

Restoring Consensus in Flint, Michigan: The Socialist Party in Municipal Politics, 1910-1912

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At the height of its political influence in the decades before World War I, the Socialist Party of America elected over a thousand representatives to state and municipal office and gained virtual control of a score of American cities ranging in size from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Mineral Ridge, Ohio. The municipal victories, concentrated in the industrial heartland of America stretching from western Pennsylvania westward to the Chicago-Milwaukee region, energized the party. Municipal politics was viewed as a means of rearranging historic urban coalitions along class lines, developing class consciousness by connecting neighborhood and workplace grievances with a broader class ideology, and garnering valuable political and administrative experience necessary for working-class control at higher governmental levels. Practical political work at the municipal level would test Socialist theory and strategy at the point of immediate contact with the world it hoped to change. Municipal politics was to give the youthful party experience, exposure, and confidence; it was a vital and logical part of the party's strategy for building a mass base in the cities.

The many municipal elections in which the Socialists participated in the prewar years were an important part of the party's strategy in their own right, but for historians they also provide a unique view of the grass-roots Socialist organization operating in situations in which Socialist victory was not only possible, but in many cases an actuality. Urban victories brought notoriety to the local organization; lively newspaper coverage provides a microcosmic view of the party in relation to the broader social forces that stimulated or restricted its development. At the same time, neighborhood class distinctions, translated into ward voting statistics, provide our first clear understanding of the class dynamics of Socialist victory and defeat. The Socialist municipal experience suggests that the party had no overwhelming difficulty attracting urban workers in classic Socialist fashion. Just as evident, however, is the local organizations' inability to formulate an effective policy for dealing with the reform-minded urban middle class. The relationship between weaknesses in internal party structure and strategy and the reaction of external forces — the urban progressives first endorsed the Socialist program and then turned on the party in subsequent elections — was the key to Socialist defeats in urban politics.

The Socialist tenure in Flint, Michigan, illustrates the social and political movements behind success and defeat in Midwestern cities. The Flint Socialist local placed its candidates in office in the April 1911 elections, a few months before the wave of Socialist municipal successes swept through the Midwest. One of the earliest examples of Socialist success, it was also among the most brief. Defeated decisively in 1912, the

Socialists were never again a significant factor in Flint politics. The situation, however, illustrates clearly a key aspect of the difficulties Socialists faced in building a grass-roots party through the medium of urban politics. The expansive forces in Flint's economy, dominated by the vigorous young General Motors Corporation, throw into relief the conditions under which workers and businessmen interacted politically in the prewar American cities. In Flint, Socialists faced an emergent local bourgeoisie typical of the Socialist experience elsewhere; despite an initial cordial relation between Socialists and traditional political elites, urban progressivism in Flint was ultimately reduced to a single goal: restoring the political consensus and the class harmony upon which General Motors and Flint's economy depended. Progressive rhetoric became a class weapon as the city's businessmen confronted those who bore the heavy burdens of the drive for prosperity in the city.

The City of Industrial Peace

The Socialist party's initial successes owed much to the town's burgeoning automobile industry and the tremendous dislocation accompanying the boom. Between 1903 and 1910 Flint's carriage and wagon industry was transformed into a massive complex of automobile assembly and parts factories, the hub of William C Durant's expanding General Motors empire. Centered around the Buick plant, the largest automobile factory in the world, the auto industry epitomized turn-of-the-century industrial progress. The swiftly changing technology, the engineering triumphs, the new organizational techniques, and the unrelenting drive for speed and precision in the shops gave birth to a new generation of imaginative industrial leaders and invigorated the entire city. Flint's businessmen, highly conscious of the industrial transformation taking place, celebrated the arrival of each new industry in the pages of the *Flint Journal*, and although they claimed that "no special effort has ever been made to 'boom' the city by spectacular and ... artificial methods," Flint's economic growth owed a great deal to the energies of these local promoters.¹ Yet, while they adopted General Motors' confident spirit, civic leaders were sensitive to the competition the city faced from other industrial centers in the upper Midwest. Flint, they advertised, was a model industrial city, a "City of Industrial Peace," full of "happy, busy mechanics."² The automobile industry's extraordinary success molded a new progressive ideology that matched Flint's emergence into the national economy and its rapid transformation into an industrial city.

On the other hand, the drive for new industry outstripped the city's capacity for growth. Flint's population nearly tripled between 1900 and 1910.³ The exploding population of machinists, semiskilled industrial workers, and rural or foreign migrants brought instability to the city's newly established "North End." The rootlessness of the northern neighborhoods was evident in fluctuating residential patterns, boardinghouses jammed with unmarried workers, and a general boomtown atmosphere.⁴ The most obvious manifestation of the population influx was an acute housing shortage. Boardinghouses were rented consecutively to night-shift and day-shift workers while about a thousand working people lived in tents and tarpaper shacks in the undeveloped areas of the industrial district.⁵ Drab, single-design houses —many of them built by the factory owners —filled the industrial district, creating a backlog for city utilities that seemed impossible

to fill. One older resident saw Flint as an "infant Chicago," with its "mixed population, crowded into poorly constructed tenements, overflowing with children . . . [having] no place to play except [in] . . . streets and alleys . . . reeking with filth, and in the summer months baking with heat."⁶

Nor was the city prepared to ensure the health and safety of its citizens. In 1911 the city's health department consisted of one health officer, whose frustrated campaigns for housing inspection, better sewers, and pure milk were virtually ignored by city hall. Without paved street or sidewalks, the North End was periodically transformed into a sea of mud that impeded travel and posed serious domestic health problems. Storm and sanitary sewers had been installed on an ad hoc basis; city officials hardly knew how many houses existed in the North End, much less how to equip them with proper public facilities. I lie inevitable seasonal flooding backed up sewers, and standing water brought the threat of epidemic and pneumonia closer to the neglected North End than to any other part of the city.⁷

Neighborhood frustrations were compounded by new forms of work in the factories. Flint's earlier carriage and wagon industry had drawn to the city eastern carpenters experienced in fine woodcrafting techniques. In the shops, work teams built carriages individually, each craftsman conscious of the ways in which his skills fit into the broader scheme of production. The transition to automobile manufacturing brought radical changes in production techniques. Manufacturers initially found it cheaper to subcontract for parts rather than to acquire and maintain specialized machinery.⁸ As automobile production was systemized, the factory was separated into various subcontracting units and a central assembling plant. Factory engineers focused on design, speed, and costs, leaving any remaining craftsmanship to the subcontractors. Skills were likewise fragmented; a *Scientific American* reporter described the effect upon the shopworkers:

Men are given tasks that are very simple in themselves, and, by dint of repetition day in and day out, acquire a knack that may cut the time of the operation in two. A man may become a specialist in so insignificant an operation, for instance, as putting in a certain bolt in the assembling of a machine.⁹

With the rudiments of assembly line production already in place in Flint, the de-skilling process that would become so characteristic of the automobile industry was well under way. The strains were terrific. "In the machine shop there are so many machines going at once, such an infinite variety of work being performed, that one emerges from it in a daze," a reporter commented.¹⁰ Although wages remained high, labor-management relations were not cordial. Superintendents and foremen wore stiff derby hats at work, one citizen remembered, "the better to protect them from heavy bolts dropped from above by not too friendly workmen."¹¹ Flint's growth went hand in hand with the development of a modern industrial working class.

Yet, neither the squalor of the North End nor the frustrations in the shops moved Flint workers to challenge the prevailing open-shop formula. High wages, a fluctuating population, "Billy" Durant's dynamic leadership style, and the absence of prior union experience kept industrial disturbances at a minimum.¹² Dissatisfaction with conditions in the North End remained latent.

