at low wages, for long hours and in substandard physical surroundings. Women turned to unionization for remedial action during the 1840's and 1860's. However, abuses remained and in the 1880's thousands of women joined the Knights of Labor. The Knights welcomed them and supported their demands for equal pay for equal work and improved working conditions. In the child labor field the Order actively campaigned for improved educational opportunities and the abolition of child labor.

The working conditions which led women to organize during the early years of the century contributed to feminine interest in the opportunities offered by the Knights. The number of women in the labor force increased steadily during the early nineteenth century. Women unionists made their appearance during the first period of significant development of American unionism, 1825-1837. However, female unionization achieved significance only after the depression of 1837 as the competition of cheap western agricultural products wiped out many New England farmers and created a permanent female factory population dependent on their wages for survival. In the 1840's female operatives in textile mills rebelled against low wages, long hours, store-order wage-payments, and a speed-up system. Sarah Bagley organized the Female Labor Reform Association of Lowell to fight for a ten-hour day and similar associations appeared in other New England towns. However, the legislation which resulted from this agitation proved ineffective.[1]

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1. Rayback, History of American Labor, pp. 93-94.

The Civil War forced many additional women into the labor market and many of them remained at work when their men failed to return or came back crippled. This situation pleased employers because these women were willing to work long hours for low wages. In spite of this situation, women in a number of occupations including laundry workers, typographical workers, and shoe workers, organized trade unions. Laundresses, led by Kate Mullaney established an effective, but ephemeral, union in Troy, New York, during the middle 1860's. However, the union collapsed after the loss of a crucial strike in 1869. Typographical workers made some gains during the late 1860's including admission of women into the International Typographical Union on an equal footing with men. The Daughters of St. Crispin, a shoe workers unit, was the only women's trade union of that period with a national organization. While the union conducted some successful strikes, it declined during the depression of 1873 and never fully recovered. However, many members later carried a knowledge of unionism with them into the ranks of the Knights of Labor. The National Labor Union advocated equal pay for equal work and the eight-hour day for women, but remained suspicious of the objectives of the women's rights movement. Their policies were frustrated by the refusal of most national trade unions to admit women. Therefore, women remained largely unorganized.[2]

In spite of these sporadic attempts at effective unionization, adverse working and housing conditions continued to afflict women during the last decades of the century. The experiences of a few working women may indicate some of the factors responsible for the massive female affiliation with

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2. Grob, Workers and Utopia, pp. 25-26.

the Order. Rebecca, a New York City factory girl, wrote a series of letters to the editor of John Swinton's Paper concerning her plight and that of her fellow employees. These letters constitute a moving and incisive exploration of the subject. She indicated that listlessness caused by resignation to a daily life of drudgery plagued working girls. However, Rebecca lacked an alternative because of her opposition to marrying a young man of her class and then keeping house for five or six children on the fourth floor of a dirty tenement. She worked at a sewing machine, in a ladies underclothing plant, from eight until six for a salary of five dollars a week. Rebecca concluded her letter with the plaintive question on behalf of herself and her sister "how do we live on $5 a week with good girlish appetites for nice things, and good girlish fondness for nice clothes and ornaments and good girlish liking for dances, excursions, and holidays--how do we get along"?[3]

Her next epistle informed the editor that dull business had caused a reduction in the work force at her place of employment from a peak figure of one hundred to thirty. Rebecca remarked that almost all of the employees were good workers and that they depended on their wages for subsistence. However, the employer treated them like dogs and used the terms "liar," "dirty hussy," and "lazy good-for-nothing" in reference to them. Although he compelled them to start work punctually, he delayed ringing the bell in the evening in order to steal a few minutes. Rebecca wrote that she had been "laid off" two days of each week during December, 1885, and, in addition, had not worked on holidays.[4]

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3. John Swinton's Paper, November 29, 1885.

4. Ibid., January 3, 1886.

The information that she had joined the ranks of the unemployed highlighted the news contained in her next letter. This development forced Rebecca and her sister to obtain employment as apron makers. The girls earned a total of three dollars and sixty cents a week, although they worked until ten o'clock.[5] After a month's absence Rebecca returned to her initial job. Employer indignities continued to oppress the operatives. He refused to greet them when he met them on the street. Not only did the working area lack adequate heating, but the employer prohibited the girls from warming themselves in the hall room during the lunch period. Furthermore, they received scoldings if they looked up from their work.[6]

Rebecca concluded her series of letters to the editor with a discussion of the means of ameliorating the conditions that she had described in her previous correspondence. She stressed the necessity of organizing working girls into trade unions in order to eliminate injustice, caprice, and humiliation and introduce a system based on fair wages and decent treatment. The impulse for organization, Rebecca pointed out, must come from outside because the girls lacked the time necessary for effective organizational activity.[7] The next issue of John Swinton's Paper contained a letter from a reader who advised Rebecca to join the Knights of Labor.[8]

The experiences of girls in other parts of the country confirmed the observations of Rebecca. The common element which distinguished employed women

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5. Ibid., January 24, 1886.

6. Ibid., February 28, 1886.

7. Ibid., April 4, 1886.

8. Ibid., April 11, 1886.

"was the ability to perform a simple, repetitive task at sustained high speed."[9] For example, the work performed by Mrs. John Van Vorst consisted of fitting corks into pickle jars and loading the jars. She received seventy cents for fitting thirteen hundred corks and loading four thousand jars of pickles. This strenuous activity caused an ache in every bone and joint of her body and, thereby, compelled her to miss two days of work.[10]

Dorothy Richardson reported that she became very tired as the hours dragged on during her first day of work at the paper box factory. "The awful noise and confusion, the foul smell of glue, and the agony of breaking ankles and blistered hands seemed almost unendurable."[11] An inferno of sound greeted her as she applied for work at an underwear factory. She saw rows of girls with their eyes concentrated "upon the flying and endless strip of white that raced through a pair of hands to feed itself into the insatiable maw of the electric sewing maching."[12] Dorothy Richardson earned a starting salary of three and a half dollars a week and received four dollars after acquiring some experience as a shaker at the Pearl Laundry. Her efforts to stem the avalanche of clothing that fell upon her caused excruciating pain. The heat emanating from the engine-room directly beneath the work area combined

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9. Robert W. Smuts, Women and Work in America (New York, 1959), p. 74.

10. Mrs. John Van Vorst and Marie Van Vorst, The Woman Who Toils, (New York, 1903), p. 27.

11. Dorothy Richardson, The Long Day (New York, 1905), p. 71.

12. Ibid., p. 204.

with the humidity of their steam-filled room drove the employees "to a state of half-dress before the noon-hour arrived." During the afternoon the girls suffered from "feet parboiled to a blister on the burning floors" as well as the aching backs, arms, and legs caused by the strenuous activity of the morning hours.[13]

Marie Van Vorst, who worked in Lynn, Massachusetts, making shoes, wrote that by ten o'clock in the morning she already felt tired and by three-thirty "her fingers had grown wooden with fatigue, glue-pot and folding-line, board, hammer and awl had grown indistinct. It was hard to continue. The air stifled. Odors conspired together. Oil, leather, glue (oh, that-to-heaven-smelling glue!) tobacco, smoke, humanity."[14] Mrs. John Van Vorst, her sister, worked at a box and label factory in Chicago. She earned three dollars a week for a working day which lasted from seven until six during the week and until one thirty on Saturday. She described the environment as one in which "A fine rain of bronze dust sifts itself into the hair and clothes of the girls at our end of the room. . ." and where "the sweet, stifling smell of printer's ink and cheap paper" permeated the room.[15]

Employers rarely provided the safety devices required to prevent mechanical presses, rollers, or cutting devices from injuring the fingers and hands of their employees.[16] Dorothy Richardson wrote that a worker's hand at

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13. Ibid., pp. 240, 243, 246.

14. Van Vorst, The Woman who Toils, p. 201.

15. Ibid., p. 137.

16. Smuts, Women and Work, p. 78.

the Pearl Laundry went into the rollers because she was tired.[17] In some industries special hazards confronted employees. Artificial flower makers developed horny, spade-fingered hands from shaping the flowers and shoe workers had to use a substance "which stained the hands beyond cleansing, rotted the skin, and ate away the fingernails."[18]

The working girl often found the friendship and sympathy that she desired in her fellow workers, but seldom from her employer.[19] Work rules and thunderous noise inhibited conversation among employees during working hours. After work the girls wanted to engage in some activity which would "make them forget the hard facts of their daily lives."[20] Dorothy Richardson noted that her fellow employees at the box making factory spent more time discussing the heroes of story-books than steady fellows.[21] Marie Van Vorst reported that southern mill-hands craved amusement, relaxation and distraction.[22] In Perry, a New York mill town, the desire for friendship and entertainment manifested itself in the organization of Sunday gatherings highlighted by the popular box social.[23]

The life of the average factory girl in the late nineteenth century was difficult.[24] She earned between five and six dollars for a sixty-hour week. Moreover, she often worked under terrible conditions: smells, noise, heat, humidity.[25] Most female workers lacked effective restraints on the actions of

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17. Richardson, Long Day, p. 234.

18. Smuts, Women and Work, p. 77.

19. Richardson, Long Day, p. 210; Van Vorst, The Woman Who Toils, p. 90.

20. Report of the Senate Committee on Labor, vol. 2, p. 614.

21. Richardson, Long Day, p. 73.

22. Van Vorst, The Woman Who Toils, p. 268.

23. Ibid., pp. 85-86.

24. Fourth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor, 1888, p. 68.

25. Smuts, Women and Work, p. 75.

their employers. Requirements that employees be searched to prevent theft of the company's products, the necessity of scrubbing the factory floor and the failure of employers to greet their employees on the street illustrated the low esteem in which employers held working women.[26] Mrs. John Van Vorst cogently and concisely summarized the conditions which confronted most factory girls:

> It is impossible for the imagination to sustain for more than a moment at a time the terrible fatigue which a new hand like myself is obliged to endure day after day; the disgust at foul smells, the revulsion at miserable food soaked in grease, the misery of straw mattresses, a sheetless bed with blankets whose arid smell is stifling. The mind cannot grasp what it means to be frantic with pain in the shoulders and back before nine in the morning, and watch the clock creep around to six before one has a right to drop into the chair that stood near one all day long. 27

The subject of women workers presented a difficult problem for the Order. The constitution adopted in 1878 included the first major statement of the Knights on the subject. The relevant plank contained a provision that the organization would endeavor "To secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work."[28] In spite of this stand, the Order moved cautiously in the area of organization of women workers. In September, 1879, Philip van Patten introduced a resolution at the General Assembly to admit women. Although the committee submitted a favorable report, the resolution was tabled until the next meeting of the General Assembly when it failed to receivedthe two-thirds approval

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26. Report of the Senate Committee on Labor, vol. 1, p. 852; Van Vorst, The Woman Who Toils, pp. 33-34; John Swinton's Paper, January 3, February 28, 1886; Smuts, Women and Work, pp. 85, 88.

