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The Puerto Rican Organized Workers' Movement and the American Federation of Labor 1901 to 1934

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

The Puerto Rican Organized Workers' Movement and the American Federation of Labor, 1901 to 1934

by

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Most studies of the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico (FLT) have emphasized its non-socialist character and stressed the strong impact Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) exerted in promoting the FLT's trade unionist and reformist politics. Other studies emphasize the early organized labor movement's socialist ideology and the FLT's independence of action vis-à-vis the AFL. This study argues that although the FLT did indeed grow out of a movement influenced by radical socialist and anarchist thinking, it exhibited, from its inception, a predominantly trade unionist and reformist orientation. This was to some extent the result of AFL influence, but primarily a consequence of the particular conditions operating in Puerto Rico.

The AFL supported the democratic rights of Puerto Rican workers to form labor unions and to strike for higher wages, a shorter work day, and better working conditions. It provided financial assistance in the form of paid labor organizers. Puerto Rican workers benefited somewhat from the AFL's strike and sick benefits program. In addition, the AFL furthered the organizational growth of the FLT through the

personal efforts of AFL President Samuel Gompers, the commissioning and monitoring of volunteer labor organizers, and the chartering of Puerto Rican labor unions. However, the AFL only served to reinforce the trade unionist and reformist tendencies already present within the FLT from the time of its founding.

Numerous factors other than the ideological influence of the AFL furthered the FLT's trade unionist and reformist position. These included the early labor movement's failure to develop a satisfactory strategy for achieving a new social order and the vague vision of the kind of society it sought to create. Moreover, the repression and persecution the FLT suffered at the hands of local employers and government officials, the promise of U.S. democracy in contrast to Spain's autocratic rule, and the inherent difficulties of organizing unskilled agricultural laborers also contributed to the appeal of trade union and reform politics.

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ACRONYMS

AFL American Federation of Labor

FLT Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico, Free Federation of Workers of Puerto Rico

FRT Federación Regional de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico, Regional Federation of Workers of Puerto Rico

PF Partido Federal, Federal Party

PR Partido Republicano, Republican Party

PS Partido Socialista, Socialist Party

PU Partido Unión, Union Party

PUR Partido Unión Republicana, Republican Unión Party

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that following the U.S. acquisition of Puerto Rico after the War of 1898, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) played a significant role in the growth of the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico (Free Federation of Workers of Puerto Rico, FLT). The purpose of this thesis is to examine the emerging Puerto Rican organized workers' movement, as represented by the FLT, and most importantly, to address conflicting theories about the AFL's role in its development during the first three decades of the twentieth century. This introductory chapter begins with a brief overview of the history of organized labor in Puerto Rico and identifies several key questions that will be addressed on the scope and impact of the AFL on the FLT. It includes a review of the secondary sources on the history of the island's organized labor movement.

Historical Overview of the Organized Labor Movement

Workers in Puerto Rico began to form labor organizations during the last third of the nineteenth century. In 1897, shortly after his arrival on the island from Spain via Cuba, Santiago Iglesias Pantín and other artisan workers laid the basis for the early twentieth century organized labor movement when they founded the Federación Regional de los

Trabajadores de Puerto Rico (Regional Federation of Workers of Puerto Rico, FRT). Shortly after the United States invasion of 1898, following a split in the Federation, the FLT emerged in June of 1899 as the organized expression of the island's emerging working class. The FLT was to remain the principal labor organization in Puerto Rico throughout the first three and a half decades of the century.

In the years before the First World War, the FLT undertook a mass campaign to organize Puerto Rican laborers undergoing a rapid process of proletarianization. The FLT led many militant strikes of skilled workers in urban areas, as well as the massive agricultural strikes in 1905-06 and 1915-16 periods that involved thousands of rural workers in dozens of agricultural districts throughout the island.

The FLT's strategy included electoral politics, as well as union organizing. In the years before 1915, the FLT briefly entered into electoral alliances with the political parties of the land owning elite and urban professionals. After the U.S. annexation of Puerto Rico, the two principal political parties on the island were the Partido Federal (Federal Party, PF), which consisted mostly of large agriculturalists with interests in export coffee production, and the Partido Republicano (Republican Party, PR), which brought together urban professionals and large land owners involved in sugar production. In 1902, the FLT allied itself with the PF. However, after the PF broke up in 1904, the FLT became part of a new party, the Partido Unión (Union Party,

PU) which Puerto Rican hacendados, mostly those in coffee production, had organized in an effort to unite all political sectors in response to U.S. colonialism on the island. However, the FLT quickly withdrew from the PU when, during the agricultural strikes of 1905-06, it noted the class contradictions that existed between the workers the Federation represented and the large land owners and agricultural employers who made up the PU.

Feeling the need for an independent political presence, the FLT participated on its own in the elections of 1906 and 1908. However, in the wake of poor results due to its organizational weakness, the FLT thereafter concentrated on organizing the island's growing rural labor force. In 1915, after a highly successful drive to unionize agricultural workers, it founded the Partido Socialista (Socialist Party, PS) as its political wing and once again took a direct part in electoral politics. The PS achieved great successes in the elections of 1917 when it obtained 14 percent of the vote and won in six municipalities and in 1920 when it polled 20 percent of the votes cast and won eight municipal elections.

In the period after the First World War, however, the organized workers' movement became increasingly conservative and more concerned with obtaining public office and the benefits of government positions than with the social and economic interests of the working class. In 1924, the PS established an electoral pact, known as the Coalición (the Coalition), with elements of the conservative and pro-U.S.

Partido Republicano. In 1932 the PS came to power for the first time as part of a coalition with the Partido Unión Republicana (Republican Party Union, PUR). Among the PUR leadership were owners of large sugar and needlework corporations.

As part of a ruling coalition with a political party representing capitalists interests, the FLT and PS were reluctant to press labor demands that antagonized their partners in the government. Thus, in January of 1934 the FLT readily agreed to a labor contract favored by the sugar interests represented by the PUR even though workers openly opposed the accord. Tens of thousands of sugarcane workers subsequently went on strike and repudiated the leadership of the Federación Libre and the Partido Socialista after blaming them for selling out the workers' interests. These organizations then entered a period of decline from which they never recovered as many workers joined a new labor organization, the Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, CGT) and a new political party, the Partido Popular Democratico (Popular Democratic Party, PPD).

A conspicuous aspect of the history of the FLT was its relationship to the American Federation of Labor (AFL). In September of 1901, the FLT affiliated with the AFL and thereafter participated fully as a member of the Federation. The FLT ardently supported both U.S. citizenship for the people of Puerto Rico and statehood for the island and it

consistently opposed calls for Puerto Rican independence. For more than thirty years the AFL provided the FLT with political, organizational, and financial support until it ceased to function as a viable labor organization in the mid-nineteen thirties.

A comparison of the AFL and FLT presents some sharp contrasts. The AFL focused only on organizing and representing the interests of skilled industrial urban workers. In Puerto Rico, the FLT sought to organize rural unskilled agricultural laborers as well as skilled urban workers. In addition, while the AFL opposed the establishment of a labor party and the direct participation of workers' organizations in electoral politics, the FLT favored both. Moreover, while the AFL disapproved of socialism, the FLT espoused socialist ideology. Another outstanding feature of the FLT was its decidedly annexationist politics.

The present study focuses on two fundamental questions in relation to the history of the organized labor movement in Puerto Rico. What was the ideology of this movement: was it really socialist or simply trade unionist and reformist? The secondary literature presents conflicting views on this issue. Secondly, what role did the AFL play in the development of the island's organized workers' movement? The existing historical studies have not thoroughly examined the role of the AFL in Puerto Rico. By addressing these questions, this study considers whether the AFL decisively influenced the politics of the FLT, or if it was merely one

of a number of factors which determined the Puerto Rican labor movement's ideology and practice.

Review of the Secondary Literature

There is little scholarship on the role of the AFL in Puerto Rico. The historical literature on the U.S. labor movement does not address the influence of the AFL on the island or does so in only a very superficial manner. For example in The A.F.of L. in the Time of Gompers, Philip Taft devotes only a few paragraphs to the AFL's participation in the labor movement in Puerto Rico.[1] More recently, Julie Greene's Pure and Simple Politics, The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917, neglects to mention the AFL's involvement in Puerto Rico at all.[2]

The neglect of Puerto Rican labor history in U.S. labor studies is arguably an unfortunate by-product of the ambiguous political relationship of Puerto Rico to the United States. In some regards, the island functions as an integral part of the U.S. and in others as an independent nation. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, but they can not participate in Presidential elections or send voting representatives to Congress. Yet, they send delegates to both the Democratic and Republican national party conventions. Puerto Rico is part of

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[1]Philip Taft, The A.F.of L. in the Time of Gompers (New York: Octagon Books), 1970.

[2]Julie Greene, Pure and Simple Politics, The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881-1917 (New York: Cambridge University Press), 1998.

the U.S. tariff system and its economy is fully integrated into the U.S. economy, but it fields its own Olympic team and participates independently in a number of international cultural events, such as the Miss Universe competitions. For most of U.S. history, the Puerto Rican labor movement has been tangential to the main concerns of U.S. labor.

In Puerto Rico, the questions that are the focus of this study have been addressed somewhat more extensively even though they have not been a major concern of traditional Puerto Rican political history, nor of the social histories and labor studies produced on the island since the early 1970s. A review of how these questions have been answered discloses significant differences in interpretation regarding the FLT's socialist ideology and the role of the AFL in Puerto Rico.

Many of the island's historians and political scientists who have commented on the history of the FLT and the PS deny that these were socialist organizations and attributed FLT and PS ideology to the influence the American Federation of Labor. Other scholars have argued that the FLT and PS began as socialist and revolutionary organizations, but only subsequently became trade unionist and reformist. They emphasize, however, that the AFL did not play a decisive role in that transformation.

In Puerto Rico Freedom and Power in the Caribbean, U.S. scholar Gordon K. Lewis, placed Puerto Rico's history in a Pan-Caribbean framework and in the context of the island's

continuing neo-colonial relationship with the United States. Lewis portrayed the labor movement in highly unflattering terms. He claimed that it was never really socialist, but had from the very beginning surrendered to what Lewis referred to as the endemic temptation in all Latin American countries to becoming, "the ward of a bogus social and political radicalism."[3]

He characterized FLT leader Santiago Iglesias's political thinking as "an eloquent confusion of disparate and ill-digested ideas gathered indiscriminately from Marxism, Spanish syndicalism, and American labor of the Gompers style."[4] However, Lewis argued that the FLT and its Partido Socialista acted independently of the American Federation of Labor. As proof he cited the founding of the labor movement's Partido Socialista in 1915 as a deviation from Gompers' strategy of using the labor vote as a way of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies."[5] Lewis explained the electoral alliance between the PS and the conservative Partido Republicano, a party of hacendados and professionals, as the product of their mutual interest in promoting U.S. statehood for Puerto Rico.

In Party Politics in Puerto Rico, U.S. political scientist Robert Anderson examined the growth of the party

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[3]Gordon K. Lewis, Puerto Rico, Freedom and Power in the Caribbean (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1963), p. 233.

[4]Ibid., p. 236.

[5]Ibid., p. 233.

system and political developments on the island in the period after the Second World War. Although he did not focus on the early labor movement, he claimed that the AFL strongly influenced organized labor in Puerto Rico. Anderson argued that at least until 1915, when the PS was organized, Santiago Iglesias readily accepted "Gompers's theory of the political role and nature of the labor movement."[6] Nevertheless, he agreed with Lewis's analysis of Santiago Iglesias's brand of socialism. Anderson viewed Iglesias as a pragmatic leader who was "untouched by the subtleties of European Marxist Socialism."[7] He explained that the contradiction between Gompers' political ideas and the organization of an independent labor party in Puerto Rico for the purpose of direct electoral participation was a result of the partisan nature of island politics. Anderson attributed the PS's undoctrinaire and nonideological politics to Puerto Rican political tradition, Santiago Iglesias's personality, and Samuel Gompers's influence.[8]

The historian Blanca Silvestrini also stressed the influence of Samuel Gompers on the workers' movement in Puerto Rico. In Los trabajadores y el Partido Socialista, 1932-1940, Silvestrini argued that during the 1930s, the political ambitions of the leadership of the FLT and PS took

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[6]Robert W. Anderson, Party Politics in Puerto Rico (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 34.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p.35.

precedence over the economic and social interests of the workers they represented. She explained the alliance between the PS and the PUR as the consequence of the two parties' desire for political office and their support for U.S. statehood for Puerto Rico. Silvestrini acknowledged that the participation of labor unions in electoral politics represented an area of disagreement between the AFL and the FLT, but nevertheless concluded that the American Federation of Labor exerted a strong influence on the labor movement in Puerto Rico through its emphasis on the organization of workers by trades and the control of strike movements by the central leadership.[9]

Another Puerto Rican historian who stressed the impact of Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor in Puerto Rico was Arturo Morales Carrión. In his study of Puerto Rico from Spanish colonial times to the present, Puerto Rico, A Political and Cultural History, Morales Carrión concluded that Iglesias paid a heavy price for the powerful allies and protection he received from Samuel Gompers and the AFL. He argued that Iglesias began as a Marxist-influenced socialist, but became Gompers' faithful disciple and converted to "American trade unionism, the doctrines of U.S. constitutionalism, and the intricacies of

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[9]Blanca Silvestrini, Los trabajadores y el Partido Socialista 1932-1940, (Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria, 1979), pp.19-20.

U.S. politics, and the propaganda system the A.F. of L. used to spread its gospel."[10]

For Morales Carrión, Gompers was a benign but eager tutor who sought to Americanize Puerto Rican labor attitudes, structures, and methods. Carrión believed that, "with Iglesias at the helm, many of the [island's labor] leaders were willing to answer Gompers's call to action and embrace the new strong fatherland and its promised freedom."[11] In its most extreme form, this line of interpretation views Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor as direct agents of the imperialist bourgeoisie of the United States and its colonial policy in Puerto Rico. As such, the AFL is depicted as undermining the radical politics and militancy of the early Puerto Rican labor movement. Gompers and the AFL are portrayed as instrumental in promoting support for U.S. citizenship and statehood for Puerto Rico.

Thus, in La política y lo político en Puerto Rico, Wilfredo Matos Cintrón claimed that the AFL played a primary role in promoting "yankee imperialism" in Puerto Rico.[12] Cintrón declared that while the AFL's support for the extension of democratic rights to Puerto Rico seemed progressive, it was also reactionary and played into the

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[10]Arturo Morales Carrión, Puerto Rico, A Political and Cultural History (New York: Norton, 1983), p. 178.

[11]Ibid., p. 179.

[12]Wilfredo Matos Cintrón, La política y lo político en Puerto Rico (México: Ediciones Era, 1980), p. 63.

hands of U.S. colonialism by weakening the anti-colonial united front that might have been forged between island workers and local hacendados, the commercial farm owners.[13] This, he stated, occurred because most hacendados opposed U.S. colonial policies as detrimental to their economic interests, while many workers, especially the leaders of the FLT and the PS, took a pro-U.S. stance as a result of the political benefits they obtained from the United States. Consequently, they advocated U.S. citizenship and annexation to the U.S. while many hacendados demanded independence or at least greater political autonomy for Puerto Rico.

Juan Angel Silén also emphasized the key role the American Federation of Labor played in subordinating the Puerto Rican workers' movement to the process of political annexation to the United States. In his brief history of the island's labor movement, Apuntes para la historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño, Silén claimed that the FLT's affiliation to the AFL resulted in acquiescence to its reformist politics, the organization of workers by trade, and the development of an incipient labor aristocracy.[14]

All of the studies referred to above emphasized the non-socialist character of the early organized labor movement in Puerto Rico and stressed the strong influence Samuel Gompers

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[13]Ibid., p.64.

[14]Juan Angel Silen, Apuntes para la historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1978), 52.

and the AFL exerted in promoting the movement's trade unionist and reformist politics. A very different perspective, however, emerged in the early 1970s when Gervasio García and Angel Quintero Rivera led a "new history" movement which focused on the history of the working class in Puerto Rico and emphasized social and economic developments instead of political history.[15] Their research focused primarily on reconstructing the origins of the Puerto Rican working class and tracing the history of its earliest attempts to form labor organizations during the last third of the nineteenth century. They also analyzed the impact of U.S. political and economic policies on workers in Puerto Rico during the first three decades of the twentieth century. In contrast to most of the historical studies cited above, Gervasio García and Angel Quintero Rivera's work emphasized the early labor movement's genuine socialist ideology and the FLT's independence of action.

In an essay on the origins of the Puerto Rican labor movement, Gervasio García observed that it is important to question whether the organized workers of Puerto Rico subserviently followed the political dictates of the American Federation of Labor or instead pursued a course of action outlined by their own leaders and determined by circumstances in Puerto Rico. While acknowledging that the FLT developed within the context of its affiliation to the

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[15]James Dietz, "Puerto Rico's New History," Latin American Research Review 19 num. 1 (1984): 210-222.

American Federation of Labor, García concluded that the affinity between the politics of the two federations was only coincidental and was not always maintained. According to García, both federations viewed the organization of the working class as their primary goal, and their political participation was secondary. However, García claimed the AFL and the FLT applied this principle differently, with the FLT being decidedly more political than the AFL.[16] García argued that Anderson was incorrect when he claimed the FLT simply followed AFL policy until 1915. On the contrary, he agreed with Lewis' view that the FLT acted independently of the AFL.

In their book Desafío y solidaridad, breve historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño, Gervasio García and Angel Quintero Rivera stated that during the early years of the affiliation between the two organizations, the American Federation of Labor remained mostly indifferent towards workers in Puerto Rico.[17] This indifference, they claimed, guaranteed the autonomous development of the labor movement on the island.[18] The view that the island's labor movement developed its own character is also supported by Francisco A. Scarano in Puerto Rico, cinco siglos de historia. According

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[16]Gervasio García, "Los origenes del movimiento obrero en Puerto Rico: mitos y problemas" in Historia crítica, historia sin coartadas, algunos problemas de la historia de Puerto Rico (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1985), p.82.

[17]Gervasio García and Angel Quintero Rivera, Desafío y solidaridad, p.37.

[18]Ibid., p.58.

to Scarano, the labor movement in Puerto Rico developed primarily as a result of the conditions which prevailed on the island. These conditions included a large number of rural agricultural laborers, many unskilled urban workers, a high level of unemployment, and low wages.[19]

The ideology of the Puerto Rican labor movement was another issue addressed by the new history. Angel Quintero Rivera challenged Gordon Lewis and Robert Anderson's view that the labor movement was never really a radical or truly socialist movement. Quintero claimed that libertarian socialism was the ideology of radical artisan workers at the start of the century and that it influenced the labor movement for several decades. According to Quintero, the PS, organized in 1915 by proletarianized artisans and plantation laborers, sought a radical transformation of Puerto Rican society. In addition, he claimed that by 1924, island politics revolved around the Puerto Rican working class movement and that its militancy and resolute socialist politics threatened the hacendados and the growing capitalist plantation system as well.[20]

In an article on the history of the Puerto Rican working class, Quintero Rivera argued that the origins and

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[19]Francisco A.Scarano, Puerto Rico, cinco siglos de historia (San Juan: McGraw Hill, 1993), p.639.

[20] Angel Quintero Rivera, "El Partido Socialista y la lucha triangular de las primeras décadas bajo la dominación norteamericana," Revista de Ciencias Sociales 19, num. 1 (1975): 49-99.

development of a radical organized labor movement on the island was rooted in the process of proletarianization of the laboring population that began in the late nineteenth century and that intensified in the aftermath of the U.S. occupation. He claimed, however, that in the nineteen twenties this process of proletarianization came to an end and that this fact explains the labor movement's turn toward reformist politics and specifically the PS's alliance with the PUR. "The paralysis in the proletarianization process and the growth of marginados [marginalized workers] shattered the faith of the working class in the certainty of its future victory," and that as a consequence, the PS entered into an electoral alliance with the PUR in order to "participate in government and put through specific measures leading to immediate improvement."[21]

In The Organized Labor Movement in Puerto Rico, Miles Galvin, like Angel Quintero Rivera, characterized the island's early labor movement as radical. Galvin claimed that interpretations that denied its radical nature were based on Iglesias's memoirs, written thirty years after the fact, in which he revised the initial ideological positions of the FLT.[22] Galvin emphasized that the movement espoused radical ideology but could not implement it. Thus, the movement's

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[21]Angel Quintero Rivera, "Puerto Rico, c. 1870-1940," in The Cambridge History of Latin America, Vol. V (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 284.

[22]Miles Galvin, The Organized Labor Movement in Puerto Rico (London: Associated University presses, 1979), p. 69.

embrace of reform was based on a calculation of the relative feasibility of alternatives to revolution.[23]

Galvin also believed that the American Federation of Labor influenced the movement's transformation towards reformism, but emphasized that this was not the result of any Machiavellian plot. He defined the AFL-FLT relationship as one of "flexible ambiguity" wherein the FLT in some regards functioned just like any other state federation of labor, while in others it acted like the labor federation of an independent republic. Galvin explained the increasingly reformist politics of the island's organized labor movement as partly a consequence of the weak position it found itself in due to the superabundance of unskilled and easily replaceable workers. The leaders of the labor movement, he argued, became convinced that the best way to promote social reform was through electoral politics rather than labor strikes.[24] He claimed, moreover, that the separation of the island's working class movement from the struggle for independence was not necessarily due to AFL influence. Rather, it was based on the view that an independent Puerto Rico free of U.S surveillance "would leave working people at the total mercy of the island's employing class."[25]

This review of the literature highlights the conflicting interpretations advanced by scholars in Puerto Rico regarding

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[23]Ibid., p.98.

[24]Ibid., p. 65.

[25]Ibid. p. 63.

the ideology of the early Puerto Rican organized labor movement, and the role the AFL played on the island. As noted above, some historians and political scientists argued the movement was never really socialist, while others claimed the opposite. Of those taking the latter position, many maintained that the AFL exerted a decisive influence in the FLT's transformation from socialist and revolutionary to trade unionist and reformist. Others, however, have denied the AFL such a prominent role, instead, attributing the change in the labor movement's politics to other causes. Quintero stressed the ending of the proletarianization process and Galvin emphasized the problems of high unemployment and severe repression of labor strikes as factors that contributed to the movement's inability to put its revolutionary ideology into practice.

Given the central importance of the AFL in this controversy, it is striking that AFL sources have not been used in addressing questions relating to its role in Puerto Rico. Valuable AFL primary sources exist which have never been examined in researching the history of the island's labor movement and no studies detailing the AFL's participation in that history have been written. In "¿Colonialismo sindical o solidaridad internacional?", Félix Ojeda Reyes criticized Puerto Rican scholars for their failure to avail themselves of important AFL documents in the United States.[26] These documents and resources include the

proceedings of the annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor, the letters, editorials, articles, and reports that appeared in the AFL journal, The American Federationist, and AFL President Samuel Gompers' correspondence with labor leaders in Puerto Rico.

The present study incorporates these AFL sources. It also uses FLT and PS documentation, including their political programs and the surviving records of FLT labor congresses and the PS's founding convention. In addition, it uses the writings of prominent leaders of the early Puerto Rican labor movement.

The study finds that socialist and anarchist ideologies had a strong influence on the early labor movement in Puerto Rico. But there is a difference between the ideological writings of prominent leaders of the early organized workers' movement and the political programs and practice of the FLT and PS in the period under consideration. Although the FLT was strongly influenced by socialist and anarchist thinking, it exhibited, from its very inception, a predominantly trade unionist and reformist orientation. This reflected the particular conditions prevailing in Puerto Rico and not the pervasive influence of the American Federation of Labor. The AFL did play a significant role in the FLT's organizational development and its trade unionist and reformist ideology.

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[26] Félix Ojeda Reyes, "¿Colonialismo sindical o solidaridad international? Las relaciones entre el movimiento obrero puertorriqueño y el norteamericano en los inicios de la Federación Libre (1898-1901)," Revista de Ciencias Sociales 26, num. 1-4 (1987), p. 314.

However, the AFL only served to reinforce those tendencies already present within the FLT.

For example, the AFL helped further the pro-U.S. annexationist aspirations of most of the leaders and members of the FLT. Many organized workers in Puerto Rico desired United States citizenship and U.S. statehood for the island, and the AFL can not be held responsible for these sentiments. Puerto Rican workers wanted this for themselves, for their own reasons, and not because the AFL pushed it on them. Similarly, the AFL helped further the trade unionist and reformist ideology already present within the FLT from the time of its founding.

The organized labor movement on the island exhibited a strong faith in democratic and republican form of government. Commitment to this ideology was rooted in the history of the labor movement during the final period of Spanish rule in Puerto Rico and the early years of the United States' comparatively more liberal political administration which predisposed the labor movement to the possibility of successful reformist politics. Later, in the wake of many years of violent repression of labor strikes, reformist politics became an increasingly attractive option.

Overview of the Study

This chapter has surveyed the history of the organized labor movement in Puerto Rico, reviewed the secondary literature on the topic, and identified conflicting

interpretations about the role of the American Federation of Labor in Puerto Rico. Chapter II provides the political, economic, and social context within which the organized labor movement in Puerto Rico emerged and expanded. It examines the origins of the island's working class during the last third of the nineteenth century and its accelerated growth in the three decades after the United States acquired the island. Chapter II also reviews the reasons behind the U.S. intervention in the Cuban struggle for independence and its declaration of war against Spain. In addition, it addresses the nature of the political relationship the U.S. established with Puerto Rico and the impact of U.S. policies on the island's economy and its people.

Chapter III then focuses on the ideology of the early workers' movement as represented in the political writings of some of its most important leaders. This chapter illustrates the influence that socialist and anarchist ideas had on the Puerto Rican labor movement during the early years of the twentieth century. It also demonstrates that while early labor leaders had a good understanding of the economic and social problems they confronted, they did not have a very clear vision of the kind of society they wanted to establish. More importantly, they did not have a well conceived strategy for social change to promote the new social order they desired.

Chapter IV traces the history and development of the FLT from its founding in 1899 until 1934 when rank and file

members in the sugar industry went on a wildcat strike and repudiated the leadership. It shows that for many years class-conscious urban workers made a concerted effort to organize the broad mass of island workers, including unskilled agricultural laborers, to lead their struggles for better working and living conditions, and to safeguard their political and democractic rights. It includes a consideration of the growth of the FLT and its persecution by local authorities. Further, it broaches a discussion of the initial labor struggles and their violent repression, the establishment of the PS and its electoral participation, and the coalitions the PS entered into with the PR and the PUR.

Chapter V examines the role of the American Federation of Labor in the development of the organized labor movement in Puerto Rico. In the AFL, the organized workers of the island had a powerful ally. The AFL promoted the democratic rights of Puerto Rican workers to form labor unions and to strike for higher wages, a shorter work day, and better working conditions. It provided financial assistance in the form of pay for a full-time labor organizer and occasional part-time organizers. It included Puerto Rican workers in its strike fund and sick benefits program. In addition, the AFL furthered the organizational growth of the FLT through the personal efforts of Samuel Gompers, the commissioning and monitoring of volunteer labor organizers, and the chartering of Puerto Rican labor unions. The AFL also lobbied strenuously among political leaders in Washington D.C. for

the extension of United States citizenship to the people of Puerto Rico. In summary, this chapter shows that the AFL played a significant part in the history of the workers' movement in Puerto Rico.

Nonetheless, the AFL did not decisively influence the reformist politics of the FLT and the PS. The concluding chapter of this study will consider the numerous other factors that had a more fundamental, far-reaching impact. These include the persecution the FLT suffered, the nature of U.S. rule in Puerto Rico, and the difficulties of organizing unskilled agricultural workers.

Chapter II

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE GROWTH OF THE PUERTO RICAN WORKING CLASS

Nineteenth Century Economic Developments

This chapter focuses on the events and circumstances which provided the context for the organization of labor in the early twentieth century. It begins by describing the increase in population and economic growth during the nineteenth century, and comments on the coexistence of pre-capitalist and capitalist relations of production during the final years of the Spanish regime in Puerto Rico. It then discusses the background to the U.S. annexation of the island, the colonial relationship that it established, and the transformation of the island's agricultural economy. Lastly, the chapter considers the consolidation of capitalist relations of production and the conditions of labor that gave rise to the growth and development of the FLT and PS.

