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Workers in Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn, 1886–1898

Mendel, Ronald, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1989

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WORKERS IN GILDED AGE NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN 1886-1898

by

RONALD MENDEL

VOLUME I

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

1989

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

January 23, 1989
Date

Chair of Examining Committee

January 24, 1989
Date

Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

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PREFACE

This dissertation began as a research paper on sympathy strikes in the New York building trades and developed into a full-fledged study when, to my surprise, I discovered that the history of workers, especially organized labor, in late Gilded Age America has been neglected. Indeed, within the context of New York City, the period following the Henry George mayoral campaign in 1886 up to the beginning of the Progressive Era in 1898 constitutes a "black hole" in the study of labor history. Initially, I intended to write a history of the working class of late Gilded Age New York City and Brooklyn, but the late Herbert Gutman, who at the time was my dissertation supervisor, wisely advised against embarking on such an ambitious enterprise. Instead, I approached the subject more strategically, and decided to examine four groups of workers who according to their skills, ethnicity, gender and occupational experience offered the opportunity to gain a cross-sectional perspective on the working class of both cities.

From the time I began formulating the dissertation proposal to the final stage when I put the finishing touches on the manuscript, I have been fortunate to receive the assistance of scholars and friends alike. Professor Gutman's influence on me transcended his death. The breadth of his conceptual thinking, his inquisitiveness and personal enthusiasm rekindled in me an interest in history, one which remained dormant during a long interlude between the completion of a M.A. degree

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and resuming my graduate education. Professor Gutman inspired me to ask global questions and to frame bold hypotheses without sacrificing the need to investigate the documents critically and to weigh the evidence carefully.

Professor Irwin Yellowitz, my dissertation supervisor, has guided me through the often painstaking process of writing and revising the text. His suggestions helped me to analyze my data more astutely, to clarify my observations and to sharpen my arguments. He showed remarkable patience with my writing style, which, in part due to his efforts, hopefully has improved. Professor Eric Foner, who served as the first reader on my dissertation committee, reminded me of the need to balance the descripitive with the interpretative in my historical study. He prompted me to tease the meaning out of the figures and events and consider the implications of my findings. Above all, he never lacked words of personal encouragement, which, in light of the fact that most of the manuscript was written in England, meant a great deal to me.

Though writing a dissertation is a solitary experience, friends and family members eased the burden with their support. Hadassah Kossak, who recently completed her Ph.D., reiterated the need to be patient with myself and kindly shared some of her references from the **Arbeiter Zeitung**, a Socialist newspaper written in Yiddish. Dorothee Schneider suggested sources for the study of cigarmakers. Annie Chamberlain demonstrated an enthusiasm for my work and an interest in my personal well being that I found touching. Jerry Meyer always had some words of wisdom, which proved to be invaluable in what I have found to be act of perseverance.

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My parents, Julius and Ruth, provided both moral and practical support, which reinforced my resolve to complete the task at hand. John and Diana Street offered an environment in which I could take my mind off my work and regenerate my spirits. Above all, my partner, Anne Street has made the completion of the dissertation possible. The contributions she made are too numerous to mention, but the significance of them can not be exaggerated. By being herself she did more than she will ever know.

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CHAPTER ONE — THE ECONOMY OF NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN

For New York and Brooklyn the late Gilded Age was a period of steady economic expansion, population growth and urban development. Linked in a symbiotic triad, industrialization required and spurred a growing demand for various types of labor, transportation facilities and commercial and financial services that were best provided in an environment where work, consumption and leisure were concentrated spatially. Both New York's and Brooklyn's course of development demonstrated that industrialization and urbanization were mutually reinforcing. New York's population jumped from 1.2 million in 1880 to 1.5 million in 1890 while Brooklyn's grew from 600,000 to 839,000 during the same period. By 1900 (two years after the formation of Greater New York), New York's population stood at 3.4 million, making it the largest city in the United States. (1)

A matrix of economic activity noted for its diversification, volume and intensity supported this development. In New York, for example, commerce, finance, wholesale and retail trade and manufacturing flourished. Various commercial institutions, including the Cotton, Produce, Mechanics and Trades Exchanges, and, of course, the New York Stock Exchange were located in lower Manhattan. Over a hundred trust companies, commercial and savings banks, among them the largest in the nation, operated in the city. New York was home to countless wholesale and retail merchants selling many of the city's manufactures as well as home to many importers of finished goods produced outside the United States. In fact, New York served as the nation's major hub for import-export trade in 1890 with 65 percent of the United States'

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imports and 41 percent of its exports passing through the city's docks, railway depots and warehouses. (2) Last, but not least, in New York and Brooklyn in the 1890's manufacturers increasingly set up shops processing and producing a variety of goods ranging from metals (iron, steel, copper, etc.) to mass consumer goods such as clothing, apparel, cigars and foodstuffs. By 1890, New York laid claim to almost 300 specific industries (as defined by the U.S. Census) and Brooklyn more than 200. During the late Gilded Age, New York and Brooklyn had become major manufacturing centers, where such industries as ready-made men's and women's clothing and printing and publishing stood most prominently.

Assessed by all available measurements, the economic expansion of New York and Brooklyn from 1880 to 1900 was vigorous (See Tables I. and II.). The number of industries from 1880 to 1890 almost doubled, the number of business establishments rose by 124 percent, and the number of workers increased by 55 percent. Likewise, wages earned jumped two-fold, capital invested more than doubled, and sales value climbed by 62 percent. In Brooklyn, during the same period, the proportionate expansion in two areas was not as great as in New York, but in four others the growth was comparable if not greater. The number of industries and the sales value of goods rose by 27 percent and 40 percent respectively. However, the number of establishments doubled and capital invested more than doubled, while the number of workers leaped slightly more than two-fold and the wages they earned tripled.

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Table I. Economic Growth of New York

	Establishments	Workers	Wages	Capital	Sales
1880	11,399	227,352	$97,030*	$181,206*	472,927*
1890	25,400	309,144	178,409*	426,118*	777,223*
1900 (Manhattan and Bronx)	27,168	344,054	184,602*	608,662*	975,168*

Table II. Economic Growth of Brooklyn

	Establishments	Workers	Wages	Capital	Sales
1880	5,201	47,557	$22,487*	$61,647*	$177,223*
1890	10,623	94,660	51,235*	163,887*	270,824*
1900	10,713	100,881	51,108*	271,375*	342,127*

* = all figures for wages, capital and sales are in thousands.
(Sources for Tables I and II are United States, Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in Cities**, Bulletin 211, p. 3 and Bulletin 213, p. 3; and Twelfth Census (1900), **Manufactures**, Part II, p. 594.)

In the 1890's the rate of expansion of New York's and Brooklyn's economy declined. Recovering slowly from the depression of 1893-1897 and adjusting to such structural shifts as the relocation of industries (cigarmaking and textiles, for example) to outlying areas and the emphasis on fixed capital investment (i.e. machinery, equipment and land) over labor, Greater New York approached the 20th century with a slower paced growth. The city's number of businesses, workers, and the amount of wages increased only marginally (See Table III.). Examined more closely, Manhattan and the Bronx experienced a growth rate almost equal to the entire city, while the same indicators for Brooklyn either increased by a lower percentage, or in the case of wages, actually declined. Compensating for the sluggish pattern in Brooklyn was the precipitous increase in the number of Queens' business establishments, workers and wages. Less checkered, whether viewed from the perspective of the city as whole, or its subdivisions, was the continued growth of capital, especially fixed, and the sales value of products.

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Table III. Percentage Change In Economic Activity (1890-1900)

	establishments	workers	wages	capital	value of output
N.Y. State	19.5%	12.9	10.4	46.1	27.1
N.Y. City	7.0	11.4	3.7	48.0	26.4
Man.& Bronx	6.9	11.3	3.5	42.8	25.5
Brooklyn	0.8	6.6	-0.2	65.6	26.3

(Source: United States. Twelfth Census (1900) **Manufactures**, Part II, pp. 594 and 596.)

Viewed in a larger regional context, the city's rate of growth during this decade takes on a different hue. As Table III demonstrates, the proportionate increase among three of the five indicators for New York City resembled the State's. New York's position as a manufacturing base relative to the State therefore did not change, as it still had more than half of the State's manufacturing firms, representing 56 percent of capital expenditures and 63 percent of total sales revenue, employing 55 percent of the State's manufacturing workers, and paying out 60 percent of the wages earned by manufacturing workers.

The economic growth and development of New York and Brooklyn during the late Gilded Age reflected a more general transformation of the nation's industrial map. The country's urban population and number of production workers (excluding sales, clerical, and managerial personnel employed by manufacturing concerns) rose markedly from 1880 to 1900 (See Table IV.).

Table IV. Economic Growth in the U.S. (1880-1900)

	Urban Population	Production Workers	Value Added	Value Added per worker
1880	14,130,000	2,733,000	$1,973,000	$722
1890	22,106,000	4,252,000	4,693,000	1,104
1900	30,160,000	5,308,000	7,030,000	1,324

(Source: Robert Max Jackson, **The Formation of Craft Labor Markets** (New York, 1984), p. 126 and Robert Gallman, "Commodity Output 1838-1899", **Trends in the American Economy in the 19th Century** (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1960), pp. 13-65.)

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Moreover, the value added in manufactured goods and value added per worker grew steadily during this period, signifying not only a greater industrial capacity and expanding market but higher productivity as well. These trends were most evident from 1880 to 1889 as the rate of change in commodity output and value added per worker exceeded the growth rate in previous decades. As further evidence that this economic growth was persistent from 1880 to 1900, the number of business firms increased annually by 5.7 percent, the number of workers, by 4.7 percent and the value of the product, by 8 percent. (3)

The breadth of manufacturing in New York and Brooklyn in their own right was impressive. Unlike other manufacturing centers neither New York nor Brooklyn was identified with any one industry. No industry stood out as did Lynn's shoemaking, Pittsburgh's iron and steel, Milwaukee's brewing or Kansas City's meatpacking industries. In Manhattan, especially below 14th Street, a host of manufacturing industries thrived. In the older and most densely populated sections, the men's and women's clothing industries predominated, as factories and tenement shops appeared to multiply weekly. The cigarmaking industry, also concentrated in lower Manhattan, likewise set up production in large factories, small shops and the apartments of immigrants. Interspersed among these industries were the various branches of the apparel industry, including men's furnishings such as ties and suspenders, fur goods, silk wear, hats, millinery and boots and shoes. Also below 14th Street, in the vicinity of City Hall, the manufacturing of paper goods such as stationery and envelopes, the publishing of the many daily newspapers, the printing of books and periodicals and the production of printing presses and other equipment flourished.(4)

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Further uptown, between 14th and 59th Streets, along blocks radiating from the Hudson River on the west side and from the East River on the east side, were medium sized metal works, furniture making establishments, shops specializing in the production of musical instruments and food processing businesses. North of 42nd Street, up through the 50's in particular, could be found some of Manhattan's largest workplaces: on the west side were breweries, piano making plants and slaughterhouses and on the east side, sugar processing plants and slaughterhouses. On the east side, north of 50th Street and reaching into East Harlem north of 96th Street, cigarmaking, cabinetmaking, upholstering, baking and custom-made clothing firms opened and expanded operations, indicative of Manhattan's northward residential and economic movement. Further north, in the Bronx, along the Harlem River between 135th and 149th Streets, manufacturers took advantage of convenient railway transport and lower rents to set up facilities producing pianos, furniture and iron goods. (5)

On the opposite side of the East River were the hubs of Queens' and Brooklyn's larger scale manufacturing industries. Oil refining and its adjunct, the manufacturing of tin cans, the production of construction supplies (brick, plaster and paint), piano making and the manufacture of industrial machines made Long Island City, Queens a bustling economic area. Here were some of the metropolitan area's largest facilities which employed hundreds of workers per site, including Steinway and Sons, Standard Oil Company and Devoe Manufacturing Company. College Point developed as a manufacturing district, although less noticeably than Long Island City. In 1895 silk

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weaving and warping establishments employing in some cases over a hundred workers operated here.(6)

Brooklyn's manufacturing bases was as diversified as New York's. At the heart of Brooklyn's economic development stood its waterfront where the majority of the ships entering the metropolitan area delivered their goods and where many of the city's manufacturing plants thrived. In Williamsburg sugar refining plants, grain elevators and refrigerator factories occupied the waterfront. Many firms with headquarters in Manhattan had their production facilities there. For example, Henry Worthington and Company, whose offices were located in lower Manhattan, maintained a plant "several" blocks long where steam pumps used to pump water were manufactured. The Iron Clad Manufacturing Company operated a factory that employed 800 workers who made milk cans, range-boilers, garbage cans and tea kettles among other iron and steel based goods. This division of operations between the two cities also existed in the publishing industry. Both D. Appleton and Company and A.J. Barnes had their offices in Manhattan while the actual printing and binding was done in Brooklyn.(7)

More common in Williamsburg and other manufacturing areas in Brooklyn, such as Greenpoint, were modest sized, mechanized factories and traditional handicraft shops. Here Brooklyn's glassware industry, steeped in the skilled craftmanship of hand tool technology, and the porcelain industry, whose production processes from sifting to molding were predominantly mechanized, coexisted. Not to be overlooked were Brooklyn's concentrated breweries, glue factories and iron foundries as well as its smaller specialized machine producing shops and architectural iron works.(8)

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A comparison of manufacturing in New York and Brooklyn reveals both distinctive and common features. Both in New York and Brooklyn most of the ten leading manufacturing industries (See Table V), ranked by value of goods sold and by average number of wage workers in 1890, experienced robust competition and decentralized production. Furthermore, they employed few workers per establishment, had relatively low capital requirements, especially in fixed capital (investment in land, physical plant and equipment) and were largely dependent on labor for generating output.

Table V. Leading Manufacturing Industries in New York and Brooklyn

	Value of Output	Number of Workers
New York		
	Men's Clothing (Factory)	Men's Clothing (Factory)
	Women's Clothing (Factory)	Women's Clothing (Factory)
	Printing and Publishing (Newspaper)	Cigars and Tobacco
	Cigars and Tobacco	Men's Clothing (Custom Work)
	Slaughtering	Printing (Book and Job)
	Malt and Liquors (Brewing)	Men's Clothing (Repairing)
	Printing and Publishing (Book and Job)	Foundry and Machine Shop Goods
	Slaughtering and Meatpacking	Printing and Publishing (Newspaper)
	Men's Clothing (Custom work)	Women's Clothing (Dressmaking)
	Furniture	Furniture
Brooklyn		
	Sugar Refining	Foundry and Machine Goods
	Foundry and Machine Goods	Men's Clothing (Factory Product)
	Brewing (Malt and Liquors)	Carpentering
	Bread and Bakery Goods	Women's Clothing (Dressmaking)
	Carpentering	Bread and Bakery Goods
	Wholesale Slaughtering (not Meatpacking)	Painting and Paper Hanging
	Slaughtering and Meatpacking (Wholesale)	Lumber
	Lumber	Masonry (Brick and Stone)
	Men's Clothing (Factory)	Boots and Shoes (Custom)
	Masonry (Brick and Stone)	Printing (Book and Job)

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(Source: United States. **Eleventh Census (1890) Manufacturing Industries** Part II. pp. xxxii and xxxvi; and **Manufacturing in Cities,** pp. 88-97 and 394-407.)

Of the ten leading New York industries ranked by the number of workers, all had hundreds if not thousands of production sites. Most conspicuous were the men's and women's clothing industries and the cigarmaking industry. Of those ranked in the top ten by sales revenue, only three -- meatpacking, slaughtering and the brewing industries -- had few proprietors who provided a much lower share of manufacturing jobs. Likewise, Brooklyn's leading manufacturing industries, with the exception of meatpacking, slaughtering, brewing and sugar refining, had many competitors.

Not only were there numerous manufacturing firms but their scale of operations was modest as well. From the perspective of wage workers, this meant in general small workplaces. Brooklyn's manufacturing workers, laboring in six of that city's ten leading industries, commonly worked at sites with fewer than ten employees. Only for foundry and machine shop workers and lumber yard and mill hands was it usual that large groups of workers labored together. New York's manufacturing workers labored in workplaces that on the average were larger than those in Brooklyn. Only in dressmaking and custom-made men's clothing enterprises did the workplace average fewer than ten workers. In six of the leading industries as measured by employment it was not unusual for worksites to average more than twenty workers, which nevertheless was small when compared to factory based industries such as steel, textiles and shoemaking found in other parts of the United States (See Table VI.).

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Table VI. Average Number of Workers per Establishment for Leading Manufacturing Industries in New York and Brooklyn

(Note: Figure in parenthesis shows number of workers in Brooklyn counterpart of New York industry ranked in descending order of total number of workers or New York counterpart of Brooklyn industry ranked in descending order.)

New York City			Brooklyn		
Men's Clothing (Factory)	23	(9)	Foundry and Machine Shop	43	(28)
Women's Clothing (Factory)	31	(21)	Men's Clothing (Factory)	9	(23)
Cigars and Tobacco	15	(2)	Carpentering	6	(7)
Men's Clothing (Custom)	40	(*)	Women's (Dressmaking)	3	(4)
Printing (Book and Job)	16	(22)	Bread and Bakery Goods	3	(5)
Men's Clothing (Repair)	6	(3)	Painting and Paper Hanging	5	(6)
Foundry and Machine Shop	28	(43)	Lumber	58	(32)
Printing (Newspaper)	17	(23)	Masonry (Brick and Stone)	25	(26)
Dressmaking	4	(3)	Boots and Shoes (Custom)	2	(2)
Furniture (Factory)	32	(31)	Printing (Book and Job)	22	(16)

* signifies that there was no data available for Brooklyn counterpart. For data on size of manufacturing workplaces in the United States, see Robert Max Jackson, p. 141. Data for workplace size in New York and Brooklyn was compiled from Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in Cities**, pp. 88-97 and 394-407.

Seen from the employers' perspective, the reduced scale of operations was reflected in limited shares of the industry's sales revenue. In New York, for instance, custom-made men's clothing shops sold on the average $10,000 worth of goods, and cigarmaking concerns grossed an average $26,000. Less extreme but nevertheless indicative of competitive market conditions, were the two branches of the printing industry in which gross sales revenue ranged on the average from $69,000 in newspaper publishing to $30,000 in book and job printing. In Brooklyn, the pattern was even more pronounced, as in three industries (ranked among the top five in employment and the top ten in value of sales) -- men's clothing, carpentering and bread and bakery goods -- sales revenue was below $20,000. In short, with the exception of a few industries, which collectively employed only an infinitesimal proportion

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of the total manufacturing labor force, "petty" production prevailed both in New York and Brooklyn.(9)

Characteristic of "petty" production were low capital requirements, relatively little investment in machinery, equipment and physical plant, and concommitantly a greater aggregate expenditure on labor as a factor of production. This pattern is most apparent if we examine the seven New York industries and six Brooklyn industries which ranked amomg the top ten in both the average number of workers and value of goods produced (See Table VII.).

Table VII. Fixed Capital (Machinery, Tools, Land and Buildings) as percentage of Total Capital

New York Industries		Brooklyn Industries	
Printing (Book and Job)	59.2%	Bread and Bakery Goods	69%
Printing (Newspaper)	59.0	Lumber	52.3
Furniture (Factory)	26.5	Foundry and Machine Shop	48.8
Women's Clothing (Factory)	12.3	Masonry (Brick and Stone)	45.0
Cigars and Tobacco	11.8	Carpentering	34.0
Men's Clothing (Factory)	3.0	Men's Clothing (Factory)	32.8
Men's Clothing (Repair)	9.0		

(Source: United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in the Cities,** pp. 88-97 and 394-407.)

Almost without exception in these industries, most of the capital expenditures were on non-fixed items such as raw materials and not on machinery or tools. Here again the factory produced men's clothing, women's clothing and cigarmaking industries in New York, and men's clothing and carpentry in Brooklyn represented the most prominent examples. In New York only the two branches of the printing industry industries deviated from the general trend. In Brooklyn, in four industries -- baking, lumber, foundry work and machine making and masonry -- fixed capital outlays represented almost half of all capital

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investment. However, only in the baking industry and foundry and machine work did investment in machinery constitute over twenty percent of all capital expenditures -- considerably lower than the 50 percent rate in the printing industry. In turn, the leading manufacturing industries in New York and Brooklyn were largely labor intensive. This is demonstrated generally through each industry's capital/labor ratio (the amount invested in fixed and non-fixed capital for every dollar spent on wages). (See Table VIII).

Table VIII. Capital-Labor Ratios (Dollar for Dollar*) for the Leading Manufacturing Industries in New York and Brooklyn (1890)

(Source, See Table VII.)
(Note: First Group of Industries for each city includes those ranked among top ten both per value of goods and employment; second group includes only leading industries per value of goods; and third, only per employment.)
* The capital-labor ratio should be read as follows: for every dollar spent on wages the amount spent on capital.

New York Industries		Brooklyn Industries	
First Group (in descending order)			
Printing (Newspaper)	2.82	Foundry and Machine Shop Goods	2.60
Printing (Book and Job)	2.10	Lumber	2.33
Men's Clothing (Factory)	1.61	Bread and Bakery Goods	1.93
Furniture (Factory)	1.38	Carpentering	1.30
Cigars and Tobacco	1.30	Men's Clothing (Factory)	.84
Men's Clothing (Repair)	.93	Masonry (Brick and Stone)	.72
Second Group			
Malt Liquors (Brewing)	11.67	Sugar Refining	14.55
Slaughtering and Meatpacking	4.90	Malt Liquors	9.57
Slaughtering(not Meatpacking)	4.36	Slaughtering and Meatpacking	5.19
		Slaughtering (not Meatpacking)	4.75
Third Group			
Foundry and Machine Shop	2.20	Printing (Book and Job)	2.16
Dressmaking	.86	Painting And Paper Hanging	.79
Men's Clothing (Repair)	.01	Boot and Shoes (Custom&Repair)	.55
		Dressmaking	.38

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None of this should be construed to indicate that manufacturers in these industries devalued or underemphasized the importance of technological innovation. In the women's clothing industry, where ready-made clothes were being stressed, as well as in the making of men's clothing, such as suits, coats and pants, efforts to mechanize production were well underway in the 1880's and 1890's. Similarly, cigarmaking employers sought to improve the productivity of their operations through refinements of existing equipment or the introduction of new devices. In the construction industry, affecting such trades as carpentry and masonry, architectural and engineering innovations facilitated by the development of new technologies were proceeding steadily. Yet for a variety of reasons the primary concern of employers in the clothing, cigarmaking and construction industries, to name a few, was guaranteeing an adequate supply of labor. Consequently, in these industries a subcontracting labor system emerged, which although differing in details in each case, involved the use of middlemen to hire the labor and oversee the actual day by day organization of work. Often the manufacturer/marketer of the goods and the employer were not the same people, again signifying the rampant decentralization of production which served to slow investment in technological development, or at least block the dissemination of whatever technological breakthroughs had been achieved.

This overview of the major industries in New York and Brooklyn suggests that rampant competition, small scales of operation and low capitalization had significant implications for manufacturing workers. First, the abundance of firms and their modest workplace size in Brooklyn's custom-made boot and shoe shops, bakeries and dressmaking

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concerns to name a few, and in New York's custom-made men's clothing and dressmaking trades suggests that the demarcation between employer and worker was not hard and fast. Perhaps the establishments in the trades above either were family owned and managed shops which combined manufacturing and retail sales, or physical extensions of households where families and boarders worked and lived together.

Even where the family did not constitute the production unit, small workplaces might indicate that the employer and worker had personal and informal ties. These may have included sharing work responsibilities, laboring under similar conditions and for similar lengths of time and belonging to the same neighborhood associations, churches and political organizations. In any event, small workplaces arguably encouraged a relative "community" of interest between employer/proprietor and employee/worker, and not a shared recognition by workers of their distinct interests as a group, and thereby discouraged workers' activity, especially through trade unions.

In industries where the average workplace size was larger, the abundance of establishments and the decentralized structure of production posed an immediate challenge to workers whose conditions of employment indeed promoted a sense of their own interests and an "us against them" perspective. Here, however, the practical tasks of building an organization that could involve and mobilize others throughout the trade or industry were imposing. Whether it be preparing a common front to press demands put to employers, conducting a strike, or enforcing an agreement embodying previously won gains, decentralization in such industries as men's and women's clothing, cigarmaking, printing and publishing among others remained a challenge

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in the achievement of such goals.

In fact, it was this structural feature that influenced the orientation and modes of organization in the unions which represented workers in the aforementioned trades: the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, the United Garment Workers, the Cigarmakers International Union and the International Typographical Union. These unions organized workers by craft, not by industry, and sought to maximize the strength of those workers who claimed indispensable skills in the production process. They stressed the principles of mutual aid and self-help in their definition of members' rights and responsibilities, and recognized the autonomy, within limits, of individual locals to determine policy and govern themselves.

Local affiliates of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners negotiated closed shop agreements with building contractors in order to control the supply of labor, thereby increasing wage rates and promoting job security. Unions representing bricklayers, painters, plasterers and plumbers in New York and Brooklyn adopted a similar approach and formed the Board of Walking Delegates to encourage cooperation among the metropolitan area building trades. Number 6 in New York City and Number 98 in Brooklyn of the International Typographical Union assumed the primary responsibility of seeking to establish wage and hour scales for compositors in the newspaper and book and job branches of the industry. In practice this meant higher scales for newspaper compositors who faced more stringent demands for accuracy and speed than their book and job counterparts. On occasion, Number Six agreed to grant temporary reductions in wage rates to financially troubled employers who otherwise might have to layoff

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printers or close down operations. Individual locals of the Cigarmakers International Union negotiated separate "price" scales in recognition that some firms specialized in certain styles and types of cigars which possessed a higher market value than others. Such localism among the New York's and Brooklyn's organized cigarmakers did not foster intra-union competition. On the contrary, locals cooperated to set a standard minimum piece rate regardless of cigar style and pooled their resources in campaigns against tenement house production.

Forming the other sides of the triangle in this prevailing industrial structure were the bitter competition among manufacturers and the intensity of labor in the production process. Where the drive to gain a larger share of the market increasingly depended on underpricing other firms, reducing production costs and simultaneously boosting output per worker became more essential. In practice this entailed the chronic tendency of employers to resist any effort by workers to increase rates of compensation and very often to introduce unilaterally wage and piece rate cuts and/or to demand more production per hour or pay rate. Therefore, in the women's clothing industry, for example, dressmakers, cloakmakers and shirt waist makers were paid by how many items they stitched, sewed or pressed. In the men's clothing industry, coatmakers and suit makers were expected to complete a certain number of "tasks" to earn a stipulated "price" for their labor. Often working in teams of three, coatmakers discovered that unless "they" pushed themselves to work at a vigorous pace, their work days became longer and longer, often nullifying contractually defined terms of employment.(10)

In cigarmaking, manufacturers tried to keep labor costs down, either indirectly, through contracting with agents to supply the needed

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labor at a set price, or directly, by renting living and working quarters to entire families. Known as the tenement shop system, this method of organizing production was the target of the Cigarmakers International Union and its New York and Brooklyn locals because of its blatant threat to union job standards. Simultaneously, manufacturers sought to reduce the need for the higher priced labor of the handicraft cigarmaker by redefining the organization of labor. The employers accomplished this in two ways: (1) by the establishment of team work whereby each member did only certain specified tasks and (2) by the introduction of new devices and equipment such as molds, rollers and suction tables. This development gathered momentum in the 1890's, laying the foundation for a factory based industry whose workforce became less dependent on male craftsmen. (11)

The salient features of New York's and Brooklyn's manufacturing industries found expression in another way. From 1880 to 1900 manufacturing appeared to be a less viable path to accumulate wealth than either finance or commerce. Whereas manufacturing, excluding processing industries like sugar refining, brewing and oil refining, in 1892 was equal to banking and second to wholesale trade as the major source of New York's millionaires, by 1902 less than 10 percent of the city's "greatest fortunes" were made through manufacturing, leaving manufacturing a distant third behind wholesale trade and finance.(12) Concommitant with this trend was a paucity of manufacturing firms that commanded large corporate resources. In 1895, in the men's and women's clothing industries, not one manufacturing concern claimed assets of a million dollars or more, and in the cigarmaking industry, only one firm's assets were valued at $1 million. Meanwhile, in the printing

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and publishing industry, five companies' assets were $1 million or more. Using the rating system of R.G. Dun, the New York based agency that evaluated businesses, only a handful of the manufacturing firms in the aforementioned industries received an A rating, signifying assets of $500,000 or more.(13) In short, in three of the industries under examination, there were a few large scale enterprises whose size of operations and total assets stood out conspicuously in otherwise crowded markets in which firms employed a modest number of workers and claimed limited financial resources.

Within this context manufacturers individually lacked the economic resources to curb workers' concerted efforts to organize unions or to press for improvements in their conditions of employment. Individual employers thereby might be vulnerable to targeted strikes and those specifically oriented to a local market were most susceptible to consumer boycotts in support of labor's aims. Moreover, since only a few manufacturers were part of the city's social and economic elite, most could not claim the prestige and status afforded business in general and did not have comparable leverage in city government or comparable influence in party politics, as the leading financial and commercial interests did.

Given that economic wealth could be, and was, translated into power which often carried with it respect in the community, it was not surprising that manufacturers, especially in the more competitive industries, found it necessary and desirable to organize collectively. Wholesale clothing manufacturers in the late 1880's began to collaborate against attempts of tailors, cloakmakers and other garment workers to establish strong unions. In the building trades, contractors, "boss"

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roofers and framers, architectural iron manufacturers and owners of building material firms formed associations that occasionally worked in tandem when building tradesmen waged sympathy strikes. Likewise, the proprietors of book and job printing firms organized the New York Typothetae to resist demands of compositors and other printing tradesmen.(14)

Therefore, the growth of employer associations among New York's and Brooklyn's manufacturers represented a conscious effort to overcome fragmentation and decentralization -- both liabilities for employers. Pressured by market conditions to maintain low labor costs and/or to expand productivity, they tried to keep their businesses "union free", or, at least, to restrict the unions' voice in determining workers' conditions of employment. In some industries, such as men's and ready-made women's clothing, this development actually fostered workers' activity. By forging a framework in which the employers' responsibilities were identified, the creation of employer associations established the preconditions for the standardization of wages and hours sought by garment workers. In industries, such as construction and printing where workers had built powerful unions by 1890, the effect of employer associations was to raise the stakes of confrontation, serving notice to both employers and workers alike, that any attempt to seriously reshape power relations at the workplace would be bitterly contested.

It is important to note that two major industries -- both of which are subjects of this study (printing/publishing and construction) -- did not adhere exactly to the pattern demonstrated by most of New York's and Brooklyn's manufacturing industries. As examined earlier,

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manufacturing in both cities shared three dominant characteristics: a highly competitive market with easy entry into and exit from the industry and with no single firm or group of firms claiming a disproportionate share of sales, low capital requirements especially on machinery and physical plant and a significant dependency on labor for gains in productivity. Although some of these features appeared to be pertinent in the printing industry and the building trades, their relative importance in each's market structure and production process differed. In printing, while the average workplace size was smaller than the norm in New York's factory produced men's and women's clothing industries (See Table IX), it was larger than the custom-made men's and women's clothing industries.

Table IX. The Size of Workplaces in the Printing and Clothing Industries in New York

Printing and Publishing		Clothing	
Book and Job	16	Women's Clothing (Factory)	31
Newspaper and Periodical	17	Men's Clothing (Factory)	23
		Men's Clothing (Custom & Repair)	6
		Women's (Dressmaking)	4

(Source: U.S. Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufacturing in the Cities,** pp. 88-97 and 394-407.)

This was indicative of the fact that printing was a less decentralized and divided industry -- with fewer employers entering and leaving the industry. Newspaper publishing and book and job printing relied on investments in typesetting machines and sophisticated presses which raised capital requirements. Moreover, production -- the setting of type and the printing of copy -- was completed at one site, or at the least under the direction of the same firm.(15)

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In contrast, sweatshop production played a significant role in the ready-made men's and women's clothing industries. Shops run by contractors who received orders from manufacturers to turn cut cloth into finished cloaks and coats appeared and disappeared throughout New York's Lower East Side. In turn, contractors often hired home workers living in the city's teeming tenements during some phases of production. In the early 1890's factory inspectors and union officials estimated that as many as 6,000 sweatshops existed in New York and Brooklyn, employing anywhere from 60,000 to 80,000 workers. At the very least, sweatshop workers constituted about half of the labor force in the garment trades. (16)

Secondly, the technostructure of these industries stressed skilled labor. In the building trades the preparation of construction materials -- bricks, wood, architectural iron, concrete etc, was aided by machine technology, but the on-site work was done almost entirely with the use of hand tools. In the printing industry, the introduction of new typesetting machines, printing presses and photo reproducing equipment was revolutionizing the production process, increasing plant capacity, expanding physical output and lowering per unit costs. Yet, the applied knowledge of compositors and pressmen acquired during a formal apprenticeship was valued by craftsman and employer alike. Whereas in the construction industry the knowhow of the building tradesmen could not be embodied in machine technology, in the printing industry, the maximum potential of machine technology could not be realized without the printers' skills.

Late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn bristled with economic activity. Banking, commerce, transportation and manufacturing

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dramatically grew, indicative of the nation's rapid industrialization and urbanization. As their economies expanded, New York and Brooklyn emerged as major metropolitan centers that attracted people from rural areas of the United States and from the countryside and cities of Europe who sought the opportunity to earn a more substantial livelihood and the excitement of an urban life style. The influx of people from near and afar stimulated the growth of many manufacturing industries in both cities, such as the building trades, printing and ready-made clothing, not only by increasing the demand for their products but by satisfying these industries' labor needs.

The specific context in which New York and Brooklyn economically developed affected how people earned a living and how they worked. As discussed earlier, no single industry dominated either city's economy, although by volume of sales and numbers of workers the apparel trades, the printing industry and the building trades had risen to economic heights. Moreover, unlike other manufacturing centers, heavy industry failed to sink deep roots in either city. Consequently, most manufacturing operations remained modest, employing few workers per site, possessing limited assets and claiming a minor share of the market. Possessing few economic resources to weather the trials and tribulations of a volatile market, most firms desperately sought to control labor costs and increase productivity. This led to the development of new divisions of labor, such as team work in the cigarmaking industry and the task system in the garment trades, a variety of methods to recruit and manage labor, such as contracting in the men's and women's clothing industries and subcontracting in the building trades and technological innovation which tended to deemphasize

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the skills of craftsmen such as cigar rollers or use them in a different manner as in the case of compositors/typesetters.

Such employers' strategies did not go unchallenged by workers. Not only did the workers' conditions of employment -- wages, hours, job security and working conditions -- hinge on the employers' response to economic pressures, but their standing in their respective communities and position in society did as well. For these reasons, workers organized unions, waged strikes, boycotts and union label campaigns and participated in electoral politics as members of socialist, labor-reform and mainstream parties. The breadth and depth of the labor activity of printers, building tradesmen, cigarmakers and garment workers owed a great deal to the structure and dynamics of their respective trades/industries. Yet as these workers organized, they influenced the very terrain of economic life, thereby affecting the fortunes of employers and livelihoods of workers alike and establishing that labor and capital were inseparable even in conflict.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Moses King, **King's Handbook of New York** (Boston: the author, 1892), pp. 753-782.

2. **Ibid**, p.785.

3. Daniel Creamer, "Capital and Output Trends in Manufacturing Industries, 1880-1948," **Occasional Paper** 41 (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1954); and Robert Gallman, "Commodity Output, 1838-1899," **Trends in the American Economy in the Nineteenth Century**, Volume 24, **Studies in Income and Wealth** (Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 16 and 31. The number of production workers in the United States approximately doubled between 1880 and 1900. During the same period the number of workers in Brooklyn likewise doubled, while in New York the city's labor force increased by 51 percent (See Tables I, II and IV.). The comparatively larger rate of growth in the industrial labor force nationally represented the rapid economic development of the western sections of the country, especially the expansion of railroads and the growth of the mining and lumber industries. Brooklyn's labor force grew at a faster rate than New York's largely because of a number of interrelated factors. Brooklyn's population was growing at a faster rate (by 100 percent compared to 30 percent for Manhattan and the Bronx), which spurred the development of many of its "fringe" areas such as East New York, Brownsville and Red Hook, and lower property values attracted economic investment, especially in larger scale manufacturing such as sugar processing plants, meatpacking, breweries and iron foundries. For more on Brooklyn's manufacturing industries, see page 7 of this chapter.

4. **King's Handbook of New York**, pp. 930-950.

5. New York State. Factory Inspection Bureau, **Fifth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 321-330.

6. Factory Inspection Bureau, **First Annual Report** (1886), p. 128; **Fifth Annual Report** (1890), pp.175-176; and **Tenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 178-180.

7. **Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac** (1893), pp. 100-101; **King's Handbook of New York**, pp. 922-934; Margaret Lattimer, **Two Cities: New York and Brooklyn The Year the Great Bridge Opened** (Brooklyn Educational and Cultural Alliance, 1983), pp. 24-26; and Eleanora Schoenebaum, Emerging Neighborhoods: The Development of Brooklyn's Fringe Areas 1850-1930 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1976), pp. 71-72.

8. David Ment, **The Shaping of a City: A Brief History of Brooklyn** (Brooklyn Educational and Cultural Alliance: 1979), p. 56.

9. United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in the Cities**, pp. 88-97 and 394-407.

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10. Jesse Pope, **The Clothing Industry in New York** (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1907).

11. Willis Baer, **The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry** (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Art Printing Company, 1933).

12. David Hammack, **Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century** (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1982), pp. 49-51.

13. R.G. Dun and Company, **Reference Book Containing Ratings of Merchants, Manufacturers and Traders Throughout the United States and Canada** (1895).

14. See Clarence Bonnett, **The History of Employers' Associations in the United States** (New York: Vintage Press, 1956); Charlotte Morgan, **The Origins and History of the New York Employing Printers' Association** (New York: Columbia University, 1930); and New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board. **Fourth and Fifth Annual Reports** (1890 and 1891).

15. Robert Max Jackson, **The Formation of Craft Labor Markets** (New York: Academic Press, 1984), p. 142, suggests, although not conclusively, that printers as well as carpenters owed their ability to organize unions in part to the growth of larger firms in the late nineteenth century. He estimates that less than one-fifth of all printing and carpentry firms accounted for all unionized printers and carpenters in the United States. This observation raises a number of questions: were unionized printers more likely to be employed by the most "modern" (technologically advanced and corporately organized) firms; and did they and building tradesmen encounter different types of employer associations varying by location, market structure and scales of operation? More fundamentally, why were workers in larger firms more able to organize unions? Was it because their shared work experience entailed a greater distance between worker and employer, and thereby engendered a greater potential to develop a common identity of interest? Did printers working for larger book and job companies and daily newspapers play a more strategic role in the production process than did their counterparts in smaller firms? If so, was this pattern attributable to the larger employers' dependence on volume of output for their profits which, in turn, left them more vulnerable to the effects of collective job actions? Or, can it be argued, the larger employers could "afford" to adjust to unions because of their market position whereby the benefits of higher productivity could be shared with workers even when that meant higher labor costs would be borne by consumers?

16. United States Congress, House of Representatives, **Report of the Committee on Manufactures and the Sweating System,** 52nd Congress, second session, 1895, pp. iv and v; and New York State. Assembly, **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Condition of Female Labor** (1896), p. 140.

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CHAPTER TWO — THE PEOPLES OF NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN

Both New York and Brooklyn were polyglot communities, home to immigrants from many European countries. In fact, the bulk of both cities' population consisted of foreign-born and their native-born children. In 1880, four-fifths of New York's 1.2 million population were either first generation immigrants (foreign-born) or their offspring (second generation). Of Brooklyn's 567,000 residents about a third were foreign-born. This left New York ranked sixth and Brooklyn ranked seventeenth among cities in the United States in the proportion of its population who were foreign-born.(1) In the successive twenty years the immigrant base of New York's and Brooklyn's population continued to prevail (See Table I.).

Table I. Immigrants (First Generation) and Their Native-Born Offspring (Second Generation) as Proportion of New York's and Brooklyn's Population (1890 and 1900)

	1890		1900	
	Ist Generation	2nd Generation	Ist Generation	2nd Generation
New York	42%	38%	37%	40%
Brooklyn	32%	38%	30%	41%

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Eleventh Census (1890) **Population**, Part I, pp. 646-647 and **Vital Statistics**, pp. 232-233 and 242-243; and Twelfth Census (1900) **Population**, Part I, pp. 772-773 and 876-877.)

In the 1880's, the specific composition of the immigrant population began to change. Germans and Irish remained the most numerous nationalities from 1880 to 1890. New York and Brooklyn were home to twice as many Irish as Dublin, and New York and Brooklyn's German population equalled Hamburg's.(2) However, the relative significance of immigrants from Ireland declined as the number of "newer" immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe increased exponentially. During this

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period, German immigrants as a percentage of the foreign-born and the general population remained stable in New York and rose slightly in Brooklyn (See Table II.).

Table II. Irish and German First Generation Immigrant Population in New York and Brooklyn (1880 and 1890)

			New York		
	1880	1890		1880	1890
Irish as % of F.B.*	41.5	30.0	Germans as % of F.B.	34.0	32.9
Irish as % of Pop.*	16.5	12.6	Germans as % of Pop.	13.5	13.9
			Brooklyn		
	1880	1890		1880	1890
Irish as % of F.B.	44.4	32.4	Germans as % of F.B.	30.8	36.3
Irish as % of Pop.	13.9	10.5	Germans as % of Pop.	9.8	11.8

(* = F.B. and Pop. are abbreviations for foreign-born and population, respectively.)
(Source: Ira Rosenwaike, **Population History of New York City** (Syracuse University, 1972), pp. 63 and 70.)

During the next decade the change in the makeup of the immigrant population became more marked both in New York (Manhattan and the Bronx) and Brooklyn. In New York, the Irish-born and German-born population declined from 1890 to 1900, and in Brooklyn, from 1890 to 1900 the Irish-born population held steady while the German-born population marginally rose. As the first generation Irish and German population either declined or stagnated, the first generation immigrant population from "Russia" (including Poland), the Austrian-Hungarian Empire -- (including Bohemians), Poles from Galicia and Croatians from present day Yugoslavia -- and Italy dramatically grew (See Tables III. and IV.).

Table III. The Number of Irish-and German-Born Immigrants in New York and Brooklyn (1890 and 1900)

	1890		1900	
	Irish	German	Irish	German
New York	190,000	211,000	179,000	199,000
Brooklyn	84,000	95,000	84,000	107,000

(Source: Ira Rosenwaike, **Population History of New York**, pp. 63 and 70.)

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Table IV. The Number of Russian, Austrian-Hungarian and Italian Immigrants in New York and Brooklyn (1890 and 1900)

	1890			1900		
	Russian	Aus-Hung	Italian	Russian	Aus-Hung	Italian
New York	55,000	40,000	40,000	146,000	91,000	104,000
Brooklyn	5,500	2,000	9,800	31,500	10,500	37,000

(Source: See Table III.)

While in general the immigrant population was dispersed throughout New York and Brooklyn, certain areas attracted a higher proportion than others; moreover some immigrant groups tended to concentrate in clearly demarcated sections. Manhattan represented the hub of New York's immigrant life. It claimed the overwhelming majority of New York's population in 1880 and 1890, and with the formation of Greater New York in 1897, still held more than half of the city's entire population and almost two-thirds of its foreign-born population in 1900. (3) Immigrants lived in all of Manhattan's twenty-two wards. However, they were most prominent below 14th Street (in the older sections of the city) where during the late Gilded Age about 55 percent of Manhattan's population resided.

For example, in 1890 in the sixth, tenth, thirteenth and fourteenth wards (see map of Manhattan), virtually the entire residential population consisted of the foreign-born and their native-born children. In the wards north of 14th Street the immigrant population prevailed, albeit at lower proportions ranging from 60 to 70 percent. More illuminating were the residential patterns or tendencies demonstrated by specific immigrant groups living in Manhattan. The Irish appeared to be dispersed throughout the county's wards, but constituted a higher percentage of the population in the uptown wards, especially on the west side. The Germans represented a smaller share of the population

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below 14th Street than did the Irish, except in the tenth, eleventh and seventeenth wards in the Lower East Side, and, by 1890, had begun to concentrate in the uptown sections between Central Park and the East River.(4)

The uptown movement of the Irish and German immigrants was inextricably linked to the changing composition of the downtown population. Italian immigrants arriving after 1880 settled primarily in the older Irish sections in the sixth and fourteenth wards. By 1890, two-thirds of the fourteenth ward's residents were Italian immigrants, and by 1900 Italians had clearly supplanted the Irish, making the area running from Canal Street to Houston Street and from West Broadway to Broadway the most concentrated Italian "colony" in the city.(5) Likewise, Russian-Jewish immigrants occupied sections in the seventh and tenth wards vacated by Germans in the heart of Manhattan's Lower East Side. However, certain downtown wards such as the eleventh and seventeenth -- spanning North and South from 14th Street to Grand Street and East to West from the East River to Broadway -- remained German communities, the hub of **Kleindeutschland**, with a scattering of Russian-Jewish and Italian immigrants.(6)

Other recently arrived immigrants established "colonies" as well. Hungarians massed into an area within the eleventh ward that was less than one mile square, east of Avenue B and around Houston Street. Bohemians from Austria almost exclusively settled in the nineteenth ward north of 50th Street and east of Lexington Avenue Moreover, the arrival of new immigrants also affected the New York's Afro-American population. Numbering 20,000 in 1880, Afro-Americans began to move out of Greenwich Village, known as "Little Africa", and into Chelsea north

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of 14th Street, as recently arrived Italian immigrants settled north of Houston Street up to Washington Square.(7)

Brooklyn's immigrant population differed from Manhattan's in two respects: it was less widely distributed, and it continued to originate from Northern and Western Europe rather than Southern and Eastern Europe. Immigrants were significantly greater both absolutely and proportionately in those areas due east of Manhattan's Lower East Side across the East River -- Greenpoint, Williamsburg and Bushwick, where Brooklyn's major industries were located. The Irish, as in Manhattan, did not concentrate into any particular ward, although they did represent a plurality of the population in most of Brooklyn's wards. Working class Irish constituted a majority in those wards situated along waterfronts such as the Red Hook harbor and Brooklyn Navy yard, while their more prosperous counterparts settled in the middle class residential area of Brooklyn Heights.(8) The Germans did not settle as widely as the Irish. Two wards, the sixteenth and eighteenth, located in Williamsburg, constituted more than a third of Brooklyn's German population.

More significantly, Brooklyn's immigrants were overwhelmingly from Ireland, Germany, Great Britain and Scandinavia. Unlike New York, or to be more exact, Manhattan, relatively few Russian and Polish Jews, Italians and Austrian-Hungarians settled in Brooklyn. By 1890, the Irish- and German-born and their native-born children (391,000 strong) constituted a little more than two-thirds of Brooklyn's immigrant population (570,000) and almost one-half of the city's entire population of 806,000. Conversely, only slightly more than 20,000, or 3.7 percent, of Brooklyn's immigrants could trace their lineage to

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Russia, Poland, Italy or Austria-Hungary.(9) Brooklyn did not attract the "newer" immigrants to the same extent New York did in the 1880's because it did not possess such a large stock of affordable housing as New York, nor provide comparable employment opportunities to relatively unskilled workers as New York's clothing industry did. In addition, there was a tendency for immigrants to settle where members of their ethnic group had already begun to sink roots in hope of easing the transition to a strange environment. In essence, then, patterns of immigrant settlement were self-perpetuating.

During the 1890's, however, Brooklyn became home to a more diverse immigrant population. The influx of Italians was marked by the establishment of distinct "settlements" or "colonies" in the Ft. Greene section and the area adjacent to the Brooklyn Navy yard and even in the German "strongholds" of Williamsburg and Bushwick. (10) Russian Jewish immigrants and their employers found the low rents of Brownsville in Brooklyn's twenty-sixth ward attractive. Cloakmaking manufacturers relocated or opened new shops there beginning in the late 1880's, and by 1900 Brownsville sustained a vibrant Jewish community filled with synagogues and fraternal organizations that claimed almost one-fourth of the neighborhood's population. (11)

New York's and Brooklyn's immigrants in the late Gilded Age emigrated from societies whose political, economic and social environments varied. Some left nations whose aspirations for statehood (Ireland, Bohemia or Czechoslovakia, Serbia and Poland) were dashed by a dominant power. Others left newly unified nation-states (Germany and Italy), and still others fled a repressive autocracy (Russian Jews). European migrants emerged from both pre-industrial and industrial

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backgrounds and rural and urban settings. Above all, most had experienced a wave of social-economic transformation sweeping Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century that affected land tenure patterns, occupational status and the means by which families materially and culturally sustained themselves.

Germans who migrated after 1870 left a society undergoing rapid industrialization and urbanization. In the northeast regions, including Prussia, Pomerania, Posen and Mecklenburg, agricultural activity became more intensive and more commercially oriented, as the average size of farms grew dramatically. Simultaneously, manufacturing industries, especially in the western provinces of Westphalia and the Rhineland, began to generate a higher percentage of Germany's national income. (12)

Part and parcel of industrialization and capitalist agricultural development were the twin forces of external and internal migration. Between 1872 and 1882, the decline in wheat prices and the intensifying competition to village/town handicraft trades from both German and British based factory production resulted in an accelerated migration of displaced farmers, farm laborers and artisans. These economic casualities of industrialization found that Germany's manufacturing and commercial centers could not absorb most of their ranks, leading to outmigration to the United States, among other countries. From 1871 to 1900, about 2.6 million Germans migrated to the United States, of which more than half came during the 1880's. (13)

By 1890, the character of migration to the United States had changed. Those coming from Mecklenburg consisted in the main of landowning farmers, not agricultural laborers, who followed the footsteps of their predecessors and settled in the wheat and corn belts

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of the United States where they found thriving German-American communities. New York also drew migrants from agricultural areas, but, by and large, the city's German-born population came from the mixed regions of Bavaria and Baden, where industry and agriculture coexisted, and to some extent from the Hanse towns of Bremen and Hamburg -- Germany's industrial heartland. Among them were traditional handicraftsmen such as carpenters, furniture makers, piano makers and bakers and skilled industrial workers, including machinists and tool-makers.(14) In short, Germans emigrating to New York did not in the main originate from a landless peasantry and a rural proletariat, nor for that matter, from a factory based industrial proletariat.

New York's second most prevalent immigrant group, the Irish, migrated from a predominantly rural society where industrialization barely made any inroads on the country's economic landscape and whose inhabitants sustained themselves through subsistence farming, village handicrafts and domestic service. Although industrially undeveloped, Ireland was hardly a static society. From 1860 to 1890 commercial agriculture, emphasizing land use for cash-earning income, gained sway, resulting in fewer and larger land holdings.

This development, manifested most clearly in the shift from growing potatoes to the grazing of sheep for Great Britain's woolen textile industry, seriously affected the lives of Irish men and women. Small "independent" farmers and cottiers who doubled as tenants and agricultural laborers found their status increasingly precarious. Their difficulties compounded by the decline of such cottage industries as weaving and spinning, Irish peasant families encountered additional challenges to their ability to sustain themselves economically. (15)

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Not suprisingly, those who felt these effects constituted the majority of Ireland's emigrants. From 1875 to 1890, "common laborers", including cottiers and agricultural workers, represented about 55 percent, and servants about 28 percent, of Ireland's emigrants. Four counties in the province of Munster, located in the south and southwest -- Cork, Kerry, Tipperary and Limerick -- and two counties in the province of Connaught located on the island's west coast -- Galway and Mayo -- supplied slightly more than half of Ireland's emigrants from 1851 to 1910. During this period women represented a higher proportion of Ireland's emigrants. This occurred especially in Munster and Connaught, where women starting in 1881 outnumbered men in the exodus from Eire. (16)

Although the majority of Ireland's emigrants to the United States shared a rural and pre-industrial background based on a peasant family economy, some claimed a different experience. Included in their ranks were skilled craftsmen (from 1875 to 1890 about ten percent according to official government data) -- carpenters, blacksmiths and weavers. Moreover, a significant minority of Ireland's emigrants did not leave for the United States directly but instead first settled in industrializing and urbanizing Great Britain, where they unloaded ships in Liverpool, spun cloth in Lancashire's cotton textile mills, cast iron in Birmingham's foundries and built residential housing and commercial facilities in ever expanding London. Some of New York's Irish immigrants, then, had lived in an environment where, on one hand, they confronted a dominant culture that continually reminded them of their minority status, but, on the other hand, granted them a greater opportunity to learn the ways of urban and industrial life, not least

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the advantages of trade unions, civic action and voluntary associations. These "transmigrants" who left Ireland to live in Great Britain and then moved to the United States "expected" a different future from their brethen who disembarked from County Mayo or County Cork, since their recent past differed from those who migrated directly from the Irish countryside. (17)

Among the newer immigrant groups settling in New York and Brooklyn Eastern European Jews, mostly from Russia, predominated. In the 1880's and 1890's, Jews found the coercive segregation in the Pale of Settlement and violent attacks against Jewish communities (pogroms) and the narrowing of economic opportunities more intolerable with each passing day. In face of this persecution by the Tsarist autocracy, many opted for migration to more secure surroundings. This is not to say that Jews were the only people to leave their homeland, for in fact from 1881 to 1898 a third of the Russian migrants to the United States were not Jewish.(18) However, in late Gilded Age New York Russian or Polish-born immigrants had become synonymous with Eastern European Jew. One student of the Jewish labor movement estimated that 80 percent of those classified as "Russian" by the 1890 Census were Jewish; and another writer estimated that three-quarters of all European Jews entering the port of New York between 1886 and 1898 settled in the city. (19)

In the Russian Empire, Jews almost exclusively lived within the Pale of Settlement, ranging from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and including Lithuania, Poland, Byelorussia and most of the Ukraine. There they dwelled in "incorporated" cities and "miestechkos" (**shtetls** in Jewish or Yiddish nomenclature) -- settlements providing commercial services and manufacturing for the surrounding countryside. That they

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did so was not accidental or optional since government decrees in the 1880's barred Jews from owning or renting land outside cities and otherwise discouraged Jews from living in villages.(20)

Both in the shtetls and industrial centers Jews had established occupational niches and developed religious and fraternal institutions to provide solace and comfort from a hostile social environment. 39 percent of Russia's Jews earned their livelihood in mining and manufacturing and thirty-three percent through commerce. Jews represented a significant minority of the workforce in Lodz' cotton textile industry, Bialystok's woolen textile industry and Grodno's cigar industry. Most Jewish men, however, preferred the independence granted by traditional handicraft work as cobblers, weavers, tanners, watchmakers and bakers. In the shtetls, particularly, these trades coupled with peddling constituted the primary sources of economic sustenance.(21)

Yet increasingly in the 1880's and 1890's the patterns of Jewish social and economic life experienced tension and disruption. Jewish craftsmen encountered displacement in the face of factory production, leaving many as **luftmenschen** -- those without any visible means of support -- and, in some shtetls, half of the Jewish population depended on charity. These developments challenged the miscellaneous voluntary associations that helped to make life less rigorous and protect against its uncertainties. Tailors, cobblers, hatmakers and tanners organized **khevres** (trade and fraternal societies whose origins dated back to the 17th century) which practiced mutual aid, sought to regulate prices of their wares, settled disputes between employers and employees and contributed to the upkeep of shules -- the Jews' house of worship.(22)

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But, as the ranks of these occupations dwindled, or the practioners of handicraft skills found less and less opportunity to support themselves and their families, their ability to sustain the associational life of the shtetl became increasingly problematic. While migration to the commercial and manufacturing centers provided some with economic alternatives -- as factory hands, laborers in small workshops and as merchant capitalists who hired entire families to "put out" in the domestic clothing trade -- others found their lives even more marginalized. Even those who apparently had adjusted to the new rhythms and routines of urban life and had "settled" into new jobs expressed a dissatisfaction with their social environment and migrated across Europe and overseas. During the 1880's more than 15,000 Russian Jews migrated to the United States annually, and in the 1890's the annual rate doubled.(23)

"America", and more exactly, New York City became the destination of those caught up in these changes. New York became the adopted home of factory hands and craftsmen, petty but acquisitive employers and laborers with their own aspirations of self-advancement, the proletarianized and the declassed alike.