This was not to last, however. Until 1910 Flint's industrial growth proceeded without faltering, but after the incorporation of General Motors in 1908 Durant undertook an ambitious plan to consolidate the entire auto industry. With technology in a very fluid

state, Durant's acquisitions proved to be of uneven value, and by 1910 General Motors was seriously overextended. After several trying months, Durant secured new capital from eastern bankers, but at a high price. Among other things, the bankers forced Durant to withdraw from management of the corporation.¹³

The General Motors crisis was Flint's crisis as well. For several months while Buick's plants stood "almost deserted," the city faced an uncertain future, and perhaps its older citizens reflected upon the degree to which their once-remote local economy had become tied to uncontrollable national economic forces. For the workers, the brief recession was no doubt more revealing. In the boomtown atmosphere, conditions in the North End had seemed a temporary inconvenience, and the pressures and frustrations of work were compensated by high wages and mobility. Reorganization brought layoffs and lower wage scales as economy became the watchword and the company focused its attention on sales and the cost of the product. Flint's workers had "almost worshipped" Durant, but the eastern bankers were less inspiring. Moreover, local employers took advantage of the sudden glut in the labor market to lower wages throughout the city. After 1910, as the growth of the Socialist vote suggests, frustrations in the factories and neighborhoods were borne with much less patience.¹⁴

The Socialist Movement in Flint

Confident and enthusiastic, the Socialist party in Flint adapted well to the new industrial conditions. The party drew its strength from the city's trade unions, particularly the cigarmakers, iron molders, and machinists, and thus tied its fortunes largely to the older skilled working class. In conjunction with the Central Labor Council, the Socialists planned to build a "Labor Temple" with headquarters for both the council and the party. The local's weekly paper, the *Flint Flashes*, provided a "labor page" devoted to trade union news and exhortations to nonunion workers. The party also participated in organizing drives in the city and made a point of offering union members as Socialist municipal candidates. John A. C. Menton, who became the party's mayoral candidate in 1911, was secretary-treasurer of the Central Labor Council and president of the local cigarmakers union, one of the largest in the city.¹⁵

The working class in Flint, however, was divided between these more established skilled workers and newer arrivals —many of them recent immigrants. Nativism was not prominent in the local Socialist movement. Indeed a Polish local was successfully organized in 1911, and in the year to come the Socialist administration would make strenuous efforts to install a black Democratic politician as Flint's police commissioner. Yet the Socialists failed to reach out to the growing immigrant population in the city. On one hand, the party was tied closely to the traditional craft unions in the city and reflected the older organizations' biases against unskilled newcomers. Anxiety over skill degradation in the automobile plants was no doubt in many cases transformed into resentment toward the flood of unskilled workers entering the city. On the other hand, as the *Flint Journal* later pointed out, around 70 percent of the five thousand men employed in the huge Buick plant in the North End were not voters in Flint.¹⁶ Some were too young; some too recently in the state; and others too apathetic. But a great many were not voters because they had yet to become citizens of the United States. Thus for

a number of reasons the party ignored the special interests of the city's foreign workers, who could have, if properly cultivated, added another sizeable element to the growing Socialist movement in 1911.

Still, by 1911 the *Flashes* was circulating to over three thousand citizens. The party conducted a lively campaign in 1910 and 1911, distributed the paper throughout the city, and agitated in the labor unions and in the Buick and Weston-Mott plants, where a number of Socialists worked. Out-of-town Socialist speakers came to Flint about once a month, and rallies for the local candidates drew progressively larger crowds. Although the *Journal* ignored the Socialist campaigns, the Socialist speakers themselves provoked interest, and the local's regular meetings advertised standing room only. The Socialists' agitational flourish, along with the crisis in Flint's economy, channeled the resentments of the new working class into local politics in 1911.¹⁷

One of the party's advantages in 1911 was its flexibility. The stresses of growth and change in Flint called for new forms of leadership which the older parties, rooted in small-town and rural conservatism, were unable to provide. The Socialists addressed progressive and labor causes and gave expression to a variety of local frustrations.¹⁸ Forging a progressive ideology tailored to Flint's new industrial conditions, the party was a logical choice in the strained social atmosphere of the city's local industrial revolution. The party's predominantly agitational function permitted a broad appeal capitalizing on all the shortcomings of Flint society. It was, in a vague way, all things to all people.

The Socialists' platform offered labor reform measures and proposals for better city government while pushing the question of socialism itself into the future. Like those of other Socialist locals, the platform explained that true socialist legislation would have to wait until Socialists "captured the state government and the lawmaking power." In the meantime, the party announced a variety of working-class demands: factory and building inspection, an eight-hour day for all city employees, free city hospital, and aid for children "who might otherwise be prevented by lack of means" from attending schools.¹⁹ Yet while all Socialist planks contained a hint of socialism or class conflict — including the ubiquitous call for municipal ownership — much of what the Socialists had to offer could have appealed to anyone with progressive inclinations. Street and sewer improvements, for instance, carried a broad mandate in 1911, although workers would have gained disproportionately from the measure.

In more subtle ways, the Socialist campaign transcended progressivism. The party's objective was to provide a medium through which workers could voice demands not traditionally considered the business of politicians. The Socialists issued calls for unions and denounced factory conditions and the attitudes of shop managers toward employees. They rallied behind workers docked wages and in general placed each worker's particular complaints within the framework of a wide-ranging, indeed worldwide, class struggle. In short, the Socialists broadened their criticisms to include attacks upon economics as well as political institutions. In the coming year, the Socialists' decision to act upon this broader conception of politics would play an important part in determining the class nature of the opposition to their program.

The North End voters turned out on April 3 in numbers that amazed local citizens. When the polls closed, Flint was surprised to find that a "wave of Socialism" had swept through the predominantly working-class First, Fifth, and Sixth wards, and that the Socialists were in control of the mayor's office and three of Flint's twelve council-

manic seats. While the North End — primarily the First Ward — had been decisive for the Socialists, their strong showing in the older, more established central wards—the Second and Third — suggest that a number of middle-class residents also voted Socialist, expressing either feelings of protest against the major parties or sympathy with the Socialist stand on efficiency and economy.²⁰

Flint citizens had hardly expected such an outcome. Even the Socialists, having conducted an essentially educational campaign, were unprepared. The local admitted to lacking "tactical" expertise in matters of municipal administration, but promised to send for books on the subject so that they would "know how to act in harmony with the principles of their party." The local quickly set up a legislative committee which they hoped to staff with tradesmen whose expertise might be helpful in the coming administration. Avoiding rash judgment, the outgoing mayor promised the Socialists the "same hearty co-operation of the citizens and the kindly courtesy of the council" Flint mayors traditionally enjoyed.²¹

The 450 to 500 Socialists in Flint had chosen as their standard-bearer John A. C. Menton, forty-four-year-old cigarmaker and a resident of Flint since age four. Menton, a longtime Socialist, had campaigned for the mayor's seat in two previous elections. The new Socialist alderman from the First Ward, a tool and die maker in the Weston-Mott and Buick factories, had been a Socialist "since he was six years old." Alderman Orrin H. Castle from the Fifth Ward —also in the North End—had learned the blacksmith trade as a youngster working in a carriage factory in Ovid, Michigan, and had arrived in Flint in 1897 to work in the blacksmith department of the Durant-Dort carriage factory. The same neighborhood that gave him 14 votes in 1909 elected him with 647 votes in 1911. Sixth Ward Alderman James A. McFarland had been a rural school teacher, a store clerk, a traveling salesman, and a bookkeeper. The non-Socialist aldermen-elect—all Republicans—were of higher status: a manager of a meat market, a cigar store owner, and an insurance and real estate dealer.²²