Impact of the Cédula de Gracias

In the early nineteenth century, Spain made a concerted effort to convert Puerto Rico into a profitable colonial enterprise. In 1815, the Spanish government promulgated a royal decree, known as the Cédula de Gracias, that promoted population growth on the island and stimulated economic development by encouraging immigration and lowering restrictions on commerce. This act provided free land grants to all white immigrants; those bringing slaves received additional land. The Cédula also established a fifteen year period of unrestricted trade between

Puerto Rico and Spain, permitted the free importation of agricultural equipment from Spain, and exempted new settlers from taxes for ten years.[1] Although trade with foreign nations had to be conducted on Spanish ships, and local authorities subsequently reduced the tax exemption for new colonists to five years, the Cédula de Gracias sparked economic development and population growth.[2]

Many of the immigrants attracted to Puerto Rico brought along capital, technological knowledge, tools and machinery, skills, and an entrepreneurial spirit that contributed to economic progress. The newcomers came from Spain and France, as well as from Latin America and Haiti, from where they arrived as refugees fleeing the wars of independence and revolution. Settlers also came from Louisiana and from other areas as well.[3] The increased immigration and the natural growth of the population led to the rapid growth in the number of people living on the island.

Slavery existed in Puerto Rico from the early sixteenth. However, it did not become an important source of labor until the nineteenth century. In the aftermath of the Cédula, the number of slaves increased greatly. In 1765, 5,037 slaves worked

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[1]Raquel Rosario Rivera, La Real Cédula de Gracias de 1815 y sus primeros effectos en Puerto Rico (San Juan: First Book Publishing, 1995), pp. 126-36.

[2]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, Institutional Change and Capitalist Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 21-22.

[3]Francisco A. Scarano, ed., Inmigración y clases sociales en el Puerto Rico del siglo XIX (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1981).

in Puerto Rico. The introduction of slaves into the island peaked in the years between 1825 and 1835. Most of the slaves brought to Puerto Rico during this period did not come directly from Africa; they came from other nearby islands, especially from the French Caribbean.[4]

Table 1
Population and Number of Slaves in Puerto Rico[5]

	Population	Slaves
1800	155,426	-
1802	-	13,333
1820	230,622	21,730
1846	447,914	51,265
1860	583,308	41,736
1873	-	29,229
1899	953,243	-

In addition to the population increase and the growth of slavery, the Cédula de Gracias contributed to economic development. In its wake commercial farming, as measured by the value and volume of agricultural trade, and the proportion of land dedicated to the leading export crops, sugar and coffee, expanded greatly. In 1814 the total value of Puerto Rican foreign trade amounted to 484,684 pesos. By 1819 it had increased to 2,229,677 pesos. Exports accounted for about half of this figure. In 1883 exports totaled 11,807,720 pesos out of 25,593,563 pesos in foreign trade. In particular, the volume of sugar and coffee exports increased significantly. In the five

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[4]Francisco A. Scarano, Puerto Rico, cinco siglos de historia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), p. 407.

[5]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, pp. 31 and 36.

year period from 1828 to 1832 Puerto Rico exported an average of 291,892 quintales of sugar and 125,176 of coffee annually (One quintal equals one hundred pounds). These figures increased to an average of 1,570,667 quintales of sugar and 331,244 of coffee during the five years ending in 1883.[6]

From about 1820 to 1876, sugar dominated the island's export trade. Favorable international trade conditions and commercial relations with the United States stimulated the transformation of the island into a major sugar-producing area. The high price of sugar on the international market favored the expansion of sugar production. The 838 tons of sugar produced in 1812 increased to 2,340 in 1817 and to 14,126 tons, or 282,521 quintales, in 1830.[7] By the 1850s, the production of sugar in Puerto Rico averaged over one million quintales per year.

The Cédula de Gracias facilitated commercial relations between Puerto Rico and the United States.[8] Trade between the island and the U.S. increased greatly after 1815. Sugar represented the main product in this exchange. Between 1870 and 1897, the United States imported between 56 and 70 percent of Puerto Rico's sugar production, while Spain never bought more than 36 and sometimes as little as 1 percent of the island's sugar.[9] As a result, Puerto Rico became increasingly

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[6]Ibid., p. 19.

[7]Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[8]Francisco A. Scarano, Puerto Rico, cinco siglos de historia (San Juan: McGraw Hill), p. 400.

economically dependent on the United States even as politically it remained a colony of Spain.

Puerto Rican sugar production entered a period of crisis in the second half of the century. Several factors contributed to the decline of sugar production: increased competition from beet sugar produced in Europe and the United States, expanded sugar production in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, the lack of capital and credit facilities to modernize production in Puerto Rico, and the falling price of sugar on the international market. Sugar prices, which had been as high as 15 cents a pound in 1815, dropped to between 2 and 4 cents by the end of the century.[10]

In the of 1870s, coffee replaced sugar as the island's most important commercial crop. After 1876, markets for Puerto Rican coffee expanded in Spain, most of western Europe, and Cuba.[11] Moreover, as the price of coffee on the international market increased, the number of acres dedicated to the cultivation of this crop expanded by the tens of thousands. During the late 1880s, Puerto Rico became the fourth largest producer of coffee in Latin America after Brazil, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic.[12] In 1886, the value of island coffee exports equaled

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[9]Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, History Task Force, Labor Migration Under Capitalism, The Puerto Rican Experience (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), p. 71.

[10]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 25.

[11]Laird W. Bergad, Coffee and the Growth of Agrarian Capitalism in Nineteenth century Puerto Rico (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 226-27.

49.4 percent of the total value of exports; this increased to 76.9 percent in 1896.[13]

As commercial agricultural production and foreign trade expanded, the amount of land devoted to the cultivation of export crops increased, while the portion dedicated to subsistence agriculture decreased. In 1830, sugar accounted for 12.4 percent of all cultivated land and coffee took up 14 percent. By 1862, these figures had increased to 30.2 and 18.5 percent respectively. At the end of the century, the percentage of cultivated land used for sugar amounted to 17.8, while that devoted to coffee production had increased to 48.9 percent. Meanwhile, the proportion of cultivated land used for subsistence farming decreased from 70 percent in 1830 to less than 50 percent in 1862, and to only about 33 percent by 1899.[14] As a result, the importation of basic foods such as rice and flour increased and by the end of Spanish rule in Puerto Rico amounted to 40 percent of the value of all imports.[15]

Changes in the Labor Force

The expansion of commercial agriculture and increased legal trade entailed commercial relations with capitalist countries and a greater exploitation of available sources of labor. These developments, however, did not necessarily lead to the emergence

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[12]Ibid. pp.147-48.

[13]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 27.

[14]Ibid., pp. 18-20.

[15]Ibid., p. 20.

of free wage workers.[16] Instead, hacienda owners in Puerto Rico depended mostly on slaves, agregados (squatters with usufruct rights on privately owned land), and the power of the state to coerce the rural landless population to work as wage laborers for commercial agriculturalists. In the nineteenth century, capitalist and precapitalist forms of labor coexisted on the island.[17] Capitalist relations of production began to expand in the last third of the century, but it was not until after the U.S. annexation that capitalism became the dominant mode of production in Puerto Rico. For most of the nineteenth century, commercial agriculture relied on slave labor, agregado labor, and coerced rural labor.

Slavery existed in Puerto Rico since the early fifteen hundreds and lasted until 1873, when it was abolished. Although slaves never numbered more than 51,265, or 11.4 percent of the population, they provided a significant source of labor, particularly in the production of sugarcane in the coastal southwestern part of the island during the first half of the nineteenth century.[18] The importance of slavery, however, decreased in the second half of the century. After Britain forced Spain to abandon the slave trade smugglers picked it up

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[16]Angel Quintero Rivera, "Background to the Emergence of Imperialist Capitalism in Puerto Rico," in Adalberto López, ed., The Puerto Ricans: Their History, Culture, and Society (Rochester: Schenkman Books, 1980), p. 100.

[17]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 34.

[18]Francisco A. Scarano, Sugar and Slavery in Puerto Rico, the Plantation Economy of Ponce, 1800-1850 (Madison:The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.)

and the price of slaves increased. The lack of sufficient capital to purchase slaves and the stagnation of the sugar plantation economy on the island contributed to the decline of slavery in Puerto Rico.[19] Coffee production on the island never depended on slaves; instead, it relied on hired labor.

The shortage of labor for hire constituted a major problem in Puerto Rico throughout the nineteenth century. Most of the rural population would not readily submit to the rigors of wage labor because they either owned land or had access to it as agregados. An agregado was a "squatter on privately owned land."[20] In exchange for permission to maintain a house and cultivate a subsistence plot an agregado was obligated to work for the landowner.

In 1776, about 8,000 agregados existed in Puerto Rico along with an even larger number of free peasants who worked unowned, or crown land. By 1824, the number of agregados had increased to 14,327. Their number grew significantly as the state sanctioned the seizure of untitled peasant land by large landowners. In 1827, there were 38,906 agregados and by 1832, almost one third of the 330,051 people on the island population was thus classified.[21]

Agregados, however, were not a reliable work force and in the mid-nineteenth century the state exerted sustained efforts

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[19]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 38.

[20]Ibid., p. xxi.

[21]Ibid., pp. 41-2.

to restrict their access to land and force them to work for wages or their equivalent. In the absence of sufficient capital to engage wage labor, hacendados often relied on the extension of credit in hacienda shops or the circulation of vales (vouchers), redeemable with local merchants.

In order to force agregados to work as hired laborers, the Spanish government issued special laws, such as Governor Miguel López de Baño's Bando de Policía y Buen Gobierno in 1838 and Juan de la Pezuela's Reglamento Especial de Jornaleros in 1849. The Bando defined as jornaleros (day laborers) men between the ages of 16 and 60 who did not own or rent land. It required those so defined to work for a wage. The Reglamento mandated they carry a libreta (workbook) in which their employers recorded their work history and personal conduct[22].

The libreta system sought to force the agregado population to work as hired laborers and thereby solve the island's labor shortage problem by creating a free wage labor system. The libreta regime, however, did not have the desired effect, because lax enforcement of the law and the lack of capital and credit facilities served to undermine the emergence of a free labor system. Many jornaleros circumvented the intent of the law by acquiring, or by appearing to have acquired from relatives or friends, enough land to meet the law's requirements or by becoming renters. In 1873, Spain abolished the libreta system at the same time it ended slavery.

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[22]Labor Gómez Acevedo, Organización y reglamentación del trabajo en el Puerto Rico del siglo XIX, propietarios y jornaleros (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1970), p. 98.

The abolition of slavery promoted the development of a wage labor system. Many former slaves found employment as wage workers in sugar haciendas. In addition, the growth of a landless population also contributed to the expansion of free wage labor in rural areas. At the same time, in the towns a small group of salaried workers also developed as the result of public works, the construction of housing, and the growth of cigar manufacturing.[23] This emerging working class grew rapidly in the aftermath of the U.S. occupation of the island in 1898.

The U.S. Annexation of Puerto Rico

The United States' annexation of Puerto Rico accelerated a transformation from predominantly pre-capitalist to capitalist relations of production. This led to the growth of a wage labor force and provided the context within which the history of the island's organized labor movement unfolded. Between 1898 and the early 1930s, a mainly pre-capitalist and still largely subsistence agricultural society gave way to a thoroughly capitalist economy. This change involved the rapid proletarianization of rural agricultural laborers and urban artisans as the result of the expropriation, concentration and centralization of land, and the introduction of the factory system. For the growing working class, these developments produced increasing levels of unemployment, low wages, and

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[23]Gervasio Luis García, "Los primeros fermentos de organización obrera en Puerto Rico: 1873-1898," in Desafío y solidaridad, breve historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño (Río Piedras: Huracán, 1982), p. 15.

wretched working and living conditions. Before examining in greater detail the economic and social changes brought about by the United States and their impact on the population, it is important to first consider the background to the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico and its political relationship to that country.

The United States seized possession of Puerto Rico in 1898 following its defeat of Spain in the Spanish-Cuban-American War. The United States justified its participation in the Cuban war of independence as a defense of liberty and justice, claiming that it was seeking to end a savage conflict that had gone on for years and to help Cubans achieve their freedom. In regard to Puerto Rico, General Nelson Miles of the United States Army declared that the military invasion did not mean to "bring war against a people which has been oppressed for centuries," but rather to bring it prosperity and democracy.[24]

However, economic and military considerations also motivated the United States. Influenced by an expansionist and imperialist policy, the U.S. sought new markets for its industrial production, investment opportunities for excess capital, and easy access to needed resources, such as raw sugar. It also pursued control of strategic geographic positions important for the military defense of its eastern seaboard, the

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[24]Edward Berbusse, The United states in Puerto Rico 1898-1900 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 79.

Mexican Gulf states, and the sea-lane approaches to the proposed Central American canal.[25]

The Treaty of Paris, ratified by the U.S. Congress on April 11, 1899, formally ended the war. The Teller Amendment, adopted by the Congress in 1898, committed the United States to a non-annexationist policy in regard to Cuba and, although the Platt Amendment severely curtailed its sovereignty, that island soon achieved its national independence. Puerto Rico, however, was another matter. The feeling among some members of the United States Congress was that the Puerto Ricans had not fought for their liberty and did not deserve freedom. Actually, many had fought valiantly as part of the Cuban insurrection with the understanding that the war aimed for Puerto Rican as well as Cuban independence.[26] The United States, however, meant to keep Puerto Rico and it annexed the island as compensation for U.S. losses suffered in the war.

After a two year period of military government that lasted from October 1898 to April of 1900, the United States Congress passed the Foraker Act. This went into effect on May 1, 1900 and established a civilian government for the island under a U.S. Governor appointed by the president of the United States and approved by the Congress. The president also named, with Congressional consent, an eleven-member Executive Council, of

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[25]Louis A. Pérez, The War of 1898. The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 50.

[26]Félix Ojeda Reyes, Peregrinos de la libertad (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1992), pp. 227-8.

which no more than five were Puerto Rican. The Executive Council functioned as the Governor's Cabinet and the upper legislative house. In addition, the Foraker Act provided for a thirty five member lower legislative body, the House of Delegates, elected by males over the age of twenty-one who could read and write or paid property taxes.[27]

As well as providing for a civilian form of government, the Foraker Act contained important economic provisions. It denied Puerto Rico the right to negotiate commercial treaties with third countries, placed the island under United States tariff laws and regulations, stipulated that only U.S. ships be employed for commercial traffic moving in or out of the island, and made the U.S. dollar the legal medium of exchange.[28]

The Foraker Act established Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States. The U.S. appointed governor obtained the right to veto any law passed by the local legislature and Congress affirmed its own right to annul any legislation approved by the Governor.[29] In 1901, in the case of Downes vs. Bidwell, the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed the colonial status of Puerto Rico when it ruled that Puerto Rico was a non-incorporated territory of the United States and that the U.S. Constitution did not automatically apply on the island.[30] The Jones Act replaced the

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[27]Lyman J. Gould, La ley Foraker: Raices de la política colonial de los Estados Unidos (Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1969).

[28]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, pp. 89-92

[29]Ibid., p. 97.

Foraker Act in 1917. This new law granted U.S. citizenship to the people of the island in place of the Puerto Rican citizenship conferred on population in 1900 and instituted a limited reform of the local government. Otherwise, it changed nothing in the Foraker Act that made Puerto Rico a direct colony of the United States.[31]

Twentieth Century Economic Developments

The Foraker Act and the Jones Acts, permitted massive U.S. capital investments in Puerto Rico between the turn of the century and the early 1930s. U.S. capital increased the importance of sugar production, expanded tobacco cultivation, and stimulated large-scale cigar and needlework manufacturing. By the late 1920s the total of all foreign, mostly U.S., interests in Puerto Rico amounted to about 176 million dollars. Forty million were invested in the sugar industry and another ten in the tobacco industry.[32] The rest was invested in needlework manufacturing, railroads, utilities, and other economic enterprises.

Changes in Agricultural Production

The U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico, enhanced sugar production while it allowed coffee production to stagnate. The

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[30]José Trías Monje, Puerto Rico, The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 48.

[31]Ibid., p. 75.

[32]Victor S. Clark, Porto Rico and Its Problems (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1930), p. 417.

importance of the coffee industry, which had been the most profitable sector of the economy at the end of the nineteenth century, declined quickly. The stagnant number of acres of land dedicated to coffee cultivation and the sharp fall in the relative value of coffee exports reflected the decreased significance of coffee production. Although it had represented 59.7 percent of the total value of Puerto Rican exports in 1895, in 1914 coffee accounted for just 19.0 percent.[33]

The coffee industry in Puerto Rico suffered primarily as a consequence of the loss of traditional markets in Europe and Cuba. In addition, the lack of tariff protection in the United States hurt this industry. In 1905, in his report to the U.S. Department of Labor on conditions on the island, Walter Weyl, a special investigator for the department, stated that while free trade between Puerto Rico and the United States had greatly benefitted other agricultural products, it had been detrimental to coffee production.[34] He claimed that the depression in the industry which already existed in 1898 as a consequence of the falling price of coffee on the international market deepened as a result of the enactment of the Foraker Act.

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[33]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 101.

[34]United States Department of Labor, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico," by Walter Weyl in Bulletin of the Department of Labor 61 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printiing Office, 1905), p. 814.

Table 2
Total Number of Acres under Coffee Cultivation[35]

1899	191,357
1909	186,875
1919	193,561
1929	191,712

Under Spain, Puerto Rican coffee had enjoyed a preferential tariff in that country and its colonies, and the coffee industry prospered. However, after 1900 exports of coffee to Spain and Cuba, the two major markets for Puerto Rican coffee, diminished.[36] Meanwhile, without tariff protection in the United States, Puerto Rican coffee could not compete with less expensive South American and especially Brazilian coffee for which U.S. consumers had already developed a preference.[37]

While the coffee industry stagnated, sugar production witnessed a period of rapid growth. In the years between 1900 and 1930, the sugar industry became the backbone of the island's economy. As early as 1901, sugarcane and its by-products, molasses and rum, represented the most profitable enterprises on the island and directly or indirectly the largest employers in Puerto Rico.[38] Over the next thirty years the acreage of

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[35]United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), p. 153 and United States Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Outlying Territories and Possessions, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932), p. 208. Figure for 1899 converted from cuerdas to acres (one cuerda equals .9712 of an acre).

[36]Walter Weyl, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1905," p.750.

[37]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 100.

farmland used for the production of sugarcane increased dramatically.

Table 3
Total Number of Acres under Sugar Cultivation[39]

1899	71,026
1909	145,433
1919	227,815
1929	237,758

In 1905, Walter Weyl observed that, "all the seacoast lands are being made use of ... The pasture lands are being pressed back into the mountains in order that every available acre of land may be devoted to sugar."[40] By 1919, the sugar industry had become "the king of Puerto Rican commerce and employed the largest number of agricultural laborers."[41] The 1920 census of population reported 77,487 men employed as farm laborers in the sugar industry. Another 3,738 were listed as laborers in sugar factories. Together these men represented 25 percent of the total employed male labor force of 322,466.[42] By 1929,

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[38]United States Department of Labor, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico," by Azel Ames, in Bulletin of the Department of Labor 34 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printiing Office, 1901), p. 392.

[39]United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899, p. 154 and United States Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, p. 208. Figure for 1899 converted from cuerdas to acres.

[40]Walter Weyl,"Labor Conditons in Porto Rico, 1905," pp. 753-754.

[41]United States Department of Labor, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico," by Joseph Marcus, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919).

agricultural laborers cut well over five million tons of sugarcane and mill workers produced over eight hundred thousand tons of raw sugar.

Table 4
Tons of Sugar Produced in Puerto Rico[43]

1900	81,526
1910	349,840
1921	491,000
1930	866,109

The production of sugar went from an annual average of 57,000 tons during the last ten years of Spanish rule to 200,000 tons a year early in the twentieth century and to an average of 900,000 tons yearly in the early 1930s.[44] Sugar, which had accounted for 21.6 percent of the total value of exports in 1897, represented 54.9 percent of the value of exports in 1901 and 60 percent in 1935.[45]

Table 5
Volume and Value of Puerto Rican Sugar Exports[46]

1902	92,000 tons	$ 5,890,302
1910	284,000 tons	$23,545,922
1921	409,000 tons	$72,440,924
1929	471,000 tons	$35,224,056
1930	-	$53,670,038

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[42]United States Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920, pp. 1288-90.

[43]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 105.

[44]Harvey S. Perloff, Puerto Rico's Economic Future (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 28.

[45]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 105.

[46]Ibid., p. 101.

The growth of the sugar industry responded to the interest U.S. investors had in promoting the production of this important commodity. Sugar produced in Puerto Rico benefited from large capital investments and from tariff protection in the U.S. market which, under the terms of the Foraker Act, it entered duty free. In addition, the industry expanded greatly due to the application of modern technology, fertilizers, economies of scale, and the use of irrigation that brought marginal lands into production.

Tobacco also attracted large investments. The tobacco industry consisted of an agricultural and manufacturing phase: the cultivation of the tobacco leaves and the production of cigars. As early as 1901, tobacco cultivation, which had long been a great source of profit but which had recently been in a depressed condition rallied sharply, and expanded to become a very profitable business.[47] By 1905, "American capital [was] practically in control of the industry, the largest establishments being in the hands of a company affiliated with the American Tobacco Company."[48]

Puerto Rican tobacco and cigars competed favorably in the United States market because they had tariff protection. The growth of the industry reflected this favorable circumstance. Between 1899 and 1930 the number of acres dedicated to tobacco cultivation increased more than tenfold.

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[47]Azel Ames, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1901," p. 393.

[48]Walter Weyl, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1905" p. 759.

Table 6
Total Number of Acres Under Tobacco Cultivation[49]

1899	5,791
1909	22,142
1919	39,068
1929	52,947

In addition, between 1910 and 1920 the number of farm laborers engaged in the cultivation of tobacco increased from 5,346 to 21,451 while the number of semi-skilled operatives employed in cigar factories grew from 3,743 in 1899 to 13,380 in 1930.[50] As a result of these developments, the number of pounds of tobacco produced increased greatly.

Table 7
Tobacco Production in Puerto Rico[51]

1897	6,255,953
1909	10,827,755
1919	19,362,826
1929	30,358,149

At the same time, the value of tobacco and cigar exports grew sharply. In 1901 tobacco and cigars represented only 6 percent of the total value of Puerto Rican exports, but by 1928 tobacco products represented 20 percent of exports.[52]

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[49]United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899, p. 356 and United States Bureau of the Census, Fifthteenth Census of the United States: 1930, p. 208. Figure for 1899 converted from cuerdas to acres.

[50]United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899, p.327; United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Porto Rico, 1910, p. 613; 1920 p. 1288; and 1930. p.186.

[51]United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899, p. 145 and United States Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census, 1930, p. 208.

Table 8
Value of Puerto Rican Tobacco Exports[53]

	Tobacco	Cigars
1901	$ 375,000	$ 306,000
1910	$ 1,258,317	$ 4,480,000
1920	$13,416,388	$11,614,000
1930	$11,916,505	$ 3,848,000

Between the turn of the century and 1930, the amount of farm land used for the production of crops for local consumption decreased significantly and the importation of food increased. In 1899, food crops for local consumption accounted for 42 percent of all cultivated land; by 1929 this figure had declined to 28 percent.[54] Meanwhile, food imports increased. As early as 1905, a large share of the food consumed by the people of Puerto Rico came from abroad. Rice and flour, the staples of the diet, came from the United States. Codfish, at the time a major source of protein in the local diet, also came from overseas. Weyl deduced: "It can therefore be stated that a considerable portion of the articles entering into the daily consumption of a Porto Rican workingman comes from foreign countries."[55] According to a Brookings Institution report published in 1930, the growth of foreign trade in Puerto Rico over the course of the first three decades of the twentieth century resulted in "the transforming of a more largely self-sufficing island economy into one which

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[52]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 101.

[53]Ibid. p. 117.

[54]Ibid., p. 122.

[55]Walter Weyl, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1905," p. 777.

is integrally related with the commerce of the rest of the world, particularly ... the United States."[56]

Proletarianization of Labor

The growth of commercial agriculture led to the concentration and centralization of agricultural land. Between 1896 and 1920 the number of farms fell by fifty percent, from 6,867 to 3,160 farms, and farm owners decreased from 5,541 to 2,649. At the same time the average size of farms increased from 53.7 to 111.9 acres.[57] In other words, "The ownership of land in general, and not just of that in sugar production, became more highly concentrated under U.S. control."[58] Between 1899 and 1930, the number of farms of less than twenty acres fell from 87.7 percent of all farms to 71.0 percent. At the same time, farms of over 100 acres increased from 2.2 percent of farms to 6.0 percent of farms.[59]

The concentration and centralization of land led to the rapid proletarianization of the rural population as many farmers who owned some land were persuaded to sell.[60] Small proprietors in the thousands thus gave up their land and entered the rural proletariat along with those peasants who, without enjoying

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[56]Victor S. Clark, Porto Rico and Its Problems, p. 403.

[57]Ibid., p. 499.

[58]James L. Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 106.

[59]Ibid., p. 107.

[60]Walter Weyl, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1905," p. 816.

legal ownership, had relied on easy access to land. As early as 1905, the old system of allowing rural laborers to squat upon their employer's land and cultivate a small piece for themselves gave way as a result of the increased value of farmland. The proletarianization process also advanced in urban areas. There, artisans, particularly cigarmakers, came under pressure as the factory system based on wage-labor expanded. U.S. census figures show that between 1899 and 1910 the number of males employed as operatives in cigar factories increased from 3,683 to 7,330.[61] The number of women employed in cigar factories grew even more significantly.

The proletarianization of labor involved mostly men, but between 1899 and 1930, the number of women who entered the labor force as wage workers also increased. At the same time, the female labor force participation rate went up from 13.9 percent in 1899 to 22.9 percent in 1930, and the percentage of the total gainfully employed female population increased from 9.8 percent in 1899 to 16.3 percent. In 1899 only 46,931 females over the age of 10 worked for wages. By 1930, the census reported 125,777 gainfully employed females.[62] Women, and many children as well, came under pressure to join the wage-labor force as a consequence of the low wages, seasonal nature of employment, and high rate of joblessness among male workers. Increasingly, in

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[61]United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899, pp.327-228 and United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Porto Rico, 1910, pp. 612-613.

[62]United States Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census, p. 183.

the latter half of the 1920s and through the period of the Great Depression, women's economic contribution to household income made the critical difference that allowed families to subsist during very difficult times.

Women and the Development of Manufacturing

Cigar manufacturing and the needle trades employed the largest number of female workers. Under the impact of large U.S. investments, cigar making went from an economic activity carried on mostly in small shops with only a handful of highly skilled craftsmen, into a large scale enterprise based on factories employing hundreds of workers, new production techniques, and a greater division of labor. Women trained to perform the various tasks involved in the new cigar making process worked as semi-skilled operatives, but received only a fraction of what skilled male cigar makers earned.[63] By 1930, women in cigar factories outnumbered men by more than 2 to 1.[64]

Table 9
Females Working in Cigar Factories[65]

1899	60
1910	3,204
1920	8,573
1930	9,290

[63]Yamila Azize, La mujer en la lucha (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1985), p. 47.

[64]United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899, p. 327-28 and Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, p. 186.

[65]United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899, p.327; United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Porto Rico, 1910, pp. 613; 1920 p. 1288; and 1930. p.186.

In the years immediately after the First World War, the export of needlework also began a period of rapid growth.[66] As the manufacture of garments, embroidery, and lacework became an important sector of the island's economy, needlework emerged as the largest employer of women as home workers. In 1919, the Bureau of Labor in Puerto Rico reported that a great number of women did needlework in their homes.

Table 10
Dressmakers and Seamstresses [67]
(not in factories)

1899	5,785
1910	11,200
1920	12,650
1930	34,345

Several factors contributed to the growth of this industry in Puerto Rico. The First World War seriously disrupted the importation of needlework from Europe to the United States. As a result, merchants in the U.S. sought alternative sources to supply their demand. Puerto Rico became an attractive location for such work because the island was much closer to the mainland than the Far East, which was then also considered as an alternative. Moreover, women in Puerto Rico had the necessary skills. During the Spanish colonial period, it had been the

[66]The outstanding historical study of the needlework industry in Puerto Rico is that of Lydia Milagros González García, Una puntada en el tiempo, la industria de la aguja en Puerto Rico, 1900-1929 (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1990).