The emigration of Italians to the United States, unlike that of Russian Jews, had its roots in the countryside, especially from the South. From 1880 to 1900 about 80 percent of Italians emigrating to the United States came from the South, particularly from Abruzzi, Calabria, Basilicata, Apulia and Sicily.(24) In these areas the number of landless agricultural laborers climbed precipitously even as large plots in all but Apulia, Italy's major wheat farming district, were disappearing. Many of these laborers doubled as sharecroppers who tenuously occupied

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small plots growing both subsistence and cash crops.

As more of Southern Italy's cultivators experienced displacement and proletarianization, social conflict sharpened. In Apulia and Sicily labor unrest grew in intensity as did the landlords' and authorities' repressive measures. In Sicily, bricklayers, stone cutters, quarry workers and shoemakers joined with peasants to organize the Fasci Siciliani (leagues or unions) to wage strikes and tax protests, and elsewhere formed mutual aid societies by occupation and locality to provide assistance to members' families losing the income of male heads of households.(25) Migration from these areas increased following the suppression of strikes, although, as noted by McDonald and others, mass migration occurred where labor unrest remained conspicuously scant or absent.(26) The Italian emigration encompassed a cross-section of Mezzogiorno's society, although in contrast to the Irish and Russian-Jewish emigrations, men overwhelmingly made up the majority of emigrants. Land cultivators and day laborers predominated, representing 73 percent of male emigrants between 1878 and 1896. However, building tradesmen and manufacturing workers, including artisans, constituted a significant proportion of Italy's emigrants.(27)

New York's Italian immigrant population during the late Gilded Age emerged from a rural and pre-industrial background that informed its adaptation to life in an urban industrial capitalist society. In their adopted homeland Italian immigrants maintained an allegience to and identification with their home village or province (**campanilsmo**) that forestalled the development of a coherent group identity deemed so essential in New York's and Brooklyn's heterogeneous environment.(28) **Campanilsmo** represented the Italian immigrants' attempt to recreate

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those patterns of living familiar to them in their original homeland. Therefore, membership in fraternal associations and mutual aid societies was limited to emigrants from a certain town just as it had been in Italy. In a rural society and pre-industrial economy such locally oriented organization appeared not only culturally desirable but practically feasible as well. In an urban and industrial environment this form of organization might be appropriate for informal social and cultural associations such as lodges, clubs and orders, or when the size of the group was not an important factor affecting its viability, as in the case of mutual aid or benefit societies. However, workplace organizations whose membership was defined by specific locality would fragment relationships among workers and hinder the development of strong trade unions which stressed a different type of identity and sought to maximize the number of members in order to gain concessions from employers.

Furthermore, the experience of Italian immigrants in their homeland aroused specific aspirations that wider economic opportunities in the United States allowed many to realize. Therefore, despite the persistence of job and housing discrimination in New York and Brooklyn, Italian immigrants focused their short-term efforts on earning enough money to achieve a long-term objective, namely the independence associated with land ownership, and thereby behaved as "birds of passage" expressed in the repatriation of 43 out of every 100 Italians who emigrated. (29)

Immigrants from Austria-Hungary varied by nationality, religion and occupation. Within Austria proper, most immigrants traced their roots from Galicia (part of Poland), Bohemia (part of modern

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Czechslovakia), Upper and Lower Austria (where German was the "native" language) and Croatia (today, part of Yugoslavia). Within Hungary, Bukovina, in the northeast bordering on Galicia, parts of Transylvania and, to a lesser degree, the central region surrounding the capital, Budapest, provided the sources of the emigrant population. More than 100,000 Jews migrated to the United States during the 1890's from Galicia, where many had been craftsmen in the printing, weaving and toolmaking trades.(30) In the main, emigrants from Austria (with the exception of Bohemia) and from Hungary, especially from Bukovina, did not emerge from an agricultural or industrial proletariat. During the late Gilded Age, at least, independent landowners (owning from two to five hectares), artisans -- including tanners, weavers and blacksmiths -- and merchants constituted a majority of the emigrating population. However, by the late 1890's, day laborers, agricultural workers and landless peasants had become a significant source of those leaving their homelands for the United States. (31) In contrast, immigrants from Bohemia were more likely to be skilled industrial workers residing in cities who sought a more secure and comfortable economic future in the United States. In fact, Bohemia's cigarmakers -- some of whom worked in government sponsored factories -- were vigorously recruited by New York City cigar manufacturers. This, coupled with the emigration of other craftsmen, led to a shortage of skilled labor in the 1890's, especially in Prague. (32)

Immigrants entering New York and Brooklyn in the 1880's and 1890's encountered cities undergoing rapid physical growth and urban development that simultaneously facilitated and reflected the acceleration of the influx of people. Construction of more and more

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housing, commercial establishments, industrial facilities and places for recreation and transportation meant that late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn not only needed more people to sustain its development, but could also indeed accommodate those who made either city their home.

While many Americans, following Horace Greely's advice, went west, Manhattanites moved north (by 1890, more than half of Manhattan's population lived above 42nd Street) beyond Central Park and into the Bronx, and Brooklyn residents moved east and south to Brownsville and Bay Ridge. Between the Lower East Side and Harlem and between Greenpoint and Brownsville there appeared to be an neverending process of settlement, development and transformation of communities. As Stephen Crane observed in one of his walks through New York's frenetic streets: "Here was a four story structure, with a long sign of a bakery over the basement windows, one of those ancient dwellings which the churning process of the city had changed into a hive of little industries."(33)

The "churning" process of New York and Brooklyn, however, usually entailed physical expansion. In Brooklyn, the rate of construction of housing, factories and workshops, schools and churches from 1886 to 1898 far exceeded that of the previous twelve years. For example, while the erection of new housing never exceeded 2,400 from 1874 to 1885, it approximated or surpassed 3,000 in every year from 1886 to 1893, that is, until an economic depression began in 1894. Likewise, the construction of business and industrial facilities annually averaged 109 from 1874 to 1885, increasing to 158 between 1886 and 1897. Reflecting a larger residential population, seven schools and twelve churches a year were built from 1886 to 1897 compared to a yearly average of four schools and five churches in the preceding twelve

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years.(34)

In Manhattan, both during the boom and the bust times of the 1890's, building construction accommodated the city's growing population and helped to expand its economic capacity. From 1890 to 1897, an average of 122 tenements were built yearly, and the number of tenements built in 1895 more than doubled that of any preceding year. However, at the less modest end of the housing market, construction of single and double family houses declined steadily from a peak of 264 in 1892 to 71 in 1897. By 1900, only six percent of homes in New York (Manhattan and the Bronx) were owned by their occupants, leaving New York with the lowest rate of home ownership among cities with a population of at least one-hundred thousand. (35)

This emphasis on the construction of less expensive multiple family housing reflected a new pattern of land use -- the maximization of vertical space -- most starkly embodied in the development of the "skyscraper", the name given to the tallest office buildings. Refinements in the use of structural steel frames and beams, improvements in power driven elevators, the development of better grades of cement and the introduction of more elaborate and diversified architectural techniques permitted the erection of "elevator" buildings (the forerunner of the skyscraper), averaging ten to fifteen stories in height -- with some like the Ivins Syndicate and Pulitzer buildings over twenty stories and almost 400 feet tall -- and bridges, such as the Brooklyn Bridge, capable of sustaining a constant flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. (36)

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The expanded ability to build taller and larger edifices intensified the competition over how land and space would be used. Concomitantly, the sales value of land rose. The price per square foot of space in lower Manhattan -- from the Battery to Chambers Street -- rarely surpassed a hundred dollars before 1880, but during the following two decades it often exceeded two hundred dollars. (37) Residential housing vied with factories and workshops which, in turn, competed with wholesale and retail stores, warehouses, banks and other credit and investment institutions for space. This competition was in part resolved by the concentration of storage facilities along docks and the distinct separation of company offices and production sites -- the former based in lower Manhattan, and the latter, in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens.

Yet the accelerating influx of people from abroad and from other parts of the United States called for immediate responses. Recently arrived immigrants often settled where work and compatriots could be found. For instance, the Lower East Side attracted those who knew they could land employment in the countless clothing "factories" and "sweatshops", or strike out on their own as peddlers. There the old housing stock proved to be inadequate to accommodate the waves of Eastern and Southern Europeans arriving in the 1880's and 1890's. The congestion, to some extent, was eased as more settled immigrants, particularly second generation German and Irish, moved uptown or across the East River to Brooklyn. This residential mobility was indicative of the ability of Irish and German immigrants to secure employment in the higher paying occupations of building tradesmen, printers and machinists, among others.

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This movement into outlying and relatively underpopulated areas of Manhattan and Brooklyn continued unrelentingly as the transportation network of each city developed more extensively. Over 30 streetcar lines and steam driven elevated and surface railroads allowed people to move cross-town and up and down New York by 1890, and under the auspices of the Surburban Rapid Transit Company and the Fordham-Bronx Railway Company, railroad service began to link the Bronx and Manhattan.(38) Moreover, by 1893 at least twelve ferries serviced Manhattan and Brooklyn (39) carrying daily commuters from Williamsburgh, Greenpoint and Brooklyn Heights to Manhattan's industrial, commercial and financial districts.

Brooklyn, however, was hardly a "bedroom community" for its rapid transit system had by 1890 signaled its growth as a city. More than 25 miles of elevated and surface railroads and six miles of electrically driven trolley cars traversed Brooklyn, running from downtown Brooklyn eastward to Bushwick, Bedford Stuyvesant and Brownsville, and southward to New Utrecht and Bay Ridge.(40) A more extensive transportation system within Brooklyn and between Brooklyn and New York stimulated the growth of residential housing in less crowded, less noisy, less frenetic -- that is, more attractive areas -- and thereby contributed to the development of new middle class and working class communities.

In Brooklyn, too, this involved an increasing emphasis on the construction of multiple family dwellings. During the 1890's, the number of multiple family dwellings, including tenements, more than doubled that of private single family houses. In 1897, tenements constituted more than twenty percent of multiple family home construction, and in Brownsville in 1895 every permit issued for the

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building of multiple family dwellings was earmarked for a tenement. Nevertheless, the rate of private home ownership did not decline between 1890 and 1900, as the percentage of residential housing owned by its occupants remained at 18 percent.(41)

For New York's and Brooklyn's residents improvements in transportation provided many opportunities to enrich their lives or otherwise ease the burdens and trials of everyday life by bringing Brooklyn's parks and beaches closer. Brooklynites enjoyed the "outdoors" of fifteen parks. Most spanned less than ten acres, but some like Prospect Park and Ridgewood Park rivaled New York's Central Park in size and ambience. There families picnicked, bicycle clubs sponsored races, professional and amateur baseball teams played, fraternal organizations held dances and concert and still others simply strolled. (42) These recreational areas became more accessible in the 1890's by mass transit, particularly the trolley car. On steamy July and August Sundays the 34th Street ferry carried many of the "most leisurely and pleasure loving of New York's great middle class" to Manhattan Beach located on the South Brooklyn shore. There two resort hotels accommodated visitors for a day and the wealthy, sporting their yachts and private cars, all summer long.

At the other end of the geographical and social spectrum stood West Brighton and Coney Island. Accessible by the New York and Sea Beach Railroad for 25 cents in the 1880's and by trolley for a mere nickel by 1895, Brighton Beach and its casinos became increasingly popular recreational spots for New York's and Brooklyn's workers. At the West Brighton Casino, for instance, the Knights of Labor District Assembly held their annual summer "reunions". Throughout West Brighton saloons,

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sideshows, shooting galleries and variety shows proliferated, attracting not only amusement seekers but hustlers as well. This growth of popular "illicit" activity threatened to overwhelm the islands of genteel respectability represented by the Brighton Beach Hotel and Sea Beach Palace whose visitors pejoratively referred to Brighton's encroaching red-light district as "Sodom by the Sea".(43)

New York had its share of outdoor retreats from the intensity of urban life. More than sixty parks offered a bit of greenery and fresh air for Manhattanites, with six parks spanning more than one hundred acres, all located in Northern Manhattan or the Bronx with the exception of Central Park. More significantly, parks, squares and boulevards could be found in nearly every ward or residential area. Unions, various labor organizations and political groups used these facilities, especially during the summer. Brommer's Park at 133rd Street, Wendel Lion's Park at 109th Street and Ninth Avenue and Cosmopolitan Park and Casino in the High Bridge section of the Bronx accommodated the picnics and parties of cigarmakers, furniture workers and printers among others.(44)

Yet what was most striking about the urban landscape of New York, and more exactly, Manhattan, was the juxtaposition of opulence and squalor, gentility and materialism and tradition and modernity. Contemporary observers repeatedly stressed New York's clashing yet coexisting realities. Theodore Dreiser saw New York as a city filled with "great" and "mean" streets.(45) Fifth Avenue from Greenwich Village up to 42nd Street was called The "Queen of Avenues" because of its plush hotels and restaurants such as the Brunswick, Albermarle and Delmonico's and such exclusive clubs as the Knickerbocker, Athenaeum and Union,

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where the well bred, refined and rich socialized. Fifth Avenue above 42nd Street became known as "Millionaires' Row" in the 1880's for there could be found the mansions of the country's most powerful and wealthy -- the Goulds, Vanderbilts, Astors and Havemeyers. (46)

Just one block west along Sixth Avenue from 35th Street through 49th Street stretched one of New York's most notorious sections -- the "Tenderloin District", featuring flop houses, brothels, saloons, dance halls and cafes. There New Yorkers of various ranks and occupations -- professionals and laborers and businessmen and wage earners -- snubbed their noses at Victorian sensibilities, all under the approving eye of the city's police who for the right price scrupulously ignored violations of Sunday Blue laws.(47) Further south, along Sixth Avenue, stood some of the city's largest department stores -- R.H. Macy's, John Wanamaker's and Siegel-Cooper's -- where streetcars and elevated railroads "unloaded batallions" of shoppers.(48)

Commercial and recreational districts were not the only parts of the city with their contrasting seamy and decorous sights. The Lower West Side between Canal and 14th Streets possessed five story tenements whose "bareness" seemed, in one writer's mind, to "typify the general neglect in the locality" and, simultaneously, had spacious one family houses whose front windows' view consisted of trees and not telegraph poles.(49) Even the Lower East Side, the epitome of urban grime and congestion to many European travellers, reform-minded journalists and government inspectors, displayed a diversity of sights and sounds. While one observer from Italy could only highlight the Italian quarter's "filth, incumbrances and disorder", another could simultaneously acknowledge the "hideous blackness" of Baxter Street and the

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"brightness" of Mulberry Street "alive with the scarlet, orange and green of shops and push carts". (50)

The process by which New York's and Brooklyn's urban landscape became a "cityscape"(51) reflected the experience of both cities' ever expanding and changing immigrant population. While immigrants found an urban world not of their making, the means by which they adapted to their adopted homeland broadly and deeply shaped city life. The residential patterns, employment opportunities and occupational choices, associational networks and cultural activities of the foreign-born and their native-born offspring illustrated the interplay of social and physical environment and human agency that helped make New York especially a community **sui generis.**

Immigrants from Northern and Western Europe and those from Southern and Eastern Europe displayed similar approaches to finding their way in New York and Brooklyn even if the specific paths they charted varied. All showed a proclivity to settle initially in areas where compatriots already lived. For example, each of the five Italian "colonies" in New York drew immigrants from certain provinces, and in Little Italy, between Houston and Canal Streets, not only individual blocks but tenement houses attracted former residents of the same town.(52) Russian Jewish and Irish immigrants also grouped together according to the county or village of their original homelands. Immigrants often had a clear destination, more precise than just New York. Equipped with the names and addresses of relatives and friends, new arrivals sought if not familiar grounds, familiar faces and voices.

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Settling with their own compatriots permitted immigrants to cope with the vagaries of industrial-urban life. When Samuel Cohen arrived at Castle Garden in 1880 after almost a month's journey from Russia, he was met by his uncle Ben, who took him and his brother and sister-in-law to Ludlow Street in the Lower East Side where they were to live together. Sam was put to work in his uncle's grocery store, at least until he decided he could do better on his own as a peddler. Then when he grew restless, he left for Worcester, Massachussetts, where 98 percent of the city's Jews had emigrated from his home town of Balbirishik. (53)

Even when kinship ties were not evident, ethnic clustering and employment opportunities were closely linked. Jewish immigrants gravitated to the Lower East Side because they knew landsmen from the old country who served as contractors and operators in the garment trades or heard of the German Jewish clothing manufacturers' and tenement house cigar manufacturers' preference for Jewish "greenhorns" fresh from Europe. Abraham Cahan, editor of the **Arbeiter Zeitung,** recalled finding work with the cigarmaking firm of Stachelberg, whose proprietor customarily hired recent immigrant arrivals as tobacco strippers for a few weeks, or until they "adjusted" to living in New York City.(54) Irish and Italian immigrants found the Brooklyn communities of Red Hook, Greenpoint and Sunset Park particularly attractive because of their respective various employment opportunities. Near the docks of Red Hook, known as India Wharf, and Greenpoint's Brooklyn Navy Yard recent arrivals fresh from Castle Garden and Ellis Island found work as stevedores and warehousemen and inexpensive accommodations in tenements and two story brick houses. In Sunset Park,a small but flourishing Polish Catholic working class community emerged,

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surrounding the Ansonia Clock Company and miscellaneous light manufacturing firms from which residents derived their livelihood.(55)

The pattern of ethnic clustering did not preclude residential mobility, or the emergence of new neighborhoods. By 1900, Jewish immigrants had sunk roots in Harlem and Brownsville, establishing synagogues, fraternal organizations and philanthropic groups with extensive links to New York's and Brooklyn's Jewish communities. Likewise, Italians developed colonies in East Harlem in New York and in Astoria, Long Island City and Flushing in Queens where homeownership and not tenement dwellings were the rule.(56)

In fact, the development of immigrant communities was indicative of the immigrants' forging of distinctive group identities. Immigrants settled in specific areas because they felt less alien where they could socialize, recreate and worship in ways that conformed to their cultural traditions. All of New York's and Brooklyn's immigrant groups shortly after moving into a neighborhood sought to form their own churches or synagogues, fraternal and mutual aid societies, cultural organizations and newspapers. By 1890 German Catholics claimed 12 parishes in New York and 23 in Brooklyn, and German Protestants, including the Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Baptists, Presbyterians and Independents, had established a "separate" Protestant church preserving German customs and rituals. Italian Catholics arriving later during the 1880's and 1890's initially encountered "mixed" parishes dominated either by Irish or Germans. In some churches Italians were compelled to worship in the basement under the auspices of "secular" priests. Dissatisfied with this experience, Italians sought to create their distinctive parishes and national church. Italian Catholic churches sprung up in New York and

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Brooklyn during the late Gilded Age to the extent that by 1899 there were 13 Italian churches and 3 Italian chapels served by 38 Italian priests. (57)

The significance of immigrant churches and synagogues transcended their religious and spiritual activities. Catholic parishes, Protestant congregations and Hebrew synagogues served as social welfare, educational and cultural institutions. Irish, German and Italian Catholics formed parochial schools independent of the public school system. Countless mutual aid, fraternal and recreational associations sprung forth from churches. German Lutherans maintained a Mission and Emigrant House at Castle Garden where they provided recent arrivals meals and lodging. St. Joachim in the Bowery provided classes in sewing and English as well as medical care to Italian immigrants, and St. Raphael's Society further uptown served as a benevolent society, providing shelter and assistance in finding employment to local parish members.(58)

Russian Jewish immigrants formed **landmanshaftn** (societies of townspeople) whose membership was loosely defined by the immigrant's town in his/her original homeland. Of the 118 landmanshaftn initiated from 1882 to 1900, 22 emanated from synagogues. These societies doubled as communal centers and mutual aid societies. Jewish immigrants could attend classes to learn English, learn about employment opportunities and housing vacancies, or to listen to the Yiddish poetry of worker poets such as Morris Rosenfeld, David Edelstadt, Yossef Bovshover and Morris Winchevsky. Landmanshaftn also provided members with funeral and cemetery benefits, medical insurance and loans without the need of collateral. Not suprisingly, Abraham Cahan nostalgically

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recalled these worker-immigrant associations as engendering "good citizenship", conviviality and a modicum of "beauty and charm" in the too often drudgery-filled lives of sweatshop hands and tenement dwellers.(59)

As suggested by the development of landsmanshaftn, the associational life stemming from immigrant religious institutions were only the tip of the iceberg. From 1886 to 1898 the number of fraternal, self-help and social groups established by Brooklyn's immigrants grew steadily. Some of these associations, such as the Irish Ancient Order of the Hiberians and the German Order of Germania, had many branches or lodges.(60) Not to be outdone, more recent immigrant groups formed their own organizations. Russian Jews and Italians, who characteristically labored in trades where unions were absent or weak, quickly organized benefit and mutual aid societies. Initially among the Italians these societies were controlled by **prominenti** -- newspaper editors, padrones and entrepeneurs. Not only did they provide material comfort to the unemployed, the ill and widows, but they contributed to the development of Italian ethnic identity, often denying the existence of social or class divisions. (61)

Emblematic of New York's and Brooklyn's evolving "cityscape", a variety of recreational, cultural and social clubs and/or societies emerged among both cities' ethnic groups. The Germans took pride in their **Turn Verein,** athletic schools that stressed physical fitness and mental discipline through gymnastics. The Irish formed gaelic football/athletic clubs and handball clubs. Most popular were bicycle clubs which featured races regularly on spring and summer weekends in New York's and Brooklyn's larger parks. Eastern European Jews adopted

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baseball as a favorite past-time, although apparently on a less formal note than their Northern and Western European counterparts. Immigrants also expressed a strong interest in singing and dancing. Choirs, choruses and glee clubs proliferated wherever immigrants settled. Dancing "schools" became popular among Jewish immigrants in the Lower East Side, especially among the young for they provided an opportunity for men and women to socialize together.(62)

Less formal, but equally central to immigrant-working class social life were the neighborhood saloon, tavern and cafe. All three contained a range of attractions: drink, food, music, companionship, talk and at times organized cultural events such as one act plays and poetry readings. There patrons over beer or tea could keep abreast of the latest strike developments, debate the virtues of socialism and anarchism, assess the merits of political candidates, or simply gossip about their neighbors. Because of their popularity among both cities' workers, it was customary among German socialists and Russian Jewish anarchists to hold their meetings, and for Tammany Hall to establish their precint headquarters, at taverns and saloons.

When conversation and argument became wearisome, there was a broad selection of theatres to entertain New York's and Brooklyn's population. Irish-American drama claimed center stage especially through the creativity of Edward Harrigan, who captured the public's fascination with Irish immigrant life personified by Dan Mulligan in a series of music-laced, light-hearted, tragic-comic plays. German plays called **Volksstuck** (folk drama) were performed at the Irving Place Theatre and Thalia Theater in the vicinty of New York's Union Square and at the Lyceum Theatre in the Brooklyn community of Bushwick. During the 1880's

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German socialists and anarchists began workers' theatres, sometimes called **Freie Buhnen** (Free Stages) which featured short dramas, modelled after traditional festival plays whereby religious celebrations were adapted to a modern social and political milieu. Italian and French drama as well as German plays were performed at the Teutonia and Germania Assembly Halls. Some dramatic societies went mobile, as was the case with the Italian-American group **Circulo,** which in 1889 and 1890 performed their works at Brommer's Union Park in Manhattan and the Cliff Cottage Hotel in Staten Island. Jewish immigrant plays performed in Yiddish, a language carved out in the diaspora and given new meaning in the United States, could be seen at the Bowery Garden/Oriental and Thalia Theatres and at four "concert halls" in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Much of the popular theatre included vaudeville, burlesque and variety shows, which combined humorous skits, bawdy farce, magic acts, juggling and music, as well as "legitimate" plays with clearly delineated plots.(63)

Common to the popular theatre, regardless of the language it was performed in, its explicit themes or dramatic conventions, was the invocation if not direct appeal to the audience. Actors and actresses played to their audiences, welcoming their enthusiastic approval of their performances and anticipating the audience's identification with their characters. Stephen Crane's Maggie, the main protagonist of **Maggie: A Girl of the Streets,** sat among a "loud gallery who encouraged the struggling hero with cries, and jeered the villain, hooting and calling attention to his whiskers."(64) Theatre managers aimed to please their sponsors and patrons, and did so in many ways, not the least of them, by promoting a convivial environment that helped men and women,

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adults and children feel comfortable. Hutchins Hapgood, observing the interaction between performers and audience during a Yiddish play, captured the atmosphere of much the city's popular theatre (65):

> Poor workingmen and women with their babies of all ages fill the theatre. Great enthusiasm is manifested, sincere laughter and tears accompany the sincere acting on the stage. Peddlers of soda water, candy, of fanastic gewgaws of many kinds, mix freely with the audience between the acts. Conversation during the play is received with strenuous hisses, but the falling of the curtain is the signal for groups of friends to get together and gossip about the play or the affairs of the week.

The multifaceted immigrant adaptation to American society and the development of the urban landscape represented a series of dialectical relationships underlying the transformation of New York's and Brooklyn's people and their environment. As immigrants sought to make their way in their adopted homeland, they helped to weave New York's and Brooklyn's varied social-cultural texture. In doing so, they participated, willingly or not, in a process of becoming Americans of a new kind and "makers" of a "third" American working class (66) whose composition became more ethnically diverse and socially striated.

This process of "becoming" was not uniform for all immigrant groups, and for that matter, did not proceed on a smooth, straight trajectory. For some immigrants the transition from original to adopted homeland constituted a challenge to their traditional old world habits of thought and behavior which could not be easily and painlessly jettisoned or forgotten. For others, the adoption of new modes of living and cultural patterns was paved by time-tested attitudes and practices nurtured in societies quite different from New York's and Brooklyn's.

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Interwoven into becoming an "American" was the formation of an evolving immigrant based working class. Emerging from rural agricultural or nascent urban-industrial societies, recently arrived immigrants experienced proletarianization as uprooted peasants (Southern Italians and migrants from Western Ireland in the main), adrift luftmenshn (many Eastern European Jews without a documented skill or trade), or hand craftsman whose traditional skills were less needed and valued by an industrializing society (numerous Germans).

These twin processes contained the sources of both divisions and unity in late Gilded Age working class life and contributed to the ebb and flow of New York's and Brooklyn's labor movement. In adapting to American society immigrants experienced tensions between contradictory pressures and confronted the possibilities and threats of countervailing forces. Sensing a strong need to belong to the larger society if not conform to its dominant culture, immigrants also felt the need and compulsion to maintain their customary ways of living, especially language and religion. Many an immigrant shared the fears of appearing to be a "greenhorn" experienced by Yekl, (Abraham Cahan's fictional character) and tried their utmost to talk, dress and eat as a well-mannered American. However, few carried this drive to belong to the lengths of divorcing their spouses because they remained "greenhorns", as Yekl did.(67) Nevertheless, more settled immigrants who already had attained a measure of social status, middle class respectability and economic comfort looked down on their more recently arrived counterparts as riff-raff who could threaten their hard earned position in society. Uptown German Jews therefore saw the Lower East Side Russian Jewish immigrant as unrefined and vulgar -- an unruly lot

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given to social disorder and radical political movements.

Even among the ranks of the recently arrived, tensions could, and did, develop between those seeking to adopt new attitudes and values and those clinging to traditional ways. For example, among the waves of Eastern European Jews who migrated to New York in the 1880's and 1890's there were those who stressed a cosmopolitan rather than an insular perspective -- a secular and not a religious outlook. Abraham Cahan described emigrants from the German-Russian border towns of Suwalki and Kalisz as tradition minded in contrast to the "modern" intellectual emigres from Vilna. The latter deemed the former as "ignorant and primitive", and the former considered the latter "atheists" and "lunatics".(68) This cultural conflict continued to blaze in New York's Lower East Side in the cafes, landmanschaften and Yiddish press. Jewish immigrant intellectuals valued the city's cosmopolitan milieu, seeing it as a golden opportunity to develop a new Jewish culture simultaneously distinct but not exclusive. For their part, Jewish religious elders sought to replenish the cultural resources of a people cast in a turbulent sea threatened by encroaching Protestant and Catholic currents, not to mention the stormy winds of American secularism. Russian Jewish immigrant socialists and anarchists made their atheism an emblem of their movement. Marcus Savage, recalling the days of his radical youth, highlighted this anti-religious creed (69):

> We were all missionaries, and some of us were quite genuine bigots. On the Day of Atonement, when all the conservative people of the quarter fasted and repented and knelt in prayer, we ostentatiously went about with big cigars in our mouths and bags of food in our pockets; and in the afternoon we met in the public square and marched off in a body with flags and trumpets to the atheist picnic somewhere in Brooklyn.

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Some in the Jewish immigrant socialist movement came to respect rather than disparage traditional Jewish culture. Socialist organizers of the early Jewish trades unions, leaders of the major strikes among cloakmakers and coatmakers in 1890 and 1894, and the creators of a vibrant Yiddish literature drew on the imagery of the Torah (the five books of the Old Testament) and other religious folklore to speak to and for their audience. Abraham Cahan, editor of the **Arbeiter Zeitung**, was the leading socialist advocate and practitioner of the need to appreciate the value of the Jewish immigrant's religious beliefs. The **Arbeiter Zeitung** became a popular Yiddish daily newspaper in part because of its willingness to open its pages to writers whose vignettes and poetry accepted Jewish immigrants for what they were, instead of emphasizing their inability to conform to the standards of secular-minded intellectuals.

The experience of organizers from the United Hebrew Trades, an umbrella organization of labor unions among occupations in which Jewish immigrants predominated, provided support for Cahan's perspective. For example, when representatives of the UHT attended a union meeting of tailors in a basement synagogue they were greeted by yarmulka (skull cap) clad men whose chairman equated the first union walking delegate with Moses and the executive board with the **sanhedrin** (the traditional Judaic council of relgious elders). Union meetings of coat cleaners were organized as celebrations of **Simchas Torah** (the day commemorating the completion of the weekly reading of the Torah) in which participants toasted glasses of beer to cries of "long live the union" and danced to Hasidic tunes. This led the United Hebrew Trades official in attendance to tag the coat cleaners: the "Simchas Torah Union". (70)

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Such experiences demonstrated that traditional religious values and practices did not hinder the formation of labor unions whose development for many socialists represented a cutting edge of working class consciousness. In reality, however, the activity of Cahan and UHT organizers remained just one current in the Jewish immigrant socialist and labor movement during the 1890's. Yet because of the continuing disdain many in the movement held for a culture they saw as riddled with superstition and mysticism, these attempts by some socialists to establish a common ground for the secular and religious aspects of Jewish immigrant life were especially significant. They presented the foundation for a possible alliance of intellectuals and workers from which the efforts to build viable unions could draw strength and inspiration.

Earlier in the century New York's and Brooklyn's Irish immigrants found that their Catholicism could provide the foundation for a group identity that facilitated their adjustment to an alien environment. However, unlike immigrant Jews, Irish "religiosity" developed after leaving Ireland. Until almost two decades after the first major wave of migration that followed the blight of potato crops and resultant famine, there was barely any evidence of an Irish Catholic church. In their adopted homelands Irish immigrants began forming parishes, and quickly a church officialdom emerged. During the 1850's and 1860's New York's Irish Catholic church along with German Catholic parishes pressed for the establishment of parochial schools, a campaign that aroused strong opposition from Protestant clergymen, political leaders and many of the city's major newspapers. (71)

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The rapid rise of an Irish immigrant Catholic presence developed as the necessary product of a hostile social order that regarded "Paddy" as intemporate, unfrugal, prone to violence and disruptive to Protestant Anglo-Saxon life. Even in Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn, when some of the cultural stereotypes lost their validity as Irish immigrants and their offspring experienced economic and social mobility and successfully entered the arena of electoral politics, nativist attitudes persisted, especially among the social-cultural elites of both cities. Consequently, Irish immigrants continued to manifest symptoms of defensiveness about their way of life and suspicion about the motives and behavior of dominant groups. Some historians have argued that parity in the male/female ratio among Irish immigrants discouraged intermarriage between Irish and non-Irish and thereby forestalled Irish assimilation into American society.(72) Others have pointed to the chronic insecurity in Irish immigrant life, expressed in letters to family members and friends in Ireland. Job competition, especially during economic depressions, plagued those earning their living as casual laborers working on the docks, railroads and canals. In New York and Boston, for example, Irish immigrant "slums," characterized by high rates of alcoholism, disease, unemployment and pauperism, survived into the early twentieth century.(73)

For their part, the hierarchy of the Irish Catholic church in New York, Brooklyn and other cities contributed to a purportedly "universal" feature of the Irish immigrant experience, the development of urban Irish ghettos. By consistently upholding traditional values and sources of authority in society and politics as necessary bulwarks against the corrosive impact of secularism and materialism, many of the

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church's archbishops appeared to be representing Irish Catholicism as outside the mainstream of American life. Parish priests evidently played a role in this process with their missionary zeal and strident criticism of Protestant beliefs and practices. (74)

In practice, however, few Irish-Americans adhered to any religious orthodoxy. First, a majority did not attend church regularly; instead they attended only on special occasions, such as baptisms, confirmations, marriages and deaths. Secondly, other sources of leadership and authority emerged in the Irish immigrant community. These included successful building contractors, realtors, saloon keepers, independent newspaper editors and, with a renaissance of the labor movement following the depression of 1873-1877, trade union leaders and labor reformers. Moreover, at the parish level, there were priests who became advocates of the interests of the poor and workers, including Patrick McSweeney, pastor from St. Bridget's church in lower Manhattan between Canal and Houston Streets, Isaac Hecker from St. Paul's parish on New York's west side and most notably, Father Edward McGlynn from St. Stephen's Church in New York's Murray Hill section. At the grass roots, Irish immigrant Catholicism did not foster the growth of values, attitudes and practices that hindered adaptation to urban-industrial life, but instead, in its own way, helped in the development of an ethnic identity and distinct institutional network, consisting of fraternal, mutual aid and social groups.(75) By 1880, a vibrant Irish immigrant community was much in evidence and gave additional substance to the Irish nationalism sweeping many cities.

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Irish nationalism grew in the United States between 1875 and 1882 as Charles Parnell and other advocates of Irish home rule scored successes in parliamentry elections. The American counterpart of the Irish Land league conducted a campaign of education and agitation via public rallies and its press. At a joint rally sponsored by the Irish Land League and the newly formed Central Labor Union in 1882, Peter McGuire from the Brotherhood of Carpenters and the League's Michael Davitt denounced the "land monopoly" for denying American workers and Irish peasants the just rewards of their labor. Patrick Ford, editor of the New York published **Irish World,** stressed the symmetry of the United States' anti-colonial and republican heritage and the Irish nationalist movement.(76)

The "evangelical" appeals of Ford and Davitt among others bore fruit. From afar Irish-Americans contributed to the nationalist cause with hopes of finally ridding their homeland of absentee owners and British overseers. Financial donations, especially from working class areas in Pennsylvania flowed to the **Irish World,** and the newspaper gained a loyal working class readership, even among non-Irish. Resistance to landlords' control of the sources of wealth in Erie reverberated with new significance among aroused Irish immigrant laborers whose conditions of employment led many to join unions and labor reform organizations such as the Knights of Labor and enter the ranks of independent labor parties in New York, Cincinnati and Chicago. Moreover, the movement's idealism eroded some of the negative stereotypes attributed to Irish immigrants and helped them to attain respectability among the middle class and working class alike in New York, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh among other cities. (77)

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The development of ethnic consciousness and working class formation had its complications as well. At one end of the spectrum were Italian immigrants whose access to jobs came under the sway of padrones -- labor agents who for a fee placed newly arrived immigrants in positions with the expectation that they would stay clear of unions and strikes. Moreover, their mutual aid and benefit societies often were dominated by prominenti, who remained cool to Italian immigrant workers' participation in the labor movement and most concerned in promoting an image of the respectable Italian-American.

At the other end were German immigrants who in many ways stressed an "exclusiveness" in their adjustment to their adopted homeland. As alluded to earlier, German immigrant Catholics and Protestants, both in response to the hostility of the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture and in reverence for traditional German customs, strove to establish exclusively German churches and congregations in which only German would be spoken and German rituals observed. At the workplace too, German immigrants seemed to display a tendency to form organizations that recruited only German workers. German trade unions emerged in occupations in which Germans overwhelmingly represented a majority or a significant minority. Brewery workers, furniture workers, musical instrument makers, bakers, carpenters and printers, to name just a few, organized exclusively German unions. Moreover, the German trade unions maintained an umbrella group -- the United German Trades -- even when each union was granted membership in the New York's Central Labor Union. German trade union exclusiveness, however, was not one dimensional. German labor leaders and socialists stood at the core of the Henry George campaign and the movement to build the United Labor

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Party in 1887. Furthermore, the United German Trades helped to promote the fledgling United Hebrew Trades which was created by Eastern European Jewish immigrants. In addition, German trade unions proved to be the most staunch practioners of labor solidarity, not only expecting, but providing, mutual support for strikes and boycotts waged by other unions and immigrant workers. Essentially, the exclusivity of German immigrant institutional life grew from an independence of spirit and cultural pride, which at times appeared to represent social distance and ethnic arrogance, but really reflected the **auswanderers'** accommodation to American society. The chairman of New York's Central Turner Verein, speaking at the opening of a new Turner Hall at 67th Street, expressed the German immigrants' sense of belonging most sharply: "The German loves his fatherland like a man loves his mother, and he loves America like a man loves his wife. He can adore both at the same time, but he will leave the mother to follow the wife". (78)

In summation, working class life in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn in large measure owed its shape and essence to a number of economic and social factors. Both cities' economies (see Chapter 1), despite technological innovation, remained labor intensive, especially in need of relatively unskilled and "semiskilled" manual labor. They consisted of a diverse industrial base specializing in consumer goods whose manufacturers -- most noteworthy among them, proprietors of ready-made clothing concerns and cigarmaking shops -- faced rampant cost competition. This feature was somewhat alleviated by the swelling ranks of immigrants and their offspring who resided in neighborhoods that accommodated these very same businesses.

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Moreover, the evolving urban landscapes of each city contained a mixture of constraints and opportunities that simultaneously produced hardship and enrichment to urban dwellers. Rapid unplanned growth entailed checkered land use patterns in which manufacturing and residential housing overlapped, leading in the case of the Lower East Side and the Upper East Side, to the proliferation of tenement houses which doubled as people's homes and workplaces. As developers continued to stress the construction of multiple housing units, often on reclaimed land, the population density of some of Manhattan's neighborhoods -- and with it public health problems -- increased. Meanwhile, New Yorkers and Brooklynites found that an expanding infrastructure -- improved rapid mass transit, the paving of new roads, the clearing of "new" land for housing and the development of open air recreation and amusement areas -- improved the quality of their lives. If social-economic improvement proved elusive or precarious to most workers, the chances for residential mobility to less harsh surroundings grew for many. And, even those who could not afford, or were not inclined to move to new communities, could find some solace in the fact that relief from the rigors of inner city life was only a trolley car or train ride away.

Above all working class life was bound up in the American immigrant experience. As the foreign-born and their native-born offspring coped with demands of surviving materially and culturally in an urban and industrial environment, they symbiotically came to forge new identities and shape their adopted homeland. Immigrant workers kept New York's and Brooklyn's economic beehives buzzing and pollinated both cities' urban landscapes to the extent which underscores the following inescapably fundamental truth: the lives of both cities' workers can be

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best understood as immigrants, and the immigrant experience, best comprehended as part and parcel of the emergence of a multi-ethnically defined working class.

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FOOTNOTES

1. United States Census. Tenth Census (1880), **Population**, pp. 521, 536 and 538.

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3. **Ibid**; U.S. Census. Twelfth Census (1900), **Population**, Part 1, p. cixxviii; Eleventh Census (1890), **Vital Statistics of the Population of New York and Brooklyn**, pp. 232, 233, 242 and 243; and Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., **The Rise of the City, 1878-1898** (New York: MacMillan, 1933), pp. 72 and 73.

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13. United States. Twelfth Census (1900), **Population**, Part 1, p. ciii.

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43. Theodore Dreiser, **The Color of a Great City** (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), pp. 120-122; John Kasson, **Amusing the Millions** (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), pp. 31-34; and **The Leader**, July 25, 1887 and August 22, 1887.

44. New York State Assembly. **Report of the Tenement House Committee** (1895), pp.175-179; and **The Leader, passim**, July and August, 1887.

45. Dreiser, p. viii.

46. Maxwell Marcuse, **This Was New York!: A Nostalgic Picture of Gotham in the Gaslight Era** (New York: Carlton Press, 1965), pp. 353, 354, 356-360 and 366.

47. Stephen Crane, pp. 162-166; and Marcuse, pp. 273-277.

48. Crane, p. 117; and Marcuse, pp. 283-286.

49. J.W. Sullivan, **Tenement Tales of New York** (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1895), pp. 170 and 171.

50. Marcuse, p. 79; and Giuseppe Giacosa, "Gli Italiani a New York ed a Chicago," reprinted in Bayard Still, **Mirror for Gotham** (New York: N.Y.U. Press, 1956), p. 247.

51. Albert Fein, **Landscape into Cityscape: Frederick Law Olmstead's New York City** (New York: Van Nostrand, 1981).

52. Pozetta, p. 102; and Gabaccia, pp. 78 and 79.

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53.Samuel Cohen, **Transplanted** (New York: the author, 1937), pp. 100-106 and 136-137.

54. Abraham Cahan, **The Education of Abraham Cahan,** edited and translated by Leon Stein, Volume I (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), pp. 229-230.

55. David Ment and Mary Donovan, **The People of Brooklyn: A History of Two Neighborhoods** (Brooklyn Educational and Cultural Alliance, 1980), pp 52-56; and Ralph Foster Weld, **Brooklyn is America** (New York: Columbia University, 1950), pp. 137-139.

56. Jonathan Gurock, **When Harlem Was Jewish** (New York: Columbia University, 1979), pp. 19-34; and Humbert Nelli, **From Immigrants to Ethnics: The Italian-Americans** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 70.

57. Lapham, pp. 54, 83, 112 and 113; and Silvano Tomasi, **Piety and Power: The Role of the Italian Parishes in the New York Metropolitan Area, 1880-1930** (Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies, 1975), pp. 27, 75-77, 95 and 98-99.

58. Lapham, pp. 85-91; and Tomasi, pp. 129-131.

59. Aaron Antonovsky, pp. 132 and 133; Epstein, pp. 273-297; and Charles Bernheimer, ed., **The Russian Jew in the United States** (Philadelphia: J.C. Winston, 1905) p. 40.

60. **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac** (1887), pp. 76-83; (1891), pp 125-136; (1895), pp. 193-212); and (1899), pp. 178-212.

61. Pozetta, pp. 248 and 249; and Edwin Fenton,"Immigrants and Unions: A Case Study of Italians and American Labor, 1880-1920," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1957), pp. 60-65.

62. **The Leader,** September 7, 1887; Smith, pp. 200-203; **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac** (1899), pp. 178-212; Jacob Riis, **How the Other Half Lives** (New York: Hill and Wang, 1890 and [1957]), p. 82; Cahan, pp. 257, 258, 327, 333 and 337.

63. Maureen Murphy, "Irish-American Theatre," Maxine Seller, ed., **Ethnic Theatre in the United States** (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 226 and 227; Christa Convajal, "German-American Theatre," Seller, ed., pp. 179-181; Carole Poore, "German-American Socialist Workers' Theatre, 1877-1910," Bruce McConachie and Daniel Friedman, eds., **Theatre for Working Class Audiences** (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 61-69; Mary Henderson, **The City and The Theatre** (Clifton, New Jersey: J.T. White, 1973), pp. 121 and 135-143; and George C.D. O'Dell, **Annals of the New York Stage** Volumes XIV and XV (New York: Columbia University, 1945), pp. 434-481 and 206-259, respectively.

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64. Stephen Crane, **Maggie: A Girl of the Streets** (New York: D. Appleton, 1897), p. 71

65. Hutchins Hapgood, **The Spirit of the Ghetto** (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1902 [1965]), pp. 116 and 120-125.

66. The phrase "third American working class" speaks to the process of working class formation and development in the United States. The sources of the first American working class were native-born artisans, Yankee farm girls and, to a lesser extent, immigrants from Great Britain, Ireland and Germany. The period of proleterianization occurred between 1820 and 1850. The "second American working class" was formed between 1850 and 1890, and consisted largely of Irish, German and British immigrants and their offspring. As the work of Herbert Gutman and Ira Berlin, "Class Composition and the Development of the American Working Class, 1840-1890," Ira Berlin, ed., **Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class** (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), pp. 380-394, has shown, by 1880, if not earlier, the foreign-born and their native-born children constituted the bulk of the country's industrial labor force. The "third American working class" was beginning to develop during the late Gilded Age with the influx of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. By the first decade of the twentieth century, many of the nation's major industries, including steel manufacturing, coal mining, cotton and woolen textiles and the garment trades, depended predominantly on the labor of the foreign-born.

67. Abraham Cahan, **Yekl: The Tale of the New York Ghetto** (New York: D. Appleton, 1896).

68. Abraham Cahan, **The Education of Abraham Cahan**, p. 223.

69. Marcus Savage in Irving Howe and Kenneth Libo, eds., **How We Lived** (New York: Richard Marek, 1979), p. 163.

70. Bernard Weinstein, "Forty Years in the Jewish Labor Movement," Howe and Libo, eds., p. 172.

71. Jay Dolan, **The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics** (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1975); Norman Yetman, "The Irish Experience in America," Harold Oriel, ed., **Irish History and Culture** (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1976), pp. 356-358; and Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in America, 1850-1875," **American Historical Review**, 77 (1972), 651. New York's Irish and German Catholic communities were successful in their efforts to form parochial schools, but by the end of the century most first and second generation Irish and German children received their education in the city's public schools. See David Doyle, "Catholicism, Politics and Irish-Americans," P.J. Drudy, **The Irish in America: Emigration, Assimilation, and Impact** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.204-206.

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72. For example, see Yetman, pp. 352, 353 and 373. Between 1869 and 1900 there were twenty years where the number of Irish immigrant women exceeded male Irish immigrants. During this period no other immigrant showed a comparable numerical parity among men and women.

73. Kerby Miller, "Emigrants' Responses to Industrial America," P.J. Drudy, ed., **The Irish in America**, pp. 92-97; and Stephen Thernstrom, **The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973). Also see Oscar Handlin's classic study of Boston's Irish in the mid-nineteenth century, **Boston's Immigrants: A Study of Acculturation** (revised edition, New York: Atheneum, 1970). For data on the living conditions of New York's and Brooklyn's Irish residents, see United States. Commissioner of Labor, **Seventh Special Report** (1894) **The Slums of Baltimore, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia;** United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Vital Statistics;** New York State. Assembly, **Report of the Tenement House Committee** (1895), pp. 25, 33, 35 and 36; New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Forty-Third, Forty-Fourth, Forty-Fifth, Forty-Sixth, Forty-Seventh and Forty-Eighth **Annual Reports;** and Brooklyn. Bureau of Charities, **Tenth Annual Report** (1891), pp. 18-35.

74. Timothy Meagher, **From Paddy to Studs: Irish American Communities in the Turn of the Century Era, 1880-1920** (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1986), pp. 14-15; Miller, **Emigrants and Exiles** pp. 523-528; and Yetman, pp. 185-187.

75. David Doyle, "Catholicism, Politics, and Irish Americans," P.J. Drudy, ed., **The Irish in America**, pp. 204-206; James Donnelly, "Catholic New Yorkers and New York Socialists, 1870-1920" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1982), pp. 47-48 and 380-394; Dennis Clark, "The Irish Catholics: A Postponed Perspective," Randall Miller and Thomas Marzik, eds., **Immigrants and Religion in Urban America** (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), pp. 48-61; and Kerby Miller, **Emigrants and Exiles**, pp. 497-513.

76. R.K. Webb, **Modern England** (New York,: Harper and Row, 1980) pp. 366-372; Michael Gordon, "The Labor Boycott in New York City, 1880-1886," **Labor History**, 16 (Spring 1975), 184-229; Thomas Brown, **Irish-American Nationalism** (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966); and Eric Foner, "Class and Ethnicity and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League and Irish America," **Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 157-160.

77. Foner, pp. 170-178; Gordon pp.195-196; Brown, pp. 86-100; V.A. Walsh, "'Fanatic Heart': The Cause of Irish-American Nationalism in Pittsburgh During the Gilded Age," **Journal of Social History** (December, 1981); Dale Light, "The Rise of Irish-American Organs in Assimilation and Community Formation," P.J. Drudy, ed., **The Irish in America**, pp. 132-136; and Stephen Ross, **Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure and Politics in Industrializing Cincinatti, 1788-1890** (New York: Columbia University, 1985), pp. 310-320.

78. **The Leader**, September 7, 1887.

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CHAPTER THREE— WORKERS AS IMMIGRANTS; IMMIGRANTS AS WORKERS

As immigrants — both those born outside the United States as well as their native-born children — fueled New York's and Brooklyn's population growth, they furnished the labor that helped to generate both cities' industry, commerce and transportation. Moreover, most immigrants earned their livelihoods as wage earners and some groups in particular were based in the labor intensive manufacturing industries.

In 1890 and 1900, the overwhelming majority of New York's and Brooklyn's male and female labor force were first generation immigrants and their native-born offspring. In 1890, among all occupations, excluding the self-employed (proprietors), professionals (doctors, lawyers and teachers) and managerial personnel (bankers and company officers, for example), 82 percent of New York's and Brooklyn's gainfully employed men consisted of the foreign-born and their native-born sons, and 88 percent of the female labor force consisted of immigrant mothers and their daughters. Among the manufacturing trades the immigrant composition of the labor force was even more pronounced, as 90 percent of New York's and Brooklyn's goods producing male workers were immigrants, and 89 percent of the female manufacturing workers in New York and Brooklyn were immigrants. In 1900 this immigrant "dominance" continued, with percentages nearly identical to 1890.(1)

A case in point was the tailoring trade. In 1890, 91 percent of New York City's male tailors were first generation immigrants and seven percent second generation (the native-born children of the foreign-born), while 74 percent of Brooklyn's male tailors were first generation immigrants and 23 percent, second generation. The preponderance of

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immigrants among both cities' tailors was not especially endemic to the trade, for the immigrant composition of male tailors in New York State as a whole was 54 percent first generation and 19 percent second generation, respectively. This was considerably less than New York City's and Brooklyn's proportionate dependence on immigrant labor in tailoring, especially in light of the fact that both cities' figures were included in the tabulation for New York State.(2)

Yet lumping first generation immigrants and their native-born children together irrespective of nationality and gender obscures as much as it reveals. In 1890, among male wage earners first generation Germans were the most numerous (See Table I.). In New York City and Brooklyn together almost one-fifth of all men employed in trades other than those classified as professional, managerial and self-employed were German-born. Among manufacturing workers the German-born were even proportionately greater, as they constituted more than one fourth of that sector's labor force. The Irish, the second most numerous nationality, constituted almost one-sixth of the male wage earning workforce in New York City and Brooklyn together but only about one-tenth of the male manufacturing workers.

Table I. Male Workers (1890) — Percentage each Nationality (First Generation) Constituted of All Workers Per Sector

New York	German	Irish	British	Scandinavian@	Other*
All wage earners	19.1	15.9	5.1	less than 1	16.3
Manufacturing	26.9	10.7	5.3	1.3	26.3
Brooklyn					
All wage earners	17.4	13.7	6.2	2.9	6.3
Manufacturing	24.6	10.0	6.8	4.6	7.3
NY and Brooklyn					
All wage earners	18.6	15.1	5.5	1.6	12.9
Manufacturing	26.2	10.5	5.8	2.4	18.2

@ = Swedish and Norwegian * = Not specifically enumerated by Census.

(Source: United States. Eleventh Census (1890). **Population,** Part II, pp.640-641 and 704-705.)

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Among foreign-born women workers the Irish were the foremost nationality, as they almost doubled the Germans in their share of women wage earners. However, among female manufacturing workers the Irish-and German-born represented about 10 percent of New York's and Brooklyn's workforce and were surpassed by foreign-born women from "other" countries, most from Russia, Poland and Bohemia, known today as Czechslovakia (See Table II.).

Table II. Women Workers (1890) — Percentage Each Nationality (First Generation) Constituted of all Workers Per Sector

New York	German	Irish	British	Scandinavian@	Other*
All Wage Earners	13.2	24.6	3.2	1.3	13.0
Manufacturing	9.1	10.2	3.0	less than 1	20.4
Brooklyn					
All Wage Earners	11.0	22.1	4.0	3.6	3.3
Manufacturing	8.9	7.8	3.8	1.1	3.6
New York and Brooklyn					
All Wage Earners	12.5	23.9	3.4	2.0	10.2
Manufacturing	9.0	9.5	3.2	less than 1	15.8

@ = Swedish and Norwegian * = Not Specifically enumerated by Census (Source: United States. Eleventh Census (1890). **Population**, Part II, pp.640-641 and 704-705.)