As a minority of political novices in a potentially hostile situation, the Socialists were eager for reconciliation and so took immediate steps to quiet the fears of Flint's business community. Mayor John Menton called for the "loyal support of every reasonable citizen" and tactfully assured that the Socialists' goals would benefit the "greatest number of citizens." Socialists reemphasized their working-class allegiance but cautiously explained that most of their socialistic program would have to wait until they elected a majority council, hopefully in 1912. They would use their administration to gain firmer support from workers, but at the same time intended to protect their fragile victory by neutralizing business opposition. Accordingly, Menton approached the controversial issue of factory inspection gingerly. "Undoubtedly many people violate the laws through ignorance," he explained, "and we hope that owners of factories and stores will take the trouble to inform themselves upon the laws protecting the working class and see that they are obeyed."²³

The new administration faced an uncertain future. The Socialists' strategy of building a climate favorable to legislative reform by placating the business community placed drastic limitations upon the substance of these very reforms. The Socialists sought a balance' between .in administration that would provide "fair treatment" to all and one that would build class solidarity. The party called for an eight-hour day for city workers, for instance, to "set a good example for manufacturers and business houses to

follow," and drew attention to various unsafe and unhealthy factory conditions. They were careful to point out, however, that what they asked was nothing out of the ordinary. "Hundreds of cities," the Socialists indicated, "have adopted the same. . . ." ²⁴

Despite such moderation, partisan opposition developed quickly. In May, non-Socialist councilmen began resisting any motion from their Socialist counterparts on principle. Late in the month a small campaign paper appeared in Flint bristling with anti-Socialist articles by local and nationally known publicists. The *Witness* scrutinized and ridiculed every detail of the Socialists' public behavior and kept a running account of "Socialist blunders" in the back pages, a practice disconcerting, no doubt, to the political novices whose books on municipal "tactics," if indeed they had arrived yet, must have seemed woefully inadequate to the local situation. ²⁵

As political opposition to the Socialists intensified, the party's hope for comprehensive reforms dimmed. The first setback was the council's refusal to ratify Menton's Socialist appointees to various civil offices. With embarrassing regularity Menton's appointees were presented to the council at each meeting and voted down, nine to three. In retaliation, the Socialists attacked other councilmen for minor conflicts of interest in their business relations with the city. Political infighting consumed precious time and served as a chronic reminder of the divided council's inability to conduct the business of the city smoothly. Flooded by petitions for street, curb, sewer, and other routine improvements, the council was about two weeks behind in its work by September. ²⁶

Even in routine matters, Menton explained in July, constrained budgets and rapid growth left it impossible to meet all needed improvements at once. Menton's vital sewer plan died in the finance committee while street paving, the "biggest issue before the citizens at the present time," was only sparsely funded. Predictably, the fall of 1912 brought rains that flooded cellars and streets in the North End, and irate citizens petitioned for improvements for which there were no funds. Menton and the North End councilmen personally took a hand in clearing storm drains and comforting flood victims but could offer nothing to permanently relieve the situation. ²⁷ In the face of recurring minor crises, the Socialists' more ambitious plans for the city were set aside.

Menton faced a political dilemma. Declaring it impossible to consider "any lavish expenditures ... at this time," he avoided critics who complained that the Socialists would bankrupt the city. But his fiscal realism disappointed those who had hoped for something more from the Socialists. In order to gain some room to maneuver financially, he suggested several efficiency moves, including a central purchasing agency, direct employment of workers in city construction, strict inventories of city equipment, and more accurate tax assessments of the North End factories. ²⁸ But this program, like other Socialist measures, met firm resistance in the council. Faced with political opposition and limited funds, Menton was able to offer only stopgap solutions to the city's major problems.

Such limitations no doubt brought some soul-searching in the Socialist local. The party's ultimate goal—raising class consciousness—was best served many felt, if the Socialists were to remain critically distant from the other members of the council. ²⁹ Conceivably, the party could have found allies; among non-Socialist North End councilmen who faced mounting pressure from their working-class constituents as the Socialists raised expectation; for reform legislation. Yet, in view of the partisan opposition and in order to protect their own broader interests, the Socialists chose to close ranks. They

remained adamant on such issues as the Socialist appointees and counted on the educational value of their activities to increase their power in 1912.

Despite all obstacles, the Socialists accumulated a surprising number of minor victories in the name of Flint's working class. Although many of their legislative gains were more symbolic than real, the Socialists managed to push through several concrete reforms whose substance was enough to suggest that neither political obstacles nor the conflict of being "in but not of" city politics—to borrow Daniel Bell's phrase—were insurmountable. Seeking broad support for a measure requiring shorter hours for city workmen Menton successfully appealed to civic pride, explaining that "all progressive cities are working their employees on an eight hour basis." In an equally dramatic victory, Menton eventually forced improvements in interurban rail service. The Socialists also saw that state factory laws were enforced and inspired, as the *Journal* put it, "a wonderful amount of activity in cleaning up displayed by proprietors of different kinds of food supply houses."³² Impure milk, a key factor in Michigan's deplorable infant mortality, had been a focal point of the Socialist campaign. Non-Socialist aldermen resisted milk inspection, insisting the program was too expensive and the legal questions too ambiguous. After seven months of intensive opposition, the Socialists, with support from the health board and the *Journal*, compelled the council to pass the inspection ordinance." Against strong opposition Socialists also won Flint's first plumbing and electrical inspections, improved streets in the North End, and secured a \$ 3 million increase in assessments on Mint corporations.³²

More significant for the Socialist cause, however, was the local's use of municipal politics to guide Flint workers to a deeper understanding of their class interests. Pursuing politics in the broadest sense of the term, Socialists went beyond a critique of other political parties to criticize basic social and economic institutions in Flint. The Socialists compared what they had done with "what the Capitalists have done to the Workers in Flint," citing among other things forced overtime, blacklists, filthy milk, fire hazards, and flooded streets. Articles in the *Flashes* criticized local factory conditions, typically ending with a moral: "Are you, Mr. Workingman, getting about sick of being treated this way?"³³ The Socialists realized that in spite of their dramatic victory, cultivating class consciousness would require time. What was probably less clear to them was that their attack on the foundations of "Industrial Peace" had politicized Flint's business community, which was moving to galvanize the non-Socialist constituency into a new political coalition. In the winter of 1911-12 Flint's businessmen resolved to end the Socialist threat to political consensus in their city.

Opposition Stiffens

With the 1912 elections drawing near, city politics approached a watershed. The council was able to conduct the routine affairs of the divided city with only the greatest of difficulty. Needing only a plurality against two opponents, the Socialists appeared ready to break the impasse by gaining full control of the government. But for several reasons, this course of events was unacceptable to Flint businessmen. Whereas Flint's Socialist city officials might have appeared an anomaly in American politics a year earlier, by 1912 they had been joined by hundreds of others across the nation. The *Journal*

noted the election of ten Socialist mayors in Ohio alone, implying that socialism in Flint was part of an enduring movement.³⁴

Far more important was the impact of Socialist rule upon Flint's reputation as the "City of Industrial Peace." The Socialists' broader conception of politics threatened the city's climate for investment and the employee relations upon which Flint's automobile industry thrived. The rapidly expanding auto industry would not have stood by while Flint endured prolonged labor troubles. With a booming demand for automobiles, a widespread labor shortage, and new technologies and companies entering the industry almost daily, Flint's industrialists could ill-afford the class feelings Socialists hoped to instill in the local labor force.³⁵

On January 12, two months before the 1912 election, Flint's political elites christened a new Independent Citizens party (ICP), which displayed the outward signs of the urban progressive movement then sweeping the nation's cities. It would be a nonpartisan organization, striving to bring to Flint government "expert knowledge" and a "business system" capable of "direct responsibility to the people."³⁶ The ICP slate as selected "without regard to political affiliation" —that is, it swallowed the Republican and Democratic parties wholesale. Even before the primaries it was clear that only the ICP and the Socialist party would remain on the ballot in the spring. The *Journal* quickly endorsed the Independents, as did the *Arrow*, a new anti-Socialist paper that took up the banner from the defunct *Witness*.