[67]United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899, pp.327-8; United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Porto Rico, 1910, pp. 613; 1920 pp. 1288; and 1930. pp.186.

custom to teach young girls to sew, embroider and do various kinds of hand needlework.[68] In addition, by 1907 the government of Puerto Rico had a policy of teaching needlework in the public schools in order to provide girls with a profitable skill. The Department of Public Instruction even had an agency to sell the students' work.[69]

In the early 1920s, the making of blouses began a period of expansion. The manufacture of women's embroidery and lacework also developed further. This production, based on homework, found a ready market in the United States where the development of mass-produced, ready-to-wear clothing greatly increased the value of handmade garments, embroidery, and lacework. A market for this type of work existed among well-to-do women in the U.S. In 1921, the Bureau of Labor in Puerto Rico estimated that 40,000 women worked at home for the needlework industry.[70]

Table 11
Value of Needlework Exports[71]

1895	0
1901	$8,000
1911	$12,000
1921	$2,333,000
1931	$13,951,000

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[68]El Mundo, 1933, Interview with María Luisa Arcelay.

[69]Luisa Hernández Angueira, "Auge y decadencia de la industria de la aguja en Puerto Rico: 1914-1940," PhD Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de México, 1983, p. 2.

[70]Porto Rico Bureau of Labor, Eighth Annual Report (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, Printing and Transportation, 1921), p. 22.

[71]Harvey S. Perloff, Puerto Rico's Economic Future, p. 136.

Conditions of Labor

Needless to say, the rapid expansion of the Puerto Rican economy, as reflected in the growth of sugar, tobacco, cigar, and needlework production, did not mean more prosperity for the workers of the island. On the contrary, in the period between the turn of the century and the early nineteen thirties, workers in Puerto Rico experienced difficult economic and social conditions characterized by long hours of labor, low wages, high rates of unemployment, miserable living conditions, and increasing emigration. In 1919, a wealthy citizen of the United States who had resided on the island since the U.S. occupation stated that while he was not on the side of labor, but on the side of capital, "humanitarian feelings do not permit me to shut my eyes to existing evils on the island. The peon is just living from day to day without any hope or preparation for the future."[72]

Most of the rural population, which accounted for the vast majority of the people on the island, worked as unskilled agricultural laborers in either sugarcane, tobacco, or coffee cultivation. In 1905, in his study of labor conditions on the island, Walter Weyl reported that wages for agricultural work ranged between 30 and 50 cents per day.[73] He noted that wages sometimes included a five cent breakfast or lunch and that in some areas wages might have been supplemented with free lodging

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[72]Joseph Marcus, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1919," p. 34.

[73]Walter Weyl, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1905," p. 725.

and maybe free fuel. He quickly added, however, that "these supplementary earnings ... appear to have been more common in former times."[74] After the Great Depression, low agricultural wages declined further. In 1930, wages for sugarcane workers averaged 70 cents to $1.00 per day, while those on tobacco and coffee plantations earned 80 and 50 cents per day respectively.[75]

Low wages were endemic to the majority of the working class. They barely covered the basic needs of workers and their families. In his report on labor conditions in Puerto Rico in 1905, Walter Weyl stated that, "expenditures in practically all cases exactly balances income. The great mass of the working class - certainly not less than 99% - consume every month the earnings for that month."[76] Weyl documented this conclusion with detailed tables listing the wages of all classes of workers and statistics on the retail prices of commodities. In 1919, Joseph Marcus cited the case of a typical sugarcane worker:

> Pedro Candilarias cuts cane from morning till night, and earns from $5 to $6 a week. The prevalent wages in his district are from 65 cents to $1 a day for 11 hours of work. He works regularly only six months in the year, and after the busy season earns $1 or $2 a week, and at times nothing at all. On this income he tries to maintain himself, his wife, and eight children, the youngest of whom is 2 years old and the oldest 21; but since the latter is a girl she has no work to do. During the dull season ... people eat one day and fast the next two, wandering from place to place in search of work and bananas.[77]

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[74]Ibid., p. 727

[75]Victor S. Clark, Porto Rico and Its Problems, p.21.

[76]Walter Weyl, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico," p. 776.

Food was expensive. Rice, which together with beans constituted a staple of the Puerto Rican worker's diet, cost between 4 and 5 cents per pound, while beans cost from 6 to 8 cents per pound. Cheese, a valuable source of protein, cost 20 to 25 cents; codfish, another important source of protein, cost 9 to 12 cents, and jerked beef was 15 to 17 cents per pound. Coffee prices ranged between 15 and 24 cents per pound. At the same time, clothing was also expensive. A shirt cost between 25 cents and $1.00, pants were from 75 cents to $1.00, and shoes were priced at between $2.50 and $3.00. Women, on the other hand, had to pay between $1.00 and $3.50 for a dress while a pair of shoes for them cost between $2.00 and $3.00.[78] In 1930, the island's Bureau of Labor reported that 75 percent of wages were spent on food. The balance went mostly to pay for housing.[79] Reports of the Puerto Rican Bureau of Labor consistently stressed the high incidence of poverty on the island and the problems that existed in housing, health, and education.

In 1901, Azel Ames, who investigated working and living condidtions in Puerto Rico for the United States Bureau of Labor considered it an absurdity to think of the shacks in which the

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[77]Joseph Marcus, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1919," pp. 32-33.

[78]Porto Rico Bureau of Labor, Special Report, (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1912).

[79]Porto Rico Bureau of Labor, Fourteenth Annual Report, (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1930). 1930.

greater part of rural wage workers lived as "houses."[80] Even in the towns, poor workers could only choose between bad and worse housing conditions. A small tenement with one or two rooms and without any light or air was usually all these workers could afford.[81] In 1905, Walter Weyl described the primitive housing conditions that prevailed in rural Puerto Rico. "The houses of the majority of rural workers are merely a framework of poles, covered with the bark of palm trees and with dried leaves and thatched with palm leaves or a tough grass which is found all over the island."[82] Almost twenty years later, housing conditions had not improved very much. In his report on conditions on the island in 1919, Joseph Marcus included photographs and descriptions of both rural and urban houses. He noted that in some rural areas it was possible to ride for hours without finding any house not made of palm leaves or tough grass.[83] In urban areas, the tenements he encountered resembled those described by Azel Ames in 1901.

Poor health and unsanitary conditions presented additional problems for poorly paid workers. In his report, Marcus noted that thousands of rural men, women, and children suffered from various afflictions and had no medical attention. "They are often far away from a town, without immediate neighbors to

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[80]Azel Ames, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1901," p. 410.

[81]Ibid., p. 422.

[82]Walter Weyl, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1905," p. 789.

[83]Joseph Marcus, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1919," p. 27.

appeal to for assistance, without funds to bring a physician or to buy medicine or food."[84] Uncinariasis (hookworm disease) was a common illness. Lack of proper sanitary facilities in rural areas caused this condition. Between 1917 and 1918, health officials treated well over 20,000 cases. Many more existed, but the rural population had great difficulty getting to a dispensary or doctor.[85]

The workers' clothing often reflected their low wages. In 1901, male laborers usually wore nothing more than an inexpensive cotton undershirt and the cheapest trousers available. Very few wore shoes and a hat, if used, was made of wool or palm leaf. Women contented themselves with cheap cotton dresses and bare feet and heads. If the feet were covered, it was with cheap shoes and no stockings. A cheap straw hat might cover their heads.[86] Writing nearly twenty years later, Joseph Marcus described similar outfits. "His dress consists of a pair of white trousers, a white shirt, and a straw hat. His wife and children are clad as poorly as he is; none of them wear shoes."[87] Moreover, he noted, "throughout the island thousands of children of the ages 1 to 7 years go naked, in the town as well as in the rural districts".[88]

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[84]Ibid., p. 26.

[85]Ibid., p. 15.

[86]Azel Ames, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1901," pp. 417-18.

[87]Joseph Marcus, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1919," p. 14.

[88]Ibid.

Illiteracy and lack of educational opportunities also plagued the population. In 1899, only 22.7 percent of the population could read and write.[89] By 1910, this figure had only increased to 33.5 percent.[90] In rural areas, children received only one to three years of schooling. This was not only because parents wanted to avail themselves of their childrens' labor services and earnings but because of the inability of the schools to accommodate all the students in need of school places.[91] In addition, some in Puerto Rico felt that educating the children was unnecessary because they were destined to be unskilled laborers.[92] In 1919, Marcus acknowledged that even when school facilities were available, many children negected to attend school because of the lack of proper attire or nutrition. A district school supervisor claimed that many of the 200,000 children out of school failed to attend because they were ashamed to go in rags and that many were so undernourished that they did not have the strength to walk the long distances to and from school.[93] In addition, many children did not attend school because they had to take care of siblings or work in order to contribute to their family's income. The Puerto Rican Bureau of

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[89]Walter Weyl, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1905" p. 800.

[90]Joseph Marcus, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1919," p. 12.

[91]Walter Weyl, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1905," pp. 802-03.

[92]Ibid., p. 804.

[93]Joseph Marcus, "Labor Conditions in Porto Rico, 1919," pp. 46-47.

Labor often reported that many parents hampered efforts to enforce child labor laws by hiding their working children from labor inspectors.

By 1930, however, unemployment had become the most serious problem confronting the Puerto Rican working class. In 1899, the number of unemployed males numbered 54,803, or 17 percent of all males over the age of 10. During the course of the next two and a half decades, unemployment increased steadily. By 1926, the number of unemployed males reached 146,461, or 30.2 percent of the male labor force.[94] According to the Puerto Rican legislative committee investigating unemployment on the island, Puerto Rico was "undergoing one of the most acute periods of industrial and agricultural uneasiness and restlessness, due to the enormous number of unemployed in town, city, and countryside."[95]

The government of Puerto Rico explained the persistence of low wages, poverty, and unemployment as the result of overpopulation. It stated that Puerto Rico simply had too many people for too few resources. Government officials used this argument continuously, not just as an explanation for unemployment and low wages, but as a justification for at first allowing, and later actively promoting, the migration of workers from the island.

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[94]Porto Rico Legislative Committee to Investigate the Industrial and Agricultural Uneasiness and Restlessness Causing Unemployment in Porto Rico, Report (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1930), p. 218.

[95]Ibid., pp. 153-154.

In his first annual report to the United States Congress, Charles H. Allen, the first civilian governor of Puerto Rico under U.S. rule, endorsed emigration as a solution to the problem of unemployment.[96] The emigration of Puerto Rican workers began in 1900. Between November 22nd and August 29th of that year, 2,869 men and boys over the age of twelve, and their families (5,203 people altogether) left for Hawaii to work in sugar plantations.[97] They emigrated as contract laborers in a total of eleven expeditions. This emigration movement was the result of the depressed economic conditions that existed in the mountainous coffee-growing regions of the island due to the damage caused by hurricane San Ciriaco in August of 1899 and to the disruption of coffee exports occasioned by the passage of the Foraker Act in May of 1900. Over the next thirty years, the emigration of workers continued as the problem of unemployment in Puerto Rico reached crisis proportions.

In addition to the movement to Hawaii, smaller groups of workers emigrated under contract to various other locations. For example, in 1900 a number of Puerto Rican laborers contracted to work in a U.S. owned iron mine in Cuba and in 1901 some went to work on the sugar harvest in the Dominican Republic.[98] Then, in

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[96]Charles H. Allen, First Annual Report of the Governor of Porto Rico (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), pp. 14-15.

[97]El Problema, September 6, 1901, p. 1 and "Report of the Commissioner of Labor in Hawaii," in Bulletin of the U.S. Bureau of Labor, no. 47 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1903).

1903 several hundred traveled to Mexico under a Mexican government-sponsored plan to colonize an unsettled area in the Yucatán peninsula.[99]

The largest emigration of workers from Puerto Rico under contract took place between September 19 and November 7, 1918 when 13,233 men from 18 to 45 years of age left for war-related work projects in the southern part of the United States.[100] They traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana; Wilmington, North Carolina; Brunswick, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; and Savannnah, Georgia where these men worked in the building of army camps and in munitions factories. This migration had disastrous consequences for the men involved; in fact, hundreds died en route to their work assignments not only due to the outbreak of influenza on board the ships they traveled in, but also as a result of industrial accidents in the factories where they worked, and because of overwork in labor camps.[101]

On May 29, 1919, the Puerto Rican Legislature passed "An Act to Regulate Emigration from Porto Rico."[102] This represented an attempt by the local government to establish some control over the process of labor migration as it had been unfolding.

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[98]La Correspondencia, July 19, 1900, p. 1 and April 19, 1901, p. 2.

[99]Puerto Rico Herald, September 26, 1903, p. 953.

[100]El Tiempo, November 14, 1918, p. 1.

[101]History Task Force, Sources for the study of Puerto Rican Migration, 1879-1930 (New York: Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, 1982), pp. 104-128.

[102]Ibid., pp. 140-41.

Employers often violated labor contracts by paying lower wages than they had agreed to or by otherwise forcing unsatisfactory conditions upon migrant workers. Faced with abominable employment situations, many workers abroad appealed to the government of the island to incur the expense of repatriating them. However, the Emigration Law of 1919 stipulated that only those workers whose contracts had been supervised by the island government would have a right to appeal to it for repatriation should their contract be violated.

The process of labor migration under contract continued after the passage of the emigration law. Between November of 1919 and January of 1920 several groups totaling 586 farm workers left Puerto Rico for work in a Cuban sugar factory.[103] Later, newspaper accounts reported that labor agents would soon arrive on the island to recruit workers for a new emigration movement to Hawaii.[104] Ironically, even as the government of Puerto Rico attempted to regulate labor migration under contract and even as new expeditions of contract laborers were being organized, the process of emigration took a new turn. During the nineteen twenties, an increasing number of Puerto Rican workers attempted to resolve their desperate economic and social conditions by emigrating to New York City voluntarily, i.e. on their own and not under contract. The number of island-born

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[103]Porto Rico Bureau of Labor, Seventh Annual Report (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1920), pp. 20-26.

[104]La Correspondencia, April 13, 1925 p. 1.

Puerto Ricans living in New York increased from 7,364 in 1920 to 44,908 ten years later.[105]

While some workers attempted to resolve their desperate economic situation through emigration, many others sought to improve their work and living conditions through labor strikes. In 1905 and again in 1915, there were large strikes of agricultural workers. In 1915, 20,000 striking laborers in the countryside demanded higher wages, and end to the eleven and twelve-hour working day, and the abolition of the payment of wages in vouchers good only in plantation stores, which were still in existence in many areas.[106] After three decades of economic development, the average worker could not find employment for more than four days a week, and wages were extremely low.

The poor living and working conditions of the population, the high level of unemployment, and increased internal and external migrations characterized the lives of most of the working people of the island during the years between 1900 and 1930. The following table shows the changing proportion of the urban and rural population and the changing structure of the island's labor force that provided the background and context for the emergence and development of the Puerto Rican organized labor movement between the turn of the century and the 1930s.

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[105]Lawrence Chenault, The Puerto Rican Migrant in New York City (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 58.

[106]Porto Rico Bureau of Labor, Fourth Annual Report, (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1916), p. 6.

Table 12
Population by Place of Residence
and Major Occupational Categories, 1899-1930[107]

	1899	1910	1920	1930
Total Island Population	953,243	1,118,012	1,299,809	1,543,913
Male	472,261	557,301	647,825	771,761
Female	480,982	560,711	651,984	772,152
Urban	138,703	224,620	283,934	427,221
Rural	814,540	893,392	1,015,875	1,116,692
Urban %	14.6%	20.1%	21.8%	27.7%
Rural %	85.4%	79.9%	78.2%	72.3%
Gainfully Employed 10 Yrs. Old and Over				
Male	268,664	317,256	322,466	378,033
Female	47,701	76,892	86,462	125,777
Gainfully Employed By Major Categories				
Agriculture				
Male	196,893	230,066	227,565	249,854
Female	1,868	10,779	17,719	11,944
Manufacturing				
Male	20,126	34,881	40,707	43,986
Female	6,389	18,194	30,809	65,846
Domestic Service				
Male	27,415	9,811	7,142	9,530
Female	37,404	45,149	32,482	37,424
Trade				
Male	22,347	24,667	24,669	36,105
Female	1,729	912	916	1,895
Professionals				
Male	1,883	2,778	3,688	5,825
Female	331	1,497	3,253	5,661

[107] United States Department of War, Census of Porto Rico, 1899 and United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Puerto Rico, 1910, Census of Puerto Rico, 1920, and Census of Puerto Rico, 1930.

Chapter III

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE EARLY LABOR MOVEMENT

Throughout Latin America, European anarchist and socialist theories influenced the ideology of the early labor movement. The migration of workers from Europe to the Americas during the nineteenth century included many class-conscious radicals who later played important roles in the emerging working class struggles in the countries of South America.[1] Similarly, in Puerto Rico, many working class leaders adopted the ideas of Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Karl Marx, Enrico Malatesta, Pierre Proudhon, and Jean Jacques Reclus.[2] This chapter will survey the major writings of prominent labor leaders and demonstrate the influence that radical working class ideologies had on the early labor movement in Puerto Rico.

The leaders whose work is the focus of this chapter, Luisa Capetillo, Angel María Dieppa, Juan Marcano, Manuel Francisco Rojas, Ramón Romero Rosa, and Juan Vilar, formed part of the intermediate level membership of the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico. Above them were the top leaders of the organization, those who directed the Federation and maintained contact with the American Federation of Labor. Below them were the rank and file members who formed the base of the

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[1]Hobart Spalding, Organized labor in Latin America, Historical Case Studies of Urban Workers in Dependent Societies (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), p. 8.

[2]Rubén Dávila Santiago, "El pensamiento social obrero a comienzo del siglo XX en Puerto Rico," Revista de Historia, Vol. I, Num. 2 (July-December, 1985), p. 151.

organization, unskilled rural agricultural laborers and semi-skilled and unskilled workers in urban employment such as cigar manufacturing.[3] The leaders under consideration here participated actively in the labor movement, in the period before the First World War, as organizers, public speakers, and ideologues.

Very little is known about the lives of these individuals. Only Luisa Capetillo and Ramón Romero Rosa have been the subject of biographical studies. The little information about their personal lives that is known is included in the following pages. However, some of their writings did survive and this body of work provides an insight into the ideological influences of the early labor movement in Puerto Rico.[4] Contrary to the views of those historians who argued that the early labor movement on the island was never socialist or radical, a review of the writings of these leaders reveals that anarchist and socialist thinking formed an important part of the ideology of the Federación Libre.

While most of the island's population was illiterate, labor leaders were able to spread their ideas through speeches at

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[3]Rubén Dávila Santiago distinguished these three levels of membership inthe FLT in his book, El derribo de las murallas, orígenes del socialismo en Puerto Rico (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1988), p. 88.

[4]Erick J. Peréz and David Baranov, Bibliografía sobre el movimiento obrero de Puerto Rico, 1873-1996, (San Juan: Ediciones Cildes, 1996) provides a comprehensive listing of early labor writings that have survived and that can be consulted, usually in the form of poor quality xeroxed copies, in several library collections in Puerto Rico and the United States.

meetings and rallies and through theatrical skits performed before audiences of workers.[5] The work of these six writers has been singled out for examination because it illustrates the basic ideas that guided the FLT during its early years.

A fundamental tenet of the labor movement in Puerto Rico in the early twenieth century was the belief in the importance of ideological education. The labor leaders examined in this chapter stressed the need to raise workers' consciousness about the struggle between labor and capital. They emphasized the necessary unity that existed between consciousness and action.[6] A major principle of the early workers' movement on the island was the idea that the emancipation of the working class was its own responsibility and that workers therefore had to develop their own labor and political organizations.

As in other countries in Latin America and elsewhere, artisans in Puerto Rico became radicalized when their path to upward mobility got blocked by capital. In the aftermath of the U.S. annexation of the island, cigarmakers became the first and largest group of artisans in Puerto Rico to undergo the process of proletarianization. U.S. capital investments promoted the rapid transformation of the cigar industry from a system of production based on skilled artisan labor in small workshops into a large factory based operation employing semi-skilled and unskilled wage workers. A greater division of labor and new

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[5]For an anthology of some of these plays see Rubén Dávila Santiago, Teatro obrero en Puerto Rico (1900-1920) antología (Río Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1985).

[6]Ibid., p. 152.

production techniques facilitated this process. Other artisans, such as shoemakers, came under increasing economic pressure as a result of the importation of cheap but high quality mass produced merchandise.

Although they made up only a small percentage of the working class, urban artisans represented the vanguard of the early labor movement. In contrast to rural workers, urban artisans in Puerto Rico were much more likely to be skilled, literate, and educated. Typesetters and cigarmakers in particular demonstrated these qualities. This was a product of the nature of the typesetters' work and the cigarmakers' tradition of employing a reader in cigar factories. In addition, because of their place within the economic structure, artisans were also among the first workers on the island to develop a feeling of class solidarity. In Puerto Rico, artisans exhibited a strong sense of pride and contempt for hierarchy that gave rise to a tradition of dissent. Class-conscious artisan workers subsequently adopted a revolutionary ideology centered on the principles of anarchism and socialism, and began an effort to organize rural workers.[7]

Beginning in 1902, leaders of the young labor movement undertook an active campaign to organize rural workers, particularly in the sugarcane-growing regions of the island. In this campaign, referred to as La Cruzada del Ideal (the Crusade

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[7]Angel Quintero Rivera, "Socialist and Cigarmaker: Artisans' Proletarianization in the Making of the Puerto Rican Working Class," *in* Latin American Perspectives, Vol. X, Nums. 2-3 (Summer and Spring, 1983).

of the Ideal), proletarianized and radicalized urban artisans formed a Cuerpo de Oradores del Trabajo (Workers' Speakers Bureau), and went out into the countryside to proselytize among unorganized rural laborers.[8] Discouraged by initial results, and after suffering defeats in a series of strike movements in 1905 and 1906, the FLT concentrated on organizing cigarmakers, carpenters, bakers, shoemakers, and masons in urban areas.[9] However, towards the end of the first decade of the century and in the wake of poor electoral showings in 1906 and 1908, the FLT once again redoubled its effort to organize agricultural workers.[10]

This new effort paid off as thousands of workers organized into agricultural unions affiliated to the FLT, thus establishing the basis for the founding of the PS in 1915 as the political arm of the organized workers' movement. The concerted efforts of the many dedicated and class-conscious urban workers who went into rural areas to help establish labor unions resulted in a successful organizing campaign. By 1916, the FLT had organized 29 agricultural workers' unions.

In sugarcane fields and small towns, FLT speakers presented the rural population with a critique of existing conditions,

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[8]Juan Carreras, Santiago Iglesias Pantín, su vida, su obra, su pensamiento (San Juan: Editorial Club de la Prensa, 1967), p. 117.

[9]Gervasio L. García and Angel Quintero Quintero Rivera, Desafío y solidaridad, breve historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño (Río Piedras: Editorial Huracán, 1982), p. 46.

[10]Ibid., p. 59.

urged workers to organize as a social class, and called for a new economic order based on the common ownership of the means of production. The writings of early FLT leaders, such as Luisa Capetillo, Angel María Dieppa, Juan S. Marcano, Manuel Francisco Rojas, Ramón Romero Rosa and Juan Vilar provide a good idea of the message that these organizers took to the rural working class. Considered together, they show both the scope and focus of the early workers' movement in Puerto Rico in the early 1900s while maintaining their individual perspectives. Their interests were certainly broad based, touching on issues such as women's rights, educational reform, military involvement and religion. Yet at the same time, this eclectic approach did not preclude an overarching agreement that change had to take place in the existing social order and that the workers themselves would be instrumental in bringing this change about.

Luisa Capetillo

Luisa Capetillo, an outstanding labor organizer during the early years of the workers movement in Puerto Rico, was a prominent feminist and anarchist leader. Beginning in 1909, she played an active role in the Cruzada del Ideal.[11] Born on the island, in the city of Arecibo, to French and Spanish parents on

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[11]"Recuerdo a la Federación Libre, impresiones de viaje, 1909," in Luisa Capetillo, Mi opinión sobre las libertades, derechos y deberes de la mujer, como compañera, madre y ser independiente. La mujer en el hogar, en la familia, en el gobierno (San Juan: Biblioteca Roja, 1911), pp. 167-84, relates some of her experiences during that campaign.

October 28, 1876, Luisa Capetillo was a leading member of the FLT during its first two decades.[12]

Between 1904 and 1906, she worked as a journalist for the labor press, a needle worker, and a reader in a tobacco factory. In 1907, she published Ensayos libertarios, the first of the four books she wrote.[13] During the years between 1912 and 1913, she resided in New York, Ybor City, and Tampa, Florida where she again collaborated in the labor press and in the labor movement among tobacco workers.

In 1914 and 1915 she lived in Havana, Cuba from where the government deported her because of her support for the anarchosyndicalist movement. While in Cuba, she was also arrested for wearing pants in public.[14] Upon her return to Puerto Rico, she participated in numerous strikes by agricultural workers; in Patillas in 1917, in Ceiba in 1918, where she was arrested for disorderly conduct and charged with inciting a riot, and in Vieques in 1919.

She again resided in New York City from 1919 to 1920. While in New York she operated a vegetarian restaurant and a

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[12]The biographical information that follows is drawn from the book by Norma Valle Ferre, Luisa Capetillo, historia de una mujer proscrita (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1990).

[13]The other books she published were: La humanidad en el futuro, 1910; Mi opinión sobre las libertades, derechos y deberes de la mujer como compañera, madre y ser independiente, 1911; and Influencias de las ideas modernas, 1916. Julio Ramos, ed. ,Amor y anarquía, los escritos de Luisa Capetillo (Río Piedras: Huracán, 1992) contains selections from her four books.

[14]Julio Ramos, ed., Amor y anarquía, p. 66.

guest house that became a center for political discussion among workers. She also once again worked as a reader in a tobacco factory and collaborated in the labor press. She died in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico on April 10, 1922.

Luisa Capetillo is probably remembered first and foremost as a feminist. She believed fervently in the equality of women and men in bed, in the home, at work, and in the public sphere. She opposed the double standard that allowed men liberties denied to women. For example, she argued that it was wrong that men, having experienced love affairs with many women, should insist on marrying a virgin. "The man who demands a young virgin should be in the same condition himself."[15]

She was opposed to the idea that men should be allowed the freedom to go out for a day's or evening's entertainment on their own while their wives were obliged to stay at home. "Individuals of both sexes have fallen into the error of believing that only men have the right to use their freedom as they please."[16] She denied that women had less sexual drive than men and argued that in matters of sexual relations, women were the same as men and had identical desires and needs.

Luisa Capetillo advocated the idea of free love. "I say that love should be absolutely free, for the woman as well as for the man, and add that love cannot really exist except under conditions of freedom. Without complete freedom, love is

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[15]Mi opinión, p. 153. All the quotes that follow were translated from the Spanish by the author.

[16]Ibid., p. 70.

prostituted."[17] She believed that if a man and a woman were attracted to each other and loved one another, they should be free to form a union and create a family without the formal intervention of the church or the state. Similarly, if a man or a woman in such a union fell out of love with the other, he or she should be perfectly free to go their own separate way. She denied that such a relationship was immoral. What she considered immoral and hypocritical was that someone should stay in a relationship for the sake of social convention or convenience.

She also advocated women's right to vote and participate fully in the political life of society. She believed that women had the same rights and ability to engage in many jobs and professions from which they were excluded and to wear the same clothes as men. "Women, through force of will and energy are perfectly capable of engaging in certain jobs that up to now they have been excluded from."[18]

In what became one of the most famous incidents in her life, Luisa Capetillo was arrested in 1915 in Havana for creating a public scandal by wearing a man's suit. She was not a lesbian or a cross dresser as such; in fact, she abhorred homosexual and autoerotic love. She simply believed that men's clothing were more comfortable than women's and she argued that women had the same rights as any man to wear pants and a jacket if they wanted to. Capetillo had three children; Manuela, who

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[17]Ibid., p. 47.

[18]Ibid., p. 60.

was born in 1897, Gregorio, born in 1899, and Luis, 1911. "It seems to me that I would not be a complete woman if I were not a mother."[19] She wrote extensively about the duties and responsibilities of a woman as a wife, a mother and a companion.