An immigrant based working class was not peculiar to New York and Brooklyn. Late Gilded Age industrial America had come to depend heavily on the foreign-born and their native-born offspring to keep its workshops, factories, mills and mines running. In 1890, 56 percent of the U.S.' gainfully employed men in manufacturing and mechanical industries were either foreign-born or their native-born sons. This sector provided more employment to first generation immigrant and second generation men than any other group of occupations, including agriculture, which in the 1890 Census encompassed mining as well as farm proprietorship and farm laborers. In Detroit, for example, 54 percent of the labor force in 1890 were foreign-born, with Germans leading the way. Four of every five adult male German and Irish immigrants derived their livelihood from wage earning occupations.(3)

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Moreover, the tendency for certain immigrant groups to gravitate to particular occupations appeared in numerous cities. Both first and second generation Irish established footholds in Chicago's and Philadelphia's textile and carpet making industries and second generation Irish particularly were conspicuous within the building trades in both cities. German immigrant workers in Chicago from 1880 to 1900 disproportionately occupied skilled craft positions. First generation Germans maintained a niche among such occupations as bakers, butchers, cigarmakers, tailors and carpenters, although by 1900 some of these trades -- cigarmaking and tailoring -- for instance, had become less attractive because of changes in production methods and comparatively lower rates of compensation. Meanwhile, second generation Germans tended to enter the more specialized divisions of furniture making and metal trades. (4)

The tripartite relationships of class, ethnicity and gender were manifested in the degrees of occupational "clustering", on one hand, among immigrants and their native-born offspring and, on the other, among men and women. Germans numerically dominated within such goods-producing occupations as bakers, butchers, cabinet makers, woodworkers, tailors and cigarmakers. The Irish stocd out most clearly in the building trades -- plastering, plumbing, masonry and stone cutting -- and in transportation and the handling of goods, employed as steam and street railway workers, teamsters, draymen and packers. First generation British immigrants, while only representing about five percent of all wage earners and 6 percent of all manufacturing workers, constituted at least one-tenth and as much as one-fourth of New York's and Brooklyn's skilled occupations -- printers, machinists, marble and stone cutters,

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plumbers, masons, carpenters and shipbuilders. Not to be overlooked, although not specifically delineated by government reports such as the U.S. Census, recently arrived immigrants from Eastern, Southern and Central Europe massed into the flourishing garment trades to work as tailors, dressmakers and cloakmakers, into the apparel industries, especially boots and shoes, to labor as stitchers, into the cotton, woolen and silk goods industries to serve as machine tenders and into cigarmaking where Bohemian immigrants vied with the German-born and their native-born sons for positions as bunchers, rollers and packers.(5)

The composition and occupational distribution of the female workforce in New York City and Brooklyn varied in significant respects from their male counterparts. While almost the same proportion of women wage earners were employed in manufacturing as men (36 percent), foreign-born men were more likely than first generation immigrant women to be employed in manufacturing; or put another way, manufacturing industries depended more on foreign-born men relative to their proportion of the wage earning labor force than they did on foreign-born women (See Table III.). The lower rate of participation in the manufacturing labor force among foreign-born women stemmed in large part from their gender defined roles as wives and mothers which restricted many to household based labor and, to a lesser extent, the fears of some immigrant groups that wage labor outside the home left women vulnerable to the sexual abuse of male coworkers and foremen.

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Table III. First Generation Immigrants (Foreign-Born) as a Proportion of the Wage Earning Labor Force and Manufacturing Workers (Men and Women) in New York and Brooklyn (combined) in 1890

	Men	Women
All Wage Earners	52.9	51.7
Manufacturing Workers	62.8	38.1

(Source: See Table I.)

Moreover, a disproportionate number of women manufacturing workers found employment in the garment trades. In New York about 43,000 of the city's 58,500 women manufacturing workers, or 73.5 percent, labored in the men s and women's clothing industries as seamstresses, tailoresses, sewing machine operators and shirt, collar and cuff makers and in the related apparel industries as milliners and lace and embroidery makers. In Brooklyn 18,000 of the 22,500 women engaged in manufacturing worked in the clothing and apparel industries.(6)

Among first generation immigrant women the Irish figured as prominently as the Germans in the garment trades. In Brooklyn, 1500 Irish-born and 1900 German-born women worked as seamstresses, dressmakers, tailoresses etc., and in New York City, Irish-born women outnumbered German-born women in the garment trades by 5,130 to 4,310. Similar to the pattern observed among foreign-born male workers in New York City's garment trades and manufacturing industries in general, immigrant women from Eastern and Southern Europe represented a higher percentage of the workforce than their proportion of all wage earning women. In fact, they surpassed Irish-born women in the garment trades by more than 3,000 and more than equaled Irish-born and German-born women among manufacturing workers (See Table IV.).

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Table IV. First Generation Immigrants (Men and Women) By Nationality as a Proportion of All Wage Earners, Manufacturing Workers and Garment Workers in 1890

New York City (Women)	German	Irish	"Other"*
Garment Workers	10.0	11.9	19.2
Manufacturing Workers	9.1	10.2	20.4
All Wage Earners	13.2	24.6	13.0
New York City (Men)			
Garment Workers	24.7	3.1	59.5
Manufacturing Workers	26.9	10.7	23.6
All Wage Earners	19.1	15.9	16.3

* = Not specifically enumerated by Census but includes Eastern and Southern European immigrants (Source: United States. Eleventh Census (1890). **Population**, Part II, pp.640-641 and 704-705)

Yet this trend within the garment trades was different from the broader experience of men and women wage earners and manufacturing workers in particular. As Tables I-IV. demonstrate, the role of first generation men and women in both cities' workforces differed significantly. Among male workers in New York, first generation immigrants filled well over half of the wage earning occupations and almost two-thirds of the manufacturing trades. In Brooklyn, while less stark than in New York, the prominence of foreign-born male workers persisted, as almost one-half (46 percent) of that city's wage earners and more than one-half (53 percent) of its manufacturing workers consisted of first generation immigrants. In both cities, however, foreign-born women workers were less prominent. In New York City, while 55 percent of the women wage earners were first generation immigrants, only 44 percent of the city's manufacturing workers were foreign-born. In Brooklyn, about 45 percent of women wage earners and only 25 percent of women manufacturing workers were foreign-born.(7)

These differences between first generation immigrant men and women workers, on one hand, and between New York City's and Brooklyn's labor forces, on the other hand, suggest divergent demographic patterns.

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For one, New York's population had a higher proportion of "newer" immigrants from Eastern, Southern and Central Europe than Brooklyn. A number of wards in New York's Lower East Side even by 1890 were increasingly becoming known as "Little Russias" and "Little Italys". More significant for an understanding of the diverse rates of labor force participation for first generation women were other factors: (1) the foreign-born adult female population, both in New York and Brooklyn, was proportionately older than the second generation female population (See Table V.) and (2) the intimate relationship between women's life cycle and their experience with wage labor.

Table V. Distribution by Age of New York's and Brooklyn's Adult Female Immigrant Population (1890)

	First Generation		Second Generation	
	15-24	25 and >	15-24	25 and >
New York City	22.7%	77.3	52.4	47.6
Brooklyn	35.9	64.1	49.0	51.0
N.Y. and Brooklyn	26.4	73.6	51.7	48.3

(Source: United States. Eleventh Census. **Population**, Part II, pp.116 and 126)

The fact that the overwhelming majority of first generation immigrant women were over 25 and that half of their native-born offspring were between 15 and 24 influenced the specific composition of the female wage earning labor force. Census reports and studies prepared by the U.S. government indicated that women wage workers, whether or not immigrants, were predominantly drawn from the 15-24 age group. In New York and Brooklyn women from this age group represented almost 60 percent of women wage earners.Conversely, they showed that women over 25 who were usually married and raising a family were less likely to become

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wage workers. In fact, it was rare in the United States as a whole for married women, regardless of age, to be engaged in wage work (see Table VI.).

Women between the ages of 15 and 24 were very often single, never married, had not borne children or were not primarily responsible for child care even if they lived with their parents. Experiencing a different phase of the female life cycle than their mothers, they were less home bound and otherwise less constrained from entering wage work. Although some wage work could and was performed at home without disrupting or interfering with child rearing and managing the household, these opportunities were limited.(8)

Illustrative of this situation were the two manufacturing industries that particularly depended on women workers: the garment trades and cigarmaking. In the felling and finishing phases of coatmaking and the making of children's wear, for example, homework was common, but in the growing cloakmaking and shirtwaist branches of the women's clothing industry it was not. In the cigarmaking industry, although tenement house production declined in the 1890's, home production where entire families worked was not exceptional. (9)

Table VI. Women Wage Earners (United States) By Age and Marital Status — Percentage of Each Group Who Worked

1890	**married**	**single**	**15-24**	**15-24 and single**
first generation	3.0	70.4	50.4	70.4
second generation	2.7	44.4	35.0	41.9
native-born	2.2	27.5	17.7	24.0
all	4.6	40.5	29.0	37.3
1900				
first generation	3.6	69.4	48.9	not available
second generation	3.1	49.1	37.5	" "
native-born	3.0	31.5	20.1	" "
all	5.5	43.5	30.6	" "

(Compiled from United States. Twelfth Census (1900) **Statistics on Women at Work**, pp. 16, 19, 21 and 22.)

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The importance of age, marital status and birthplace among New York's and Brooklyn's women workers conformed to the U.S. pattern. Single, young women were more likely to become wage earners than married women. However, native-born single, young women -- both those whose parents were native-born and first generation immigrants -- were less likely to perform wage labor than their foreign-born counterparts. This difference in labor force participation among single, young women reflected the economic status of the male heads of households. Native-born men found greater employment opportunities in skilled manual work and white collar positions which offered primary wage earners higher incomes. Immigrant men, especially from Germany and Ireland, experienced occupational mobility within the manufacturing sector as recently arrived immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe supplied many industries with relatively unskilled labor. In short, as the income of fathers and husbands rose, the overriding need for their daughters to work declined.

However, the relative significance of first generation immigrant women and their native-born daughters in the labor forces of New York and Brooklyn deviated from the national pattern largely because the foreign-born represented a greater proportion of the overall population in both cities than they did for the nation's population at large. In the United States, especially within the 15-24 age group, because the number of second generation women was double that of first generation immigrant women, the majority of immigrant women who worked as wage earners regardless of age were the native-born daughters of the foreign-born. In New York and Brooklyn in 1890, however, first generation

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immigrant women outnumbered second generation women among all wage earning occupations, i.e., exclusive of the self-employed, professionals and managers. In New York the gap between first and second generation exceeded 30,000, and in Brooklyn it was about 2,000. (10)

First generation immigrant women workers were most conspicuous among the service occupations, as almost 54,000 of New York's 67,000 and 19,500 of Brooklyn's 26,000 servants, housekeepers, stewardesses and laundresses were foreign-born. Not only did this indicate that New York's and Brooklyn's domestic workforces were overwhelmingly foreign-born, but that domestic service represented the major source of wage income for foreign-born women, as 60 percent of New York's foreign-born women workers and 68 percent of Brooklyn's foreign-born women workers were employed as domestics. In contrast, second generation women depended less on service work and more on manufacturing and white collar work (as saleswomen, clerks and typists) for their livelihood than first generation immigrant women (See Tables VII. and VIII.), and in New York outnumbered foreign-born women employed in manufacturing. In 1890, both in New York and Brooklyn, approximately one-half of the wage earning second generation women worked in manufacturing and about one-sixth in domestic service. As a whole, three of every four women wage earners found employment in service or manufacturing, while the remaining 25 percent acquired jobs in the growing white collar sector. Nevertheless, for reasons to be discussed later, only a small proportion of foreign-born women became white collar workers.

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Table VII. Women Workers in Service Occupations — Service Work As a Percentage of Employment for Immigrant Women and Their Offspring

	All Women Service	Service/First Gen.	Service/2nd Gen.
New York	41.3	60.4	16.3
Brooklyn	40.2	68.5	16.9
NY and Brooklyn	41.0	62.5	16.5

(Computed from United States. Eleventh Census (1890). Population, Part II, pp.640-641 and 704-705)

Table VIII. Women Workers in Manufacturing (1890) — Manufacturing Work as a Percentage of Employment for Immigrant Women

	All Women in Manu.	Manu./First Gen.	Manu./Second Gen.
New York	35.9	28.2	48.6
Brooklyn	34.8	20.0	49.6
NY and Brooklyn	35.6	26.2	48.9

(Source: see Table VII.)

However, even this pattern was marked by diversity. In New York City, for example, both immigrant women and their native-born daughters in almost equal proportions worked in the garment trades, while the former almost tripled the number of the latter engaged in cigarmaking. Conversely, the latter more than quadrupled the former in the printing trades as compositors, bookbinders and engravers.

This diversity in immigrant women's participation in particular manufacturing industries stemmed from a number of factors. As discussed earlier, some of the phases of clothing manufacturing and cigarmaking were done at home, thereby facilitating the participation of the foreign-born, especially women with children. In addition, before arriving in the United States young girls learned the use of a needle, thread and even sewing machine in preparation for wifehood and motherhood. Cigarmaking, while not containing skills steeped in the sexual division of labor within a family economy, nevertheless had become a "traditional" trade for women in regions of Germany and Bohemia. On the other hand, printing was done exclusively outside the home, contained skills learned not in the course of performing household duties and, in

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the case of typesetting, usually required literacy in English — all of which favored the participation of second generation rather than first generation immigrant women.

These qualifications aside, the significance of manufacturing as a source of employment for immigrant and second generation women was the mirror opposite of their male counterparts. Whereas the native-born daughters of the foreign-born "associated" wage work with manufacturing, it was the foreign-born men and not their native-born sons who heavily depended on manufacturing for their livelihood, and, in turn, within some industries, such as the garment trades and cigarmaking, became synonymous with the industrial workforce.

During the 1890's immigrant men and women continued to represent the bulk of the wage earners and manufacturing workers in Greater New York (New York and Brooklyn combined). Moreover, manufacturing work still served as the single most important source of employment for immigrants, and the overwhelming majority of immigrants as in 1890 earned their living through wage labor (See Table IX.).

Table IX. Percentage of Wage Earners (First Generation, Second Generation and Native-Born) Employed in Manufacturing in New York and Brooklyn Combined — 1890 and 1900.

	Men			Women		
	First Gen	Second Gen	Native	First Gen	Second Gen	Native
1890	42.0	31.5	23.0	26.2	48.9	35.0
1900	48.1	36.6	28.4	33.1	42.6	32.1

(Computed from United States. Eleventh Census. **Population**, Part II, pp. 640-641 and 704-705; and Twelfth Census. **Special Reports Statistics of Occupations**, pp.634-641).

In the 1890's a shift in the ethnic composition of New York's and Brooklyn's manufacturing labor forces developed. The native-born sons of immigrants from Germany, Ireland and Great Britain found opportunities to climb industrial ladders or else move into occupations

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demanding greater skills and providing higher pay and social status. In the building trades, the number of second generation and native-born carpenters, painters and plasterers among others grew at a faster rate than the number of first generation immigrants in these occupations, although the foreign-born still constituted a majority. On the other hand, first generation immigrants employed as plumbers and gas/steam fitters barely increased, while the number of second generation plumbers increased by 66 percent and the number of native-born plumbers doubled. Even more dramatically, the rate of growth of native-born and second generation printers so exceeded that of first generation immigrant printers that by 1900 the native-born claimed an almost equal proportion of the printing trades' jobs as first generation immigrants did, and the second generation, twice as many. (11)

The changes experienced by New York City's women wage earners appeared to be even more dramatic. As part of a nationwide shift in the employment patterns that accelerated in the ensuing decades of the twentieth century, women proportionately found greater job opportunities within the white collar occupations and, to a lesser degree, among the manufacturing trades and, proportionately fewer jobs in personal and domestic service (See Table X.).

Table X. Distribution of Jobs by Major Occupational Groups and the Proportion Each Represented for Women Employed in Non-Agricultural Positions in the United States

Year	Servants, Housekeepers, Waitresses, etc. (Service)	Clerks, Typists, Saleswomen, etc. (White Collar)	Mill and Factory Workers (Manufacturing)
1880	970,000 (47.3)	38,000 (1.9)	429,000 (20.9)
1890	1,300,000 (40.3)	172,000 (5.3)	658,000 (20.3)
1900	1,400,000 (33.0)	394,000 (9.1)	966,000 (22.3)

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, **Women in Gainful Occupations 1870-1920**)

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In New York City (Greater New York, i.e., including Brooklyn) the proportion of women wage earners employed in white collar jobs almost doubled between 1890 and 1900 (from 9.3 to 17.2 percent), and the percent employed in service declined (from 41 to 36). While the proportion of women engaged in manufacturing increased only marginally (from 35.6 to 36.4 percent), the actual number of women manufacturing workers climbed from 81,000 to 116,000, a relative increase of 44 percent.

These general shifts in the structure of the city's female labor force were not experienced uniformly by immigrants, their offspring and the native-born. Significantly, the percentage of foreign-born women manufacturing workers increased, and the percentage of second generation women manufacturing workers declined -- to the extent that the foreign-born constituted a plurality in 1900 (See Table XI.).

Table XI. Distribution of Women Wage Earners in New York and Brooklyn (Combined) By Type of Work and for Each the Proportion Who Were First Generation, Second Generation, and Native-Born in 1890 and 1900

	first generation		second generation		native-born	
	1890	1900	1890	1900	1890	1900
Manufacturing	38.1	44.7	50.7	42.9	11.3	12.5
Service	78.7	73.4	14.8	18.5	6.5	8.1
White Collar	14.7	15.9	61.0	57.2	24.4	26.8

(Computed from U.S. Eleventh Census, (1890) **Population**, Part II, pages 640-641 and 704-705; and Twelfth Census (1900). Special Reports. **Occupations**, pages 634-635.)

The "movement" of first generation immigrant women into manufacturing and the "exiting" of second generation women from manufacturing was reflected in two basic ways. First, manufacturing assumed a growing importance for the livelihood of first generation immigrant women and, correspondingly, a declining importance for the livelihood of second generation women (although manufacturing still provided native-born daughters of the foreign-born their major source of

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employment, in contrast to their mothers and foreign-born "sisters" who still depended chiefly, albeit to a far lesser degree than in 1890, on service work) [See Table XII.]. In addition, the share white collar work assumed among second generation women wage earners more than doubled and replaced service work as the second leading source of employment.

Table XII. Proportion Each of the Three Types of Work Represented of All Wage Work for First Generation, Second Generation and Native-Born Women in New York and Brooklyn in 1890 and 1900

	first generation		second generation		native-born	
	1890	1900	1890	1900	1890	1900
Manufacturing	26.2	33.1	48.9	42.6	35.0	32.1
Service	62.5	53.8	16.5	18.2	23.0	20.5
White Collar	2.8	5.6	16.6	26.9	21.2	32.6

(Source: see Table XI)

The female offspring of immigrant women (second generation in tables) and native-born daughters of native-born parents (native-born in the tables) disproportionately filled the ranks of the white collar labor force. Both in 1890 and 1900, second generation women, although they represented a third of all female wage earners, constituted a majority of women white collar workers. Native-born women of native-born parents constituted about a third of white collar workers and slightly more than ten percent of all women wage earners. Equally noteworthy, in 1900 white collar work represented a quarter of all wage labor performed by second generation women, and a third, by native-born workers. In contrast, foreign-born women, although they were half of the female wage labor force in 1890 and 1900, represented only about 15 percent of white collar workers. Moreover, white collar work constituted a small minority of the wage work done by first generation immigrant women.

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The relative growth of white collar and manufacturing work and the relative decline of service work among women workers were indicative of deeper structural economic and social changes. Fundamentally the exponential growth in the employment of women as clerks, typists and sales personnel developed as a result of the increasing importance of financial, commercial and insurance activity buttressing the society's industrial structure. Manufactures had to be marketed; capital investment required credit; expenses and earnings of firms needed recording -- all of which created an accelerating demand for labor not directly involved in goods-producing work but nevertheless whose skills were crucial for an industrializing economy. Throughout the last quarter of the 19th century, manufacturing companies maintained their headquarters in New York and their production facilities elsewhere. Wholesale stores were joined by large retail stores, known as department stores, which sold a wide variety of merchandise. The volume of business of New York's banks, insurance companies and stock and commodity exchanges also expanded rapidly.

The countless transactions necessitated by this economic activity called forth a labor of a new type -- "endowed" with specific skills, some developed by formal schooling and training and others attained through women's socialization process. The ability to do basic arithmetic, to spell and to punctuate and to maintain an office was not exclusive to women, although in the 1890's women earning a high school degree outnumbered men. Moreover, retail sales and clerical work tapped women's "traditional" roles to serve, to please and to look after others. Store owners also found it sound business practice to employ women to serve their growing middle class female clientele who, because

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of their husbands' earnings were freed from the need to enter the wage earning labor force and free to join the swelling ranks of consumers.(12)

Other factors encouraged the hiring of women in sales and office work. Department store owners and office managers could hire women with comparable skills and education for lower pay rates than those claimed by men on the premise that women were not the household's primary wage earners, and with the knowledge that women would find clerical or sales work more economically renumerative than domestic service and most manufacturing jobs. In this context, the introduction of the mechanical typewriter and its growing deployment in company offices also opened the doors to the employment of women. Whereas during most of the nineteenth century many clerical skills were specific to the firm, during the late Gilded Age, an increasing number of a clerical worker's tasks, such as filing and typing, had become general to most offices regardless of firm or type of business. The development of a standardized labor process in clerical work meant that employers no longer had to assume the primary responsibility of training employees, thereby providing office managers an incentive to hire women who, in contrast to men, showed higher rates of labor turnover. The introduction of classes to teach typing by the Young Women's Christian Association in the late 1880's and the Working Women's Society in the 1890's, and the establishment of business schools at the turn of the century where a myriad of office skills were taught increased the supply of women clerical workers. Lastly, managers of department stores and offices consciously sought to attract women workers by providing a clean, pleasant and safe work environment. These efforts won the accolades of such proponents of expanded employment

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opportunities for women as the **Business Women's Journal** which held that white collar work represented an improvement in status. For a number of economic and social reasons, then, some forms of white collar work had become defined as suited for women, when before 1880 clerical and sales work were essentially male domains.(13)

Domestic service increased absolutely but not at the same pace as white collar and manufacturing employment. The demand for domestic servants continued to grow among middle class women. Many found that their professional responsibilities as teachers, nurses, doctors and social workers denied them the time for household tasks, and some encouraged by their husbands' incomes and social status hired others to do domestic chores. For first generation immigrant women this type of labor continued to serve as a magnet, but for second generation and native-born women, an expanding white collar sector provided a viable option.

The different roles service, white collar and manufacturing work assumed for first generation, second generation and native-born women spoke to the experience of each group. Foreign-born women gravitated to domestic service because it satisfied particular needs and eased their transition to life in their adopted homelands. Many arrived unmarried and without an immediate family and therefore became boarders with relatives or friends known in the town or village from which they emigrated. For these immigrant women domestic service provided security and a measure of comfort in the way of room and board as well as companionship.(14) In addition, the responsibilities of housekeepers, laundresses and stewardesses involved skills women learned incidentally from their mothers as preparation for their anticipated roles as wives

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and mothers and did not require literacy in English or familarity with American customs. Manufacturing, while it demanded skills women possessed in abundance, was a less viable option for immigrant women, although coatmaking, cigarmaking and artificial flower making, to the extent they were based in the household, drew on the labor of first generation immigrant women.

Second generation women faced fewer constraints and claimed more resources that broadened their occupational choices. For one, they lived at home thereby reducing the attraction and the necessity of domestic service. For another, manufacturing and white collar work offered women an opportunity to earn more and to realize a modicum of freedom from their parents without preventing them from fulfilling their other household responsibilities. More likely to be literate in English and familiar with American dress fashions and hair styles, second generation daughters of immigrant women found it easier to secure employment where interaction with the public was instrinsic to the job. These advantages were even more pronounced among native-born daughters of native-born parents. They not only possessed the necessary social skills required by retail sales, clerical and secretarial work but also had more educational opportunities to allow them to choose work other than domestic service or manufacturing. Furthermore, native-born women showed a preference for the "moral" and clean work environments that offices and stores offered. Secretarial schools and trade publications emerging late in the nineteenth century stressed such attitudes in the aim of recruiting women into white collar employment.(15)

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At the same time these occupational changes occured, the female manufacturing labor force experienced a transformation especially in the garment trades. Here the proportion of first generation immigrants increased significantly in all but for dressmakers. Whereas in 1890 first generation immigrants represented either the plurality or the majority only among tailoresses, in 1900 they were the plurality or the majority among seamstresses and shirt, collar and cuff makers as well. Almost with equal intensity, the percentage of second generation women employed in the garment trades, especially among tailoresses, seamstresses, shirt, collar and cuff makers and sewing machine operators, declined.(16)

In sum, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century the experience of New York's and Brooklyn's workers was inextricably tied to the experience of both cities' immigrant population. The observation by a clergyman that "not every workingman is a foreigner, but in the cities at least, it may almost be said that every foreigner is a workingman" (17) rang especially true in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn.

Yet differences crystallized in the occupational clustering shown by immigrants and their native-born offspring and between men and women. Broadly stated, between 1886 and 1898 first generation immigrant women's role in the manufacturing labor force grew as the role of second generation women declined. In the men's and women's clothing industries, which provided the overwhelming majority of manufacturing jobs for women, the proportion of first generation immigrants expanded. First generation immigrant men, especially from Eastern Europe reinforced their niche within light manufacturing, particularly within

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New York's men's and women's clothing industries. Meanwhile, the native-born male offspring of immigrant men made strides and even assumed leadership in the skilled occupations within the building trades, printing and metal works industries.

Shifts in the composition of manufacturing occupations became more apparent among the male offspring of immigrants from Germany, Ireland and Great Britain who moved into trades marked by craftsmanship and higher earnings. This occupational movement during the 1890's among second generation men was apparently facilitated by the accelerated influx of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe that furnished New York's and Brooklyn's industries with their entry level, relatively low skilled, manual labor.

In the building trades, for example, the Irish and German immigrants, especially second generation, increasingly consolidated their hold on the skilled crafts of carpenter, plasterer and mason, while the Italian immigrant's share of the casual day laborer positions increased from 15 to 75 percent from 1883 to 1893. (18) In the same vein, German immigrants, and to a lesser extent, second generation Irish laid claim to the highest paid positions in the garment trades as clothing cutters for New York's largest clothing manufacturers. Meanwhile the lower rungs, varying in reponsibility, skill and compensation were predominantly occupied by Russian/Polish-born immigrants. In the ready-made men's and women's clothing industries, the hierarchial division of labor followed gender lines as well. For instance, in the making of coats women were relegated to specific job classifications such as finishers and fellers, and men almost exclusively occupied the positions of operators and pressers whose

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piece rates were considerably higher than those for finishers and fellers.(19)

The differences in occupational opportunities experienced by specific immigrant groups can be viewed through another lens. If we take the building trades and garment trades as points of comparison (the former the epitome of integrated, craft and relatively highly compensated labor, and the latter, the archetypical semi and unskilled, subdivided and poorly renumerated labor), the significance of ethnicity in the expression of working class formation and relations becomes clearer. Among the earlier immigrant arrivals from Germany and Ireland and their native-born offspring, the building trades constituted a greater proportion of manufacturing work in particular and wage labor in general than did the garment trades. Conversely, among Russian Jewish immigrants and Austrian-Hungarian immigrants and their offspring, employment in the garment trades was proportionately more significant than employment in the building trades. Among the "newer" immigrant groups, for only the Italians was employment in the building trades in relation to manufacturing employment and wage labor as a whole greater than it was for the Germans or Irish (See Table XIII.).

Table XIII. Building Trades' and Garment Trades' Employment as Percentage of Wage Labor and Manufacturing Work for Immigrant Men By Nationality

	German		Irish		Russian		Austrian Hungarian		Italian	
	Wage	Man	Wage	Man	Wage	Man	Wage	Man	Wage	Man
Building Trades	10.9	22.5	7.0	22.7	7.8	11.3	7.0	10.7	8.9	26.7
Garment Trades	4.5	9.4	<1.0	2.2	41.4	59.7	30.9	47.0	7.9	23.8

(Computed from U.S. Twelfth Census. (1900). Special Reports. **Statistics of Occupations**, pp. 634-641.)

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The fact that some immigrant groups apparently "gravitated" to certain occupations or industries demands closer attention. Moreover, accounting for differences between first generation immigrants and their native-born children and between women and men requires an analysis that seeks to integrate social and economic structure and human agency. European migrants to the United States had their distinctive histories in their original homelands. They occupied certain trades, practiced certain crafts and performed a host of tasks that all embodied acquired skills, work habits and workplace relationships, and as such influenced the immigrants' expectations in their "adopted" homelands.

Irish peasants, decades after the Irish potato famine of 1844 and 1845, sought an escape from rural poverty through migration. Likewise, Italian peasants who found life in the "Mezzogiorno" increasingly harsh and tenuous in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, besides migrating to other parts of Europe, left for the United States and Argentina. Both the Irish and Italians in their own ways lived in "pre-industrial" cultures where large scale manufacturing, mechanization of production, sub-divison of the labor process and "open" labor markets had barely made inroads. Men who earned their livelihood in other ways than tilling the land did so in manual trades in which often the product of one's labor was a tangible whole; the demarcation between employer or owner and worker was blurred; and the physical setting was the outdoors or a small shop. In Ireland, village economies provided work for blacksmiths, carpenters and weavers. In Italy, masonry, stonecutting and shoemaking were popular occupations among men who associated these crafts with "clean, respectable and independent"

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labor in contrast to most manufacturing work which they identified as being "dirty and dependent". (20)

Women who emigrated from Ireland and Italy were also steeped in a peasant economy that rested on familial relationships and a household division of labor. Both in Ireland and Italy women's labor primarily was oriented to the immediate sustenance of the household and to the welfare of the family. Besides tending to the tasks of cooking, cleaning, mending, spinning and caring for children, Irish and Italian peasant women could be counted on to labor in the fields, especially during harvest season. Irish and Italian women experienced scant opportunity to work outside the home. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as Irish cottage industries of spinning and weaving declined and the shift from potato farming to livestock grazing accelerated, women found their economic options restricted. A few young unmarried women found employment in the retail shops of Dublin and Cork, but most had to settle for work as domestic servants. From 1875 to 1900, when women made up the majority of Ireland's emigrants, the proportion of women with a reported occupation who worked as domestic servants ranged from 25 percent in 1885 to a high of 52 percent in 1895.(21)

In Italy, the census of 1901 indicated that only a minority of women over the age of nine worked for compensation and a smaller minority in non-agricultural activities. Among Italy's gainfully employed female labor force, one-fifth was engaged in domestic service, and in the poorer southern provinces of Basilicata and Sicily the proportion of women employed as domestics ranged from 25 to 34 percent. Among those provinces with high rates of outmigration, only Campania and

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Calabria, whose textile and garment industries were growing, provided an alternative to domestic service and agricultural labor. (22)

The occupational "histories" of Irish and Italian peasants is instructive. Their experience as subsistence farmers, casual day laborers -- and for some -- skilled craftsmen explains in part the Italian male immigrants' avoidance of factory work in New York and their "choice" of work on the city's docks, road clearing projects and miscellaneous construction activities. In their original homeland many Italian men regarded factory work as physically confining, socially unrespectable and personally demeaning. In New York the relative absence of heavy industry (in contrast to Pittsburgh or Chicago, for example) and growing availability of outdoor casual employment allowed Italian immigrant men to seek jobs that conformed to their attitudes and values about work.(23) In short, both economic opportunity in their adopted homeland and the cultural experience in their original homeland influenced Italian men's occupational choices. The Italian male immigrants' pattern of employment resembled that of their Irish immigrant counterparts who earlier in the nineteenth century had settled into comparable lines of work.

Yet the Irish immigrant arriving in New York City after 1880 differed from the Italian immigrant in two major respects. Already able to speak English, an increasing percentage of Irish immigrants were also literate (by 1890, 90 percent). (24) This provided them with a potential advantage in competing for work where language skills were required and otherwise were an asset in adapting to American urban-industrial life. Probably more important was that in late Gilded Age New York recently arrived Irish immigrants entered an already existing Irish-American

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community that had put up its stakes. Previous Irish immigrants had become employers in manufacturing, transportation and retail trade and thereby were in the position to hire Irish newcomers. The Irish had assumed leadership if not control of Tammany Hall -- the city-wide district by district organization -- whose candidates under the Democractic Party ticket usually captured the municipal offices of mayor and aldermen, and as such gave the specially placed Irish politician an opportunity to award contracts, grant licenses and to assign jobs to his loyal friends and supporters.

New York's German immigrant population possessed both "pre-industrial" and urban-industrial backgrounds. In their original homelands they resided in towns that often were adjacent to cities and sustained themselves and their families through wage labor in the traditional and less mechanized trades such as carpentry, the manufacture of furniture and musical instruments, baking and cigarmaking among others. Also some of Germany's most skilled craftsmen trained in technical schools (**hochschulen**) were recruited by U.S. manufacturers to work as machinists, toolmakers and glassblowers. (25)

In short, although German immigrants knew wage labor intimately, they did not arrive in the United States as either a displaced rural proletariat, nor, for that matter, as redundant factory hands. In New York and Brooklyn, German immigrants demonstrated a similar occupational clustering evident in other cities, such as Chicago, Detroit and Philadelphia, where they constituted a significant proportion of the industrial labor force. Germans were "over-represented" in the consumer trades as bakers, butchers and brewers and the handicraft occupations as carpenters, cabinetmakers, upholsterers and piano makers. Clearly then,

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German immigrant workers flocked to lines of work in their adopted homeland for which they were prepared in their original homelands.

Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who settled in New York and Brooklyn in the late nineteenth century had also tasted urban-industrial life before entering the United States. Laws and edicts barring them from owning, tilling or otherwise using agricultural land, and a multitude of oppressive official and unofficial practices -- most notoriously, pogroms -- pressured Russian Jews to seek refuge and solace in small towns known as shtetls and a degree of anonymity in some of Russia's and Poland's larger cities. In **shtetls**, they filled the ranks of numerous occupations, including tradesmen, peddlers and handicraft artisans -- carpenters, shoemakers, tinsmiths and watchmakers -- who sold what they produced. In cities, they were twice as likely to earn a living through manufacturing than either through commerce (retail or wholesale trade) or transportation. In Grodno, both men and women worked as cigarmakers; in Lodz, Poland, they labored in the largest and most mechanized cotton and woolen textile plants; and in Bialystok, women supplied that city's clothing industry with its seamstresses, sewing machine operators and cap makers, while men, for their part, served as tailors, cutters and furriers. Overall, during the 1890's Jews represented one-fifth of Russia's factory labor force and almost one-third of Poland's. (26)

In brief, both male and female Russian Jewish immigrants had become attuned to the routines of clothing manufacturing, conducted generally in small shops and unmechanized factories, well before settling in New York or Brooklyn. This "old world" occupational experience in conjunction with expanded employment opportunities

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generated by the ready made coatmaking and cloakmaking industries in New York helps to account for why enumerators from the Baron de Hirsch Fund, studying the population of the 7th, 10th and 13th wards of New York's Lower East Side, reported that 30 percent of the heads of Jewish immigrant households worked as "tailors or cloakmakers". (27)

The experience of male and female immigrants in their original homelands not only points to how they confronted new employment opportunities and why they gravitated to certain occupations in their adopted homelands, but might suggest that the significance of pursuing a trade, entering new lines of work, or even participating in wage labor itself to the immigrant varied by nationality, birthplace and sex. Secondly, the multi-ethnic character of most of the manufacturing occupations -- and more specifically -- the economic conditions at the time of entry by newer immigrants or recent arrivals embodied implications for the relationships among workers, bearing on what they shared in common and distinguished them from each other.

The patterns of occupational movement among immigrants and their American-born children and specific occupational clustering discussed earlier identified both shared and distinctive features of New York's and Brooklyn's working class. Documentation of intragenerational and intergenerational mobility in industrial America by Thomas Kessner, **The Golden Door**, Stephen Thernstrom, **The Other Bostonians**, Hermut Keil, "Chicago's German Working Class in 1900" and John Jentz, "Skilled Workers and Industrialization: Chicago's German Cabinetmakers and Machinists, 1880-1900 in **German Workers in Industrial Chicago 1850-1910** (28) underscores the role first generation immigrants and their native-born offspring played in the formation and reconstitution of the

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American working class. Second generation Germans found tool and dye making more "rewarding" than cabinetmaking, a preferred trade of their German-born fathers; second generation Russian Jews showed a greater occupational diversity than their Russian-born fathers, finding employment in the building trades, the printing industry and miscellaneous white collar occupations.

Recognizing the diversity in the experience of immigrant workers is especially pertinent in the case of women. For most immigrant women, wage labor outside the home was an "episodic" experience -- inextricably linked to women's life cycle and the needs of their families. Women participated in the labor force when they were unmarried and young, usually dropped out when they were married and with pre-adolescent children to care for, and reentered when their husbands were laid off, engaged in strikes, or died.

Yet the fact that the experience of wage labor outside the home was often brief did not diminish its significance to women. Italian immigrant women, particularly from Sicily, entered the wage labor force in the face of strict sexual mores and social values that sought to confine women to the home and the control of their husbands and fathers (29). Italian immigrant women, working in the ready-made women's clothing industry under male supervision, deviated from present gender roles which held that a woman's proper place was in the home and sheltered from the harsh realities of the public sphere, not the least of them, potential sexual encounters with men. Even when immigrant women did not encounter such traditional restrictions, the experience of wage work could be dramatic. Russian Jewish and Austrian-Hungarian Jewish women, who played central economic roles in their original homelands as

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textile, clothing, cigar workers, peddlers and storekeepers, expected they would work outside the home in their adopted homelands. However, wage work was no longer simply pursued to contribute to the family's income, but came to be associated with personal independence and individual autonomy. Young women employed in the women's clothing industry, for example, found the factory as opposed to the "sweatshop" a favorable "social environment", for it provided them with opportunities to work with their peers. The realization that wage work might be significant for other reasons than to fulfill familial responsibility was most strongly articulated by second generation women. As instrumental to their adaptation to American urban-industrial life, they began to claim as their right to keep part, if not all their earnings and spend it on the growing variety of consumer products that helped to distinguish "Americans" from "greenhorns". (30)

The diversity of New York's and Brooklyn's working class was bound up with the complex relationships that developed among workers whose backgrounds and social positions not only differed, but who labored in industries with distinct structures and patterns of development. Consequently, the workers' "world of work" featured a variety of experiences -- some distinguished by a specific trade, some by a particular job classification, or membership in a trade union. In the same industry or within the same occupation, on the job experience was not uniformly shared, as employers' hiring practices and evolving divisions of labor "discriminated" according to nationality and gender.

The lack of a shared experience for many workers could be attributed to the conditions that engendered employment of women and newly arrived immigrants. For example, in the cigarmaking industry

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technological innovation during the last two decades of the nineteenth century made the hiring of women more economically desirable and feasible. Entering a male dominated craft, women were deemed as intruders, associated with nonunion, that is, lower standards of labor, whose employment either should be contested, or failing that, restricted to the more menial tasks of the trade. (31)

Recently arrived immigrants, especially during periods of economic downturns, often encountered resentment by earlier immigrant workers already "entrenched" in their occupations. In the building trades, for example, the bricklayers' union, reacting to the seasonal influx of migrant masons from Great Britain and Ireland, required that all members be U.S. citizens, and officials of the painters' union complained of cheap competition from Russian and Swedish immigrants. (32) In the garment trades, the German led Brotherhood of Tailors looked upon the incoming Russian and Austrian-Hungarian immigrant tailors as exacerbating an already overcrowded labor market. For their part, Austrian-Hungarian immigrant tailors, concentrated in "inside" (factory) work, considered their Russian-Polish immigrant counterparts employed in "outside" shops to be responsible for degrading the trade --"debasing the quality of workmanship and the conditions of the shop". (33)

The diversity of New York's and Brooklyn's working class entailed many implications for labor activity. Building tradesmen, printers, cigarmakers and clothing workers each experienced a "world of work" in which conditions of employment and relations of production were overladen with diverse ethnic and gender identities. Consequently, the development of a "shared" experience within a trade, not to mention across trade lines, was problematic. In essence, the forging of workers'

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common understanding of their interests and needs -- expressed in labor activity and organizing trade unions -- was challenged if not attenuated by the multivalent experience of workers -- as craftsmen and industrial laborers, as men and women, as "settled" immigrants or native-born Americans and immigrant newcomers.

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FOOTNOTES

1. United States Census Bureau. Eleventh Census (1890). **Population**, Part II, pp. 640-641 and 704-705; and United States. Twelfth Census (1900) Special Reports. **Statistics of Occupations**, pp. 634-641.

2. United States. Industrial Commission, Volume 15, p. 319.

3. Richard Oestreicher, "Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1877-1895" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1979), pp. 16, 513 and 516.

4. David Doyle, "Unestablished Irishmen: New Immigrants and Industrial America, 1870-1910," ed., Dirk Hoerder, **American Labor and Immigration History, 1877-1920's** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), pp. 193-220; and Hartmut Keil, "Chicago's German Working Class in 1900," Harmut Keil and John Jentz, eds., **German Workers in Industrial Chicago** (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University, 1983), pp. 26-29.

5. United States. Eleventh Census (1890), **Population**, Part II, pp. 640-641 and 704-705.

6. **Ibid.**

7. United States. Twelfth Census (1900), Special Reports, **Statistics of Occupations**, pp. 634-641.

8. Alice Kessler-Harris, **Out to Work** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 21-24; and Lynn Weiner, **From Working Girl to Working Mother** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp. 13-30.

9. Jesse Pope, **The Clothing Industry in New York** (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1905), pp. 51-53 and 66-73; and Mabel Willet, **The Employment of Women in the Clothing Trade** (New York: Columbia University, 1902), pp. 38 and 68-69.

10. United States Eleventh Census (1890), **Population**, Part II, pp. 640-641 and 704-705.

11. **Ibid**; and United States. Twelfth Census (1900), **Statistics of Occupations**, pp. 634-641.

12. Margery W. Davies, **Woman's Place is at the Typewriter** (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), pp. 51-78; and Lynn Weiner, pp. 19-24.

13. Elyce J. Rotella, "The Transformation of the American Office: Changes in Employment and Technology," **Journal of Economic History**, 41 (March 1981), 51-57; Julie A. Matthaei, **An Economic History of Women in America: Women's Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism** (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), pp. 220-223; W. Elliott Brownlee and Mary M. Brownlee, **Women in the American Economy: A Documentary History, 1675-1929** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 32 and 33. By 1900, about a third of all clerical workers in the

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United States were women, compared to only four percent twenty years earlier. In addition, whereas women constituted nationally only 40 percent of the typists and stenographers in 1880, twenty years later they represented three-fourths of these jobs. Data is from Margery Davies, "Women's Place is at the Typewriter," Richard Edwards, Michael Reich and David Gordon, eds., **Labor Market Segmentation** (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath, 1975), p. 286.

14. Weiner, pp. 20-23; and David Katzman, **Seven Days a Week: Domestic Service in Industrializing America** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 65-72 and 80-81.

15. See Kessler-Harris, pp. 135-139; and Brownlee and Brownlee, p. 257.

16. Explanation for the different proportions of first and second generation women in the garment trades is difficult because of the hazy demarcations among some of the job classifications such as dressmakers, tailoresses and seamstresses. For instance, it is not clear from the U.S. Census data what distinguished a tailoress from a seamstress other than the fact that the former, as the title tailor did in the case of their male counterparts, generally referred to a job classification in the men's clothing industry, and seamstress referred to a title in the women's clothing industry. Dressmakers apparently included women who doubled as proprietors and workers in small shops engaged in sewing, mending and selling of women's wear. In short, it was not as precise a classification as sewing machine operator or shirt, collar and cuff maker. The former pertained to basters and finishers employed in the ready-made clothing industry, particularly in the larger inside shops, and the latter covered those engaged in producing a specific line of goods.

17. Quoted in Bryan Palmer, "Social Formation and Class Formation in North America -- 1800-1900," ed., David Levine, **Proletarianization and Family History** (New York: Academic Press, 1984), p. 260.

18. Edwin Fenton, "Immigrants and Unions: A Case Study Italians and American Labor 1870-1920" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1957), p. 378.

19. Jesse Pope, **The Clothing Industry in New York**, pp. 86-91; United States. Eleventh Census (1890), Manufacturing Industries. **Statistics of Cities**, pp. 704-706 and 708-710; and New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Twelfth Annual Report** (1894), p. 69.

20. John Briggs, **An Italian Passage** (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 8-10; Robert Foerster, **The Italian Emigration of Our Times** (Harvard University Press, 1924), p. 531; Donna Gabaccia, **From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change Among Italian Immigrants 1880-1930** (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), pp. 62-64; and L.A. O'Donnell, "From Limerick to the Golden Gate: An Odyssey of a Irish Carpenter," **Ireland Studies**, (Spring-Summer 1979), 76-91.

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22. Louise Tilly, "Comment on Yans-McLaughlin and Davidoff Papers," **Journal of Social History**, 7 (Summer 1974), 453-454.

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24. David Doyle, **Irish-Americans, Native Rights and National Empires** (New York: Arno Press, 1976), pp. 57-58.

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31. Patricia Cooper, "From Handicraft to Mass Production: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories 1900-1919" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1981), p. 248; and Helen Summer, **The History of Women in Industry in The United States** Volume 9 of **Report on Conditions of Women and Child Wage-Earners in the United States** (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), p. 199.

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CHAPTER FOUR — THE WORLD OF WORK IN THE GARMENT TRADES

In late nineteenth century New York and Brooklyn each occupation -- garment workers, cigar makers, printers and building tradesmen -- experienced a distinct world of work. This variety, be it the organization of production or conditions of employment, existed within each occupation. Workers in different branches of an industry and specializing in particular product lines not only encountered different production methods, but different work environments as well. Moreover, the work experience of each occupation in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn underwent changes that significantly influenced the relationships between workers, their ability to organize at the workplace and their socio-economic position.

The pervasive diversity of industrial structure and conditions of employment were exemplified most by the experience of garment workers. New York's and Brooklyn's clothing industry consisted of two major branches -- women's and men's clothing (coats, pants and vests) -- and at least three minor branches: shirts, men's furnishings (ties and suspenders) and children's wear. The first two provided consumers with relatively less expensive ready-made garments -- cloaks, suits and coats. By 1890, these branches had eclipsed their custom-made counterparts in the industry's market, as 60 percent of men's clothing was ready-made, compared to just 40 percent a decade earlier.(1) The sales value of New York's and Brooklyn's factory produced (ready-made) men's clothing totaled $75 million, tripling that of custom-made men's clothing. In 1890 ready-made men's clothing "factories" employed 40,000 workers compared to the 22,000 employed by custom-made shops. Meanwhile, among the ready-made women's clothing shops, were some of the

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garment industry's largest manufacturers, employing as many as 200 workers and holding assets worth between $500,000 and $1,000,000. In 1890 the factory product sector of the women's clothing industry employed about 23,000 workers. (2)

These two branches of the garment trades differed significantly. For example, cloakmaking and coatmaking differed in organization of production, methods of production and allocation of labor, not to mention, wage rates and working conditions. Within both branches two systems of production coexisted: factory produced wholesale manufacturing (also known as "inside" shops) and contracting-subcontracting production based in "outside" shops, including "sweatshops" and small contractor managed shops. Sweatshops consisted of space rented in tenement houses, where entire families worked and lived together in the same quarters, and "flat" shops where the families' work and living quarters were marginally separated. Contractors also rented rooms above storefronts and in basements during the busy season. During the 1880's and 1890's outside shops proliferated. According to estimates by New York State's Assistant Factory Inspector, John Franey and Charles Reichers of the United Garment Workers in 1895, as many as 6,000 sweatshops existed in New York and, 900 in Brooklyn, which employed a minimum of 50,000 and 10,000 workers, respectively.(3) Moreover, in the 1890's a third form of production facility emerged in the making of coats, pants and vests called "transition" shops, consisting of skilled machine operators, who often owned their sewing machines, and a handful of assistants. These shops were modest in size, usually employing between 15 and 50 workers, and exhibited a simple division of labor.(4)

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What differentiated these systems of production was not simply the locus of work, but the allocation of responsibility for arranging for production itself. In the "factory" system, the manufacturer served as the entrepeneur who invested capital, hired labor, either directly or indirectly through his foremen or superintendants, and sold the merchandise as wholesale to retail stores and consumers alike. In most cases, the factory mode involved the integrated or complete production of garments at one facility, although in the making of coats and pants, it was also common for the finishing stages to be parcelled out to families working at home. Outside shops operated according to a complex contracting and subcontracting network. Wholesale manufacturers paid a fixed amount to contractors who assumed responsibility for establishing production sites and hiring labor. All the manufacturers provided contractors with was cut cloth; the rest of the material and equipment contractors furnished themselves. Some enterprising contractors in turn sublet the work to subcontractors who acted as the middlemen, deciding on whom to hire and overseeing the actual production of garments.(5)

Although contractors assumed responsibility for hiring, in practice manufacturers strongly influenced the wage rates paid by contractors since they "set" the price for the completion of orders. Intense competition flourished among contractors vying for business with wholesale manufacturers. The premium lay with cost cutting, especially the price for labor. "The sweator's price", observed Jacob Riis, the journalist who studied life in New York's Lower East Side, "is not what he can get, but the lowest he can live for and underbid his neighbor ... The manufacturer knows it, and is not slow to take advantage of his knowledge."(6) Charles Reichers, General Secretary of the United Garment

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Workers, testified before Congress that manufacturers paid contractors 45 cents for every overcoat, from which wages were paid, and in turn sold each finished product for $7. (7)

The growth of outside shops was fueled by an expanding labor pool drawn from recently arrived immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. The garment industry set up shop in New York's Lower East Side where Russian Jewish and Italian immigrants had settled partly because of the availability of work. Accordingly, by the late 1880's, they began to surpass German and Irish immigrants in the labor force. The large proportion of women and children among Jewish immigrants, in addition, swelled the available labor pool and contributed to the outside shops' chronically low wage rates. The demographic and economic forces shaping the city's land use patterns also influenced the structure of the men's and women's clothing industry. As New York's population grew dramatically from 1880 to 1900, the demand for low cost housing accelerated. Lower Manhattan's housing stock, in the main multifamily dwellings, was replenished with the construction of tenements whose per unit cost declined during this period. Simultaneously, rental fees and the sales value of commercial space per square foot increased, thereby providing an incentive to manufacturers either to expand outside lower Manhattan or circumvent the problem of higher rents altogether.(8)

By resorting to the contracting system, clothing manufacturers fulfilled two related needs: finding a reliable, flexible and plentiful source of labor and lowering per unit fixed and variable costs.(9) The tenement house as both workshop and living space -- the epitome of the public's image of the sweatshop -- was conveniently located, usually within walking distance of the larger wholesale manufacturers of cloaks

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and suits situated along Broadway above Chambers Street and below 14th Street. Consequently, the spatial dispersal of production facilities proved not to be an economic obstacle; instead it was a boon for the ready-made clothing industry.

Closely related to the dual systems of production in the women's and men's clothing industries were multiple technological imperatives and divisions of labor. In cloakmaking, where inside shops were more common, mechanization proceeded more systematically, covering most phases of production, including the cutting and notching of cloth, sewing of seams, making of buttonholes and pressing. Likewise, in the production of cheaper grades of children's jackets, overalls, trousers and shirtwaists mechanization prevailed. In coatmaking, where inside work was the exception, only the initial cutting phase and the sewing of seams were mechanized. This was particularly the case in the making of finer grades of goods, such as Prince Albert coats and Vicuna worsted vests.(10)

Ironically, however, coatmaking featured a division of labor noted for its specialization whereby each worker organized by teams performed specific tasks. This system of production earned another name -- task work -- since workers were paid by the number of tasks they completed. Most outside shops featured at least two teams supervised by a contractor who often worked alongside them preparing work for the operators, setting buttonholes and trimming linings. Within the teams a hierarchy of skill prevailed whereby operators, or tailors, completed the more intricate stitching, basters sewed the seams with long, loose stitches, pressers pressed the seams and cloth and finishers removed loose threads and sewed buttons.(11)

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Variations in the team system developed, shortly after its introduction in the late 1870's. In outside as well as inside shops, a modified team system (known as section work) developed in which each job title -- operator, baster, presser and finisher worked with at least one, or in the case of pressers, five assistants, all with their own assigned specific task organized by degree of difficulty. For example, in this scheme, the first operator sewed the edges of coats and pockets, and the second operator sewed by machine the linings and seams. In the 1890's, manufacturers and contractors alike, seeking to circumvent union demands to curb the hiring of women and children in the men's clothing industry, introduced the "Boston" system which subdivided the labor process even more extensively. The "Boston" system proved especially efficient in the making of "open work" coats in which the linings and outside material were done simultaneously and not separately as they were earlier. In cloakmaking the team system functioned somewhat differently. Teams included operators, tailors, pressers and finishers. Tailors often doubled as pressers who oversaw the work of finishers, and in the production of finer grade cloaks performed the precise stage of preparing the cloth often with the use of hand tools.(12)

In the production of men's and women's clothing, the industrial division of labor coincided with a sexual division of labor. In the men's clothing industry, women were relegated to the position of finisher (the lowest position within the team), sewing buttons, felling armholes and pulling bastings. In coatmaking, women were also hired as edge-basters (further up the industrial scale), working in tandem with basters who traditionally were men. In vestmaking, in contrast, women dominated the basting phase altogether. Moreover, in the enclaves of the

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traditional "home" shop operated by one family, mothers worked as pressers and their daughters served as operators as well as basters. In cloakmaking, at least in the production of cheaper grades, women encountered less job segregation, not only performing the tasks of finishers but pressers as well, although the higher paid positions of operator and tailor remained predominantly in the hands of men.(13)

The specific sexual divisions of labor in the different branches of the garment trades, which had their roots before the Civil War, deepened in the 1880's and 1890's. A number of factors contributed to its rapid development during this period. Men sought the most "skilled" and highest paying positions by virtue of their socially defined role as family providers and their aspirations for self-employment, which traditionally was associated with tailoring. Even with the relative decline of custom-made clothing shops and the virtual disappearence of the artisan tailor in the Gilded Age, tailors and machine operators with little capital could purchase the necessary machinery and tools to become contractors. As late as 1900, it has been estimated, the cost to open an outside shop was $50, compared to the factory (inside shop) start-up cost of $2,000. In coatmaking, men eschewed those positions considered inferior, namely those, requiring less skill and embodying less prestige among their peers. Moreover, in most of the garment trades, certain physical requirements favored the employment of men over women. The cutting and preparing of cloth necessitated the use of heavy and cumbersome tools, and the pressing of cloaks and coats entailed the operation of "goose" irons featuring long, heavy cranes, that also required more physical strength than most phases of production.(14)

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If women were not excluded from certain positions, they nevertheless gravitated to particular jobs. For those women who tripled as wives, mothers and family wage earners, working in outside shops (especially in tenement house shops) as basters, bushelers and buttonhole makers had obvious advantages. Outside work permitted women to fulfill the responsibilities of caring for children and household management and perform their specific production tasks. In addition, as indicated by the similar job distribution in inside shops, women found these positions desirable, for they required little formal training and firsthand experience before women could reach the highest rate of pay assigned to each task. This was especially significant since many women entered the wage earning workforce episodically -- in times of family crisis when their husbands or fathers lost their jobs, fell victim to illness, or died. (15)

As the system of production in the garment trades became more diverse and a new division of labor developed, the composition of the labor force changed. In the men's and women's ready-made clothing industries, the role of women proportionately declined, and concurrently the industries' jobs were being filled by recently arrived immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. In the women's clothing industry, although the number of women workers expanded by 80 percent between 1890 and 1900, their share of labor force fell slightly from about 59 to 57 percent. In the men's clothing trade, the decline of women was both absolute and relative. In 1900, there were almost 40 percent fewer women employed in coatmaking than there were ten years earlier, and whereas women constituted 39 percent of coatmakers in 1890, they represented less than a third of the trade's workers in 1900. (16) Edith Abbott,

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studying employment patterns in the clothing industry throughout the United States, observed that the relative decline of women in the men's clothing industrial labor force began in 1860, when the proportion of women stood at 63 percent and dropped steadily to 46 percent in 1900.(17) In New York City, this decline was sharper due to two interrelated factors: the influx of Eastern European Jewish and Italian immigrants, in the main men, (18) and the growth of the task system in the men's clothing industry, especially in coatmaking, which lowered per unit labor costs while increasing output per worker. In short, an alternative pool of labor and a new system of production increased the employment opportunities for men and reduced the incentive of many employers to hire women. (The task system is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.)