27. Van Vorst, The Woman Who Toils, p. 159.

28. Proceedings, January, 1878, p. 29; Powderly, Thirty Years, p. 245.

necessary for passage.[29]

The 1880 convention adopted a resolution to admit women as members and established a committee to prepare a ritual and regulations.[30] However, the committee failed to issue a report. The admission of women into the Knights of Labor began in September, 1881, with the organization of Garfield Local Assembly 1684 of Philadelphia, the first local composed entirely of women.[31] The Griffiths' resolution adopted by the convention in 1882 officially confirmed the policy of admitting women.[32]

Female participation, thereafter, increased rapidly as additional women's locals were formed, membership mounted and women served in official capacities. They occupied major posts at the local and district levels with Mrs. George Rodgers, Master Workman of District Assembly 24 in Chicago, achieving the highest office held by a woman.[33] The participation of women reached its peak in 1886 when membership may have reached fifty thousand, and sixteen delegates attended the General Assembly.[34]

The significance of female participation led the Order to make special provisions for dealing with their problems. For example, the 1886 convention

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29. Proceedings, 1879, p. 131.

30. Ibid., 1880, p. 226.

31. John B. Andrews and W.D.P. Bliss, History of Women in Trade Unions, 61st Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Document 645, vol. X (Washington, D.C., 1911), p. 114.

32. Proceedings, 1882, p. 347.

33. Andrews and Bliss, Women in Trade Unions, p. 114; The Labor Leaf, September 1, 1886.

34. Andrews and Bliss, Women in Trade Unions, pp. 17, 128-131.

established a permanent organization for the committee on women's work and appointed Leonora Barry, formerly a worker in a New York hosiery mill, as general investigator.[35] She energetically undertook the task of expanding the data available on the condition and status of women workers. She travelled throughout the country and conducted a vast correspondence in accomplishing this task.[36]

Her findings were embodied in a series of reports to the General Assembly, entitled "Report of the General Investigator." In 1887 she reported that in many places her investigations had been less thorough than she preferred because she was "obliged to refrain from going through establishments where the owners were opposed to the Order lest some of our members be victimized. . ." Mrs. Barry also made suggestions, designed to improve the organization of women workers. She requested the aid of the male workers in the organizational drive and recommended the assignment of one or more educators in each district assembly, state assembly or national trade assembly.[37] The following year she praised the Woman's Department and stated that it ". . .has done as much effective work in cheering, encouraging, educating and instructing the women of this Order in the short years of its existence as was done by the organization the whole time of women's connection

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35. Proceedings, 1886, pp. 287-288; Journal of United Labor, April 14, 1888, 2611.

36. Leonora M. Barry to Powderly, February 6, February 17, March 1, 1888. Powderly Papers (hereinafter cited as PP).

37. Proceedings, 1887, pp. 1581-1582.

with it previous to its establishment."[38]

Terence Powderly, the major leader of the Knights, supported the work of Mrs. Barry and frequently advocated improving the condition of women workers. He referred to women as "the best men in the Order."[39] In 1889 he gave a speech in Detroit in which he stated "that he thought the time had come for men to take the wage-earning woman by the hand and lift her to the plane or position on which he stood."[40] His most eloquent plea on behalf of women, however, occurred in Denver, Colorado, in 1889, when he delivered the Report of the General Master Workman. In this address he recommended that the Knights of Labor amend the Preamble of its constitution so as to include among the aims of the organization the securing of equal rights for both sexes. He closed his speech with a call to the delegates to ". . .be manly enough to demand for her the same rights that man enjoys." The General Assembly unanimously approved Powderly's recommendation.[41]

Despite the efforts of Barry and Powderly, female participation declined along with total membership during the late 1880's.[42] Mrs. Barry remarried in 1890 and shortly thereafter severed her connection with the Knights. This decision ended the last effective effort of the Order to assist

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38. Ibid., 1888, p. 14.

39. John Swinton's Paper, April 26, 1885.

40. The Advance and Labor Leaf, April 27, 1889.

41. Proceedings, 1890, P. 14; Terence Powderly, The Path I Trod (New York, 1940), pp. 387-388.

42. Leonora M. Barry to Powderly, November 15, 1887, PP.

female workers.

Before an accurate assessment of the success of the Knights of Labor in organizing and assisting women workers can be attempted some of the special difficulties.confronting the Order in this type of endeavor must be indicated. The temporary character of their vocational experience due to marriage inhibited organization. This fact also caused them to stress immediate advantages more than wage increases or other economic goals. Their lack of skills and employer opposition further undermined their bargaining position. In addition, the timidity, foolish pride, and concern with social distinctions of some women workers aggravated their condition.[43]

In spite of these obstacles the record of the Knights of Labor in aiding women workers was impressive. Their performance seems more lusterous in comparison with the achievements of the American Federation of Labor. Employment in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations, victimization by a complex system of trade union rules and regulations and a lack of concern by many national trade unions about the problem of female labor drastically restricted the participation of women in the affiliates of the Federation.[44] On the other hand, Professor Grob considers the pioneering efforts of the Knights among women workers as "a significant precedent. . .for the labor movement" while Philip Foner statessthat the Order "boldly declared that women were entitled to the same pay as men for the same work. . .and systematically

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43. Proceedings, 1889, p. 2; Andrews and Bliss, Women in Trade Unions, pp. 140-146.

44. Philip S. Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States (New York, 1964), III, 219-222, 236-237.

encouraged the organization of women on an equal footing with men."[45]

Women faced substandard working conditions and many of them turned to the Knights of Labor as the best means of dealing with their situation. During the ephemeral period of its national significance the Knights performed this task adequately, even admirably. It organized many workers and thereby gave them an opportunity to improve their conditions by collective means and to feel the joy of participating in group activities. Mrs. Leonora Barry noted some of the specific benefits of organization to laboring women. "Petty annoyances are removed, and they receive more respect and less interference while at work. Their demands are listened to and, if reasonable, they are usually granted."[46] In sum, the Knights of Labor, whatever their shortcomings in this area, deserve commendation for being "the first large labor organization to systematically encourage the admission of women to membership on an equal footing and with equal powers with men."[47]

Child workers labored under even more deplorable conditions than those experienced by their elders. The use of child labor meant that the young spent time in the factory rather than the classroom and that they deprived men of jobs. The use of child labor in the factories of Fall River, Massachusetts, had a demoralizing effect on children, especially those without parents. An operative stated "that children put in the mills at this early age often become useless when they reach their twentieth year; and the young girls from

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45. Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 56; Foner, Labor Movement, II, p. 66.

46. Reprinted in Advance and Labor Leaf, January 15, 1888.

47. Andrews and Bliss, Women in Trade Unions, p. 113.

fourteen and upwards learn more wickedness in one year than they would in five years out of the mill."[48]

The condition of children in southern mills, however, was even worse. They worked long hours in mills filled with a deafening roar, particles of flying cotton and vile odors, lack of adequate clothing, conditions in the mills and the pneumonia-producing transition from the hot mills to the cold wind of the outdoors made them an easy prey for disease.[49] Society paid a high price for the practice of child labor. Marie Van Vorst wrote that "the cotton mill child cannot develop to the normal adult working-man and woman."[50] Some children returned home at eight o'clock listless and tired. "They fall asleep at the table, on the stairs; they are carried to bed and there laid down as they are, unwashed, undressed; and the inanimate bundle of rags so lie until the mill summons them with its imperious cry before sunrise, while they are still in stupid sleep."[51]

Reform organizations condemned the practice of child labor. This system, they contended, undermined the bargaining position of adult laborers as well as stunting the normal development of the children. The constitution adopted by the Knights of Labor in 1878 at the first session of the General Assembly dealt with this issue. One plank was a demand to prohibit "the employment of children in workshops, mines and factories before attaining their

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48. Thirteenth Annual Report of Massachusetts, p. 202.

49. Van Vorst, The Woman Who Toils, pp. 289-291.

50. Ibid., p. 293.

51. Ibid., pp. 286-287.

fourteenth year."[52] The Address of the Grand Master Workman delivered by Uriah Stephens in 1879 included a suggestion that "an emphatic utterance should be formulated on the subject of. . .an entire prohibition of child labor."[53] The following year Terence Powderly, his successor as Grand Master Workman, called on the Order to destroy the system which drives the child into competition with his parents.[54] Powderly returned to this problem in the Address of the General Master Workman which he presented in 1886. He advocated a child labor law so that the child of the poor man could obtain the education necessary for him to perform satisfactorily his duties as a man and a citizen.[55]

The Knights of Labor advocated labor legislation to deal with this problem. In 1885 the Journal of United Labor, the official publication of the Order, requested the adoption of child labor laws in every state.[56] In some states, such as North Carolina, the Knights of Labor took the lead in initiating child labor bills in state legislatures.[57] From 1885 to 1889, a period of significant activity by the Knights, ten states for the first time passed measures which fixed a minimum age for the employment of children and

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52. Proceedings, January, 1878, p. 29; Powderly, Thirty Years of Labor, p. 245.

53. Proceedings, 1879, p. 103.

54. Ibid., 1880, p. 174.

55. Ibid., 1886, p. 41.

56. Journal of United Labor, March 10, 1885, p. 933.

57. Herbert J. Lahne, The Cotton Mill Worker (New York, 1944), p. 118.

six new states established a maximum limit on the number of hours which children may work.[58] The campaign of the Knights against child labor contributed to the substantial legislative gains recorded in this field after 1900.

After a period of little activity in this field during the 1890's, a revitalized movement appeared at the turn of the century as the plight of the child in the textile industry produced an aroused conscience in the South and people in the North sought to establish employment standards which would protect children. By 1917 almost all states had enacted legislation which stipulated minimum age requirements. Steps were also taken to require compulsory school attendance for the entire school session. By 1917 thirty-seven states had passed legislation prohibiting night work by children.[59]

Although the Progressive movement ushered in the first significant advances in the improvement of the condition of child labor through legislation, the Knights of Labor took an advanced position on child labor and achieved gains in this field. The Order's record in the sphere of female labor was even more impressive. The Order implemented their proclamations concerning equal rights by assisting women in obtaining an improved work situation. However, the pressing problem of Negro labor put the program of labor solidarity to an even more acute test.

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58. John R. Commons and Associates, History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932 (New York, 1935), IV, 404.

59. Ibid., 405, 410-416, 421-422.

Chapter IV

The Role of the Negro

Emancipation confronted the American labor movement with the task of developing a position on the role of the Negro in the labor force. Unions reacted indecisively until the Knights of Labor tackled this issue in the middle 1880's. Generally the Knights followed an open door policy on the question of admitting Negroes. Many Negroes joined and some of them became officers and served in other official capacities.

In many respects the Knights of Labor merely elaborated on the reform legacy bequeathed to them by their predecessors. On the Negro question, however, the Knights moved with giant, if sometimes hesitating, strides beyond the accomplishments of its ideological predecessors. Prior to the Civil War the antislavery crusade occupied the leading place on the reform agenda. However, workingmen failed to support the movement and long remained indifferent, even hostile, to the Negro. The refusal of the abolitionists to recognize the significance of labor issues combined with the fear that the abolition of Negro bondage would increase the economic competition faced by the lower class of unskilled white laborers accounted for this attitude. This viewpoint prevailed until the emergence of the Free Soil Party. Their argument that the extension of slavery presented a threat to free labor roused workingmen to espouse the cause of Negro freedom.[1]

The National Labor Union, on the other hand, faced a different dilemma. This organization, which represented the general interests of labor from 1866 to 1872, had to formulate a policy relating to the emancipated Negro.

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1. Joseph G. Rayback, "The American Workingman and the Anti-Slavery Crusade," Journal of Economic History, III (November, 1943), 152, 160-163.