Luisa Capetillo was outraged by conspicuous consumption and the ostentatious display of wealth. She considered it immoral for anyone to buy and wear expensive jewelry when so many people were going hungry and barefoot in the world. "We who attempt to transform society should not present the bad example of superfluous expense when our brothers lack the most essential necessities."[20] She was opposed to frivolous concern with good looks and outward appearance. True beauty, she believed, came from within and was based on healthy living, a proper diet, and regular exercise.

In addition to being a feminist, Luisa Capetillo was also a spiritualist. She believed in the immortality and the transmigration of the soul. She argued that one's situation in this life was influenced by actions in a former existence. However, she denied that prayer or appeals to supernatural forces could affect present conditions. "The ignorant believe that their salvation rests in prayer even though their life is an accumulation of injustices and selfishness."[21] Instead, she urged everyone to strive to perfect themselves in their present

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[19]Influencias, p. 65.

[20]Luisa Capetillo, Ensayos Libertarios (Arecibo: Tipografía Real Hermanos, 1907), p. 24.

[21]Mi opinión, p. 95.

existence and in particular, to struggle against conditions of exploitation. "We must form groups and societies for the purpose of emancipation. To accept all that exists without proposing new means toward liberty is cowardice. Radical socialism provides a road towards emancipation."[22]

While professing a belief in God and in the teachings of Jesus Christ, she denied divine intervention in human affairs. She was especially critical of those who claimed to be Christian, and observed the rituals of the Catholic Church, yet had no qualms about exploiting their fellow human beings.

She proclaimed herself a socialist and an anarchist. She aspired to a new society where private property would be abolished, where all the means of production would be owned in common, and where there would be no need for government authority or organized religion. As an anarchist, Luisa Capetillo refused to respect the rights of capital and private property. In her view, capital was the product of unpaid labor and a subtle form of legalized robbery. "The anarchists can not respect private property because they know it to be the result of exploitation."[23]

Luisa Capetillo believed that modern society was divided into two antagonistic classes: the capitalist class, which did not work or produce anything of value yet had control and ownership of most of society's wealth and material goods, and

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[22]Ibid., pp. 101-02.

[23]Mi opinión, p. 94.

the working class, which worked and produced everything, yet was subjected to a life of misery and poverty. She lamented that after a lifetime of labor, most workers ended up as beggars or were hospitalized, if they were fortunate enough to live near a hospital.

She also believed that the emancipation of the working class was its own responsibility. "The emancipation of labor must be achieved by the workers themselves."[24] She exhorted workers to organize as a class for the struggle against capitalism and for the establishment of a workers' cooperative community. What was needed, she argued, was for the workers to educate themselves, establish cooperative societies, and organize in preparation for a General Strike that would lead to the establishment of socialism and an anarchist society. "The best system is for the poor to organize themselves for the General Strike as a defense, not as a vengeance but to demand and claim our usurped right to establish communism in an anarchist society."[25] According to Luisa Capetillo, people of progressive ideas who wished to emancipate the workers from economic slavery had to educate them to rebel against exploitation and improve their conditions by abolishing wage labor. "Education is the basis of the happiness of the people and the mother of liberty."[26]

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[24]Influencias, p. 14.

[25]Ensayos libertarios, p. 26.

[26]Mi opinión, p. 27.

Luisa Capetillo argued that the working class could only emancipate itself by taking over control of production and government power; once in control of the government, the workers were not to use it but destroy it. Control of the means of production was to be realized by building a cooperative system and, "in this manner when we have taken over the land and the instruments in general, government will be abolished."[27]

She recognized the role of institutionalized religion in maintaining social class divisions and the privileges of the bourgeoisie. Luisa Capetillo also recognized that under capitalism the state used violence as a means of maintaining the exploitation of the working class. "The government expends fabulous sums on ammunition, gunpowder, swords, guns...to shoot workers if they complain and declare themselves on strike. With what right? With that of force and ignorance."[28]

However, she did not call for violence as an instrument of class struggle, claiming that: "Violence can not be the mother of liberty."[29] Instead, she advocated education. She espoused the notion of raising workers' consciousness about the exploitative nature of class society and the need to achieve working class unity and organizational strength. "Organization is the only defensive means against the present system. It is the only means to combat the injustices that are committed

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[27]Ibid. p. 87.

[28]Ibid., p. 90.

[29]Ibid., p. 77.

against all who produce. It is the one and only means to establish a General Strike."[30]

Luisa Capetillo denied that Puerto Rico, for the moment at least, needed self-government. Instead, what workers required was a living wage and educational instruction. She urged workers to join the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico in order to protect their economic well-being and to become a part of the Partido Socialista so as to promote their political interests. "Vote under the torch [the electoral symbol of the Socialist Party] for the establishment of socialism, which is against monopolies and privileges."[31]

Luisa Capetillo was an outstanding labor organizer and a leading feminist, anarchist, and socialist who helped raise workers' consciousness to the nature of class struggle in capitalist society and urged workers to take responsibility for their own emancipation. Capetillo underscored the importance of organizing and participation in labor unions. She opposed the use of violence as a means of struggle, but urged workers to engage in the General Strike as a way to take over the government and establish a workers' cooperative commonwealth.

The ultimate goal was the establishment of a cooperative system based on the principles of altruism and the universal brotherhood of man. In such a society, everyone would be free to engage in whatever kind of work they preferred and there

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[30]Ensayos libertarios, p. 23.

[31]Ibid, p. 34.

would be no need for money. Everyone would simply exchange what they produced for what they needed. Luisa Capetillo was motivated by the desire to see an end to human exploitation and social injustice. She had an overriding faith this would be achieved through the march of progress. "It is the century, progress which propels us."[32] She also believed the workers' struggle would triumph because theirs was a just cause. "The workers by themselves will obtain triumph in the not too distant future because their cause is just."[33]

Angel María Dieppa

Angel María Dieppa's pamphlet El porvenir de la sociedad humana also exemplifies the influence that anarchist ideas had on the island. Dieppa, another prominent intellectual leader of the time, began this pamphlet by alluding to the 1869 meeting of the International Workingmen's Association and the ideological struggle that took place between Marx and Bakunin. He supported Bakunin's anarchist ideals and made favorable references to international anarchist leaders Malatesta and Kropotkin. Dieppa claimed that "anarchism is to live without government in the most perfect order and harmony."[34] He advocated a society of free men without government, tyranny, privileges, prostitution,

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[32]Ibid., p. 29.

[33]Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[34]Angel María Dieppa, El porvenir de la sociedad humana (San Juan: Tipografía "El Eco," 1915), p. 5.

exploitation, or misery. "We want," he wrote, "a society based on love, harmony, fraternity, justice, and equality."[35]

Dieppa argued that social revolution and the establishment of an anarchist society could not be achieved through legal means and opposed the cooperative movement and parliamentary socialism as doomed to failure. He considered the cooperative workers' ventures advocated by Saint Simon and Herbert Spencer as ineffective in labor's struggle against capitalism. He argued that capital was far too powerful economically to be defeated from within by such means and too violent in nature to be overthrown by such pacific methods as democratic socialist electoral campaigns. According to Dieppa, both cooperativism and parliamentary socialism only served to undermine the revolutionary labor movement. Capitalism, he claimed, could only be destroyed by violence and direct action as promoted by revolutionary syndicalism. Dieppa considered that "within the struggle for emancipation, legalism and revolution are opposites," and that trying to mix the two would be like trying to mix water and oil.[36]

Dieppa characterized religion and the state in capitalist society as allies of the bourgeoisie in its effort to oppress and exploit the working class. He urged workers to oppose both. According to Dieppa, private property represented theft guaranteed by laws and the power of the state. Dieppa also

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[35]Ibid., p. 39.

[36]Ibid., p. 15.

called for opposition to militarism, which he claimed represented an attempt by the bourgeoisie to arm workers in order to protect capitalist economic interests. Similarly, he urged workers to resist nationalist appeals to patriotism. "Armies machine gun each other over a rag called a flag, they quarter and assassinate each other in order to assure the power of the moneyed class."[37] Dieppa criticized the concept of a social contract. Such a contract, he claimed, only condemned workers to a life of hunger, prostitution, crime, and death. According to this author "the social contract, economically and socially speaking, is nothing other than the right the capitalist, the bourgeois, has to starve workers to death."[38]

Dieppa believed that people were not inherently bad. Instead, he claimed that the social environment, particularly the evil influence of money, corrupted humankind, stating that: "Experience teaches us that society makes the man and not man society."[39] Dieppa argued that once workers destroyed the capitalist system, the exploitation of people by people would come to an end and that anarchism would then establish the basis for a free society characterized by equality and mutual solidarity.

In regard to women, he maintained that they experienced a double form of slavery. Women suffered exploitation in workshops and factories and then in their homes where their husbands

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[37]Ibid., p. 33.

[38]Ibid., p. 27.

[39]Ibid., p. 44.

treated them as slaves. In the future, he proposed, women would toil at jobs appropriate to their sex and would not be required to work during preganacy, while nursing, or before their children reached six years of age.

Juan S. Marcano

Few early labor leaders advocated independence for Puerto Rico. Juan S. Marcano did. Marcano, a shoemaker from Caguas, was a member of the Partido Socialista.[40] In the only pamphlet he is known to have written, Juan Marcano affirmed that people on the earth had the right to self-determination and to develop their activities according to their customs and aspirations; to deny this was to deny liberty itself.[41] He argued that to deny Puerto Rico the right to freely determine and administer its own interests was a crime against the island. According to Marcano, to oppose independence for Puerto Rico was to favor the absorption of the island's riches and annihilation of its people by foreign and native corporations.[42]

He believed that socialism and the "dictatorship of the proletariat" could only be achieved within the framework of a democratic republic.[43] A bourgeois democratic republic could not

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[40]Workers' Struggle, p.70.

[41]Juan S. Marcano, Páginas rojas, (Humacao: Tipografía Conciencia Popular, 1919), p. 41.

[42]Ibid., p. 42.

[43]Ibid., p. 43.

satisfy the aspirations of the working class, but it permitted the necessary freedom of thought and expression to allow workers to organize for the establishment of a "Social Republic."[44]

While he was in the minority as far as the issue of Puerto Rico's political status was concerned, Juan Marcano's thinking in regard to the class nature of society and the need for socialism harmonized with the ideas of the island's other labor leaders. He began his pamphlet, Páginas rojas, by affirming the class nature of society as the basis of social problems and the abolition of the bourgeoisie as the solution. "We do not need the bourgeosie for anything, if it disappeared the working class would not cease to exist."[45]

He proposed that workers be the sole owners of the land, the main factor in the production of wealth, and that they have exclusive use of the instruments of production. According to Marcano, contemporary society, which was based on the principles of capitalism, usury, and exploitation, was incapable of providing for the well-being or true liberty of the people. He called for the establishment of a new regime, based on the collective ownership of land, and for the social ownership of the means of transportation and communications as well. Socialism, he argued, would result in greater individual security within society.

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[44]Ibid., p. 44.

[45]Ibid., p. 7.

Marcano's proposal for the workers' ownership of the means of production was coupled with the view that all forms of government were oppressive. "Land and all its productive machinery should be the property of those who work it. Monarchistic, republican, or whatever type of government all have one purpose: to rule and oppress."[46] He also believed that ignorance, servitude, and religious fanaticism retarded all revolutionary movements.

In his political thought, Juan S. Marcano distinguished between reform and revolution. He argued that organizations that simply struggled for momentary improvements for the working class were out of step with the currents of the century. "Those formulas and conservative procedures of our anti-capitalist organizations no longer satisfy, nor can they respond to, modern struggles and the century's libertarian spirit."[47]

To achieve a socialist society, Juan S. Marcano believed that the first step was to raise the consciousness of the working class as to the nature and essence of socialism.[48] In addition to education, he called for organization and made the point that it was necessary to organize not only the proletariat but the majority of the population, including small farmers and industrialists who were being threatened by the process of proletarianization.[49]

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[46]Ibid., p. 9.

[47]Ibid., p. 15.

[48]Ibid., p. 20.

Moreover, he urged that women's oppression be recognized and claimed that only under socialism would they achieve true equality. "Women in Puerto Rico, in the entire world, have not yet occupied their corresponding place as equal beings. Socialism is the ideal that will truly give them liberty!"[50]

Juan Marcano believed that the triumph of socialism was inevitable, postulating that: "Progress is a force no one can detain."[51] But, at the same time, he urged workers to take the initiative, to organize, to form study groups, and to struggle to promote the establishment of a socialist regime. "Let us be active, not passive," he implored: "let us educate the people and prepare them for the society of the future."[52]

Manuel Francisco Rojas

Another important labor leader who helped articulate the early vision and goals of the workers' movement was Manuel Francisco Rojas. Rojas, from Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, was the Partido Socialista's Secretary-General from the time of the party's founding in 1915 through the early 1930s.[53] In Cuatro siglos de ignorancia y servidumbre en Puerto Rico, Rojas

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[49]Ibid., p. 23.

[50]Ibid., p. 45.

[51]Ibid., p. 53.

[52]Ibid., p. 55.

[53]Angel Quintero Rivera, Workers' Struggle in Puerto Rico, A Documentary History (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), p. 212.

presented a critique of the capitalist system and called for socialism. In addition, he discussed his opposition to the independence of Puerto Rico (a view he later changed), his support for the democratic institutions the United States brought to the island, and the Puerto Rican labor movement's affiliation to the American Federation of Labor.[54]

Rojas believed that private property in the hands of a few privileged owners was the cause of workers' poverty. Furthermore, he argued that the private ownership of land and the means of production was the result of robbery by unscrupulous men of little conscience. He urged salaried workers to unite for the purpose of liberating the land, tools, and machinery from those who owned it illegally. Failure to do so, he warned, would lead to the continuation of the poverty, slavery, and suffering that were the causes of social malaise.[55]

According to Rojas, the only thing that was needed for the final triumph of a social revolution was for the workers to unite and act in concert. "The power of that conceited aristocracy can be annuled as soon as the masses unite and together undertake the struggle that will secure their usurped rights and which they willingly and stupidly give the aristocrats."[56]

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[54]Manuel Francisco Rojas, Cuatro siglos de ignorancia y servidumbre en Puerto Rico, (San Juan: Imprenta La Primavera,1914).

[55]Ibid, pp. 65-66.

[56]Ibid., p. 67.

He also advocated cooperatives as a solution to workers' problems and as a means towards creating a new social order. He believed that cooperative workshops, factories, and commercial establishments would generate capital and employment, supply workers with their necessities, and at the same time facilitate their education and propaganda in favor of socialist ideals.[57]

Rojas complained of working class customs and beliefs that hindered its economic and political progress. He was especially critical of drinking and gambling. "The worker always finds himself inclined towards going to the tavern where he gets drunk; a gambling establishment where he loses the only resources he relies on for his support and that of his family."[58] He also emphasized that the social and economic problems of the working class were not decreed by providence, but were the result of the perverse exploitation of the majority of the population by the few selfish individuals who owned the means of production.[59]

Manuel Francisco Rojas compared the period of Spanish domination in Puerto Rico to that of United States' administration and argued that under the U.S., the island enjoyed much greater liberty. He emphasized that those who advocated independence did so employing rights granted to them by the new colonial power.[60] He pointed out that previously,

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[57]Ibid., p. 84

[58]Ibid., p. 29.

[59]Ibid., p. 79.

[60]Ibid., p. 17.

they would have been arrested and prosecuted for going against government authority.

Opposition to the independence of the island had a lot of support within the early labor movement. This reflected the fear that an independent Puerto Rico, under the leadership of the hacendados, would be detrimental to the interests of the workers. "It is not convenient to push the request for independence unless we have the absolute certainty that we will not later suffer painful and grave consequences."[61]

Manuel Francisco Rojas stressed that it was important for the people to possess sufficient civic, social, and political education so as not to succumb to the influence of reactionary elements who wished to establish an oppressive and despotic regime. Rojas pointed out that in 1897, during the short-lived period of political autonomy from Spain, the workers' movement had been severely repressed. He recalled how a peaceful assembly of three thousand workers in the Teatro Municipal in San Juan was broken up by the police and how labor leaders were arrested simply for meeting regularly to discuss the problems workers were experiencing.[62] Rojas pointed out that the right of habeas corpus did not exist in Puerto Rico until the U.S. occupation and how under the new regime the workers' struggle against capital had made great advances. "Due to the new methods

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[61]Ibid., p. 6.

[62]Ibid., p. 45.

introduced since the U.S. invasion, we have seen how the struggle between capital and labor advances."[63]

He also highlighted the advantages of the Puerto Rican workers' movement's affiliation to the American Federation of Labor. When labor leaders were arrested for their organizing activities, it was the AFL and U.S. government authorities in Washington, D.C. that immediately came to their aid.[64]

Manuel Francisco Rojas pointed to the advances the workers' movement was making in all parts of the world under the influence of the propaganda of the revolutionary and parliamentary socialists, the trade unionists, cooperativists, syndicalists, and anarchists. He argued that the capitalist system was on the decline and that its days were numbered. "Unquestionably the world advances, the capitalist system has undermined its foundation."[65]

According to Rojas, workers in Puerto Rico adopted the ideals of the international socialist workers' union movement because it was necessary in order to establish universal social equality. "In opposition to the patriots who aspire to perpetuate the oppressive system of the privileged classes, we are struggling within the heart of international socialist unity to maintain the trend to redeem humanity and establish the kingdom of social and human fraternity."[66] Like many other

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[63]Ibid., p. 25.

[64]Ibid., p. 55.

[65]Ibid., p. 68.

workers at the time, Rojas opposed independence for Puerto Rico because it was the political demand of most hacendados whom they recognized as their class adversaries. Most class conscious workers believed an independent Puerto Rico would be governed by large landowners who would then have a free reign to further exploit the island's rural landless working class.

Ramón Romero Rosa

Another early labor leader was Ramón Romero Rosa, also known as R. del Romeral. Rosa was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico on August 30, 1863.[67] After very little formal education that barely taught him to read and write, he began working as a typesetter in 1877 at barely fourteen years of age. While working at this trade, he availed himself of the constant contact with books, newspapers and magazines that his work involved to obtain a broader learning and class consciousness.

In 1897, he was part of a small group of artisans that met in the home of one of their own, Fernando Gómez Acosta, and took part in the organizing work that shortly thereafter led to the publication of a working class newspaper, Ensayo Obrero. As a member of this small group, he helped organize El Centro de Estudios Sociales, a workers' study circle established for the purpose of discussing issues relating to the origins of the

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[66]Ibid., p. 63.

[67]The biographical information that follows is drawn from Amílcar Tirado Avilés, "Ramón Romero Rosa su participación en las luchas obreras (1897-1906)," Revista Caribe, año II, nums. 2-3 (1980-81), pp. 3-25.

capitalist system and the private ownership of the means of production, the First International, the principles of socialism, trade unionism, and the cooperative system.[68] He was also instrumental in the establishment of the FRT in 1898.

Between 1896 and the time of his death as a result of tuberculosis on April 25, 1907, Romero Rosa distinguished himself as a leader of the emerging Puerto Rican proletariat. He was an outstanding labor organizer, journalist, propagandist, and working class politician, having been elected in 1904, and reelected in 1906, as a labor representative to the House of Delegates, the lower chamber of the legislature in Puerto Rico. There he served on the Public Lands and Mines Commission and on the Welfare Commission and also participated in the presentation of over two dozen bills for legislation in favor of the interests of the workers of the island. However, Romero Rosa, who published under the pen name R. del Romeral, obrero tipógrafo, is best remembered for his theoretical writings.[69]

What is distinctive about Romero Rosa was not the originality of his thinking on social and economic issues, but his familiarity with fundamental Marxist concepts of class, class struggle, and the nature of bourgeois government. Among early labor leaders in Puerto Rico, he did the most to

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[68]Rubén Dávila Santiago, "El pensamiento social obrero a comienzo del siglo XX en Puerto Rico," p. 10.

[69]Among his most important writings are La cuestión social y Puerto Rico, 1904; Musarañas, 1904; Catecismo socialista, 1905 and Entre broma y vera, 1906.

disseminate these ideas through his numerous and varied writings.

The major element of Ramón Romero Rosa's social and political thought was the concept of class struggle. He saw this struggle as one in which humanity had been engaged for centuries, and as one that would not end until the economic and political inequalities that divided people were eliminated. According to Romero Rosa, society was divided into two antagonistic classes. These were the capitalist class (a group of non-producers, which was relatively small in numbers but owned the means of production), and the working class. This class constituted the largest part of the population and was composed of all the producers, including mechanical workers, manual laborers, and intellectuals.[70]

He believed that the exploited class, the workers, was on the whole submerged in ignorance and base preoccupations that kept it indolent, oppressed and enslaved. The capitalist class, on the other hand, availed itself of its exclusive ownership of the means of production and its control of the powers of the state to defend its privileges and to appropriate the larger share of the production of the working class which was left with only enough to reproduce itself.

For Romero Rosa, the fact that Puerto Rico was under the control of a republic that was considered the most liberal and democratic in the world did not mean that liberty existed on the

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[70]R. del Romeral, La cuestión social y Puerto Rico (San Juan, 1904), p. 14.

island. On the contrary, for him the right to vote and participate in popular elections only gave the impression of political representation. "Within the capitalist system, for the purpose of human exploitation, the concepts of a republic are identical to those of an empire, monarchy, or Caesarean regime."[71] According to Romero Rosa, bourgeois democracy kept the masses in a state of slumber and political parties were the means whereby the most able were elected to serve as bureaucrats in defense of an exploitative system.[72]

In addition to identifying the state and bourgeois democracy as instruments of capitalist class exploitation, Ramón Romero Rosa also pointed to the role that religion played, saying that: "Religion has never done anything other than prepare the slaves."[73] The purpose of religion was to keep the people ignorant so they would not rebel against exploitation. Romero Rosa regarded the clergy as a very powerful ally of the capitalist class and he ridiculed the way religion portrayed itself as the vehicle that would lead humanity to great happiness via poverty and deprivation. He argued that an ill-fated preoccupation with religion made it impossible for workers to think about their emancipation and limited their ability to embark upon the road to a 'radiant and beautiful' future.

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[71]Ibid., p. 20.

[72]Ibid., p. 22.

[73]Ibid., p. 10.

In his analysis of society, Ramón Romero Rosa distinguished between natural and artificial poverty.[74] To his way of thinking, natural poverty had existed since the creation of man up until the discovery of steam power. It was based on the inability of people to physically produce more than their subsistence requirements. However, the advent of steam power and industrialization resulted in an extraordinary superproduction of goods which led to artificial poverty, to the extent that the capitalist class appropriated these products for itself.

On the other hand, he also argued that the discovery of steam power, the invention of machinery, and the increased industrialization which led to a greater division of labor and a more intense competition for markets also gave rise to the ideals of socialism and the need to radically alter existing society. For Romero Rosa, socialism meant replacing the present system of exploitation by a society where the means of production would be owned collectively. He called for the scientific organization of production and a higher moral social order in which everyone would belong to the family of workers and live in liberty with honor and dignity.[75]

For Romero Rosa, the creation of such a socialist society required the proletariat to achieve a higher level of class consciousness, to organize as a class, and to actively struggle against capitalist exploitation. A central precept of his

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[74]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[75]Ibid., p. 15.

thinking was the idea that the working class was responsible for its own emancipation.[76] Nevertheless, he saw the intelligentsia as playing an important role in this process. According to Ramón Romero Rosa, intellectuals were among those who suffered as a result of the capitalist system and, in addition, they were related to the peasants and proletarians by blood.[77] For these reasons it was their responsibility to raise the consciousness of the masses. One of his admonitions was: "Intellectuals, to you corresponds the moral uplift of the people. The true liberty of this fertile and productive ground depends on you."[78]

Ramón Romero Rosa believed that in order for the working class to successfully emancipate itself, it also had to overcome certain preoccupations which were hindering its consciousness and its ability to organize and struggle. Among these were religious beliefs and frivolous and immoral activities such as dancing, drinking, and gambling. He was not opposed to dancing as such: "It is not that we are opposed to dance. Nor do we believe that youth should not meet to enjoy a few hours of recreation dancing to the rhythm of music. No, a thousand times no."[79] Rather, he felt it was more important for workers to concentrate on the struggle for better housing, food, clothing, and social justice than to spend time organizing and

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[76]R. del Romeral, Musarañas (San Juan: Tipografía de el Carnaval, 1904), p. 26.

[77]La cuestión social, p. 4.

[78]Ibid., p. 3.

[79]Musarañas, p. 14.

participating in dances and other celebrations such as religious festivals.

He singled out drinking and gambling as particularly harmful to the interests of the working class. He felt it was a shame that through an excessive use of alcohol, that was destroying them, hundreds and hundreds of laborers limited their capacity to reason, defend themselves, and struggle for emancipation. "Alcoholism, like gambling, is a counterweight that offsets the balance of labor justice."[80] He noted that it pleased the bourgeoisie to see workers getting drunk instead of participating in labor organizations.

Romero Rosa also pointed to nationalism as something that kept the working class divided. "The proletariat is divided by patriotic issues that do not concern it."[81] Meanwhile, capitalism was cosmopolitan in nature. "Capitalism is cosmopolitan, it is internationalized everywhere."[82]

For Ramón Romero Rosa, socialism was inevitable. He argued that society had reached a point in its development when a decision had to be made in favor of emancipation or continued economic slavery, i.e. wage labor. The fact that socialism was a rational system was its great source of strength. Romero Rosa firmly believed that socialist ideals would triumph as soon as education, socialist propaganda, and class consciousness removed the veil of ignorance from the working class. He felt that,

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[80]Ibid., p. 38.

[81]La cuestión social, p. 15.

[82]Ibid. p. 22.

despite its preponderance and power, the capitalist regime was doomed to defeat because the proletariat was constantly growing in size and had begun to rebel.

Juan Vilar

Juan Vilar was a cigarmaker from Caguas, Puerto Rico. At the beginning of the twentieth century, he was among those who initiated the organization of workers on the island. In 1904, he collaborated in the founding of a social studies group, Juventud Estudiosa, and became known as an intellectual leader of the labor movement. In addition to other activities, Vilar founded several labor newspapers and wrote numerous philosophical and pedogogical pamphlets, including Páginas libres, which was published in 1914, one year before his death.

In this work, Vilar gave expression to many of the ideas that were to become prominent elements of the early labor movements' ideology. For example, he paid tribute to the importance of the strike as the weapon of the disinherited and as the hope of the workers in their struggle against capital. Vilar linked the progress of the population to production, commerce, and wages, and saw the demand for higher wages as a call for justice, liberty, and bread.[83]

Vilar argued that humanity was divided into two groups: the rich and the poor. He emphasized that the rich enjoyed private

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[83]Juan Vilar, Páginas libres (San Juan: Compañia Editorial Antillana, 1914), p. 87.

property and all the comforts of life while they created an employers' tyranny which subjected the poor to the law of wages and embittered their existence. According to Vilar, the struggle for existence had a perverse effect on human beings who, good by nature, had become evil. Juan Vilar held opinions on a wide range of social issues, speaking out, for example, against the death penalty. He argued that this was not the way to prevent crime because criminal activity was the result of social conditions, especially the existence of poverty and misery. He suggested that people deny the vote to any legislator who advocated the death penalty. "When social economic inequality ends, man will be good and live in a new tomorrow of equality and justice."[84]

Vilar urged workers to think about the future, to obtain their rights by loving and defending justice and liberty, and to work in the economic sphere to destroy the present system and transform it completely. According to Vilar, the misery and ignorance of the workers in Puerto Rico was the product of their disunity and only through unity would they progress and prosper. He observed: "The workers of this country live dying, they earn a paltry wage, inhabit unsanitary housing, walk barefooted, and their families enjoy no comforts. Yet, they do not unite. They prefer to live under these conditions rather than unify their efforts to defend and help each other."[85] He also urged workers

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[84]Ibid., p. 31

[85]Ibid., p. 85.

to overcome the vices that served to undermine their prospects for the future. In particular, he opposed drinking and gambling.

Like the labor movement in general, Juan Vilar gave great importance to education and he saw women, as mothers, playing a vital role in preparing children for the future society. "When the mother is enlightened, ideas begin to germinate in the home...when a mother lacks education and lives in chains, the people are slaves and miserable."[86] He argued that education should be secular and scientific, saying that: "Religion is the antithesis of reason because where faith begins, science ends. Religion divides the people."[87] He also advocated rationalism and in addition to his opposition to the teaching of religious ideas, opposed instilling patriotic sentiments among students.