Closely related to the changing sex composition of the workforce was a shift in its ethnic makeup. German-born tailors (those in the various garment trades who operated the sewing machines and pressed the garments) numbered 13,900 in 1880 and ten years later, 10,200. In 1900, even counting the native-born male offspring (the 1900 Census included both under German lineage), the number of German tailors fell below 10,000. Meanwhile, the number of immigrant tailors other than from Northern and Western Europe (appropriately called "other" by the Census tabulators), in the main from Russia, Austria-Hungary and Italy, stood at 16,000 in 1890. Ten years later 36,600 of the city 's tailors could trace their lineage to these three countries, with those from Russia representing the majority (20,300). In fact, since 92 percent of New York's tailors in 1900 were foreign-born, it can be safely claimed that the men's and women's clothing industries had found a new immigrant

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source of labor. (19)

The growing presence of men in the garment trades coincided with other trends in the industry. In the 1890's the size of workplaces remained modest, and the proportion of larger establishments employing more than twenty-five workers fell (See Table I.). This trend in size of workplaces reflected the abundance of firms with limited capital assets and the prevalence of shops run by contractors. Inextricably linked to petty scale production in the garment trades was that most firms were "price takers" caught in an intensely competitive market. For contractors, as indicated above, this meant bidding for the business of wholesale manufacturers by offering the lowest price possible, which in practice meant keeping down labor costs.

Table I. The Number of Workers per Establishment in Selected Garment Trades (New York and Brooklyn) and the Percentage of Establishments Employing More Than 25 (1890, 1895 and 1900)

	# of workers per establishment			workplaces with > 25	
	1890	**1900**		**1890**	**1895^**
Men's Clothing*	17.9	16.1	Coats	19.7	6.4
Men's Furnishings	32.3	35.4	Men's F.	20.7	11.0
Women's Clothing@	30.6	27.8	Cloaks	43.3	12.9

* Factory product and material furnished, including coats.
@ Factory product and material furnished, including cloaks and excluding dresses.
^ 1895 was chosen as the point of comparison because in subsequent years the Report of Factory Inspection Bureau was less reliable and useful.
(Calculated from United States. Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufactures in Cities**, pp. 649-681; Twelfth Census (1900), pp. 620-628; and New York State. Inspection Bureau, **Fifth Annual Report** (1890) pp.199-253 and **Tenth Annual Report** (1895), pp.150--625.)

Moreover, the virtual disappearance of workplaces with more than 25 workers in coatmaking and the dramatic decline in the proportion of larger workplaces in other branches of the industry was directly related to the role of women in the labor force, for women's employment

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opportunities tended to increase the larger the workplace. Taking 1895 as an illustrative year (the respective samples consist of hundreds of workplaces), the ratio of women to men in cloakmaking, coat-making and men's apparel shops increased almost as steadily as the size of the workplace rose (See Table II.).

Table II. Ratio of Women and Men in Selected Branches of the Clothing Industry in 1895 (New York and Brooklyn)

	1-25	26-50	51-100	more than 100
Cloaks	1:6	1:3 1/2	1:3	1 3/4 :1
Coats	1:4 1/2	1:4	n.a.*	n.a.*
Men's Apparel	1:3	1:2	1:1	4:1

*n.a. = not applicable since there were no workplaces employing both men and women in these categories.
(Calculated from New York State. Inspection Bureau, **Tenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 150-625.)

The correlation between the sex ratio of the workforce and workplace size was attributable to both the hiring practices of employers and the preferences of workers. The largest manufacturers of cloaks, making up the core of the Cloak Manufacturers' Association, were first and second generation Germans who had few reservations about hiring women, deeming them less likely to join unions, more likely to work at lower rates and conforming to traditional employment patterns. Meyer Jonasson, Chairman of the Cloak Manufacturers' Association, employed 250 women in a workforce of 600 at his Grand Street factory. Albert Freidlander and Company, whose chairman also served as an officer in the employers' association, had an equal number of men and women in an workforce of 250.(20)

Young immigrant women between 16 and 25 found working in the larger shops and factories advantageous since they provided opportunities to be free of parental supervision and to socialize with

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their peers. It appears that women working in factories and other larger "inside" shops were treated with "more consideration" and could earn more, largely because they were less subject to the industry's seasonal shifts in demand for labor. Interviewers for the Commissioner of Labor were told by cloakmakers that some of the major manufacturers -- "Jews of a better class" -- were among the "kindest proprietors" who did not dock pay for lateness. Moreover, one recent study concluded that second generation Russian Jewish women in particular regarded employment in clothing factories as a form of "cultural mobility", an escape from the immigrant ghetto.(21)

Smaller shops, particularly those run by contractors, were less inclined to employ women because there were few incentives to do so. Managers of outside shops had no difficulty recruiting the necessary labor among the city's continual flow of newly arrived immigrants, which remained predominantly men despite the changes in their specific places of origin. Cultural forces also served to minimize the need to hire women. Russian Jewish immigrants who became the core of the men's and women's clothing industries in the 1890's sought out employers whom as **landsmen** they knew personally or who were recommended by relatives and friends who knew them. Likewise, contractors hired friends and fellow townsmen as personal favors and in payment of old debts, or simply, in recognition that the recently arrived immigrant, driven by the urgent need to find a job, would work cheaply. For their part, Eastern European Jewish immigrant men preferred the small outside and inside shop because both were free of the factory's pervasive supervision and discipline. Coatmakers, paid by the piece, had the "liberty" of reporting to work early or late and quitting early or staying late, although in practice

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low pay rates compelled many of them to work longer hours.(22)

While the informal work environment was attractive to some women, the disadvantages of employment in outside shops outweighed the advantages. With piece rates low and the number of tasks often increasing, workdays became even longer and the work pace even more intense. Unless the outside work was done at home, the demands of production conflicted with women's household responsibilities. In addition, in outside shops women found the conversation of men talking about their latest sexual escapades disagreeable. Finally, outside work lacked the "dignity" of factory employment, since it symbolized to immigrant women and their native-born daughters a lowly, "greenhorn" status.(23)

Mechanization of the production process had an ambigous impact on the changing composition of the labor force in the garment trades. Cloakmaking, which featured a relatively less modest average workplace size, a greater percentage of workplaces with more than 25 workers and a greater presence of women workers, appeared by most accounts to be more dependent on machinery than, for example, coatmaking which, as Tables I. and II. indicate, had a small average workplace size, a minute percentage of workplaces over 25 workers and low female-male ratios.

The significance of machinery in understanding the specific makeup of the garment trades' labor force can be best assessed by examining the changing composition of capital in certain branches of the industry. Employers in the women's clothing industry (cloakmaking in particular) and men's furnishings (neckties and suspenders, for example) invested a higher proportion of their capital on land, buildings,

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machinery and tools (fixed capital) than their counterparts in the men's clothing industry. This difference in capital expenditures reflected the greater presence of inside shop production in both the women's clothing and men's furnishing trades. Proprietors of inside shops were more likely to own than rent production facilities, and the larger manufacturers often owned the land upon which their factories were built.

However, unlike the women's clothing industry and men's furnishings, the men's clothing industry (including coatmaking) between 1890 and 1900 showed a consistent increase in outlays on fixed capital as a percentage of total capital and in expenditures on machinery and tools as a percentage of total capital (See Table III.). This shift in the composition of capital in the men's clothing industry indicated the growth of inside shop production and the emergence of "transitional" shops whose proprietors assumed a greater responsibility for providing workers with sewing machines and other equipment than did contractors, the managers of outside shops. Furthermore, although the garment trades remained labor intensive, expenditures on machinery relative to those for wages rose between 1890 and 1900. The rate of increase in the ratio of outlays on machinery and wages was greatest in the men's clothing industry where the number of women in the workforce declined precipitously.

Table III. Changes in the Composition of Capital and Machinery-Labor Ratios in Selected New York and Brooklyn Garment Trades (1890 and 1900)

	Fixed Capital as % of All Capital		Machinery & Tools as a % of all Cap.		Machinery-Labor^	
	1890	1900	1890	1900	1890	1900
Men's Clothing*	4.7	7.0	1.8	3.5	.03	.08
Women's Clothing*	12.7	11.1	9.5	8.0	.08	.11
Men's Furnishings	7.6	16.4	6.6	6.5	.09	.17

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* Factory Product and Materials Furnished. ^ The Machinery-Labor Ratio refers to how much was spent on machinery for every dollar spent on wages. For example, in 1900 eight dollars was invested in machinery and equipment for every one-hundred dollars spent on wages.
(Calculated from United States. Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufactures in Cities,** pp. 649-681; and Twelfth Census (1900), **Statistics of Manufactures,** Part II, pp. 620-628.)

The relatively low expenditure ratio between machinery and wages suggests that in men's clothing, mechanization per se was not the critical factor in production, but that the timing and pace of its introduction were more significant. Indeed, when changes in productivity, as measured by sales value per worker and dollar output per dollar of capital are taken into account, mechanization's role becomes clearer (See Table IV.).

Table IV. Productivity in Selected Garment Trades (New York and Brooklyn)

	Sales Value Per Worker		Capital-Output Ratio*	
	1890	1900	1890	1900
Men's Clothing	$1824	$3394	42.3	35.7
Men's Furnishings	$1845	$2355	30.1	41.0
Women's Clothing	$1845	$2297	24.6	26.6

* The meaning of the capital-output ratio is as follows: Using men's clothing as an example, for every $100 worth of output in 1890, $42.30 of capital expenditures was necessary. In 1900, accounting for inflation, only $35.70 of capital was required to generate a $100 worth of output. The capital-output ratio was calculated by dividing the sales value of the goods by capital expenditures in each branch.
[Calculated from Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufactures in Cities,** pp. 649-681; and Twelfth Census (1900), **Statistics of Manufactures,** Part II, pp. 620-628.)

While the sales value per worker increased in all three branches, only in men's clothing did the dollar output per dollar invested also rise. The reason for this dynamic resided in this branch's prevailing division of labor. As indicated earlier, men's clothing, especially coatmaking, organized production through a task system whereby teams of three to five workers, each with their specifically assigned tasks,

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produced garments. In the 1880's modified team, or section work, also became popular, and in the 1890's some manufacturers and contractors introduced the Boston system.

Team work in all its variations entailed a detailed division of labor which in fact became more developed as refinements in its basic scheme were introduced. In this context, technological innovations in the cutting and preparing of cloth, sewing, pressing and buttonhole making maximized the productivity of labor. Operators, using cutting and spranging machines which dampened and prepared the cloth, by 1895, could cut and prepare six times as much material for coats, vests and trousers in the same time as they could by hand. Even where mechanization was limited to a few phases of production, such as finer and more expensive grades of men's clothing, teams could produce coats and vests in less than one-half the time needed where manual operations were in force. In the manufacture of cheaper goods, where mechanization pervaded, productivity gains were greater in almost all phases of production except for finishing. For example, trousers and jackets could be completed in less than a third of the time required by hand. (24)

In outside shops a less rigid work environment also contributed to high levels of productivity. The lack of set hours and strict rules encouraged worker initiative. Work teams "pushed" themselves to produce, counting on each member to spur each other on, so if "an operator slackened his pace, the baster called for more coats". Although the evidence is fragmentary, operators and basters producing coats could earn more per week working in "outside" shops employing the task system than they could in large steam powered "factories" using the Boston system of labor allocation.(25)

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Technological development and production methods in general helped to shape the structure of the clothing industry. Since the machines used in the making of garments remained simple and limited in their application, employers continued to concentrate their efforts on increasing productivity by efficiently organizing the workforce. Team work, "modified" team work and the Boston system all involved the assignment of clearly defined tasks to individual workers whether they sewed by machine or by hand. This division of labor flourished both in inside and outside shops for the very reason that it did not require sophisticated machine technology. Nor, for that matter, did efficient production methods or industrial productivity require economies of scale -- with high capital outlays and a large volume of output. In turn, since the necessary technology was relatively inexpensive, firms could enter the industry with fewer obstacles.

The contracting system in particular found this environment favorable. Managers of outside shops did not need many machines or large facilities to compete for business. Instead, since the essential cost factor in production remained labor, they offered to produce garments for wholesale manufacturers and distributors for the lowest price with which they could buy labor. And labor not only was cheap but bountiful as well. Owners of inside shops also knew that with only a handful of workers they could produce the cheaper grades of coats, vests and pants and secure a place in the market even in competition with the larger Broadway manufacturers.

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In sum, inside and outside production -- manufacturers and contractors -- coexisted, mutually depending on their respective special attributes to supply a growing market for ready-made clothing. Low capital requirements promoted easy entry into the industry, and consequently small scale production, expressed in the size of workplaces and firms' assets, prevailed. Employers pursued a labor focused rather than technologically oriented approach to productivity, as witnessed by the increasing demands of the task system and team work. These constituted the major features of the garment trades which helped to shape the relations between employers and workers.

These characteristics of the industry were translated into specific conditions of employment. Garment workers experienced long hours, burdensome work loads, intense paces of work and harsh disciplinary measures. In return they found their earnings, except for the most skilled among them, erratic and substandard and their sources of livelihood, if not tenuous, then limited seasonally. Both work in inside and outside shops meant tedious toil and untold hardships. However, the world of the outside shop, in all its dimensions, came to symbolize the worst in industrialization and urbanization, and therefore earned the epithet by laborer, union spokesperson, social critic and public official alike of "sweatshop". In an industry where the overriding stress was speed and volume of production, workers employed in sweatshops faced a more intense pace of work and larger production quotas than their counterparts in inside shops or factories.

Again, this environment logically emanated from the prevailing division of labor expressed in the task system. Each team was expected to complete a specific number of tasks, which, in turn, signified a

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certain number of garments produced. This system originated in the late 1870's in coatmaking shops run by Jewish immigrant contractors who sought a method to promote greater levels of output while keeping labor costs low. During slack seasons contractors took advantage of workers' hunger for work to increase the number of coats per task. This task then became the "standard" with the return of the busy season. In addition, operators testified that improvements in sewing machines made in the late 1880's allowed them to produce 50 percent more coats in the same time than they could earlier in the decade. Consequently, the number of coats per task each team was required to complete inexorably rose. In 1896 teams were required to produce anywhere from fifteen to twenty lower grade coats per task and from twelve to fourteen higher grades per task. Most coatmakers could not complete a task (production quota) in a day unless they worked more than twelve hours. Therefore, rarely did a team produce more than five tasks per week as compared to the average weekly output of eight or nine tasks only a decade earlier. (26)

Garment workers confronted other measures designed to achieve greater output and to reduce labor costs. In 1894, cloakmakers struck inside and outside shops because of what they perceived as unjust increases in their work loads. Strikers told members of New York State's Mediation and Arbitration Board of one manufacturer's practice of upping the required number of tasks twice within a year: from fourteen to eighteen and then to 28. Coatmakers and cloakmakers who sought minimum standards through time work, i.e. specific rates per day for each job classification, discovered that employers could counter these gains by increasing work loads. Those working by the piece (per garment) incurred the practice of additional pay rate cuts, or, when a union-employer

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agreement precluded that, the switching of numbers placed on completed garments signifying their grade and respective pay rate so that they received less.(27)

To promote labor productivity, employers rigorously enforced disciplinary practices that either meant less take home pay for workers, or even the loss of their jobs. "Rebecca" informed the readers of **John Swinton's Paper** of the "abuse" inflicted on her and her coworkers by an underwear manufacturing firm. They had to pay for the thread they used in the making of the underwear, were fined from five to ten cents for any spots or blemishes on the product and additionally fined for coming in late, or laughing, talking and eating during work hours. Shirt, collar and cuff workers could be fined for simply losing tickets issued by foremen representing the amount of trimmings and threads, or the number of the batch on which they were working. Molly Smith, a vestmaker, who "protested" to a contractor that her weekly earnings of $3.90 was insufficient for her needs, was "turned off" (fired) when she vigorously rejected his suggestion that she find herself a "young gentleman" to take care of her.(28)

The extensive work loads, fast work paces and capricious exercise of employer authority took their toll on garment workers. James W. Sullivan sympathetically watched cloakmakers who "saved the half-minutes as they sew, whisking the garments up and down ... without stopping to talk, looking up or apparently without taking a breath". Sam Cohen, soon after arriving in the United States from Russia, was warned by his cousin Jake to avoid the men's clothing factories, for working their power driven machinery was "just the same as having your leg cut off ... That's a trade for a slave!" Stephen Crane's Maggie, as many other

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garment workers, found the air in the shop "strangling" her: "She knew she was gradually and surely shrivelling in the hot, stuffy room." Others found the odor of machine oils "nauseating" and "sickening", and the dusty atmosphere, "choking".(29)

Lack of ventilation, exposure to chemical odors and close contact with carriers of contagious illnesses posed threats to workers and their families. In New York's Lower East Side where tenement sweatshops abounded, the incidence of diptheria, scarlet fever, measles and whooping cough drew the concern of public health authorities. The Board of Health received authorization in 1894 to order proprietors of sweatshops to insure a separation of work space from living quarters, and if necessary the confiscation of garments so that they could be fumigated. Through most of the period, however, a lack of inspectors prevented enforcement of this provision. (30)

If intensification of work and unhealthy working conditions were not enough, clothing workers also faced long workdays. This in large measure stemmed from the low pay rates, especially in outside shops, and the seasonal nature of the garment trades. Workers in tenement shops worked at least twelve hour and at times sixteen hour days to compensate for the fact they might be out of work for as many as six months in a year. In one extreme case, Jacob Riis met two cloakmakers who, in anticipation of a long slack period, worked in an inside shop during the day and at home at night, from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., and for their efforts earned between fifteen and twenty dollars a week. Garment workers employed in inside shops, most of whom were unorganized, also labored from early in the morning and into the night. Clothing cutters, the "aristocracy" of the trade, worked six ten hour days during the

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week; cloakmaking tailors labored eleven hours a day six times a week; coatmakers, irrespective of classification, encountered six twelve hour days, and pantsmakers, among the lowest paid garment workers, labored for sixteen hours during the busy season. Neither were unionized clothing workers spared long days of toil. Coatmakers, cloakmakers, vestmakers and pantsmakers customarily worked five ten hour days from Monday through Friday and a nine hour day on Sunday (Saturday was recognized as the day of rest in respect of the heavily Jewish labor force). Cutters worked from 53 to 55 hours a week, depending on union affiliation.(31)

An even greater diversity existed in the pay rates and earnings of garment workers. Within each branch of the clothing industry workers' earnings varied by job classification. In cloakmaking, from 1890 through 1893, a weekly pay rate gap of two or three dollars existed between each successive rung in the industrial ladder -- operator, tailor and presser -- with a downward spread of six dollars between presser and finisher. In coatmaking, through most of the 1890's, the operators' pay rate surpassed that of basters on the average by two dollars, and pressers and finishers by six dollars. Among workers in the same job classification pay disparities prevailed. Clothing cutters in merchant tailoring shops producing higher grades of coats, and those employed in the larger cloakmaking shops claimed higher weekly earnings than their counterparts working on other garments. In 1895, cutters in merchant tailoring and cloakmaking shops averaged more than $20 a week, compared to weekly averages of $15 for cutters in shops making dresses, pants and shirts. At the other end of the industrial ladder, women finishers employed in cloakmaking shops earned a weekly average of $9, $2 more

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than their counterparts in merchant tailoring shops, and $3 a week more than those engaged in pantsmaking. (32)

The earnings of garment workers varied by sex as well. Women earned less than men in all job classifications and branches of the garment trades. For piece rate workers women's annual earnings were proportionately lowest in the women's clothing industry. (33) Among workers paid by the day or week (time in table), both the absolute gap and relative gap (women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings) was greatest in the men's clothing industry (coats, vests, jackets and pants) (See Tables V. and VI.).

Table V. Average Annual Earnings of Piece Workers in Selected Garment Trades (New York City — 1890)

	Men	Women	Women's Earnings as a % of Men's
Men's Clothing	$600	379	63.2
Men's Furnishings	446	312	70.0
Women's Clothing	554	317	57.5

(Source: U.S. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing Industries**, Part II, **Statistics of Cities**, pp. xxii and xxiii.

Table VI. Weekly Earnings Gap of Men and Women Paid By Time in Selected Garment Trades Grouped by Level of Skill (New York — 1890)

	Gap in $		Women's Earnings as a % of Men's	
	Skilled^	Unskilled^	Skilled	Unskilled
Men's Clothing*	7.65	5.81	46.3	52.5
Men's Furnishings	6.06	3.68	55.5	61.1
Women's Clothing*	6.56	2.89	53.3	66.1

* = Factory product and material furnished. ^ = Skilled positions include operators and basters, and among the unskilled classifications are finishers and buttonhole sewers. Calculated from U.S. Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufacturing Industries**, Part II, **Statistics of Cities**, pp. 684-826.)

Women earned less than men for a number of reasons. In a study of the coatmaking trade by the U.S. Industrial Commission, women were found consistently to be concentrated in the lowest paying positions in the

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finishing phase of production: as edge-basters, a specific grade of finisher, and general finishers. Edge basters, whose tasks included, among others, the lining of armholes and pocket making, were paid at anywhere from one-half to two-thirds of the rate paid operators and three-quarters the rate paid pressers whether they were employed in a small outside shop or large inside shop. General finishers experienced even lower piece rates. Those who felled coats received four cents a piece, and those who tucked buttons received three cents a piece. Accordingly, finishers earned less than $10 a week, while operators and pressers earned between $12 and $15.(34)

Yet even when women entered the ranks of skilled operators and pressers, they earned less than their male counterparts. This pay gap persisted because men were more willing and capable of working long hours and generally more experienced in their trade. In coatmaking where the number of garments per task tended to rise with the transition from busy to slack seasons, and in the men's clothing industry where piece rates remained especially low, differences in work effort could result in sharp variations in earnings. In the men's clothing industry, especially in coatmaking, women worked fewer days during the year, and consequently their annual earnings were lower (See Table VII.).

Table VII. Number of Days Worked and Annual Earnings of Coatmakers, Vestmakers and Jacketmakers in 1897

	Men		Women		
	Days	Earnings	Days	Earnings	Women's as a % of Men's
Coatmakers	224	$349	173	$207	59.8
Vestmakers	210	376	213	247	65.8
Jacketmakers	204	339	192*	235*	69.3
Average	213	355	193	230	64.8

* = These figures were tabulated after calculating the average number of days and earnings per quarter since data for one quarter in 1897 was missing. (Source: New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Sixteenth Annual Report**, pp. 854-857 and 868-871; and U.S. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, **Immigration**, [Washington, D.C., 1901], pp. 339-342).

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Even more consistent was the disparity between the pay rates and earnings of union and nonunion garment workers. Pay differentials were far ranging among the most skilled workers including cutters and trimmers and more modest among coatmakers (tailors, in the main), pantsmakers, shirtmakers and vestmakers. Organized cutters earned from $6 to $10 more than those unorganized, and trimmers occasionally represented by the same union as cutters, netted $3 to $5 more than their nonunionized counterparts. In the men's clothing industry, the weekly pay gap between union and nonunion workers averaged $2. Moreover, during the 1890's the less skilled unionized garment workers -- edge-basters, finishers and bushelers in coatmaking -- enjoyed pay increases despite the onset of an economic depression in 1894. Between 1891 and 1895 both the high and low weekly earnings of edge-basters rose by $1, while the high and low weekly earnings of bushelers and finishers increased by $2. In contrast, cutters (both in coat and cloakmaking) experienced no increase in their $20 weekly earnings. Among the more skilled garment workers, only coatmaking operators represented by the United Garment Workers were able to raise their weekly pay rates. These gains made by coatmakers, including operators and finishers, resulted from the relatively successful strikes against the task system in 1894 and 1895.(35)

Differences in the weekly earnings of union members existed according to specific union affiliation as well. In general, members of the United Garment Workers, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, had higher pay rates than their counterparts represented in the Knights of Labor. For example, in 1895, pressers in the United Garment Workers #17 claimed a daily pay rate of $2.50 compared to the Knights of

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Labor/Knee Pants Pressers' rate of $1.67, and cutters from the United Garment Workers #4 and #69 earned on the average $24 a week compared to the $18 earned by members of the Gotham Association of Knife Cutters.(36)

The higher average weekly earnings of the organized compensated in part for the chronic seasonal shifts in employment. In 1897 and 1898, as the economy emerged from the Panic of 1893, most clothing workers, regardless of sex, job classification or trade, experienced dramatic shifts in the number of days they worked per quarter. For example, both unionized female and male coatmakers and cloakmakers worked more than twice as many days during the busy months as they did during the slack period. Not unexpectedly, the earnings of garment workers reflected this seasonal ebb and flow. In the two year period, women earned more than a $100 during the busy months (usually in late summer and early fall) and less than $50 during the slow winter months. Men reportedly earned about twice as much during the busy season as they did in the slack season. Only the cutters enjoyed regular employment and consistently high earnings. In the slowest quarter they worked nearly as many days as women garment workers did in the busy months, and their lowest quarterly earnings far exceeded those of all garment workers with the exception of male cloakmakers.(37)

The specific ways production was organized in the clothing industry and the conditions of employment they generated affected garment workers intimately. Chronic seasonal unemployment, the reliance on the task system to allocate labor, the fostering of job hierarchies, an addiction to cost cutting -- just to name a few of the industry's features -- had a far ranging impact. Immigrant families and households

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faced hard choices in the effort to devise strategies of survival. Decisions about where and when to work — not to mention, in what capacity -- were predicated on prevailing job opportunities, economic conditions and each family's needs. Defining the type of work and the conditions that were acceptable became more difficult in the face of a buyer's labor market. Desires for a more comfortable work environment and a better standard of living — and with it improved life chances for family dependents -- appeared beyond workers' immediate control, as the responsibility for decisions regarding hiring, pay rates and hours was divided between manufacturers and contractors. Lastly, the tense coexistence of inside and outside work and the proliferation of workplaces compounded the difficulties of workers seeking to organize collectively and to protect whatever gains had been made through union activity. Clarifying the issues, identifying the loci of power, developing approaches for organizing, adopting concrete tactics and deciding when to act loomed as more challenging if not problematic in the garment workers' "world of work".

With employment irregular and earnings erratic, garment workers developed a "family economy". Male heads of households worked as many hours as possible to compensate for low pay rates and long stretches of unemployment. Married women burdened with the responsibility of raising young children nevertheless contributed to the family's income. Proprietors of the smaller inside shops and contractors for the larger manufacturers provided opportunities for women to work at home, felling the armholes and bottoms of coats and finishing pants. However, with piece rates for felling coats as low as eight cents, and for finishing pants eleven cents a pair, it was not uncommon for entire families to be

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mobilized into income earning activity. Dr. Ann S. Daniel, outdoor visiting physician for the New York Infirmary for Women and Children, observed young school age children working alongside their parents both at evening and during school hours. Meanwhile the New York State Assembly's Tenement House Committee found that most garment workers did not withhold children under thirteen years old from school.(38) However, during hard times brought on by layoffs, strikes, or a parent's death, children would leave school to find employment. While the inside shops did not depend on child labor, outside shops approaching deadlines for their orders would hire children with the aid of adult workers who would sign parents' certificates affirming the children's legal age.(39) Likewise faced with a family crisis, women would enter the wage earning workforce or double their efforts at home to earn cash.

The precarious economic position of many garment worker families also encouraged some to take in boarders who themselves incurred economic and personal hardship, and found in the households of relatives, friends and **landsman** or **compatria** a measure of protection. The one to three dollar weekly contributions each boarder made were essential within the family economy. They supplemented the income of many families whose earnings from garment work for many did not cover expenses and thereby represented the difference between subsistence and destitution. For others they could enable garment worker families to save as much as thirty dollars a month and perpetuate the hope of escaping poverty and seemingly endless toil. (40)

The prevalence of the contracting system loomed large not only in the garment workers' conditions of employment but in their efforts to change them. Identifying who was responsible for pay rates and hours was

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confusing in light of the practice of manufacturers paying contractors a fixed price from which they were to purchase the necessary labor to complete the manufacturers'orders. Many garment workers had contact only with contractors who decided whom to hire and not with the manufacturers who actually determined wage or piece rates. Therefore, outside shop hands dissatisfied with the weekly earnings and working conditions turned immediately to the contractors for redress, only to be rebuffed by the cry that they were helpless victims of the manufacturers. When the more determined garment workers took their case to the manufacturers, they often encountered the convenient response that the issues in question were out of their hands.(41)

The difficulty of locating the appropriate target for increasing wages, reducing hours and upgrading conditions was additionally compounded by the blurring of lines that separated contractor from worker. In practice, the former, increasingly in the 1880's, had become more than a labor agent who knew how to tap the mines of labor dwelling in New York's and Brooklyn's tenements. In coatmaking shops the contractor performed the duties of a tailor, instrumental in the production process, as well as exercising the responsibilities and prerogatives of a proprietor.(42)

For many coatmakers employed in outside shops, the contractor was not a natural antagonist but a potential ally; in fact, coatmakers and others in the ready-made men's clothing industry in particular apparently tolerated the objectively oppressive conditions of the sweating system because they actually aspired to be contractors and thereby employers themselves. Garment workers saw contracting as a path to higher incomes, and the personal independence and social status that

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accompanied self-employment. For young women workers, contractors and owners of the small inside shops, that became a prominent feature in the cloakmaking and coatmaking trades, were not only employers but caretakers who served as surrogate fathers and uncles offering friendly advice.(43) In short, then, an absence of any significant social distance between employer and worker, at least in one system of production -- appearing as expressions of common aspirations for some and paternalism for others -- fostered a budding community of interest in the garment trades.

If anything, however, the garment worker's world of work was fluid, experiencing the impact of different forces. Therefore, the harmonious relations between employer and wage earner promised by the intimacy of the outside shop was suspect almost from the start. As the ready-made men's and women's clothing industries increasingly stressed the economies of a detailed division of labor whose refinements introduced more specialization, coatmakers and cloakmakers, for example, developed relations of production that forged links among workers distinct from their employers -- be they manufacturers or contractors.

Despite the clear gradations of skill, especially evident in the making of finer lines of coats and cloaks, roles converged in the labor process. Garment workers, whether or not they were paid by the piece or by the day, worked in teams and were responsible for a certain number of tasks. Each worker's earnings by necessity was predicated on the efforts of his or her team. The fact that operators were paid at a higher rate than basters, who in turn received more per piece or day than finishers, did not alter the mutuality of interests in production.

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Despite the proliferation of job classifications, a homogenization of the basic conditions of employment occurred. Lower rates and the increase in the number of tasks became the experience of most workers in both ready-made clothing industries.

Conditions of employment and relations of production found expression in concrete labor activity. Garment workers organized around issues that addressed the most burdensome features of their work experience. They formed loosely knit unions to resist pay rate reductions and increased work loads. Often these unions disappeared as quickly as they emerged, after the completion of job actions, whether or not they were successful. Seasonal unionism prevaled in the 1880's and 1890's largely because of certain structural features of the garment trades. In anticipation of the possibility of securing wage hikes during the busy season, workers joined unions. However, as the slack period inevitably returned, layoffs and often wage cuts or increases in work loads followed. Unions seemed unable to prevent these developments, and as a result union membership and loyalty suffered. Also the frequent change in the location of outside shops and the fluid entry and exit of contractors into the industry contributed to high rates of labor turnover which hampered organizing workers into stable unions.

Strikers, in general, targeted the wholesale manufacturers in the men's and women's clothing industries, especially those who constituted the manufacturers' association in the cloakmaking and coatmaking trades. This included not only those who directly worked for the manufacturers but those employed by contractors as well. At times, garment workers elicited the support of the contractors who, during the "Triple Alliance" strike in 1890, formed a union of their own to press the

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manufacturers' association to grant higher prices and thereby higher pay rates. Even when contractors were not so cooperative, garment workers discovered that confrontations with their outside shop employers yielded few gains. Many strikes against contractors produced agreements covering pay rates, work loads and hours that proved to be virtually unenforceable. Therefore, both workers seeking immediate results and unions eyeing well grounded agreements bypassed the middlemen in the garment trades altogether.

In fact, cloakmakers and coatmakers through their unions came to the conclusion that their conditions of employment could be improved only by eliminating the contracting system and, with it, the contractors. The more durable unions like the United Garment Workers campaigned against the proliferation of "sweatshops", calling for more vigilant inspection of tenement house workplaces and the creation of affordable housing outside the congested Lower East Side.(44) Occasionally, the sweatshop issue was framed in more personal terms. The passage of tougher child and female labor protective legislation and the stricter enforcement of existing laws, it was hoped, would reduce the strident competition for jobs that employers exploited. In the same vein, union spokespersons clamored for careful regulation of immigration to the United States, citing the dangerous use of contract labor and the influx of "paupering classes". Recently arrived immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe often did not share an enthusiasm for immigration restriction since many hoped that relatives and friends left behind could rejoin them in the United States.(45)

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Garment workers waged job actions against what they considered the epitome of their plight: the task system. In 1894 and 1895 coatmakers struck for the abolition of payment per task and the introduction of standard weekly or daily pay scales. In less propitious times, coatmakers either sought increases in piece rates or a commensurate reduction in the number of required tasks. In any event, most strikes erupted in late summer or early fall during the busy season. (46)

Not only were strikes frequent, but they were bitterly contested. The large manufacturers, many of whom were first and second generation Germans, showed scant respect for the Eastern European immigrants they indirectly or directly employed. These "uptown" Jews, craving the respectability and prestige that wealth promised, considered outside shop workers in particular "unwashed" and "crude". Occasionally this contempt was expressed off-handedly during negotiations with union leaders whom the manufacturers were careful to distinquish from those who "discredited" their nationality.(47)

For their part, garment workers chose from their ranks leaders who could "hold their own" against the self-proclaimed upstanding employers. They were expected to be clever, cunning, resourceful, articulate and above all -- "presentable". One of the cloakmakers' most inspiring leaders -- Joseph Barondess -- survived the trials and tribulations of costly strikes and the internecine warfare of anarchists and socialists because he maintained an emotional adulation among many who saw in him their image of "lowly" immigrant turned American citizen.(48)

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Whereas the social distance between manufacturers and clothing workers infused strikes with "cultural" friction that made resolution of the issues in contention difficult, the intimacy of employer and worker in the outside shop and the smaller inside shop gave rise to prolonged and heated walkouts. Resistance to calls for higher pay, or further squeezing of labor contradicted workers' expectations that contractors, by virtue of emerging from the ranks, would understand their circumstances. Repeated wage cuts and demands for more tasks tended to erode the paternalistic relationships between contractors and workers. Contractors were no longer generous landsmen, but greedy "sweators" who deprived women basters and finishers from earning enough to keep their families afloat and male operators from saving enough to open their own workshops. To contractors, those who withdrew their labor when orders were due displayed ingratitude and threatened their hard-earned yet tenuous independent status.

The unions garment workers organized adapted to the specific structural features of the clothing industry. The dichotomy between custom-made and ready-made clothing found expression in distinct unions representing workers doing similar types of work. For example, in 1890 custom tailors formed the United Custom Tailors' Union under the auspices of the International Journeymen Tailors' Union, while tailors in the ready-made men's clothing industry established a number of organizations. These included the Knights of Labor affiliate, the National Progressive Tailors' Union and the United Brotherhood of Tailors (part of the United Garment Workers affiliated with the A.F.L.). Moreover, pantsmakers, suspender makers and shirt makers each created their own unions. In the ready-made women's clothing industry a

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plethora of unions emerged in the 1880's and 1890's, representing cloak operators, cloak finishers and dressmakers. (49)

Workers organized by specific craft, although a quasi industrial union movement appeared as well. Cutters began the Gotham Knife Cutters' Association of New York as Knights of Labor Assembly #3038 and expanded in 1886 to include those preparing cloth in the cloakmaking trade. In the 1890's some unions began to cross the demarcations of particular branches, product lines and job classifications. In 1891, the United Garment Workers launched a campaign to organize cloakmakers, suitmakers, pantsmakers and children's jacketmakers, and, in the same year, socialists, inspired by the formation of the United Hebrew Trades, created the United Garment Trades, consisting of cloakmakers, coat operators and tailors. Even here, however, the pattern of organization embodied the different job titles that prevailed in the men's and women's clothing industries. For example, the United Garment Workers had separate locals for basters, bushelers, tailors, cloak and suit cutters.(50)

In conclusion, within the garment workers' "world of work" diversity prevailed. Production was organized in inside and outside shops -- under the aegis of manufacturers or contractors. In the ready-made women's and men's clothing industries, in particular, the system of production along with the size of the workplace, the forms of technology and the division of labor varied by the specific garment produced. Cloaks were just as likely to be produced in a "factory" as in a tenement workshop, while coats were more likely to be produced in the latter and small inside shops. Coatmaking was less subject to machine technology than cloakmaking, limited to the cutting and preparing of

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cloth and the sewing of loose seams, but ironically more subject to a detailed division of labor where a strict hierarchy of skill held sway. Moreover, cloakmaking had a larger proportion of women in the workforce who assumed a greater variety of positions than they did in coatmaking, which depended more on the labor of immigrant men and relegated to women work deemed "inferior".

Similarly, there existed a wide range in the garment workers' conditions of employment. Outside shop hands were more likely to be paid by the piece, tended to earn less per week and faced longer hours than their counterparts in inside shops. In the women's clothing industry, cloakmakers on the average earned more than dressmakers, and in the men's clothing industry, coatmakers earned more than either pantsmakers or jacketmakers but less than vestmakers. Indicative of the sexual division of labor, men predominated within the higher paid positions of cutter and operator while women concentrated in the lower paid positions of busheler and finisher. More gender blind were the garment workers' bouts of chronic unemployment, an apparent occupational "hazard" regardless of skill or job classification.

Both in their efforts to simply persevere and their attempts to change their world of work, garment workers demonstrated the impact of varying influences. The dual systems of production complicated if not attenuated the process of initiating meaningful concerted activity. The frequency and militancy of strikes and the fluid and uneven scope of union organization were enmeshed in a maze of manufacturers and contractors. Accordingly, the industry's specific structure accounted for much of the labor movement's ebb and flow.

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FOOTNOTES

1. United States Congress, House, **Report of the Committee on Manufactures and the Sweating System**, 52nd Congress, second session, 1895. pp.iv and v.

2. The number of workers in factory produced men's and women's clothing does not include those employed in "outside" shops, commonly called sweatshops. See second page of this chapter (p. 112) for discussion of "outside" shops. United States. Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufactures in Cities**, pp. 88-97 and 649-681; and R.G.Dun and Company, **Reference Book and Key Containing Ratings of Merchants, Manufacturers and Traders Generally Throughout the United States** (1895)

3. New York Legislature, Assembly, **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Condition of Female Labor** (1896), pp. 278-282.

4. **Report of the Committee on Manufactures and the Sweating System,** p. 219; Mabel Willett, **The Employment of Women in the Clothing Trades** (New York: Columbia University, 1902), pp. 34, 35 and 44-46; and Jesse Pope, **The Clothing Industry in New York** (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1905), pp. 50-51.

5. Pope, pp.61-65 and 276-279.

6. Jacob Riis, **How the Other Half Lives**, (New York: Hill and Wang, [1957] and 1890), pp. 88 and 89.

7. **Report of the Committee on Manufactures and the Sweating System,** p. 224.

8. Real Estate Association, **A History of Real Estate, Buildings and Architecture in New York City During the Last Quarter of a Century**, (New York, 1898), p.121.

9. Pope, pp. 62 and 63; and Edward Pratt, "Industrial Causes of Congestion of Population in New York City," **Studies in History, Economics and Public Law**, XLIII, (1911), 27-33, 35, 36 and 82-83.

10. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report**, (1895) pp. 197 and 198; and U.S. Bureau of Labor, **Thirteenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor** (1898), Volume I, p.38.

11. **Report of the Committee on Manufactures and the Sweating System,** pp. 182 and 183; Willett, pp. 36, 37 and 41; and U.S. Bureau of Labor, **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor**, (1904), pp. 541 and 544.

12. Pope, pp. 67-74; Willett, pp.42 and 43; and Victor Clark, **The History of Manufacturing in the United States**, Volume II (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1929), pp. 447 and 448.

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13. Pope, pp. 74 and 75.

14. Egal Feldman, **Fit For Men: A Study of New York's Clothing Trade** (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1960), pp. 98-103; **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor** (1904), p. 541; Willett, pp. 37 and 38; Christine Stansell, "The Origins of the Sweatshop," Michael Frisch and Daniel Walkowitz, eds., **Working Class America** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 83; and Benjamin Stolberg, **Tailor's Progress** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Doran, 1944), p.5.

15. Willett, pp. 68-72; and Elizabeth Pleck, "A Mother's Wages: Income Earning Among Married Italians and Black Women, 1896-1911," Michael Gordon, ed., **The American Family in Historical Perspective** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), pp. 492-496.

16. The number of women employed in the men's clothing industry declined from 16,000 in 1890 to slightly less than 10,000 in 1900. During this period, the size of the workforce fell from 41,000 to 30,000. In the women's clothing industry the number of women rose from 14,000 in 1890 to 25,000 in 1900, but did not rise as sharply as the entire workforce which almost doubled in size (from 23,000 to 45,000). Data from United States. Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufactures in Cities**,pp. 88-97 and 394-407; and Twelfth Census (1900), **Statistics of Manufactures**, Part 2, pp. 620-628.

17. Edith Abbott, **Women in Industry** (New York: D. Appleton, 1909), pp. 233-244.

18. For example, about 60 percent of adult Jewish immigrants entering the United States between 1886 and 1898 were men, and during the late Gilded Age four-fifths of all Italian immigrants were men. Salo Baron, **Steeled by Adversity: Essays and Addresses on American Jewish Life** (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), p. 281; and United States. U.S. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, p.295.

19. Calculated from U.S. Eleventh Census (1890) **Population**, Part II, pp. 640, 641 704 and 705 and Twelfth Census (1900) **Occupations**, pp. 638 and 640. On Germans as garment workers, see James Lapham, "The German-Americans of New York City, 1860-1890," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, St. John's University, 1977), p. 40.

20. New York State. Inspection Bureau, **Tenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 291 and 335.

21. U.S. Bureau of Labor, **Fourth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor: Working Women in Large Cities** (1888), p. 21; and Susan Glenn, "The Working Life of Immigrants, 1880-1920," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1983), pp.246-249.

22. Ernest Poole, "Task Work Bowing to the Factory System," reprinted in Allen Schoener, ed., **Portal to America: The Lower East Side, 1870-1925**

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(New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 170.

23. Glenn, pp. 246-251 and 259-261; Willett, pp. 68-72; and Rose Cohen, **Out of the Shadow** (New York: G.H. Doran, 1918), p. 82.

24. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 38, 39 and 17-204; and United States. Bureau of Labor, **Thirteenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor**, p. 38.

25. United States. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, 344-346.

26. Pope, pp. 128-136; and Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor, pp. 545 and 549. The task system developed in the men's clothing industry in other cities, including Chicago, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. United States. Industrial Commission, Volume VII, p. 194.

27. New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 46 and 47; and New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Twelfth Annual Report** (1894), p.70.

28. **John Swinton's Paper**, July 4, 1886; Stolberg, p. 12; and Lee Meriwether, **The Tramp at Home** (New York: Harper Brothers, 1889).

29. James W. Sullivan, **Tenement Tales of New York** (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1895), pp. 50, 71 and 72; Sam Cohen, **The Transplanted** (New York: the author, 1937), p.114; and Stephen Crane, Maggie: **A Girl of the Streets** (New York: D. Appleton, 1897), pp. 65 and 66.

30. **Report on Manufactures and the Sweating System** (1894), p. xv; and **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Condition of Female Labor** (1896), pp. 333-340. Other problems confronted public authorities trying to eliminate some of the sweatshops' most objectionable features. A 1897 law which restricted the tenement house production of men's clothing and cigars to only family members living in an apartment proved to be unenforceable since the distinction between "private" dwellings and rented facilities was hazy. Two years later, the State legislature passed a more stringent law, prohibiting the manufacturing of any clothing, cigars and artificial flowers without a license from the Factory Inspection Bureau, which would certify that rooms designated for production were clean and sanitary. The law authorized inspectors to confiscate the garments made in unlicensed tenement house shops and to seek fines from the courts for repeated violations. However, the frequent movement of contractors, who closed down operations to open new ones in other locations, continued to hamper these regulatory efforts. See Willett, pp. 63, 64, 150-163; and U.S. Industrial Commission, Volume VII, p. 185.

31. **Report on Manufactures and the Sweating System**, pp.xix and xx; Riis, pp. 94 and 97; and New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics. **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896).

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32. **Eleventh Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor** (1896), pp. 149-160; and Pope, pp. 87 and 90.

33. Four-fifths of the women and two-thirds of the men employed in New York's men's clothing industry earned by the piece, while almost sixty percent of both men and women in the city's women's clothing industry received weekly rates. See U.S. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing Industries**, Part II, **Statistics of Cities**, pp. 86-97 and 394-406.

34. United States. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, pp.347-350 and 364-366.

35. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics. **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896), pp. 738-750.

36. **Ibid.**

37. U.S. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, pp. 339-342; and Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Sixteenth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 854-857 and 868-871; and **Seventeenth Annual Report** (1899), pp. 166, 167, 228 and 229.

38. **Report on Manufactures and the Sweating System**, pp. 187-193; and New York Legislature, Assembly, **Report of the Tenement House Committee** (1895), pp. 148-157.

39. **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Condition of Female Labor**, p. 63.

40. **Report on Manufactures and the Sweating System**, p. 185; Willett, pp.92-95; and Riis, pp. 93 and 94.

41. Henry White, General Secretary of the United Garment Workers, in his testimony to the Industrial Commission described the contractor as trapped in "a sort of infernal cooperative system by which he shared his misery with the dependent workingmen". Industrial Commission, Volume VII, p. 186.

42. For a description of evolution of contracting system, see John R. Commons' comments in the U.S. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, pp. 320-323.

43. Glenn, pp. 243 and 244.

44. For a most articulate and forceful case for tenement house reform and construction of new housing, see **The Garment Worker**, August 1898.

45. For example, note testimony of John Lennon, President of the Journeymen Tailors' Union of America, to House Committee on Manufactures and the Sweating System (1895), pp. 216 and 217.

46. New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 14 and 15; **Ninth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 224 and 225; and **The Garment Worker**, December 1895, p.6.

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47. See, for example, **New York Sun**, June 15, 1890.

48. Barondess' leadership qualities drew much attention from New York's daily press. See **New York Sun**, August 26 and September 10, 1894.

49. **New York Sun**, May 2, 1886; James O'Neal: **A History of the Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters Union, Local 10** (New York: Local 10, 1927); and Lewis Lorwin (Levine), **The Women's Garment Workers Union** (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1924), pp. 33-66 and 95-99.

50. Lorwin (Levine), pp. 11 and 87 and 88; William Leiserson, "A History of the Jewish Labor Movement in New York City," unpublished B.A. Thesis (University of Wisconsin, 1908); and **The Garment Worker**, November and December, 1895 and August 1897.

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CHAPTER FIVE — THE LABOR ACTIVITY OF GARMENT WORKERS: UNIONS AS CALLS FOR ACTION; STRIKES AS THEIR PRIME MOVERS

As garment workers faced an industry that thrived on low wages and intense work loads, they found it necessary to organize unions. In the 1880's and 1890's labor unionism carried different meanings to its participants in the garment trades. For many, the raison d'etre of unions was to strike against contractors and manufacturers alike to secure immediate wage concessions; for others, labor unions represented a vehicle, primarily through trade agreements, to eliminate the more oppressive aspects of the industry and thereby promote a measure of stability in labor-employer relations; and for some, unions potentially constituted a mechanism to facilitate the organization of workers as a class in pursuit of sweeping social change.

For whatever reason garment workers organized unions, the strikes they waged bore the stamp of their participants. Their breadth of interests and depth of activity demonstrated the influence of workers' immediate work experience, political commitments and ideological orientation. In their efforts to establish priorities, develop strategies and define tactics, garment workers called on their involvment in New York's and Brooklyn's socialist, anarchist and labor reform movements. Similarly, the dynamics of union organization and strike mobilizations pulsated with the rhythm of their constituents. Strikers elicited the support of community associations energized by a culture forged by immigrants in their adopted homeland.

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Garment workers' unions emerged, disappeared and re-emerged with a regularity and rapidity that defies description. Unions appeared when it became evident that workers faced employers bent on wage cuts or intransigent on the issue of upgrading conditions of employment. Yet workers often did not regard unions as useful or practical after the completion of a strike. Essentially they viewed unions as ad hoc formations, instruments to deploy in their contest with employers. Nevertheless, throughout the period some workers understood unions to be more than temporary shelters from the storm, and strove to build permanent edifices to house the ranks of labor. This ebb and flow of seasonal unionism and institutional development moved in many directions. The multidirectional movement expressed the pressure of rival organizational affiliations -- the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor -- and conflicting ideological tendencies -- socialists against non-socialists, or socialists against anarchists. At other times, most notably from 1889 to 1892, the centripedal force of cooperation among different unions and even consolidation of parallel organizations into a larger more integrated body held sway.

Cloakmakers appeared to be tireless in their efforts to organize unions. From 1881 to 1886, under the auspices of the Knights of Labor, cloakmakers organized to increase wages. Despite, or because, of their intermittent success in securing wage hikes, the unions formed by cloakmakers were short-lived.(1) In 1886, when workers throughout the garment trades as well as building trades, cigarmaking and printing launched concerted campaigns for reductions of the work day and pay raises, cloakmakers organized the Independent Cloak Operators Union and the Independent Cloak Finishers, representing 1000 and 250 workers,

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respectively. That same year shirtmakers and suspendermakers formed unions. However, by 1889, the only traces of labor unions in women's clothing and men's furnishings were two small Knights of Labor local assemblies, representing women dressmakers and shirtmakers.(2)

Coatmakers' efforts to organize unions were more extensive and less transient. Coatmakers too showed a propensity to form unions in preparation for a strike, but, in contrast to cloakmakers, were just as likely to continue as to disband their strike-born unions. Between 1884 and 1886 three different coatmaker unions emerged. In 1885, a year after its founding, the United Tailors' Union (U.T.U.) won a 12 hour day and established a permanent work exchange bureau to help tailors adjust to the industry's seasonal cycles. In 1886, however, internal conflict between socialists and non-socialists left the union barely intact. Simultaneously, two young Russian Jewish immigrant socialists, Abraham Cahan and Bernard Weinstein, initiated a drive to organize the Jewish Tailors' Union which devoted most of its energies to propagandizing about the role of labor unions in building a socialist movement.(3) In addition, coatmakers created the Progressive Tailors' Union #1, affiliated with the Knights of Labor. The union reached a peak in 1886 with 5,000 members, organized in five sections, each representing a particular "craft" or occupational classification. Nevertheless, the Progressive Tailors' Union also by 1889 was all but a memory, leaving tailors in the men's clothing industry virtually unorganized. Only those employed in the custom-made men's clothing trade claimed membership in a union, the Journeymen Tailors' National Union, which had a foothold in some of the expensive Fifth Avenue shops.(4)

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In contrast to the transitional unions of the cloakmakers and the uneven development of their counterparts among coatmakers, clothing cutters throughout the 1880's maintained the torch of trade unionism. The ability of cutters to organize relatively durable unions in large measure rested on their position in the production process. They performed the primary tasks of the cutting and preparation of cloth without which coats or cloaks could not be made. Their labor demanded the skills of physical strength and precise judgment -- neither of which was duplicated by machine technology.