It responded by issuing the Address of the National Labor Congress to the Workingmen of the United States in 1867. This manifesto, prepared by a committee chaired by Andrew C. Cameron, called for the consolidation of labor based on co-operation with the Negro and a denial of discrimination due to race, nationality or religion. However, the organization evaded rather than implemented the provisions of this proposal. For example, the Committee on Negro Labor, a special body appointed at the Congress of 1868 to deal with this issue, concluded that the subject should be laid over until the next session of the Congress. This decision precipitated a heated discussion. William Sylvis, the leading figure in the organization, stated that the alternative was consolidation or antagonism. The Committee finally reported that the prevailing constitution, because of its non-discriminatory nature, obviated the necessity of reporting on the subject of Negro labor. The issue was evaded again in 1868. The National Labor Union finally accepted a compromise involving cooperation at the national level and separate organization at the local level. In short, in spite of the idealistic pronouncements of the National Labor Union the Negro remained outside the labor movement and stayed there until the 1880's.[2]

A decision of the Grand Master Workman in 1879 marked the first step in the organization of Negroes by the Knights of Labor. He stated "The (outside) color of a candidate shall not debar him from admission, rather let the coloring of his mind and heart be the test."[3] In 1880 the Journal of United Labor reaffirmed this position and, in addition, indicated that several

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2. Gerald Grob, "Organized Labor and the Negro Worker 1865-1900," Labor History I, (Spring, 1960), 165-166; Commons, Documentary History, IX, 157-160, 185-188.

3. Journal of United Labor, May 15, 1880, p. 9.

assemblies composed exclusively of Negroes had been established and many other assemblies included Negro members. These individuals demonstrated unexcelled fidelity to their obligations, strict attendance at all meetings, prompt payment of dues and good conduct.[4]

Articles in John Swinton's Paper in 1885 indicated the strides being made in the area of Negro participation: the establishment of seven assemblies by Negroes in Richmond, the organization of a Negro district assembly, and the existence of hundreds of colored assemblies in the South.[5] During the next two years Negro participation reached its peak. However, the lack of complete records makes it impossible to accurately determine the number of Negro members. John W. Hayes, a leading Knight, estimated Negro membership in 1886 as 60,000.[6] The New York Sun considered 90,000 to 95,000 a conservative estimate while the Weekly Pelican, a New Orleans Negro newspaper, estimated total Negro membership at 90,000 during 1887.[7] Although most Negro assemblies were located in the southern and border states, almost every industrial area of the nation was represented. For example, a colored assembly was formed in Kansas City, Kansas during 1885. The Knights also absorbed independent Negro unions such as the Negro Teamsters Union of Louisville.

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4. Ibid., August 15, 1880, p. 49.

5. John Swinton's Paper, April 12, 1885.

6. Quoted in the Washington Bee, July 2, 1887, Sterling D. Sperb and Abram L. Harris, The Black Worker (New York, 1931), p. 42.

7. Quoted in the Washington Bee, July 2, 1887; Sidney Kessler, "The Negro in Labor Strikes," Midwest Journal, VI (Summer, 1954), 17.

Laborers in Camden, New Jersey, and boot and shoe cutters in Marblehead, Massachusetts formed locals.[8] Furthermore, Negroes established assemblies in such diverse areas as Knoxville, Houston, Petersburg, Virginia and Carroll, Maryland.[9]

Office holding as well as membership illustrates the role of the Negro in the Knights of Labor. C.F. Johnson was a recording secretary and financial secretary of a Newburgh, New York local, J.B. Hart served as a delegate to District Assembly 24 of Chicago for three years, and David H. Black was a member of the executive board of District Assembly 78 of Ft. Worth, Texas.[10] Moreover, half the delegates at the meeting of the State Assembly in North Carolina were colored, a Mrs. Anthony was chosen as a delegate to District Assembly 1, and a Negro informed John Swinton's Paper that he had been elected Worthy Treasurer of his assembly for the third time.[11]

Negroes also participated in the programs sponsored by the Knights. The first annual picnic of Barbers Assembly No. 4032, which was held during July, 1886, drew a large crowd.[12] The Washington Bee reported that the Knights demonstration held on November 2, 1887, was the largest that ever took place in the city.[13] Tarrant Assembly 4408, of Fort Worth held an entertainment and ball during November, 1885, which John Swinton's Paper characterized as "a very merry affair."[14] Many Negroes participated in the mass meeting held by the

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8. John Swinton's Paper, November 8, 1885; Sidney Kessler, "The Negro in the Knights of Labor," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, New York, N.Y., 1950, p. 20.

9. John Swinton's Paper, February 14, May 16, July 11, 1886.

10. Kessler, "Negro in the Knights of Labor," pp. 121-125.

11. Labor Leader, February 11, 1888; New York Freeman, November 18, 1886; John Swinton's Paper, January 2, 1887.

12. Washington Bee, July 24, 1886.

13. Ibid., November 7, 1887.

14. John Swinton's Paper, November 8, 1885.

Knights of Labor in Baltimore on March 15, 1886.[15] More than six thousand Negroes and whites marched in behalf of their demand for an eight-hour day in Louisville in 1886.[16] A labor demonstration sponsored by the Knights in Birmingham, Alabama, included more than five thousand Negro and white marchers.[17] Twenty-five thousand people participated in the Labor Day parade held in Baltimore in 1886. Many assemblies marched carrying the implements of their craft or examples of their vocational efforts. "Colored men were well mixed in and through the procession. In some instances you would see an assembly composed entirely of colored Knights; another assembly would be perhaps half colored, and in some instances one solitary colored individual would be marching with any number of white trades-brothers."[18]

Negroes engaged in a number of the co-operative enterprises established by the Knights of Labor. Lack of records preclude a full presentation of this subject. However, some information is available and a few examples may be presented. Most of these enterprises used the first floor of the union hall as the site of the co-operative store. Negroes established co-operative stores in Knightsville, Alabama, and Helema, Arkansas. The Birmingham Negro American referred to the store in Selema, Alabama, as "one of the neatest and best conducted family grocery stores in that city."

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15. New York Freeman, March 20, 1886.

16. Kessler, "Negro in the Knights of Labor," p. 44.

17. Foner, Labor Movement, II, 70.

18. New York Freeman, September 11, 1886; John Swinton's Paper, September 19, 1886.

However, a lack of capital and the poverty of many members usually inhibited successful operation of co-operative enterprises.[19]

Although the general officers of the Order condoned the use of strikes "only as a last resort," the rank-and-file, white and Negro, engaged in many strikes, particularly during the mid 1880's. In 1882 Negro railroad workers at Williamsport, Pennsylvania, joined Italian immigrants in a strike against the Jersey Shore and Pine Creek Railroad and won a fifteen cent a day wage increase, which increased their daily wage to $1.50. More than 3,000 Negro tobacco workers formed the Lynchburg Labor Association at Lynchburg, Virginia, and struck for higher wages. The strike, which lasted from March 26 to April 11, 1883, resulted in male workers winning a wage increase which brought their daily wage to a $1.18 and female workers reaching the forty-five cent level. Furthermore, the workers won a reduction of their work week from seventy-two to sixty hours.[20] Negroes joined whites in the unsuccessful Southwestern strike against Jay Gould in 1886. Negro railroad workers testified before a congressional investigating committee concerning their grievances. They stated that foreman used insulting language in conversing with Negroes, threats had been made to discharge Negro workers, and they received extremely low wages. The failure of the railroad to pay a living wage was cited as the primary cause of the strike.[21]

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19. Kessler, "Negro in the Knights of Labor," pp. 83-84; Journal of United Labor, March 31, 1888, p. 2602.

20. Kessler, "Negro in Labor Strikes," 18.

21. Ibid., 22-23.

However, the first strike conducted by the Knights in which Negroes constituted a majority of the participants occurred in Pulaski County, Arkansas during July, 1886. Cotton plantation workers unsuccessfully demanded increased wages. In spite of incessant planter demands, the Governor refused to dispatch the militia unless strikers provoked violence. The local sheriff, however, assembled a posse to deal with the situation. During this episode at least two Negroes were murdered.[22]

The most significant strike occurred in the sugar district of Louisiana in November, 1887. One scholar characterized this strike as "one of the more significant strikes of the decade" and "the epitome of all Negro strikes for this decade."[23] Prior to the appearance of the Knights of Labor, the demand for higher wages caused strikes. In November, 1886, 1,000 laborers walked off the Fairview Plantation near New Orleans in order to get a fifty per cent wage increase in the first strike held under the sponsorship of the Order. The employers formed a planters' association which imported strikebreakers and drove Negro Knights from their residences on the plantations. Conditions deteriorated and tension mounted.

The combination of these factors resulted in the great strike of November, 1887. The workers' major grievances were an average wage of sixty-five

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22. Ibid., 23-24; Kessler, "Negro in the Knights of Labor," pp. 88-90; New York Freeman, July 17, 1886.

23. Kessler, "Negro in Labor Strikes," 20, 25.
Ibid., 25-34; Kessler, "Negro in the Knights of Labor," pp. 90-106; Journal of United Labor, December 3, 1887, p. 2534.

of the militia, 300 residents, opposed to the strikers, formed a local military unit in Thibodaux using reports of shootings as a pretext. The planters finally agreed to pay one dollar a day with board and fifty cents for night watch. However, the laborers rejected the agreement, because the planters refused to recognize the Knights as a bargaining agent.

The militia withdrew leaving the town under the control of white armed "irregulars." The whites unsuccessfully attempted to provoke a disturbance with Negroes. The shooting of two white "irregulars" --newspaper reports disagree about the assignment of guilt--served as the pretext used by armed whites for an attack on the Negro settlement in which many Negroes were killed. Simultaneously, George and Henry Cox, the Negro strike leaders imprisoned at the beginning of the strike, were removed from their cells and lynched by a white mob. Local white citizens remained armed although the militia returned.[24] The strike was successful on only a few plantations.

Strong local opposition and limited national union assistance accounted for the result. The pro-planter Times-Democrat spread the fear of unemployment and the dogma of white supremacy among the workers. Hardship forced the strikers to return to work as no national union funds were available to finance the strike. Lynching, intimidation and violence against workers undermined the morale of the strikers. Finally, the national organization failed to mobilize national sentiment in opposition to the planter's actions. Several months after the Pattersonville and Thibodaux incidents Negroes began to make plans to emigrate from Louisiana.[25]

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24. Kessler, "Negro in Labor Strikes," 32.

25. Ibid., 25-34; Kessler, "Negro in the Knights of Labor," pp. 90-106; Journal of United Labor, December 3, 1887, p. 2534.

The enormity of the difficulties encountered by the Knights of Labor in organizing Negroes enhances the credit which the organization deserves for the success of its efforts. Northern employers used blacklists, lockouts, iron clad contracts and Pinkertons to inhibit Negro unionization. In the South, however, employers added some special sectional weapons to the aforementioned arsenal. Direct intimidation was utilized against a Negro in Milton, Florida. A.W. Johnson, a prominent Negro member of the Knights, conducted a successful local business with the assistance of the patronage provided by the members of the Order. As his success became evident he was ordered to leave town."Thinking that he was a free man and had a right to live wherever he chose, he disobeyed this order and was shot dead in his own establishment."[26]

However, South Carolina displayed the greatest bitterness toward Negro members and the men who tried to organize them. The white leaders of the state used every weapon of suppression. In December, 1886, the South Carolina legislature appropriated funds for the maintenance of a militia designed to suppress riots. Furthermore, the South Carolina Senate passed a bill which extended the provisions of the conspiracy statute by making interference between employer and employee in any contract, verbal or written, an offense punishable by fine and imprisonment. The Negro press reacted immediately and forcefully. For example, the New York Freeman stated that "The law virtually reduces the laborers of S.C. to the condition of slaves." Subsequently the newspaper reported that "The Knights of Labor at Louisville are denouncing the actions of the Democratic Legislature in South Carolina."