The ICP constructed a platform designed to rival —and in some instances duplicate —that of the Socialists. Both parties called for efficiency and economy and offered planks designed to benefit Flint citizens as a whole, although the Socialists were more radical in their suggestions. In addition to several planks written especially for Flint businessmen, the Independents called for three labor-oriented measures: better street railway service; a building code; and a night school. The ICP embraced other progressive issues — charter revision, expert accounting, budget responsibility, and efficient city services —hoping to consolidate the non-Socialist vote and to lure workers from the Socialist party.³⁷

But like the Socialists the ICP had intentions that went beyond "immediate demands." Ultimately the ICP intended to reestablish a favorable climate for investment and to ensure continued political consensus by removing ideological issues from city politics. By early February the ICP, the *Journal*, and various civic and religious organizations had begun stressing the need for class harmony and the fallacy of voting according to "party shibboleths." Narrowing the spectrum of issues, *the Journal* explained that partisan politics had been a detriment to Flint's growth because it had destroyed the "harmony of action and co-operation of all the people which is so essential to a progressive and thoroughly republican government."³⁸

In the hands of the ICP, progressivism became a tool to destroy socialism and restore consensus in Flint. Politics, the ICP urged, was "nothing more than the selection of men who can give to the citizens the best result; in government for the money they expend in the maintenance of a city administration." And if politics was indeed simply a calculated technical choice, the ICP had the better candidate. For mayor the new party sported Charles S. Mott, Flint's First Citizen, head of the sizeable Weston-Mott axle works, and an influential member of the General Motors board of directors. Aside from being Flint's best-known businessman, Mott enjoyed a nationwide-reputation as a phi-

lanthropist. Although he modestly claimed to be "in the kindergarten class in politics just now," Mott's business acumen and administrative talents were unquestionable.³⁹

Mott himself assumed an Olympian posture; remaining "above politics," he left the disposal of the Socialists to the *Journal* and the *Arrow*. When Socialists charged that Mott used his position unfairly by campaigning in his factory without allowing them the same privilege, the industrialist replied that his rally had not been "a political meeting but a gathering of men interested in securing better government in Flint." Businessmen, of course, were easily persuaded. Investments in Weston-Mott were spread throughout the city and the future of the corporation was linked by a fine web of personal and financial ties to all the city's banking, commercial, and industrial leaders. For the unconvinced, the *Journal* ran numerous testimonials stressing the importance of North End payrolls to all local businesses.⁴⁰

Still, the ICP recognized that it was "up to the workers, the hands in the big shops, if Mott is to be the next mayor of Flint." The campaign for the working-class vote invoked paternalism, class harmony, a variety of economic threats, and a full repertoire of anti-Socialist precepts. Mott's campaign pronouncements were "not the talk of the employer to his employees, but . . . the word of one man to others whom he recognized as men and fellow citizens." With a curious twist of logic, Mott proudly claimed that he had "always maintained an open shop"; he had allowed union men to work in (if not organize) his factory. "Some of my best foremen and workers have been union men," Mott proclaimed, fondly recalling days when the shops were smaller and he was able to "hire and know personally" each of his men. *The Journal* repeatedly insisted that Mott consented to run "only at the request of a large number of factory workers."⁴¹

The campaign was strained, however, by the new party's evident inability to attract endorsements from actual workingmen. Testimonials recorded under banners such as "Elated in the Factories"; "They All Think Well of Mott"; and "All Classes Want Him" were drawn from men like the assistant secretary and treasurer of Buick Motor Company, who insisted that "We are elated in the North End of the city." Others, "speaking as . . . factory employees," included Charles W. Nash, then general manager of Buick, along with a division superintendent, a merchant, three lawyers a manager, an auctioneer, an ex-mayor, a real estate agent, three ministers a National Guard officer, and a priest. In fact, only one of more than fifty *Journal* and *Arrow* testimonials claiming that the "boys in the shops" encouraged Mott's election came from a factory employee below the rank of assistant foreman.⁴² Nevertheless, mention of Mott's name seldom lacked reference to the workers. Urging Mott's identification with the workers the *Journal* claimed that the concerns of the factory owners and the worker: were indistinguishable, since contented workers meant higher profits. Mott's stake in Flint, the *Journal* maintained, was "The People's Stake."⁴³ What was good for General Motors was good for Flint, and vice versa.

The ICP concluded its drive to restore consensus on a darker note Flint's climate for investment—and the workers' security, it argued—depended upon class harmony. "Side issues," such as the Socialists raised, threatened the Flint "spirit" that drew capital into the area. The *Arrow* put the matter more bluntly: towns without capital, the editor insisted, "are dead towns and dead towns are hardest of all upon labor."⁴⁴ Elevating Mott to a position above "political" and ideological issues, the *Journal* and the *Arrow* struck at the Socialists directly. Both papers insisted that municipal government had "nothing to

do with the philosophy of property," since such question could never be "settled in any one city." The Socialists disagreed, of course pointing to the class nature of municipal government and to the fact that Flint's election would be a test case for the nationwide Socialist movement.⁴ But the Socialists need not have belabored the point; by late February the question of socialism had indeed become the predominant issue of the Flint campaign.

The combined efforts of the *Journal* and the *Arrow* were part of a massive attack upon the local Socialists that involved an outpouring of anti Socialist lectures, sermons, and speeches in Flint. Several local Protestant and Catholic churches entered the campaign, arguing on one hand that Socialist ideals were noble but impractical, and on the other that Socialists were enemies of home, family, Christianity, and the state. One churchman's vivid if fanciful conjectures about the Socialists' plans for America's future were given feature-article status in the *Journal* in the weeks before the election.⁴⁶

As the election approached, *the Journal* began reiterating the *Arrow* charges, keeping the Weston-Mott payroll prominent in its pages to emphasize the fact that industry meant more to the city than ideology. "Four millions of dollars! All of it distributed among Flint men," the paper explained. The man responsible for this largess was running for mayor, "willing to take charge of the city's affairs and devote practically his entire time to the work for \$100 a year." The *Journal* added with amazement: "And it is said in some quarters of Flint that the city ... is hesitating about accepting his services."⁴⁷

Although they had devoted their first campaign to polarizing city politics along class lines, the Flint Socialists were hardly prepared for such an onslaught. The party's first impulse was defensive. The *Flashes* pointed out that "destruction of the home" was not to be found in the Socialist platform. Accused of bringing in outside agitators, the Socialists charged that Mott himself, a helpless "victim of Wall Street," was the true outsider. The Socialists explained that the ICP's version of the "business administration" was exactly that: an administration responsive only to the interests of businessmen. The party attacked Mott's motives for running for office, noting that the factory owner had fired the Socialist who had raised assessments on his North End property.⁴⁸

But the real issue, Socialists now claimed, was class control of city government. Menton pointed to the Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike then in progress, emphasizing that municipal authorities there maltreated the wives and children of the strikers. "Do you know why?" he asked.