Founded in 1884, the Gotham Knife Cutters' Association, Knights of Labor Local Assembly #3038, expanded in 1886 to include the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association and amalgamated with the Beehive Cutters' (underwear) Association. Over the next two years, the Gotham Knife Cutters assumed a low profile. The Knife Cutters, 125 strong, held weekly meetings which featured regular reports from delegates to District Assembly 49 of the Knights of Labor and New York's Central Labor Union, and reminders to members to respect union rules, especially those concerning working with nonunion cutters.(5)

Although the post 1886 period represented a decline in the fortunes of garment workers' unions and a dampening of militant labor activity, there were signs of revitalization. In October, 1888, at a meeting organized by members of the Yiddish speaking Branch #8 of the Socialist Labor Party, the United Hebrew Trades (U.H.T.) was created. The founders of the U.H.T. proclaimed that a central body overseeing the development of labor unions was necessary to assist the "Jewish proletariat ... to free itself more quickly from the filth of the pig market and to throw off the yoke of the various contract systems...."(6)

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In 1889 and 1890, largely due to the tireless efforts of Bernard Weinstein, the one-time cigarmaker, shirtmaker and Socialist Labor Party activist, and Morris Hillquit, a twenty year old shirtmaker who had only lived in the United States for three years, the United Hebrew Trades steadily grew. When cloakmakers encountered a lockout by manufacturers in October, 1889, its organizers mobilized support for the strike-born Operators' and Cloakmakers' Union. By the time the lockout ended, six months later, the Operators' and Cloakmakers' Union, with its 7,000 members became the largest constituent union in the U.H.T.(7)

Cloakmakers joined the knee pantsmakers and shirtmakers whom the U.H.T. helped to organize in 1889. By the end of 1890, the U.H.T. could boast of a federation of garment workers' unions, representing tailors, pantsmakers, children's jacket makers, buttonhole makers and suspendermakers. For the next two years, the United Hebrew Trades was instrumental in the formation of unions among pressers and overalls makers as well as many other workers in the apparel industry. At its zenith the United Hebrew Trades consisted of 40 unions of which about a quarter were garment worker unions. (8)

The movement to organize garment worker unions gained momentum in the early 1890's. In 1891, the United Garment Workers, in part inspired by dissatisfaction with the U.H.T.'s socialist orientation, was formed. It aimed to organize cutters, tailors and operators among others in the different branches of the clothing industry. Cutters, in the main of Irish and German descent, initially assumed leadership, but quickly were rivaled by men's clothing tailors, organized into the United Brotherhood of Tailors. In 1892 and 1893 the United Garment Workers (U.G.W.) expanded its base by establishing the United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers.(9)

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The drive for consolidation continued, although the emphasis, unlike previous efforts in 1889 and 1890, was on reinforcing rival alliances and not the fusion of parallel organizations. As the United Garment Workers extended its reach to cloakmakers, suitmakers and workers employed in the production of children's clothing, other unions developed under the umbrella of the United Hebrew Trades. (10) Formal separatism erupted into open conflict when the Executive Board of the U.G.W. voted in 1893 not to recognize the Pantsmakers', Vestmakers' and Children's Jacketmakers' Unions since they remained linked to the U.H.T. The U.H.T. originally raised an olive branch, reiterating its commitment to organize workers as part of the American labor movement and asserted it always urged members of these unions to affiliate with the U.G.W.

In 1894, however, the U.H.T. inaugurated a campaign to organize coatmakers into the International Tailors' Union because, it argued, the U.G.W. had left the Brotherhood of Tailors moribund by stifling any rank and file criticism of the leadership. This led to the formation of the United Garment Trades, which unlike the United Garment Workers did not possess an A.F.L. charter, but instead drew its support from independent socialist led unions and Knights of Labor affiliates. (11)

The conflict between socialists and non socialists in garment worker unions continued unabated. In 1896 the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, established by the Socialist Labor Party to promote socialism within the labor movement as an alternative to the A.F.L. launched the Progressive Cloakmakers. In turn, the SLP's opponents began the United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers #1. During the next three years the United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers developed into a viable union consisting of

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10,000 members organized by craft, or specific job classification, locality and nationality. Locals existed for operators, tailors and pressers, for Brownsville and Brooklyn at large and for Polish and Italian members. (12)

The competition among unions arose largely because of differences in political orientation and loyalty. Anarchists and socialists assumed leadership in the efforts of cloakmakers, pantmakers and vestmakers to organize collectively. Anarchists valued labor unions not as vehicles for the improvement of conditions of employment but as arenas for the dissemination of ideas about "social revolution", that is, the need for workers' direct rule at the workplace and community. Socialists, while recognizing the role unions could play in improving conditions of employment, nevertheless considered the unions' major virtue as teaching the lessons of cooperation and developing the prerequisite awareness for workers to act as a united class. Socialists, in contrast to anarchists, held that the true litmus test for workers' "class consciousness" was at the ballot box. Therefore, they urged unions to affiliate officially with the Socialist Labor Party, or at the very minimum, urged the rank and file to vote for the party's candidates. This conception of politics became an issue of contention, especially among the cloakmaker unions in the late 1880's and early 1890's.

Moreover, many garment workers did not share the anarchists' and socialists' zeal for social change, believing instead that unions essentially existed to ease the burdens of their work lives. Among these non socialists were those who valued unions as collective bargaining institutions capable of avoiding strikes and introducing some stability in the relations between workers and employers. Many of

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these differences came to a head with the formation of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance in 1896. The Socialist Labor Party under Daniel DeLeon's leadership sought the establishment of "socialist" unions and thereby embarked on a path of dual unionism that not only antagonized such non socialist led unions as the Brotherhood of Tailors and United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers but resulted in a split among socialists as well.

Organizational rivalries aside, garment workers displayed an interest in common concerns and strategically approached these concerns in similar ways. Cutters, cloakmakers and coatmakers all stressed such basic issues as wages, hours, job security, work rules and union recognition. Despite shifting emphases from time to time, the many different unions in the garment trades adopted collective bargaining, union shops, self-help, cooperatives and mutual support in pursuit of their objectives. In addition, many of the garment worker unions nurtured a vibrant inner life, marked by frequent meetings -- during which union policy was intensely discussed and political questions hotly debated -- and a broad range of social activities that strengthened the participants' esprit de corps.

In an industry where competition was rampant and production decentralized, garment workers sought standardization of their conditions of employment. Among coatmakers and others in the men's clothing industry, this meant an attack on the task system and the growth of outside shops. In 1886 and again in 1894 coatmakers struck to pressure wholesale manufacturers to assume direct responsibility for wage rates and hours. In the wake of the second dispute, the United Brotherhood of Tailors' walking delegate, Meyer Schoenfeld, sought an

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interim agreement with contractors whereby tailors working on better grade garments pledged to work only for those contractors who did not employ "tenement" labor. Such a pact promised contractors a reliable supply of labor and standard prices, and tailors, higher and more stable rates of pay.(13)

Cloakmakers, too, pressed for standardization of their conditions of employment. In the massive strike of 1890, when cutters and contractors stood by cloakmakers represented by the Operators' and Cloakmakers' Union, the Cloak Manufacturers' Association agreed to establish a new wage structure and to eliminate the inside contracting system. In 1898 the United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers #1 pursued collective bargaining agreements with the larger manufacturing firms. One agreement reached with Meyer Jonasson created a price list with detailed scales of pay for each job classification and line of work along with clearly defined workdays. For example, operators sewing fancy straps earned 1.15 cents for every six and those doing fancy stitching earned 1.25 cents per sleeve. Inside workers were to work from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and outside workers, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.-- both with an hour off for lunch. (14)

The collective bargaining process, nevertheless, remained tenuous through most of the 1880's and 1890's. Union-employer contracts, referred to as trade agreements, usually applied to individual shops, and rarely to a craft, not to mention an entire branch of the industry. Employers circumvented a union's reach by sending work to nonunion shops. As a countervailing strategy unions adopted trade or union labels, hoping in the process that this would facilitate the establishment of union shops and thereby enable workers to reap the

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benefits of standardization of their conditions of employment.

The United Garment Workers in particular campaigned for the introduction of union labels. Early in the 1890's the U.G.W. entertained the option of a state seal as well, so long as it certified that certain minimal workplace standards regarding the location of production, the employment of children and health conditions were enforced. Later in the decade, the union decided to agitate exclusively for a union label and refused to grant it to any shop with fewer than 25 workers. The U.G.W. sought to make the union label more attractive to employers by linking it to a proposal for mediation of industrial disputes. One scheme called for the formation of a Board of Conciliation and Arbitration to consist of representatives of the different garment worker unions, the Cloak Manufacturers' Association, the Clothing Manufacturers' Association and the Contractors' Mutual Protective Association. This format would preclude the necessity of calling strikes, or for that matter, lockouts as well as eliminate the practice of blacklisting union members.(15)

For some clothing workers, standardization translated expressely into job security and the protection of a craft's integrity. Clothing cutters represented both by the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association and the Gotham Knife Cutters' Association legislated standards which they implemented by withholding labor from employers and penalizing members who did not honor the union's standards. Union rules defined the cutters' tools as short knives and shears while "outlawing" long and jagger knives. Any member using the latter two tools faced a $50 fine. Likewise, cutters in Local 4 of the United Garment Workers, in recognition of the long knife's threat to their jobs, sought to limit the number of suits when compelled to work with

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long knives. The United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association set strict rules governing apprenticeship, limiting apprentices to one per cutter for a three year period with a graduated wage scale, starting at $6 a week and culminating at $15. The Gotham Knife Cutters required members to gain permission from the Executive Committee to teach the skills of the craft and could be fined $5 if they ignored the procedure.(16)

Searching for ways to enforce their standards, unions paid close attention to the details of internal organization, seeking ways to overcome any symptoms of fragmentation that might reduce their leverage with employers. The Gotham Knife Cutters' Association stipulated that strikes required authorization of the executive board, a precondition for the release of strike pay. The United Garment Workers' constitution penalized locals which called strikes without the sanction of the executive board by requiring them to defray the entire costs.(17) The United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers #1 went even further in stipulating the necessary conditions for sanctioning strikes. Strikes could only be called by the General Executive Board after strike votes were conducted in the shops of each local. The Executive Board would entertain a strike resolution only if 75 percent of the shop workers were union members, and even then a two-thirds majority was required. (18)

In addition, many unionized garment workers, particularly the skilled, stressed a code of conduct which valued self-discipline, loyalty and individual responsibility. Cutters were encouraged, and not simply constitutionally guided, to see the union's work as their own. Therefore, work rules, whether they pertained to apprenticeship, or the use of certain tools, pay and time standards and employment opportunities, were only significant if union members remained prepared

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to report any violations. Cutters who worked alongside nonunion counterparts, or for employers who openly and consistently did not adhere to union standards, faced the prospect of financial penalties, public censorship and ostracism by their peers.(19)

The United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers pursued a more constitutional approach to defining the responsibilities of union members. "No member", its constitution read, "shall debate in the shop, or in the street regarding matters which concern the Brotherhood". Any member acting as a "procurer" of nonunion members during a strike could expect to be expelled. Moreover, any cloakmaker becoming a contractor or foreman had to forfeit his membership. To enforce these strictures, union members were held to be duty bound to report any violators, "traitors", or "scabs".(20)

Unions did not simply make demands on workers; they provoked many to think more broadly and deeply, helped to foster a comraderie among union members and provided practical aid during troubled times. Members of the Gotham Knife Cutters' Association frequently debated the virtues of political and social reforms such as the Australian ballot, Henry George's single tax, the eight hour day and cooperatives.

The idea that workers could organize production in a manner that avoided the imperatives and pitfalls of wage labor especially proved attractive. To their sponsors, cooperatives constituted not only a democratic system whereby the majority ruled and workers retained an equitable share of the product of their labor, but a more efficient mode of economic organization, producing better quality goods at lower costs than those by "capitalistic speculators". Shirtironers represented by the New York Labor Club sponsored a ball to raise funds for a

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cooperative shop in 1886 after their efforts to improve working conditions proved unsuccessful. In 1887, the Tailors' Progressive Union helped to initiate an exploratory conference to establish a cooperative association. Workers had to demonstrate their ability to make a coat, vest or pair of pants to participate in the cooperative. Members could buy more than one share at $10 a piece, but nevertheless each was entitled to only one vote. When 800 members of the Pantsmakers' Union faced a lockout by the Contractors' Association in 1890, they established a cooperative to provide temporary employment. In 1896, the United Garment Workers tried to launch a cooperative clothing factory in Long Island, beyond the reach of sweatshop owners, where union pay scales would prevail. (21)

Cooperatives remained exceptional, appearing usually in the midst of a protracted strike or lockout and when unions otherwise could not wrest concessions from employers. In addition, few were successful. Even when cooperatives proved not to be feasible, mutuality among union garment workers was not uncommon. Sometimes it found expression in their informal social activity, and on other occasions it asserted itself through more formal channels, such as the establishment of union benefit plans and mutual aid societies, and declarations of solidarity with strikers. Picnics became annual summertime fare for Knights of Labor affiliates within District Assembly 49, such as the Gotham Knife Cutters' and Tailors' Progressive Union. Strikes prompted workers to seek ways to spend their free time as well as raise financial support for their cause. Clothing cutters engaged in a long dispute with Browning and King held a benefit in December 1886 featuring a violin solo, a father and son banjo duet and choral music. The United Hebrew

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Trades in 1890 sponsored a performance of a Yiddish play, entitled "Esther and Gedy" to assist striking shirtmakers. Later that same year, the Shirtmakers' Union helped to organize a concert and a play to raise funds for striking knee pantsmakers. Cloakmakers facing eviction and hunger during their 1894 strike against the Cloak Manufacturers' Association, found Wahala Hall, where their union regularly held their meetings, a home away from home. There cloakmakers sang and danced, or otherwise eagerly conferred about the strike's progress when they were not napping on improvised beds.(22)

This social-cultural dimension of garment worker unions was a source of strength to members. Picnics, benefits and other social gatherings contributed to the development of a common identity as workers and trade unionists. These activities served to integrate workers, many of whom possessed little trade union experience, into the life of the organization. In this way the responsibilities, demands and the rights of union membership could be instilled. Moreover, during the trials and tribulations of strikes and lockouts union sponsored social events provided a lift for sagging morale and offered practical assistance to the needy.

Union membership not only provided workers with "roses" but "bread" as well. Needy members of the Gotham Knife Cutters could tap a special fund to help when out-of-work. The Gotham Knife Cutters, the Cloak and Dress Suit Cutters and the United Garment Workers maintained regular strike funds. The various cloakmaker unions, however, improvised strike assistance for their ranks, often drawing on the United Hebrew Trades and community based fraternal organizations in the process. In fact, such mutual aid offered, for some garment workers, a

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union's raison d'etre. Therefore, when unions lacked the necessary resources -- more often than not the case -- or simply dissolved, garment workers resorted to founding mutual aid societies. Following the demise of the United Custom Tailors' Union in 1896, Italian tailors formed the Italian Tailors' Society, inviting all regardless of nationality to contribute and take advantage of its sick and funeral benefits. Socialists, recognizing immigrant workers' need for mutual aid, established the **Arbeiter Ring** (Workmen's Circle) in 1892. The Workmen's Circle provided sick and funeral benefits and through weekly forums sought to promote "scientific" secular culture as an alternative to Jewish religiosity.(23)

Mutuality did not end with the sharing of benefits. Occasionally garment workers supported each other's strikes, and honored the calls for boycotts by workers in other trades. In 1890, clothing cutters provided financial assistance to knee pantsmakers and cloakmakers on strike. That same year members of the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association struck in sympathy with locked out cloak operators. In turn, Cloak Operators and Makers #1 answered the Cloak Manufacturers' Association's lockout of the cutters by forming an alliance with the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association that resulted in an unqualified victory for both cutters and cloakmakers. In September 1894, the Amalgamated Clothing Cutters pledged not to cut cloth for any who refused to pay striking members of the United Brotherhood of Tailors the union scale and honor a ten hour day. A month later, 1,000 members of the Cloak and Suit Cutters' Union joined forces with the cloakmakers who struck because four manufacturers did not respect the Cloak Operators' demand for a union shop. When the cloakmakers faced the

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prospect of a long strike, they received contributions from the Coat Pressers' Union affiliated with the United Garment Workers, the socialist led Tailors' Progressive Union and the Brotherhood of Tailors who just had emerged from a month long strike against the contracting system in the men's clothing industry.(24)

Labor solidarity was not confined to conflicts in the garment trades. The Gotham Knife Cutters' Association, participating in the Knights of Labor District Assembly 49 and New York's Central Labor Union, urged members to boycott nonunion beer brewed in St. Louis and tenement labor made cigars sold by the New York firm of Ochinsky, Liebermann and Levy. The Tailors' Progressive Union not only appealed to members to boycott the Oriental Theatre in the Lower East Side in support of the Choristers' Union, but imposed a fine on any member found patronizing the theatre. (25)

Garment worker labor unions owed much of their breadth and depth to the involvement of socialists. German and Russian Jewish immigrants found in the late Gilded Age New York's and Brooklyn's socialist movement echoes of the principles born in the German movement to establish a socialist republic and the Russians' struggle against Tsarist autocracy. Young worker-intellectuals contributed to the founding of newspapers, educational societies, propaganda groups and political organizations seeking to establish bridges to the immigrant working class of both cities. Their most noteworthy efforts -- the development and growth of the United Hebrew Trades from 1889 to 1894 -- followed a decade of false starts, unrealized promises and sobering lessons that apparently failed to dim the movement's optimism.

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Among the earliest attempts to promote socialist labor unionism among garment workers was the **Russian Arbeiter Verein** (Workers' Union), a blend of Russian, Polish and Austrian-Hungarian immigrants brought together through the auspices of New York's German-American socialist newspaper, the **New Yorker Volkzeitung.** The Russian Workers' Union, as its sponsor, participated in the political campaigns of the Socialist Labor Party, issuing literature and holding meetings in behalf of SLP candidates, or otherwise promulgating the socialist program. In 1884, the Russian Workers Union gave birth to the Russian Labor Lyceum, which featured Sunday lectures, debates and discussions on East Broadway, in the heart of the Lower East Side. There, Serge Schewitsch -- editor of the **New Yorker Volkzeitung** -- and two Jewish immigrant socialists, Abraham Cahan and Louis Miller, matched debating skills with recently arrived east London Jewish immigrant anarchists -- Roman Lewis and S. Yanofsky. Schewitsch, whom Cahan credited as having an "indescribable impression" on him as a young man, articulated a "language of socialism" that defined the theoretical distinctions between socialism and anarchism while not losing sight of the immediate practical tasks for the movement's activists.(26)

Many Jewish immigrants, however, spoke neither German or Russian. Therefore, in 1884 the Russian Workers' Union formed the **Yiddish Arbeiter Verein** (Yiddish or Jewish Workers' Union) whose primary objectives was to disseminate socialist principles and to publish a Yiddish labor newspaper. Beginning in 1886 and for three and half years thereafter, the **New Yorker Yiddishe Volkzeitung** publicized the efforts of Louis Miller and Morris Hillquit to organize shirtmakers, the United Tailors' drive against the contracting system and the garment workers'

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abortive attempts to fuse the practices of mutual aid societies and trade unions.(27)

During its brief tenure the **New Yorker Yiddishe Volkzeitung,** by providing a forum for discussions of strategy and by giving credence to union organizing, paved the way for the United Hebrew Trades. Indeed in one of its last issues it advanced the rationale for the creation of a "central body" among Jewish immigrant "green hands": "such an organization could command the respect of the exploiters, as well as that of the American workingman who is prejudiced against other central bodies, and thus shatter the Chinese wall which still separates the Jewish worker from his brothers."(28)

The Jewish immigrant socialists who sought to "shatter the Chinese wall" running across New York's working class emulated the existing labor federations. From the United German Trades, they derived the very concept of an ethnically based body of labor unions. Since 1886 the United German Trades, consisting of unions representing brewers, bakers, cabinetmakers, furniture makers among others, coalesced to serve as a network through which strikes and boycotts could be waged. From the city's Central Labor Union, the organizers of the United Hebrew Trades drew much of their programatic inspiration. Its short-term objectives included the eight hour day, the abolition of the contract and sweatshop system, health and safety inspection of all workplaces, and the abolition of all "class privileges" and conspiracy laws. (29)

What distinguished the United Hebrew Trades from its predecessors among Jewish immigrant workers was not its openness to programs and modes of organization, or for that matter, its commitment to socialist

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principles. Instead the U.H.T.'s distinctiveness resided in its persistent and creative pursuit of ways of fusing elements of Jewish immigrant culture to forge a movement of workers disoriented by the painful experience of proletarianization and adaptation to American society. In January, 1890, the U.H.T. founded the **Arbeiter Zeitung**, a daily workers' newspaper written in Yiddish, organized, like the **New Yorker Volkzeitung**, as a cooperative venture. At Abraham Cahan's initiative, political and economic concepts were expressed in a popular idiom. Cahan used the format of the **sidra** -- the weekly reading from the Torah done in synagogues every Sabbath -- and the style of the **maggid** -- a sermon filled with colorful and allegorical anecdotes -- to illustrate the precepts of socialism and the principles of labor unionism. His regular column drew parallels between the trials and tribulations of Jewish immigrants in New York and the biblical sagas of Moses, Joshua and Queen Esther, and in the process raised the hopes that deliverance from oppression was imminent.(30)

Religious immigrant culture permeated the labor activity of Jewish garment workers as well as the writings of intellectuals. Union meetings among men's clothing pressers, in recognition of their observance of Orthodox Jewish practices, were held in synagogues, and union presidents doubled as Hebrew "scholars". Coat cleaners organized their union meetings as celebrations of "Simchas Torah" (the day commemorating the completion of the weekly reading of the Torah) during which they toasted glasses of beer to cries of "long live the union" and danced to hasidic tunes. Orthodox Jewish coatmakers, veteran tailor Wolf Misselsky observed in 1899, customarily began their annual strikes in September, or to be more exact, on the ninth day of the month of Av,

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when observant Jews sat barefooted in the synagogue to mark the fall of the temple in Jersualem to the Romans. U.H.T. officials were considered representatives of the "Jewish Parliament, the tribunal of the Jewish workers in all the trades". Union members freely quoted from the **Torah** and **Talmud** (the latter, a centuries' old collection of teachings from rabbis and scholars) to reinforce their points. In one common reference, Moses' leadership of Hebrews enslaved in Egypt found a modern parallel in the union walking delegate who similarly promised an escape from bondage.(31)

The religious impulse in Jewish immigrant culture was especially significant in light of the Jews' experience in their original and adopted homelands. In the face of pogroms and other manifestations of antisemitism in Russia, and the material hardships and the psychological trauma of resettlement in an urban industrial society, Judaic beliefs and practices comforted immigrants and provided them with spiritual strength. Although most Jewish immigrants did not devoutly observe the strictures of the religion, i.e, attend syngagogue regularly, honor the sabbath (in fact, many were expected to work on Saturday), or keep a kosher home, few failed to be influenced by Judaism's emphasis on the individual's responsibility to lead a moral life and the collective expectation that as a "chosen people" redemption in one form or another awaited them. Undoubtedly, for some, given the difficulties of adjusting to a new and strange environment, moral sensitivity and a belief in redemption meant a retreat into the religion's more insular world of studying the Talmud and a strict adherence to its commandments.(32)

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Yet others interpreted Judaism's "calling" in a more engaging manner: they found that redemption required collective intervention in the secular world and discovered within the Torah the moral imprimaturs to act decisively. Garment workers and union organizers drew on these precepts while striking against low wages and onerous working conditions and thereby developed a language of protest which transcended the barriers of religiosity and secularism. Abraham Cahan, who probably more than any other Jewish immigrant of his generation, expressed the need for labor organizers -- socialists included -- to respect the religious traditions and loyalities of their **landsleit**, bore witness to the moral urgency shared by striking garment workers when he quoted a vestmaker:

> Ours is a just cause. It is for the bread of our children that we are struggling. We want our rights and we are bound to get them through the union. Saith the law of Moses: 'Thou shalt not withhold anything from thy neighbor nor rob him .... So it stands in Leviticus. So you see that your bosses who rob us and don't pay us regularly commit a sin ....(33)

Although most socialists and anarchists were either nonreligious or antireligious, they shared Judaism's ethical concerns and faith in a redemptionist future. Some of Russia's most influential Jewish socialists who framed the thinking of an entire generation of radicals articulated a powerful "messianic" impulse. Moses Hess and Aron Liberman, writing in the 1870's, viewed Russian Jews as destined by the experience of oppression and their cultural legacy to be in the forefront of the international socialist movement. Both, moreoever, stressed the need for intellectuals to "go to the people" and immerse themselves in the traditions of the "masses" so that they could fulfill their roles as revolutionaries. (34)

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Equally important as the teachings of Hess and Liberman was the fact that many of the Jewish radicals who migrated to the United States had been intimately in touch with traditional Jewish culture as part of their upbringing. In **The Prophetic Minority,** Gerald Sorin traces the background of over 50 radicals active before and after 1900 and demonstrates a majority were "significantly" influenced by religious principles, especially those who were the sons and daughters of rabbis, cantors and **heder** (hebrew school) teachers.(35) Therefore, it was not incongruous that even those who scorned the doctrine and practices of Judaism as obstacles in the development of "revolutionary" consciousness could express the same intense messianism that characterized the religion. In fact, it was this shared messianism that lay behind the ability of antireligious anarchists and socialists to assume leadership of unions in which a significant proportion of the membership were devout Jews. No one testified to the power of a messianic belief in the future more than Marcus Ravage, who as an anarchist in his youth regarded it to be the "soul of the ghetto":

> ... was not this ancient dream of the prophets revitalized and recast into a modern mold, that had the magic power to transfigure the rotting slums into an oasis of spritual luxuriance, and the gloomy, dust-laden factory into a house of light and hope? (36)

The Jewish immigrant culture articulated by garment workers provided the movement to build unions with not only energy but also meaning; undoubtedly, then, its underlying impact was to promote coherence in the face of differences in craft, nationality and political orientation. The influence of socialism in the development of garment worker unions, however, was more ambiguous. Socialists and anarchists assumed strategic roles in the attempts to transcend seasonal unionism

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and overcome the fragmentation of labor activity in the many branches of the garment trades. Garment worker unions (with the exception of the cutters) in all of the trades or crafts could trace much of their roots to the socialist and anarchist movements. The emergence of the United Hebrew Trades essentially crystalized the experience of socialist shirtmakers, pantsmakers and cloakmakers whose efforts in the 1880's bore little fruit, and prepared the way for more successful organizing efforts in the next decade. In the 1890's, both independent of, and under the guidance of the U.H.T., socialists and anarchists, stressing the power of mutual support and community mobilization, helped to organize unions which gained concessions from manufacturers and contractors.

While the socialist-anarchist movement helped to foster consolidation among garment trade unions, it also seemed capable of sowing the seeds of disunity. For most of the 1890's, socialists and anarchists raised their doctrinaire swords, either against each other or against trade unionists who were swayed by neither socialism nor anarchism. Among the cloakmakers, for example, socialists and anarchists contested for leadership of the Operators' and Cloakmakers' Union and then in the International Cloakmakers' Union. Socialists, through the **Arbeiter Zeitung**, and anarchists, through the **Freie Arbeiter Stimme**, bitterly attacked each other. Joseph Barondess, the charismatic leader virtually worshipped by Jewish immigrant workers, sought to maintain his position by forming temporary alliances with socialists and anarchists. During the first year of the Operators' and Cloakmakers' Union's existence and through the victorious Triple Alliance strike in 1890, when cloak operators, cutters and contractors united against

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member firms of the Cloak Manufacturers' Association, Barondess managed to gain the tactical support of the socialists.

In late 1890, however, the differences between Barondess and organizers for the United Hebrew Trades working within the cloakmakers union became manifest. Abraham Cahan, in particular, criticized Barondess for being a "labor czar", guilty of arbitrary behavior and autocratic leadership. The socialists organized an "Anti-Barondeeist" caucus that pressed for Barondess' resignation from his position as Union manager. Barondess warded off this threat by winning a vote of confidence among the union leadership in January 1891. However, when Barondess was arrested and then convicted for "extortion" in May 1891 for extracting a cash payment from a contractor in the settlement of a labor dispute in Jamaica, Queens, the socialists stepped up their campaign to unseat him. While he was in exile in Canada, where he fled fearing that those who posted bond for him were about to withdraw their support, the United Hebrew Trades appointed Cahan a "special" organizer for the Cloakmakers, effectively making him the union's chief spokesperson. Barondess soon regained the upper hand, in May 1892, when he returned to New York, and with the backing of the Central Labor Union and the United Hebrew Trades won a pardon from New York's governor. This resulted in his reinstatement as union manager, a decision the socialist opposition severely criticized, for, in their view, the entire episode demonstrated Barondess' instability and unfitness for office.(37)

Matters came to a head later that year when a dispute erupted over the status of the Operators' and Cloakmakers' Union's delegates to the United Hebrew Trades, and the latter's refusal to recognize Barondess'

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leadership. Consequently, in June 1893 Barondess led the Cloakmakers' Union out of the United Hebrew Trades and in response his socialist opponents renewed their drive to topple him. For their efforts they were expelled from union meetings, and a month later when it was apparent they could not oust Barondess, they launched a rival cloakmakers' union.(38)

That same year the U.H.T. began to organize parallel unions to contest the United Garment Workers which refused to recognize any organization affiliated with the former. The formal rupture between the two organizations followed a three year period in which tensions between socialists and non-socialists had been mounting. One reason for the friction was the U.H.T.'s support for the Central Labor Federation, which many affiliates of the American Federation of Labor scorned after their annual convention in 1890 decided not to seat Lucien Saniel, Secretary of the CLF and a member of the Socialist Labor Party. For two years the SLP's newspaper, **The People**, edited by Daniel DeLeon, bitterly attacked the AFL in general and its President Samuel Gompers in particular, and began to raise doubts, at least among the member unions of the UHT, about continuing their AFL affiliation. In addition, socialists within the United Garment Workers stepped up their campaign of advocacy for independent political action, viz. support for the electoral efforts of the Socialist Labor Party. The entire conflict posed a crisis for the socialists when, in 1895, some in the U.H.T., like Abraham Cahan and Louis Miller, in response to the formation of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance and its policy of "dual unionism", sought to remove the **Arbeiter Zeitung** from the SLP's control. Two years later, the **Arbeiter Zeitung** became a victim of the growing factionalism

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in the socialist movement when it split into two newspapers: the **Daily Vorwarts** and the **Abendblatt.**(39)

While acknowledging the fragmentation that the socialist-anarchist movement promoted, it would be misleading to emphasize this dimension at the expense of its more salient features. Socialists-anarchists helped to instill a greater sense of purpose to garment workers' labor activity, both borrowing from and enriching the Jewish immigrant culture. Through the **Arbeiter Zeitung,** one of the most widely read newspapers among Jewish immigrants, a journalism consisting of fiction and poetry blossomed. Written exclusively in Yiddish, the language of most working class Jewish immigrants if not intellectuals, the **Arbeiter Zeitung** made the principles of socialism more accessible to untutored or uninitiated readers. As a credit to Abraham Cahan's innovative use of traditional religious imagery and symbolism to develop a new literary genre, one Lower East Side worker recalled with delight his discovery of a Yiddish socialist newspaper,

> Although till then I never heard about socialism and its doctrine, still I understood it without any interpretation. I liked it because its ideas were hidden in my heart and in my soul long ago; only I could not express them clearly. . . .(40)

This relationship between the paper and many of its readers became more intimate as more of the **Arbeiter Zeitung**'s energy and space was devoted to portraying the life of Jewish immigrants. Young aspiring Yiddish writers such as Zalman Libin, B. Gorin and Leon Kobrin -- all with experience in the garment trades -- composed colorful sketches, some accentuating the pathos of "ghetto" life and others satirically mocking the idiosyncracies of Jewish immigrants. In one vignette by Libin, a tailor bemoans to his wife the coming of the "new law" (the

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ten hour day) as a "bitter law" because it prevented him from working the long hours necessary to earn more money. In another by Kobrin, entitled "The Pig Story", a "sweatshop boss" brags about how well he is doing in New York, since he is in a position to take advantage of the opportunities presented by other Jewish immigrants, especially young women, seeking work. If some of their characters were essentially caricatures, they nevertheless were sufficiently true to life to strike a familiar chord among many readers.(41)

Less concerned with conforming to any standard of realism was the work of such worker-poets as Morris Rosenfeld, David Edelstadt and Yossef Bovshover. Rosenfeld, who tasted first hand the rigors of sweatshop labor, published many of his poems in the **Arbeiter Zeitung.** In the main they expressed the despair of machine operators who endured a seemingly unending life of exacting toil, but occasionally they sought to arouse the latent anger of workers to reaffirm their humanity. Edelstadt and Bovshover wrote poetry for the readers of **Freie Arbeiter Stimme,** an anarchist newspaper also written in Yiddish. Their work above all was inspirational in its intent and blunt in its tone, recognizing the timidity and narrow-mindedness of sweatshop workers but simultaneously appealing to their sense of self-worth and urging them to fulfill their potential. (42)

The most powerful feature of the socialist-anarchist cultural milieu was its articulation of values that despite their secular nature many immigrants shared. They reiterated that labor's worth resided in its social utility and its potential to better the community, and thereby restated the traditional Judeo-Christian concept that regardless of skill labor was dignified. They appealed to the workers'

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notions of right and wrong and responsibility for one another, and thereby tapped the moral sensibilities at the root of Judaism. Although most of these radicals prided themselves on being cosmopolitan and not the least bit religious, and in general downplayed their "Jewishness", they contributed to a redefinition of the Jewish immigrant identity. In large part, this was result of a creative tension between traditional Jewish culture, to which some in the socialist movement had become sensitive, and the ways of an urban-industrial world with which most Jewish immigrant socialists, and for that matter intellectuals, identified. (43) By enthusiastically adopting Yiddish as their language, socialist-intellectuals found the means to speak and write with greater authenticity to those whom they tried to influence. Moreover, by contributing to **Yidishkayt**, a distinctively Eastern European immigrant blend of literature, theatre and song, they began to bridge the social-psychological gaps between themselves and Jewish immigrant workers. Therefore, it was not suprising to discover socialist principles as part of the garment workers' rhetoric of protest even if most garment workers did not declare themselves socialists, and to find socialists at the helm of many of the garment workers' strikes even if they were not always dominant among the garment worker unions.(44)

Socialists and anarchists left their mark on Jewish immigrant life in other ways. In their own way they helped to foster a sense of community among a generation that had to cope with the wrenching experience of resettlement which left many hopelessly adrift and uprooted. Besides contributing to the Yiddish culture which spoke to, of and for recently arrived Jewish immigrants, socialists sought to show how, through education and cooperation, lowly simple wage workers could

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uplift themselves and enrich their lives. For example, the Workmen's Circle offered members not only the benefits of mutual aid as other **landsmanschaften** did but the opportunity to learn about biology, physics and other sciences. The United Hebrew Trades sponsored weekly lectures in Russian and Yiddish on political economy, history, current affairs and literature.(45)

These efforts were more credible in light of the fact that many socialists and anarchists earned their living as garment workers. Although there remained considerable social distance between the "clodpates", who were consumed by the daily grind of labor and whose idea of leisure was attending a lighted-hearted, amusing play, and the "intellects", who looked forward to any opportunity to discuss the latest book they had read or lecture they had heard, the fact that many workshops in the garment trades were small made it possible for both groups to intermingle, and, just as importantly from the perspective of the "intellects", to demonstrate first hand the example of the self-educated worker. (46)

In trying to develop a sense of community, socialists and anarchists talked of a workers' movement not confined to one occupation or country. The annual May Day celebrations, in which socialists and anarchists played a prominent role, provided participants with the opportunity to identify with a community of workers with common aspirations. On May 1, 1890 3,000 cloakmakers, among 9,000 Jewish immigrant workers, marched to the anthem of the international socialist movement, the "Marseillaise", greeted by cheering bystanders waving red banners from their windows. After reaching Union Square, they listened to speeches of socialists, among them Abraham Cahan, who euphorically

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claimed that May 1 represented the commencement to a revolutionary movement in the United States that would "overthrow capitalism" and "create a new society" built on "true liberty, equality and fraternity".(47)

Garment workers, inspired by socialism's "broad and enobling social spirit"(48), nevertheless found the road to viable labor unions filled with obstacles. The very structure of the clothing industry discouraged the development of labor unions. Outside shops often employing fewer than twenty-five workers proliferated; and home work in the finishing phases of some products survived even the arrival of wholesale manufacturing. The division of responsibility between manufacturer and contractor further compounded the situation, constantly challenging garment workers' organizing abilities and tactical skills. Chronic and acute seasonal shifts in employment disrupted the momentum of labor organizing and potentially eroded the base necessary for stable organizations.

Divisions in the labor force often overlapping by skill, ethnicity and sex also retarded if not blocked the growth of effective unions. The Gotham Knife Cutters, for example, offered to assist "English speaking" shirtmakers in their organizing efforts but maintained a distance from the "greenhorn" shirt operators who also approached the cutters for help.(49) Tailors of German and Austrian-Hungarian descent often assumed a superior posture towards their Polish and Russian Jewish immigrant counterparts, associating them with the declining standards in the trade in the 1880's and 1890's.(50) Within the United Garment Workers a hierarchy according to craft and sex existed. Cutters and tailors (coat operators) established the largest locals and provided the union with

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most of its leaders. Meanwhile, women's tailors (basters and finishers) constituted the smallest locals and characteristically were excluded from union shop provisions negotiated by the United Garment Workers from 1891 through 1895. Similarly among cloakmakers, despite the frontline participation of women in the historic 1890 strike, female basters and finishers were explictly exempt from the ten point agreement covering wages, hours, job security and work responsibilities.(51)

The apparent lack of influence among women in coatmaking and cloakmaking flowed from a number of factors. The episodic character of women's participation in the labor force in addition to their propensity to do homework either left many beyond the reach of unions or more immediately concerned with maximizing the earnings upon which their families depended in times of crisis. However, on this last point, a caveat should be offered. Women garment workers per se did not eschew labor unions. Among cloakmakers, coatmakers, pantsmakers and shirtmakers they proved to be the most resilient strikers and expressed an unqualifiable enthusiasm for conducting the everyday work of labor organizing.(52) On balance, though, the specific circumstances of their work experience and Gilded Age cultural constraints created serious obstacles to women's involvement in the trade union movement and fostered an attitude among male workers that undervalued the labor performed by women.

By the turn of the century, garment workers' unions had made only limited inroads in organizing the clothing industry's workforce. After a decade of intense labor activity, marked by widespread strikes and the formation of new, and often, competing labor federations, in 1898 only a minority of garment workers belonged to unions. Approximately 30 garment

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worker unions claimed 15,000 members. Cloakmakers constituted the largest group of organized workers (9,700), followed by the cutters (1,400). Among men's clothing workers only the pantsmakers had more than a thousand organized. Unionized garment workers represented 17.5 percent of the industry's workforce in the making of ready-made women's clothing, men's clothing, men's furnishings and shirts, and about 15 percent if we include those employed in dressmaking, buttonhole manufacturing and custom-made men's clothing.(53)

Because of their minority status unions found it extremely difficult to enforce gains whenever they were able to wrest them from their employers. Contracts, or trade agreements, negotiated in the midst of strikes often went unobserved by employers once the pressure ceased. In fact, broken agreements represented a constant source of renewed strikes, leading unions to press contractors and manufacturers to post bonds and to lobby for legislation making the agreements enforceable in courts.(54) Meyer Schoenfeld, on behalf of the Executive Board of the United Brotherhood of Tailors, expressed this dilemma most forcefully in an open letter to employers, declaring the union's intention to eliminate the contracting system: (55)

> On four occasions, after a heroic strugle, we forced the contractors to grant the ten hour day and a minimum wage scale. We even induced them to give security for the faithful performance of the agreements entered into. Although successful in each count, the terms of the agreement were ignored as soon as the busy season was over and old conditions again restored.

Employers did more than simply ignore or circumvent negotiated agreements. In late 1891, two of the largest cloak manufacturing firms — Blumenthal Brothers and Benjamin & Caspary — "ordered" the contractors to whom they sent their work not to renew their agreements with the

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Cloakmakers' Union. During the depths of the slack season of January, 1892, 300 contractors locked out 2,000 cloakmakers, which in turn provoked the 800 employed directly by the two manufacturers to strike in sympathy. When the contractors' lockout fizzled, Blumenthal and Benjamin & Caspary resorted to sending their work to nonunion shops in Jamaica, Queens, ultimately breaking the strike and severely damaging the union in the process.(56) More insidiously, when manufacturers assumed responsibility for production and employment, garment workers, to their dismay, discovered former contractors serving as foremen. Paid bonuses for driving teams to produce beyond the minimal quota, contractors-turned-foremen helped manufacturers to nullify contractual provisions regarding work loads and pay rates.(57)

In most cases, however, no formal union existed to enforce agreements. Garment workers formed "seasonal" unions at the beginning of the busy season when pay rates could be altered, but lost interest when the slack period approached. As ad hoc formations they served as instruments to gain immediate improvements in conditions of employment rather than in codifying relations between labor and employer. To many historians this seasonal feature underscored the fragility of garment workers' unions, and was indicative of an immature labor movement that acted more out of desperation rather than from clear-headed purpose.(58)

This judgement does not adequately acknowledge the environment that spawned seasonal unions. During the industry's slack period garment workers endured the certain fate of unemployment, which unions appeared to be powerless to change. Employers, whether they were contractors or owners of small inside shops, came and disappeared at a staggering pace. A significant portion of the workforce seemed to be as mercurial

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as their employers. Women especially, entered the industry usually at a young age and left before they reached 21 years of age or when they married. Some were temporarily pressed into wage work because their fathers or husbands were incapacitated or had died.

In any event, both industrial conditions and family circumstances encouraged garment workers to value a union's potential ability to maximize their income. As agents to mobilize workers to take effective collective action, unions, even if they remained seasonal, assumed a significant role in the working lives of cloakmakers and of coatmakers among others. Undoubtedly seasonal unions had their limitations: they lacked a clearly defined mechanism to enforce agreements and could not readily protect workers from life's trials and tribulations with out-of-work, disability and death benefits. However, for workers immersed in an industry characterized by instabilty and whose immigrant experience prepared them for the worst, seasonal unions represented the most reasonable response to employers bent on controlling wages and squeezing labor.

Furthermore, the moral urgency and religious fervor many contemporary observers noted animating seasonal unions, could, and did, lead to the emergence of more durable unions. For example, cloakmakers, in 1889, tired of low wages, twelve hour workdays and the lack of respect shown them by employers, formed the Cloakmakers' and Operators' Union to conduct a strike. Rather than disbanding after their victory, they joined the United Hebrew Trades where for the next three years their union grew to be the largest of the 40 constituent organizations.

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The life of garment workers' unions, whether brief or long, pulsated with the beat of strikes. As Jacob Magidow, whom Morris Hillquit credited as being the "father" of the idea of Jewish labor federation (59), observed: "our Jewish workers saw no difference between a union and strike -- these were one and the same thing in their minds."(60) Therefore, a closer examination of garment worker strikes should provide insights into the unions they supported and workplace and community relationships they expressed.

The strikes waged by garment workers were almost as varied as the different branches in the clothing industry. Some strikes represented defensive responses to employer initiatives such as wage cuts, increases in work loads, extension of the workday, or violations of previously negotiated agreements. Others demonstrated workers' aggressive attempts to upgrade standards in their conditions of employment: a minimum pay rate for all job classifications, a reduction in the workday, a regulated apprenticeship system and protection from arbitrary dismissal. A few strikes sought to restructure the industry itself by the abolition of task work and the elimination of the contracting system. Many strikes were short-lived: lasting less than a week, limited to one or two work places, and involving only a few workers. Some became protracted conflicts: lasting weeks, covering hundreds of work places and involving over 10,000 workers. Some trades -- the coatmakers for most of the 1890's and the cloakmakers for the first half of the decade -- appeared to be in constant turmoil. Others like the pantsmakers, children's jacket makers and vestmakers intermittently initiated strikes, while the shirtmakers rarely resorted to such militant action, and when they did, their strikes were brief in duration and narrow in scope.

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Mutual support characterized many of the larger strikes, most notably in the Triple Alliance strike in 1890, and the coatmakers' attack on the task system in 1894. Yet other strikes either originated because of, or exacerbated, organizational rivalries between Knights of Labor affiliates and locals of the United Garment Workers, resulting in members of one union "scabbing" on members of another, and one union seeking exclusive representation of a shop at the expense of another. The targets of strikers varied as well. Cloakmakers in 1890 and 1894 struck member firms of the Cloak Manufacturers' Association, but contractors in 1895. Coatmakers targeted both contractors and manufacturers in their 1894 strike, and contractors in 1895 and 1896, when they blatantly violated strike-born agreements.

Despite the variety of the types of strikes, their causes and their breadth of support, certain common features are apparent. Garment worker strikes erupted and spread through the force of example. In some years a walkout by one trade sparked independent efforts by other trades. In 1886, the defeat of cloakmakers failed to discourage tailors engaged in custom-made work, or coatmakers from striking, and shirtmakers from asserting themselves. In 1890, what began as a sympathy strike in support of locked out cutters became an unqualified victory for cloakmakers pursuing their own demands. In 1894, in the midst of the coatmakers' strike, knee pantsmakers, jacketmakers and cloakmakers caught strike fever.

The clustering of strikes in the garment trades reflected not only their contagious quality but a logic of timing. Because of the seasonal nature of the industry, the potential damage of the strike weapon varied according to when it was deployed. Most strikes occurred

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at the beginning or well into the busy season, usually during the summer or early fall. Conversely contractors and manufacturers sought to provoke strikes, or begin lockouts when the slack season appeared, usually in late winter and early spring.

Strikers exhibited resourcefulness in coping with the imperatives of industrial conflict, a buoyant esprit de corps in the face of material deprivation and a tenacious sense of purpose despite the behavior of employers. When individual employers reached terms with the union, those returning to work helped to support those still on strike. The United Brotherhood of Tailors and the Pantsmakers' Union, for instance, created emergency strike funds to enable their members to hold out against the most recalcitrant employers. Many unions tapped the United Hebrew Trades' for organizing and financial assistance, while those unaffiliated with the U.H.T. turned to other A.F.L. locals or Knights of Labor assemblies for funds. More informally, strikers obtained in-kind contributions from merchants and peddlers in their community, and found **landsmanschaften** (the Jewish immigrant fraternal and mutual aid societies) generous benefactors. Shirtmakers and cutters, on strike against R.K. Davies in the summer and fall of 1886, adopted a different tactic. Rather than depending on the financial assistance of other unions, they gained employment in shops willing to recognize the union and pay higher wages, and mounted a boycott with the help of the Central Labor Union.(61)

Strikes often assumed the air of festivals in which workers, released from the demands of every day labor, expressed their personalities. Union meeting halls became the second, and for those evicted from their tenements, the only home for strikers. The

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conviviality of socializing with shopmates and neighbors overlapped with the practical tasks of strike mobilization. Meetings appeared to be perpetual events, being called at any time and often spilling into the streets where sidewalk discussions of strike strategy continued. Young women and men broke out into impromptu dance, while older strikers played cards, smoked their pipes or stretched their tired legs. During the coatmakers strike in August of 1895, meeting halls reverberated with the voices of strikers urging each other in a Yiddish melody to "keep together and not fall apart".(62)

Women strikers traditionally held their own meetings barring all men, except for invited union officials and newspaper reporters. Women members of the International Cloakmakers' Union organized rallies of the wives and daughters of strikers, faced with imminent evictions from their homes, calling on them to encourage their husbands and fathers to continue their participation. The women's branch of the United Brotherhood of Tailors, representing felling hands and thread pullers, formed autonomous strike committees in 1895 and 1896. From their ranks rose three women, all under twenty -- Littie Persky, Minnie Rose and Esther Freedman -- to leadership positions. At one strike mobilization rally Esther Freedman made a familiar appeal to the assemblage, many of whom had never participated previously, establishing the links between men and women workers: "If the men are downtrodden, so will we be. We all must stand out to the end".(63)

Above all, strikers showed a strong sense of purpose and esprit de corps. During a meeting of striking pantsmakers in 1898, employers were compared to "bad boys , who no matter how much you spank them, they (sic) do not mend their ways." (64) Meyer Schoenfeld, after the arrest

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of striking coatmakers, defiantly challenged the "big merchants of Broadway and Mercer Street", threatening to "wipe them out at the polls", if they tried to intimidate strikers, "by the influence of the saloon, politician or police".(65) Equally combative and self-assured, Yettie Miller, member of the Vestmakers' Executive Committee, asserted that "strikes are anything but a temporary weapon. Until we have a cooperative commonwealth, however, they will be necessary to enable us to keep what we gained." (66) Somewhat self-effacing but yet clear sighted were the sentiments of Littie Persky, who at fifteen years of age became the first woman delegate to the Central Labor Union in 1893: "I am no modern Joan of Arc. I am simply a working girl who is striking along with other girls to stop the descent, not to improve our present condition."(67)

In short, whether their remarks took the form of Schoenfeld's bravado, or Persky's unassuming demeanor, garment workers expected and strove for respect from employers. While many understood this to mean that garment workers must through their collective efforts accumulate the power necessary to make manufacturers and contractors yield, others stressed the importance of self-esteem which could be translated into the mutual recognition of the rights of employers and workers.

The earliest garment worker unions had to prove their mettle under the rapid fire of strikes. Fresh on the heels of their August 1885 strike in which 10,000 inside and outside shop workers won a wage increase and a pledge from the employers to arbitrate future disputes, the Dress and Cloak Makers' Union faced a more severe test in the spring of 1886. Joined by members of three other unions they waged a frontal attack on the contracting system. In mid-March union representatives

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presented the Cloak and Suit Makers' Association with their demand that the manufacturers employ cloakmakers directly, thereby ending contracting to outside shops. Meyer Jonassen, in behalf of the manufacturers, contended this demand was unattainable, since the manufacturers lacked the capacity to accommodate the existing cloakmaking workforce. Moreover, he held, the cloakmakers' demand conflicted with their religious practices, since manufacturers traditionally remained open on Saturdays when Jews observed the Sabbath.(68)

Undeterred by such arguments, 6,000 cloakmakers struck on March 20, and pressured eleven firms to accede to their demands. Most manufacturers, nevertheless, maintained their position, offering as a compromise to send their work only to "properly ventilated" outside shops and "cooperative" enterprises. When the cloakmakers rejected the manufacturers' proposal, the strike headed to an apparent deadlock. Consequently, on March 29, representatives of the Central Labor Union acted on behalf of the Independent Cloakmakers Union, proposing to the manufacturers that they "gradually phase out" the contracting system by August 1. After the manufacturers silently vetoed the proposal, the cloakmakers attempted to broaden the strike. Finishers, buttonhole makers and cutters began to walk off their jobs, and by April 2, 9,000 had joined the strike.(69)

However, despite interruptions in production, the manufacturers had attained an advantage. The number of summer orders fell, thereby minimizing the impact of the strike. Once again, the Central Labor Union's Arbitration Committee intervened, indicating that now the cloakmaker unions were prepared to accept the manufacturers' previous

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offer. Bargaining from strength, the manufacturers withdrew their offer, leaving the unions with no room to negotiate. On April 15, the unions called off the strike, and the cloakmakers returned to work with an "understanding" that the manufacturers would try to prevent the contractors from exploiting the strikers' defeat.(70)

No major strikes occurred in the garment trades until 1889. In that year the United Hebrew Trades' inspired Knee Pantsmakers' Union, representing pressers and operators, launched a campaign against what they called the "sweating system". The Knee Pantsmakers' central demand was for employers to provide operators with sewing machines, instead of operators renting them from contractors for a fee. The union hoped that if contractors were responsible for the capital expenditures on machinery, the cost of opening and running a shop would rise, and thereby discourage the growth of contracting. The union also sought to establish a rule limiting its members to selling their machines for cash and barring them from loaning or leasing them to contractors.(71)

After a two week walkout the contractors acceded to the strikers' demands. Contractors yielded on the pantsmakers' major point, agreeing to supply, at their own expense, the machines, the needles, screw drivers and other tools and material with no deduction from workers' pay. To encourage the contractors' compliance with the agreement, the pact stipulated that any employer violation would trigger a $50 fine per day and legitimate workers' job actions. (72)

Four months later the pantsmakers organized another strike, after learning from bitter experience their victory in 1889 was not as unqualified as it first appeared. Contractors ignored the agreement, closing their doors and relocating their businesses, often without

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paying workers their accrued wages. Others circumvented the agreement by parcelling the finishing work to households, thereby saving on fuel and rent as well as wages. Without authorization from the union, or the United Hebrew Trades, disgruntled pantsmakers ceased working. Once the strike erupted, U.H.T. organizers intervened, assuming leadership of the day to day responsibilities, including setting up relief committees and pickets. After a week, contractors relented and announced they were prepared to provide operators with sewing machines and recognize the Knee Pantsmakers' Union.(73)

The January, 1890 settlement, however, only represented a truce in the war between knee pantsmakers and contractors. On March 7, the union announced a five point program, again emphasizing the issue of free provision of sewing machines. In addition, the knee pantsmakers sought a ten hour day, a twenty percent increase in pay rates, the weekly payment of wages and the establishment of a union shop. On March 9 the contractors, through their newly formed Contractors' Association, announced that any pantsmaker refusing to renounce his or her membership in the union would be locked out. The next day the union called a strike, and began organizing cooperative shops in anticipation of a protracted conflict.(74)

For more than one month the pantsmakers pressed their demands, managing to win agreements with thirty-five contractors. The United Hebrew Trades increased their financial contributions to supplement the dwindling strike fund which provided married men with 60 cents and single men 40 cents a day. A week later a contract was finalized. Employers agreed to an upgraded schedule of pay rates covering eight types of garments and 30 specific operations, a ten hour day, weekly

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payment of wages and the payment of a $50 fine for any contract violation. (75)

In 1890 cutters and cloakmakers scored an even more resounding victory in the mass Triple Alliance strike. In May the firing of workers at two inside shops precipitated a strike and lockout that mushroomed into an unprecedented united front of cloakmakers, cutters and contractors against the Cloak Manufacturers' Association. On June 9th, ten days after the lockout of two-thousand cloak operators began, cutters employed at Meyer Jonassen's manufacturing firm walked off their jobs in sympathy. On June 14, the Cloak Manufacturers' Association, under the initiative of Meyer Jonassen, declared a lockout of all cutters in the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association, with the intention of "preempting" a "general" strike. Two weeks later, the Cloak Operators and Makers #1, the Cutters and the Contractors' Union forged their triple alliance, and answered the manufacturers' preemptive action with a massive counter-attack.(76)

The cutters' support of the cloakmakers, in particular, disrupted the manufacturers' strategy. Assuming that cloakmakers would be reticent to strike with the slow summer season approaching, manufacturers pursued an aggressive stance. The withdrawal of the cutters' labor when they normally began preparations for the fall orders, however, raised the risks of a showdown. Five hundred of the city's 600 cutters were unionized compared to about half of New York's 10,000 cloakmakers, thereby increasing the possibility that the cutters' action might be effective.(77)

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As the confrontation appeared to escalate, union representatives -- two each from the cloakmakers, cutters and contractors -- and the manufacturers met to reach a settlement. Two issues remained unresolved: payment for time lost during the lockout; and discharge of workers without a "contract". On the first, the manufacturers argued that cutters and operators were not permanent workers, but instead hired only by the week, while union negotiators asserted that manufacturers in practice hired them for indefinite periods. On the second, the employers declined to discharge qualified, experienced cutters and operators simply because they were not union members. For their part, the cutters' representatives emphasized that this constituted a principled issue, since their unions' by-laws barred working with non-union workers, while Thomas Garside, the union's spokesperson, told the manufacturers, "... you have no right to ask our men to associate with those who were robbing, starving and dishonoring strikers." Meanwhile, the contractors continued to press the manufacturers for an increase in the contract prices to cover any wage increases granted to the cloakmakers.(78)

On July 15 a tentative agreement was reached. Both the cutters and cloak operators won union recognition and a pledge to arbitrate future disputes. In addition, the manufacturers yielded to the cutters' demands that they be rehired and compensated for the time lost during the lockout. The cloakmakers, on the other hand, neither gained a pledge to rehire all strikers nor to pay them for their lost time.(79)

The cloakmakers' response came quickly and dramatically at a mass meeting the following day. After Abraham Cahan translated the proposed agreement, point by point from English to Yiddish, a heated discussion ensued. Joseph Barondess denounced the agreement for expecting union

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cloakmakers to work with non-union cloakmakers, while Garside argued that the manufacturers made "serious concessions" to the union. Cahan urged the Jewish immigrant cloakmakers to disassociate themselves from a man "who doesn't speak your language and doesn't follow your trade, and therefore is unfit to hold union office". By a three to one proportion the 2,000 cloakmakers voted to reject the proposed agreement and resume striking.(80)

Even without the participation of the cutters, the strike lost none of its vigor. Operators and contractors organized pickets in front of the larger manufacturing firms for the next week, "hooting" the cutters who returned to work. On the 24th the manufacturers relented at an all day bargaining session at which Barondess had replaced Garside as the union spokesperson. They signed a ten point agreement, far more extensive than the July 15th one rejected by the cloakmakers. Member firms of the Cloak Manufacturers' Association agreed to hire only operators and contractors from their respective unions, to reinstate union strikers and to discharge any worker hired after June 6. Moreover, a new wage structure was established, providing tailors with a $15 and pressers a $14 minimum. Most conspicuously, however, the terms of the agreement explicitly excluded women, although they had participated in the strike and the victory celebration later that evening. (81)

Four years after what Alexander Jonas, editor of the **New Yorker Volkzeitung**, called a "historic" strike, cloakmakers waged a series of strikes, beginning in the summer and culminating in a demoralizing defeat in late fall. In late August cloakmakers from New York and Brooklyn launched scattered strikes for wage increases. These strikes, advantageously timed, achieved in just two days higher rates for 1,500

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pressers and finishers, largely due to the intervention of manufacturers who, fearing a long interruption in production, assured the contractors they would be reimbursed. In September, the cloakmakers aimed their strikes at the manufacturers and organized shop meetings at Blumenthal Brothers, Popkin and Company, Freedman Brothers and their old foe, Meyer Jonassen. (82)

While cloakmakers appeared ready for a strike, strikes had already erupted in the men's clothing industry, involving between 10,000 and 15,000 coatmakers against 500 contractors. The coatmakers -- members of the Brotherhood of Tailors/United Garment Workers -- pressed for the abolition of the task system, which by September included a production quota of 26 coats, an increase of ten since the previous year. At a meeting of United Garment Workers' locals 27, 55 and 83 in Brooklyn, precipitated by the unauthorized walkout of 500 coatmakers at 60 shops, tailors and pressers demanded action to improve the unsanitary and unsafe working conditions, to reduce their excessive workdays and end the "exploitation" of women and children. Other locals met on August 31 and September 1, and on September 2 the strike began. (83)

In the next few days, coatmakers and their supporters held rallies in the Lower East Side to build the strike. In Brownsville, strike squads went from shop to shop suspected of still operating, to persuade other workers to join. These tactics produced physical confrontations between strikers and nonstrikers and the contractors employing them. The strike gathered momentum, especially in Brooklyn, when news that contractors were breaking ranks to sign agreements ending the task system. On September 10, an estimated 4,000 tailors and pressers, many not union members, walked off their jobs.(84)

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As the strike progressed, the battle lines became sharply drawn. Contractors belonging to the Clothing Contractors' Mutual Protective Association endorsed the coatmakers' cause, and signed a joint resolution with the United Brotherhood of Tailors, calling for a ten hour workday and regular weekly payment of wages. Clothing cutters represented by the United Garment Workers resolved not to cut any cloth for any contractor refusing to pay the union scale and establish a ten hour day.(85)

In the meantime, workers from other garment trades, such as jacketmakers, shirtmakers and knee pantsmakers, initiated their own strikes, also pressing for wage increases and a reduction in hours. When manufacturers, confronted with spreading strikes, began to prepare to open their shops, contractors rushed to reach terms with the coatmakers. The contractors' association buckled under the strain. This prompted the union to shift its strategy, since many of the contractors agreed to post bond with the union to insure compliance with their agreements only through the contractors' association. Consequently, the U.B.T. turned to the manufacturers to pressure the reluctant contractors to post the required bond. By mid-September, about two weeks after the strike's inception, more than half of the industry's five-hundred contractors, employing 10,000 workers, acceded to the union's demands. These included new minimum weekly rates for all job classifications and the introduction of a ten hour day.(86)

As the strikes in the mens' clothing industry simmered down to a successful conclusion, discontent among the cloakmakers boiled over. What began as isolated walkouts in a handful of workplaces became an industry wide strike, pitting the cloakmakers against a united front of

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manufacturers. Most historians, including Louis Lorwin, Benjamin Stolberg and Melech Epstein have held that the cloakmakers' strike started in sympathy with the coatmakers, indicating that the cloakmakers returned to work once the United Brotherhood of Tailors reached a settlement. (87) Although several thousand cloakmakers had supported the coatmakers, the industry-wide strike of cloakmakers that followed in October 1894 was basically a reaction to poor conditions. Indeed, the job actions were an expression of strike fever that characterized garment worker strikes during the busy season.