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26. New York Freeman, October 8, 1887.

Although the bill was placed at the foot of the House calendar and then killed in the Judiciary Committee of the House due to pressure from members of the Knights of Labor throughout the nation, its submission led to the migration of Negroes from South Carolina.[27]

These conditions, which indicated the widespread hostility of southerners to the organization of Negroes, forced the Order to recruit secretly and even under other names. H.F. Hoover, a white Knights of Labor organizer, traveled through the upper part of South Carolina organizing Negroes. He recruited Negroes into the Co-operative Workers of America. This organization sought to dignify and elevate labor, improve conditions for labor and obtain for workers a just share of wealth that they created. Hoover went to Georgia during the winter of 1886 to continue his organizational efforts. He was fatally shot in Warrenton, Georgia, on May 20, 1887, at the conclusion of a discussion of labor topics before an audience composed predominately of Negro workers.[28] Local Assembly 2002 of Warrenton, Georgia, responded to this incident by passing a resolution which concluded with the statement "That the Assembly denounces the shooting of Hoover as a case of capitalistic conspiracy against Labor; and that the General Executive Board be asked to consider the matter and take proper action." At the Minneapolis Convention held in October, 1887 the Assembly requested the General Executive Board to take appropriate action. The General Executive Board sent the request to the district assembly for investigation and report.[29]

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27. Ibid., December 25, 1886, January 1, 1887; Washington Bee, December 25, 1886; Labor Leaf, December 22, 1886; Labor Enquirer, January 1, 1887.

28. New York Freeman, July 9, 1887; Labor Enquirer, May 28, 1887; Sidney Kessler, "The Organization of Negroes in the Knights of Labor," Journal of Negro History, XXXVII, (July, 1952); Labor Enquirer, May 28, 1887.

29. John Swinton's Paper, June 19, 1887; Proceedings, 1887, p. 1283.

The Advance and Labor Leaf of Detroit editorialized in July, 1887 that Hoover had been shot like a dog by the best citizens of South Carolina because he organized Negro and white laborers and the general officers had taken no action. The editorial advised them to send as many organizers as possible into the region and to get protection from the federal government and the Order at large, if necessary.[30]

The major test of the racial solidarity concept of the Knights of Labor occurred at the Richmond Convention of October, 1886. This episode concerned Frank J. Ferrell, the outstanding Negro leader in the Order. Ferrell, who served as a delegate from District Assembly 49 of New York, was described in a short biographical sketch in the Advance and Labor Leaf as fairly well read, a good speaker and an excellent parliamentarian.[31]

An officer of District Assembly 49 went to Richmond a few months before the convention to arrange hotel accommodations for the sixty-member delegation which included one Negro, Ferrell. Colonel Murphy, the hotel owner, cancelled the reservation when he discovered that one of his guests would be a Negro. He offered to provide quarters for Negro delegates at a Negro hotel. However, District Assembly 49 unanimously resolved that the delegation would not accept hotel accommodations at any place which excluded delegates because of color, creed, or nationality. The delegation eventually engaged accommodations with several Negro families.

Ferrell became the first Negro to occupy an orchestra seat in a Richmond theatre when the delegates of District Assembly 49 attended a performance of Hamlet at the Mozart Academy. A rumor spread that the group

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30. Labor Enquirer, August 13, 1887; Foner, Labor Movement, II, pp. 161-162; Kessler, "Negro in the Knights of Labor," p. 34.

31. Advance and Labor Leaf, February 19, 1887.

would see another play the following evening. With the approval of Mayor Carrington, officials decided to close the curtain if Ferrell appeared at the theatre. The Knights of Labor, a Chicago newspaper, reported that the mayor had asked Powderly to request Ferrell not to attend the performance so that the theatre could remain open. When the delegates learned about this request, they refused to attend the theatre and persuaded many others not to go.[32]

Powderly became a central figure in this incident when Master Workman Quinn of District Assembly 49 informed him about the episode involving the hotel accommodations and asked Powderly to permit Ferrell to introduce Governor Fitzhugh Lee of Virginia to the General Assembly. Powderly opposed this suggestion because he did not think it was courteous to defy a custom. Instead he proposed an arrangement according to which he would introduce Governor Lee and Ferrell would introduce him. All parties accepted this recommendation.

Ferrell's introduction referred to Powderly as a man without racial prejudice. Powderly complimented District Assembly 49 for upholding the principles of the Order in refusing to use segregated hotel facilities. The Richmond Convention also dealt with the Negro question in its official capacity. The General Assembly informed District Assembly 41 of Maryland of the advisability of admitting Negro boys as apprentices in the mechanical department.[33]

The Richmond public and the southern press reacted adversely to the actions of Powderly and District Assembly 49 at the Richmond Convention.

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32. Knights of Labor, October 16, 1886; Kessler, "Negro in the Knights of Labor," 62-63; Foner, Labor Movement, II, 71-72.

33. Proceedings, 1886, pp. 7-8, 12, 194, 274; New York Freeman, October 9, 1886; Washington Bee, October 23, 1886; Powderly, Thirty Years, pp. 651-655.

Powderly replied to their criticism in a statement published in the Richmond Dispatch on October 12, 1886. This letter indicated that his sole object in selecting a colored man to introduce him was to encourage and to help uplift Negroes from mental slavery. Powderly stated that he did not want to interfere with the pattern of social relations which existed between the races. However, he insisted on the equality of American citizenship, "in the field of labor and American citizenship we recognize no line of race, creed, politics, or color."[34]

Praise, as well as condemnation, greeted the actions of Powderly and District Assembly 49. The Library Society, connected with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, congratulated District Assembly 49 and Powderly for their stand on the Ferrell issue.[35] Adrian Assembly Number 5631, passed a resolution which endorsed the decision of District Assembly 49 to refuse accommodations at a hotel which would not accept the Negro member of the delegation. The Assembly also requested the General Assembly to take action designed to place colored workingmen in a position of social and legal equality with other wage workers. W. Calvin Chase of the Washington Bee sent a congratulatory telegram to Powderly.[36]

The issue of the New York Freeman published on October 16, 1886, contained a cross section of the editorial opinion of the Negro press in regard to the Knights of Labor. The Wilmington (North Carolina) Chronicle advised every colored man to treat the Order with greater respect and

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34. Powderly, Thirty Years, pp. 656-659.

35. Proceedings, 1886, p. 32.

36. Labor Leaf, October 13, 1886; Washington Bee, October 16, 1886.

consideration. The Salisbury (North Carolina) Star of Zion observed that in spite of any denunciation that may be uttered against the Order it was doing more than any organization in existence to recognize the equality of manhood in all races. The New Orleans Standard praised District Assembly 49 and General Master Workman Powderly for their actions and suggested that the Order insist that its component units accept Negro members. In the next issue the New York Freeman editorialized in support of the position adopted by District Assembly 49. However, the newspaper criticized Powderly's attempt to soften and gloss over the matter in deference to the southern press and white members of the Knights of Labor in the South.[37]

The attitude of Terence Powderly, the key leader of the Knights of Labor from 1879-1893, represented the general position of the national leadership during this period. His background, like that of Uriah Stephens, indicated an early sympathy toward the Negro and his problems.[38] Powderly's letters accurately indicate his essentially moderate position on the race issue. In 1879 he stated that in regard to a person's affiliation with the Knights it "makes no difference with the outside color of the man if he's white on the inside it is all we ask."[39] However, four years later while he reiterated his opinion concerning the permissibility of Negro membership he advised the organization of a Colored Assembly as the best plan for the present.[40] In 1886 Powderly repeated that the Order recognized no color bar

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37. New York Freeman, October 16, October 30, 1886.

38. Labor Leaf, March 10, 1886; Powderly, Path I Trod, p. 11.

39. Powderly to J. Stewart, October 8, 1879, TVPLB.

40. Powderly to M.W. Patill, May 15, 1883, TVPLB.

and stressed the point that the employer oppressed labor and reduced wages regardless of the color of the laborer.[41]

Powderly amplified his views in a speech at the St. Louis Farmers' Convention in 1890 at which he stated that the southern people are capable of managing the Negro and the social relations between the races. However, no man should be oppressed.[42] In short, his attitude emphasized the need for moderation and patience. Even when the national leadership issued rulings, they were often ignored. For example, in 1887 the General Executive Board received a complaint from Negro members in Harrisburg, Texas, which charged white members with discrimination. The Board then informed local assemblies to treat colored members with respect and courtesy. However, there is no record that the General Executive Board enforced the ruling.[43]

In spite of significant obstacles, external and internal, tens of thousands of Negroes, especially in the South, joined the Knights during the middle and late 1880's. The Knights, unlike the equivocal position of the National Labor Union and the apathy and even discrimination of the constituent unions of the American Federation of Labor, openly espoused the cause of the black worker and to a marked degree implemented their pronouncements.[44] In

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41. Powderly to W.H. Lynch, April 13, 1886, TVPLB.
Powderly to Thomas Curley, January 14, 1886, TVPLB.

42. Journal of the Knights of Labor, January 16, 1890.

43. Proceedings, 1887, p. 1316.

44. Grob, Workers and Utopia, pp. 22-24; 153-157; Bernard Mandel, Samuel Gompers: A Biography (Yellow Springs, Ohio, 1963), pp. 142, 145, 239; Comer Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge, 1951), p. 361.

this regard a closer parallel may be drawn between the farmers' movements and the Knights of Labor. The Colored Alliance, which originated in Texas in 1886, grew rapidly. By 1891 the organization had a membership of more than a million. The Negroes often adopted more radical programs than their white counterparts with special emphasis on the land question. The receptivity of the Colored Alliance to a third party movement aided Populist leaders in reaching an understanding with Negroes. Negroes obtained a voice in the party organization of the Populists. The denunciation of lynch law and convict lease and the call for a defense of Negro political rights by southern Populists may be the result of their influence. Although the gains recorded by the farmers' movement in the racial field were temporary, they illustrated the potentialities of unity.[45] The Knights of Labor, which organized all workers, met Negro needs more adequately than national trade unions which admitted only skilled workers. Negroes were relegated almost entirely to menial occupations and unskilled labor partially because of employer and labor union discrimination.

The Knights provided the mutual benefit and social features of national fraternal orders which performed functions which trade unions normally neglected. The organization offered Negroes the opportunity to participate in picnics, banquets and socials in addition to giving them a chance to rise to leadership status. Thus, the Knights supplemented the outlets for group participation by Negroes provided by the church and fraternal societies.[46]

The program proposed by the national leadership appealed to southern Negroes. The overwhelming percentage of Negroes remained in the South where

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45. Woodward, The New South, pp. 192, 220, 256-257.