Because the municipal government of Lawrence is a business administration. Business administrations are administered by the employing class. Lackeys of this class, in power, believe that employees should be submissive to the employers.⁴⁹

Under tremendous pressure from the ICP, the press, and the churches, the Socialists narrowed their campaign to an issue that clearly distinguished them from the progressives: the use of city government during strikes.⁵⁰ Having lost the middle-class vote, the Socialists abandoned the overtures to small businessmen they had sprinkled through their 1911 campaign and pinned their hopes to a working-class constituency.

Bereft of middle-class allies, the Socialist party nevertheless failed to broaden its working-class base in the 1912 campaign. The party's close working relationship with the Central Labor Council and the city's union workers offered little to inspire support

from unskilled and foreign workers in the North End factories. The *Flashes* pointed out cases where "men have been placed in the shops who are inferior mechanics because they were cheaper labor," and complained that "foreigners have been brought in [in] place of Flint men, and Flint men have been turned away."⁵¹ These pronouncements articulated the fears of Flint's established and politically active workers, but they suggest as well that the local had little success in bridging the gap between the new and the old working class.

The pressures of the progressive onslaught also brought to light divisions within the local itself. Although the *Flashes* gives no hint of controversies within the party, the national organization's *Party Builder* later noted that the movement in Flint was "torn asunder by internal quarrels," and innuendoes in the *Arrow* indicates that all was not well within the local. The *Arrow* blamed the row upon an imported "foreign agitator," a Chicago Socialist organizer who had been brought in to help with the local campaign. The organizer did not understand local conditions, the *Arrow* surmised, and foisted the strike issue upon the reluctant local.⁵² But the conflict no doubt went deeper. Municipal victories placed Socialist locals everywhere under tremendous ideological strains. Emersion in city politics forced locals to commit themselves on issues that had been glossed over when they were mere agitational organizations.⁵³ In Flint, the local's complicated position on the role of a revolutionary minority in a bourgeois government was forged only in the confused events of the new Socialist administration, amid repeated petty crises of budgets, streets, sewers, and floods. Forced to narrow their appeal to the strike issue on one hand and to defend their reformist administrative record on the other, the Flint local faced pressing ideological decisions. The strategic choices the local made in 1912 no doubt left scars.

In 1912 the conditions of the previous election were reversed. The Socialists, rather than their opposition, were divided. The ICP had galvanized middle-class support and had launched an intensive campaign to meet the Socialist challenge. The new party drew every institutional and ideological apparatus of local society into the campaign and induced the town's leading citizen to lay aside his private duties to run for office. The incipient radical movement was overwhelmed as the Socialists' strategy of moving from immediate demands to class consciousness met formidable opposition from Flint's middle class.

Barraged with ideological appeals from both sides, the workers themselves were reticent about their convictions in 1912. In the factories, which the *Journal* had predicted would be solidly pro-Mott, a reporter found few workers willing to discuss their views openly. He recorded a few grudging Mott endorsements: "I guess I'll vote for Mott"; "He's all right, I guess . . ."; or at best, Mott was "too big a man" to be a grafter.⁵⁴ Given the publicity the campaign generated and the energy both the ICP and the Socialists put into it, this mood was certainly something other than mere apathy. Undoubtedly, the workers' mood reflected a confusion about the ultimate aims of socialism. But more important was an uneasiness about the factory owners' reactions to the possibility of further radicalization in Flint. Obviously unenthused by Mott's campaign for class harmony, factory workers nevertheless felt threatened by the progressives' insistence that industry would abandon a Socialist-controlled city. This uncertainty was extremely damaging to the Socialists' political chances.

Extant evidence of direct forms of intimidation suggests darker undertones to the campaign to restore class harmony in 1912. The *Flashes* claimed that two Socialist city officials were fired at Weston-Mott, blacklisted locally, and then labeled "outside agitators" by the opposition papers because they were forced to find jobs outside Flint. A local executive recalled later that Flint bankers at one point "took hold of Jack [Menton] by his bank mortgage and gentled him into conservatism." In the shops, Mott's candidacy was urged repeatedly upon the men, according to the *Journal*, and it is not hard to imagine that threat was implied by some of the more enthusiastic foremen, or at least assumed by the workingmen. The *Flashes* accused the **ICP** of informing workers they would have to reregister as Socialists—thereby exposing themselves—if they wished to vote Socialist in the spring elections. Even the *Arrow* noticed that workers in the plants were afraid to admit to being Socialists.⁵⁵

In the election the Socialist defeat was decisive.⁵⁶ The ICP won in the Socialist strongholds, the First and Sixth wards, by 55.7 percent and 60.4 percent, and in the entire city the ICP aldermanic candidates received 63.1 percent of the votes and the Socialists only 36.9 percent. While this, of course, reflects the combined strength of the former Republican and Democratic constituencies, Socialist losses were still substantial. In 1912 the Socialist vote decreased by 24.1 percent while the ICP vote increased by 27.1 percent over the combined Republican and Democratic vote of 1911. At first glance, it would seem that many voters simply switched from Socialist to ICP candidates, since the ICP gains approximated Socialist losses. But this was not necessarily the case. In the First Ward, the predominantly working-class North End, the Socialists lost 325 (36 percent) of their 1911 votes. The ICP, however, did not make corresponding gains there. In fact, even their vote declined from the 1911 Republican and Democratic total by forty votes (4 percent). Socialist defeat in the First Ward was clearly a result of apathy—or more likely fear—on the part of the workers. While voters were hesitant about voting for either party, more of those who voted Socialist in 1911 seem to have had misgivings in 1912 than those who had voted against the Socialists in 1911.

On the other hand, the Second Ward, which included Mint's elite homes and the older residential neighborhoods, was the only ward to substantially increase its total vote over the 1911 figure. This clearly reflects ICP efforts to mobilize Flint's middle class. The gains, of course, went to the Independents, who garnered 144 votes (17 percent) more than the 1911 non-Socialist figure, while the Socialists lost 15 votes (15.6 percent). The Independent gains and Socialist losses in the Second Ward suggest that middle-class citizens there had second thoughts about voting Socialist as a form of protest. Workers in this ward, being more established, were also more vulnerable to the progressives' claim that Socialists would drive industry from the city. Thus many Second Ward workers who voted Socialist in 1911 (as in the First Ward) probably remained at home in 1912.

In the Sixth Ward, the second 1911 Socialist stronghold, the Socialist vote dropped as precipitously as in the First —by 178 votes (38.4 percent). Yet there, the non-Socialist vote increased by roughly the same amount: 126 votes. The difference between the Sixth and the First wards in regard to the non-Socialist vote may be related — although it is difficult to tell —to the fact that the working-class neighborhoods there were bounded on two sides by more respectable central wards. Sixth Ward workers may have stayed at home, as did those in the First, while the middle-class neighbor-

hoods that spilled over into the Sixth from the central wards were mobilized behind the ICP.

The ICP campaign triumphed among Flint's middle classes. The ideological barrage demonstrated the perils of voting Socialist, and since the ICP offered progressivism without stirring the masses, middle-class voters swung behind the newer party with enthusiasm. But in the North End, victory was less decisive. Working-class support for the notion of class harmony and a businessman's government remained to a certain extent unsettled.