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In summary, the ideology of the early Puerto Rican labor movement as expressed in the writings of these key FLT leaders consisted of three major elements: a critique of the existing society, a call for a new economic and political order, and a plan for bringing about social change. Of these three themes, the most highly developed and best articulated aspect of the workers' ideology was the critique of their society.

An acute awareness existed that the social and economic problems of the working class were rooted in the class divisions

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[86]Ibid., p. 36.

[87]Ibid., p. 65.

of capitalist society and the private ownership of the means of production. Moreover, working class leaders clearly understood that the capitalist class controlled the state and used it as an instrument of class oppression. They viewed bourgeois democracy and politics in general, and nationalist ideology in particular, with a great deal of skepticism. Nonetheless, at the same time, many of them recognized that the democratic rights guaranteed by U. S. rule afforded the labor movement the necessary conditions for its growth and development. They were also distrustful of nationalist ideology. Although some within the movement favored political independence for Puerto Rico.

In addition, these leaders recognized that religion played an instrumental role in maintaining the existing unjust social system. Their critique of the social order also pointed to the debilitating effects of working class ignorance, disunity, and social vices such as drinking and gambling. They exhibited a high level of consciousness about the particularly oppressive conditions that women lived under and the need to address their problems and enlist their support in the class struggle.

However, the ideology of the leaders of the workers' movement exhibited less clarity in regard to the kind of society envisioned for the future. Idealism and a high degree of altruism characterized this aspect of their thought. They wanted to establish a socialist society, a classless social order where the means of production would be owned in common by the working class. This would be the basis for human liberation, social justice, and a humane society. Under this system the workers'

moral, educational, and physical development would be guaranteed and everyone would live in peace.

Unfortunately, the road toward acheiving these ideals was not clearly mapped out. In other words, while these leaders' vision of the future was already decidedly more vague than their analysis of the existing society, their plan of action for implementing a new social order was even less well articulated. Yet, what united these leaders were certain ideological beliefs. They had an all-consuming faith in human and social progress and felt that history was on their side. They firmly believed that their cause was just and that justice would prevail. At the same time, they had great faith in the power of education and class consciousness and the effect that working class organization and class unity would have in promoting the goals of the movement. They recognized the role of violence in maintaining the exploitative system they lived under, but for the most part proposed nonviolent methods of struggle. As the means toward the creation of a new society, they advocated the development of the great general strike.

Not examined in the above discussion was the ideological and political thinking of Santiago Iglesias Pantín, the early Puerto Rican organized labor movement's most important and prominent leader. The reason for not considering his ideas in this chapter is that Iglesias was a labor organizer rather than an ideologue. His writings consisted primarily of reports to the American Federation of Labor on his organizing activities. He also reported to the AFL on working and living conditions in

Puerto Rico. The American Federationist, the official AFL journal, published many of his reports. In addition, Iglesias wrote for the Puerto Rican labor movement on his participation as an FLT delegate at the annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor. His memoirs, published in two volumes as Luchas emancipadoras, crónicas de Puerto Rico, the first volume of which appeared in 1929, would appear at first glance to offer us a vision of his thinking. However, they do not contain very much information on his political ideas and, to the extent that they do, can not be read as a reliable source on his ideological positions, since they were written towards the end of his life, many years after his participation in the events they describe.

Although details on his life and role in the workers' movement on the island are provided in chapter four, it is important, at this point, to highlight the two major principles that guided Iglesias' work as a labor leader. He articulated these principles in 1907 in a pamphlet entitled Gobierno propio...Para quien?[88] In this piece, Santiago Iglesias argued that the primary goal of the workers' movement in Puerto Rico was to achieve immediate improvements in working and living conditions. He emphasized the importance of working in alliance with the American Federation of Labor in order to obtain higher wages, shorter work hours, improved housing, better health facilities, and greater educational opportunities. Secondly, Santiago Iglesias staunchly opposed independence for Puerto

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[88]Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Gobierno propio...Para quien? (San Juan: Imprenta Federación Libre, 1907.

Rico. He did not oppose independence in principle; rather, he claimed that given the workers' weak political position, a Republic of Puerto Rico would necessarily be governed by hacendados, their sworn class enemies. Instead, Iglesias advocated support for U.S. rule in Puerto Rico on the grounds that the United States' government on the island guaranteed the democratic rights workers depended on in their struggle against capitalist exploitation. These rights included the rights to free speech, assembly, and a free press, as well as the right to form labor unions and strike for improved economic conditions. Santiago Iglesias is a controversial figure in Puerto Rican history. Many historians condemn him as a traitor to the cause of independence, while others praise him as the workers' savior and a champion of democratic liberty on the island.[89] The chapters that follow examine the history of the organized labor movement in Puerto Rico and the role of Santiago Iglesias and the American Federation of Labor in that movement.

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[89]The critique of Santiago Iglesias as a traitor to the cause of Puerto Rican independence originated in the Nationalist Party in the 1930s and has carried over to the contemporary independence movement. In Santiago Iglesias, Labor Crusader, Clarence Senior portrays Iglesias as labor's savior.

Chapter IV

HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZED LABOR MOVEMENT

This chapter traces the history of labor organizations in Puerto Rico from the late nineteenth century through the early nineteen thirties. It concentrates on the ideology and politics of the Federación Libre and the Partido Socialista. It will show that in contrast to the revolutionary socialist and anarchist thinking of many early labor leaders, as discussed in the previous chapter, the organized labor movement on the island promoted an essentially reformist political program. An examination of FLT and PS documents reveals that although these organizations spoke in terms of the ultimate emancipation of the working class and the establishment of a workers' social democracy, their primary goals focused almost exclusively on limited economic reforms.

The present chapter also demonstrates that while the FLT leadership, which consisted entirely of skilled urban workers, made a valiant effort to organize unskilled agricultural workers and lead large-scale strikes by rural laborers, it was also committed to party politics and was not averse to the formation of electoral alliances with hacendado and capitalist interests. Such an arrangement culminated in the formation of a coalition government in 1932.

Early Labor Organizations

Labor organizations first emerged in Puerto Rico after 1873 when Governor Rafael Primo de Rivera issued a decree granting the population the right of free association. Urban artisans took advantage of this opportunity to organize casinos, mutual aid societies, cooperatives, and trade guilds. The casinos were clubs styled after those of the upper classes, which excluded the artisans. Artisans founded their own casinos primarily for educational and recreational purposes. These casinos sponsored dances, literary readings, theater groups, and classes in art and music. They also provided their members libraries and the opportunity to study in evening classes.[1] An example of this type of organization was the Sociedad Protectora de la Inteligencia del Obrero, founded in 1889. Another example was the Sociedad Verdaderos Amigos, established in Ponce in 1893 and which promoted the education of workers through classes in reading, grammar, geography, and mathematics.[2]

Mutual aid societies offered their members financial assistance in cases of illness, insurance against accidents, and death benefits. The earliest mutual aid society was probably the Sociedad Amigos del Bien Público, founded in San Juan in 1873. It primarily sought to help families in the event of the death of a member. Another mutual aid society, El Taller Benéfico de

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[1]Gervasio Luis García and Angel Quintero Rivera, Desafío y solidaridad, breve historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño (Río Piedras: Huracán, 1982), pp.19-20.

[2]Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Artesanos de Ponce, offered its affiliates the services of a doctor and fifty cents per day in case of sickness. Mutual aid societies also sponsored recreational and cultural activities similar to those provided by the casinos.[3]

Artisans also organized cooperatives and trade guilds. They founded cooperatives as a way of addressing the problem of unemployment within their ranks. Masons, carpenters, shoemakers, and other craft workers sometimes joined together to establish workshops and thus create employment which the economy did not always readily provide. Cooperatives were set up by San Juan carpenters in 1889 and 1893, Ponce masons in 1893, bakers in Mayagüez in 1894, and shoemakers in Ponce in 1895.[4] Artisans created trade guilds for the purpose of controlling the quantity and quality of artisan production. These guilds also helped govern the entry and apprenticeship of workers into the various skilled trades. These efforts were geared towards maintaining high standards and regulating the prices of artisan production.[5]

According to Gervasio García and Angel Quintero Rivera, labor organizations in the nineteenth century began as associations of artisans concerned with educational and recreational pursuits but evolved into defensive associations that sought to protect the economic interests of artisans as the

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[3]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[4]Ibid. p. 23.

[5]Angel Quintero Rivera, "Socialist and Cigarmaker: Artisans' Proletarianization in the Making of the Puerto Rican Working Class," Latin American Perspectives Vol. X, Nums. 2-3 (Summer and Spring, 1983), p. 21.

process of proletarianization unfolded. By the last years of the century, artisans began to identify with workers and their organizations took the offensive in the struggle against capitalists. Quintero has pointed out that during the last two decades of the nineteenth century the names of labor newspapers reflected the artisans' new sense of identification. The words "worker" and "proletarian" replaced the word "artisan" in the title of these publications.[6] For example, El Artesano was the name of a newspaper which appeared in 1874. By the late 1880s and early 1890s, laborers published newspapers with titles like El Obrero (1889), El Eco Proletario (1892), Revista Obrera (1893), and Ensayo Obrero (1897).[7]

The appearance of Ensayo Obrero on May 1, 1897 represents the origins of the twentieth century organized labor movement in Puerto Rico. In February of 1897 José Ferrer y Ferrer, Norberto Quiñones, José Rivera, Ramón Romero Rosa, Eusebio Félix, and Santiago Iglesias Pantín met in the house of Fernando Gómez Acosta and planned the publication of this new labor weekly.[8] It proposed to disseminate labor and socialist principles and doctrines.[9] The premier issue described the tragedy of the

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[6]Ibid., p. 29.

[7]See Erick J. Pérez and David Baronov, "Periódicos y boletines obreros" in Bibliografía sobre el movimiento obrero de Puerto Rico, 1873-1996 (San Juan: Ediciones Cildes, 1996), pp. 37-45.

[8]Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Luchas emancipadoras, crónicas de Puerto Rico, Vol. I, (San Juan: Imprenta Venezuela, 1958), pp. 45-46.

Chicago, Haymarket affair of 1886 and made reference to the resolutions of International Workers' Congresses.[10] Many of those who collaborated on this publication later became leaders of the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico.

On February 20, 1898 the publishers of Ensayo Obrero met and organized the Grupo de Estudios Sociales (Social Studies Group). Its primary aim was to train leaders in order to spread the ideals of social and economic justice for the working class.[11] Reorganized one year later under the presidency of Santiago Iglesias, the Grupo de Estudios Sociales continued this effort as a forum dedicated to the study and discussion of the problems and struggles of the international working class.[12] It also played an active role in the organization of Puerto Rican workers.

Santiago Iglesias Pantín served as the most prominent labor leader in Puerto Rico during the first four decades of the twentieth century. In addition to his participation in Ensayo Obrero and the Grupo de Estudios Sociales, he was a founding member and head of both the Federación Libre and its political wing the Partido Socialista. The subject of several biographies, Santiago Iglesias has been credited with the creation of the Puerto Rican labor movement.[13] Gervasio García, however, has

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[9]Rafael Alonso Torres, Cuarenta años de lucha proletaria (San Juan: Imprenta Baldrich, 1939), p. 161.

[10]Ibid., pp. 109-110.

[11]Ibid., p. 190.

[12]Ibid., p. 208.

cautioned against the error of subscribing to the great leader theory of history.[14] Instead, he claims, Iglesias must be recognized as only one of the many labor leaders who came to the fore during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the context of the development of the proletariat and working class organizations. Nevertheless, his importance in the history of the working class struggle in Puerto Rico can not be underestimated.

Santiago Iglesias played a role comparable to that of Samuel Gompers in the labor movement in the United States. Like Gompers, Iglesias was a European immigrant, an artisan by trade, who in his youth had been influenced by Spanish socialist ideology. He was a charismatic leader, highly articulate, a man of great personal courage, and an untiring labor organizer. He convinced many of the importance of organizing workers in order to promote their economic and political interests as a class.

Born in La Coruña, Spain on February 22, 1872, Iglesias lived in Cuba for about ten years before arriving in Puerto Rico in December of 1896.[15] Nothing is known about the period before

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[13]Gonzalo F. Córdova, Santiago Iglesias Pantín, creador del movimiento obrero de Puerto Rico (Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria, 1980). Other biographical studies include Juan Carreras, Santiago Iglesias Pantín, su vida, su obra, su pensamiento (datos biográficos) (Río Piedras: Editorial Club de la Prensa, 1967) and Clarence Senior, Santiago Iglesias, Labor Crudader (Hato Rey: Inter American University Press, 1972).

[14]Gervasio L. García, "Los orígenes del movimiento obrero en Puerto Rico: mitos y problemas," in Historia crítica, historia sin coartadas, algunos problemas de la historia de Puerto Rico (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1985), p. 68.

he landed in Puerto Rico. He did not discuss it in his memoirs, the principal source of information on his life. However, it is clear that he left Cuba due to the very repressive nature of Spanish rule during Cuba's second war for independence. Upon his arrival on the island on December 26, 1896, Iglesias immediately found a job as a carpenter and proceeded to make contact with those artisan workers who formed the group that published Ensayo Obrero and established the Grupo de Estudios Sociales.

Federación Regional

On October 20, 1898, the leaders of the Grupo de Estudios Sociales summoned a mass meeting of workers in the Municipal Theater in Old San Juan and founded the Federación Regional de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico. The Federación sought to unite workers for the purpose of obtaining "their inherent liberty and equality as human beings."[16] It called for an end to the exploitation of people by people and pledged itself to struggle until the complete emancipation of the proletariat. The FRT also urged the establishment of contacts and fraternal relationships with labor organizations in Europe and the United States. At that founding meeting, the FRT elected a central committee of twelve representatives of various trades, raised funds for the opening of an office, and passed a resolution to send a labor

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[15]Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Luchas emancipadoras, crónicas de Puerto Rico, Vol. I, (San Juan: Imprenta Venezuela, 1958), p. 33.

[16]Rafael Alonso Torres, Cuarenta años de lucha proletaria, pp. 220-221. (My translation.)

delegation to meet in the United States with representatives of the Socialist Workers' Party and the American Federation of Labor.[17]

On October 23, 1898, Porvenir Social replaced Ensayo Obrero and became the official weekly newspaper of the Federación Regional. This new publication provided information on the economic and political struggles of workers' organizations throughout the world.[18] Produced under the direction of Santiago Iglesias and with the cooperation of the typographers Ramón Romero Rosa and José Ferrer y Ferrer, Porvenir Social also promoted the Federation's program of social and economic reforms.[19]

The Federación Regional presented its political and economic program at a special assembly convened by the island's political leaders on October 30, 1898. The purpose of the meeting was to draw up a petition from the people of Puerto Rico to the U.S. president. Representing organized labor, the FRT declared itself in favor of the annexation of Puerto Rico by the United States and called for the extension of U.S. institutions to Puerto Rico, especially the school system and the system of sanitation. The Federation expressed its belief that public administration should be honest and democratic. In regard to

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[17]Ibid., p. 222 and Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Luchas emancipadoras, p. 94.

[18]Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Luchas emancipadoras, p. 94.

[19]Rafael Alonso Torres, Cuarenta años de lucha proletaria, p. 208.

economic reforms, the FRT proposed an eight hour work day, a minimum wage law, an end to the employment of children under the age of fifteen, a government system of workers' compensation, a maternity leave program, and the establishment of school cafeterias for children and low cost public kitchens for workers.[20]

Certain aspects stand out about the FR: it constituted an organization of skilled urban artisans; it promoted a reformist political and economic program; and it advocated a close political associaton with the United States. This established a pattern for the Puerto Rican organized labor movement throughout the period under consideration. Skilled urban workers dominated its leadership even after it organized a large number of unskilled rural workers. It continually promoted an essentially reformist political program, even though many of its members were radically socialist and anarchist, and it called for a close association with the United States, even though some within its ranks advocated Puerto Rican political independence.

The Federación Regional, however, did not last for very long. It split when the Partido Republicano attempted to take control of this workers' organization for its own political objectives. After the United States' occupation of Puerto Rico, the political parties representing the interests of professionals and hacendados changed their names and their politics. The Partido Autonomista became the Partido Republicano

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[20]Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Luchas emancipadoras, pp. 95-96.

and the Partido Liberal became the Partido Federal. The latter represented the island's hacendados, particularly those involved in coffee and sugar cultivation. The former was principally the party of island professionals. Lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, and engineers dominated its leadership, although it also included some agriculturalists, merchants, and artisans.[21]

During the War of 1898, many hacendados and island professionals pledged their support to Spain. However, after the United States took over the island, they became pro-U.S. Both parties supported the annexation of Puerto Rico by the United States and both wanted it to become a state of the union. The difference between the two parties was that whereas the Partido Federal was moderate in its pro-U.S. sentiment, the Partido Republicano was in favor of the immediate Americanization of Puerto Rico. The Republicanos quickly acquiesced to the colonial status the Foraker Act of 1900 imposed on the island, while the leaders of the Federales loudly protested the clear colonial implications of that legislation. After 1904, the Partido Federal disbanded and its members became the core constituents of the Partido Unión de Puerto Rico. Organized to combat the colonialism implicit in the Foraker Act, the Partido Unión consisted of a right wing, under the leadership of Luis Muñoz Rivera, which advocated political autonomy for the island, and a left wing, under the leadership of José de Diego, that demanded Puerto Rican independence.

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[21]Francisco Scarano, Puerto Rico, cinco siglos de historia, p. 575.

Soon after the founding of the Federación Regional, the Partido Republicano tried to enlist its political support. However, most FRT leaders took the position that partisan party politics only served to divide workers and they refused to declare the Federación in favor of the Republicanos. According to Santiago Iglesias, the leaders of the federation urged workers to decide on politics as they saw fit and to belong to whatever party they wanted, or to none if that was their choice.[22] Nevertheless, the Republicanos conspired to take over control of the workers' federation. They offered money and government positions to Federación leaders, such as first vice-president Rosendo Rivera, in exchange for their support. They wanted to put the federation at the service of the Partido Republicano.[23]

The Republicanos, who were in the minority at the time, wanted to take advantage of the growing strength of the organized workers' movement and were prepared to do anything to obtain its support. Santiago Iglesias claimed this was part of a plot to undermine the strength of the new movement which the political elite viewed as a threat. On June 18, 1899, supporters of the Republicanos within the FRT called a mass meeting of workers. Chaos broke out when those opposed to converting the FRT into a tool of the Republicanos challenged the authority of those who had organized the meeting.

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[22]Santiago Iglesias, Luchas emancipadoras, p. 110.

[23]Ibid.

Federación Libre

After the municipal police intervened in the assembly hall where the meeting took place, a majority group of FRT members left the auditorium and reconvened in the offices of Porvenir Social. They then founded the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico and the Partido Obrero Socialista as its political wing. Porvenir Social was declared the official organ of the new federation. The first central commitee of the FLT consisted of delegates from various trade unions including typesetters, masons, carpenters, painters, stevedores, and cigarmakers. Members of the Federación Libre could belong to any political party. The Partido Obrero, however, required its members to belong to the Federación Libre. Excluded from the new party were workers with commitments to other parties or who "in some direct way were voluntarily serving the interest of the employer class against the interests of the workers."[24] The organization of a workers' party was an expression of the FLT leaders' belief that the parties of the landowners and professonals could not represent the interests of the working class. It was also a reflection of their commitment to the idea that workers had to take responsibility for their own emancipation.

The new federation adopted the same goals and the economic, social, and political program that had served as the basis for

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[24]Ibid., p. 114. (This and all subsequent translations from the Spanish by the author.)

the establishment of the Federación Regional. From its inception, the Federación Libre espoused a commitment to the principles of international socialism. Yet, its political program focused on reformist and trade unionist objectives. The Federación Libre endorsed the general principles of the First International and the Partido Obrero Socialista declared itself in favor of Marxism. In addition, the party became affiliated to the Socialist Workers Party of the United States from which it received a charter as the socialist organization of the "state of Puerto Rico."[25]

There is no evidence that there was ever any close collaboration between the workers' movement in Puerto Rico and the Socialist Workers Party of America or that the SWP contributed in any way to the workers' struggle on the island. In any case, the Partido Obrero Socialista never became a viable political entity. The FLT did not have the organizational strength or financial resources to successfully maintain a working-class political party. According to Santiago Iglesias, workers in Puerto Rico had little understanding of socialism and equated it to something akin to "the emancipatory ideology preached by Jesus Christ. It was for them an intuitive idealism of justice and welfare."[26] The party disappeared after only a short time and it would be many years before the FLT organized another socialist party.

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[25]Ibid., p. 118.

[26]Ibid., pp. 118-119.

Political Program

Shortly after its founding, the new labor federation approved a document, Reglamento de la Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico, which articulated its goals. The Federación Libre sought to unite all workers on the island regardless of sex or type of labor performed. Its broad definition of workers included manual laborers, artisans, professionals, and government employees. The FLT emphasized that only through unity would workers achieve "economic and social emancipation" and destroy once and for all ignorance, low wage slavery, the tyranny of employers, unjust and inhumane laws, usury, and corruption.[27] It is important to note, however, the rhetorical nature of this language and that in concrete terms, the immediate objectives of the FLT were a great deal more modest.

Like the Federación Regional before it, the goals of the Federación Libre focused on ameliorating the conditions of labor. It proposed using union dues to establish a reserve fund for use in labor struggles for better wages, improved working conditions, and an eight hour work day. The federation also advocated cooperation, solidarity, and mutual aid among workers and sought to inculcate among them the goal of "emancipation" as the basis for their organization. In its effort to enhance the moral and material conditions of workers the FLT called for the

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[27]Reglamento de la Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico, San Juan, August 24, 1900.

government to establish day and evening schools for children and adults.[28]

The Federación Libre appealed for the enforcement of the liberal democratic rights the United States had extended to Puerto Rico. These included the right to free speech and to a free press, the right of assembly, the right to form labor unions, and the right to strike for higher wages and improved working conditions. It advocated the annexation of Puerto Rico by the United States and adamantly opposed the nationalist aspirations of that sector of the island's economic and political elite who wanted independence. The FLT viewed United States' citizenship and U.S. statehood as the best way to safeguard the political rights of workers on the island.

The FLT also actively solicited the moral, political, and material support of the U.S. working class and called for establishing relations with U.S. labor organizations. In particular, it sought the assistance of the American Federation of Labor and in September of 1901, the Federación Libre affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.[29]

The reformist goals of the FLT were later reiterated in a document addressed to the island's Legislative Assembly.[30] In this appeal, the FLT focused on the economic and social problems

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[28]Ibid.

[29]Igualdad Iglesias de Pagán, El obrerismo en Puerto Rico, época de Santiago Iglesias (1896-1905), (Palencia de Castilla: Ediciones Juan Ponce de León, 1973), p. 160.

[30]Exposición de la Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico (San Juan: Tipografía Boletín Mercantil, 1916).

that demanded the decisive and energetic attention of the legislature. It cited the difficulties caused by the existing system of production and the big corporations that invested in Puerto Rico. It also noted the problems associated with a 40 percent increase in the cost of living. The measures proposed included the development of a Peoples' Bank and a plan to stimulate agriculture and native industries. It also advocated municipal public markets and control of the prices of basic subsistence goods.

In addition to these proposals, the FLT sought a law to compensate workers for job-related injuries, a minimum wage for women of eighty cents for an eight hour day (they then earned twenty five cents per day), the creation of barrios obreros (special housing communities for workers), the building of additional public schools to accomodate the 200,000 children who lacked educational facilities, an end to convict labor, more power and resources for the island's Labor Bureau, and the regulation of pool halls, horse racing, and taverns.

In its 1920 Constitution, the FLT declared that as a matter of principle, it was committed to the emancipation of labor and called upon all wage workers to unite, regardless of race, religion, or politics, "to obtain the necessary legislation for the benefit of our class."[31] It went on to affirm the workers' right to organize trade unions and to go on strike, when no other means for improving labor conditions were available.

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[31]Constitución de la Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico (San Juan: Tipografía Compañía Editora de "Justicia," 1921).

Specifically, it sought an eight hour work day and a forty four hour week. It also promoted the use of the union label. It stated that no motion to declare a boycott would be considered by FLT Congresses unless this was in accord with the AFL Constitution. In addition, it stated that it was the obligation of the FLT's Legislative Commission to prepare, support, and oversee all legislative measures which directly or indirectly affected workers and to initiate, under the direction of the Executive Committee, legislative measures which the FLT Congress had agreed to.

Labor Struggles

The Federación Libre made a committment to organize all of the workers of Puerto Rico: men as well as women, white and black, urban and rural, and skilled and unskilled workers. In particular, it recognized the importance of organizing rural workers, especially in the sugarcane plantations and centrals. Led by skilled urban artisans, particularly cigarmakers, it launched an organizing drive to unionize the island's increasingly proletarian agricultural labor force.[32]

This organizing effort, the Campaña del Ideal, succeeded in establishing dozens of unions of rural laborers to complement the many unions of craft workers, such as carpenters, bakers, masons, and shoemakers, that the Federación organized in urban areas. Rafael Alonso Torres, Secretary General of the Federación

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[32]Gervasio García and Angel Quintero Rivera, Desafío y solidaridad, p. 59.

Libre, reported that the number of FLT unions and members had increased from 30 unions with 5,500 members in 1900 to 159 unions with 31,000 members in 1923.[33] According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 261,789 agricultural workers in Puerto Rico in 1930.[34] By 1934, the FLT claimed over 50,000 members in 180 affiliated unions.[35] Most members were agricultural workers.

Throughout an almost thirty year period, the FLT courageously stood up for the economic, political, and social interests of the Puerto Rican working class and championed many militant and large-scale strike movements. As a consequence, the leaders of the Federación Libre withstood years of persecution and violent repression at the hands of hacendados, the police, and local government authorities.

Two outstanding examples of militant FLT-led strike movements were the agricultural workers' strikes of 1905-06, and 1915-16 sugar-harvest seasons. In 1905, the FLT led a strike of over 20,000 sugarcane laborers across the southern coast of the island.[36] Striking workers demanded a raise in wages to 75 cents

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[33]Rafael Alonso Torres, Cuarenta años de lucha proletaria (San Juan: Imprenta Baldrich, 1939), p. 263.

[34]United States, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. Outlying Territories and Possessions (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), p. 185.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Luchas emancipadoras, Vol. 1, p. 338.

for a nine hour day. They justified these demands on the basis of a rise in the price of sugar on the international market.

During the strike, employers and local government authorities subjected workers and FLT leaders to severe repression. Strikers were denied basic democratic liberties such as freedom of speech and the right of assembly. For example, the police suppressed a peaceful labor meeting in the Plaza de las Delicias in Ponce on April 16, 1905. Many workers were beaten and arrested.[37] In his annual report for that year, the Governor of Puerto Rico commended these officers and their men, "for the excellent service rendered by them under the most trying circumstances."[38] In addition to police violence, for the first time ever, striking workers and their leaders were issued court injunctions.[39] Needless to say, the workers lost the strike.

The following year, sugarcane workers in the district of Arecibo again went on strike for higher wages and a shorter work day in a protest that lasted about two months. Although peaceful at first the strike turned violent when plantation owners brought in strikebreakers. The striking workers attacked them and then attempted to break machinery and set cane fields on fire. However, according to Santiago Iglesias, President of the Federación Libre, "everywhere police officers were put in

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[37]Federación Libre de Ponce, "16 de abril de 1905, Crimenes policiacos," (Ponce: Establecimiento tip. de M. López, 1905).

[38]Fifth Annual Report of the Governor of Porto Rico (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905),p. 144.

[39]Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Luchas emancipadoras, Vol. 1, p. 339.

command as evidence of the determination to prevent violence by the strikers," and this strike was also lost.[40] In the years that followed the FLT continued to organize among rural agricultural workers and lead their strike movements for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions.. These efforts culminated in the great agricultural strikes of 1915-16.