46. August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915 (Ann Arbor, 1963), pp. 13, 15.

they usually worked as agricultural tenants and laborers. Although southern Negroes migrated during the late nineteenth century in search of better economic opportunities, the major trend was to move from one agricultural region within the South to another. Powderly's demand for land reform -- stopping the land grabbing activities of the land monopoly and giving the settler an opportunity to obtain land -- struck a responsive chord. Land symbolized wealth, independence and respectability in the South and the Negro, therefore, desired to own a farm. The Order's demand for increased educational opportunities corresponded to the desires of the Negro.[47]

Negroes also discovered that the Knights' organizers were willing, despite significant personal risk, to permit members of their race to affiliate with the Order. In addition, southern affiliates presented wage demands to the planters and resorted to strikes if no agreement could be reached. A combination of factors--broad membership base, the opportunity to participate in group activities, and a program which included basic and immediate aims--were most likely the basic reasons for Negro affiliation.

An assessment of the relation between the Knights of Labor and the Negro is difficult because of the lack of a single universally enforced organizational policy. Attitudes toward the Negro varied from strong antipathy to militant advocacy of labor solidarity with the moderate policy of Powderly constituting the middle position. The Knights succeeded in organizing many Negroes and were pledged to a policy of labor and political equality for the Negro. Negro organizations realized the contributions made by the Knights of Labor and even praised the Order. For example, the Colored National Editorial convention passed a resolution in 1886 which declared "that

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47. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

the establishment of amicable relations between the races can be best secured through the medium of such organizations as the Knights of Labor and kindred bodies that have evinced an interest in the welfare of the Afro-American, and have expressed the desire to include him in the general plea of justice for the wage-worker."[48] The New York Freeman published a comment by Jola from the Memphis Watchman concerning her impressions about a Knights of Labor meeting she had attended. She reported that all women were welcomed and seated with courtesy, a situation which made her more receptive to their enunciation of principles of justice.[49]

The stand of the Knights of Labor on the Negro issue deserves commendation. In spite of certain lapses, they compiled an enviable record of solidarity. This point is clearly indicated in the following quotation: "Although circumstances and fear of internal conflict within the Order compelled Powderly to speak and act cautiously, he and the Knights accomplished much for the Negro. For the first time in American history a great labor organization was not merely wooing him with words but in many instances admitting him to full membership."[50] In contrast to this generally enlightened position on the Negro issue was the practice of discriminating against the Chinese.[51]

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48. John Swinton's Paper, September 19, 1886; Knights of Labor, October 2, 1886; Labor Leaf, September 15, 1886; New York Freeman, January 15, 1887, Washington Bee, August 21, 1886.

49. New York Freeman, January 15, 1887.

50. Grob, "Labor and the Negro Worker," 168; Kessler, "Negro in the Knights of Labor," 143; Foner, Labor Movement, II, p. 69; Spero and Harris, Black Worker, p. 45; Paul V. Black, "The Knights of Labor and the South, 1876-1893," Southern Quarterly, I, (April, 1963), pp. 204-205; Philip Taft, Organized Labor in American History (New York, 1964), p. 665.

51. Nicholas A. Somma, "The Knights of Labor and Chinese Immigration," unpublished M.A. Thesis, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1952, pp. 12-63.

Chapter 5
Land Reform and Co-operatives

The Knights of Labor considered land reform and the establishment of co-operatives the basic instruments in establishing a better society. In stressing these reforms, the Order continued programs formulated by pioneer reform unionists. Although Terence Powderly accorded primacy to the land issue, most members sought other solutions. The vision of the co-operative commonwealth exerted greater magnetism and a number of co-operative enterprises were established.

In the first half of the nineteenth-century several individuals and organizations formulated ideas that the Knights of Labor would later accept and implement. In 1829 for example, Thomas Skidmore, a New York City reformer, advocated the equal division of land among American citizens and a few years later a committee of the National Trades' Union Convention resolved ". . .that the whole of the unseated land belong unto the people. . ."[1] However, it was George Henry Evans who forced the land issue into the national spotlight. He condemned the land monopoly and insisted that an equitable land distribution must be inaugurated based on the principles of equality, inalienability and individual ownership. Evans advocated the establishment of rural republican townships created out of public lands where the landless would receive land and retain their independence.[2] Powderly inherited the "agrarian individualism of George Henry Evans."[3]

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1. Commons, Documentary History, VI, 207.

2. Commons, Documentary History, VII, 290; Ware, The Industrial Worker, p. 181.

3. Ware, The Labor Movement, p. 324.

Other ante-bellum reformers considered co-operatives rather than land the key factor in reforming society. News of the establishment of National Workshops in France after the February Revolution of 1848 may have ignited interest in this remedy. The Cincinnati iron molders established co-operative foundries in 1848 which collapsed in 1851 as a result of a recession and underselling by competitors. Some consumers' co-operatives, especially the New England Protective Union, achieved temporary success. In the 1850's the Protective Union expanded the scale of its operations and increased its sales. The early leaders of the organization also agitated for the ten-hour day, factory education, and universal public education. However, the experiment all but disappeared prior to the Civil War because of internal dissension, inadequate capital and deteriorating economic conditions.

Communitarianism, the use of small-scale social experiments, most graphically reflects the optimism which pervaded many early nineteenth-century reform movements. During the first half of the century approximately one hundred colonies were planted in the United States. Communitarianism assumed the possibility of shaping the future by laying the desired foundations during the present. Many individuals felt duty-bound to seize this opportunity. They viewed themselves as the guardians of the interests of unborn generations and feared that speculators would be able to monopolize the public domain if reformers followed the incorrect course. Therefore, during this period of ferment many individuals tried to remake society. By the 1880's, however, the belief in the plasticity of social institutions had eroded and reformers of this era turned their attention to the development of new techniques more suitable.

to the task of altering institutions already firmly established.[4]

Henry George recognized that industrialization and urbanization had produced vast changes on the American scene. These developments promoted increasing wealth while failing to eradicate poverty. George pointed out this unsolved problem and proposed a solution. He observed that the worst pauperism and the greatest riches could be found in the oldest centers of industry. This discovery turned his attention to the distribution of wealth and he concluded the poverty of labor resulted from unjust distribution rather than natural laws regulating population or wages. The payment of rent caused poverty. George advocated levying a tax on the rise in the value of land in order to confiscate for public use revenue created by the development of society.

George became an international celebrity as he spread his lesson in economics and message of hope by means of books and speeches. This message elicited enthusiastic popular approval. He focused public attention on the theme of community welfare and dramatized the significance of the land issue.[5]

The Knights of Labor, particularly Terence Powderly, considered land a basic factor in any program to achieve a more equitable distribution of wealth. In the fifth plank of the platform adopted at the first session of the General Assembly the Order demanded: "The reserving of the public lands--

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4. Arthur C. Bestor, "Patent-Office Models of the Good Society: Some Relationships between Social Reform and Westward Expansion," American Historical Review, LVIII (April, 1953), 506-507, 515, 519, 525-526.

5. Daniel Aaron, Men of Good Hope: A Story of American Progressives (New York, 1961), pp. 63, 67-71.

the heritage of the people--for the actual settler; - not another acre for the railroads or speculators."[6]

Terence Powderly effectively dramatized this issue by incessantly speaking, writing and organizing on behalf of land reform. He established land leagues and emphasized the necessity of land reform in his voluminous correspondence. For example, in a letter to Joseph Labadie written on May 17, 1882, he stressed the importance of the land question and referred to the soil as the heritage of all men.[7] In Thirty Years of Labor 1859 to 1889 Powderly elaborated on this issue. He condemned the holding of land for speculative purposes and informed his readers that every acre which escaped its just share of the tax burden increased the load borne by owners of other land. Land speculation, unequal land taxation and bonanza farming drove people off the land and into urban areas where they competed for jobs. The best remedy, according to Powderly, was to levy a single tax on land. The rental value of property should be ascertained and taxed accordingly.[8]

In addition to frequent references to the land issue in his vast correspondence and in his published works, Powderly used the forum of the annual general assemblies to propagandize orally. For example, in his 1882 address he asserted "the main all-absorbing question of the hour is the land question."[9] The following year he warned Americans that the rapid filching of public lands was ominous because "this country was intended and should be held, for the oppressed of the earth."[10] In 1884, he declared his opposition

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6. Proceedings, January, 1878, p. 28.

7. Powderly to Joseph Labadie, May 17, 1882, TVPLB.

8. Powderly, Thirty Years, pp. 360-261, 374, 379.

9. Proceedings, 1882, p. 282; Journal of United Labor, May, 1883, p. 477.

10. Ibid., 1883, p. 406.

to speculators or foreigners getting another acre of land.[11] In the Address of the General Master Workman in 1885, Powderly presented specific suggestions for solving the land problem. He advocated terminating the privilege of aliens to own American land, limiting individual land ownership to a hundred acres or less and returning all land held for speculative purposes to the public domain.[12]

Two other letters written by Powderly demonstrate that, contrary to the prevailing interpretation, he considered land reform rather than the establishment of co-operatives as the basic means of reforming society. He wrote to President Cleveland in 1887: "The one great question of the present day is the land question. The one great, crying evil of the present day is the absorption of large tracts by aliens, cattle syndicates, and powerful corporations."[13] In a letter to the Journal of United Labor he repeated this theme. "Don't forget the LAND; encourage those who voted to take back the land that was stolen from the people."[14]

Powderly received some support within the Order for this position. For example, in 1883 a member wrote to the Journal of United Labor imploring workers to occupy the land as means of abolishing monopoly and a local assembly advised workers to purchase land.[15] Local

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11. Ibid., 1884, p. 574.

12. Ibid., 1885, p. 14.

13. Powderly, Path I Trod, p. 224.

14. Journal of United Labor, April, 1884, p. 674.

15. Ibid., September, 1883, pp. 555-556.

Assembly 1307 of Chicago passed a resolution in which the organization indicated that it viewed with alarm the tendency of the existing land laws to create a few large landowners while simultaneously subjugating a large majority of the wealth-producing people to the degrading dependence of landless tenants.[16] A local assembly from Philadelphia submitted a resolution at the meeting of the General Assembly held in Richmond in October, 1886, which proposed that Congress, in addition to granting citizens 160 acres of land assist settlers by lending them $500 to finance the costs of occupancy and land improvement.[17] However, an 1886 proposal made by Local Assembly 4074 of Coleman, Michigan, contains the clearest and most concise expression of the Knights' position on the land issue. The statement advocated expropriation by the workers of the speculators ill-gotten gains and the opening for settlement of the vast areas available for agriculture in order to aid the new farmers and diminish the supply of labor in urban areas and, thereby, increase wages.[18]

Most of the rank-and-file responded more enthusiastically to the magnetic appeal exerted on reformers by co-operatives. In the 1870's the Grange used co-operatives in order to establish direct relations between producers and consumers for the disposal and purchase of supplies. Soon after the organization of a state grange, agents for distributive co-operation usually appeared. Affiliates in the Middle West took the lead in this activity.

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16. John Swinton's Paper, April 5, 1885.

17. Proceedings, 1886, p. 189.

18. Journal of United Labor, August 10, 1886, p. 2137; Fred A. Shannon, "A Post Mortem on the Safety-Valve Theory." Agricultural History, XIX (January, 1945), 31-37.