Consolidation

It was in light of this situation that shortly after the spring election the Flint Board of Commerce launched a campaign to revive the city's sagging civic spirit and ensure its reputation as the "City of Industrial Peace." The *Journal* announced the campaign in an editorial summing up the Socialist experience in Flint. Socialists were "the ones selected to suffer as the result of the [civic] awakening which they themselves had brought about." They had forced a new awareness of civic problems, and city leaders now wished to redirect this public sensitivity into more positive channels, Charles Mott, the new mayor, called for a revitalized Board of Commerce which, like the ICP, would be a "nonpolitical" organization that would bridge class divisions. "If we had such a Board of Commerce last year," Mott reminded his associates, "I don't think we would have had as much worry as we did in the election this last time." The board of Commerce would continue the progressive response to the Socialist challenge with an effort to rebuild consensus in a city "divided by petty jealousies."⁵⁷

The civic campaign, complete with a professional "business revivalist and town development evangelist," lasted into early June. Patriotism was the keynote. Competition for new industry being keen, Flint citizens were asked to renew their civic pledges in order to reclaim their reputation as the "City of Industrial Peace." "We are going to succeed in this movement," the *Journal* announced, "because we believe the men of Flint have faith in the city in which they live." Specifically, each citizen could contribute to the "UNANIMOUS SHOVING of Flint FORWARD AND UPWARD" by placing absolute faith in the city's commercial and industrial institutions.⁵⁸

Like the political campaign, the civic crusade took on coercive overtones. Negativism was deemed a crime against the city's future and anyone unwilling to submit to this civic spirit was invited by the new Board of Commerce to leave town. A Catholic priest active in the earlier anti-Socialist campaign urged board members to "retain in their employment men who have families," explaining that he did not want "to see Flint advanced and have . . . men living here who advocate divorces and want to decrease the police force." Since it was understood that socialism was incompatible with marriage, the Father's policy would eliminate the reds who had been drifting in with the new industrial workers.⁵⁹ Civic revival raised the connection between class harmony and prosperity to an absolute political imperative and employed it as an economic threat to force consensus in the city.

Either Father Murphy failed to impress Flint businessmen with his argument for banning unmarried workers or some unscrupulous Socialists actually married to retain

their jobs, for socialism did not pass directly out of city politics. The Socialists polled over four hundred votes for Eugene Debs in 1912 and made a respectable showing in the 1913 municipal elections. But the party never again elected a candidate to city office, and each year the Socialist vote declined further.⁶⁰ After 1912 Flint was again the "City of Industrial Peace" and would remain so until a sit-down strike in the 1930s once again made class divisions a matter of concern for the whole community.

If indeed the emancipation of the working class was to be the work of the working class itself, then the failure to develop a strong grass-roots organization in communities like Flint suggests weaknesses in the Socialists' plan for developing a Socialist society. At first glance, the brief history of socialism in Flint calls to mind Daniel Bell's insistence that American Socialism failed because it refused to enter the "day-to-day, give-and-take" world of practical politics; it appears that workers became disenchanting as the Socialists imposed agitational concerns upon everyday practical politics.⁶¹ But impracticality was not the issue in Flint. As politicians, the party's ideologically motivated officials were at least as effective as their tradition-bound non-Socialist counterparts. The Socialists presented a successful campaign, fused "immediate demands" and Socialist pronouncements, and came away with legislative victories that proved their class loyalties. It is true that the party's larger ideological concerns conflicted with immediate local needs at times, but one could hardly imagine a young revolutionary movement in which this contradiction would not develop; they were, after all, Socialists.

The Socialist party's problem in Flint was neither its impracticality nor the pragmatic bent of its working-class supporters. Reorienting the political thinking of its constituency was, to be sure, a complicated task. The party platform, written by and for Flint's working people, was an expression of the dignity and self-determination they once enjoyed at the workplace. It was a bid for collective power in a world where industrial relations, epitomized by the staggering transformations in Flint's auto industry, were increasingly authoritarian and degrading. Socialist politics expressed a faith in political equality and linked workers with the republican traditions of their artisan forefathers.

Flint's Socialists intuitively grasped the deeper significance, of the party's appeal, but they also understood the limited and transitional nature of workers' class consciousness. In a recent biography of Eugene Debs, Nick Salvatore explored this ambivalent quality in working-class identity. The republican traditions he identified in Terre Haute inspired and united workers but also bound them to the goals of the town's upper classes. Flint workers, like those in Terre Haute, were torn between deferential community norms and the new affront to republican traditions posed by changing industrial conditions. Vacillation in voting behavior in the more established southern working-class wards especially suggests this ambivalence and a vulnerability to the ICP's paternalist appeals. Latent in the republican traditions that boosted the Socialists to power was the understanding that all "producers"—workers and factory owners alike—were bound by common goals in the economic competition of town against town. Socialists were beginning to breathe new meaning into these republican values and to reinterpret the "community of all producers" as a class slogan.

The ICP exploited the ambiguity in working-class political allegiances and coupled this with the threat of factory relocation. Socialists, having attracted working-class support through a platform of immediate demands, were simply not given an opportunity to promote a serious commitment to their broader goals. The ICP countered the incipi-

ent revolt by offering several benefits the Socialists themselves promised and, more importantly, by threatening possible industry relocation should the Socialists win a second election. Ultimately it was the ICP response rather than the actual performance of the Socialists or the vacillation of the workers that provides the key to Socialist defeat in Flint.

While Flint workers were only beginning to see socialism as an expression of power in a changing society in early 1911, the city's middle class demonstrated a solidarity that transcended longstanding partisan divisions and united leaders of local religious, social, and political institutions in the fight against socialism. This middle-class solidarity tells us much more about Socialist defeat in Flint than the workers' tentative response to the new socialist world view. The dynamism of the middle-class reaction to socialism was partly a result of national political trends. Progressivism, the common logic of municipal reform in the 1910s, legitimized Flint's business consensus, placed it in the context of a national movement, and provided a rhetoric that appeared universal while it served the particular needs of Flint's industrial and merchant elite. But progressive ideals rested on more fundamental assumptions in towns like Flint. Traditionally local politics revolved around matters of efficiency and economy—means to an end prescribed informally by the local business community. The ideological assumptions that structured small-town politics were firm and deep-seated, but were never allowed to surface. The close link between Flint's pragmatic politics and the deeper imperatives of the business community explains the growing solidarity among Flint's middle class in early 1911. In Flint, the industrial and merchant community had grown accustomed to politics defined simply as a discussion of means by which business goals might best be accomplished.

Like Flint workers, businessmen reacted to the Socialist movement on the basis of perceived roles in a changing society. Businessmen, the ICP campaign rhetoric suggests, viewed politics as a community of interests in which the social and economic structure of the town remained inexorably rational and businessmen acted as overseers of Flint's economic destiny. The traditional elite defined how economic growth was to proceed, and municipal politics implemented the program. Pressed by the Socialist challenge to this pragmatic consensus, the ICP campaign articulated these subtle assumptions and brought them into play in the war for the workers' consciousness.

Business initially accepted the Socialist victory as a concession to the North End that could be absorbed within the town's pragmatic consensus. But the deepening Socialist program, which eventually included economic as well as political reform, violated norms that had bound workers and industrialists to a common agenda. As the Socialists turned from purely political matters to workers' complaints generated in the auto plants, the informal power exercised by the town's elites was crystallized in the Independent Citizens party and given an explicit anti-Socialist cast.

The Flint experience suggests that small-town workers were not unreceptive to the Socialist interpretation of their changing world. But it also emphasizes the critical dynamics of small-town middle-class politics. Flint workers viewed socialism as an alternative to the power and dignity they had lost in the shops; businessmen saw it as a threat to the pragmatic consensus that bound all citizens to the goals of industry. The traditional paternalistic assumptions that lay behind Flint's pragmatic politics provided the ICP with a lasting commitment from middle-class citizens. Socialists, applying new

meanings to old republican values, were never given an opportunity to develop a similar commitment among workers.