In January, 1915 agricultural workers in the sugar plantations and mills went on a strike that lasted two months. This was the most important strike to take place in Puerto Rico up to then. The Federación Libre again played a leading role in a strike that sought higher wages and shorter hours of work. Laborers complained that the wages they received were not sufficient to cover the cost of living, that their 11 to 12 hour workday did not allow them enough time to have lunch or rest, that they were compelled to shop in company stores that overcharged them for inferior goods, and that they were paid their wages in these same stores only after the owners had deducted the amount owed them. The strikers won an increase in wages but after the harvest thousands of men were let go and wages for remaining workers were reduced to what they had been before the strike.[41]

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[40]Sixth Annual Report of the Governor of Porto Rico, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), pp. 199-200.

[41]Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor to the Legislature of Puerto Rico (San Juan: Bureau of Supplies, Printing, and Transportation, 1916), p. 7.

During the strike, angry workers burned cane fields in many districts and caused great damage to plantation properties. Clashes between striking workers and the police took place in Juncos, Vieques, and Ponce and at least five strikers were killed.[42] A report by a U.S. commission that investigated the strike concluded that the it was justified and that striking workers had been provoked into violence. It also concluded that the violation of the workers' rights by local police and rural magistrates was inexcusable.[43]

The next year, sugar workers struck again in a movement that quickly spread throughout the island's sugar-producing areas. This time the strike involved between 30,000 and 40,000 workers again seeking higher wages and a shorter work day.[44] Although more peaceful than the strike the previous year, several violent clashes broke out between strikers and the police. In Juana Díaz, two workers were killed and several wounded.[45]

The same conditions that provided the FLT with fertile terrain for organizing rural agricultural laborers also explained the failures. The low wages and miserable working

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[42]Fifteenth Annual Report of the Governor of Porto Rico, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), 1915, p. 36.

[43]Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor, p. 9.

[44]Sixteenth Annual Report of the Governor of Porto Rico (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), p. 31.

[45]Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor, p. 11.

conditions that prevailed were based on a surplus of labor. During strike movements to improve wages and working conditions, this same excess workforce provided a pool of strikebreakers that employers readily utilized to undermine strike activity. The low wages, seasonal employment and high level of unemployment and underemployment made it difficult for rural workers to sustain the numerical and financial strength of their nacent labor unions. Moreover, despite the fact that conditions were so harsh, the violence that employers perpetrated against strikers, with the tacit approval of local government authorities, caused even greater suffering. It was not uncommon for sugar plantation operators to provide the police with room and board on plantation property during strikes. In this context, the FLT promoted political participation as an effective and viable alternative to strike movements.

Party Politics

In addition to promoting the cause of labor through its organizing efforts and the leadership of strike movements, the Federación Libre also took part in party politics. The FLT believed in electoral participation as another means to improve the economic and social conditions of workers. From the beginning, the FLT articulated an aversion to working in concert with the political parties of the island's hacendado and professional elites. However, in practice the FLT, and later its political wing, the Partido Socialista, entered into numerous electoral pacts and coalitions with those parties.

After the organized workers' movement refused to ally with the Partido Republicano in the summer of 1899, members of the PR led a violent attack against the FLT.[46] They also attacked the leadership of the Partido Federal with whom they were in competition for control of the local government in the elections of 1900. These attacks were so severe that many labor leaders feared for their lives and PF leader, Luis Muñoz Rivera, went into exile in New York City. In 1902, the FLT's Partido Obrero Socialista formed an electoral pact with the PF. This agreement grew out of the rivalries that existed between the FLT and the PR, and between the PR and the PF. The association between the POS and the PF was based on the fact that they had a common enemy in the Partido Republicano. For the workers' federation, the pact seemed attractive because it gave their small organization some help in the fight against the PR. For the PF, it helped counterbalance the support the rival labor federation, the Federación Regional, gave the PR. The relationship of the FLT to the AFL also impressed the leadership of the PF.[47]

In 1904, after the dissolution of the PF, the FLT reached an electoral understanding with its successor, the Partido Unión de Puerto Rico. Many PF members had joined the new party. Thus, the arrangement with the PU, which allowed the FLT to run candidates as part of the new party's ticket, was an outgrowth of the pact with the former PF.

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[46]Mariano Negrón Portillo, Las turbas republicanas, 1900-1904 (Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1990).

[47]Gervasio Luis García and Angel Quintero Rivera, Desafío y solidaridad, p. 51.

As a result of its combination with the PU, in the elections of 1904, six FLT labor representatives, including Ramón Romero Rosa, won seats in the House of Delegates, the lower branch of the legislature in Puerto Rico at that time.[48] However, the rural labor strikes of 1905 and 1906 exposed the class contradictions between the Partido Unión and agricultural workers and the FLT discontinued the political agreement with the hacendado party.

In the next two elections, the FLT ran its own candidates independently.[49] In 1906 it received 1,345 out of over one hundred and fifty thousand votes cast and in 1908 it obtained just 1,327 votes.[50] These poor showings led the FLT to once again concentrate on the organization of rural agricultural workers. After some organizing success, and the founding of the Partido Socialista in 1915 as its political wing, the FLT again participated in electoral politics. By establishing the PS and participating in elections, the FLT sought to complement the economic struggle it waged for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions with a political campaign to promote the enactment and enforcement of legislation of benefit to the growing working class.

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[48]Bolivar Pagán, Historia de los partidos políticos, Vol. 1, p. 118.

[49]Gervasio García and Angel Quintero Rivera, Desafío y solidaridad, p. 55.

[50]Bolivar Pagán, Historia de los partidos políticos puertorriqueños, 1898-1956, vol. I, pp. 125 & 127.

Whereas the Autonomous Charter of 1897 had provided for almost universal male suffrage, the franchise for the elections of 1900 was restricted to men over twenty-one years of age who could read and write of paid taxes. This severely limited the number of people who could vote as only 22.7 percent of the population was literate in Spanish.[51] However, the government lifted the literacy requirement before the elections of 1904.[52] This made workers important participants in electoral politics.

Partido Socialista

Following the suppression of the rural strikes of 1905-06, the FLT organized the Partido Obrero Socialista in Arecibo, a labor stronghold. In 1910, the Partido Obrero, as the party was then known, participated in the municipal elections in the city of Arecibo and received only 872 votes. However, in 1912 it ran in the district of Arecibo and increased its vote to 2,359. Two years later, the party polled over 18,000 votes across the island.[53] In that same year, 1914, reflecting the Federación's growing strength, the party expanded to San Juan, Caguas, San Lorenzo, Juncos, Cayey, and Guayama.[54] Then in 1915, the FLT

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[51]James Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico; Institutional Change and Capitalist Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 87.

[52]Gervasio Luis García and Angel Quintero Rivera, Desafío y solidaridad, p. 52.

[53]Bolivar Pagán, Historia de los partidos políticos puertorriqueños, 1898-1956, vol. I, pp. 146, 150, and 164.

[54]Partido Socialista, Actuaciones de la primera convención regular (Bayamón: Tipografía El Progreso, 1915).

founded Partido Socialista as its island-wide political wing. The PS was established for purely electoral purposes and built on the success of the earlier party. This party explicitly denounced the use of violence in favor of the "revolution of ideas."

The PS denounced the bourgeois political parties and advocated socialism. Its ultimate goal was the establishment of a workers' social democracy, "la democracia social y del trabajo," and public ownerhip of the railroads and all utilities.[55] However, the party's political program mirrored the FLT's reformist political agenda. Among other things, it called for a people's bank, land for workers, schools for children, the abolition of child and convict labor, a workers' compensation program, and old age pensions. It also appealed for universal suffrage, the regulation of the court system by referendum and recall, the abolition of the death penalty, and an end to the use of imprisonment as a form of punishment. In 1917, the party polled over 24,000 votes, or over 14 per cent of the vote. It won in six municipalities, and its president, Santiago Iglesias Pantín, was elected to the island Senate.[56] In 1920, the party increased its share of the vote to 20%, or 59,140, and gained control of eight municipalities.

In 1924, recognizing that it did not have sufficient voter support to achieve electoral success on its own, the Partido

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[55]Programa del Partido Socialista, June, 1917.

[56]Ibid., p. 184.

Socialista proposed an electoral pact with the Partido Republicano. However, a leading sector of the PR sabotaged that idea and instead supported an electoral pact with the Partido Unión as a way of impeding the electoral advance of the workers' socialist party. Thereupon, a dissident group within the PR formed the Partido Constitucional Histórico and established an electoral pact known as the Coalición (Coalition) with the PS. The Coalición lost the election of 1924 to the Alianza (Alliance), as the pact between the PU and the PR was known, by 90,679 to 163,041 votes. It lost the next election as well, although the Coalición increased its votes to 128,415 while the Alianza decreased its share to 132,825.

Historians have explained the socialist coalition with dissident republicans as a consequence of several factors. By 1924, the leadership of the FLT and PS saw elective office as the best way to implement the workers' political program. However, by this time the Partido Socialista had begun to lose impetus.[57] The socialist drive slowed down as a result of economic stagnation and an increasing rate of unemployment that led to growing emigration to the United States, particularly to New York City. Realizing they could not achieve electoral success on their own, the socialists sought a coalition with another party. A common desire for elective positions in the government and similar ideals in regard to U.S. statehood for Puerto Rico united the socialists and the republicans. The

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[57]Francisco Scarano, Puerto Rico, cinco siglos de historia, p. 657.

republicans had not won control of the island's government for twenty years. The Partido Socialista had never been in power. In addition, the republicans supported U.S. statehood for the island and in 1923 the same goal became part of the SP program.

While the Coalición did not win any elections in the 1920s, the pact was significant because it established the precedent the coalition between socialists and republicans that came to power in the elections of 1932. However, for the leadership of the workers' movement, this presented a new and challenging dilemma.

The Coalición that won in 1932 was an anomaly because the Partido Socialista represented the island's workers, including many in the sugarcane and needlework industries - two of the most important sectors of the economy - while the Partido Unión Republicana (Republican Union Party, PUR), the republicans with whom they united, represented interests diametrically opposed to those of labor. Leaders of the PUR included Pedro Juan Serallés, a partner in a large sugar company in Ponce, Miguel Angel García Méndez, a lawyer for several sugar mills and big landowners, and María Luisa Arcelay, the proprietor of leading needlework enterprises in Mayagüez.[58]

The Coalición won in six of seven electoral districts. It obtained fourteen seats in the Senate, as against five for the opposing Partido Liberal, and thirty representatives to the

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[58]Gonzalo F. Córdova, "Santiago Iglesias y las elecciones de 1932," (San Juan: Oficina del Gobernador de Puerto Rico, 1984), p. 9.

Cámara de Representantes, the lower legislative chamber, to the PL's nine.[59] However, as part of the government, the Socialists became reluctant to press labor demands that antagonized their partners in the Coalición. Thus, in January of 1934 the FLT readily agreed to a labor contract favored by the sugar interests represented by the Partido Unión Republicana even though the workers openly opposed the accord .

1934 Agricultural Workers' Strike

On Saturday January 6, 1934 a fire destroyed several buildings and cane fields at the Guánica Central sugar mill in southwestern Puerto Rico. The blaze, which could not be controlled by firefighters, was started by striking laborers after four hundred of them demanded an increase in wages and refused to return to work.[60] In a statement to the press, wildcat strike leaders opposed to the increasingly conservative labor leadership rejected the contract signed the previous day by their union, the Unión de Trabajadores Agrícolas, and the sugar industry's employer group Asociación de Productores de Azúcar. This contradicted newspaper reports that sugarcane workers had accepted the first island-wide contract negotiated on their behalf by the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de

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[59]Bolívar Pagán, Historia de los partidos políticos puertorriqueños, 1898-1956, Vol. II (San Juan: Campos, 1959), p. 45.

[60]La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico, January 8, 1934, p. 1.

Puerto Rico, the labor federation to which their union belonged, and that the harvest season would proceed as normal.[61]

The strike spread throughout the island's sugarcane-growing districts. In addition to a forty percent wage increase, workers demanded payment in legal tender, an eight hour work day, the abolition of piecework, and an end to the use of company stores.[62] This strike took place in the midst of the Great Depression in Puerto Rico. After the Wall Street stock market crash of October 1929, unemployment, which was already high, went up still further. The cost of basic consumer goods, which was also already high, increased, and low wages decreased further.[63] The strike among sugar workers was part of an unprecedented wave of popular insurgency that spanned the period from summer 1933 through the winter of 1934. In addition to sugar workers, needlework, dock, public transportation, and cigar manufacturing workers, university students, and customers of the gasoline industry and the Porto Rico Railway Light and Power Company struck and boycotted. Often, labor strikes led to violent confrontations with the police.[64]

In the sugar industry, the backbone of the island's economy, the strike was as much a protest against the two main organizations of the Puerto Rican labor movement, the Federación

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[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid., January 15, 1934, p. 1.

[63]James Dietz, Economic History of Puerto Rico, p. 135.

[64]Francisco A. Scarano, Puerto Rico, cinco siglos de historia (San Juan: McGraw Hill, 1993), p. 690.

Libre and its political wing the Partido Socialista, as against the sugar corporations. It represented both a rejection of the agreement between their labor representatives and the sugar industry and a repudiation of the leadership of the Federación Libre and the Partido Socialista. The workers felt betrayed because these organizations had accepted a contract that granted workers wages ranging from $0.70 to $2.75 per day, which were lower than those paid during the previous harvest.[65]

After rejecting their leaders, striking sugarcane workers in the district of Guayama called upon Pedro Albizu Campos, president of the Partido Nacionalista, the political party that demanded immediate independence for Puerto Rico, to lead their strike movement. Albizu Campos appealed to the striking workers because of the island-wide prominence he had achieved as the leaders of the independence movement. Responding to their request, the Nationalist leader addressed six thousand workers in Guayama.[66] He then went on to Fajardo, where he spoke to a crowd of over three thousand. He also made visits to Luquillo and Yabucoa after he was invited by striking workers in those districts and he participated in the creation of a new labor organization, the Asociación de Trabajadores de Puerto Rico.[67]

This convergence of the labor and independence struggles was extraordinary because each had evolved as a distinct

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[65]Blanca Silvestrini, Los trabajadores y el Partido Socialista, 1932-1940 (Río Piedras: Editorial Universitaria, 1979), p. 68.

[66]La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico, January 13, 1934, p. 1.

[67]Ibid., January 15, 1934, p. 1.

movement. Most labor leaders had long advocated U.S. citizenship and U.S. statehood for Puerto Rico and were suspicious of the Nationalist campaign for independence. Many workers felt that hacendados and bourgeois leaders, their class adversaries, would govern an independent Puerto Rico and that a close association with the United States was the best way to safeguard their democratic rights and the freedom to maintain unions and advance the cause of labor. The workers' overture to Albizu Campos represented the potential unification of labor's struggle for social and economic justice and the nationalist movement for political independence from colonial domination by the United States.

However, this unity never materialized. The Asociación de Trabajadores de Puerto Rico proved stillborn and the Partido Nacionalista did not have any success organizing workers or leading their movement. The party could not overcome the limitations of a narrow anti-colonial nationalist ideology that denied the class struggle between island workers and native capitalists. Nor could its petit bourgeois membership, which consisted of professionals, small land owners, and petty merchants, identify with agricultural workers and their struggles.[68]

In the nineteen thirties, the Partido Nacionalista concentrated on the movement for political independence from the United States via a campaign of confrontational politics that

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[68]George Fromm, "El nacionalismo y el movimiento obrero en la década del 30," Op. Cit., Num. 5, 1990.

culminated in the assassination of the head of the police, Colonel Francis E. Riggs, on February 23, 1936. As a result, the Nationalists suffered severe repression by the colonial government, which crippled their effectiveness.

The 1934 wildcat strike movement in the sugar industry was quickly defeated and laborers soon returned to work under the terms of the agreement signed by the Federación Libre. FLT leaders, committed to enforcing the contract, argued that the strikers had simply misinterpreted the provisions of the pact. They then launched a concerted effort to explain it to them. Lacking an effective cadre of leaders, solid organization, and sufficient financial resources, the men on strike were no match for the FLT and PS when they brought to bear all the resources at their disposal to convince the laborers to accept the contract. These resources included control of the two labor organizations, experienced organizers and public speakers, money, and government vehicles.[69]

The sugarcane workers' strike of 1934 demonstrated the breach that had developed between the leadership and the rank and file members of the organized workers' movement of Puerto Rico. Affirmación Socialista, a dissident group of FLT and PS members, which had sought to revive labor's original socialist goals was also defeated and expelled from the movement. Thereafter, the Federación Libre and the Partido Socialista degenerated into insignificance as a result of several factors:

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[69]Blanca Silvestrini, Los trabajadores y el Partido Socialista, 1932-1940.

the large scale defection of members in the wake of the failure of the strike of 1934; a debilitating internal struggle over control of those two organizations in the aftermath of the death in 1939 of their principal leader, Santiago Iglesias Pantín; and the emergence in 1940 of a new and vigorous labor federation, the Confederación General de los Trabajadores.

This new labor organization, however, soon came under the control of the Partido Popular Democrático, which under the leadership of Luis Muñoz Marín, the son of hacendado leader Luis Munõz Rivera, convinced workers that the best way to further their class interests was to support the party's program of industrialization, Operation Bootstrap, on the basis of U.S. foreign investments. Marín continued Santiago Iglesias' idea that the political status of Puerto Rico was not at issue, and that what was most important was addressing the immediate economic needs of the population, i.e. more jobs, better paying jobs, and the provision of educational, health, and better living conditions. Thus, although the FLT failed to exist as a viable labor organization, many of its political and economic objectives formed the basis of the Partido Popular's political party program.

An important issue for consideration is the extent to which the politics of the Federación Libre were affected by its relationship to the American Federation of Labor. The affiliation of the AFL and the FLT brought together the most powerful workers' organization of the United States, an advanced industrialized and imperialist nation, and the politically and

economically weak labor movement of an underdeveloped agricultural colony. The next chapter will examine the nature of the relationship between these two labor federations.

Chapter V

THE ROLE OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR IN PUERTO RICO

Under the leadership of Samuel Gompers, the American Federation of Labor, organized in 1886, followed pure and simple trade union politics. It emphasized the organization of trade workers and its membership became dominated by white urban male skilled laborers, as opposed to unskilled, agricultural, immigrant, minority, or female workers. The AFL did not seek the overthrow of the capitalist system and was leery of socialist and radical labor organizations. Instead, the AFL only wanted to improve workers' wages, hours of labor, and working and living conditions through the use of strikes, boycotts, and collective bargaining. The AFL opposed the idea of a labor party and sought to maintain an apolitical stance while rewarding its friends and punishing its enemies. After 1908, however, and especially during the First World War, it grew increasingly close to the Democratic party. In the early twentieth century, its over one and a half million members and huge financial resources made the AFL the most powerful labor organization in the United States.

This chapter examines the role the American Federation of Labor played in the development of the organized labor movement in Puerto Rico. First, however, it is important to acknowledge that the AFL was a large and diversified federation that included a substantial socialist minority. It was in no way a monolithic organization. Often, references to the AFL in this study should be read as indicating the AFL leadership,

particularly Samuel Gompers. Workers on the island initiated the affiliation of the Federación Libre to the AFL in December of 1900 in an attempt to strengthen an incipient labor movement under severe political persecution, and the AFL sustained the relationship in an effort to protect the political and economic interests of its members in the United States. An altruistic concern for the plight of island workers also motivated the AFL.

For the FLT, the AFL represented an important source of political, financial, and organizational support. The American Federation of Labor acted as an influential power broker in Washington, D.C. and among high government officials in Puerto Rico on behalf of the political interests and democratic rights of island workers. In addition, between the turn of the century and the early nineteen thirties, the financial assistance the AFL provided the FLT proved crucial to the growth of the organization. The AFL contribution paid for a full-time labor organizer, occasional paid part-time organizers, and participation in the AFL's strike and sick benefits programs. In addition, the AFL extended to Puerto Rico its system of volunteer labor organizers as well as its organizational structure.

The Federación Libre's Affiliation to the American Federation of Labor

The Federación Libre's desire to unite with the American Federation of Labor grew out of the weak political, economic, and organizational position of the Puerto Rican labor movement

at the start of the twentieth century. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, efforts to organize workers in Puerto Rico began at the end of the nineteenth century. Workers attempting to form labor unions, however, faced tremendous opposition and persecution. In San Juan, municipal authorities blacklisted labor leaders and a combination of employers and government officials violently attacked them.[1] During the Spanish colonial period, organized workers in Puerto Rico attempted to enlist the support of Spanish labor groups. These efforts were short lived and never led to any connections between labor in Spain and the island. When the United States took over control of Puerto Rico, island workers turned to this country for assistance. FLT leaders sought the support of the socialist and trade union movement in the U.S. in early 1900.

In January of 1900, Santiago Iglesias and Eduardo Conde traveled to the United States as elected representatives of the FLT and made contact with labor unions and workers' parties in an effort to obtain their help.[2] They originally intended to participate as FLT delegates at the Socialist Party convention in Rochester, New York. However, they arrived too late to attend that gathering and instead stayed in New York City, where they met with prominent socialist and trade union leaders, including Morris Hillquit, a leader of the right wing of the Socialist Labor Party. Santiago Iglesias and Eduardo Conde were very well

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[1]Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Luchas emancipadoras,crónicas de Puerto Rico (San Juan: 1958), p. 135.

[2]Ibid., p. 136.

received and fêted at numerous labor meetings and banquets, including one at Cooper Union and another at the Spanish-speaking cigarmakers union, La Resistencia, in Brooklyn. The Puerto Rican labor representatives addressed the New York Central Labor Union on the labor situation in Puerto Rico and also spoke to members of the Carpenters' Local Union Number 309. Everywhere they went they experienced a strong sense of brotherhood and labor solidarity.[3] Iglesias and Conde returned to Puerto Rico in the late spring of 1900.

Before his trip to the United States, Iglesias had participated in the labor strikes that followed the change in currency and devaluation of the Puerto Rican peso, which was stipulated by the Foraker Act. Angry workers protested the sharp increase in the cost of living that resulted when their wages continued to be paid at the old rate, while basic consumer goods were sold at increased prices. Upon his return to Puerto Rico, Santiago Iglesias was arrested by local government authorities on charges stemming from his part in those strikes. On August 22, 1900, while in prison, Santiago Iglesias wrote to various trade unions and socialist organizations in the U.S. and requested moral and financial support for the workers' movement in Puerto Rico.[4] Santiago Iglesias again left Puerto Rico for New York City on September 26, 1900 to seek the assistance of workers in the metropolitan power.

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[3]Ibid., p. 137.

[4]Ibid. p., 197.

On December 6th of 1900, while still in New York, Santiago Iglesias wrote to the AFL during its annual convention, and requested its assistance on behalf of island workers. He addressed his letter to "The Convention of the American Federation of Labor: Brother President and Bretheren Delegates." Specifically, he asked the American Federation of Labor to "recommend to and influence in a decisive manner the public authorities, to see to it that the workingmen of Porto Rico be accorded full freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and free speech."[5] From the very beginning of their relationship, the FLT viewed the American Federation of Labor as an important and influencial ally that could intercede on its behalf among government officials to safeguard the democratic rights of Puerto Rican workers.

In his letter, Iglesias also requested the translation into Spanish of the constitutions of the organizations of carpenters, bricklayers, painters, cigarmakers, and tobacco workers in the United States. He wanted to use these documents for a campaign to organize workers in Puerto Rico.[6] Thirdly, Iglesias asked that the AFL appoint a commission to visit the island to investigate and report on labor conditions and to help organize the 15,000 skilled workers whom Santiago Iglesias was certain would willingly join the American Federation of Labor.[7] In

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[5]Report of Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1900, pp. 64-65.

[6]Ibid. p. 65.

[7]Ibid.

addition to seeking the political and organizational support of the AFL, the FLT wanted its help to expose the miserable conditions that prevailed among workers in Puerto Rico. In his memoirs, Santiago Iglesias explained that the FLT appealed to the AFL for assistance, because it believed that workers in Puerto Rico needed to focus on economic organization and because it did not feel that the Socialist Party was adequately prepared to help promote immediate and practical improvements to the masses of exploited workers on the island.[8] This reasoning demonstrates a pragmatic attitude on the part of Santiago Iglesias and the other FLT leaders. In other words, they were more interested in prompt and tangible results than with ideological issues.

The American Federation of Labor responded immediately and positively to Santiago Iglesias' petition. It appointed a "Special Committee on Porto Rico" to consider the FLT requests.[9] The AFL convention then quickly approved this committee's recommendation that it act on the first two requests, stipulating that in addition to trade union constitutions, general literature on the need for labor organization also be translated into Spanish. It referred the plea for help in organizing the workers of Puerto Rico to the AFL's Executive Council.

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[8]Santiago Iglesias, Luchas Emancipadoras, p. 199.

[9]Report of Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor,1900, p. 86.

The following day, the convention adopted the Council's recommendation, which requested that AFL unions whose trade was pursued on the island take action to guarantee the workers of Puerto Rico the opportunity to organize and become affiliated to AFL national or international trade unions in the United States. In addition, the Executive Council directed the incoming Council to "take every action possible to comply with the requisition of Santiago Iglesias as contained in his letter" and "authorized [it] to expend a sum not to exceed $3,000 to carry these recommendations into effect."[10]

The following year, in September of 1901, the Federación Libre became affiliated as a state branch of the American Federation of Labor and the AFL named Santiago Iglesias a paid organizer for Puerto Rico.[11] Although it was not a state, the American Federation of Labor treated Puerto Rico as such. This reflected Samuel Gompers' and the AFL's belief that Puerto Rico formed an integral part of the United States and that it should be granted statehood and its people accorded U.S. citizenship.

The American Federation of Labor came to the aid of the Federación Libre because it viewed Puerto Rico as an integral part of the United States and believed that all the provisions and guarantees of the U.S. Constitution applied to the island. Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor believed

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[10]Ibid., p. 119.

[11]Gonzalo F. Córdova, Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias and His Times, Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1993, p. 96.

that the denial of basic democratic rights to the people of Puerto Rico represented a potential threat to the Constitutional rights of the people of the United States. In 1898, in the wake of the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898, the military occupation of Cuba, and the annexation of Puerto Rico, Samuel Gompers declared, "it is not difficult to imagine that it is but a step from military rule applied to Cuba to the territory constituting the present United States of America."[12] According to Gompers, "when the Cuban, the Porto Rican and the Philippines are deprived of the right to self-government by our ruling class, it is our political rights which are in jeopardy."[13] Thus, the AFL's interest in protecting the rights of Puerto Rican workers was grounded in its desire to protect the rights of workers in the United States. This became clearly evident in the AFL's response to Puerto Rican government authorities' attempt to enforce old Spanish laws that declared labor unions and strikes illegal.

AFL Defends FLT's Right to Form Unions

On November 9, 1901, when Santiago Iglesias returned to Puerto Rico from his second trip to the United States, local officials again arrested him. This time, he was charged with contempt of court for failing to appear for the trial to which he had been summoned while he was in the U.S., and the court set

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[12]Report of Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1899, p. 16.

[13]Ibid. p. 148.

bail at two thousand dollars.[14] The American Federation of Labor posted the five hundred dollars to which his bail was reduced, but Iglesias and seven other FLT leaders were subsequently convicted on the charge of conspiring to raise the price of labor. Iglesias was sentenced to over three years in jail, while the others were sentenced to lesser terms. The FLT was declared illegal.[15]

Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor soon went to the aid of Santiago Iglesias and his associates. The AFL, meeting in Scranton, Pennsylvania for its annual convention, "gave expression to its deep concern, and directed that every effort be made to secure not only the release of Iglesias, but also to secure a change in the laws of Porto Rico."[16] In his report to the Convention, Gompers noted that he had met and discussed the matter with President Theodore Roosevelt and Governor William H. Hunt of Puerto Rico, and that both had assured him that Iglesias and his colleagues would be granted their rights. This was the first of numerous instances when Samuel Gompers interviewed with high federal and local government officials on behalf of island workers.

In an editorial in the AFL journal the American Federationist, Samuel Gompers pointed out that many newpapers in the United States, even some that did not sympathize with the

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[14]Santiago Iglesias, Luchas emancipadoras, p. 218.

[15]Ibid., p. 242.