Generally business flourished for a few years and then sales declined precipitously in the last half of the decade. Those units which followed the rules issued by the National Grange and subscribed to the Rochdale Plan enjoyed the greatest success. Granger manufacturing enterprises often failed. The general failure of the co-operatives established by the Grange may be attributed to the unsuitability of many enterprises to the co-operative methods, the premature establishment of large scale units and the incompatability of this form of business operation with American rural conditions. In spite of failure, the Grange co-operative experiment saved farmers considerable amounts of money and offered farmers an opportunity to obtain business training.[19]

The Sovereigns of Industry, a labor organization of the 1870's which influenced the Knights of Labor, also established co-operative enterprises. During the middle of the decade the movement organized a number of co-operative stores in New England. Depression and price cutting by private enterprises reduced the Sovereigns to a handful of members by 1880 although a number of stores managed to survive the debacle.[20]

The platform adopted by the Knights of Labor in 1878 included a plank which favored "The establishment of co-operative institutions, productive and distributive."[21] This program received the endorsement of Terence Powderly.

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19. Buck, The Granger Movement, pp. 238-239; 260, 267, 274-279.

20. Rayback, A History of American Labor, pp. 130-131; Florence E. Parker, The First 125 Years: A History of Distributive and Service Cooperation in the United States, 1829-1954 (Superior, Wisc., 1956), pp. 18-21.

21. Proceedings, January, 1878, p. 28.

In the Address of the Grand Master Workman of 1880, he referred to the system of co-operation as the mechanism on which the eyes of the workingmen and workingwomen of the world are fixed. He cautioned his audience that the complete fulfillment of their hopes would not be achieved during their lives. Powderly urged the convention to use the resources of the Resistance Fund for the establishment of co-operatives rather than for the support of strikes as a means of hastening the introduction of the co-operative commonwealth.[22]

At the national and local levels the Order split on the issue of the importance to be attributed to the establishment of co-operatives. The first major dispute arose over the use of the Resistance Fund. Those members who advocated the use of the funds for the purpose of establishing co-operatives eventually triumphed over those who favored its use as a strike fund. However, the abolition of the fund in 1881 left them with only the gratification of a pyrrhic victory.[23]

In July, 1883, the capital held by local assemblies totaled only $2,300. The request of Henry E. Sharpe, president of the Co-operative Board, for financial assistance in establishing a system of integral co-operation produced less than $1,000 in contributions during the first nine months of 1884.[24] Undaunted by this apathetic response, he proposed a plan in the Report of the Co-operative Board of 1884 designed to achieve a more effective program for the establishment of co-operatives. The plan called for an immediate program to organize the consumers and to produce for them. In order

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22. Ibid., 1880, pp. 171-172.

23. Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 45.

24. Proceedings, 1884, pp. 679-680.

to realize this aim, Sharpe proposed the establishment of a guild composed of the members of the Knights supporting the arrangement. According to his proposal, the guild would obtain funds through voluntary contributions. This money would be used to establish guild industries which would employ only guild members. Guild members participated in the system as consumers when they pledged to use only guild products.[25]

The issue of whether to depend on voluntary contributions or to use compulsory taxation for co-operative purposes caused dispute. Some supporters of co-operatives opposed any plan which involved compulsory contributions. Many units of the Order, including powerful District Assembly 30 of Massachusetts, registered protests.[26] All chance of a compulsory plan disappeared when the General Assembly rejected the compulsory co-operative tax and the Co-operative Board indicated it would only recognize co-operation based on a voluntary system.[27]

The national organization managed to conduct one co-operative project - the Cannelburg Coal Mine - in spite of numerous problems, most of which were financial. The Buckeye Coal Company of Cannelburg, Indiana, locked out eight members of Local Assembly 1436 during the winter of 1883 because of their membership in the Knights. These miners leased adjacent land and sank a shaft, and appealed to the General Executive Board for financial aid. Local Assembly 300, a glass workers' Assembly, responded to the subsequent request of the General Executive Board with a loan of two thousand dollars. The Board then took

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25. Ibid., pp. 603, 609-610

26. Ibid., pp. 700, 704; Journal of United Labor, August 25, 1884, p. 778.

27. Journal of United Labor, September 10, 1884, pp. 790, 802.

control of the property and incorporated itself as the Union Mining Company of Cannelburg, Indiana.[28]

The company, with a capital stock of $10,000, expected to mine, ship, and sell coal. The plan to raise funds by the sale of 2,000 debentures to individuals and companies failed. The General Executive Board therefore levied a twenty cent per member assessment in order to finance the operation of the mine. However, many assemblies requested and received exoneration from the payment of the assessment.[29]

After overcoming many obstacles the company eventually was ready to ship coal. It dispatched a request to the Ohio and Mississippi Railway for the installation of a switch to the mine. The railroad agreed, but procrastinated for almost a year and then graded for a sidetrack without laying rails. In 1886 the Board leased the mine to the Mutual Mining Company composed of members of the Order and then sold the mine for $4,000 in 1897. The failure of this experiment can be attributed to inefficient management and the failure of the railroad to build a switch to the mine.[30]

Most of the co-operative enterprises established by the Knights were conducted under the auspices of local units. The Order established co-operatives throughout the country. For example, many enterprises were established in New

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28. Proceedings, 1884, pp. 625-637.

29. Ibid., pp. 637-639; Ibid., 1885, 56-62.

30. Ibid., 1886, p. 76; Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 46; Powderly, Thirty Years, p. 461; Amos G. Warner, "Three Phases of Cooperation in the West," History of Cooperation in the United States (Baltimore, 1888), 412-413; Ware, Labor Movement, p. 331; Warner and Ware differ on the role played by the Buckeye Coal Mine and the railroad in ruining this experiment.

England. The Clinton Knights of Labor Cooperative Shoe Store established in Clinton, Massachusetts, featured a ten per cent price reduction for members in good standing. The Lynn Knights of Labor Cooperative Boat and Shoe Company produced a quality product and gained increasing patronage from members of the Knights.[31] The company hired only members of the Order.

The Middle Atlantic states included some co-operative enterprises. District Assembly 49 of New York City established the Solidarity Cigar Factory on August 1, 1886, with a capital of fifteen hundred dollars. By the following March, the company employed ten men and had an expanding business. In 1888 the Journal of United Labor referred to the Scranton Knights of Labor Co-operative Overall factory as a success.[32]

The Knights of Labor also established numerous co-operative farms in the South. One of the more significant enterprises was the National Knights of Labor Tobacco Company of Raleigh, North Carolina, incorporated on January 1, 1886, with an authorized capital of $10,000. After an extremely auspicious beginning the enterprise continued satisfactorily in spite of insufficient capital.[33] Although it faced powerful competition, the Knights of Labor Co-operative Soap Factory located in Richmond, Virginia, operated successfully during the middle and late 1880's.[34]

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31. Edward W. Bemis, "Cooperation in New England," History of Cooperation, 69-, 86-88.

32. Bemis, "Cooperation in the Middle States," History of Cooperation, 163; Journal of United Labor, June 23, 1888, p. 2651.

33. Daniel R. Randall, "Cooperation in Maryland and the South," History of Cooperation, 495-496; Frederic Meyers, "The Knights of Labor in the South," Southern Economic Journal, VI (April, 1940), 486; Journal of United Labor, August 10, 1886, p. 2150.

34. Randall, Cooperation, 500; Journal of United Labor, August 10, 1886, p. 2150.

The Knights achieved their greatest success in an experiment conducted in Minnesota. "The most remarkable success of co-operatives was found among the coopers of Minneapolis," according to Professor Richard Ely.[35] The ephemeral co-operative experiments undertaken by C.W. Curtis in 1868 and 1870 provided part of the foundation for the successful co-operative ventures which followed. The status of Minneapolis as a milling center and mecca for coopers undermined the wages of coopers by the middle 1880's and, thereby, provided a favorable climate for the establishment of a system of permanent co-operation.

The most serious initial problem was securing a market for their product. A promise by Charles Pillsbury to grant the Cooperative Barrel Manufacturing Company the contract for supplying one of the mills he controlled served as the basis for the incorporation of the firm in November, 1874. Its by-laws provided that all members must be equal shareholders and that the ordinary gains or losses of the business would be apportioned in accordance with the work accomplished by each member. The company experienced steady prosperity and in the middle 1880's had ninety members. The proceeds enabled many members to become home owners. Some smaller companies also achieved notable success. For example, the North Star Barrel Company ended its first decade of operation in 1886 with fifty-six members, many in excellent financial condition.

When conditions worsened the co-operatives clearly demonstrated their superior qualities. They maintained a high credit rating and used efficient business methods. The movement in addition to general financial success

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35. Ely, The Labor Movement, p. 188.

had an elevating moral effect on the participants. Albert Shaw evaluated this experiment in 1888 "In every aspect the cooperative flour barrel companies of Minneapolis have been successful."[36] This experiment demonstrated that co-operatives had a greater chance of being successful in fields in which labor and quality of workmanship had a more than normal significance compared with the role of capital.[37]

By the middle 1880's the Order had established more than one hundred enterprises, mostly in the fields of mining, cooperage and shoe production. Most of these businesses were located in the central and eastern states.[38] Machinists and shoemakers, members of machine-menaced occupational groups, most actively advocated the use of co-operatives. For example, the New England shoemaker demanded justice for all non-plutocratic Americans and considered producers' co-operatives as the most suitable mechanism for attaining this goal. Co-operatives, he anticipated, would be the means of establishing a society which stressed quality work, self reliance, greater occupational mobility and a higher status for his occupation.[39]

Most co-operatives lasted for a comparatively brief period. A prime cause of their brief duration was a lack of capital with the average investment being only $10,000.[40] In addition, inefficient management, internal dissension

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36. Albert Shaw, "Cooperation in the Northwest," History of Cooperation, 230.

37. Ibid., 230, 234, 238, 242.

38. Commons, History of Labour, II, 433; Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 46.

39. Commons, History of Labour, II, 430; Arthur Mann, Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), pp. 176-177.

40. Powderly to Felix Adler, January 20, 1884, TVPLB.

and injudicious borrowing at high interest rates undermined many enterprises. Another factor inhibiting success was competitor discrimination as in the operation of the Cannelburg coal mine.[41]

Co-operatives, in spite of their ultimate collapse, made significant contributions to its members. The experience developed the business education of members. The responsibilities of participation caused the workers to place more stress on hard work and saving money. Most important, however, this activity demonstrated to many workers the necessity of working collectively rather than individually to solve the problems which confronted them.

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41. Commons, History of Labour, II, pp. 437-438.

Chapter VI

The Knights of Labor and the American Reform Tradition

The founding, growth and decline of the Knights of Labor occurred against the background of a rapidly changing society. By the end of the nineteenth century the United States had become a world leader in railroad mileage, steel production and petroleum output. However, entrepreneurs appropriated most of the benefits of these advances with the assistance of the national government. Increased productivity proved no boon to most workers. They continued to labor long hours for low wages, and often lived in small, crowded, dirty tenements. This situation contributed to significant increases in the membership of the Knights of Labor during the 1880's. Some members wanted the Order to concentrate on ameliorating conditions within the framework of the capitalistic system while others agitated for a new type of society. The program of the Knights, therefore, included some features to improve the existing system and others expected to result in the inauguration of a new society. Their social and educational activities were designed to promote social integration and thereby alleviate the feeling of atomization produced by industrialization and urbanization. The Knights welcomed all members of the producing class, including Negroes and women. Some members envisaged a society, to be achieved by land reform and the establishment of co-operatives, based on a more equitable distribution of wealth, dignity for producers and termination of producer dependence on monopolists.