Drawn to municipal politics by the ease of local victories and by the possibilities they saw in American democracy, Socialists in Flint and elsewhere encountered a resistance for which they were simply not prepared. The Socialists saw municipal politics as a means of raising working-class consciousness and ultimately challenging the pragmatic tradition in American politics. They successfully, although briefly, entered the "day-to-day political world" of Flint politics, transformed it into a class struggle, and initiated the important process of recasting working-class republican values as a radical critique of capitalism. Given more time to prepare the groundwork for municipal victories, Socialists might have survived the middle-class assault, for consensus appears to have been less a habit internalized by American workers than an imperative of the class against which the Socialists fought. The initial victories perhaps came too easily; the opportunity to be "of" city politics arrived before the Socialists were able to build their locals, prepare their constituencies, or reach basic decisions about the meaning and significance of municipal politics. A finer appreciation for the forces behind the consensus ideology they challenged might have prepared them more adequately for the seemingly untroubled step into city politics they were about to take in 1910.

Notes

1. *Flint Journal*, Apr. 29, Aug. 14, Nov. 4, 1911; *Flint Globe, Flint, Michigan, the Vehicle Manufacturing City* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Globe Publishing Company, ca. 1901), pp. 4, 5; Edwin O. Wood, ed., *History of Genesee County, Michigan*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis, Ind.: Federal Publishing Company, 1916), p. 775. For the development of the automobile industry in Flint, see Wood, *History of Genesee County*, William Smith, ed., *An Account of Flint and Genesee County From Their Organization* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: National Historical Association, 1924); Lawrence R. Gustin, *Billy Durant: Creator of General Motors* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 49-96. Flint's turn-of-the-century carriage and wagon industry earned it the title of "Vehicle City" well before the coming of the automobile. In 1903 James Whiting brought the Buick Company to the city and placed it under the direction of William C. Durant. In 1908 Durant transferred the entire Buick works to Flint and later in the year Buick, Champion Ignition, Weston-Mott axle works, and other subsidiary industries incorporated as the General Motors Corporation.
2. *Flint Journal*, Mar. 15, Apr. 29, 1911, Feb. 12, 1912.
3. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census (1910), Population*, p. 85; Flint Institute of Research and Planning, *Compiled Studies, Part Four* (Flint n.d.), p. 2; *Flint Journal*, Apr. 7, 1909, Jan. 10, Mar. 31, Apr. 11, Apr. 20, Nov. 15, 1911, Oct. 2, 1912.
4. Wood, *History of Genesee County*, p. 818; Flint Institute of Research and Planning, *Compiled Studies, Part Four*, p. 1; John Ihlder, "Flint: When Men Build Automobiles Who Builds Their City?" *Survey* 36 (Sept. 2, 1916): 549; *Flint Journal*, Mar. 17, 1911, Jan. 3, Feb. 12, June 10, 1912.
5. Ihlder, "Flint: When Men Build Automobiles, Who Builds Their City?" p. 549; Wood, *History of Genesee County*, pp. 777, 784-; *Flint Journal*, Apr. 10, 1913.
6. Pierce F. Lewis, "Geography in the Politics of Flint," PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1958, p. 24; Ihlder, "Flint: When Men Build Automobiles, Who Builds Their City?" pp. 552, 555; *Flint Journal*, June 13, 1912.
7. On streets and sewers, see *Flint Journal*, Dec. 12, 1910, Mar. 20, Oct. 19, Dec. 23, 1911; Jan. 11, Mar. 19, May 28, 1912. On the threat of typhoid fever, see *ibid.*, May 7, Oct. 17, Oct. 21, 1911, Jan. 5, 1912.
8. Arthur Pound, *The Turning Wheel: The Story of General Motors Through Twenty-five Years* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1934), p. 90.
9. A. Russell Bond, "Going Through the Shops —I," *Scientific American* 110 (Jan. 3, 1914): 8. See also Bond, "Going Through the Shops-II," *ibid.* (Jan. 10, 1914): 30-31, 56; Bond, "Going Through the Shops-III," *ibid.* (Jan. 17, 1914): 66-67; Theodore M. R. von Keler, "Labor-saving Devices that Produce Automobiles," *ibid.* 104 (Oct. 12, 1912): 304-5.
10. Bond, "Going Through the Shops —I," p. 9.
11. Arthur Pound, "General Motors' Old Home Town," *Michigan History* 40 (Mar. 1956): 90. See also Pound, *Turning Wheel*, p. 85; Flint Institute of Research and Planning, *Compiled Studies, Part Four*, p. 3.
12. Pound, "General Motors' Old Home Town," pp. 85-86.

13. Gustin, *Billy Durant*, pp. 137-44; John B. Rae, *American Automobile Manufacturers: The First Forty Years* (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1959), pp. 88-89; Pound, *Turning Wheel*, pp. 75, 121.

14. Gustin, *Billy Durant*, pp. 86, 136; Pound, "General Motors Old Home Town," pp. 90, 125; Pound, *Turning Wheel*, pp. 132-35; *Chicago Daily Socialist*, Apr. 5, Nov. 16, 1911. The *Cleveland Citizen*, Apr. 15, 1911, speculated that Flint workers were "infected" by the open-shop battles raging at that time in Battle Creek and "carried their fight to the ballot box. . . ."

15. *Flint Journal*, Apr. 11, June 27, 1911; *Chicago Socialist*, Apr. 4, Nov. 16, 1911; *Flint Flashes*, Feb. 26, 1911; Mar. 30, 1912.

16. *New York Call*, July 17, 1911; *Flint Journal*, May 16, 20, 1911, Mar. 14, 1912; Pound, *Turning Wheel*, p. 90. See Charles Leinenweber, "The American Socialist Party and 'New' Immigrants," *Science and Society* 32 (Winter 1968): 1-25.

17. *Flint Flashes*, Feb. 26, 1911. Information on Local Flint is sketchy before 1911. The Socialist party *Monthly Bulletin* mentions a resolution coming from a local in Flint as early as 1907. By August 1911 membership in the local was between 450 and 500, and in the 1910 elections the Socialists polled around 600 votes. See *Monthly Bulletin*, Jan. 1907; Arthur A. Guild, "What the Socialists are Doing in Flint, Michigan," *Columbus Socialist*, Aug. 5, 1911; "Power of the Press Won Flint For the Socialists," *Chicago Daily Socialist*, Nov. 16, 1911; *Flint Journal*, Apr. 3, 1911; A. W. Ricker, "Ricker Tells of Peculiar Situation in Flint, Michigan," *Chicago Daily Socialist*, Feb. 3, 1912.

18. This impression of the Flint local derives from the few existing copies of the *Flint Flashes*, 1911-12, which are located in the Flint Public Library and were very graciously copied, pieced together, and mailed to me by Cheryl Renwick of that institution. As far as I know, these are the only extant publications from the local.

19. *Flint Flashes*, Feb. 26, 1911.

20. Workers in the North End had been politicized not only by the Socialist agitation but by the local prohibition fight in the spring of 1911. See *Flint Journal*, Mar. 30, 1911. For voting statistics and analysis, see *Flint Journal*, Apr. 4, 1911. the First Ward—the North End working-class district located near the auto factories—delivered the largest number of Socialist votes and also comprised the most principled Socialist vote, having elected a "straight Socialist ticket from alderman to constable," according to the *Journal*.

21. *Flint Journal*, Apr. 4-11, 1911. The *Journal* editors found it difficult to accustom themselves to hearing three councilmen address the chair as "Comrade Mayor." See *Flint Journal*, Apr. 18, 1911.

22. *Flint Journal*, Apr. 6, 1911.

23. *Ibid.*, Apr. 11, 1911.

24. *Ibid.*, Apr. 4, June 27, 1911. The Socialists planned to "swing the other aldermen around into their [the Socialists] way of thinking" on specific issues and to "increase Socialist representation at the next election," according to James McFarland. See *Flint Journal*, Apr. 6, 1911.