[16]American Federationist, March, 1902, p. 72.

cause of labor, had editorialized against the sentences and that the law under which Santiago Iglesias and the others were convicted was a remmnant of Spanish legislation in Puerto Rico. Iglesias had been found guilty of participating in a strike against payment in depreciated Spanish money, in other words for an increase in wages. "This," Gompers argued, "can not and ought not be an offense in the United States or any of its possessions in which the authority and constitutional guarantees of our country prevail."[17]

According to Gompers, the union of workers to raise wages had previously been illegal in the United States because it was considered an effort to restrain competition and trade, but that with the growth of labor organizations, a change in the law had taken place. Gompers pointed out that some states expressly recognized "the right to co-operate for the purpose of improving the conditions of labor," and that in others the right was tacitly admitted.[18]

The legal right to form labor unions and to strike for better pay, shorter hours of work, and better working conditions constituted the foundation of the labor movement in the United States. For Samuel Gompers there was not a single demand of organized labor which did not directly derive from the principle that, "men may unite to achieve that which one by himself can not achieve, or can achieve less readily, and which he has a

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[17]Report of the Proceedings of the Twenty Second Annual Convention of the American Federatiion of Labor, 1902, p. 15.

[18]American Federationist, January, 1902, p. 27.

right to achieve."[19] The arrest and conviction of Santiago Iglesias, who upon his return to Puerto Rico carried with him a commission as a paid organizer for the American Federation of Labor and an AFL union charter for the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico, was understandably perceived as a direct attack on the rights that the organized labor movement in the United States had struggled so hard and so long to obtain.

In Puerto Rico, local newspapers called for judicial reform and the Governor declared the need for legislation to eliminate all "un-American" principles and replace them with American norms. On April 9, 1902 the FLT lawyer, Herminio Díaz Navarro, appealed the conviction of Iglesias and the others to the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico. The Court decided in their favor and the government did not carry out the sentences against Iglesias or his associates. FLT offices were not closed down and the Federation gained government recognition as a legal entity. Subsequently, all Spanish laws, including labor laws, in conflict with U.S. legislation were declared null and void.[20] In defending the rights of workers in Puerto Rico, the AFL was safeguarding its own vital interests. For Samuel Gompers, "the right to organize, and the right which logically follows to secure a better return for labor, must be secured for our Porto Rican fellow workers as surely as for those in the United States proper."[21]

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[19]Ibid.

[20]Gonzalo F. Córdova, Santiago Iglesias, p. 98.

In 1904, Gompers undertook an official trip to Puerto Rico. An examination of this visit demonstrates his reaction to the many economic and social problems confronted by the people of Puerto Rico and the extent to which altruism and a sincere concern for the plight of fellow workers in the new U.S. possession motivated the AFL's effort to aid the labor movement in Puerto Rico. During his visit Gompers expressed his indignation at the miserable working and living conditions he encountered among laborers and the general population. A review of his visit to Puerto Rico also reveals the political influence the American Federation of Labor exerted on the FLT.

Samuel Gompers' 1904 Trip to Puerto Rico

Gompers traveled to Puerto Rico in response to Santiago Iglesias' initial petition to the AFL and the subsequent recommendation made in 1900, at the Twentieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, that a joint commission of AFL unions be appointed to visit the island for the purpose of investigating labor conditions there and to help organize 15,000 skilled Puerto Rican workers.[22] Another resolution passed in 1902, at the Twenty Second Annual Convention, reiterated this recommendation and an AFL Executive Council directive that President Gompers visit Puerto Rico, "for the purpose of officially inaugurating the labor movement in said island."[23]

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[21] American Federationist, January, 1902, p. 28.

[22] Report of Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1900, p. 115.

Twice Gompers delayed plans for the visit. However, in mid-February of 1904 he made the first of his two visits to Puerto Rico. Gompers visited the island a second time in 1914.

On February 12, 1904, speaking in New York, before an audience of old associates on the eve of the departure for his first trip to Puerto Rico, Gompers referred to the workers of the island as brothers of the American workingman to whom the AFL extended the hand of friendship. Later, shortly after his arrival in Puerto Rico, and following a labor parade in his honor organized by the FLT, Gompers spoke before a large gathering of workers in San Juan and exclaimed to them that he brought them a "message of fraternity, solidarity, and brotherhood" from the organized workers of the United States."[24]

Then on February 22, 1904, Gompers explained why he had traveled to the island. He went, he stated, to see for himself whether the claims of unjust treatment and miserable economic, social, and material conditions made by local labor leaders were true. He pledged that if they were, he would "urge our fellow workmen and our fellow citizens to leave no effort untried, no stone unturned, until justice and fair dealing is assured and secured to every man, woman, and child of Porto Rico."[25]

Altogether, Samuel Gompers spent over five weeks on the island. He traveled extensively from one end of Puerto Rico to

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[23]Report of Proceedings of the Twenty Second Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1902, p. 112.

[24]American Federationist, April, 1904, p. 318.

[25]American Federationist, April, 1904, p. 298.

the other. Traveling by horse and buggy, Gompers visited San Juan in the northeast and Ponce in the southwest.He also stopped over in many smaller cities and towns, including Caguas, Cayey, Mayagüez, San Germán, Arecibo, Sabana Grande, Salinas, Santa Isabel, Guánica, Yauco, Arroyo, and Guayama. All over the island, Gompers encountered large enthusiastic crowds of working people and participated in a seemingly never-ending succession of labor meetings, assemblies, luncheons, receptions, parades, marches, and rallies. He also received a long stream of greetings, messages, telegrams, and petitions. Over the course of his stay on the island, Gompers met not only with workers and labor representatives, but with government officials, from the Governor on down, and with businessmen, professionals, and the leaders of various political parties. Samuel Gompers did not speak Spanish and during his trip to Puerto Rico he communicated with the workers through an interpreter. Santiago Iglesias, who learned English during the one year he had lived in the United States, often served as Gompers' translator.

The generous welcome he met with everywhere in Puerto Rico greatly impressed Gompers, and he especially noted how in Salinas, "a family offered to leave their home and turn it over to me for the night. The hospitality of these people," he remarked, "knows no bounds."[26] At the same time, however, he expressed a very paternalistic attitude towards the Puerto Ricans. He praised the people of the island as worth preserving,

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[26]American Federationist, May, 1904, p. 393.

but he cautioned they would need to acquire the Anglo-Saxon characteristics of punctuality and persistency. He felt confident that once they did, Puerto Rico would be "an island of one of the greatest people of the world."[27]

Gompers' Reaction to Conditions in Puerto Rico

The poverty and misery of the population he encountered everywhere he went in Puerto Rico made a deep impression on Gompers. He noted that, "in spite of the great fertility of Porto Rico's soil, a great mass of men are unemployed ... poverty very largely abounds and misery and degradation obtain."[28] He observed that the working people had insufficient food and that their housing accomodations were cramped and unsanitary. "I saw more misery and hunger stamped upon the faces of the men and women and children in Porto Rico than I have ever seen in all my life, and I hope I may be spared from seeing the like again."[29]

During his visit, Gompers also commented on the long hours of labor and the low wages of workers on the island. He pointed out that in the sugar refineries he visited, the men worked from fifteen to sixteen hours for only forty cents per day. At the same time, in the sugar plantations, laborers worked, cut cane, and hauled it for fifteen hours for forty to forty five cents per day. He was particularly appalled by the use of company

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[27]Ibid., p. 416.

[28]American Federationist, April, 1904, p. 296.

[29]American Federationist, May, 1904, p. 413.

stores where plantation workers were foced to make their purchases. In these stores, they paid higher prices for goods of inferior quality than were available elsewhere, but since they were not paid in legal tender but in script redeemable only in these establishments, they had no alternative but to stock their shelves there. Speaking of the plantation workers, Gompers remarked: "They are as much bound to the soil as were the serfs in the old-time guilds [sic] when the lords and barons held their sway."[30]

Common laborers earned only thirty cents per day for eleven to twelve hours of work, while skilled workers such as bricklayers and carpenters earned only from seventy five cents to a dollar twenty five cents per day. Tailors, among the most skilled of workers on the island, made twenty five dollars per month, while cigarmakers had to roll one thousand cigars for between three and a half to four and a half dollars. Commenting on the work of women, Gompers pointed out that on coffee plantations, women and girls worked selecting coffee in the coffee houses for fourteen to fifteen hours per day for pay of only fifteen to twenty cents. The extensive unemployment also impressed Gompers. He commented: "I have seen more idle men, more unemployed men, not idle by choice, but because they can find no work to do, in my travels in Porto Rico than I have ever seen among like numbers of people in all my life."[31]

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[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid.

Promotion of AFL Ideology

Samuel Gompers used his visit to Puerto Rico to promote the basic tenets of the American Federation of Labor. Most significant among these was the importance of labor unions. Gompers urged the workers of Puerto Rico to form labor unions as a way of promoting demands for regular employment, higher wages, shorter hours of work, and improved working and living conditions. He told Puerto Rican workers that the results of organization would be "to make men more independent and intelligent, to make women more affectionate, loving, and matronly, and to make the children have brighter eyes, brighter hopes, and brighter expectations for the future."[32] This statement revealed his sexist attitudes and his optimism that workers could realize their aspirations for a better future within the existing capitalist system by simply establishing labor organizations.

In addition to stressing the organization of labor, Gompers promoted the unity of the Puerto Rican workers' movement and the unification of the labor movements of Puerto Rico and the United States. His stated purpose in Puerto Rico was to "amalgamate the labor movement into one comprehensive body in full affiliation with the American Federation of Labor."[33] He called for the unification of the two rival Puerto Rican labor organizations, the Federación Regional and the Federación Libre, the two labor

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[32]American Federationist, April, 1904 p. 299.

[33]Ibid., p. 296.

groups that resulted from the division of the Federación Regional in June of 1899 over the issue of forming an alliance with the Partido Rebubicano. According to Gompers, divisions among workers only led to more poverty, hunger, gloom, and despair. He told the workers that "the more thoroughly you are united the better will be your opportunity for higher wages, for regular employment, for better homes, [and] for sending your children to school."[34]

Gompers' effort to unite the Federación Regional and the Federación Libre proved unsuccessful, and in the end he concluded that the Federación Regional was not a bona fide labor organization but an association of opportunists including, "politicians in the employment of the government."[35] He pointed out that, "the so-called Federación Regional ... was not a labor organization in any sense of the word but a clique which sought to domineer over some workmen in the hope of using them for its own political and personal aggrandizement."[36]

He continued, however, to advocate unity between the island labor movement, as represented by the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico, and the American Federation of Labor, which Gompers viewed as representative of the essence of U.S. democractic ideals. "I convey to you the message of organized labor of the United States, which is the living

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[34]Ibid., p. 299.

[35]Ibid., p. 415.

[36]Ibid., p. 394.

embodiment of the principles of our republic."[37] As far as Samuel Gompers was concerned the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and the guarantees of the American Constitution, including all the rights of U.S. citizenship, had to be extended to Porto Rico.

This belief was predicated on the idea that Puerto Rico formed a part of the United States, which was a recurring theme in Gompers' pronouncements while on the island. In an address before a large gathering of organized workers he stated, "you are now more united to the United States than ever before, to all intents and purposes we are one country, so we must have one common interest and one common destiny."[38] However, this view ran counter to the 1901 decision of the United States Supreme Court in the case of Downes v. Bidwell when it declared Puerto Rico an unincorporated territory of the United States, that it belonged to but was not a part of this country and that the provisions of the U.S. Constitution did not automatically apply to the island.[39]

The American Federation of Labor staunchly supported U.S. citizenship for Puerto Rico, and Gompers expressed confidence the U.S. would soon grant such a status. In his words, "Porto Rico is now a part of the United States. I know that you are

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[37]Ibid., p. 299.

[38]Ibid., p. 298.

[39]José Trías Monge, Puerto Rico, The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 45.

entitled to and will receive at an early day the recognition of full American citizenship in the United States."[40] Gompers promised to do anything he could to help secure the Puerto Rican people their rights under the United States flag.[41] Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor worked long and hard to secure U.S. citizenship for the people of the island.

For their part, workers in Puerto Rico viewed the extension of U.S. citizenship to the people of the island as a way of consolidating and guaranteeing their democratic rights. Beginning in 1902, and almost every year thereafter, FLT delegates attending the annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor presented resolutions requesting that the AFL support their demand that United States citizenship be granted to the Puerto Rican people. The conventions always complied, and for many years Samuel Gompers actively lobbied the Congress and the President of the United States to bring this about. As a symbol of Gompers' efforts in this regard, President Woodrow Wilson presented him one of the three pens he used to sign the 1917 Jones Act, the major provision of which was the extension of U.S citizenship to the people of Puerto Rico.[42]

While in Puerto Rico, Gompers also expressed a strong belief in the island's right to self-government and to representation in the U.S. Federal government. He believed that

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[40]American Federationist, 1904, p. 304.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Gonzalo F. Córdova, Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias, p. 139.

if the people of Puerto Rico were good enough to have representation in Spain's national law-making body, "under the stars and stripes in free America we ought to accord Porto Rico the same right and privilege."[43] Gompers was outraged that Puerto Rico was treated "as a stepchild in the family of Uncle Sam." He stated that "the time has come when not only should Porto Rico be entitled to full fellowship in the family of the American republic, but that she should have a full share of home rule."[44]

Although he advocated U.S. citizenship and greater self-government for the people of the island, Gompers cautioned the workers against direct political participation by labor organizations. This was the official position of the American Federation of Labor and Gompers attempted to impose it on the island's organized labor movement. He argued that party politics only served to divide workers. "I know politics and political parties have had much to do with dividing the forces of labor in Porto Rico."[45] While acknowledging their right to political activity, he urged workers to act on their own responsibility and not to involve labor unions directly in electoral politics. He assured them that "in becoming members of the American Federation of Labor you surrender no political right you now have."[46] Republicans could remain Republicans and Federalists

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[43]American Federationist, May, 1904, p. 414.

[44]American Federationist, April, 1904, p. 303.

[45]Ibid., p. 305.

could remain Federalists. He only urged that they be true union men. He reminded them that elections took place only once every year, but that they had to live 364 other days of the year. He claimed that is was more important for workers to have good food and better homes.[47] In theory, the Federación Libre adopted the AFL policy to remain apolitical, but in practice it did not adhere to Samuel Gompers' advice. The FLT already had a history of political participation before Gompers' visit and it continued to take a direct and indirect role in island party politics.

The numerical strength, financial power, and political influence of the American Federation of Labor greatly impressed the leaders and rank and file of the labor movement in Puerto Rico. Workers on the island expressed great enthusiasm for the organizational, financial, and political support the AFL provided them. They felt that only Samuel Gompers and the AFL could be counted on to truthfully inform the people of the United States and U.S. politicians about the deplorable social and working conditions on the island. AFL support encouraged unionized workers in Puerto Rico to continue their organizational and strike campaigns despite their weak numerical and financial position and in the face of the open hostility of employers and the local government.

Gompers' 1904 visit to the island greatly increased interest in organizing labor unions affiliated to the AFL. In

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[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid.

the wake of his visit the FLT established many craft unions and membership grew significantly. In 1904, there existed forty three unions in Puerto Rico. By 1908, this number had increased to one hundred and twenty, with a total membership of five and one half thousand workers. At the end of his visit, Gompers claimed it had been a huge success. He felt that "the working people have become encouraged, and where they were sad and downcast and forlorn and despairing, they are now hopeful."[48]

AFL's Contribution to the FLT

Defense of Democratic Rights

Over the years, the American Federation of Labor continually supported the protection of the basic democratic rights of the workers of Puerto Rico. Specifically, the AFL defended their right to form labor unions and to strike for an improvement in working conditions and wages, as well as their rights to free speech and a free press. For example, in 1906 the police in Puerto Rico brutally attacked workers engaged in a peaceful strike and prevented them from meeting. The Federación Libre lodged a formal complaint with officials of the American Federation of Labor and the AFL lobbied local government officials on its behalf.[49]

Another violation of democratic rights took place a few years later when Julio Aybar, the editor of a local labor

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[48]Ibid., p. 415.

[49]Report of Proceedings of the Twenty Sixth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1906, p. 177.

newspaper, was sentenced to prison after being charged with libeling a court judge. Again the AFL went to the aid of workers on the island, this time to protect their right to a free press.[50] Later, in 1918, Arthur Yager, the Governor of Puerto Rico, denied striking workers the right to assemble freely to discuss the strike and employed the police in efforts to break the strike. This time, Samuel Gompers brought the matter directly to the attention of the President of the United States.[51]

The democratic rights to form labor unions, to strike, to assembly, to free speech, and to a free press in Puerto Rico were of vital significance to both the American Federation of Labor and the Federación Libre. As noted earlier, the AFL considered Puerto Rico an integral part of the United States and feared that the violation of democratic rights in Puerto Rico could sooner or later lead to similar violations in the U.S. mainland. In Puerto Rico, the guarantee of basic democratic rights safeguarded the FLT's survival as a viable labor organization. Many Federación leaders had been active during the period of the Spanish colonial regime when political rights did not exist. They knew only too well what it meant to agitate on behalf of the cause of labor in an environment where advocating

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[50]Report of Proceedings of the Twenty Eighth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1908, p. 230.

[51]Report of Proceedings of the Thirty Eighth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor, 1918, p. 98.

labor unions, strikes by workers, or speaking and writing freely about their beliefs could quickly land them in jail.

Financial Assistance

In addition to political support, the American Federation of Labor provided the Federación Libre with financial assistance in the form of a paid full-time labor organizer. For a period of almost thirty years, between 1901, when first compensated by the AFL for his work in Puerto Rico, until 1929, Santiago Iglesias remained one of the highest paid organizers for the American Federation of Labor. Appendix One, on page 182, demonstrates that Iglesias continually ranked in the top third or top half of all the organizers the AFL employed. This reflected the importance the AFL attached to the task of organizing workers in Puerto Rico. By employing Santiago Iglesias as a full-time organizer, the AFL facilitated the work of one of the island's most effective, articulate, and charismatic labor leaders. For most of the period for which he was paid, Iglesias worked exclusively in Puerto Rico. In the nineteen twenties, however, he divided his time between work for the FLT in Puerto Rico and for the Pan American Federation of Labor in its headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Besides Santiago Iglesias, the AFL occasionally deployed other paid organizers in Puerto Rico. Appendix Two, on page 183, lists nine additional labor organizers paid for their work on the island in the period between 1905 and 1924. This table, however, demonstrates that the AFL used other paid labor

organizers very infrequently and expended little money on their services. Only Rafael Alonso Torres worked repeatedly and received a relatively significant salary.

The AFL also provided financial assistance to FLT members in the form of strike, unemployment, sick, and death benefits. Generally, however, during strikes organized workers in Puerto Rico derived very little by way of financial support from the American Federation of Labor's Defense Fund. The AFL's constitutional requirements that strikes be authorized beforehand by the Federation's Executive Council, that locals be in continuous good standing for one year, and that only members who had paid union dues for a full year were eligible for strike benefits often precluded members of the Federación Libre from receiving Defense Fund benefits when they went out on strike. Samuel Gompers' correspondence with labor leaders in Puerto Rico is replete with instances where he has to explain over and over why striking workers can not get strike benefit payments. For example, on November 12, 1915, Samuel Gompers wrote to Guadalupe Vásquez, the financial secretary of Tabacco Strippers' Union No. 12502 in Juncos, Puerto Rico and urged him to "understand that, under the provisions of Article XIII of the [AFL] Constitution, your organization is not eligible to any benefits from the defense fund, they having inaugurated a strike without the Executive Council being afforded the opportunity of considering the matter."[52]

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[52]Samuel Gompers Letterbooks 1883-1924, Volume Number 212 Document Number 917 Columbia University Library Microfilm Collection.

The fact that the majority of FLT members were agricultural laborers subject to very low wages, seasonal work, and high rates of unemployment and underemployment mitigated against compliance with strict AFL Defense Fund requirements. Moreover, because of these economic conditions, many local unions and their membership rosters were often very unstable. As a consequence, financial support during strike movements was not an outstanding feature of the AFL's role in Puerto Rico. Nevertheless, as Appendix Three, on pages 184-186, demonstrates, there were numerous instances when the American Federation of Labor did provide financial benefits to striking workers in Puerto Rico. During the agricultural labor strike movement of 1906 the AFL sent more than four thousand dollars to workers in Arecibo, and in 1923 agricultural workers on strike in Guayama, Santa Isabel, and Salinas received over five thousand dollars in benefits.

Support of Labor Organization

The American Federation of Labor also extended to Puerto Rico its system for commissioning volunteer labor organizers. These were local labor union organizers who did not receive a salary for their services. While unpaid, these were prestigious and coveted positions conferred by the AFL president. For example on January 26, 1914, Samuel Gompers wrote to Pascual Jordan in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico and informed him that "in accordance with your request, I am renewing your commission as volunteer organizer, which will be sent to you under separate

cover." Because of the official recognition from the AFL hierarchy they entailed, positions as volunteer organizers bestowed status on the recipient.

The work of the volunteer organizers, together with the efforts of the paid organizers, greatly facilitated the organizational growth of the Federación Libre. The American Federationist, published monthly, often reported on the work of both paid and volunteer organizers. Appendix Four, on page 187, lists the organizers, the cities or towns in which they worked, and the years for which they submitted at least one monthly report to the AFL on their organizing work in Puerto Rico.

Volunteer organizers spearheaded the Federación Libre's many labor organizing campaigns and strike movements. They promoted the benefits of union membership in regard to wages, hours of work, and working conditions. They sought to strengthen the FLT by increasing the number of organized workers throughout the island in both urban and rural areas. They made efforts to organize skilled workers, such as cigarmakers, carpenters, and typographers. They also organized among women workers, the unskilled, and rural laborers, such a female tobacco strippers in cigar factories and sugarcane field workers. In addition, volunteer organizers actively promoted the use of the union label.

Their organizing methods included the mass circulation of leaflets and pamphlets, and the staging of open air public meetings and indoor assemblies in municipal halls, union halls, and theaters. At these gatherings, volunteer organizers

explained the principles, ideas, ends, and benefits of the organized labor movement. They also established organizing committees and set up a series of Saturday and Sunday meetings to recruit new union members. They often organized forums for the free and open discussion of the economic, social, industrial, and unemployment problems affecting the workers of Puerto Rico.

Active and courageous, volunteer labor organizers led strike movements and often confronted the hostility of employers and the police. In a report to the AFL in August of 1905, one volunteer organizer commented that, "many employers are hostile to organization and this makes our work more difficult."[53] The following year, another one wrote, "organized labor is making progress, but some of the employers are trying to boycott the laborers with the intention of destroying the union."[54] During the agricultural workers' strike of 1906, authorities arrested eleven labor leaders, including a number of volunteer organizers, and accused them of attacking the police.[55] Volunteer organizers, nevertheless, remained undeterred. "The capitalist employers are very antagonistic toward any organization on the part of the workers, however, we are going right ahead, trying to improve the working conditions of the laboring men."[56]

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[53]American Federationist, August, 1905, p. 535.

[54]Ibid., June, 1906, p. 411.

[55]Ibid., January, 1906, p. 44.

[56]Ibid., May, 1908, p. 402.

One outstanding volunteer labor organizer was Esteban Padilla. He was one of the earliest volunteer organizers appointed in Puerto Rico. Born on December 26, 1878, Padilla became both a tailor and cigarmaker by trade. After joining the organized labor movement, he served on the staffs of a number of labor newspapers, including El Porvenir Social, El Pan del Pobre, and La Huelga. He served as a volunteer organizer in 1904 and 1905 and was among the leaders of the great agricultural workers' strikes of 1905 and 1906 During those strikes he was jailed over thirty times. In 1908, he represented the FLT at the American Federation of Labor convention in San Francisco. In 1910, he helped organize the Partido Obrero Insular and for many years ran as its candidate for a seat in the Legislature. He served as assistant chief of the Bureau of Labor in Puerto Rico in 1922. After a long illness brought on by overwork in a strike in the tobacco industry, he passed away on January 24, 1927. Thousands of mourning workers attended Esteban Padilla's funeral and paid tribute to his efforts on behalf of the organized labor movement of Puerto Rico.[57]

In their reports to AFL officials, volunteer organizers made sure to include details about prevailing wages, hours of work, and general labor conditions. They also commented on the unemployment situation, the persecution of the labor movement, and on the enactment and enforcement of labor legislation. In addition, they provided information on the state of labor

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[57]Ibid., April, 1927, p. 496.

organizations, the chartering of new unions, and on the total number of union members. These vounteers often emphasized that organized workers enjoyed higher wages, shorter hours of labor, and better working conditions than unorganized workers. In this way they promoted the concepts and goals of AFL trade unionism. Writing from the town of Yauco, one volunteer organizer, Leonardo Pacheco, wrote "we are striving to create and maintain a perfect trade union organization."[58] From San Juan, Santiago Iglesias observed that "the workers seem enthusiastic to organize and make the labor movement of this island a truly and genuine American labor movement based upon the best conception of trade union."[59]

The American Federation of Labor also provided the FLT the structural framework within which the Federación Libre grew and developed in terms of size and organization. This structure included the system of chartering trade unions and central labor unions. The effectiveness of labor organizing on the island is reflected in the number of unions, central labor unions, and workers organized.

By the early 1920s, the Federación Libre claimed well over 150 local unions and 20,000 members. The most numerous unions included those of skilled workers, such as carpenters, shoemakers, and bakers. Cigar factory workers, both skilled and unskilled, also constituted a large number of locals. In

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[58]Ibid., February, 1909, p. 179.

[59]Ibid., May, 1907, p. 346.

addition, the FLT succeeded in forming many unions of agricultural workers. Appendix Five, on page 188, lists the years and cities where the AFL chartered city central labor unions. Appendix Six, on page 189, details when new unions were organized, the total number of unions, and the total membership of the FLT for selected years between 1904 and 1934. Information on the different kinds of unions within the FLT is provided in Appendix Seven, on page 190.

A directory of FLT member unions that dates from 1904 listed 126 unions and 19,157 members.[60] While the number of union members claimed is probably greatly exaggerated, it is particularly useful because of some of the details it provides. It lists the city, name, and number of each union. It also gives the name of the secretary, the street address of each local and central labor union, and the number of members. An examination of this document demonstrates that the most numerous unions were those of skilled urban workers. These unions, however, usually had only a few dozen members. For example, typographers union number 478 in San Juan had forty members while masons union number 413 in Arecibo had thirty members. Agricultural labor unions were also numerous and usually had well over one hundred members. In Juana Díaz, agricultural laborers union number 11551 had 133 members and in Arecibo agricultural laborers union number 11694 had 150 members. The largest unions, those with

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60"Directorio de las uniones de la Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico," reproduced in Igualdad Iglesias Pagán, El obrerismo en Puerto Rico, época de Santiago Iglesias (1896-1905) (Palencia de Castilla: Ediciones Juan Ponce De León, 1973), pp. 327-333.

between one and three thousand members were the city central labor unions. They brought together different kinds of workers for whom there was no specific trade union. In Arecibo the central union had 3,000 members. In Guayama, it had 1,600 members. However, very few women's unions were listed and these had only a few dozen members. One exception was women's protective union nember 1733 in Mayagüez, which claimed 320 members.

FLT Participation in AFL Conventions

Every year after its affiliation to the American Federation of Labor, the Federación Libre sent delegations to the AFL annual conventions. At these gatherings Samuel Gompers, the AFL Executive Committtee, Special Committees on Puerto Rico, or the FLT delegates themselves presented reports highlighting living and working conditions in Puerto Rico. The representatives of the Puerto Rican organized labor movement, usually Santiago Iglesias and one or two other delegates, also presented resolutions for AFL consideration. These resolutions indicated the kind of assistance the FLT sought from the U.S. labor movement. Often they requested political support.

One major aspect of the FLT's campaign on behalf of workers in Puerto Rico focused on protecting their democratic rights to free speech, a free press, assembly, and the right to form labor unions and to strike for better conditions. Many of the resolutions brought before AFL conventions by the Puerto Rican delegates asked for AFL help to guarantee these rights. They

often requested that Samuel Gompers bring to the attention of the U.S. President the violations of democratic rights in Puerto Rico. The FLT continually presented resolutions that the AFL demand that the national government grant the people of Puerto Rico United States citizenship and guarantee them the same rights and privileges as the people of all U.S. states and territories.