Some reformers of the Jacksonian Era shared these aspirations. During this era reform agitation increased. Most reformers joined President Jackson in his struggle against the Second Bank of the United States which symbolized special privilege. Although they concurred in an abhorrence of privilege, their views diverged in respect to reconstructing society.

One faction entered the struggle because it considered the Bank to be

the symbol of the impediments erected by society to block equality of economic opportunity for all citizens. Jackson supported the cause of "the real people"--planters and farmers, mechanics and laborers,--who earned stable incomes of middling proportions through lives of simplicity and stability, self-reliance and independence, economy and useful toil. Their opponents, on the other hand, engaged in primarily promotional, financial, or commercial endeavors and obtained grants of special privilege and thereby became the money power. "The real people" joined President Jackson in his crusade against the Monster Bank and agitated for an end to economic privilege which would eventually lead to a dismantling of the existing system and a restoration of the Old Republic. However, the hearts and minds of many participants in this war were torn between the simplicity, independence and wholesomeness of the pastoral republic and the lure of acquisitive capitalism as their hearts responded to the former and their minds to the latter.[1]

William Leggett, a New York City journalist of the 1830's, clearly articulated some of the basic ideas of this group. His social philosophy consisted of a compound of laissez-faire economics, natural rights philosophy and strict construction of the Constitution. The function of government, said Leggett, should be confined to the essential purposes for the preservation of the social order. He opposed special privilege and condemned the banking system for denying equal opportunity and fostering a thirst for wealth often quenched by means other than honest, patient industry. Leggett vented his

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1. Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Shaped It (New York, 1948), p. 61; Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief (Palo Alto, 1957), pp. 15-17.

greatest anger at the Second Bank of the United States, however, which he regarded as an institution denying equal rights. He demanded the establishment of a society based on equal rights which would end the political favoritism accorded the rich and give the people an equal opportunity to rise or fall by their own efforts.[2]

The internal ambivalence previously noted among "the real people" may be paralleled by a social ambivalence within the ranks of the Jacksonians in which one group espoused laissez-faire as an initial step in restoring an older order while the other used it to exploit economic opportunity.[3] The major beneficiaries of the destruction of the Monster Bank were certain bankers and a rising group of self-made men who had gained wealth in the nascent manufacturing sector. These men wanted to remove the old merchant families from their position of economic hegemony. These "new men" used the ideology of pastoralism to gain allies in this struggle. New York City bankers opposed the Second Bank of the United States because they wanted to complete the national economic dominance of New York by shifting the financial center from Chestnut Street to Wall Street. However, the removal of federal control produced a disorderly banking system and provided an environment conducive to the rise of the "robber barons" after the Civil War.[4]

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2. Meyers, Jacksonian Persuasion, pp. 149-152; Richard Hofstadter, "William Leggett: Spokesman of Jacksonian Democracy," Political Science Quarterly, LVIII (December, 1943), 585, 587-589; John J. Fox, Jr., "William Leggett: His Life, His Ideas and His Political Role," unpublished M.A. thesis, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pa., 1964, 32, 39, 41-43.

3. John W. Ward, "The Age of the Common Man," The Reconstruction of American History, John Higham (editor), (New York, 1962), p. 95.

4. Bray Hammond, Banks and Politics in America, from the Revolution to the Civil War (Princeton, 1957), pp. 740-741.

During the 1830's other groups criticized society from a different perspective. For example, some workingmen used a series of Workingmen's Parties as organs of political expression. The parties, which included many workers and artisans among the leadership, shared basic demands: higher wages, shorter hours, improved conditions, and a higher status for workers. Their programs denounced special privilege, but excluded the Jacksonian demand for the establishment of equality of economic opportunity. Instead they struggled to improve the lot of the workingman through the establishment of a tax supported school system, the abolition of imprisonment for debt and the abolition of the compulsory militia system. These ephemeral parties, in addition to serving as effective gadflies, struggled to end the alienation of workingmen from society.[5]

After the Civil War the reform movement divided into two major segments. One branch primarily represented the interests of the farmer while the other specialized in the problems of the urban worker. This dichotomy has led historians to compartmentalize their studies into agrarian movements and labor history. This approach has neglected significant areas of similarity of programs, activities and goals which place agrarian and urban worker organizations within the American reform tradition. Some of these features will be discussed here.

During the 1870's, the Patrons of Husbandry sponsored programs to aid farmers. Its founders emphasized the promotion of social intercourse and the dissemination of knowledge among the nation's farmers. In order to

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5. Edward Pessen, "Workingmen's Party Revisited," Labor History, IV (Fall, 1963), 214-216, 219-221, 225-226.

accomplish their social functions, the organization conducted periodic meetings, picnics and special events. The Grange also performed an important educational role by establishing libraries, publishing newspapers, and supporting country schools and agricultural colleges.[6]

The Populists, the most significant successors of the Grange, served as the main organ of agrarian discontent during the 1890's and demonstrated their political strength in the elections of 1892 and 1894 before fusing with the Democrats to support Bryan in 1896. The Populists formulated a comprehensive reform program in the platform adopted at Omaha in July, 1892. This document condemned the major parties for permitting the perpetuation of inequitable conditions and outlined a plan for amelioration. The Populists demanded monetary reform, a graduated income tax and government ownership of railroads, telegraphs and telephones. Their land plank condemned alien ownership and demanded that corporations return land which exceeded their actual needs. By these reforms the Populists hoped to place a larger share of the wealth in the hands of the wealth creators.

Perhaps the most interesting facet of their program was the attempt by southern Populists to enroll Negroes in an organization which had its strongest appeal among whites of the lower economic class who had strong racial prejudices. Tom Watson, the Populist leader from Georgia, told both races that the hatred which kept them apart was the foundation of the financial despotism which fleeced them of their earnings. Therefore, they must unite to defeat it.[7] Southern Populist platforms recognized the problems of the

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6. Buck, Granger Movement, PP, 280-281, 285-292.

7. Woodward, New South, p. 257; Comer Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, 1957), pp. 44-45; For Powderly's views see Powderly to W.H. Lynch, April 3, 1886, TVPLB; Powderly to Thomas Curley, January 14, 1886, TVPLB.

Negro and advocated legislation to insure Negro political rights and end lynch law and the convict-lease system--"the practice of hiring out the state's convicts to private companies as a conscript labor force."[8] Negroes served at all levels of the organizational apparatus of the party and participated in picnics, camp meetings and rallies. However, this ephemeral alliance achieved only minor gains such as jury duty for Negroes. The Populists, although willing to ally with the Negro, wanted to preserve white control of the South. The most surprising aspect of this Negro-white alliance was not its ultimate failure, but the degree of success it attained against the overwhelming odds."[9]

This brief sketch of aspects of the American reform tradition indicates the close relationship of the Knights of Labor to this movement. The Order, which has found a secure place in the annals of American labor union history, must also be placed in its proper niche within the American reform tradition. The reformers of the 1830's influenced the Knights of Labor through their anti-monopoly campaign, the stress on the producer class, and the agitation of the Workingmen's parties and the trade unions for social justice. The Knights, particularly Terence Powderly, felt the impact of the land reformers of the 1840's.[10] Moreover, the Order continued the stress on co-operatives found in the platform of the National Labor Union.[11] In addition to the well known continuity of the labor reform tradition, significant comparisons may be drawn

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8. Ginger, Age of Excess, p. 32.

9. Woodward, New South, pp. 257-258; Woodward, Jim Crow, pp. 44-46.

10. Ware, Labor Movement, p. 324.

11. Grob, Workers and Utopia, pp. 19-21.

between the programs and activities of the Knights of Labor and the major agrarian organizations of the late nineteenth-century. Both branches of the reform movement advocated admission of women and Negroes; supported government ownership of railroads and telephones, and provided social and educational program for their members.[12]

The Knights of Labor appropriated much of the ideology of the American reform tradition as well as specific programs. A segment of this tradition praised the noncommercial aspects of American life and referred to the yeoman as the ideal man and the ideal citizen who knew the joys of independence, productivity and morality.[13] However, the triumph of commercial agriculture during the period from 1815 to 1860 doomed the pastoral dream of a society based on dominance by the yeoman farmer of the great inland empire region of the Mississippi Valley.[14] Technological change failed to destroy the appeal of a middle ground between the opposing forces of nature and civilization. However, ascertaining the point of proper balance proved extremely difficult, particularly after the farmer became a producer of staple crops for distant markets and the United States entered the "take off"

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12. Proceedings, January 1878, pp. 28-29; Buck, Granger Movement, pp. 41, 280-281, 285-292; Hicks, Populist Revolt, pp. 129-132.

13. Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (New York, 1964), pp. 19-23; Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, p. 24.

14. Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, pp. 29, 38-40; Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (New York, 1959), pp. 144-145; Joseph Dorfman, "The Economic Policy of Thomas Jefferson," Political Science Quarterly, LV (March, 1940), 102-105.

stage of economic development.[15]

The American religious tradition reinforced the emphasis on individualism and self-reliance common to earlier reform movements and the pastoral ideology. American theology stressed individualism, ethics and voluntarism.[16] The Knights of Labor drew inspiration from these sources and accepted many of their tenets. However, the rising capitalistic class appropriated these concepts and used them in a blend of Calvinism, laissez-faire economics and conservative Darwinism as a system which served as an effective rationalization for their activities. The dominance of this dogma meant that no one could escape from the economic race and its verdict of success of failure. This system denounced labor organizations as "un-American" attempts to shelter the unfit.[17]

Although the Order supported individualism and self-reliance, it realized the necessity of providing members with a sense of community, status and identity denied to them in society.[18] The social and educational features of the Knights of Labor made particularly noteworthy contributions in this respect. Affiliates held dances, excursions, parades and banquets. A continuous record of social and financial success indicated membership approval.

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15. Marx, Machine in the Garden, pp. 118, 135, 139-140; Walter W. Rostow, The Stages of Economic Growth (Cambridge, England, 1962), p. 38.

16. William Lee Miller, "American Religion and American Political Attitudes," Religious Perspectives in American Culture, James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jameson (editors), (Princeton, 1961), pp. 97-98.

17. Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution (New York, 1955), pp. 223-224; Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (Boston, 1955), p. 51; Henry Steele Commanger, The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's (New Haven, 1950), p. 29.

18. Clark S. Lewis, "The Labor Philosophy of Terence Powderly," unpublished M.A. thesis, Columbia University, New York, N.Y., 1950, p. 54; The Journal of United Labor, October 25, 1884, p. 826; Frank Tannenbaum, The Philosophy of Labor (New York, 1951), pp. 10-11; Ella Rose Tambussi, "The Knights of Labor", unpublished M.A. Thesis, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass., 1942, pp. 103-106.

The Knights performed its educational function through newspapers, lecture series, libraries and reading rooms. These programs of enlightenment and entertainment partially relieved the gloom of the hard, dull lives of many members.

A related problem involved the attitude that should be adopted toward government. The influence of their adversaries prevented the Knights of Labor from obtaining reforms which required government action.[19] The President and the Congress accorded big businessmen preferential treatment and stifled reform activities.