Two sets of factors influenced the timing and scope of the cloakmakers' action. In some shops cutters and operators found that agreements were not being honored. More prevalent was the absence of any formal understanding between the cloakmaker unions and employers that addressed the issues of pay, hours and work loads. Internal union dynamics focusing around Barondess' leadership also were significant. In the summer of 1894 the socialist led International Cloakmakers' Union and the Operators and Cloakmakers #1 negotiated terms of a merger which included Barondess' resignation as union manager. Less than a month later, however, at an emotional meeting, members pleaded with Barondess to reassume his leadership position. To cries of "if you don't stay they'll starve us again", Barondess agreed to become union manager.(88) Barondess' behavior during his reinstatement and leadership of the cloakmakers' strike typified what many observers, including Abraham Cahan, Emma Goldman and New York's press, referred to as his impulsiveness and flair for the melodramatic.(89) In October, when it became evident that the majority of the Operators and Cloakmakers #1 were set to begin a "general" strike, he enthusiastically joined the

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movement, raising the hopes that the cloakmakers could repeat the coatmakers' victory of the previous month.

No single issue provoked the cloakmakers to action in the initial phase of conflict. In early October, approximately a hundred makers of ladies' cloaks and suits employed by S.F. Rothschild struck because the manufacturer failed to honor a provision calling for an increase in piece rates. At four other establishments — Baller and Company, Julius Stein, Julius Gramer and Heller and Dinkelspiel, employing more than 500 cloakmakers among them — the manufacturers' refusal to recognize the union precipitated strikes.(90)

The strikes against the four manufacturers touched a nerve among cloakmakers working in shops covered by a union contract. On October 6 the Cloakmakers' Union called an emergency meeting to consider waging a sympathy strike in support of the cloakmakers at the four nonunion shops. Union Manager, Joseph Barondess, counseled caution to the more than 4,000 in attendance. Samuel Gompers echoed this advice, telling the cloakmakers not "to waste your powder now" since the strikes at Baller et. al. had only recently started.(91)

Nevertheless, the cloakmakers' combative mood prevailed, as the Cooper Union assembly voted by acclamation to call a "general" strike. Soon the character of the strike changed, for, on October 10, the union adopted its "ten commandments" which it intended to deliver to the manufacturers. Time work was to replace piece work, home and night work were to be abolished, a nine hour day for inside workers and a ten hour day for outside workers would be new standards. Other "commandments" established union shops, the union's "exclusive control" of its members and the stricture that employers not discharge any worker without

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"sufficient cause" and without consulting the union.(92)

The manufacturers who had resuscitated the Cloak Manufacturers' Association virtually ignored these demands. Some claimed nothing needed to be negotiated and declared their readiness to accept unconditionally the strikers' return to work. Others rejected this attitude of "benign neglect", showing their distrust of unions per se. Daniel Richman, the target of one of the strikes preceding the outbreak of the industry-wide strike, attacked the cloakmakers for violating contracts that did not expire until December: "How are you going to make a contract with such an organization as that? ... with these men there is nothing tangible, we can not hold them." (93)

Meanwhile the strike peaked in a war of force and not words. Strikers frequently fought nonstrikers, and the police were called in to restore order. When strikers assembled for a march from Rutgers Square to mobilize support for their cause on October 11, they were met by club swinging police. Only Barondess' production of a parade permit made the police relent. Eight-thousand, behind American and Italian flags, then marched up the Bowery to Union Square on 14th Street, culminating in a rally ringing with cheers for Barondess and the socialist movement's anthem, the Marseillaise. Jefferson Market Police Court maintained a brisk pace with the arrest of Italian and Russian Jewish cloakmakers for "threatening" nonstrikers and "forceably" entering workplaces looking for "scabs". In the most celebrated incident, four women were arrested after they "tore the clothes and pulled the hair" of workers entering the premises of Hochstadter and Company. (94)

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These confrontations expressed the strikers' resolve to continue the strike. In November, strikers at Meyer Jonassen, Freedman Brothers and Julius Stein voted at shop meetings to carry the strike through the winter. Financial and in-kind contributions from other unions alleviated the hardships of a long strike. The Brotherhood of Tailors, the Tailors' Progressive Union, the Marble Cutters' Union and Musicians Union gave anywhere from $150 to $600, while the Bakers' Union prepared bread and the Actors' Union performed for strikers and their families, many of whom had made Wahalla Hall, the headquarters of the strike, their home. Such support became even more critical in December when Jewish and other charitable societies began to withhold assistance from striking cloakmakers, maintaining that to do otherwise would subsidize the strikers who "must be held responsible for their own sufferings".(95)

The assistance of a cross section of unions, notwithstanding, the protracted conflict took its toll. Hunger and eviction became too high a price to pay when the prospects that the manufacturers would concede appeared slim. The privations of a slack season had since become the scurge of an acute depression that showed scant signs of ending. What many expected to be a relatively short contest of wills, in light of the coatmakers' victory in September, had become a struggle for survival. While about 4,500 strikers had returned to their jobs after securing promises to abolish piece work, to introduce weekly payments and to establish a ten hour day, most sought reinstatement without achieving tangible gains. Some, in fact, left for Baltimore, Philadelphia and Chicago to find employment.(96) In short, the strike ended in defeat, leaving the cloakmakers and their union with little leverage to enforce

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whatever gains some shops had made.

As the cloakmakers' strike petered out, employers in the coatmaking trade moved to regain the initiative from the tailors who two months earlier had achieved some significant gains. With Christmas approaching, the contractors' association threatened coatmakers with the reintroduction of piece rates unless the manufacturers increased their rates by 40 percent. Both as a cost reduction measure and pressure tactic, contractors began to shut down their shops. The Brotherhood of Tailors, however, interpreted what seemed to be a replay of the seasonal decline in business as a lockout of its members, charging the contractors with once again reneging on their signed agreement with the union. Rhetorical flourishes aside, the union failed to take any action to combat the layoffs/lockout.(97)

The 1894 strikes and their aftermath underscored the dynamics of the labor activity of garment workers. The scattered walkouts in August and September grew out of impatience with employers who either failed to honor existing agreements or to renew them beyond their expiration dates. The outbreak of the "general" strike in October was an expression of the widespread dissatisfaction with a deterioration of pay rates and working conditions and the hope that cloakmakers could duplicate the success of coatmakers. This strike contagion, while not unique to 1894, appeared to reach fever pitch with the coming of economic depression.

The conflicts in 1894 also demonstrated the differences in garment worker strikes. The coatmakers' attack against the task system followed the path of a carefully organized campaign. The United Brotherhood of Tailors, as part of a larger union — the United Garment Workers — which in turn was affiliated with the AFL, could count on the financial

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and administrative support of others in the labor movement. These links also had political importance. Samuel Gompers, Charles Reichers (UGW) and Meyer Schoenfeld (UBT) expressed their case for the abolition of sweatshops in the New York State Assembly and New York City's major newspapers and thereby helped coatmakers gain sympathy from the general public.

In contrast, the cloakmakers' action in October was comparatively "spontaneous". Union leaders after counselling caution followed the will of the rank and file who felt that if they struck in support of the cloakmakers employed in the four nonunion shops, they could improve their own conditions. Specific demands, however, were not submitted to the manufacturers until four days into the strike. The "ten commandments" resembled a wish list more than a set of realistic objectives that a union — faced with internal conflict and an industry-wide slump — could obtain. Consequently, it was not suprising that the cloakmakers failed to win much public sympathy or press the leading manufacturers to consider their demands.

In one critical respect, the cloakmakers' and coatmakers' strikes were similar. The tangible gains workers achieved through industrial action could not simply be gauged by formal written agreements. What the UBT won in September, 1894 proved harder to enforce in December, and the improvements of the conditions of employment reported in those cloakmaking shops that reached terms early in the strike were jeopardized by a reduction in the strength of the cloakmakers' union following the strike's overall defeat.

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In 1895 tailors again faced contractors, determined to nullify the agreement reached the previous September. In late July, contractors in 60 shops locked out 800 members of the United Brotherhood of Tailors. In numerous others, workers applying for employment were informed that they would be required to produce a certain number of garments a day and if they failed to maintain that standard, pay deductions would follow. (98)

Perceiving this as part of a strategy to sap the union's strength by forcing it into a long strike, the union's executive board carefully considered what action it should endorse. In only six weeks the Jewish high holy days would be celebrated, customarily resulting in temporary layoffs. More importantly, September 15 marked the end of the current union-contractor agreement. If the union waited until then to start efforts to prevent contractors from reintroducing the task system, not to mention creating a new agreement, it might have been in a even more tactically awkward position. With little delay the executive board authorized a strike in support of the locked out union members and to defend the gains made the previous year. Two days later, 6,000 coatmakers at 600 shops honored the strike call.(99)

In short order, the strike spread to Brownsville, Williamsburg, and Newark, N.J. where the U.B.T.'s president Herman Robinson made a special appeal for support. By the end of July, only three days after the strike's inception, 180 contractors had signed agreements, reiterating the abolition of the task system. As the strike progressed, the union became even more aggressive. Charles Reichers, from the United Garment Workers, the parent body of the U.B.T., declared: "we want to drive the little contractors out of the field altogether".(100)

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To press its advantage, the union organized mass meetings, setting a precedent of sorts by sponsoring a joint session of men and women workers at Cooper Union. After concentrating on the smaller independent contractors, the U.B.T. set their targets on the larger contractors represented by the Clothing Contractors' Mutual Association. On August 15, 200 member contractors settled and posted the bonds demanded by the union to promote compliance with the terms of the agreement.(101)

But just as in 1894, the victory of 1895 proved tenuous at best. In December, as sure as the coming of the slack season, the contractors counter-attacked. Contractors in 60 shops announced to the 1,000 tailors, basters, pressers and operators that they had the exclusive right to hire and fire employees, that no union walking delegates would be allowed on the premises and that a new lateness policy would be rigorously enforced. In familiar terms, the union attacked the contractors for renewing a "war of aggression" to compel workers to "surrender their right to a decent living ... and their manhood as American citizens." When the contractors sought to broaden their attack against the agreements signed the previous summer, the union, rather than launching a preemptive strike, pressured the manufacturers to assist in enforcing the contractual provisions. This strategy proved successful in at least stemming the tide, as some manufacturers informed contractors they would sever ties with them and operate their own shops unless the contractors abided by the terms of the August agreement. (102)

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Reckoning with the underlying issues waited, as in 1895, until the summer. This time, however, the United Brotherhood of Tailors took the initiative. The union authorized strikes against the contractors suspected of trying once again to introduce the task system. Seeking to create a more stable environment from which to negotiate and enforce agreements, the U.B.T. tried to promote a "union" of contractors. Once this association was in place, the union would pursue exclusive agreements with member contractors, being sure to bypass, in the words of Meyer Schoenfeld, the U.B.T.'s General Secretary, the "cockroaches" in the industry.(103)

By early August ten days after the strike began, however, the tailors reached terms with less than 100 contractors, as the majority opposed the union's demand that each contractor post bonds, and instead maintained that it deal with the contractors as a single party through its association. During the third week of the strike, symptoms of weariness set in on both sides. An additional 100 contractors settled, while the tailors showed a greater interest in establishing cooperative shops than in pressing the strike among the 2,500 still not covered by a union-contractor agreement. As financial contributions from the Local 144 of the Cigar Makers International Union, Central Labor Union and miscellaneous charitable organizations continued to flow to the women's branch of the United Brotherhood of Tailors, the strike gradually faded from the picture, ending inconclusively. (104)

The strikes of cloakmakers and coatmakers in 1894 and 1895 represented the decade's last wave of widespread labor militancy. While other garment workers, including knee pantsmakers, children's jacket makers and vestmakers subsequently organized strikes to improve their

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conditions of employment, their walkouts never achieved the breadth of the cloakmaker and coatmaker strikes. For their part, union coatmakers and cloakmakers were less inclined to strike after 1895. Coatmakers, represented by the United Brotherhood of Tailors, concentrated on enforcing existing agreements through a union label. The cloakmakers, recovering from their defeat in 1894, found new ways to pursue their objectives. In 1895 they allied with the cutters and contractors, forming the Consolidated Board of the Cloak Industry, against the manufacturers, and achieved without a "general" strike the creation of weekly minimums and a pay increase ranging from 20 to 35 percent. Over the next three years the cloakmakers, represented by the Brotherhood of Cloakmakers, conducted selected strikes usually against employers not honoring, or refusing to renew, trade agreements. (105)

In the thirteen years of labor activity garment workers tasted victory and defeat. From the narrative of their strikes, specific factors can be identified that influenced their outcome. The likelihood of success of strikes increased whenever workers forged alliances that transcended craft boundaries or position in the production process. Cloakmakers overcame the resistance of the largest manufacturers in 1890 when they linked arms with cutters and contractors. The cloakmakers' tactical relationship with the contractors allowed the strike to survive a break in the ranks when the cutters signed a separate agreement. In contrast, in the 1894 strike, cloakmakers took on both contractors and manufacturers and lacked the support of the strategically located cutters.

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The breadth of support that developed in the course of a strike was also critical. Tailors and others in the men's clothing industry mobilized effectively throughout the New York metropolitan area, received the generous backing of A.F.L. locals, and in 1894 and 1895 won the sympathy of the middle class public who applauded the strikers' peaceful tactics.(106) Consequently, the tailors' strikes weakened the task system's grip over the industry.

The timing of strikes as much as the prevalence of tactical alliances and broad support affected the prospects of success. Strikes called when orders had been filled, or when business had declined put workers at a disadvantage. In these circumstances, the withdrawal of labor lacked the intended effect, but instead enabled employers to reduce labor costs. Of course, in many instances strikes directly followed employer lockouts; in fact, they were so closely coupled that distinguishing between them is difficult. At any rate, coatmakers in 1894 and 1895 discovered that contractors waited for the opportune period to reverse the gains made through strikes. Both as a direct challenge to the United Brotherhood of Tailors and as a form of pressure on manufacturers to gain higher rates, contractors in December in each year announced pay reductions and shop closings. Conversely, the U.B.T. seized the advantage when it called strikes in the late summer of 1895, knowing that contractors felt the pressure from manufacturers to fill the fall season orders.

Nevertheless, even if a strike began at the "right" time within the industry's production cycle, it did not necessarily translate into a stronger bargaining position. For example, in April of 1886, cloakmakers calculated that manufacturers would be susceptible to strike action and

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thereby waged an ambitious campaign to eliminate contracting. In the process they rejected a compromise offered by the manufacturers that would have conceded many of the cloakmakers' demands. However, in the second week of the strike, last minute cancellations of summer orders reduced the manufacturers' immediate need for labor, permitting them to withstand a longer walkout than the cloakmakers originally expected. Even the Central Labor Union's intervention could not resolve the impasse, as the manufacturers withdrew their proposal originally rejected by the cloakmakers, but, as the strike wore on, one they found acceptable.

If poor timing did not subvert a strike, an over-reaching approach did. The cloakmakers, aroused by the strikes sweeping the men's clothing industry, tried to turn a limited walkout of four manufacturing firms into a wholesale redefinition of labor-employer relations. Many manufacturers appeared to be honoring existing trade agreements with the cloakmakers' union when the strikes erupted, and a few claimed no demands were submitted to them. To compound matters, the cloakmakers decided to maintain pickets even after the overwhelming majority of strikers had returned to work with agreements in hand, and dangerously near the beginning of the slack season.

Strikes, successful or not, became emblematic of a union's vitality. Without them garment workers fell prey to apparently invisible forces that produced frequent layoffs, wage cuts and intensification of work paces. Through strikes wage rates could be increased, weekly payments secured, hours reduced and a measure of protection from capricious employer practices won. As it became evident that strikes could bring immediate concrete gains, they became a regular occurence,

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giving inspiration to the revival or creation of unions.

In this sense, "seasonal unionism" represented not an inadequacy in the garment workers' ability to organize or their trade union consciousness. Instead the pattern of activity subsumed in "seasonal unionism" demonstrated the garment workers' realistic adaption to both the constraints and opportunities inherent in their world of work. In short, the union as a strike formation served as means towards an end — to settle old scores, obtain a bit more, when one could, for his/her labor, or, as Lettie Persky, observed to "stop the descent" in workers' conditions.

In the 1890's, however, in recognition that the clothing industry's structure often prevented workers from tasting the fruits of strike victories, some trade unionists sought to overcome the limitations of "seasonal unionism". The deep depression following the Panic of 1893 also impressed on some the need for labor unions to survive in hard as well as prosperous times. For example, the United Garment Workers in the men's clothing industry sought to create the framework from which unions and employers could develop enforceable agreements that would make most strikes unnecessary.

For some labor leaders, like Meyer Schoenfeld of the United Brotherhood of Tailors and Charles Reichers of the United Garment Workers, strikes, even when successful, were costly, and the gains they yielded often were difficult to enforce. Consequently, Meyer Schoenfeld, following the victorious strike against the the task system in 1894, recommended the formation of a Board of Conciliation and Arbitration to adjudicate the disputes. Although this proposal failed to win the contractors' aprroval, the union continued to seek pacts with

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substantial contractors or those who bargained through an association, and otherwise pursue alternatives to strikes. The United Brotherhood of Tailors, with the help of the United Garment Workers, pressured manufacturers to discipline contractors who did not honor collective bargaining agreements, and later in the decade waged a union label campaign in the hope of eradicating the small outside shops run by contractors where sweatshop conditions prevailed. By 1900, however, union coatmakers discovered that while the bottles were new, the wine remained old. In a formal sense, the contracting system had declined, but in practice it reappeared under a different guise. In many shops manufacturers employed contractors as foremen to oversee production and paid them bonuses to drive workers to produce more than the daily quota.

The United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers, formed in 1897, also stressed the need for stable relations between workers and employers. Towards that end the union adopted measures to discourage the outbreak of individual shop strikes that might trigger a "general" strike. In addition, the union targeted the larger manufacturers in its campaign to upgrade conditions of employment on the premise that through the manufacturers, pressure could be mounted on the contractors to sign comparable agreements.

As the 1890's drew to a close, the patterns of the garment workers' labor activity remained intact. Strikes served to empower workers faced with the vagaries of the marketplace and the industry's chronic instability, and to mobilize workers behind aspiring unions whose primary objective was to introduce order amidst the confusion of a dual system of production of manufacturing and contracting. Garment workers continued to demonstrate an ambivalence towards unions: in one

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sense, considering them as temporary necessities when employers resisted changes in conditions of employment, to be disregarded upon a strike's completion; and in another sense, authentic institutions, built upon their experience as workers and immigrants, that embodied deeper aspirations and not simply expectations of immediate gains. Yet, if garment workers in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn left a legacy to their successors, it was not ambivalence. To the next generation of strikers and union builders they passed on a torch burning with an "enobling spirit" of trade unionism and social reform even when hardship, sacrifice and setbacks dimmed its glow.

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FOOTNOTES

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12. Lorwin, pp.87-88; and **The Garment Worker**, November, 1895, August, 1897 and August, 1898.

13. **The New York Sun**, November 12, 1894; and **The American Craftsman**, December 4, 1897.

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32. On the theme of redemption and the messianic impulse in Jewish culture, see: Will Herberg, "Socialism, Zionism and the Messianic Passion," **Mainstream**, 2 (Summer 1956), 65-74; Jonathan Frankel, **Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and Russian Jews, 1862-1917** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Gerald Sorin, **The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Radicals, 1890-1920** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 11-15.

33. Abraham Cahan in Bernheimer, editor, **The Russian Jew in the United States**, p. 40.

34. Frankel, pp. 20-48.

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36. Marcus Ravage, **An American in the Making** (New York: Harper and Row, 1917), p. 158.

37. Lorwin, pp. 58-63 and 71.

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39. Lorwin, p. 75; Philip Foner, **History of the Labor Movement in the United States** Volume 2 (New York: International Publishers, 1955), pp. 286 and 287; Sanders, pp. 160-164, 169-171 and 174-177; and Hapgood, pp. 185-187.

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40. Cited in Sorin, p. 91.

41. Hapgood, pp. 204, 215, 216, 217, 219 and 221.

42. Epstein, pp. 282 and 283 and 288-291.

43. Sorin's study of Jewish immigrant socialists and anarchists stresses the intimacy between Jewish Radicals' political ideas and Jewish morality. See especially pp. 26-32. Sorin's interpretation compensates for the over-emphasis on the socialists' and anarchists' "cosmopolitanism" by Moses Rischin, **The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1962) and Abraham Menes, "The East Side and the Jewish Labor Movement," Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg, eds., **Voices from the Yiddish: Essays, Memoirs, Diaries** (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1972).

44. Morris Hillquit, **Socialism in the United States** (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1903 [1965]), while perhaps overstating the case, nevertheless recognized the pivotal influence of socialists in garment worker unions in the 1880's and 1890's:

> "They organized the strikers into trade unions, collected funds for them, directed their battles and led them to victory.... It was therefore natural that there should have been at all times a strong bond of sympathy between the Jewish trade union movement and socialists." (pp. 263 and 264)

45. **The Workman's Advocate,** January 18, 1890; and Leiserson, p. 45.

46. See for example, Marcus Ravage's thoughts on the intellectual atmosphere of the sweatshop in **An American in the Making,** p. 66. He called it his "first university".

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49. Gotham Knife Cutters' Association, Minutes of Meetings, March 14, 1890.

50. Stolberg, p.7 and New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Sixteenth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 1036-1040.

51. **The Garment Worker,** December, 1895; McCreesh, pp. 70-72; Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report** (1890),p. 259 and Lorwin, pp. 52 and 53.

52. For insightful discussion of role of women in garment worker unions, see McCreesh, pp. 65-75.

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53. Calculated from Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Seventeenth Annual Report** (1900), pp. 162-163; and U.S. Twelfth Census (1900) **Statistics of Manufactures**, Volume 8, Part 2, pp. 620-628.

54. For example, see Joseph Barondess' pleas for legal reforms in Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 154-155.

55. Circular of the United Brotherhood of Tailors (1897), reprinted in Pope, pp. 305-306.

56. I.L.G.W.U. Archives, ILGWU News History, p.5.

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61. **The Leader**, July 22, 26, 28, August 30, and October 25, 1887.

62. **The New York Sun**, November 17, 1894 and August 15, 1895.

63. **Ibid**, October 10, and November 10, 1894, July 29, 1895 and July 25, 1896.

64. **The Commercial Advertiser**, August 12, 1898 in Rischin, p. 322.

65. **The New York Tribune**, September 4, 1894.

66. **The New York Sun**, August 7, 1896.

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68. Lorwin, p. 37; **The New York Sun**, March 19, 1886.

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70. Lorwin, p. 39; and **John Swinton's Paper**, April 11, 1886

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74. Leiserson, p. 49; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report** (1890), p. 583.

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77. Sanders, p. 114.

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79. Lorwin, pp. 51-52.

80. Sanders, p. 120 and **The New York Sun,** July 17, 1890.

81. **The New York Sun,** July 22, and 25, 1890; and Lorwin, p. 53.

82. **The New York Sun,** August 28, September 2, and 10, 1894.

83. **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle,** August 31, and September 1, 1894; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report**(1894), pp. 14-16.

84. **The New York Tribune,** September 4 and 5, 1894; **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle,** September 3, 4, 5, 9 and 11, 1894; and **The New York Sun,** September 5.

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86. **The New York Sun,** September 7, 9, and 15, 1894; **The New York Tribune,** September 9, 1894; and **The American Federationist,** October, 1894, pp. 177-181.

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90. Mediation and Arbitration Board **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 113, 155-156, 180-181.

91. **The New York Sun,** October 9 and 10, 1894; and Mediation and Arbitration Board **Eighth Annual Report**(1894), p. 167.

92. Lorwin, pp. 79-80; and Mediation and Arbitration Board **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 163-164.

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93. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 109-110 and 114.

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95. **Ibid**, November 10, 11, 14 and December 18, 1894.

96. **The New York Tribune**, November 16, 1894; Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), p. 16; and Lorwin, pp. 80-81.

97. **The New York Sun**, December 12, 1894.

98. **Ibid**, July 27, 1895; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 224-225.

99. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1895), p. 237; and **The New York Sun**, July 28, 1895.

100. **The New York Sun**, July 30, 31 and August 1, 1895; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report**(1895), pp. 232-234.

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104. **Ibid**, July 29, and August 13, 14 and 19, 1896.

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106. **The New York Tribune**, September 16, 1894.

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CHAPTER SIX — THE CIGARMAKERS' WORLD OF WORK

The cigarmakers' world of work, like that of garment workers, featured diverse patterns in the organization of production and a broad range in the conditions of employment. Three forms of production coexisted: small shop, factory and tenement house, with the latter two often interlocked through the same company or employer. Less compatible were the evolving technological modes of production -- the traditional manual mode and the innovative mechanized mode which deployed machines, equipment and accessories to standardize work. Different patterns of production and forms of technologies contributed to the development of diverse conditions of employment whereby earnings, hours, work responsibilities and job security varied from shop to shop. In late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn these features of the industry became more pronounced, leaving the cigarmakers' world of work in a state of flux that challenged their ability to organize.

In the 1890's between 15,000 and 20,000 workers, all but 1,200 in Manhattan, claimed cigarmaking as their occupation. First generation immigrants from Germany, Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) and Eastern Europe constituted the overwhelming majority of cigarmakers. In 1890, men comprised almost two-thirds of the labor force, but, by 1900, the labor force was divided nearly equally between men and women. Among women cigarmakers, Bohemians played a significant role. Many learned cigarmaking in their original homeland where they assumed a major position in the industry, and taught the trade to their husbands who often could not find work in their chosen occupation after settling in New York.(1)

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The influx of experienced Bohemian cigarmakers, which began in the early 1870's largely because of the destruction wrought by the Austrian-Prussian war, gave impetus to New York City's cigarmaking industry, contributing to the emergence of a new division of labor, called "team work",and to the growth of tenement house production. Manufacturers, seeking to minimize labor costs and to utilize the skills of women, hired them to perform specific tasks. Most Bohemian women cigarmakers stripped tobacco or made bunches in preparation for rolling. Some also worked as "bookers", smoothing the leaves and compactly rolling them. In the tenement house system women worked alongside their fathers, husbands and children doing many of the cigarmaking tasks, including rolling.(2)

The composition of the cigarmaking workforce was intimately related to the scale and location of production. Women found employment in the larger uptown factories and tenement house shops, and, in 1895, were virtually absent from the smaller downtown shops. Conversely, the proportion of men to women decreased as the size of the workplace increased (See Table I.). Accordingly, in 1900, women claimed 57 percent of the cigarmaking jobs north of 59th Street and 43 percent of those south of 59th Street. (3) The relationship between workplace size and the sexual composition of the labor force also reflected the existence of different forms of production. Most shops employed fewer than 25 workers, and averaged about eleven workers. These workplaces, dispersed throughout lower Manhattan especially to the east and west of City Hall, were owned and managed by entrepeneurs, many of whom were former cigarmakers. They employed craftsmen who used traditional manual methods of production, even, in some cases, eschewing the simplest technological innovation such as the mold.(4)

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Table I. The Proportion of Men to Women in the Cigarmaking Industry in New York City (1890 and 1895) By Size of Workplace

Workplace Size	1-25	26-50	51-100	more than 100
Proportion (1890)	4/1	1.5/1	2/1	1/1
Proportion (1895)	*	3/1	1.3/1	.8/1

* = considerably more than half of the 255 shops with less than twenty-five workers employed only men, thereby rendering the proportion of men to women as statistically approaching infinity.
(Source: Calculated from New York State. Department of Labor, Inspection Bureau, **Fifth and Tenth Annual Reports**, pp. 321-330 and 150-625, respectively.)

Because of their limited business activity and scale of operations, most of the 1,800 establishments listed by the U.S. Census Bureau inconspicuously blended into New York's manufacturing landscape. However, some stood out. In 1900, 41 companies based in Manhattan employed more than 100 workers, 25 of which were located above 42nd Street and 20 above 59th Street. At least five cigar manufacturing firms were capitalized at half a million dollars or more, of which two, M.W. Mendel and Brothers and The Owl Cigar Company were valued at more than a million dollars. The median number of workers employed by the five wealthiest firms, most of whom were located between 14th and 34th streets, was 650. While the large downtown companies maintained integrated factory facilities where most if not all the production was completed, those above 59th Street oversaw both factory and tenement shop operations. Some of these included employers who formed the hub of the United Cigar Manufacturers' Association, which locked horns with the Cigar Makers International Union in 1886 and 1887, and remained non-union in the 1890's. (5)

Manufacturers, seeking to take advantage of lower land costs further uptown and a pool of labor, supplied predominantly by recently arrived immigrants, began to establish tenement shops in the 1870's.

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They either bought or rented a row of tenement houses to house tenants with whom they contracted to produce cigars. To confuse cigarmakers and factory inspectors alike, manufacturers maintained tenement house shops under a different name from their central factory. Prepared tobacco was weighed to gauge the expected number of cigars to be produced and distributed to each tenement household. Manufacturers paid each household a pre-set price, usually per 1000 cigars. Agents of manufacturers usually visited the apartments with a fresh bunch of tobacco every week, when they collected the finished cigars and carefully weighed them to determine if tenement house workers had used any tobacco to make cigars which they later sold independently. Many settled up with their contracted households every two weeks -- paying them for what they produced after deducting a sum for rent.(6)

Tenement house production usually focused on the bunching and rolling phases, while the stripping of the tobacco as preparation for cigarmaking and cigar packing, the final stage, was done in the central factory. However, many factory and Board of Health investigators reported that on Fridays families would collect pre-stripped tobacco. Then, during the weekend, while women and men rolled cigars, their children stripped the fillers and pressed the bunches of tobacco. Tenement house production customarily specialized in the cheaper grade cigars -- the five cents variety -- but some manufacturers selected from their tenant workers the most skilled and trustworthy to produce the higher priced "Havana" cigars. (7)

Tenement shop work proved to be mutually beneficial to cigarmakers and manufacturers. Recently arrived immigrants, some without the opportunity to pursue their desired trades, could find steady work and

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places to live in a single stroke. Since living quarters doubled as workplaces, women could tend to their children while contributing to their families' income. Moreover, tenement house workers did not have to tolerate the omnipresent supervision of foremen, and the rigorous discipline of the factory. The same factors that made tenement house work "attractive" to workers contributed to the manufacturers' promotion of the system. Since household duties could be coupled with wage earning activity, and no time was lost for travel, work continued with little interruption from early in the morning until late into the night.

In this way employers could count on a large volume of production despite the fact that tenement shop work did not utilize most of the technological innovations made in the industry during the 1880's and 1890's. In addition, since manufacturers provided only the most rudimentary of housing services, often at higher than average rents, they could minimize labor costs. This proved especially significant for manufacturers seeking to compete with their counterparts who set up factories in Kingston, Newburgh and Binghamton, in upstate New York and rural York and Lancaster counties in Pennsylvania, where they deployed the most modern equipment and tapped the abundant supply of women workers to capture a considerable share of the market.(8)

The emergence of larger production facilities signalled changes in production methods, embodied in new technology and a new division of labor. Cigarmaking consisted of five specific phases: stripping, backing, bunchmaking, rolling and packing. Stripping involved the removal of the large middle rib found in a tobacco leaf. Backing included straightening of the leaves and arranging them in pads. Bunchmaking consisted of shaping the filler tobacco from pads and

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covering it with a binderleaf. Rolling demanded two sets of tasks: (1) selecting certain sections of the leaf and rolling the inner sections and (2) cutting the wrapper and rolling them around bunches according to a designated style. For example, "straight" cigars had a uniform diameter throughout except at the head; "shaped" contained a increasingly larger diameter running from the "closed" end to the "tucked" end, while "perfecto" cigars' diameter was greatest near the tuck end with the closed end shaped almost to a point. Lastly, packing consisted of sorting the rolled cigars into color groups, each with specific prices, and pasting the appropriate internal revenue stamps.(9)

In the small manual shops which characterized cigarmaking for most of the nineteenth century, stripping and backing were done by apprentices or helpers. Traditionally bunchmaking and rolling were completed by the same worker, either called a cigarmaker or roller, and packing was the exclusive responsibility of specialists, aptly named packers. Among the three basic types of cigars -- clear Havana, seed-Havana and cheaper grades -- traditional handicraft methods prevailed in the production of the first, survived in the making of the second, and virtually disappeared in the third. Clear Havana cigars, using the finest Cuban tobacco, were priced at 15 to 25 cents depending on style. Based in Tampa and Key West Florida, this specialized branch of the industry established an enclave in New York. Skillfully deploying the "Cuban blade", a thin knife two inches wide and five inches long with a curved blade, and a nine by fifteen inch cigar board (both of which they owned), cigarmakers meticulously measured the sections of tobacco to be rolled into its distinctive style. Likewise, cigarmakers used the simplest tools of the trade in the production of seed-Havana cigars.(10)

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During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, the introduction of a number of technological innovations began to transform the cigarmakers' world of work. The first series of technological innovations were in fact rather basic. To supplement the Cuban blade, manufacturers provided the "tuck cutter" -- a stationary knife attached to a block of wood which could cut cigars at a standard size. Also, to encourage standardization, employers vigorously promoted the use of molds -- rows of cups that held fresh bunches of tobacco which, through the use of a hand lever press, uniformly shaped the bunches. Initially, molds were made of wood, but, by 1890, many were constructed of sheet metal or aluminum.(11)

In the 1880's, the first mechanized changes in production appeared with the advent of the bunching machine. In its earliest version, this machine was a hand operated device that shaped the tobacco before it was inserted into molds. Subsequent refinements produced a power driven model called the scrap cigar bunching machine that combined many of the cigarmaking operations. Operatives fed tobacco into the machine and then spread the binder which facilitated the shaping process. Once activated, the machine fed leaf tobacco from a hopper in measured proportions and placed it in molds where it was pressed and prepared for wrapping.(12)

In the 1890's, two other technological advances altered production methods. Stripping or stemming machines that removed the mid-rib from the leaf, and suction tables, that focused on the rolling phase, were introduced. The latter equipment represented the most dramatic innovation, and among the cigarmaking craftsmen raised the most concern. Suction tables contained a metal die through which air suction passed.

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The suction stretched the wrapper leafs upon the raising of the die operated by a pedal. Then, with the aid of a hand operated circular knife fixed along a groove, the cigarmaker could cut uniform wrappers. Refinements in the suction table substituted flat plates for dies, allowing for a more reliable stretching of the tobacco wrappers and facilitated the rolling of tighter cigars.(13)

Taken together, these technological innovations increased productivity and lowered labor costs. Cigarmakers could produce on the average anywhere from 150 to 225 cigars per day manually depending on the style, perfectos being the most demanding and straights being the least time consuming. Cigarmakers working with molds could roll a third more cigars in the same time, or the same number in a third less time. Even the most skilled manual rollers capable of rolling 325 straights and 250 perfectos a day could not match the output of cigarmakers working with molds. Similarly, molds increased the output of bunchmakers who, working without molds, averaged per week 2,000 cigars and with the mold, 4,000 cigars. Productivity gains were even more dramatic with the use of bunching machines. By the turn of the century, one bunching machine operator could turn out 20,000 to 30,000 bunches a week at a cost of less than $8 in wages, while under manual methods the equivalent number of bunches would require ten workers earning about $80 a week. (14)

What appeared as a blessing to employers, loomed as a curse to cigarmakers. Technological innovations from the mold to the suction table threatened the integrated nature of cigarmaking and the autonomous position of the skilled manual roller in the labor process. Where in the handicraft mode of operation the many different phases of cigarmaking

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were completed by three groups of workers -- apprentices, or helpers, rollers and packers -- the introduction of bunching machines, stripping machines and suction tables generated a detailed division of labor. Machine oriented production created specific job classifications for each phase -- casers, strippers, backers, bunchmakers, rollers and packers. Furthermore, it encouraged the development of team work, especially in bunchmaking, as teams of three, consisting of a leader and two assistants performed specific tasks. Some manufacturers paid workers as teams who in turn shared their earnings among their members.(15)

Intrinsic to the task oriented division of labor was a devaluing, if not deskilling, of the traditional cigarmaker's craft. For example, handicraft cigarmakers served anywhere from a three to five year apprenticeship before being deemed competent. However, with the advent of molds the time to develop the skill of bunchmaking was reduced on the average to one year, and to as little as three months, according to some employers. The emergence of the suction table proved even more of a challenge. The period to master the art of cigar rolling and wrapping -- traditionally two years -- was converted to a two month training period during which time cigarmakers learned how to operate equipment that completed the work formerly done by skilled hands.(16)

While new technology helped to redefine the work of cigarmakers, certain factors countered the erosion of their status as craftsmen. Unionized cigarmakers, in particular, who originally resisted the use of molds, by the 1880's had adapted to their permanent place in the production process. This stemmed from the recognition that cigarmakers' earnings based on a piece rate could be increased with the use of molds, since there were fewer delays at the press where tobacco leaves were

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prepared for bunching (17), and that the device itself did not represent as great a threat to the cigarmakers' position as did the growth of non-union tenement house shops and factories. In a highly competitive industry even the smaller entrepeneur owned and managed shops, where the New York City locals of the Cigar Makers International Union had established their base, had to introduce molds to protect their market position.(18)

More basic to the cigarmakers' status was that the industry's technological development remained uneven and that the machinery could not incorporate some skills. Molds, for instance, while expediting the bunching process could not disguise shoddy work. Cigars could be filled with too little or too much filler, and their wrappers were more likely to unroll because they were excessively hard or too dry. Experienced cigarmakers working without molds could avoid such errors, thereby reducing waste. The highly acclaimed power driven bunching machine was limited to short filler cigars of 4 1/2 to 5 inches in length, until the first decade of the twentieth century. Suction tables, despite their tendency to cut labor costs and allocate work of craftsmen to semiskilled operatives, did not comprehensively subdivide the work of rollers. They still retained skills that only came with experience -- judgement and timing in the placement, cutting and wrapping of leafs.(19)

Moreover, the improvements in production offered by stripping machines, bunching machines and suction tables in the late nineteenth century were primarily relegated to the making of the cheaper grade cigars. In an age where manufacturers revered machine technology for its efficiency, they nevertheless recognized the superiority of hand-

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made cigars. In fact, even in some of the larger factories deploying the most sophisticated equipment, manufacturers employed cigarmakers who rolled the more expensive grades of cigars in the traditional manner.(20)

While the impact of new technology on cigar rollers was inconsistent, it was negligible for packers. The persistent difficulty employers had in satisfying the demand for quality wrappers -- uniform both in color and texture -- protected packers from a devaluation of their labor. Packers were responsible for placing cigars into boxes by specific shade of color that followed an intricate classification system.(21) Mistakes could result in dissatisfied customers among retailers who might then cancel orders and in higher excise taxes since rates varied with the price of each cigar type and style. For these reasons, employers gave special attention to this phase of production, a fact packers themselves emphasized in retaining their niche as craftsmen.

Changes in production methods accompanied the emergence and growth of larger workplaces where women assumed a more prominent role in the labor force. In 1890, less than 60 establishments employed 50 or more workers, and by the end of the decade 76 did.(22) Meanwhile, the number of women cigarmakers jumped from 6,500 to 8,500, an increase of nearly one-third.(23) The higher proportion of women among cigarmakers, however, was not simply a direct result of increased mechanization of production. While the more elaborate stripping machines, bunching machines and suction tables required higher capital outlays that were beyond the means of smaller firms which still predominated in the industry, the use of molds necessitated minimal capital investment.

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Moreover, the new division of labor expressed in team work, although encouraged by the development of machine technology, found a home in a less mechanized environment.

Consequently, the rate of increase in women's participation in the industry's labor force surpassed that of investment in machinery and tools. In 1890, cigar manufacturers in New York and Brooklyn spent $2 million on fixed capital (tools, equipment, land and buildings). This represented 12.6 percent of all reported capital investment. Meanwhile, expenditures on tools and equipment alone amounted to $840,000, or 41.2 percent of fixed capital outlays. Ten years later, fixed capital amounted to $2.5 million, or 16 percent of all capital investment. Expenditures on equipment and tools marginally rose to $900,000, but fell to 36 percent of fixed capital investment.(24) This suggests that employers emphasized expansion of production facilities -- opening new factories, renovating existing ones, or establishing tenement house shops.

The changing composition of the cigarmaking workforce can best be seen through an examination of specific firms varying in scale of operations, degree of capitalization and number of employees. Using the rating system of R.G. Dun and Company, which reported on firms' capital reserves, and the annual reports of the New York State Factory Inspection Bureau, which stipulated how many men and women worked for a particular employer, one can ascertain certain patterns. Taking 1892 (the peak year in cigar production according to Internal Revenue statistics), 1895 (when the nation's economy stood in the midst of a depression) and 1898 (at the beginning of an economic recovery) as representative years, the following trends emerge: (1) the proportion

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of women in the labor force of almost every firm grew between 1892 and 1898; (2) on average, in the more highly capitalized firms (those capitalized at more than $100,000, and especially more than $250,000) women constituted a larger proportion of the workforce; and (3) highly capitalized firms showed the most consistent rate of growth in women's participation in the workforce between 1892 and 1898 (See Tables II, III and IV.).

Table II. Proportion of Women In the Cigarmaking Workforce (1892, 1895, and 1898) among Selected Firms [Size of Workforce is outside parentheses and Percentage Women is inside parentheses]

Group A. (No Change 1892-1895 and increase 1895-1898)	1892	1895	1898	Rating
M.P. Breslin	100 (50%)	90 (50%)	100 (60%)	B
Heyman Bros. and Lowenstein	300 (50%)	250 (50%)	240 (54%)	B
Kerbs, Wertheimer and Schiffer	500 (60%)	1500 (60%)	1955 (64%)	A
Group B (Decrease 1892-1895 and increase 1895-1898)				
Levy Brothers	400 (50%)	375 (47%)	175 (57%)	B
McCoy and Company	120 (50%)	110 (36)	300 (53%)	B+
Jacob Stahl	100 (60%)	180 (55.6%)	300 (56.4%)	B
Group C (Steady Increase)				
L. Miller and Sons	38 (8%)	350 (43%)	278 (66.5%)	B
N. Eck and Company	85 (23.5%)	120 (33.3%)	11 (64%)	C
Ohio and Rovira	130 (23%)	90 (44%)	200 (50%)	B+
Ottenberg and Company	633 (45.5%)	335 (48%)	215 (81%)	A
Seidenberg and Steifel	20 (50%)	400 (75%)	251 (88%)	B+
Kohn Brothers	65 (31%)	70 (43%)	70 (50%)	none
Carl Upmann	465 (32%)	450 (44%)	500 (50%)	C
Aaron Engel and Sons	55 (27%)	57 (30%)	52 (33%)	F
Kaufman Brothers	150 (66.7%)	100 (80%)	175 (71%)	E
Louis Ash and Company	50 (20%)	38 (21%)	135 (26%)	E
Group D (Increase 1892-1895 and decrease 1895-1898)				
Guedalia and Company	60 (23%)	55 (27%)	92 (13%)	E
M. Stachelberg	200 (25%)	375 (33.3%)	418 (20%)	C+
I. Lewis	104 (29%)	110 (55%)	120 (33.3%)	D
M.W. Mendel and Brothers	380 (42%)	400 (56%)	200 (50%)	A+
L.E. Kaufmann	160 (63%)	125 (80%)	175 (69%)	A+
Bondy and Lederer	500 (80%)	300 (83%)	360 (80%)	B

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Explanatory Note — Key to Ratings:

A+ = $1,000,000 or more
A = between 500,000 and 1,000,000
B+ = between $250,000 and $500,000
B = between $100,000 and 250,000
C+ = between $50,000 and 100,000
C = between $10,000 and $25,000
D = between $5,000 and 10,000
E and F = below $5,000

[Calculated from R.G. Dun and Company, **Reference Book Containing Ratings of Merchants, Manufacturers and Traders Throughout the U.S.** (1895); and New York State. Labor Department. Inspection Bureau, the **Seventh** (1892) and **Thirteenth** (1898) **Annual Reports**, pp. 113-211 and 301-318; and 224-358, respectively.]

Table III. The Average Proportion of Women in High and Low Capitalized Cigarmaking Firms (1892, 1895, and 1898)

	1892	1895	1898
High	49%	56%	62%
Low	31%	41%	39%

[Clarification of terms: "High" Capitalized Firms are those receiving at least a B rating from R.G. Dun and Company, that is those firms capitalized at more than $100,000. "Low" Capitalized Firms are those receiving less than a B rating, or capitalized at less than 100,000. See key in Table II. for more detailed breakdown of ratings.]
(Calculated from same sources as in Table II.)

Table IV. Rate of Change in the Number of Women Employed and Rate of Change in the Proportion of Women in Workforces of Selected Cigarmaking Firms Per Degree of Capitalization (1892 and 1898)

	% Change In # of Women	% Change in Proportion
A and Higher		
Ottenberg	-39	+44.1
M.W. Hendel and Brothers	(a) -37.5 (b) +69 *	+18.8
L.E. Kaufmann	+25	+9.2
Kerbs, Hertheimer and Schiffer	+318	+6.5
B+ Rating		
Ghio and Rovira	+233	+116
Seidenberg and Steifel	+2,100	+76
McCoy and Company	+167	+7
B Rating		
L. Miller and Sons	+6,067	+742
M.P. Breslin	+20	+20
Levy Brothers	-50	+14
Heyman Bros. and Lowenstein	-13	+8
Jacob Stahl	+35	+8
Bondy and Lederer	-28	0
C and C+ Rating		
M. Eck	-65	+110
Carl Upmann	+66.7	+35
M. Stachelberg	+62	-22
E and Lower rating		
Kohn Brothers	+75	+63
Louis Ash and Company	+250	+30
Aaron Engel and Sons	+13	+20
Kaufmann Brothers	-50	-43
Guedalia and Company	-14	-44

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* = M.W. Mendel operated under two names in 1898 (a = M.W. Mendel and Brothers and b = M.W. Mendel)
[Calculated from same sources used in Tables II and III]

Among the twenty-two firms for which data is available for all three years, all but three employed a larger proportion of women in 1898 than they did in 1892. This pattern prevailed most consistently among the highly capitalized firms. In all but one of the firms with capital reserves of more than $100,000, the proportion of women in the workforce grew from 1892 to 1898. However, in about one-third of the lower capitalized firms the proportion of women in the workforce declined. In addition, even in the midst of the depression following the Panic of 1893, almost half of the companies demonstrated a steady increase in the proportion of women in their workforce. In fact, the Panic of 1893 did not immediately signify a reduction in the proportion of women in the workforce of 70 percent of the firms, although 60 percent did employ fewer workers in 1895 than they did in 1892.

The more highly capitalized employers tended to depend more on women workers for two related reasons. With greater capital reserves and access to credit, they could afford to invest in machinery and equipment which opened the way to hire less experienced workers. Their degree of capitalization permitted them to maximize the economies of scale afforded by the introduction of sophisticated technology and a more detailed division of labor that accompanied it. These economies of scale, resulting in lower per unit costs, assumed greater importance for firms competing in a national market that apparently fostered concentration of the means of production. These factors, in fact, led some companies to maintain production facilities in other places outside New York. McCoy and Company, the Owl Cigar Company, M. Stachelberg and

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Company and Powell, Smith and Company, to name a few, operated factories also in Florida or upstate New York.(25) By 1898, out of town production for some major firms assumed a greater importance as New York City emerged as the home of company headquarters where little or no manufacturing occurred.

The implications of this admittedly limited sample (although similar trends are evident among the sixteen other firms for which data is available for 1895 but not for either 1892 or 1898) bore heavily on employers and workers. The employment of women represented a key element of the manufacturers' quest for lower costs and greater productivity. Despite a slight increase in the number of cigarmakers between 1890 and 1900, the wage bill of employers actually declined from $9.7 million to $8.9 million, or about eight percent.(26) Meanwhile, investment in machinery and tools constituted a small share in the increase in fixed capital investment from 1890 to 1900 (see page 231 in this chapter), thereby indicating that cigarmaking remained a relatively labor intensive industry. Yet the sales value of goods produced per worker increased during the same period slightly more than ten percent, from $1673 to $1852.(27)

Lower aggregate labor costs in a slightly growing labor force combined with greater output per worker suggested that lower wage workers were being substituted for the higher paid handicraftsmen. Accentuating this pattern, despite efforts of legislators and factory inspectors, was the persistence of tenement house shops, in which women constituted anywhere from about 50 to 80 percent of the workforce. For cigarmakers these twin developments meant a bifurcation in their world of work -- manifested in a broad spectrum of conditions of employment.