In addition, the FLT sought to promote its program for social reforms, especially in the areas of education and labor, through the resolutions its delegates presented at the annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor. In 1907, FLT delegates Santiago Iglesias, Eugenio Sánchez, and Joaquín Becerrill presented a resolution that a joint FLT-AFL committee call on the President of the United States and recommend that in addition to granting Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, school appropriations and teachers salaries be increased, and that laws in favor of the eight hour work day, the abolition of convict labor, the abolition of child labor, and the establishment of a branch of the Labor Bureau in Puerto Rico be enacted. The FLT presented similar resolutions at the AFL conventions in 1909 and 1911. Increasingly, over the course of the nineteen twenties, the Federación Libre also focused on the abuses of U.S. absentee corporations in Puerto Rico. In these efforts, the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico could always count on the active support of organized labor in the United States, as represented by the American Federation of Labor.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

After the Spanish-Cuban-American war of 1898, the vast majority of professionals, hacendados, the emerging capitalist class, and workers enthusiastically welcomed the United States' annexation of Puerto Rico. They all believed that they would benefit from a close association with a liberal democratic and economically advanced nation. In fact, however, the U.S. domination of the island had grave consequences for all social classes. On the one hand, hacendados and the emerging capitalist class soon became subservient to U.S. political and economic power. While some among the island's economic and political elite, organized as the Partido Republicano, acquiesced to a colonial relationship with the United States, the majority, who belonged to the Partido Federal and later the Partido Unión, resented the colonial implications of the Foraker Act, and demanded greater local autonomy, U.S. statehood, or independence as a more acceptable political status.

The urban and rural labor population, on the other hand, came under an intense process of proletarianization during the period immediately following the U.S. invasion that resulted in increased poverty. Workers responded to their increasingly miserable working and living conditions by focusing on the class contradictions they confronted. Working class leaders such as Ramón Romero Rosa and Luisa Capetillo, among others, developed a critique of Puerto Rican society that emphasized the

exploitation of the working class by the capitalists. They also condemned religious and state institutions as allies of the bourgeoisie. Like the island's upper classes, workers also welcomed the island's annexation by the United States, but for other reasons. They believed that the democratic rights which the U.S. granted the people of Puerto Rico provided them with the necessary guarantees to develop labor organizations and strikes as weapons against class oppression. They turned to the United States government, the people of the U.S., and that country's working class, particularly as represented by the American Federation of Labor, as necessary allies in their struggle against capitalist exploitation.

Although relatively little has been written about the Puerto Rican labor movement during the period between the beginning of the twentieth century and the early nineteen thirties, the few studies that do exist express widely differing interpretations in relation to this subject. Some authors, such as Gordon K. Lewis, argued that the FLT was never a truly socialist organization. He believed that while the movement paid lip service to radical ideas, in content it was always reformist, and swayed by the confused political thinking of its leader, Santiago Iglesias. Other authors, particularly Arturo Morales Carrión, took the position that the FLT began as an organization heavily influenced by European radical socialist and anarchist thinking, but that as a result of its affiliation to the American Federation of Labor, became reformist and trade unionist in its politics.

This thesis takes the position that it is misleading to characterize the labor movement as never having been socialist, or even to assert that it was socialist at first and then became reformist. Rather, from the beginning the FLT and later the PS exhibited elements of both radical socialist and reformist orientation. It concurs with the work of those authors who maintain that factors other than the AFL's influence account for the FLT's reformist and trade unionist tendencies.

Angel Quintero Rivera argued that in the early nineteen twenties, the process of proletarianization of the Puerto Rican population stagnated and that this provided the structural basis for the ideological transformation of the organized labor movement. Miles Galvin, on the other hand, maintained that the represssion and persecution the labor movement suffered at the hands of local employers with the tacit agreement of island government officials made it necessary for the labor movement to seek alternative methods to achieve social change.

Quintero's argument is plausible in that it is grounded in the socio-economic transformation that unfolded in Puerto Rico. However, it is too mechanical to explain the view that the ideological change that took place in the workers' movement on the basis of the stagnation of the proletarianization of labor in the early 1920s. Certainly, the slow-down of proletarianization must be taken into consideration, but only along with a number of other contributing factors. Similarly, Galvin's argument is too one-dimensional. The repression of the workers' movement and the persecution of its leaders undoubtedly

contributed to the search for other ways to improve the conditions of labor. Nevertheless, that search has to be placed in a broader framework.

In the context of its historical development, a number of other factors facilitated the development of the FLT's reformist orientation at the expense of a truly radical ideology and political program. The elements that played a part in this process included the severe repression and persecution of the labor movement, a political regime that appeared to provide a means for peaceful social change, and the dynamic leadership provided by Santiago Iglesias. The influence of Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor must be taken into consideration as well.

It is important to consider that the workers' movement in Puerto Rico grew out of labor conditions that predated the U.S. annexation of the island. Although punctuated by several brief periods of liberal government, the Spanish colonial regime in Puerto Rico was autocratic and despotic. For most of the Spanish colonial period, basic democratic rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press did not exist. This had particularly negative consequences for labor.

Under Spanish law, workers did not have the right to form unions. Strikes for increased wages and improved labor conditions were also illegal. As a result, many workers viewed the extension of basic democratic rights to the people of Puerto Rico, which accompanied the U.S. occupation of the island, as a great advance. They believed that within the framework of U.S.

rule, workers were afforded the means to promote peaceful reform through the exercise of their democratic rights. However, as Miles Galvin has pointed out, the change in sovereignty did not change the relations of power between labor and capital on the island.

Nevertheless, workers did have the legal right to organize labor unions, strike for better conditions, take part in the electoral process, and form a political party. On numerous occasions, workers elected representatives to the Puerto Rican legislature and secured the passage of laws in their interest. They also influenced the creation and functioning of the island's Labor Bureau. At times, the labor movement also successfully appealed to the courts for redress of grievances and it influenced the acquisition of U.S. citizenship. The U.S. regime in Puerto Rico did not really provide the means for significant peaceful social transformation, but there was enough of an appearance of that possibility to influence the labor movement's strategy for change.

Two fundamental controversies emerge in the history of organized labor in Puerto Rico in the period between the turn of the century and the early nineteen thirties. The first concerns the nature of the ideology of the Federación Libre and its political wing, the Partido Socialista, while the second relates to the AFL's influence on the FLT's ideology. The argument advanced in this study is that anarchist and socialist ideas did have a significant influence on the workers' movement. Ramón Romero Rosa, Luisa Capetillo, and other early labor leaders

analyzed the economic, social, and political problems of workers in a way that emphasized the irreconcilable class contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and provided a critique of private property as the basis of class exploitation, and of the state as an agent of the bourgeosie. As a consequence, they advocated the abolition of private property, the dissolution of the state, and the creation of a classless society. To these ends, they urged workers to educate themselves, organize labor unions and employ the General Strike as a strategy to replace the existing system with a workers' socialist commonwealth. Reformist and trade unionist ideas also influenced the island's labor movement; however, the AFL's role in this regard, while important, was not decisive.

Instead, the reformist and trade unionist orientation of the FLT and PS can best be explained as a result of a number of other factors. Among these is the inability of early labor leaders to clearly envision the nature of the future society which the labor movement wanted. They also failed to articulate a strategy for acheiving a new social order.

Throughout its history, the FLT and the PS were dominated by leaders, particularly Santiago Iglesias, more concerned with immediate objectives than with the establishment of the workers' social demomcracy, which the political programs of the FLT and PS called for. While the labor movement's notion of what a workers' commonwealth looked like was extremely vague, immediate reformist objectives, including higher pay, better working

conditions, educational opportunities, better health facilities, and adequate housing, were very clear.

Furthermore, the repression of the labor movement was certainly an element which contributed to the ideological development of the FLT. Most of the memoirs of prominent labor leaders, such as Santiago Iglesias Pantín, Alonso Torres and Manuel Francisco Rojas, detail the many instances of the repression of the labor movement. For example, Iglesias and others were arrested for labor organizing activities at the beginning of the century, the labor press was closed down on several occasions, and the agricultural strike movements were violently suppressed. As a consequence, the FLT continually appealed to the AFL to act on its behalf to put an end to this persecution, and in this context, U.S. rule became an attractive alternative. The existence of an ostensibly liberal democratic regime in Puerto Rico under U.S. rule served to reinforce the perception that social change was possible within the framework of electoral politics.

Indeed, the political regime which the United States instituted on the island undoubtedly facilitated the acceptance of reform politics as a viable alternative to radical process of social change. In Cuatro siglos de ignorancia y servidumbre en Puerto Rico, prominent FLT leader Manuel Francisco Rojas contrasted Spanish and U.S. rule in Puerto Rico, noting the oppressive political conditions that existed on the island under Spanish rule. According to Rojas, the people were subjugated to the church and the state without enjoying the guarantees offered

by a government constituted on liberal and democratic principles.[1] He emphasized that the liberties introduced by the United States created the conditions that allowed the workers' struggle against capitalist exploitation to advance. These included the right to free speech and a free press, the right to assembly and to petition the government for redress of grievances, the right to form labor unions, and the right to strike for better wages and working conditions.

The leaders of the organized labor movement in Puerto Rico staunchly opposed the island's independence and advocated U.S. citizenship and U.S. statehood for the island. Rojas warned against demanding political independence, lest the people later suffered dire consequences. He noted that under U.S. rule, they had acquired liberties that had not required sacrifices in lives or blood.[2] Rojas cautioned workers against supporting independence because a Puerto Rican republic would most likely be ruled by the island's political and economic elite, i.e., the hacendados and capitalists, who would use control of the government to further the workers' oppression and exploitation. Rojas pointed out that during the period of autonomous government that had immediately preceeded the U.S. occupation of the island, Luis Muñoz Rivera had persecuted Santiago Iglesias for his labor organizing activities, and that Iglesias, after

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[1]Manuel Francisco Rojas, Cuatro siglos de ignorancia y servidumbre en Puerto Rico (San Juan: Imprenta La Primavera, 1914), p. 16.

[2]Ibid., p. 6.

seven months of persecution by a government headed by Puerto Ricans, had found sanctuary under the protection of U.S. invasion troops under the command of General Brooke. Thus, island labor leaders viewed the United States as their liberator. As Santiago Iglesias declared: "Glory to the liberating nation that came to Puerto Rico to completely destroy despotism!"[3]

Not all FLT leaders opposed political independence for Puerto Rico; for example, Juan S. Marcano argued that independence was a necessary condition for the full emancipation of the working class, and Rojas himself later accepted this interpretation and became an active supporter for independence. Nonetheless, this was a minority position within the organized labor movement, and was officially defeated at the Partido Socialista's Fourth Annual Convention, where Santiago Iglesias opposed independence because he believed it would play into the hands of the politicians. Iglesias believed that Puerto Ricans did not need to define a political status in order to establish an ideal system.[4] He stated that: "the majority of journalists and capitalists demand self-government because they know that since the workers are not prepared, they would be the masters."[5] In short, while there were those within the movement who

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[3]Ibid., p. 48.

[4]Actuaciones del Partido Socialista, cuarta convención anual, San Juan, May 1-4, 1919., p. 49.

[5]Santiago Iglesias, ¿Gobierno propio ... para quién? (San Juan: Imprenta Federación Libre, 1907) pp. 28-29.

advocated independence, they were in the minority and they were not in a position to define FLT policy in regard to the issue of the island's political status.

The reformist tendencies of the FLT can partly be attributed to the dynamic influence and leadership of Santiago Iglesias. In 1923, Luis Muñoz Marín, who was the son of autonomous leader Luiz Muñoz Rivera and who would later become governor of Puerto Rico under commonwealth status, conducted an interview with Iglesias which provides a useful portrait of the leader. This interview is significant because it highlights not only Iglesias' personal qualities, but also his political thinking. Marín astutely recognized Iglesias as a man of strong will, great wisdom, and a strong passion for the cause of labor. Early in his own career, Marín came under the influence of Iglesias and under his leadership, participated actively on behalf of the workers' struggle in Puerto Rico. However, Marín recognized Iglesias' lack of imagination and what he perceived as his almost infinite, flexible political opportunism.[6] Specifically, Marín questioned his socialist ideology, claiming that Iglesias was "as much as a Bolshevic as (he himself) was a bishop."[7]

Santiago Iglesias responded to this comment that the goal of socialism must be to ensure the wellbeing of the masses and

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[6]Puerto Rico ilustrado, June 23 1923. This interview is reproduced in Reece B. Bothwell González, editor, Puerto Rico, 100 años de lucha política, documentos varios, 1869-1936, vol.2, (Río Piedras, Editorial Universitaria, 1979), p.357.

[7]Ibid.

individual liberty. He claimed that "if a Bolshevic is one who protests against absenteeism, fights for public education, public health and all the other needs of the people, then I am just as much a Bolshevic as anyone else."[8] In other words, he took a position against the presence of U.S. absentee sugar corporations on the island and recognized the urgent need for adequate educational opportunities and subsistence and health needs of the working class. For Iglesias, socialism meant addressing these needs rather than subscribing to some ultimate radical transformation of society. He stressed that the focus of the workers' movement should be on immediate goals and reforms. Iglesias insisted, however, that the socialists were not purely guided by materialist objectives. He equated socialism with freedom and social justice, as well as economic wellbeing.

The history of organized labor in Puerto Rico from the late nineteenth century, when artisan workers first founded casinos, mutual aid societies and cooperatives to promote their political and economic class interests and the Federación Libre, which grew out of these early efforts, was characterized by its commitment to the organization of the working class, particularly unskilled agricultural workers, and its leadership of their strike campaigns. At the same time, the FLT and subsequently the PS was committed to electoral participation as a vehicle for social change. In the context of the violent

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[8]Ibid., p. 358.

repression of labor strikes, the FLT came to emphasize reform politics.

The extent to which the AFL can be held responsible for these reformist politics and the trade unionist orientation of the Federación Libre is the second key question which has been a focus of this study. Andrés Rodríguez Vera was the first observer to promote the view that the FLT could have developed as a radical organized workers' movement had it not been for the influence of the AFL as well as the political opportunism of Santiago Iglesias.[9]

Rodríguez Vera, who had been an active FLT member and was among the leaders of the great agricultural strikes of 1905-06 and 1915-16, was the AFL's and Santiago Iglesias' most severe contemporary critic in Puerto Rico. He argued that the FLT was a conservative organization and chastised Santiago Iglesias for his role as a paid labor organizer for the AFL. He claimed that the FLT withdrew from the Socialist Workers Party as a result of the Puerto Rican labor federation's affiliation to the AFL. According to this critic, under the influence of the AFL, the FLT became an opportunist organization that opposed bourgeois parties and politics in theory, but in practice favored both.

The argument that is promoted in this study is that in the period before the nineteen thirties, the AFL played a significant role in the development of the island's organized

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[9]Andrés Rodríguez Vera, Los fantoches del obrerismo o el fracaso de una institución (San Juan: Tipografía Negrón, 1915) and El triunfo de la apostasía (San Juan: Tipografía La Democracia, 1930).

labor movement. It defended the political and democratic rights of Puerto Rican workers and it provided important financial and organizational assistance. Santiago Iglesias certainly recognized the significance of the FLT's affiliation to the American Federation of Labor. He argued that: "The AFL is the most secure and efficient way to change the existing political, social and economic system, which enriches a minority of privileged individuals in and out of Puerto Rico, and which submits the vast majority of the Puerto Rican people to slavery in disguise."[10]

However, contrary to those who claim that the AFL was primarily responsible for the FLT's politics, this thesis has argued that the AFL only served to reinforce the reformist and trade unionist tendencies that were present within the FLT from its very inception. In fact, the AFL's influence over the organized labor movement on the island was not decisive, and furthermore, the AFL did not dictate FLT politics. In other words, although the AFL promoted its reform and trade unionist objectives in Puerto Rico, it can not be held primarily responsible for the characteristics of the island's labor movement.

For example, many scholars, such as Wilfredo Matos Cintrón and Juan Angel Silén, have argued that the FLT's staunchly pro-U.S. politics were a consequence of AFL influence. As demonstrated earlier, the AFL advocated U.S. citizenship for the people of Puerto Rico and U.S. statehood for the island. Samuel

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[10]Santiago Iglesias, ¿Gobierno propio ... para quién?, p. 26.

Gompers and the AFL argued that Puerto Rico was an integral part of the United States, that its Constitution should apply fully on the island, that the people of Puerto Rico should be granted U.S. citizenship, and the island afforded statehood. These positions were contrary to the view of the U.S. government, which claimed that Puerto Rico belonged to, but was not a part of the United States.

However, the AFL did not have to exert pressure on the FLT to accept this position. Actually, it only reinforced the FLT's belief that U.S. citizenship and statehood was in its own best interest. FLT leaders based this idea on the concrete benefits accrued to island workers under U.S. rule. Because of their organizational weakness, lack of political power, shortage of financial resources and persecution at the hands of local employers and government officials, workers on the island were in a very difficult and dangerous position. Their reaction was to turn to the United States government, people, and labor movement for assistance. Thus, the AFL cannot be held responsible for the pro-U.S. stance of the FLT and the AFL never dictated FLT politics.

This is most evident in the political stance that the FLT took, which was in sharp contrast to AFL policies. The AFL did not believe that workers should organize their own class party and participate independently in electoral politics. Nonetheless, the FLT was not only political, but it even organized an official workers' party, the Partido Socialista, in 1915. Throughout its history, the FLT took an active part in

electoral politics, both independently and in coalition with other political parties. Therefore, the FLT always manifested independent thinking and action. The influence of the American Federation of Labor over the organization was very real and important, but ultimately the FLT operated largely independently of AFL dictates.

Appendix 1.

Santiago Iglesias'Salary as a Paid Labor Organizer for the American Federation of Labor 1901-1929

YEAR	RANK IN PAY	AMOUNT COMPENSATED
1901	13th out of 57	$ 758.00
1902	11th out of 54	$ 903.50
1903	17th out of 69	$1,245.90
1904	17th out of 99	$1,986.50
1905	17th out of 60	$1,915.35
1906	15th out of 54	$2,132.40
1907	14th out of 56	$1,959.50
1908	18th out of 50	$1,741.50
1909	15th out of 34	$1,941.50
1910	14th out of 48	$1,579.00
1911	14th out of 49	$1,561.00
1912	21st out of 63	$1,714.00
1913	19th out of 77	$1,849.42
1914	19th out of 52	$2,200.44
1915	15th out of 46	$2,277.71
1916	16th out of 71	$2,595.60
1917	16th out of 93	$2,762.28
1918	21st out of 76	$1,692.82
1919	32nd out of 112	$2,233.86
1920	41st out of 125	$3,608.75
1921	25th out of 105	$4,843.15
1922	23rd out of 42	$3,895.50
1923	19th out of 32	$5,482.45
1924	20th out of 29	$3,835.21
1925	17th out of 31	$4,550.25
1929	27th out of 30	$ 500.00

Source: Reports of the proceedings of the annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor for the years noted.

Appendix 2.

Other Free Federation of Workingmen of Puerto Rico Organizers Paid by the American Federation of Labor 1905-1924

YEAR	ORGANIZER	AMOUNT COMPENSATED
1905	Julio Aybar	$ 104.00
	E. Padilla	$ 90.00
	José M. Torres	$ 60.00
1906	Julio Aybar	$ 96.20
1909	E. Padilla	$ 60.00
1912	Pasqual Jordan	$ 60.00
1913	Nemesio Morales	$ 110.00
	Nicomedes Rivera	$ 60.00
1915	C. Avilés	$ 80.00
1919	R.S. Sexton	$ 610.00
	C. Avilés	$ 100.00
1920	R.S. Sexton	$ 191.00
	T. Aybar	$ 90.00
	Rafael Alonso	$ 500.00
	S.E. Alonso	$ 170.00
	C. Avilés	$ 160.00
1921	R. Alonso	$ 310.00
1923	R. Alonso	$ 190.00
1924	R. Alonso	$ 120.00

Source: Reports of the proceedings of the annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor for the years noted.

Appendix 3.

American Federation of Labor Defense Fund Support of Workers on Strike in Puerto Rico 1906-1923

YEAR	CITY	LABOR UNION	AVERAGE MEMBERSHIP	WEEKS ON STRIKE	AMOUNT PAID
1906	Arecibo	Agricultural #11687 #11688 #11689 #11693 #11694 #11696 #11708	182	7	$4,044.00
1910	Arecibo	Bricklayers #11659	20	1	$ 80.00
1911	Bayamón	Tobacco Strippers #12722	13	6	$ 312.00
	Caguas	Banders protective #12869	6	6	$ 168.00
1912	Utuado	Tobacco Strippers #12690	14+	6	$ 344.00
1913	Juncos	Sugar Refinery #12502	184+	3	$2,212.00
	Bayamón	Tobacco Strippers #12722	9	6	$ 216.00
	Juncos	Tobacco Strippers #12502	5	6	$ 120.00
1916	Juncos	Tobacco Strippers #12502	16	6	$ 384.00

Appendix 3 cont.

YEAR	CITY	LABOR UNION	AVERAGE MEMBERSHIP	WEEKS ON STRIKE	AMOUNT PAID
1917	Cabo Rojo	Hat Makers #14209	133	4	$2,128.00
1918	Cabo Rojo	Hat Makers #14209	133	2	$1,064.00
	Bayamón	Tobacco Strippers #12722	76	2	$ 608.00
	San Juan	Cigar-makers #15206	24	3	$ 288.00
	Puerta de Tierra	Tobacco Strippers #12439	27	2	$ 216.00
1919	Bayamón	Tobacco Strippers #12722	64	4	$1,028.00
	San Juan	Cigar-makers Helpers #15206	24	3	$ 288.00
1920	Puerta de Tierra	Tobacco Strippers #12439	104	6	$2,496.00
	San Juan	Tobacco Box Decora-tors #15367	51	6	$1,224.00
	San Juan	Cigar-makers Helpers #15206	61	5	$1,220.00
	Ponce	Stampers & Decora-tors #15953	50	6	$1,196.00

Appendix 3 cont.

YEAR	CITY	LABOR UNION	AVERAGE MEMBERSHIP	WEEKS ON STRIKE	AMOUNT PAID
1920 cont.	Ponce	Wetters & Dryers #15954	47	6	$1,128.00
	Bayamón	Tobacco Strippers #12722	37	6	$ 888.00
	Utuado	Tobacco Strippers #15994	37	6	$ 888.00
	Juana Díaz	Tobacco Strippers #16103	37	6	$ 884.00
	Manatí	Tobacco Strippers #15784	15	6	$ 360.00
	San Lorenzo	Tobacco Strippers #16094	17	5	$ 340.00
1921	San Juan	Cigar makers Helpers #15206	40	1	$ 244.00
1923	Guayama	Agricul-tural #15563	286	4	$4,004.00
	Santa Isabel	Agricul-tural #17323	59	3	$ 619.50
	Salinas	Agricul-tural #16704	27	3	$ 283.00

Source: Reports of the proceedings of the annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor for the years noted.

Appendix 4.

Free Federation of Workingmen of Puerto Rico Organizers Who Report on Their Activities in the The American Federationist 1903-1929

ORGANIZER	CITY	YEAR/S
Santiago Iglesias	San Juan	1903,04,06,07,08,09, 12, and 13
Rafael Alonso	San Juan	1907,10,11,13,and 25
Rodolfo Rodríguez	Lares	1904
José Ferré	Caguas	1910
Julio Aybar	Ponce	1907
	Mayagüez	1905 and 09
José M. Torres	Ponce	1904,05,06,17,22, and 23
Esteban Padilla	Arecibo	1904 and 05
Emilio Fariza	Arecibo	1907
Juan B. Rivera	Mayagüez	1909
Leonardo Pacheco	Yauco	1906,07,08,09, and 10
Manuel Alvarez	Utuado	1910
Rivera Martínez	San Juan	1912 and 27
E. Sánchez López	San Juan	1912
Luis Irizarry Sierra	Cabo Rojo	1919,20,22,23,24, and 25
Pascual Jordan	Cabo Rojo	1913,14,15, and 16
Nemesio Morales	Arecibo	1913,14,15,16,20,21, 26, and 27
José Pereira	Juncos	1914 and 16
J. Bermúdez Sánchez	Bayamón	1920
Cirilo Avilés	Bayamón	1915 and 1916
Domingo Santos	Fajardo	1916 and 1917
Juan B. Delgado	Humacao	1917
Juan de Mata Velez	Mayagüez	1920
Civilo Avilés (sic)	San Juan	1920
Max Mattei Rivera	Yauco	1924,25,26,27,28,29, and 30
Vicente Medina	Ponce	1926
F. Paz Granela	San Juan	1927,28, and 29

Source: American Federation of Labor, American Federationist, years noted indicate at least one monthly organizer's report published that year.

Appendix 5.

Free Federation of Workingmen of Puerto Rico
City Central Labor Unions
Chartered by the American Federation of Labor
1901-1919

YEAR	CITY
1901	San Juan
1902	Ponce
	Mayagüez
1903	Aguadilla
1904	Arecibo
	Guayama
1906	Aguadilla
	San Juan
	Vieques
	Yauco
1907	Humacao
1909	Ponce
1911	Juncos
1912	Caguas
1914	Humacao
1915	Bayamón
1919	Ponce

Source: Reports of the proceedings of the annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor for the years noted.

Appendix 6.

Growth of the Free Federation of Workingmen of Puerto Rico 1904-1934

YEAR	NEW UNIONS ORGANIZED	TOTAL NUMBER OF UNIONS	TOTAL MEMBERSHIP
1904		43	
1908		112	
1909	32	120	5,500
1910	8	130	6,000
1911	22	132	8,000
1912	23	160	9,000
1913	22	130	10,000
1914	25	110	9,000
1915	26	121	10,000
1916	17	131	12,000
1917	32	148	12,024
1919	23	139	18,000
1920	79	229	16,606
1921	24	242	
1922	18	163	20,000
1930		236	35,000
1931	23		
1933			25,000
1934		450	80,000

Source: Reports of the proceedings of the annual conventions of the American Federation of Labor for the years noted.

Appendix 7.

Number of Local and Central Unions Affiliated to the FLT 1916-1922

Organization	1916	1917	1919	1920	1921	1922
Cigarmakers' Unions.....	16	15	16	21	21	16
Female Cigarmakers' Union.....		1	1	1	1	1
Carpenters' Unions.....	22	20	16	22	28	16
Typographical Union.....	1	1	1	1	1	1
Painters Union.....	1	1	3	4	4	3
Women's Protective Unions.....	6	3	3	4	4	3
Barbers' Unions.....	4	4	2	2	2	2
Tobacco Strippers' Unions.....	8	7	14	23	23	14
Wrapper Selectors' Unions.....	1	2	3	3	3	3
Tobacco Leaf Selectors' Union..	2	2		1	1	
Federal Labor Unions.....	9	8	6	4	4	6
Store Clerks' Unions.....	1	1	1	4	4	1
Longshore Workers' Unions.....	5	7	7	11	11	7
Bakers' Unions.....	6	7	3	18	18	12
Longshore Watchers' Unions.....				1	1	
Agricultural Workers' Unions...	29	31	25	30	32	25
Shoemakers' Unions.....	3	4	7	13	13	7
Hodcarriers' Unions.....	3	4	2	7	7	2
Cigar Packers' Unions.....	1	1		1	4	
Cigar Banders' Union.....	1		1			1
Bricklayers/Masons' Unions.....	2	2	2	5	5	2
Confectionary Workers' Union...	1	1				
Tailors' Union.....		1		1	1	
Hat Weavers' Union.....	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cigarmakers Helpers' Unions....	1	1	2	7	7	2
Hotel & Rest.Employees' Union..		1	1	1	1	1
Meat Cutters & Butchers' Union.		3	1	1	1	1
Tobacco Boxes Decorators'Unions		2	3	3	3	3
Boxmakers' Union.....		1	1	1	1	1
Mechanics/Machinists' Unions		3	5	8	8	9
Laborers' Protective Unions....		1	1	2	2	1
Tobacco Workers' Unions.....		1	1	1	3	1
Electrical Workers' Union.....			1	1	1	1
Chauffeurs' Union.....				1	1	
Plumbers' Union.....				1	1	
Embroiderers' Union.....				1	1	
State Federation.....				1	1	
Central Labor Unions.....	3	5	4	4	4	4
Joint Adv. Board of Cigarmakers	1	1	1	1	1	1
Local Trades Councils.....	3	5	4	5	5	4
Carpenters' District Council...				1	1	1
Longshoremen'sDistrict Councils					2	1
Labor Temples.....				9	9	9
General Organization Total...	131	148	139	229	242	163

Source: Reports of the proceedings of the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor for the years noted.

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