Republicans held the presidential office during most of the late nineteenth-century. Recurrent scandals, highlighted by the Credit Mobilier episode in which the directors of the Union Pacific Railroad formed a construction company known as the Credit Mobilier in order to divert profits from the construction of the railroad to themselves, characterized this period. Most of the other administrations of this period lacked distinction. Grover Cleveland, the only Democratic president of the era, conducted the business of his office with honesty and efficiency, but his reluctance to regulate business activity prevented him from dealing with the increasing economic polarization of society. On the other hand, his intervention in the Pullman Strike, a conflict between the American Railway Union and the General Managers' Association, demonstrated his willingness to regulate labor unions. Cleveland ordered out federal troops although neither Governor Altgeld nor the Illinois Legislature had requested them in order to crush all opposition and thereby end his forebodings of what might occur.[20] Despite this action and the lack of a

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19. Journal of United Labor, March 24, 1888, p. 2598; John Swinton's Paper, October 21, 1883.

20. Samuel Yellen, American Labor Struggles (New York, 1936), pp. 119-121; Almont Lindsey, The Pullman Strike (Chicago, 1942), pp. 170-175.

positive conception of governmental activity on behalf of reform Cleveland was, in the opinion of Richard Hofstadter, "the flower of American political culture in the Gilded Age."[21]

The record of Congress also indicated their opposition to significant reform. Congress operated most effectively in granting favors such as land grants to railroads, new and higher tariffs and favorable banking legislation to big businessmen. Infrequently, as in the demands for railroad and trust regulation, public clamor compelled legislators to grant sops to the malcontents of American political society.[22] The Interstate Commerce Act and the Sherman Anti-Trust Act failed to provide effective regulation although they permitted members of Congress to pose as regulators of business to their constituents without offending the business interests.

However, the United States Supreme Court served as the major bulwark opposing the modification of society. During the late nineteenth century the courts focused their primary attention on a new issue: "whether government should control capitalism, and how much it should control it. . ."[23] The major judicial battlefield in the struggle about government regulation of business was the interpretation of the first section of the Fourteenth Amendment. This contested section provided that "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges and immunities of the citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life,

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21. Hofstadter, American Political Tradition, p. 185.

22. Thomas C. Cochran and William Miller, The Age of Enterprise: A Social History of Industrial America (New York, 1942), p. 171.

23. Robert G. McCloskey, The American Supreme Court (Chicago, 1960), p. 103.

liberty or property, without due process of law; nor deny any person within its jurisdiction of the equal protection of the laws."[24] Through interpretation of this provision the United States Supreme Court during the period from 1870 to 1895 gradually limited the power of federal and state governments to regulate business activities. Government policies and actions deprived the Knights of Labor of access to normal political channels in implementing their reform program.

The reform tradition failed to provide an answer to the question of the proper attitude to adopt toward industrialization and urbanization. The concept of the "middle ground" -- a point between the extremes of primitivism and overcivilization -- was the best general guide,[25] Implementation, however, raised many problems. The Knights wanted an economy based on co-operatively owned small and moderate sized industries and government ownership of public utilities. The Order did not favor destroying machines; they were not Luddites.[26] For example, Terence Powderly stated, at the Richmond Convention of October, 1886, that machinery must become the slave of man rather than man being subordinated to the machine.[27] In a speech delivered in Detroit in 1889 he discussed the relation of the railroad and the worker. He opposed destruction

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24. Henry Steele Commanger, editor, Documents of American History Since 1865 (New York, 1949), p. 51.

25. Marx, Machine in the Garden, pp. 23, 139-140; John W. Ward, Andrew Jackson: Symbol for An Age (New York, 1955), pp. 39-40.

26. Daniel Aaron, Men of Good Hope - A Story of American Progressives (New York, 1961), p. 235; Samuel Hays, The Response to Industrialism 1885-1914 (Chicago, 1957), p. 71; E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1963), pp. 548-549, 552.

27. John Swinton's Paper, October 10, 1886.

of the railroad and the locomotive, but advocated government management in the public interest as a substitute for monopoly operation for private gain.[28] Other examples indicate that the Knights opposed inequitable distribution of the fruits of technology rather than technological advance.[29]

The Knights also tried to find a golden mean solution to the problem of urbanization. They condemned the shattering of human relationships and the increased anonymity of urban life. In large cities workers often felt isolated from the rest of society. The pervasive impersonality often resulted in people dealing with each other as things rather than human beings. However, in the villages and small towns, still a significant aspect of the American scene, they found a milieu which retained older and more humane values. Men knew each other well and the worker had a better opportunity to seek his economic and social rights.[30] From this milieu the Knights of Labor extracted its value system.

Most previous studies have measured the organization by purely trade union standards. Based on trade union criteria such as total membership, longevity, effective strikes and success in collective bargaining the organization has received, quite correctly, much criticism. The Knights failed to make noteworthy contributions in these areas in which the American Federation of Labor later achieved notable success.[31] Their membership, leadership and organizational structure militated against effective trade union operation.[32]

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28. Advance and Labor Leaf, April 27, 1889.

29. Journal of United Labor, February 25, 1886, pp. 2011-2012; October 3, 1889; John Swinton's Paper, January 24, 1886.

30. Herbert G. Gutman, "The Worker's Search For Power," The Gilded Age: A Repraissal, H. Wayne Morgan, editor, (Syracuse, 1963), p. 68.

31. Carl Degler, Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America (New York, 1959), p. 263.

32. Labor Leader, March 31, 1888; quoted in Labor Leaf, December 29, 1886; Gabriel, American Democratic Thought, p. 193.

The Knights' success, although greater than many of its predecessors, was limited and ephemeral.

However, another dimension of the operations of the Order must be considered before a valid judgment can be rendered. Insecurity and atomization threatened many Americans during the late nineteenth-century. The social and educational programs of the Knights aided acclimation.[33] The Knights were the first national organization to bring significant numbers of unskilled, women and Negroes within the ranks of organized labor. Their message--labor solidarity--had contemporary and future significance.[34] Furthermore, the Knights effectively spread the gospel of reform by means of publications, lectures and the distribution of reform literature. The general press also disseminated news about the Order, particularly during 1886 when the Knights experienced a meteoric rise and fall. Future leaders of American reform movements such as Daniel De Leon and James Maurer gained valuable knowledge about labor union operations as members of the Knights of Labor.[35]

The Knights conducted a crusade for the right of the people to control corporations and for the disenfranchisement of the dollar and the enfranchisement of manhood.[36] They desired a society based on a transformed

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33. Gabriel, American Democratic Thought, pp. 193-194; Ware, Labor Movement, pp. XVI-XVII; Arthur Mann, Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age (Cambridge, Mass. 1954), p. 182 ; David Potter, People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character (Chicago, 1954), pp. 104-110.

34. Gabriel, American Democratic Thought, p. 193; Ben Ames Williams, Owen Glenn (Boston, 1950), pp. 151, 153.

35. James H. Hudson, It Can Be Done: The Autobiography of James Hudson Maurer (New York, 1938), pp. 87-88, 100; Howard H. Quint, The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement (Columbia, 1953), p. 153.

36. Fred Landon, "The Knights of Labor: Predecessors of the C.I.O.", Quarterly Journal of Commerce (Summer-Autumn, 1937), 138; Hays, Response to Industrialism, p. 152; John Swinton's Paper, April 5, 1885; Proceedings, 1886, p. 8; Journal of United Labor, July 10, 1884, p. 734, March 19, 1887, p. 2322.

social ethic in which the industrial population would no longer be degraded and would instead be independent, live in dignity and share equitably in the bounty of life.[37] This society would satisfy the desire for a "good life" and not just provide a good wage.[38] Although the Knights failed to achieve this aspiration their goal remains valuable and pertinent.

The work process as well as off-the-job conditions concerned the Knights and other reform organizations. Although its successors paid little attention to this issue the problem, and scholarly interest in it, have intensified since the 1880's.[39] The introduction of machinery divided and sub-divided man so that he became a part of the machine and the property of its owner rather than a man and a worker. Monotony became a perpetual torture and the worker's mind narrowed to fit the circumscribed limits of the operation.[40] Employers forced their employees to arrive at the sound of the whistle, obey regulations and surrender the products of their labor. The introduction of machinery became a curse as well as a blessing to a large segment of mankind. The Knights contended that it would not be a blessing until

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37. Journal of United Labor, September 10, 1884, pp. 796-797; Ware, Industrial Worker, p. 20; Aaron, Men of Good Hope, pp. 18, 306.

38. Tannenbaum, Philosophy of Labor, pp. 11-12; Gabriel, Course of American Democratic Thought, p. 194; Hays, Response to Industrialism, p. 71.

39. Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 193; Robin M. Williams, Jr., American Society: A Sociological Interpretation (New York, 1961), pp. 205-206; New York Times, January 20, 1965, pp. 1, 12; Robert C. Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx (Cambridge, England, 1961), pp. 130-135; Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (Moscow, 1959), pp. 67-84.

40. Adam Smith, An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (New York, 1937), pp. 734-735; Journal of United Labor, November 15, 1880, p. 69.

machinery was subordinated to man and became his slave. Degradation would be ended, not by the destruction of machines, but by the organization of labor in the interests of promoting the dignity of man and the ownership and use of machinery for the general good.[41] In other words, the Knights of Labor tried to establish a society which viewed man as an end rather than a factor of production to be subordinated to machines.[42]

The Janus-like Knights of Labor made many valuable contributions. While nostalgia led the Knights to look backward to a bucolic age the progressive, forward-looking features of the Order, especially humanism and labor solidarity, remain relevant to the problems of twentieth-century society. Its labor solidarity program linked the organization to mid twentieth-century unionism and the humanitarianism of an earlier era.[43] The Order achieved material gains for its members, promoted social fraternity and advanced the universal brotherhood of mankind.[44] It also admirably performed a basic function of a reform organization--dramatically presenting to society the difference between what is and what-ought-to-be.[45] Although internal inadequacies and powerful adversaries partially explain the failure of the Knights to reach its goals, the major reason why its aspirations dwarfed its accomplishments was that it "wanted too much from the society of the 1880's."[46]

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41. Journal of United Labor, June 15, 1880, p. 17, February 10, 1885, p. 901, March 25, 1886, pp. 2026-2027, September 25, 1886, p. 2169.

42. Fred H. Blum, Toward a Democratic Work Process: The Hormel-Packinghouse Workers' Experiment (New York, 1953), pp. 197-198.

43. Degler, Out of Our Past, p. 265.

44. Lewis, "Labor Philosophy of Powderly," pp. 28-29; Tambussi, "Knights of Labor, pp. 103-106.

45. Mann, Yankee Reformers, p. 242.

46. Frank T. Reuter, "John Swinton's Paper," Labor History, I (Fall, 1960), 307.

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Vita

Irwin Murray Marcus was the first of two children of Benjamin and Sylvia (Goode) Marcus. He was born in New York City on November 19, 1935. He attended public school in Brooklyn, New York, and Pottsville, Pennsylvania prior to his attendance at Allentown High School in Allentown, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Allentown High School in 1953.

His undergraduate education was received at the Pennsylvania State University where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1958. He obtained a Master of Arts degree from Lehigh University the following year. During his period of residence as a graduate student at Lehigh University he served as a graduate assistant for four years. He was honored by being named George Gowen Hood Fellow in 1963-1964.

In 1964-1965 he was a member of the social science faculty at the Harrisburg Area Community College. Presently he is a member of the social science faculty at the Indiana State College.