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The diversity of the cigarmakers' world of work was reflected in their rates of pay. Pay rates and weekly earnings varied by employer, type and length of cigar, job classification and production methods. These variables often overlapped with differences among tenement house and inside shop and factory production, on one hand, and between nonunion and union workplaces, on the other. Manufacturers marketing the same grades of cigars paid workers performing comparable tasks at different rates. Bondy and Lederer paid bunchers from $2.10 to $2.40 per 1000 cigars while Straiton and Storm paid workers to bunch strips between $2.40 to $2.60 per 1000. Cigarmakers producing long filler Havanas earned at twice the piece rate as they did making the long seed variety. In general, perfectos "paid" more than shaped cigars, which in turn paid more than the simple straight style. As a rule, the longer the cigar, the higher the piece rate, employer notwithstanding. The diversity in piece rates reflected differences in the prices received for certain types of cigars, and the degree of difficulty and time required to roll them. For example, clear Havana cigars sold for 15 cents to 25 cents, and long seed cigars sold for 10 cents or 15 cents depending on the shape and tobacco used. Perfectos required more skill and time to roll than shaped and straight cigars.(28)

Cigarmakers working on the same type or style of cigar were compensated at different rates depending on the division of labor and job classification. In the handicraft shops where the functions of bunching and rolling were integrated, the cigarmakers' piece rates far surpassed the rates of those employed where the functions were divided. Under the team work format, the distinct tasks of rollers and bunchmakers were recognized with a higher pay scale for the former. (29)

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The deployment of new technology altered pay rates as well. Cigarmakers (typically nonunion) working on suction tables earned $5 per 1000 while their counterparts in the large manufacturers using molds earned $6 per 1000. In turn, rollers and bunchers using fewer than five blocks (the "standard" number) -- each capable of pressing 20 bunches -- commanded a higher rate of pay since it required more time to press an equal number of bunches.(30)

The sharpest differences in pay scales emerged between union and nonunion cigarmakers. By the late 1890's, the pay gap ranged from $2.50 to $3.00 per 1000. In general, unionized shops used little or no machinery, employed fewer workers and depended less on the labor of women. Among the identifiable nonunion shops were some of the largest manufacturers, employing more than 500 workers of which women represented more than two-thirds of the labor force. Meanwhile, few of the unionized shops had a workforce of more than a hundred, and rarely did women constitute a majority.(31)

Even among union cigarmakers, pay scales varied significantly. From 1891 to 1895 members of Local 144 of the Cigar Makers International Union claimed a rate of $37 per 1000 for the most expensive styles. Their cohorts in Local 141 attained a high rate of $16 per 1000, while members of Local 13 settled for a rate of $10 a 1000. The minimum rate in the shops represented by the five New York locals was $7, and $5 in the shops represented by the three Brooklyn locals. These pay rate discrepancies occurred because some firms specialized in clear Havanas, others in long seed cigars, and still others in the "cheap" five cent variety. It also appears that the producers of higher grade cigars preferred a Manhattan location because they would be closer to their

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customers and more conveniently located to recruit the necessary labor.

Moreover, the pattern of union cigarmakers' pay rates shifted over time. From the early 1880's until 1891 many union locals reported a fairly steady increase in pay rates. For some, like Locals 10 and 13 in New York and 132 in Brooklyn, piece rates rose by more than 25 percent. In contrast, members of #87 in Brooklyn enjoyed increases in pay from 1883 through 1887, but beginning in 1888 incurred a one-third cut, while members of #90 in New York experienced regular annual pay reductions from 1883 to 1888, when they began to reverse the tide. In the 1890's, at least until 1896, union cigarmakers enjoyed relative pay stability as seven of the eight New York and Brooklyn locals enforced the same "price list" in 1895 as they did in 1891. Two of the three cigar packer locals, however, could not preserve the pay scales set in 1891, as by 1895 rates dropped between five and twenty-five percent.(32)

While unionized cigarmakers enjoyed favorable conditions of employment, tenement house workers found themselves at the other end of the spectrum. In the mid 1890's the most generous estimates put the pay rates of tenement house workers at $4.50 to $5.50 per 1000 according to style or type. More sobering reports indicated rates as low as $3. In any case, these rates did not even approach the lowest rung on the scale of union cigarmakers. Needless to say, meager weekly earnings ensued from low piece rates. A tenement house family with two members working sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, could produce 2,500 cigars a week yielding between $9 and $11, although witnesses at the New York State Assembly Committee investigating the conditions of women workers held that the daily output of a quality worker ranged from 250 to 300.(33)

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If low rates and limits on individual skills and energy were not enough, tenement house workers suffered from an erratic flow of production. Often they received unprocessed tobacco which had to be stripped before rolling could commence. Moreover, tenement house workers were not provided with enough tobacco leaves to maximize their earnings.(34) Consequently since their housing remained contingent on their ability to produce cigars, many found the daily struggle to sustain their families precarious.

Tenement house workers adjusted in two ways. First, with rents per apartment about $9 for two rear rooms and $12 for three small, "dirty" rooms, as many members of the family were put to work as possible. A not uncommon sight was a woman rocking an infant in a cradle with her feet while she rolled cigars, and children, eyes swollen and inflamed from being rubbed with tobacco-stained hands, stripping tobacco. Apparently oblivious to health considerations and working at a frenetic pace, tenement house workers were reported to net as little as 60 cents per day, and no more than $3 after paying their rent. Secondly, when the amount of work slackened to the extent that their livelihood was threatened, many simply vacated their apartments without paying their rents.(35)

While the working conditions of tenement house cigarmakers were especially harsh, an unhealthy work environment was not peculiar to them. In large workshops and factories cigarmakers' workbenches were pressed against each other so that there was little room to walk. These cramped quarters combined with a chronic lack of ventilation exacerbated the effects of odors from tobacco and coal stoves. Consequently, cigarmakers were beset with a number of maladies, ranging from

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indigestion to life threatening respiratory illnesses, including tuberculosis, pneumonia and consumption. Tuberculosis in particular became a scourge; almost half of the cigarmakers' deaths in 1890 could be traced to the disease that contributed to the occupation's low life expectancy of 37 years. (36)

Almost equally universal were long workdays. Most cigar manufacturers ran their factories and shops six days a week, during which time nonunion cigarmakers could expect to labor more than fifty hours. Not coincidentally those manufacturers who showed a propensity to hire young women maintained the longest work weeks. For example, almost twenty percent of Kerbs, Wertheimer and Schiffer's workforce -- all required to work 59 hours a week in 1898 -- were women under the age of twenty-one, and about 25 percent of McCoy and Company's workforce, putting in 59 hours, were women under twenty-one.(37)

This feature of large scale manufacturing and tenement house production in particular became another benchmark for union cigarmakers. Beginning in the early 1880's, locals in the Cigar Makers International Union vigorously pursued a reduction in the workday. While most union members in 1883 were compelled to work ten hours Monday through Friday and eight hours Saturday, by 1887 virtually every local had secured a eight hour day Monday through Friday and a six hour day on Saturday.(38) This improvement weathered erosions of pay rates experienced by some locals and even survived the deep and pervasive depression following the Panic of 1893.

While union membership spared cigarmakers long workdays, it did not provide them with immunity from unemployment. Much of the unemployment flowed from the seasonal shifts in production endemic to

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the industry. Production peaked in September and October and then dropped steadily, reaching its nadir in January and February. In the early spring, production picked up, expanding continually until June, when it again began to level off before resuming its annual resurgence. The ebb and flow of unemployment followed almost as predictably. In 1897, for example, almost twelve percent of union cigarmakers were out of work from January through March, seven percent in the early spring, ten percent during the summer months, and less than seven percent during the last three months of the year.(39)

Such periodic bouts of unemployment encouraged union cigar makers to strive for higher piece rates and for male members to corner the trade of the most expensive types and styles of cigars. Moreover, they prompted the Cigar Makers International Union to adopt a travellers' benefit that allowed cigar makers to move to less crowded markets and an out-of-work fund to protect members from longer than expected spells of unemployment.

The organization of production and the conditions of employment it engendered affected the collective life and activity of cigarmakers. Those organized into unions had to confront changes in technology, production methods and a scale of operations that challenged their position as craftsmen and the institution whose raison d'etre it was to preserve if not enhance that position. Cigarmakers outside the "house of labor", especially those employed in tenement house shops, came to represent a growing sense of crisis in the trade -- fraught with problems and concrete constraints on the cigarmakers' ability to determine their occupational future. In short, during the 1880's and 1890's a bifurcated world of work -- between the unionized and the

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nonunionized; between handicraft production and machine production and between the inside shop/factory mode and tenement house manufacturing -- increasingly encroached on the terrain of a shared experience that fostered labor activity.

If the realm of the cigarmaking craftsmen was not idyllic, it was at least edifying. Using techniques developed and refined over many generations, cigarmakers could confidently practice their skills, knowing that they were indispensable in the production process. This sense of security helped to nurture a social cohesiveness that in turn underpinned their efforts to organize collectively. Customarily laboring in small, relatively intimate work shops where every one, including the owner, was known to each other by his first name, handicraft cigarmakers came to identify work not as a system of "bosses" and underlings but of convivial labor. Samuel Gompers, somewhat nostalgically, recalled the spirited intellectual discussions of the latest political and economic theories in which cigarmakers tired of an individual trying to dominate matters or simply disapproving of his views would "twist his blade against the board in such a way to make a whanging sound".(40) The casual atmosphere also permitted cigarmakers to be simultaneously educated and entertained while they bunched stems and rolled tobacco leaves. It was common practice, Gompers noted, for cigarmakers:

> to chip in to create a fund for purchasing papers, magazines and books. Then while the rest worked, one of our members would read to us perhaps for a hour at a time, sometimes longer. In order that the reader might not be the loser financially, each one of the other men in the shop gave him a definite number of cigars. (41)

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Put another way, cigarmakers enjoyed more than a measure of autonomy at the workplace. They maintained flexible hours, often coming in late and taking long lunch breaks, or delaying the actual starting time for work to change their clothes and, during the winter, to wait until the shops had warmed up.(42) This was all done knowing that production and renumeration by piece allowed them to roll the number of cigars necessary to satisfy themselves and the owners alike. As emblematic of their status, it was customary for handicraft cigarmakers to take some of the products of their labor at the end of the day as just compensation for their skill and effort.(43)

Cigarmakers construed such practices not as privileges, either recognized or sanctioned by benevolent employers, but as well earned rewards for respectable gentlemen of the trade. Such a claim could be made with scarcely a hint of pretentiousness since cigarmakers often were self-employed, emerging from the ranks of journeymen to open their own shops. Moreover, the cutting edge of most of the cigarmakers' organized activity through the Cigar Makers International Union, and during the 1870's, the United Cigar Makers in New York City, was a reaffirmation of the cigarmakers' pride and self-esteem. In this light, union membership entailed responsibilities and duties attendant with the demands and rewards of craftsmanship.

This conception of labor unionism came to clash with the dominant motif of industrialization in late Gilded Age America. Cigarmakers as skilled workers sought to accentuate their role through apprenticeship regulations which served to restrict entry into the occupation and thereby limit supply, and to elaborate work rules which stressed the integrity of the craft. Both collided with the manufacturers' agenda.

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To those fascinated with labor saving production methods, enamored of efficient modes of organization and competing for a larger market share, unions could be tolerated if they understood and lived within their bounds, i.e. they did not interfere with the employers' prerogative to hire and fire, introduce new technology and control the pace and rhythm of production.

Cigarmaking, while not in the vanguard of these industrial developments, nevertheless participated in the transformation of the country's economic landscape. Technological innovation, from the most simple mold to the most intricate suction table, stressed the logic of productivity. The drive to lower per unit labor costs while increasing output carried ominous signals to cigarmaking craftsmen. Skills learned through formal and lengthy apprenticeships and mastered through day to day experience faced restructuring, as machines and equipment performed the concrete tasks. Therefore, the labor process could be divided more exactly, thereby fragmenting the craft of cigarmaking into specific job functions and classifications.

Under the handicraft mode cigarmakers knew all there was to know about bunching and rolling, and their strategic role in the workplace rested on this knowledge. The introduction of new production methods, however, potentially threatened to erode the cigarmakers' occupational niche by devaluing his/her labor. Consequently, members of the Cigar Makers International Union initially resisted technological innovation in the industry during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. When employers began using molds, the union legislated rules that prohibited members from working with them or in shops where they were deployed.

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Nevertheless, a number of factors contributed to a change in union practices. Not only were the larger manufacturers, who were less inclined to recognize the union's authority, integrating molds into the production process, but so were the entrepreneur-run shops among which the union had established its base. In addition, union cigarmakers sensed a greater threat from the growth of tenement house production whose very existence undermined the union's foundation.

In recognition that molds were becoming standard equipment in cigarmaking and that New York and Brooklyn cigarmakers lacked the power necessary to prevent their spread, the union adopted a different tactic. Special attention was devoted to insure that pay scales incorporated the gains in productivity yielded by molds and to establish with employers that molds would not be used to undermine the union. In part, this approach was feasible because the deployment of molds per se did not eliminate the need for skilled labor. Molds simplified the bunching process, but rolling still required a delicate touch to shape a cigar according to the specifications of a particular style without wasting any tobacco. An experienced roller who could compensate for incorrectly made bunches in particular maximized the value of molds. Consequently, the union's adaptation to the introduction of molds actually resulted in gains for cigarmakers as: (1) their average weekly earnings rose as piece rates and output proportionately grew, and (2) the New York and Brooklyn locals expanded, including in their ranks almost 2,000 women, virtually all in mold shops (44), who especially in the 1890's were assuming a significant role in the workforce.

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On the other hand, union cigarmakers showed scant willingness to accommodate to the introduction of machine technology — strippers, bunchers and suction tables — and the new division of labor — team work — it fostered. Suction tables, above all, union cigarmakers deemed an unmitigated danger to their craft. They robbed craftsmen of their skills and thereby their indispensability, and acted as "price-killers", replacing them with unorganized low wage workers. Likewise, members of Local 90 attacked the growth of team work, which had supplanted handicraft work by the mid 1890's, for slashing piece rates almost in half. In 1895, during a depression, some cigarmakers held the growth of machine technology and team work responsible for the widespread unemployment depleting many locals' out-of-work funds. Moreover, these same factors, it was argued, contributed to the fact that only one-fourth of New York's and Brooklyn's cigarmakers were organized, a development that threatened the very future of the Cigar Makers International Union.(45)

The source of this threat was a new breed of employers — manufacturers who owned but did not manage production facilities, and who, unlike the small shop owner, did not share the same social universe with cigarmakers. Manufacturers employing hundreds of workers were propelled by economic imperatives to consider cigarmakers as merely another factor of production. These manufacturers, with their capital reserves, pipelines to credit, and multiplant operations inside and outside of Greater New York City, possessed the resources to contest the Cigar Makers International Union and resist the demands of cigarmakers.

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Therefore, New York locals, beset by formidable foes who themselves had organized into the Cigar Manufacturers' Association, and plagued by the everpresent tenement house "problem", found it increasingly difficult to develop an effective strategy to resist the use of bunching machines and suction tables, or less ambitiously, negotiate the terms of their deployment. Already by 1887, the Cigar Makers International Union identified at least twenty manufacturers using about 100 bunching machines. In 1895 an anonymous union member, observing the changes in cigarmaking over the previous ten years, claimed that a "few thousand" suction tables were in operation, thereby rendering hand work a relic of the past.(46) If cigarmakers aimed to keep the wolf from the door, their hopes rested not so much on union strictures against bunching machines, suction tables and team work, but on technical constraints and the high costs of machinery.

Less circumspect was the cigarmakers' response to tenement house production. Union members considered the existence of tenement house shops the epitome of labor's degradation -- fusing the worst features of industrialization: meager wages, endless workdays and substandard working conditions. These contrasted starkly with union standards which, members held, were under constant threat so long as tenement house shops existed. This threat ran along two fronts: (1) by squeezing workers through low piece rates and greater work efforts, tenement house manufacturers could afford to lower the price of cigars and undersell the inside shops and factories where union cigarmakers worked, and (2) by serving as a reserve for "surplus" labor not easily within the union's reach, tenement house production could help manufacturers outlast cigarmakers during a strike.

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Accordingly, union cigarmakers took dead aim on tenement house shops. In 1877 they waged a three month strike in the midst of a depression that, despite its defeat, did not diminish their resolve.(47) In 1886 cigarmakers locked horns with tenement house manufacturers again in a two month strike/lockout that resulted in some manufacturers retreating from their announced 25 percent wage reduction, and in a merger between the Cigar Makers International Union and Progressive Cigarmakers which had clashed for five years.

Cigarmakers also agitated for legislation prohibiting tenement house production and apparently succeeded in 1883, when the New York State Legislature enacted a bill, only to see it overturned by the Court of Appeals (People v. Jacobs) the following year. Nevertheless, for the next fifteen years, the Cigar Makers International Union along with public health officials, factory inspectors and those manufacturers who charged tenement house shop owners with unfair competition continued to press for legislation.(48) Abolition escaped their efforts as legislators were bound by the 1884 ruling that held interference with a person's right to work was unconstitutional. But reforms were enacted, establishing standards for proper ventilation, sewage and building maintenance.(49) Furthermore, throughout this period the Cigar Makers International Union pushed their union label, granting it to employers who recognized the union and adopted its standards, in an attempt to isolate the tenement house manufacturers.(50)

Union cigarmakers, however, were somewhat ambivalent towards tenement house workers. At the very least, the former viewed the latter as victims, complying with the "evil" practice and powerless to combat it. At worst, tenement house workers were considered active

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participants, indeed, part of the problem itself, and therefore unqualifiably enemies of union cigarmakers. International President Adolph Strasser's appellation of tenement house workers as "scum" reinvoked the distinction between the respectable immigrant-American worker who valued his/her skills and the lowly "greenhorn" who did not appreciate labor's worth. Accordingly, the Cigar Makers International Union constitutionally barred the admission of tenement house workers into its ranks and enforced this by-law with fines and suspensions of local leaders. (51)

Intermittently, though, dissenting voices were heard calling for a more open minded approach towards tenement house workers. In letters to the **Cigar Makers Official Journal** and in resolutions at local union meetings and the biannual convention, members argued that instead of rejecting tenement house workers the union should organize them.(52)

Their participation in the 1877 strike, proponents held, demonstrated their willingness and ability to oppose their employers. A policy of expanding the union's base, advocates continued, would help to achieve the union's basic objectives in two concrete ways: (1) by seeking to upgrade the material conditions of the lowest paid and most poorly treated cigarmakers, the union would protect the wage scale of higher paid inside shop and factory cigarmakers, and (2) by formally integrating tenement house workers into the union, they could be subjected to union discipline and therefore be less likely to act as a casual labor force with a propensity to "scab" during strikes.

This line of reasoning was not insensitive to the possibility that organizing tenement house workers would be a drain on the union's resources. Nevertheless, this potential drawback supporters of the

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organizing strategy considered only a temporary pitfall, since by mobilizing within the "belly of the monster" tenement house production could be eliminated. No consensus was reached on this issue, although in the 1890's differences were bridged with the advancement of the concept of a "family wage" for adult male workers(53), which its proponents asserted would reduce the necessity and incentive for women and children to work and thereby strike at the core of the tenement house system.

In sum, union cigarmakers were coming to grips with the provisional nature of their situation. They could not defend their comparably favorable position, not to mention improve pay scales, reduce the length of the workday and secure a healthy workplace, without adapting to changes in the industry. Whereas the union traditionally had proceeded on the premise that its fate lay with handicraft production done in small shops, the emergence of different forms of industrial organization and production methods prompted a reconsideration of the one-time article of faith. Already craftsmen grudgingly accepted mold workers, many of whom were women, into "their" union, and suffered no loss in status or erosion of material conditions as a result. Cigarmakers whose union leaders prided themselves as being pragmatic would need to draw on this way of thinking to overcome the obstacles presented by a divided world of work.

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FOOTNOTES

1. United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in Cities**, pp. 92, 93, 404 and 405; and Thomas Capek, **The Czech (Bohemian) Community of New York** (New York: Czechoslovak Section of America's Making Inc., 1921), p. 24.

2. United States. **Industrial Commission**, Volume XV (1901), p. 385; Edith Abbott, **Women and Industry** (New York: D. Appleton, 1909), pp.189, 198 and 199; and Jacob Riis, **How the Other Half Lives** (New York: Scribner, 1890), p. 106.

3. Lucy Killough, **The Tobacco Industry in New York and Its Environs** (New York: Regional Plan of New York, 1924), p. 33.

4. **Ibid**, p. 32; and Dorothee Schneider, "The New York Cigarmakers Strike of 1877," **Labor History**, 26 (Summer 1985), 343.

5. Killough, pp. 32 and 33; R.G. Dun and Company, **Reference Book Containing Ratings of Merchants amd Manufacturers and Traders Generally Throughout the United States** (1895); New York State. Inspection Bureau, **Fifth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 321-330; and **The Cigar Makers Official Journal**, January, 1894.

6. New York State. Legislature, Assembly, **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Condition of Female Labor** (1895), pp. 16, 831, 832, 838, 876 and 877.

7. **Ibid**, pp. 17, 831 and 882; and New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 547 and 548.

8. U.S. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, pp.387 and 388; and New York State. Legislature, Assembly, **Report of the Tenement House Committee** (1895), p. 160.

9. United States. Bureau of Labor, **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor** (1900), pp. 559 and 565; Abbott, p. 187; and Willis Baer, **The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States** (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Art Printing Company, 1938), pp. 80 and 81.

10. Baer, pp. 80 and 81; and Patricia Cooper, "From Handicraft to Mass Production: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories 1900-1919" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1981), pp. 2 and 3.

11. Baer, pp. 81 and 84.

12. **Ibid**, pp. 81, 83-86.

13. **Ibid**, pp. 86 and 87; and **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor**, pp. 572 and 573.

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14. **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor,** pp. 566 and 567; Baer, p. 86; and Cooper, p. 78.

15. Baer, pp. 82-85; and **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor,** p. 559.

16. Baer, p. 83; Cooper, p.219; and **Report of Committee Investigating Conditions of Female Labor** (1895), p.757.

17. Cooper, p. 70.

18. **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor,** p. 565

19. **Ibid,** p. 566; and Baer, p. 86.

20. **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor,** pp. 569, 574 and 575.

21. Baer, p. 87; and Abbott, p. 189.

22. Killough, p. 33; and New York State. Inspection Bureau, **Fifth Annual Report,** pp. 321-330.

23. United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in the Cities,** pp. 649-681; and Twelfth Census (1900) **Statistics of Manufactures** Part II, pp. 620-628.

24. **Ibid.**

25. R.G. Dun and Company, **Reference Book** (1895).

26. United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in the Cites,** pp. 649-681; and Twelfth Census (1900) **Statistics of Manufactures,** Part II, pp. 620-628. This development led John R. Commons to conclude that machine technology came into cigarmaking, "not as labor saving but as wage saving devices." John R. Commons, **Labor and Administration** (New York: MacMillan, 1913), p. 128.

27. Calculated from United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in the Cities** and Twelfth Census **Statistics of Manufactures,** Part II.

28. New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 241 and 242; and Cooper, pp. 2, 3, 62 and 64.

29. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report,** p. 242.

30. United States. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, p. 386; and Cooper, pp. 70 and 71.

31. **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor,** pp. 560-562.

32. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), pp.322-325 and **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896), pp. 336-339.

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33. **Report of the Tenement House Committee** (1895), pp. 254 and 255; and **Report of the Special Committee Investigating the Condition of Female Labor**, pp. 926 and 927.

34. **Report of the Special Committee Investigating the Condition of Female Labor**, pp. 919-921.

35. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1895), p. 549; **Report of the Tenement House Committee**, p. 254; **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Condition of Female Labor**, pp. 920-921; and Jacob Riis, **How the Other Half Lives**, pp. 102-103.

36. Cooper, pp. 54 -56; Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report**, p. 549; and **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, September, 1900.

37. Inspection Bureau, **Thirteenth Annual Report**, (1898), pp. 224-358.

38. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth and Fourteenth Annual Reports**, pp. 322-325 and 336-339, respectively.

39. **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, November, 1887 and September 1898; and Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fifteenth Annual Report** (1897), p. 423.

40. Samuel Gompers, **Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography** (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1925), p. 82.

41. **Ibid**, pp. 80 and 81.

42. Cooper, pp. 50-53 and 121.

43. **Ibid**, pp. 147-148.

44. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report** (1890), p. 238.

45. See, for example, **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, May, 1886 and October, 1895.

46. United States. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, pp.385 and 386; Baer, pp.100-101; **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, April 1887; and **Eleventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor**, p. 575.

47. For a concise and insightful account of the 1877 strike, see Dorothee Schneider, "The New York Cigarmakers Strike of 1877," **Labor History**, 26 (Summer 1985), 325-352.

48. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report**, pp. 550-562.

49. **Report of Special Committee Investigating the Condition of Female Labor**, pp. 16; 920- 922 and **Report of Tenement House Committee**, pp. 250-253.

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50. **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, April 1887, December, 1887, September 1897, and January, 1898.

51. Norman Ware, **The Labor Movement in the United States 1860–1895: A Study in Democracy** (New York: D. Appleton, 1929), p.264.

52. For example, see **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, May, 1890; June, 1891 and April, 1897

53. For an interesting discussion of the labor movement's advocacy of a family wage, see Martha May, "Bread Before Roses: American Workingmen, Labor Unions and the Family Wage," Ruth Milkman, ed., **Women, Work and Protest: A Century of U.S. Labor History** (Boston: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1985), pp. 1-21.

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CHAPTER SEVEN -- THE LABOR ACTIVITY OF CIGARMAKERS

During the late Gilded Age, cigarmakers sought to create order in an occupation beset by the unsettling effects of industrialization. Wherever they turned, cigarmakers encountered changes in the modes of production and production methods that significantly influenced their conditions of employment and the quality of their working lives. The dogged persistence of tenement house work, the introduction of bunching machines and suction tables and the steady growth of team work continually reminded cigarmakers -- bunchers and rollers alike -- that unless they organized collectively they would remain victims of the manufacturers' plans to increase productivity and to lower labor costs.

Through the twists and turns of economic swings and political climate, cigarmakers built unions that became both fraternal shelters from the storm of the competitive, impersonal marketplace and effective vehicles for improving their conditions of employment. Locals, formed under the auspices of the Cigar Makers International Union, offered benefits to members in times of illness, unemployment, strikes and lockouts. They legislated and enforced work rules that provided protection from employers' capricious practices, or their self-proclaimed prerogatives. They advanced -- through direct pressure on manufacturers and appeals to others in the labor movement -- a union label that represented upgraded standards in pay, hours, job security and workplace health. They agitated at the polls and in the legislative arena for measures, not the least of them being the abolition of tenement house work, that would not only eliminate threats to these standards but would also enrich the lives of poor, unorganized workers

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as well. And, when employers unilaterally acted to impose pay cuts, or turned a deaf ear to union proposals, the locals directed strikes. In essence, cigarmakers' labor activity found its most significant expression in institutions of their making: labor unions of worker-citizens.

For most of its history prior to 1886, cigarmaker unionism in New York struggled to survive. Frequently, attempts to expand unions aroused cigarmakers' expectations leading to strikes that drained the unions' resources. In 1869, Local 15, affiliated with the Cigar Makers International Union, reached out to Bohemian cigarmakers who began mobilizing against employers introducing molds into the shops. An intensely fought strike ensued which, at its conclusion, left Local #15 with less than 50 members. In 1873, the local, ignoring the International's rules, accepted bunchers as members and again found itself immersed in a costly strike. That same year, in an effort to salvage the barely existent union, young immigrants -- Samuel Gompers from London, England and Adolph Strasser from Germany -- organized the United Cigarmakers. Reflecting the ethnic composition of the workforce, three sections -- English, German and Hungarian - - were established. The following year a Bohemian section was added. After two years of progress, particularly among German cigarmakers, the leaders decided to merge the sections into one local, dissolve the United Cigarmakers Union and apply to the Cigar Makers International Union (C.M.I.U.) for a new charter as Local #144. In 1876, the combination of economic depression and a lost strike cut the union's membership by more than half.(1)

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The next year cigarmakers again tried to rebound. Inspired by the successes of strikers at De Barry and Stachelberg in the summer, Local #144 led a drive against the spread of tenement house shops. Selected strikes resulted in evictions of cigarmaking families. In response, the union mobilized a "general" strike during which it sought accommodations for evictees and established a cigarmaking cooperative. Mounting personal hardship and organizational burdens took their toll on the cigarmakers and their union. After 107 days on strike most returned to work under the status quo ante. Membership again declined, although unlike 1869, 1873 and 1876, the union could claim that some shops made gains, that its core remained intact and enthusiasm for the union still ran high. (2)

The sobering experience of the 1870's triggered at first retrenchment and reorganization. Arguing that the locals could not adequately assume the tasks of organizing without a strong, effective, central organization at the national level, Strasser and Gompers increasingly shifted their attention to the affairs of the CMIU. In 1877 Strasser was elected President, and Gompers chosen to preside over the union's constitutional committee. In 1879, under their leadership, the union's biannual convention adopted new by-laws to ensure a closer coordination of locals and the International Union, and introduced financial reforms, including higher dues, initiation fees and equalization of funds. Moreover, convention delegates endorsed a "travellers" loan plan that would assist cigarmakers in search of a more favorable job market. These changes inaugurated a period of gradual growth both in New York and nationally over the next few years, and established the foundation for the expansion of the benefits feature to

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cover illness, death, strikes and unemployment.(3)

However, the resurfacing of centrifugal forces in part offset these strides. Local #144, the only New York local between 1879 and 1885 that contained a multiethnic and multitrade membership (the other Local #90 admitted only German-speaking cigarmakers) encountered pressure to reorganize as well. Cuban and Spanish cigarmakers insisted on retaining their autonomy in a separate local. Packers also pressed for a separate local that could establish its pay scale and work rules. Even more ominous was the formation of a rival union -- the Progressive Cigar Makers in 1881, following a contested election to Local 144's executive board. Led by socialists who severely criticized Gompers' and Strasser's non-partisan political orientation, the Progressive Cigar Makers found support in the Knights of Labor District Assembly 49 under the leadership of advocates of "revolutionary unionism" and producers cooperatives known as the Home Club.(4)

The split between the Progressives and Local 144 weakened strikes called by either union. For example, in 1884 when the former waged a strike aginst Straiton and Storms for cutting piece rates, members of the CMIU took their places, ignoring a boycott authorized by the Central Labor Union. This conflict soured relations between the CMIU and the Knights of Labor and contributed to the formal recognition of the rivalry with the establishment of the American Federation of Labor in 1886.(5)

Cigarmaker unionism, nevertheless, weathered these strains. In late 1885 a rapprochement between the Progressive Cigarmakers and the CMIU began. Representatives from both unions met in Rochester and agreed upon terms of reunification. In December, the membership of the

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Progressive Cigarmakers endorsed the Rochester initiative, and locals in Brooklyn and Morrisania, in the Bronx, soon after applied to the CMIU for charters.(6)

Yet the merger appeared stillborn when the Progressives and New York locals of the CMIU became entangled in another dispute stemming from the attempts of manufacturers to cut piece rates. The Progressives and CMIU locals conducted separate strikes and entered into separate negotiations with members of the United Cigar Manufacturers' Association. The Progressives, with the assistance of the Central Labor Union in which District Assembly 49 assumed a prominent role, agreed to a sliding scale of piece rates, resulting in modest cuts for cigarmakers employed in the lower paying shops and significant reductions for those employed in the higher paying shops. The CMIU locals, unlike the Progressives, maintained their base among producers of higher priced cigars, and accordingly resisted the manufacturers' tactics, insisting that the pay scales effective January 1, 1886 be observed. While the CMIU tried to carry on the strike, the Knights of Labor gained recognition of their union label and admitted the Progressives as a Local Assembly. (7)

The idea of amalgamation did not disappear, though. In the summer of 1886, the Progressives, disenchanted with the Knights of Labor District Assembly 49, turned for support to the CMIU whose leadership at this time was also hungry for allies. By the end of 1886, the Progressives joined the CMIU receiving charters for three locals: numbers 10, 90 and 254 in New York and Local 149 in Brooklyn. The merger of the two unions signaled further expansion and reorganization of the union. The packers gained their own locals -- two in New York and

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one in Brooklyn -- and membership almost doubled from the previous year.(8)

But as dramatic as the growth of the CMIU was in New York and Brooklyn, 1886 proved to be the apex. Between 1886 and 1889 membership precipitously declined. In 1890 a temporary resurgence occurred, to be followed by a period of stagnation whereby membership hovered around the 5,000 mark. Overall, this marked a reduction of the relative significance of the New York and Brooklyn locals within the CMIU. Moreover, the three locals constituting the original source of the union's growth, Locals 144 (Gompers' base), 90 and 10 (consisting of former Progressives) encountered the most serious erosion in membership (See Table I.).

Table I. Membership in New York and Brooklyn Locals of Cigar Makers International Union (1886 to 1898)

Year	# of Members+	% of U.S. Membership	% Locals 10, 90 and 144 of N.Y. and Brooklyn
1886	7.960	32.3	75.6
1887	5,400	26.2	72.4
1888	2,850	16.7	72.2
1889*	2,570	15.0	69.8
1890	6,680	27.1	63.9
1891	5,140	21.2	61.4
1892	5,450	20.4	59.9
1893	5,090	19.0	55.8
1894	5,200	18.7	53.5
1895	not available	not available	not available
1896	5,700	20.9	51.9
1897	5,120	19.4	50.8

+ = all figures rounded off to nearest ten.
* = packers not included for this year.
Calculated from figures provided by **The Cigar Makers Official Journal**, 1887-1898; and Willis Baer, **The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States** (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Art Printing Company, 1933), p. 98.

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This pattern in membership reflected specific features of the cigarmaking industry in New York and Brooklyn. Behind the union's lack of growth from 1886 to 1897 was an inability to overcome the structural barriers in the industry and adapt to changes in technology and production methods. Despite consistent agitation by the New York locals, tenement shop production remained intractable. Many of the same manufacturers targeted for owning tenement shops in the 1877 strike, reportedly maintained them almost twenty years later. These included some of the largest firms, employing hundreds of workers, such as Kerbs and Spies, Wertheimer and Schiffer, Mendel and Brothers, and Bondy and Lederer.(9) Tenement house workers, dependent on their employers for housing as well as income, labored under conditions manifestly not favorable to organizing. Cut off from one another and immersed in the daily rhythm of a family based economy, tenement house workers lacked the prerequisite collective experience of inside shop and factory work that bred a "them against us" consciousness. Simultaneously, companies with greater capital reserves emerged, opening up factories outside New York City, in upstate New York and rural Pennsylvania, where wage rates were lower. Consequently, manufacturers began to create a national market for cigars, especially the cheaper five cents variety.(10)

Even more inexorable was the transformation of work exemplified by the pervasive use of team work, bunching machines and suction tables. The resultant standardization of production embodied a detailed divison of labor that led to a deskilling of the cigarmakers' work. In turn, this reorganization of work patterns and technological innovation facilitated the employment of women and others claiming little or no previous experience in cigarmaking.

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To a union drawing its strength and vitality from cigarmaking craftsmen, such developments spelled a direct threat. Accordingly, union cigarmakers continued to exhibit an exclusionist orientation, accepting only those who worked and behaved as craftsmen. Following the national union's constitution, the New York and Brooklyn locals prohibited tenement house workers from membership, and barred members from working for employers using bunching machines and suction tables. Not unexpectedly, the ascendant manufacturing firms that were capturing a large share of the market with the savings generated by machine technology and team work operated union free. Meanwhile, the union's base remained in the smaller shops that tended to produce for a local market and whose workforce was predominantly men working with the simplest cutting tools and molds.

Consequently, despite evidence of economic recovery in 1898, the CMIU locals did not extend their membership beyond 5,000, of whom more than 60 percent were men.(11) While the union, under Gompers' urging, officially upheld a nondiscriminatory policy towards the admission of women, the thrust of its practices at the very least deemphasized organizing women. Instead, Adolph Strasser, addressing delegates at the union's convention in 1879, articulated what became the guiding principle of the union's attitude about women's proper place. In making the case for protective legislation, he argued:

> We can not drive the females out of the trade, but we can restrict their daily quota of labor through factory laws. No girl under 18 should be employed more than eight hours per day; all overwork should be prohibited; while married women should be kept out of the factories at least six weeks before and after confinement." (12)

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Similar sentiments were expressed in editorials of the **Cigar Makers Official Journal** where the influx of women into the occupation simultaneously provoked expressions of paternalistic concern for the "weaker" sex and fears that their growing numbers represented a threat to the standards of union cigarmaking craftsmen.(13)

The impact of a stunted growth in membership, nevertheless, was inconsistent. On one hand, the New York and Brooklyn locals had difficulty in enforcing the national union's apprenticeship rules. Manufacturers in general retained power over hiring, job assignments and firing, although many tacitly accepted the union's three year apprenticeship tenure and restriction of three apprentices per shop, largely because it was less expensive to do so. Clearly, the union's limited power was manifested in its inability to prevent the spread of machine technology, union rules notwithstanding. Moreover, the pay scale of New York and Brooklyn union cigar makers failed to keep pace with those claimed by Boston, Chicago and St. Louis cigarmakers, who either stemmed the tide of technological change or negotiated agreements insuring that union members shared in the productivity increases. (14)

On the other hand, New York's union cigarmakers made consistent improvements in conditions of employment despite the lack of increase in their numbers. Every one of the nine cigarmaker and cigar packer locals had achieved the eight hour day by 1887, a year after reaching their collective zenith in membership, and retained it into the 1890's even during the depression following the Panic of 1893. In addition, virtually every local, with the exception of Local 90 in New York, experienced an increase in piece rates during the 1880's, and only one of the cigarmaker and two cigar packer locals experienced a reduction in

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its pay scale from 1891 to 1895.(15)

The uneven development of cigarmaker unionism in New York was rooted in the specific characteristics of the cigarmaking industry in New York and Brooklyn. Women represented a higher proportion of the workforce than they did in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and St. Louis, where the Cigar Makers International Union won higher wage rates. The proportion of women increased from 31 percent in 1890 to 43 percent in 1900, while during the same period men continued to outnumber women in Philadelphia's cigarmaking workforce by 2:1, in Boston's by 3:1, in Chicago's by 4:1; and in St. Louis' by 10:1.(16)

The large presence of women in the workforce complicated efforts to build viable unions. Women's participation in wage work outside the household tended to be episodic. Women worked until they married and returned to wage earning either when their children were older or when their husbands were unable to work. Women's relatively temporary job tenure discouraged the development of a strong occupational identity and the appreciation of the possible advantages of trade union organization.

Two other features of New York's and Brooklyn's cigarmaking industry inhibited unionization: the everpresent tenement house system and the growth of large scale manufacturing firms. Not coincidentally, both thrived on the employment of women as a source of "cheaper" labor. Tenement house shops also fed on the exigencies of recently arrived immigrant families who risked losing their sources of livelihood as well their homes if they joined a union. Equally important, because the Cigar Makers International Union associated tenement house production with low wages, excessive hours and the general degradation of the trade, it

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outrightly rejected the idea of organizing tenement house workers.

The growth of large cigar manufacturers who also maintained factories outside of New York and produced for a national market posed a different type of challenge to union cigarmakers. Such firms as Ottenberg and Company, M.W. Mendel and Brothers, L.E. Kaufmann and Kerbs, Wertheimer and Schiffer among others commanded considerable resources that allowed them to prevent inroads by the Cigar Makers International Union. Companies with capital reserves of a million dollars and more had ready access to credit that enabled them to expand production, invest in new machinery and widely advertise their products.

In contrast, the smaller shops employing less than 50 workers and possessing capital reserves of less than $100,000, lacked the means to introduce the bunching machines and suction tables that threatened cigar craftsmen upon whom the Cigar Makers International Union drew its support. In addition, since these shops produced for a local market, they were more susceptible to union pressure, especially boycotts. There was also an incentive for smaller employers to accept union standards. Employers paying the union scale and honoring apprenticeship rules gained the right to use the Cigar Makers International Union's blue label, which thereby provided them with access to the merchants, saloons, theatres and meeting halls frequented by union members.

In Boston, where affiliates of the Cigar Makers International Union were able to block the introduction of suction tables, rigorously enforce apprenticeship rules and preserve higher piece rates, few employers reached the size of their New York counterparts. In the late 1890's the ten largest Boston cigar manufacturers averaged about a 100 workers each, while in New York 37 manufacturers employed at least 100

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workers, and four employed more than 500 workers.(17)

In brief, the relative absence of large manufacturers bent on deploying machine technology and a reduced dependency on women in the workforce facilitated the efforts of Boston's cigarmakers to organize. Conversely, the increasing significance of major firms relying on machinery and women to reduce labor costs confined New York's cigarmaking union to a specific sector of the industry: in the main, small shops using only the simplest forms of technology such as molds and where the demand for skilled rollers remained strong.

Yet the achievements of New York's and Brooklyn's locals evidently confirmed the logic of the "new model" unionism the Cigar Makers' International Union adapted from British trade unions. Central to this concept of unions was the emphasis on consolidating the existing membership by building a stable organization administered according to sound business practices and supported by those, who, by virtue of their skills and position in the production process, most appreciated the worth of their labor and possessed the greatest capacity to organize themselves. Acting upon the first precept, the CMIU instituted high dues and initiation fees and adopted strict financial procedures, centrally enforced and locally administered, to account for the expenditure of union funds.

Following the second precept, a series of benefits was introduced starting with a travellers' loan in 1879. Members who had paid dues for one year were eligible to borrow up to eight dollars at a time, including 50 cents towards defraying transportation costs. Then in 1880 sickness and death benefits -- the latter paying 40 dollars towards a member's burial expenses -- were implemented. In 1887 the death benefit

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was expanded to include life insurance for members in good standing for five years, ranging from $200 to $500 depending on a member's tenure, and to provide burial expenses for a member's spouse. Two years later, after serious debate in the pages of the **Cigar Makers Official Journal** and at the union's convention, delegates adopted a proposal establishing an out-of-work benefit. This feature provided three dollars a week for a six week period which was followed by a seven week interlude before the benefit was continued. To discourage a dependency on the benefit and to avoid overburdening the union's financial resources, payments were limited to $54 a year per member and were not distributed during the seasonal slack periods -- from June 1 through September 23 and December 16 through January 15. In 1891, the union amended its strike benefit created in 1885, substituting a flat five dollar payment for a sliding scale based on the strike's length.(18)

The stress on benefits highlighted three key aspects of the dynamics of the Cigar Makers International Union, and its local affiliates. First, it demonstrated the union's sensitivity to certain conditions that eroded its base among the skilled but yet insecure rollers and packers. For example, notwithstanding the concern that an out-of-work benefit might be abused by members and drain the union's finances, arguments that chronic unemployment drove otherwise dyed-in-the-wool union cigarmakers to seek work in "scab" shops prevailed.(19) Similarly, the travellers' benefit served as a safety valve for union cigarmakers embroiled in long strikes, for instead of succumbing to the pressure of returning to work at the employers' terms, they could move to a city or town where the union had established a secure foothold.(20) Secondly, the variety of benefits helped members cope with both the

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anticipated and unexpected traumas of daily life in an era when the state assumed no role in promoting the social welfare of workers. Cigarmakers facing the seasonal downturns in the trade and experiencing personal problems such as alcoholism and broken marriages could turn to the travellers' loan in their search of a more propitious environment.(21) Rollers and bunchers afflicted with the respiratory illnesses endemic to the occupation had recourse to another source of income through the sick benefit. Cigarmakers lying on their death beds were comforted by the knowledge that their families would not be forced into debt or imminent poverty because a union fund covered funeral expenses. Thirdly, the provision of assistance in the most urgent situations fostered a loyalty to the union that translated into a strong identification with its objectives, an acceptence of its authority and a greater involvement in its activities.

The last of these features spoke to the shared recognition by full time union officials and rank and file members that trade unionism involved relationships based on reciprocity -- between rights and entitlements on one hand, and responsibilities and obligations on the other. Therefore, the union went to great lengths to define the specific conditions under which members could claim benefits and to implement measures to prevent members from abusing them. Those members working in nonunion shops were not eligible for an out-of-work benefit, and women members were specifically excluded from coverage under the sick benefit during the final eight weeks of pregnancy and for five weeks after giving birth. Most locals, furthermore, required that members attend a minimum number of meetings each year to be eligible to claim benefits.(22) The travellers' benefit apparently was open to

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widespread abuse, as itinerant cigarmakers made the rounds from one local to another appealing to co-members' empathy for fathers with sick children, and then adding insult to injury by reneging on their pledge to repay the loans.(23) In response, the CMIU instituted penalties for members failing to repay, accepting "illegal" loans, i.e., those not authorized by the local's financial secretary, and for doctoring loan books. The **Cigar Makers Official Journal** also regularly published a list of union members indicating those delinquent in their repayment of loans and, another, a "black" list, containing the names of members who had overdrawn from the benefit fund, forged the names of union officers, or carried two loan books.(24)

The Cigar Makers International Union attempted to strike a balance between the authority of the national union and the powers of local affiliates. Locals enjoyed substantial autonomy in making decisions on the use of their funds, support for other unions' strikes and boycotts and political commitments and endorsements. However, members and locals alike faced the wrath of the national union if they broke ranks from the latter's policy on certain key issues. For example, the Executive Board of the CMIU ruled that Local 90 in New York was required to conduct a trial of any members who participated in a campaign to abolish the internal revenue tax on cigars, a reform that the union welcomed when it was introduced. This decision sparked a number of appeals and proposed changes in the union's by-laws to oversee compliance with duly established policies. In 1888, in a general membership vote conducted local by local, the union adopted three of four proposed rules. One reaffirmed that all resolutions passed at the national union's convention were binding. Another stipulated that

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members suspected of violating these resolutions were subject to a trial, and, if found guilty, a fine; and another prohibited members of locals from acting in a "dual capacity" by forming organs outside the union and against union policy.(25)

The efforts to instill discipline among the rank and file and to promote cohesion between locals and the national union took on special significance in light of the pressing issues confronting union cigarmakers. Tenement shop production remained a scourge of New York's locals. Drives to establish and enforce union standards collided with the manufacturers' use of economic pressure and sleight of hand. Machine technology and team work continued to change the cigarmakers' world of work, and in the process, weaken the union's foothold in the industry.

The experience of cigarmakers with tenement house work, most dramatically illustrated in the 1877 strike, dominated the union's attention. New York locals with the assistance of national leaders agitated for the legislative prohibition of tenement shops, which they held was the source of "squalor, vice and crime" that stunted the "mental and moral development" of children as well as threatened union cigarmakers' conditions of employment.(26) Rebuffed by judicial decisions nullifying bills passed by New York State Legislature, union cigarmakers continued to make tenement house legislation an acid test for political endorsements of candidates, and to pressure public health authorities and factory inspectors to concentrate their efforts on tenement house manufacturers. Samuel Gompers, testifying at the New York State Assembly's Committee studying the conditions of women workers, admonished New York City's Board of Health for its "conservatism" and its lack of cooperation with union efforts to draw attention to the

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tenement house system's perpetuation of infectious diseases. Accordingly, he recommended the employment of more inspectors, a policy of frequent and extensive investigations of work premises and the adoption of imprisonment as a penalty for violations of health codes.(27)

Union members decried the pernicious spread of team work, which virtually supplanted handicraft work. Jacob Sinn, Edward Behnke and E. Brinkmann, from Local 90 charged that, contrary to the employers' contentions, team work resulted in inefficiency since rollers often had to rebunch the tobacco handled by bunch makers. Furthermore, team work produced poor quality work and a reduction of maximum rates from sixteen to nine dollars, and minimum rates from twelve to six dollars. Letters on behalf of local members regularly appeared in the **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** singling out the use of bunching machines and suction tables for driving down pay scales and displacing union members. One in particular attacked the "so called philanthropic societies of Hebrew origin" for setting up schools where "girls" received training on machines, and criticized employers for using women as "strike breakers" and "union busters". Another listed fifteen manufacturers who deployed bunching machines but yet "palmed off" their products as hand-made, thereby defrauding the consumer who paid a higher price for a "spurious article". (28)

Union cigarmakers fought these developments primarily by advancing their union label, which to them represented the observance of union rules and the endorsement of union standards for pay, hours and working conditions. New York locals provided manufacturers with the label, which was to accompany every cigar produced by union members, so long as

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manufacturers did not deploy bunching machines or suction tables, operate tenement house shops, hire women under fifteen years of age, or employ women for more than eight hours a day. Locals formed a Joint Label Committee which maintained a list of manufacturers who did not qualify for a union label and monitored the employers' attempts to use counterfeit labels. Representatives targeted other unions, appealing to them not to purchase any cigar lacking the blue label, or to frequent any restaurant, bar or store that sold nonunion made cigars. Special efforts were made to convince saloon keepers and proprietors of groceries only to carry cigars with the union label. In 1886 and 1887 the union spent more than $67,000 to promote its label and could claim for its efforts 113 union label shops. These promising results provoked Sam Ball, a member of the Label Committee, to urge the CMIU's executive board to allocate in 1888 an additional $25,000 to put ten men into the field to enforce the union label. By 1888, the cigarmakers had won pledges to honor its union label from 55 nions in New York and Brooklyn, mostly representing building tradesmen, including those from the rival American Federation of Labor and Knights of Labor camps.(29)

Enthusiasm for this strategy stemmed from a belief that it constituted a more efficient use of resources than replenishing the out-of-work fund and reduced the need for strikes, which all too often were financially costly and organizationally damaging. Moroever, the union label provided a bridge to civic leaders, social reformers, businessmen and middle class citizens valuing social stability who equated trade unionism with strikes and boycotts. Throughout most of the 1880's and 1890's the CMIU and its New York and Brooklyn locals were able to gain legal recognition of the blue label -- a measure not only of the

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legitimacy of its approach, but a sign of its respectability within the society at large. In 1887, New York State's Superior Court issued an injunction against Moonelis and Company, a reputed tenement house manufacturer, for using counterfeit labels, and in the process upheld the union's label as a trademark, signifying the quality of the product. In 1889, the union's persistent lobbying paid off with the passage of the Trade Mark Act, which recognized a union's right to seek injunctive relief and sue unscrupulous employers for damages.(30)

Cigarmakers complemented this defense of union standards by creating strict work rules which defined their relationship with employers and with one another. Locals' Bill of Prices, which delineated the cigarmakers' pay scale, stipulated work responsibilities, and in the process restricted the employers' authority. Cigarmakers were not to reroll cigars deemed inadequate by foremen unless paid for doing so. Shoddy work was not grounds for dismissal, although it might warrant a foreman's reprimand. Cigarmakers were not to prepare tobacco for rolling, and not to pack them as long as unionized packers were on the premises.(31)

New York locals sought to prevent members from becoming dependent on their employers and from developing a servile attitude toward them. Local 90 waged a campaign against S. Jacoby and Brown and Earle who discriminated against workers who refused to rent housing from the firm by denying them choice job assignments and an adequate amount of work necessary to maximize earnings. The Central Labor Union's Tobacco Trades Section, upon the local's urging, passed a resolution expressing its "outrage" at the manufacturers attempting to introduce a quasi-boardinghouse system in "vogue" in New England's cotton textile

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industry. Meanwhile, Local 254 called on member packers to resist the "bosses'" direct and indirect pressure and indicated that failure to honor its appeal would result in expulsion from the union. In a less formal manner, cigarmakers maintained a code against "sucking up" to employers and foremen by doing such things as running errands, fulfilling special orders and granting personal favors in exchange for preferential treatment. Such behavior, was deemed unmanly, dishonorable and uncharacteristic of a free and independent individual.(32)

Not all strictures and norms remained solely within the locals' domain. Unlike other unions consisting of workers immersed in local industrial and labor markets, such as building tradesmen and printers, the cigarmakers vested the national union with the authority to set apprenticeship regulations. The Cigar Makers International Union established "laws" requiring someone learning the trade to serve at least three years as an apprentice. Local officers were expected to substantiate an apprentice's service, and if he/she was discharged or resigned, they were to provide the apprentice with the appropriate certificate showing how long he or she had served. The national union, however, did recognize the locals' authority in defining the number of apprentices, and accordingly in New York locals set a limit of three per shop.(33)

In practice, the latitude of locals was even greater. New York cigarmakers frequently confronted manufacturers who hired young hands and taught them rudimentary skills necessary for the making of "common", viz., cheap, cigars at deflated piece rates, well below union standards. In recognition of the prevailing power relations between employer and worker, union cigarmakers accommodated to these hiring and training

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practices by employers provided that the three year term for "apprentices" and the three per shop limit were observed. Moreover, locals required rollers and packers not to instruct or assist apprentices or "boys" under these circumstances, and to be on the look out for "runaway cubs", apprentices who left before completing their three year terms.(34)

The improvement of members' conditions of employment was primarily the responsibility of the local affiliates of the Cigar Makers International Union. Towards that end New York's and Brooklyn's locals waged joint union efforts. As already indicated, the campaign around the union's blue label prompted New York's and Brooklyn's locals to pool their resources to defray the costs of organizers and promotional literature. Employer threats to union standards also could provoke cooperation between locals. In January, 1887 Local 144 at the request of "sister" local 141 -- called so because of the role of women like the Bohemian immigrant, Mary Hausler, in its recruiting efforts -- agreed to initiate a conference to combat the reported plans of Kaufman Brothers and Bondy and Lederer to expand tenement house operations. In May, 1887 New York locals of the CMIU and the Cuban Confederation of Cigarmakers mobilized a rally attended by 400 members to protest the two dollar per thousand cut in pay announced by Lozano, Pendas and Company.(35)

This spirit of cooperation took other forms. All the New York CMIU locals participated in the city's Central Labor Union through which they gave and received support for strikes, boycotts and legal suits. In December, 1886 shortly after the C.L.U. launched a daily labor newspaper, **The Leader**, Locals 141 and 144 allocated money to buy five dollar shares in the cooperatively run paper. In addition, union members

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donated cigars for a "fair" in which the products of organized labor were sold to raise money for **The Leader.**(36)

The Cigarmakers' identity with the labor movement did not stop at the East River or Hudson River. Brooklyn Local 132 in 1887 endorsed a boycott against Massachusetts shoe manufacturer, W.L. Douglas, in support of the New England Lasters' Protective Union. Local 90 in New York sponsored an amendment authorizing the union's International President to draw $1,000 from its general fund to assist American Railway Union officers, including Eugene Debs, who were facing trial for their role in the Pullman Boycott in 1894. In 1897 New York and Brooklyn cigarmakers sent Michael Raphael as their emissary to San Francisco to assist cigarmakers in that city organize against tenement house production.(37)

These expressions of solidarity indicated a broader vision of unions than that held by advocates of pure and simple unionism. Some cigarmakers held views, which, although not ascendant within the Cigar Makers International Union, were nevertheless representative of a signifcant proportion of the membership in New York and Brooklyn, especially Locals 10 and 90, which until the summer of 1886 constituted the socialist led Progressive Cigarmakers. Cigar packers from Local 251 in Brooklyn took issue with an editorial in the **Cigar Makers Official Journal** describing Henry George's single tax proposal as "patent medicine" and "all snare and delusion".(38) Michael Raphael in a series of letters to the union journal put forward his case for producer cooperatives. Cigarmaker cooperatives, he argued, would alleviate if not eliminate economic insecurity and "wring more concessions from employers in one month ... than we could at present in ten years." (39) By forming

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cooperatives, he continued, cigarmakers could rid themselves of tenement house shops, child and female labor, degrading machine work, convict labor and "coolie" labor of all kinds -- in short, restore the world of the male craftsmen.(40)

Raphael made cooperatives the center piece of his platform when he challenged George Perkins for the presidency of the CMIU in 1892-1893. Cooperatives, he claimed upon accepting the nomination, would reduce the need for out-of-work benefits, a feature better suited to fraternal societies than unions, and would allow members to defend themselves against the "encroachment of capital". Although Perkins was re-elected, Raphael did very well in the election. He carried two of Brooklyn's locals, ran neck and neck in another and amassed 38 percent of New York's and Brooklyn's vote -- about twice the proportion he managed throughout the national union.(41) Raphael's strong showing in Brooklyn and New York may have resulted from a number of factors not directly related to his advocacy of cooperatives. Yet, his campaign and the substantial vote for him provided added prominence to the issue.