25. *Flint Journal*, May 19, 1911; *California Social-Democrat*, Aug. 10, 1911; *Chicago Daily Socialist*, Oct. 28, 1911; *Flint Witness*, May 27, 1911.

26. *Flint Journal*, June 6, June 27, Nov. 6, Dec. 6, Dec. 12, Dec. 19, 1911, Feb. 2, 1912. Other Socialist administrations experienced the same problems. Socialists from

Milwaukee, the largest Socialist-run city in the nation, counseled others to hold firm: "If you have appointed men who are competent to fill the position and the Council refuses to confirm merely for political reasons, the sympathy of the people will be with you." Daniel C. Hoan to William Brueckman, July 2, 1913, Socialist Party of America Papers, Duke University.

27. *Flint Journal*, July 29, Oct. 2, Oct. 23, 1911.

28. Ibid., Apr. 20, May 2, May 23, May 29, June 20, Aug. 1, 1911; Guild, "What the Socialists are Doing in Flint, Michigan."

29. For a critical appraisal of the party's relation to the world of practical politics, see Daniel Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States," in Donald Drew Egbert and Stow Persons, *Socialism and American Life*, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 217.

30. *Flint Journal*, Apr. 9, Apr. 18, Apr. 20, Apr. 24, June 27, July 18, Aug. 1, Aug. 22, Oct. 17, 21, Nov. 7, Dec. 12, 1911, Feb. 6, 1912; *Chicago Daily Socialist*, Apr. 5, Aug. 10, 1911. Menton brought out the class implications of each issue, the success of which in one case, he claimed, would "safeguard . . . the people and those that toil in the shops, mills, factories, railroads; in fact, the workers in general." See *Flint Journal*, July 18, 1911.

31. *Flint Journal*, Jan. 16, April 4, Aug. 17, Dec. 14, Dec. 15, Dec. 19, 1911.

32. Guild, "What the Socialists are Doing in Flint."

33. "What the Capitalists Have Done to the Workers of Flint," *Flint Flashes*, Mar. 30, 1912. See also "Mayor Menton Again Favors the Poor," *ibid.*

34. *Flint Journal*, Nov. 8, Nov. 9, 1911. The editor noted gains of 100 and 200 percent in Socialist votes in other cities across the nation.

35. The political opposition to the Socialists in Flint originated in the business community and particularly among friends of Charles S. Mott, whose prominence among Flint businessmen is discussed below. Mott's friends persuaded the industrialist to head a fusion ticket in 1912 because they "believed he was the right person to wrest the City Hall from the 'radical' party of Mayor John A. C. Menton, who had been elected the previous campaign on the Socialist Ticket." See "Charles S. Mott, 1875-1973," *Flint Journal*, special edition, Feb. 24, 1973, p. 7.

36. *Flint Journal*, Jan. 12, Jan. 20, 1912.

37. The Independent Citizens' platform is outlined in *Flint Journal*, Jan. 26 | VI 2; the Socialists' platform in *ibid.*, Feb. 23, 1912.

38. *Flint Journal*, Jan. 12, Mar. 13, 1912.

39. Ibid. See "Charles S. Mott, 1875-1973"; Clarence H. Young and William A. Quinn, *Foundation for Living: The Story of Charles Stewart Mott and Flint* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963); *Flint Journal*, April 4, 1912.

40. *Flint Journal*, Mar. 5, 1912. In the ICP's strategy for the workingmen the elimination of politics was also crucial since Mott's "politics" were obviously different from theirs. Workingmen, the ICP hoped, would not be "slow to see that because a man is an employer is no reason why they should not support him." *Flint Journal*, Mar. 15, 1912. See also *ibid.*, Mar. 11, Mar. 14, 1912. *The Journal* claimed that the city's businessmen, professionals, bankers, heavy taxpayers, and industrialists formed "a united force behind his candidacy."

41. *Flint Journal*, Mar. 4, Mar. 5, Mar. 11, Mar. 14, Mar. 22, 1912.

42. *Ibid.*, March 6, Mar. 7, 1912.
43. *Flint Arrow*, Mar. 23, 1912; *Flint Journal*, Mar. 30, 1912.
44. *Flint Arrow*, Mar. 23, 1912.
45. *Ibid.*, Mar. 15, 1912; *Flint Journal*, Mar. 7, 1912. *The Arrow* declared that "if there is any one thing it is not important for the voters in the coming election to know it is the communist Manifesto."
46. *Flint Journal*, Feb. 12, Feb. 19, Feb. 27, Mar. 4, Mar. 6, Mar. 16, Mar 21, 1912. The *Journal* also ran articles from academics "refuting" socialism. See Feb. 7, Feb. 19, Feb. 22. Academics, of course, were more balanced in approach than were ministers: "Many Socialists advocate the abolition of homes, and fret love, and that children should be the wards of the state. . . . The bestial lives and immoral characters of very many Socialists have served as a stench in the nostril; of many people. . . . But that is not socialism; it is simply the ravings of lustful men who are Socialists." Alfred Raymond Johns, "Strengths, Weaknesses and Problems of Socialism," *Flint Arrow*, Mar. 15, 1912.
47. *Flint Journal*, Mar. 18, Mar. 27, 1912.
48. *Flint Flashes*, Mar. 23, Mar. 30, 1912.
49. *Ibid.*, Mar. 23, Mar. 30, 1912.
50. *Ibid.*, Mar. 23, 1912. See also Menton's speech to the typographical workers in Flint in *Flint Journal*, June 27, 1911.
51. *Flint Flashes*, Mar. 23, 1912.
52. *Party Builder*, Feb. 21, 1914; *Flint Arrow*, Mar. 30, 1912.
53. See Ralph Corngold to Carl D. Thompson, May 10, 1913, Socialist Party of American Papers. James H. Maurer, a Socialist state legislator from Pennsylvania, discussed the pressures of office upon party members: "I dare not vote wrong on a single issue. If I did, the whole state would howl about it. . . . I have been attacked on all sides, misquoted by the press and lied about by crooked labor leaders." Maurer, "What It Means to Be a Socialist Legislator," *Chicago Daily Socialist* May 9, 1911.
54. *Flint Journal*, Mar. 14, 1912. The reporter approached seven factory workers before he found one who would discuss politics with him. Perhaps he approached seven discreet Socialists and then found a pro-Mott worker.
55. *Flint Flashes*, Mar. 23, Mar. 30, 1912; Pound, "General Motors' Old Home Town," p. 91; *Flint Journal*, Mar. 3, 1912; *Flint Arrow*, Mar. 15, 1912.
56. *Flint Journal*, Apr. 2, 1912.
57. *Ibid.*, Apr. 2, Apr. 17, Apr. 27, 1912.
58. *Ibid.*, Apr. 17, Apr. 27, Apr. 29, June 1, June 5, June 14, 1912.
59. *Ibid.*, Apr. 29, 1912.
60. Lewis, "Geography in the Politics of Flint," charts the third-party vote, 1860-1956. See p. 28. The Socialist vote in 1913 remained as strong as the 1912 vote—2,358 in 1912 and 2,341 in 1913—but Mott's vote increased from 3,920 in 1912 to 4,290 in 1913. In a three-way race in 1914, Menton's vote dropped dramatically to 492. The 1914 race was complicated by Mott's advocacy of an unpopular charter revision. Faced with the prospect of Mott and a business-oriented charter, it appears that most of Menton's support shifted to Mott's non-Socialist opponent. Factionalism reduced the party's effectiveness.
61. Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxism Socialism," p. 217.