The Cigarmakers' interest in politics was not confined to elections to union office. Identifying candidates sympathetic to cigarmakers' concerns and needs and supporting their campaigns was duly stressed. During Henry George's candidacy for mayor of New York in 1886, cigarmakers joined numerous other groups of workers to rally voters. Ludwig Jablinowski, the German born Secretary of Local 90 and former leader of the Progressive Cigarmakers before its merger with the CMIU, sat on the Labor Committee organized to manage George's campaign. The five cigarmaker locals and two cigar packer locals helped to form the Tobacco Trades Legion which joined cigarmakers from the Knights of

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Labor and unaffiliated cigarmaker unions to mobilize rallies and marches. At one rally attended by more than 500 cigarmakers, representatives from these organizations, speaking in German, Czech and Spanish as well as English, denounced the "boodle" politicians of the Democratic and Republican parties and advocated independent political action. On October 29, about 1,600 cigarmakers marched in a massive parade up Broadway to Union Square joined by thousands of building tradesmen, printers, clothing workers, longshoremen and railroad workers. In the ranks of the Tobacco Trades Legion were 150 nonunionized workers from Kerbs and Spies, the reputed owner of tenement shops, and a contingent of Bohemian cigarmakers carrying a banner reading "Not Anarchy But Liberty; Not Revenge But Justice".(42)

Such displays of esprit de corps and independence aroused the concerns of cigar manufacturers. In the final days of the George campaign, the **U.S. Tobacco Journal** saw in the cigarmakers' political mobilization the danger of "being so elated at the idea of displacing the office holders that they think they will have the right to go for the manufacturers".(43)

While these fears proved to be unfounded following George's defeat in November, cigarmakers, nevertheless, continued to pursue their goals through the political arena. Delegates from Local 132 in Brooklyn mounted a campaign through the Central Labor Union to press the Board of Aldermen to establish a free public library for workingmen and women. The Cigar Makers International Union and its New York and Brooklyn affiliates agitated for the enactment of a number of bills in the state legislature, and towards that objective were instrumental, in 1888, in the creation of a reconstituted New York State Workingmen's Assembly

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which excluded affiliates of the Knights of Labor. Among the legislative goals were the elimination of conspiracy laws that curbed labor's ability to organize, the enforcement of the eight hour standard and the strengthening of the Board of Mediation and Arbitration and Factory Inspection Bureau. Moreover, the cigarmakers persistently sought enactment of legislation prohibiting tenement house work, testifying to legislative committees holding hearings on the subject.(44)

Most of this political activity assumed a non partisan approach, carefully avoiding a formal link to any of the major parties. Instead, union locals selectively endorsed candidates considered most in tune with cigarmakers' interests and possessing a reasonable chance of election. However, especially from locals #10 and 90, formerly in the Progressive Cigarmakers Union, calls for labor to form its own political party could be heard. In a letter to the **Cigar Makers Official Journal** an anonymous New York cigarmaker argued that the American labor movement should learn from the example of British trade unions which successfully ran candidates in elections to Parliament, and advance labor's participation in the halls of government. This, he emphatically suggested, was urgent since

> "...the product of labor is not fairly divided between the laborer and the wealthy man who employs him; the laws which regulate that division are framed by the wealthy; and an inordinate authority has fallen into the hands of wealth which drown the poor man's voice in the Senate, frustrate his efforts in the market and defeats his resistance to oppression."(45)

In a similar vein, Ludwig Jablinowski from Local 90 held that the overriding lesson of the strikes in Homestead, Buffalo, Tennessee and Boise, Idaho was that the "might" of capital through its "usurpation" of political power had made strike action increasingly ineffective. Therefore, he concluded, "labor must take into its own hands the

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legislature, the judiciary and the executive and take the land and means of production out of the hands that use it for the fleecing and enslavement of the workers and place it under public control."(46)

Cigarmakers, notwithstanding their support of electoral politics in pursuit of their objectives, found it necessary to prepare for industrial action. New York and Brooklyn locals participated in scattered strikes which usually were limited in size and duration. Characteristically, strikes broke out at individual shops, involved few workers and lasted less than a week. Some, in fact, were "quickies" -- lasting a day or less, when cigarmakers ceased working in protest against an unpopular foreman, or in response to a threatened withdrawal of a customary practice.(47)

Locals differed in their propensity to strike. Members of Local 90, as reflected both in the number of recorded strikes and the amount of strike benefits, appeared on the picket line more frequently than their counterparts from other locals, while some, like Locals 13 (New York) and 87 (Brooklyn), hardly ever conducted a strike at all. The level of strike activity, furthermore, varied year by year, indicative of shifting economic conditions and internal union dynamics. During a two year period, beginning on October 1, 1885 and ending September 30, 1887 (the CMIU maintained data for two year periods), there were twenty "authorized" strikes by New York and Brooklyn cigarmakers. Local 90 waged five, but, as indicated by the $350 strike benefit paid out, these appear to have been short and small job actions. Meanwhile, Local 144 spent more than $10,000 on four strikes, suggesting that among these was a major walkout involving members from many shops and/or for an extensive length of time. From October 1889 through September 1891, a

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greater disparity emerged, but with the roles reversed, as Local 90 participated in 36 strikes costing $7,300 while Local 144 participated in eleven, spending $775 out of its strike fund.(48) This pattern also implies that coordinated strike action among locals was exceptional, limited to times when they were confronted with a concerted effort by employers to adversely alter cigarmakers' conditions of employment.

The disparate nature and relative paucity of cigarmaker strike activity occurred for a number of reasons. First, there was the structure of the industry itself. The cigar industry in the late Gilded Age, despite evidence of some concentration and consolidation, featured an easy access market with firms entering and exiting frequently. Most cigarmakers worked for manufacturers who owned only a single shop or factory, and among these many worked for employers that specialized in a certain type or style of cigar. This decentralized industrial structure found expression in a broad diversity of conditions of employment, primarily in pay scales. Consequently, efforts by cigarmakers to upgrade their conditions usually began, and ended, with targeting their immediate employers. Only when employers themselves -- either informally through the expansion of tenement house production, or formally through the creation of a manufacturers' association, as in 1886 and 1890 -- showed signs of introducing some uniformity to a checkered economic terrain, did cigarmakers realize the preconditions for a broader field of battle.

The second group of reasons sprang from the dynamics of the CMIU and its locals. On the premise that strikes could be debilitating and self-defeating, the union established regulations and procedures that discouraged job actions. Shop strikes needed the sanction of the local

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without which it was incumbent upon the local President to order strikers back to work, and, if they "disobeyed", to advertise for nonunion cigarmakers. A local president refusing to implement this procedure faced removal from office by the International Executive Board. The CMIU also strictly prohibited the authorization of any strike for a wage increase fron November 1 to April 1, when cigarmaking was in the midst of the slack season. In any event, whatever the cause -- be it a wage cut or the extension of tenement shop work -- strikes called by a local required the authorization of other locals and the national union as well. Without official approval, expressed in a local by local referendum, no strike benefits could be distributed.(49)

Some cigarmakers found this process cumbersome and a serious obstacle to taking timely action. Antol Knakal, Secretary of Local 90, argued on behalf of an amendment to the CMIU constitution offered by the local's executive board that would counter the employers' attempts to stockpile and hire nonunion workers in anticipation of a strike: "It is a direct safequard against long-winded strike applications which prevent a quick attack that could bring manufacturers quicker to terms than if he had his own time to get ready for the strike." (50) The amendment called for the establishment of joint strike committees by locals and defined procedures that expedited the authorization of strikes and the release of strike benefits. In 1892, a year after the ratification of the amendment, New York and Brooklyn locals formed a standing Joint Strike Committee consisting of representatives from every local within a seven mile radius to oversee the administration of strikes. To minimize the possibility that locals would be drawn into costly and unsuccessful strikes, the Joint Strike Committee aimed to insure that strike benefits

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would be distributed only if the majority of a local's membership in the targeted shop participated in the strike.(51)

Another factor influencing the ability of locals to call strikes was the not uncommon practice of union members working in nonunion shops. The CMIU, understandably, adopted a cautious approach whenever union members were not a majority of the workforce. This was particularly the case during an economic slump when members might be pressured to find employment wherever they could. In 1895, for instance, the CMIU pursued a policy of wage restraint, strongly urging its affiliates to defend present standards and seek no increases. This did not go unchallenged among New York's cigarmakers. An open letter to the **Cigar Makers Official Journal** called for the authorization of strikes in nonunion shops, contending that to retain union wage rates "in some shops", it was necessary "to strike for an increase in others". Proponents of a more aggressive posture urged the union to target the unorganized and raise their wage scale "to our level" so that they could not "drag us down to theirs".(52)

Constitutional restrictions on the calling of strikes were rigorously enforced. In 1891, Local 13 opposed the application of Locals 10, 90, 141 and 144 to authorize a strike against Samuel Joseph and Company, who announced a reduction in pay rates, on the grounds that their members were employed in tenement house shops in violation of the union's constitution. Adolph Strasser as President upheld Local 13's challenge, emphatically declaring, "no member working in a tenement house factory can be allowed any benefits, or enjoy and perform the rights of a member."(53) Locals 90 and 141 promptly filed an appeal against the decision. Local officers, Anton Adele, Josef Wocel and John

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Zapotocky held that the union constitution did not expressly prohibit tenement house workers from membership and that locals had the option to accept others besides cigarmaking craftsmen, such as rollers, bunchers, leaf selectors and strippers. They also stressed the need to organize tenement house workers who, without union protection, would incur additional wage cuts and thereby provide a greater incentive to manufacturers to expand tenement house work. Josef Wocel, in particular, took the occasion to advance a strategy that represented a radical change in the union's anti-tenement shop approach:

> The system is an old one and cannot be abolished with a simple decision. It takes time. But by having them (tenement house workers) organized and having control over them, we eventually would, when favorable opportunity offers, abolish the system. (54)

Nevertheless, the Executive Board unaminously supported Strasser's decision. Gompers, for example, unequivocally argued, "it is inconsistent for the CMIU to protest against the continuance of the obnoxious tenement house system if we are to allow members to work in tenement houses".(55) Even more significantly, a secret ballot vote among CMIU members went against the appeal filed by Locals 90 and 141 (Locals 10 and 144 -- original parties in the dispute -- did not appeal the Executive Board's decision) by almost a three to one margain, although among New York and Brooklyn members the appeal attracted 1,163 votes (carrying #141 unaminously and #90 by a more than ten to one ratio). Every small local voted against the appellants and the two remaining larger locals, #10 and #144, did likewise by nine to one.(56)

In 1894, the Executive Board supported the ruling of the New York Area Joint Strike Committee made a year earlier when it began the procedure to authorize a strike before releasing strike benefits. Henry

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Haupt, Secretary of the Shop Committee at N. Eck and Company, contended that the "strike" was in fact a lockout inspired by the employer's attempt to introduce "team hand work" in 1893. In contrast, M. Dampf, Chairman of the Joint Strike Committee, reported that the original application for assistance referred to a threatened reduction in pay rates accompanying a reorganization of production. The difference in defining the dispute with Eck and Company as a strike or a lockout was significant. Under the union's constitution no strike benefits could be released without authorization of the local through a secret ballot vote of the membership. However, in the event of a lockout, members would be automatically entitled to strike benefits without a local-wide vote. In the union-wide referendum, Haupt and others received the backing of only one of the seven New York and Brooklyn cigarmaker locals (Local 90), as the Executive Board's decision was upheld by a three to one margin.(57)

Much of the constitutional attention and internal debate over the strategy of strikes emanated from the concrete experience of cigarmakers. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, cigarmakers participated in four major strikes. The first, in 1877, as previously discussed, failed in its attempt to eradicate tenement house production and left the union weaker but still intact. The next serious conflict developed in the winter of 1886 with employers in the United Cigar Manufacturers' Association against union cigarmakers divided between the CMIU and the Progressive Cigarmakers. In anticipation of renewed industrial activity, manufacturers and representatives of both unions reached an agreement in December 1885 that produced an improved pay scale and a pledge to "restrict" the making of cigars in tenement shops until May 1, 1886, with the ultimate goal of total abolition soon

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after. In one particular contract with Kerbs and Spies, Locals 144 and 10 of the CMIU made significant breakthroughs. Besides gaining a new minimum rate of seven dollars per 1,000, members secured an understanding that employers would reduce the cigarmakers' hours before laying off anyone during the slack season and, if layoffs proved unavoidable, distribute layoffs proportionally between those working on expensive and cheap cigars. The agreement also stipulated only members of Local 144 of the Cigar Makers International Union would be hired, thereby resulting in the discharge of 80 members of the Progressive Cigarmakers. (58)

In early January, some of the higher paying firms in the United Cigar Manufacturers' Association, led by Levy Brothers, announced they could not afford the rates negotiated a month earlier. Accordingly, they began posting notices of piece rate reductions. Workers at Levy Brothers almost immediately walked off their jobs. The CMIU then called on leaders of the Progressive Cigarmakers to wage a strike against John Love and Company, one of the fourteen manufacturers it named as part of the "tenement house ring". Instead, to the disgust of Local 144, the Progressives targeted Brown and Earle, not a member of the "ring". In turn, the manufacturers declared a lockout in solidarity with Levy and Brothers which they promised to enforce until the strikers accepted the cut in their pay scale.(59)

Recognizing the split in the cigarmakers ranks, the manufacturers pursued a divide and conquer strategy, not only pitting the CMIU affiliates against the Progressives but union cigarmakers against tenement shop workers. In a drive to "equalize" labor costs, manufacturers operating tenement shops offered a 25 percent piece rate

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increase to their employees while simultaneously seeking to slash the rates of union workers employed in their other shops. Furthermore, they allotted the piece rate cuts into three tiers, ranging from an 80 cents reduction for those employed in the highest paying union shops to 35 cents for those employed in the lowest paid union shops.(60)

In early February, the Progressives rejected the manufacturers' approach, and apparently with financial contributions from the Brewers' Union and other labor organizations prepared for a long fight. A week later, however, the Progressives reversed their position. Upon the recommendation of the Central Labor Union, the Progressives accepted the multi-tier pay cuts in recognition that their members would be hard pressed to hold out through the winter and in the hope that a settlement with the manufacturers might provide them with a foothold against the rival Cigar Makers International Union. Meanwhile, members Local 144 of the CMIU dug in, reiterating their position that until the pre-lockout rates at Levy Brothers and McCoy and Company were honored, they would not return to their jobs. Other members, not direct parties to the conflict, paid ten percent of their earnings to the union's strike fund, which during the course of the strike/lockout distributed $10,500 in weekly strike benefits.(61)

Despite the combativeness of Local 144's members, the manufacturers prevailed. They introduced piece rate reductions in all fourteen shops, and in March reached an understanding with the Knights of Labor, which had taken the Progressives under their wing, that in return for recognizing the Knights "white" label and gradually eliminating tenement house work, they would deploy bunching machines with no union interference. In addition, the Knights agreed to supply

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the manufacturers with cigar packers, among whom the CMIU lacked a strong base, thereby taking the steam out of Local 144's resistance. This pact drew the fire of the CMIU. Strasser and Gompers pressed the Knights General Executive Board in Philadelphia to investigate the activities of District Assembly 49, and when no satisfactory action followed, they decried the "white washing of scab manufacturers". (62)

The alliance between the Progressive Cigarmakers and the Knights of Labor, however, failed to survive the summer of 1886. The former discovered the CMIU charges that District Assembly 49 permitted the introduction of bunching for a "royalty" were valid, and realized that its relationship with employers was being jeopardized by the Knights' failure to furnish an adequate number of packers. The coup de grace occurred in July when Master Workman Jacob Wolf of Local Assembly 2814 led a delegation to the manufacturers demanding the establishment of an exclusive Knights of Labor union shop. Under this format the Progressive Cigarmakers would be required to renounce their union and apply for membership in the Knights, or face losing their jobs. After workers at Sutro and Newmark and Levy Brothers voted to remain members of the Progressive Cigarmakers, an open war for control of the union shops developed.(63)

The Progressive Cigarmakers, consequently, began exploratory merger talks with the CMIU, and then launched coordinated strikes against manufacturers who considered agreements with the Knights of Labor. To mobilize support and boost morale, affiliates of both unions held a march from Fourth Street and Avenue B up the East Side, culminating in a rally and picnic at Karl's Park at 148th Street and Third Avenue. Members and their families from Hoboken, Jersey City,

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Newark and Elizabeth, New Jersey and South Norwalk, Connecticut joined those from New York and Brooklyn to hear assorted bands and drum corps and participate in a variety of games -- all capped off with robust rounds of beer drinking. (64)

In addition, Local 1 of the Progressive Cigarmakers organized an open meeting at Cooper Union on August 4 to combat the growing influence of the Home Club, a "clique", whom the Progressives held responsible for the conflict. The Home Club was a tightly organized group within District Assembly 49 that favored secret oaths (a practice the Knights amended in 1881) and advocated political action based on socialist principles over the formation of trade unions. Its organizers, James E. Quinn, T.B. McBride and Victor Drury, held the major leadership positions in District Assembly 49 from 1883 to 1887. Leading a list of speakers, consisting of George Block of the National Bakers' Union, George McKay of #6 of the International Typographical Union, John McMahon of the Operative Plasterers' Society and Henry Cole of the Bricklayers' Union, was Frederick Haller, President of Local 10, who asserted that District 49 acted as "scabs" and that the Home Club was working hand and hand with the "bosses", and thereby not only "betraying us" but "ruining" the Knights as well.(65)

Support for the Progressive Cigarmakers continued to mount, as the Central Labor Union officially criticized District Assembly 49 for sabotaging the strike and appealed directly to Local Assemblies within the Knights not to break up the Progressive Cigarmakers Union. The Cigar Makers International Union contributed $20,000 to the strikers and voted to assess its working members ten percent of their earnings to sustain the strike. Emboldened by this support, the Progressive

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Cigarmakers demanded that all fourteen member firms of the United Cigar Manufacturers' Association agree to a one dollar rate increase and to hire only members of their union or their allies, the CMIU.(66)

Meanwhile, the pact between the manufacturers and the Knights began to unravel. The former, confronted by the unprecedented and unexpected unity between the Progressives and the CMIU, pressed the Knights to provide more rollers and packers, but the Knights insisted they were only contractually obligated to cooperate with employers exclusively hiring members of their organization. This state of affairs led some within the United Cigar Makers' Association to express utter frustration. Oscar Hammerstein, President of the American Cigar Manufacturers' Association, fearing an industry wide ripple effect if the strikers succeeded, pledged his organization's support of the fourteen struck manufacturers. Nevertheless, all but two acceded to the unions' demands during the week of August 16 and August 21.(67)

The strikes had a serious impact on New York's union cigarmakers membership. In the New York and Brooklyn affiliates of the Cigar Makers International Union doubled since the beginning of the year. The unqualified victory in the July and August strike contributed to a growing sense of confidence and combativeness, culminating in the cigarmakers' enthusiastic participation in the trade union sponsored Henry George candidacy for mayor. The wage gains made by cigarmakers in the July and August strike helped to establish a new pay structure. For the rest of the decade, most locals were able to build on the 1886 minimum pay rates, which they preserved in the 1890's even during the depression of 1894 and 1895. The admission of the Progressive Cigarmakers' Union into the Cigar Makers International Union affected

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the texture of New York cigarmaker unionism. Local #90 led by Ludwig Jablinowski and Anton Frank, Secretary and Treasurer of the Progressive Cigarmakers, respectively, and Local #10 led by Frederick Haller, also an official in the Progressive Cigarmakers, contributed to the debate about the union's future. At union conventions and in the pages of the **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, members from these locals introduced proposals on organizing strategies, electoral politics and cooperatives, some of which differed from the views of Gompers, Strasser, Perkins and other leaders of the national union.(68)

The strikes' impact also reverberated through the American labor movement. The controversial role of District Assembly 49 convinced Samuel Gompers, President of Local 144, which was at the center of the January-February strike/lockout, that an independent organization of trade unions outside the Knights of Labor was necessary. Conferences between Terence Powderly of the Knights of Labor, who attempted to discipline the leadership of District Assembly 49, and representatives of national unions exploring the prospects of forming a labor federation, failed to resolve differences about the Knights' jurisdiction and the unions' autonomy. In October, at its annual General Assembly, the Knights of Labor voted to expel any member who did not renounce his/her membership in the Cigar Makers International Union. Two months later, leaders of twelve national unions, including Gompers from the CMIU and Peter McGuire from the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, created the American Federation of Labor, which soon after began to rival the Knights for influence among American workers.(69)

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No strikes with the breadth of those in the winter and summer of 1886 occurred until 1890. However, two conflicts emerged in 1887 that deserve discussion. The first began in July, when employees of Stahl and Flechter, members of Local 237, petitioned the firm to abolish tenement house work, and for their efforts were locked out. Under the circumstances a cessation of employment also meant the loss of living quarters. Stahl and Flechter initiated dispossession proceedings, and on August 3 city marshalls armed with a court order appeared at the entrance of one tenement house in the Morrisania section of the Bronx to be met by a host of cigarmakers and supporters. The mutual show of strength forced a postponement of the eviction action as a Civil Court judge gave twelve families a two day grace period and fourteen a five day grace period. (70)

In the meantime, cigarmakers through the auspices of the Central Labor Union waged a boycott of Stahl and Flechter. Members of the Saloon Keepers' Association in New York's twenty-third and twenty-fourth wards in the Bronx pledged not to sell cigars made by nonunion replacements and contributed twenty-five dollars to assist tenants threatened with eviction. After the evictions in August, Local 237 extended the boycott to encompass a grocery store owned by Stahl and instituted a two dollar fine against members found buying goods there. As the lockout and boycott continued in September, Local 237 turned to other CMIU affiliates for help. In response, Local 144 circulated a subscription list to raise money, and Local 10 raised eleven dollars for food. Despite evidence that the boycott had resulted in customers returning cigars made by Stahl and Flechter, by October the union had realized there would be no restoration of the pre-lockout conditions.

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Consequently, with the assistance of other locals in New York and out of town, all but fifteen members found work elsewhere. (71)

Earlier that year union and nonunion cigarmakers joined forces to contest the attempt by Lozano, Pendas and Company, manufacturers of Havana cigars, to cut wages. Cigarmakers in this branch of the industry consisted of Cubans and other Hispanics, and in lesser proportions Germans and Chinese, most of whom were not members of any union. However, when the three unions representing cigarmakers at the company -- the Spanish Cigarmakers, the Cuban Federation of Cigarmakers and the CMIU -- authorized a strike, the "unorganized" answered the call, and in fact developed their own strike leadership. In the next two weeks both union and nonunion cigarmakers showed their mettle. One thousand struck in support of the 200 employees at Lozano and Pendras. The strikers issued a statement through the press listing the names of six other firms paying a comparable rate, thereby contesting the employer's claim that theirs was uncharacteristically high. The three unions held a joint strike rally and appealed for assistance from unions in Tampa, Key West and Cuba. These efforts paid off, as Lozano and Pendas rescinded the announced pay cut.(72)

The fourth and last major strike of the period erupted in 1890. On the heels of strikes in January and February that successfully repelled attempts by employers to cut piece rates, the New York locals of the CMIU began an ambitious organizing drive among cigarmakers, mostly Bohemians, who worked in nonunion shops. On March 9, 200 delegates representing about 100 shops met at Hester Hall to assess the state of the trade and discuss how to improve conditions. The meeting was chaired by three union officials, each reflecting the ethnic

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composition of the cigarmaking workforce -- Daniel Harris (London born and an old associate of Gompers in Local 144), German born Anton Frank of Local 10 and Edward Scheider of the "Bohemian" Local 13. Following testimony of repeated wage cuts since 1887 and the chronic lack of work, the delegates called for a campaign around the restoration of the 1886 minimum rate of six dollars per thousand and recommended a one dollar initiation fee to facilitate the admission of women and other nonunion cigarmakers. (73)

As the delegates met, two strikes were underway at Kaufman and Company and Seidenberg and Steifel, identified by the CMIU as tenement house manufacturers. Yet despite the aroused enthusiasm among cigarmakers for concerted action to increase wages, the New York locals made no attempt to broaden the strikes. Instead, for the next month and a half union organizers patiently sought to recruit new members. Then in early May both unionized and unorganized cigarmakers walked off their jobs, demanding increases in their pay scale. By the second week of May, more than 1,000 cigarmakers had struck twenty manufacturers in quest of pay rate increases ranging from 60 cents to $3.50 depending on the firm. (74)

This flurry of activity, evidently an expression of strike contagion, prompted union organizers to develop a more coordinated strategy. Locals formed an ad hoc joint strike committee that oversaw the mobilization of "detailed" strikes, targeting the larger manufacturers who operated tenement shops and who maintained a "cheap floor" system whereby they circumvented the union minimum scale. They activated shop committees and instituted an assessment on working members to supplement the strike benefit fund. By the end of the month,

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more than 2,000 rollers, bunchers and packers, including those in Brooklyn, had joined the ranks of the strikers. In addition, Fred Schaeffer of Local 90 sponsored an amendment to the union constitution that called for the establishment of a Committee of Agitation and Organization and the allocation of $5,000 to the seven New York locals.(75)

While the merits of the proposal were being debated in the pages of the **Cigarmakers Official Journal,** the detailed strikes moved into their second month with reports of scattered success. Some employers, such as Sutro and Newmark, Lichenstein and Company and Lewis, Hood and Company, reached terms with locals, and the Cigar Manufacturers' Association had difficulty maintaining unity among its member firms. As some manufacturers yielded, the strikers intensified the pressure. Local 87, with the assistance of the Brooklyn Central Labor Union and the socialist newspaper, **The Volkzeitung,** organized a boycott against tenement shop produced cigars, sold under the name of Climax. New strikes erupted, mostly among smaller shops, with the exception of Kerbs, Wertheimer and Schiffer, where 700 ceased working.(76)

As the cigarmakers' "spring offensive" peaked, the gains continued to mount. All but ten of the 55 strikes waged since May resulted in wage rate increases: $1.50 for mold work, $2.00 for hand work and $3 to $5 for Havana Cigars. Furthermore, each local claimed expansion of its ranks, adding 3,200 to New York's and Brooklyn's collective membership, representing more than a 150 percent increase since the beginning of the organizing drive in March. (77)

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The aftermath of these events was as illustrative of the cigarmakers' position as was the strike wave in 1890 itself. Cigarmakers, both organized and unorganized, showed an ability to mobilize to resist efforts of their employers to cut pay rates. Yet, strike action became more problematic and less desirable, at least among union cigarmakers. The larger manufacturers, targets of the strikes in 1890, reorganized the Cigar Manufacturers' Association, adopting a number of reforms, including a provision that no member firm could raise wages without the association's consent. Furthermore, the association simultaneously vowed to prevent any interference by workers in the employers' right to hire and discharge, while declaring its readiness to short-circuit worker dissatisfaction by meeting with the "appropriate parties".(78)

For their part, union officials seemed prepared to seek an accommodation with the manufacturers. Union membership dropped to 5,100 in 1891 and remained at the 5,000 mark for most of the decade. More importantly, cigarmakers found it difficult to establish union shops, and at the onset of an economic depression in 1894, they could lay claim to only twelve. In a dispute that epitomized the shifting tides of power between the manufacturers and cigarmakers, 300 workers struck Hilson and Company in 1895 in order to establish a union shop. As the strike persisted for weeks, the union agreed to the intervention of New York State's Board of Mediation and Arbitration. At a conference held under the board's auspices, union leaders sought to assuage the company's fears of a union shop by emphasizing the union's peacekeeping role, citing instances where the local agreed to a lower pay scale than demanded by the rank and file. Union negotiators, recognizing the

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impasse, indicated their readiness to accept an arrangement whereby a shop committee and not the local would handle any proposed changes in the pay scale. However, even this concession did not dent the employer's opposition, although a truce of sorts was reached whereby striking union members returned to their jobs with the understanding they would be shown no discrimination.(79)

Nevertheless, in the face of dramatic economic shifts and the manufacturers' counterattack, New York and Brooklyn locals doggedly fought to defend union standards. Despite their limited power, most could claim that pay rates and the eight hour workday held firm. Moreover, what appeared as a stagnated growth rate in membership, under the circumstances represented the union's relative stability. Whereas previous depressions and employer offensives usually seriously weakened unions, if not decimated them, the New York and Brooklyn affiliates of the Cigar Makers International Union survived with no signs of erosion at the base. Union membership in 1898 stood at 25 percent of the cigarmaking workforce, comparable to the carpenters and the printers, and considerably higher than the 17 percent for garment workers.(80) In addition, women, whose role in cigarmaking proportionately rose during the decade, represented more than 30 percent of the CMIU's membership in New York and Brooklyn. This was a noteworthy development when compared to the relative status of women in the garment workers' unions, where, with the notable exception of the cloakmakers, they were underrepresented, and overall constituted about ten percent of the aggregate membership.

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These indices of effective cigarmaker unionism coexisted with troubling patterns. New York's cigar industry was in the midst of decline, as its relative share of the number of firms, workers, capital and sales value in the United States fell between 1890 and 1900. (81) New York cigar manufacturers diversified as well, maintaining production facilities in lower wage areas in upstate New York and rural Pennsylvania, and accelerated their introduction of machine technology and team work. As factory production and a specialized division of labor became the norm, the model of a union of craftsmen ran the risk of being relegated to a beachhead on a deserted island. New York's and Brooklyn's union cigarmakers already had shown their understanding of the prevailing economic forces when they tried to organize bunchers and strippers along with rollers. As they approached the twentieth century, with the factory age looming on the horizon, their future resided in the question: could they develop a "new" unionism, just as they had in the 1870's and 1880's, and make the final transition from craft to industrial worker?

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FOOTNOTES

1. Samuel Gompers, **Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography** (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1925), pp. 33, 46, 47, 108-111 and 114; Norman Ware, **The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-1895: A Study in Democracy** (New York: D. Appleton , 1929), pp. 259-262; and Willis Baer, **Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States** (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Art Printing Company, 1933), pp. 91-92.

2. Gompers, pp. 142, 143, 148-155 and 164; John R. Commons, et. al., **History of Labor in the United States** Volume 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1918), p. 178; Philip Foner, **Women and the American Labor Movement** Volume 1 (New York: Free Press, 1979), p. 176; and Dorothee Schneider, "The New York Cigarmakers Strike of 1877," **Labor History**, 26 (Summer 1985), 325-352.

3. Gompers, pp. 165-168; Philip Foner, **History of the Labor Movement in the United States** Volume 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1947), pp. 515-516.

4. Ware, pp. 263 and 264; T.W. Glocker, "The Structure of the Cigar Makers' Union," Jacob Hollander and George Barnett, eds., **Studies in American Trade Unionism** (New York: H. Holt, [1912] 1969), pp. 51 and 52; and David Montgomery, "Labor in the Industrial Era," Richard Morris, ed., **A History of the American Worker** (Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 104. Patricia Cooper, drawing on the work of Dorothee Schneider, "Three German Trade Unions in New York 1870-1900" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Munich, 1983), stresses the cultural differences between the "Progressives" and the CMIU. The former consisted mainly of German immigrants whom, she argues, were "less assimilated" and "more ethnically conscious" than their CMIU counterparts. In contrast, the leadership and rank and file of the latter were more ethnically mixed and contained a large proportion of English-speakers. See **Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories, 1900-1919** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), pp. 22-23.

5. Ware, pp. 269 and 270.

6. **John Swinton's Paper**, January 3, 1886.

7. Ware, pp. 272-274; **Samuel Gompers Papers**, Volume 1 (1850-1886) Stuart Kaufman, ed., (College Park: University of Maryland, 1985), pp. 365-366; and **John Swinton's Paper**, February 7, and 14, 1886.

8. **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, October 1887 and **The Boycotter**, August 21, 1886.

9. Gompers, p. 189; **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, January 1894; and New York State. Legislature, Assembly, **Report of the Special Committee on the Condition of Female Labor** (1896), p.16.

10. Baer, pp. 100-101.

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11. United States. Commissioner of Labor, **Eleventh Special Report** (1904), p. 575; Patricia Cooper, "From Handicraft to Mass Production: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories, 1900-1919," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1981), p.3; and Baer, pp. 94 and 95.

12. **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** September 15, 1879, quoted in John Andrews and W.D.P. Bliss, **A History of Women in Trade Unions,** Volume 10 of **Report on Condition of Women and Child Wage-Earners in the United States,** Senate Document 645, 61st Congress, Second Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911).

13. See, for example, **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** October 1887; and Andrews and Bliss, p. 155.

14. Cooper, pp.25 and 59. and Commissioner of Labor, **Eleventh Special Report** (1904), pp.579 and 580.

15. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890) and **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896), pp. 322-325 and 736-739, respectively.

16. United States. Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufacturing Industries,** Part II, **Statistics of Cities,** pp. 92, 93, 404, 405 and 808-81; and Twelfth Census (1900) **Statistics of Manufactures,** Part II, pp 1089-1093.

17. United States. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, p. 385; and Edith Abbott, **Women and Industry** (New York: D. Appleton, 1909), p. 203. In addition, Boston cigarmakers evidently did not experience tenement house shop production. The Annual Reports of the Massachussets Bureau of Statistics of Labor conspiculously omitted any mention of the cigarmaking industry in their examination of the subject.

18. **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** January and October 1887 and July and October 1891; and Helen Sumner, "The Benefit System of the Cigarmakers Union," John R. Commons, ed., **Trade Unionism and Labor Problems** (New York: A.M. Kelly, [1905] 1967), pp. 527, 528, 533, 537 and 538.

19. See, for example, proposal by "William Shakespeare" in **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** January 1887.

20. Patricia Cooper, pp. 36-39, makes similar observations, adding in turn that the travellers' benefit provided cigarmakers the means to personally adapt to hostile employers and offered them the opportunity to broaden their experience beyond one shop, factory or locality.

21. **Ibid,** pp. 13-16.

22. Sumner, pp. 537 and 538.

23. Cooper, pp. 34-36. Also see Gompers, p. 177 for an account of the traveller's benefit "racket".

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24. Sumner, p. 534; and **Cigar Makers Official Journal, passim,** especially 1887 and 1888.

25. **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** September and November 1888.

26. New York State, Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1895) pp. 550-553.

27. **Report of Special Committee on the Condition of Female Labor,** p.154.

28. **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** October 1895 and April 1887.

29. **Ibid,** April, October and December, 1887 and April 1888; Baer, p.95; **New York Tribune,** April 1886; and Commissioner of Labor, **Eleventh Special** Report, pp. 582 and 583.

30. **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** November 1887, November 1889 and September 1897; and Baer, p. 96.

31. Cooper, "From Handicraft to Mass Production," p. 146; and Commissioner of Labor, **Eleventh Special Report,** pp. 568-569.

32. **John Swinton's Paper,** April 3, 1887; **The Leader,** May 18, 1887; and Cooper, pp. 140 and 141.

33. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Third Annual Report** (1886), pp. 144 and 145.

34. Ibid, p. 145.

35. **The Leader,** January 4 and 5, 1887 and **Samuel Gompers Papers,** Volume 1, p. 433.

36. **The Leader,** November 12, 1886 and December 21, 1886; and **The New York Sun,** May 2, 1886.

37. **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** October 1887, August 1894 and April 1897.

38. **Ibid,** April and May 1887.

39. **Ibid,** January 1887.

40. **Ibid,** February 1887.

41. **Ibid,** October and November 1892 and March 1893.

42. Louis F. Post, **An Account of the George-Hewitt Campaign in the New York Municipal Election of 1886** (New York, 1887), pp.29 and 30; **Samuel Gompers Papers,** Volume 1, p. 433; **The New York Star,** October 11, 1886; **The Boycotter,** October 23, 1886; **The Leader,** October 29, 1886; and Henry George Scrapbooks, October 30, 1886 available at New York Public Library Central Building, Economics Division.

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43. **United States Tobacco Journal**, October 30, 1886.

44. **The Union Printer**, May 7, 1887.

45. **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, September 1889.

46. **Ibid**, October, 1892.

47. New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Seventh Annual Report** (1893), **Ninth Annual Report** (1895) and **Tenth Annual Report** (1896), pp. 95, 96 and 98; 105 and 106; and 148-150, respectively. Patricia Cooper, "From Handicraft to Mass Production," observed a similar pattern among cigarmakers in Detroit, Chicago and other cities, p. 57.

48. Cigar Makers International Union, **Proceedings of the Seventh Session** (1887); **Eigthteenth Session** (1889); and **Nineteenth Session** (1891).

49. Glocker, p. 49; and **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, October 1891.

50. **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, January 1891.

51. **Ibid**, March 1892.

52. **Ibid**, October 1895.

53. **Ibid**, January 1891.

54. **Ibid**, June 1891.

55. **Ibid**, August 1891.

56. **Ibid.**

57. **Ibid**, January 1894.

58. **Ibid**, January 1886; and **Samuel Gompers Papers**, Volume, p. 373.

59. **The Boycotter**, January 23, 1886; Ware, pp. 272 and 273; and **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, February 1886.

60. **John Swinton's Paper**, February 7 and 14, 1886; and **Samuel Gompers Papers**, Volume 1, pp. 365 and 366.

61. **John Swinton's Paper**, February 7 and 14, 1886.

62. **Samuel Gompers Papers**, Volume 1, p. 366; **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, May 1886; and Ware, pp. 273 and 274.

63. **Samuel Gompers Papers** Volume, p.366; and **John Swinton's Paper**, August 1, 1886.

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64. **U.S. Tobacco Journal**, July 24, 1886; and **The Boycotter**, August 7, 1886.

65. **The Boycotter**, August 7, 1886.

66. **John Swinton's Paper**,August 15, 1886; and Ware, pp. 110-112.

67. **John Swinton's Paper**, August 1, and 15, 1886.

68. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 322-325 and **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896), pp. 336-339; and **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, passim, especially October 1887, October and November 1892, March 1893 and August 1894.

69. Ware, pp. 280-294; and Joseph Rayback, **A History of American Labor** (New York: Free Press, 1966), 176 and 177.

70. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fifth Annual Report** (1887), pp. 262 and 263; and **The Leader**, July 8, 10, and 15, 1887 and August 1-4, 1887.

71. **The Leader**, July 29, 1887; August 8, 12, 15, 17, 1887; September 16, 1887; and October 14, and 26, 1887.

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73. New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 243 and 244; **New York Tribune**, March 10, and 17, 1890; and **New York Herald**, March 10, 1890.

74. **New York Tribune**, May 2, 7, and 8, 1890; **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, May 1890.

75. **New York Tribune**, May 9, 10, and 27, 1890; and **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, May and June 1890.

76. **New York Tribune**, June 18, 1890; and **Workmen's Advocate**, June 28, 1890.

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CHAPTER EIGHT — THE PRINTERS' WORLD OF WORK

Printers labored in an industry which embodied the cross currents of industrialization. Our image of the changes transforming the economic landscape in late nineteenth century America focuses on increased mechanization, production integrated at one site, the creation of national markets and the growing concentration of capital. Such industries as the railroads, iron and steel and cotton textiles exemplified the processes by which an industrial society provided for its material needs. Printing shared some, but by no means all, of the above characteristics. Printing spawned a local and specialized market in which producers settled for a circumscribed yet buffered position. Although technical requirements meant higher capital outlays, a major branch of the industry — book and job printing and publishing — remained crowded with many firms. In printing, too, technological innovation placed a premium on standardization and speed, and facilitated the development of new divisions of labor. Yet the introduction of mechanical typesetting devices and diversified presses did not reduce the demand for skilled labor, nor did it undercut the strategic position of compositors and other printing craftsmen.

The most salient characteristic of the printing industry was its bifurcated structure. The printing industry consisted of two separate branches: newspapers and periodicals and book and job. The former included New York's and Brooklyn's daily and weekly press and popular magazines, and the latter included books, journals and miscellaneous literature. Few printing firms or publishers produced both newspapers and books. Newspaper publishers, who in the 1870's and 1880's maintained

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book and job operations, in the 1890's turned exclusively to newspaper production. By 1900, one study estimates, only twenty percent of the income earned by newspapers came from book and job publishing.(1)

In fact, within each branch specialization prevailed. In the book and job branch publishers specialized in producing literature in particular fields. Many publishers contracted out the actual printing to book and jobbers who proved most capable of doing "custom quality" work, providing special attention to style and format. One such printing concern, Wynkoop and Hallenbeck produced a number of periodicals, including **Standard and Fashion, Ladies' Standard** and **Mission Monthly.** Following the Civil War, general publishing houses began to appear, some of which, like Harpers and Appleton, owned and operated their own printing facilities and sought to diversify their line of products. Harpers and Appleton published both books and magazines in a variety of fields: fiction, travel, history and popular science. Yet the publishing of professional material in law and medicine, technical and scientific literature and religious tracts and books each remained specialized areas. In addition, surrounding New York's City Hall, between Chambers Street and Fulton Street, were scores of small specialty shops that printed pamphlets, posters, handbills, blank books and personal and office stationery.(2)

The publishing and printing of newspapers also tended to specialize. In New York and Brooklyn there were more than 600 newspapers, of which 28 were dailies. There were also local community papers and foreign language publications oriented to different readerships. Some papers appeared weekly or semiweekly and claimed an overlapping readership with the major dailies. This specialization

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modulated the competition in the industry, allowing firms to assume different places in the market. For example, the **Harlem Herald** and **Once A Week**, also a Harlem based paper, may have competed with each other but not directly with the **New York Times.** Furthermore, this characteristic of the printing industry allowed the book publishers to steadily increase the number of volumes even in the midst of a general depression following the Panic of 1893.(3)

The demarcation between newspaper and book and job printing applied to the industry's workers, too. In biographical sketches provided by **The Union Printer,** it appears that printers rarely moved from positions in newspaper production to book and job printing, and vice versa. Peter Finnen, Brooklyn-born charter member of Local 98 of the International Typographical Union (ITU), started his career as a compositor with **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle** before moving on to the **Catholic Examiner** and **The Citizen.** John Maxwell served his apprenticeship with the **Hudson County Times** in Bayonne, New Jersey but then proceeded to work for such book and job firms as De Baun, Morganthaler and Fless and Ridge. In 1893 and 1894 he was Vice-President of #6 of the ITU, and during his term organized a book and job branch in the union. William P. Delaney began working at the age of fourteen in the press room of Gildesleeve's and then moved on to Hinds, Ketcham and Company. When he lost his job with Hinds, he found employment with William J. Brown, and during his employment there served as the Vice President and then President of the Franklin Association of Pressmen affiliated with the Knights of Labor.(4)

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The printing industry was divided in other ways. In the 1880's and 1890's two tiers of employers emerged. Partly as the result of the industry's specialization, firms both modest in size and capital reserves prevailed. In 1890 the average number of workers employed by book and job and newspaper companies was sixteen and seventeen respectively. Of the approximately 250 firms for which data is available, 60 percent employed fewer than 25 workers. Meanwhile, 80 percent of the printing and publishing concerns listed by R.G. Dun and Company, the mercantile credit agency, held capital assets of less than $50,000. Simultaneously, in both branches, concentration of business operations developed. Five printing and publishing companies amassed capital reserves of at least $500,000. These included Harpers, Peter Colliers and J. Little and Company -- all of which employed at least 200 workers -- and Appleton and Company, the Brooklyn-based publishing firm, which employed almost 500 workers. Technological advances in typesetting and printing permitted the production of larger newspapers at a lower per unit cost, and led to 100 percent growth in per capita circulation from 1880 to 1900, with **The New York World**, in particular, boosting its circulation more than tenfold between 1883 and 1887. In the late 1890's, when most of New York's and Brooklyn's major newspapers had replaced hand composition with linotype machines, almost all employed over 100 workers, with the **Brooklyn Daily Eagle** employing almost 500.(5)

The printing industry's structural patterns carried serious implications for employers and workers alike. The advent of diversified book and job printing firms and larger mass circulation newspapers, faced with more sophisticated management responsibilities and a rekindling of labor unrest, encouraged employers to cooperate and pool

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resources. New York's leading book and job publishers spearheaded a campaign to organize an employers' association. In 1884, eleven years after the dissolution of the original New York Typothetae, Theodore De Vinne, Joseph J. Little, John Polhemus and Howard Lockwood convened the first session of the reconstituted Typothetae, and three years later officially affiliated with the United Typothetae based in Chicago.(6)

Until 1887, newspaper and book and job publishers remained in the same employers' association. However, economic pressures and recognition that there was a growing disparity between the demands of newspaper production and book and job printing led to a split. The growth of bigger newspapers accelerated the drive to enlarge the readership of each and to capture a healthier share of advertising revenue. Increased competition spurred companies to maximize economies of scale, which in turn encouraged publishers and editors to develop new forms of organization -- dividing the production, circulation, advertising and financial operations into separate departments. As most of the major papers tended to adopt similar business practices, the preconditions for the formation of an employers' trade association were created.(7)

In 1887, at Rochester, New York, Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of **The New York World**, William Cullen Bryant of the **Brooklyn Times** and William Laffan of the **New York Sun** played instrumental roles in the establishment of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association. They drew attention to the benefits of an employers' association -- a more reliable management of news gathering, the promotion of uniform advertising rates and the development of a unified policy on copyrights and postage rates. In addition, they reminded the delegates at the founding conference, that the A.N.P.A. could offset printers' unions

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which "think they can move the world" by providing a support network for newspapers hit by strikes and boycotts. After the ANPA's formation Bryant served as the organization's treasurer and director until 1892 and then, for the following thirteen years, as manager of the ANPA's New York office.(8)

Not only did the New York Typothetate and the American Newspaper Publishers' Association derive its support from the major firms in their respective branches of the industry. Printers' unions also were most prominent among the workforces of the larger employers. Compositors, machine operators and pressmen working at the **Brooklyn Daily Eagle** and Appleton and Company were members of #98 of the International Typographical Union. Even more extensive was the reach of New York's #6 of the ITU. In 1892 it had established 169 "chapels", or shop organizations, with about 5000 members. Almost all of New York's leading dailies had become union shops by 1898, and some of the most prominent book and job firms such as De Vinne, J. Little and Lockwood among others honored collective bargaining agreements with #6. Indeed, the larger the size of the workplace, the more likely it was for printers to belong to a union. Fifty-two percent of the firms, for which data on the number of workers and degree of capitalization is available, employed more than 100 workers. In addition, of the 50 union chapels, for which the number of printers are known, 40 percent were formed within companies with at least 100 workers, and most of the remaining chapels consisted of 50 or more working printers.(9) The base of printers' unions among the larger firms contrasted sharply with the experience of union cigarmakers. Cigarmakers organized successfully among smaller shops using traditional manual methods and the simplest technology, namely molds, and employing

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mostly men. On the other hand, the Cigar Makers International Union had considerable problems organizing among the larger manufacturers who deployed more complex technology, such as bunching machines and suction tables, and whose workforce consisted mainly of women.

The composition of the labor force was also related to the size of the firm and the type of printing in which it specialized. In 1890, eighteen percent of those employed in the printing trades were women. However, women were virtually absent from the workforce in firms with fewer than 25 workers, and since these shops predominated, women's opportunity to gain entry into printing was severely restricted. In contrast, women constituted a significant minority of the workforces in McLaughlin Brothers, Trow's, J. Little and Fless and Ridge -- each consisting of more than a 100 workers. These book and job employers usually maintained bookbinding departments which depended heavily on women. The introduction of perforating machines in many book and job shops also provided more employment opportunities for women. At Wynkoop and Hallenbeck women had achieved a niche as perforating machine operators, and thereby were able to elect from their ranks a representative in the union chapel. Few of the larger newspapers, however, showed a similar propensity to hire women. In 1895, the **New York Tribune** had only ten, the **New York Sun**, two and the **New York Times** had no female production workers on their payroll. Only the **Brooklyn Daily Eagle** employed a sizeable number of women, and even then they represented only ten percent of the workforce.(10)

Furthermore, as in the book and job branch, women were relegated to certain positions. Few worked as manual compositors, and although some employers sought to undermine union standards by setting in motion

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a "petticoat invasion" through the use of mechanized typesetters, women's inroads remained limited. In practice, however, increased mechanization of production did not expand women's employment opportunities. Union policies played a role in this development. In response to the employers' rapid deployment of linotype machines, #6, with the backing of the ITU, insisted that manual compositors be given preference for new linotype operator positions. Even before the introduction of typesetting machines, the number of female compositors was kept down, ironically, by the union's policy of admitting women under the condition that they be covered by the same pay scale as male compositors. Where union shops prevailed, this rule actually discouraged employers from hiring women, since the economic incentive had been eliminated. Under those circumstances editors and publishers could hire "boys", or young apprentices to do miscellaneous tasks. Women also lacked the necessary training and experience to learn the full range of typesetting skills. Efforts either by employers or women's groups such as the Working Women's Society to establish training institutes or special classes were far and few between, and union regulations that "journeymen" first serve a four year apprenticeship simply restricted women's chances.(11)

A number of factors contributed to women's limited access to apprenticeships. Employers were reluctant to admit women as apprentices since they expected women would soon leave their positions to marry and raise a family. Women, for their part, tended to opt for work which did not require a long training period and would allow them to earn at a reasonably high rate, such as distributing copy, assisting proofreaders and setting "straight" matter. Moreover, although much of the evidence

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is fragmentary and impressionistic, women were not terribly welcome into the printers' ranks. Reports from chapels (workplace branches of the union) published in the **Union Printer** boasted of a camaraderie among printers and rough and ready internal politics which was ill-suited to a workforce with a large proportion of women. Also union printers feared a general reduction in pay rates if women entered the industry in significant numbers. (12)

The development of new technology in the printing industry did not open many doors for women because typesetting machines and multiple presses did not allow employers to subdivide the production process and thereby substitute relatively unskilled routinized labor for skilled craftsmen. Unlike cigarmaking and the manufacturing of clothing, where the use of even the simplest technology promoted team work and tended to de-emphasize the importance of skilled labor, the skills of compositors and pressmen were not diluted by the introduction of new technology. Compositors operating linotypes still needed to know the basic rules of grammar, spelling and punctuation, and how to lay out copy; pressmen still needed to know how to prepare, load and maintain the more elaborate presses being used by many of the daily newspapers. In short, with most of their skills intact, printers were able to command the high earnings and respect of craftsmen, a position they identified as being proper for men and not women, and one they were able to protect through their unions.

Most women who obtained jobs in newspaper composing rooms worked as copyholders whose responsibility was to hold and read the copy for proofreaders as assistants to proofreaders and as distributors who helped to arrange type according to size and frequency of use so that

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they could be readily available to the compositor. The few who did set type worked on "straight" manner, free of numbers, abbreviations, changing type sizes and advertising copy -- all of which customarily paid a higher piece rate.(13)

Meanwhile, the newspaper pressroom became even more a male domain because of improvements in the machine technology. Where women formerly worked as press feeders, the introduction of more sophisticated presses led to the creation of a new job classification of pressman's assistant, who not only fed the press but helped to prepare it for printing. By the turn of the century, women worked in the press rooms of only the small nonunionized shops.(14)

Nevertheless, between 1890 and 1900, it was in the newspaper branch of the industry that women's absolute and relative role in the workforce increased the most (See Table I.).

Table I. Women in Newspaper and Book and Job Printing in 1890 and 1900 (New York and Brooklyn)

	Number of Women	Percentage of Workforce
1890		
Newspaper	595	7.3
Book and Job	1,280	11.5
1900		
Newspaper	1,736	17.7
Book and Job	1,915	15.0

(Calculated from U.S. Census Bureau. Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufacturing in the Cities,** pp. 86-97 and 394-406; and Twelfth Census (1900) Volume 8, **Statistics of Manufactures,** Part II, pp.620-628.

This suggests that although women were concentrated in particular positions, these were in greater demand during a decade when newspapers expanded from a twelve to twenty-four page format. Given the fact that women represented fifteen percent of the printing trades' workforce in the United States in 1900, and that there were only 500 female linotype operators nationwide (15), the growth of women's participation in the industry did not come at the expense of male compositors.

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Job segregation was not the only feature that distinguished men and women. While only a minority of printers, unlike garment workers and cigarmakers, were first generation immigrants, female printers were less likely to be foreign-born than men. In 1890, only 12 percent of women in the printing trades were foreign-born compared to 30 percent of male printers. Irish immigrants constituted far and away the largest number of foreign-born female printers while German-born, followed closely by Irish and British-born, formed the bulk of male immigrant printers. Ten years later, this pattern remained intact, as only 7 percent of female printers were foreign-born compared to 26 percent of their male counterparts. In 1900, as in 1890, native-born sons of immigrants (a quarter of whom were of German descent) constituted a plurality of male printers, while the majority of female printers were American-born daughters of the foreign-born, a third of whom were of Irish descent.(16)

The proportion of foreign-born women printers was particularly low for many reasons. First, the occupational experience of immigrant women in their original homelands prevented easy entry into a highly specialized industry. Whereas women were the heart of the cigarmaking labor force in Bohemia and worked in the clothing manufacturing shops and factories of Poland before emigrating to the United States, there is no indication that women either in Western or Eastern Europe found employment or were trained as printers. Secondly, because women from most immigrant groups were not encouraged to attend school, either in their original or adopted homelands, they were denied the opportunity to obtain the minimal skills required by printing. Thirdly, composition and press work was exclusively done outside the household, unlike

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cigarmaking and clothing manufacturing. Therefore, for women with child care responsibilities who wanted to earn money towards the upkeep of their families, printing was not a viable option. Finally, because they entered the wage-earning workforce to immediately contribute to their family's income, immigrant women in particular did not pursue occupations that required extensive preparation and training, such as printing. In short, women considered the investment in time and effort demanded by formal apprenticeships as inpractical. Some of these factors also contributed to the relatively low percentage of women irrespective of nationality in printing industry's labor force.(17)

If printing relied less on immigrants for its workers than many manufacturing industries, it shared a tendency associated with industrialization to stress capital rather than labor as a factor in production. The emphasis on capital was most evident in the investment in machinery, tools and physical plant (fixed capital). Book and job printing showed a higher proportion of investment in fixed capital and in particular machinery (See Table II.), but between 1890 and 1900 newspaper printing showed a larger increase in dollars spent on machinery, and accordingly experienced the most dramatic shift in the ratio between capital and labor (See Tables III. and IV.).

Table II. The Composition of Capital Investment in Newspaper and Book and Job Printing in 1890 and 1900 (New York and Brooklyn)

	Fixed as % of All Capital	Machinery as % of Fixed Capital	Machinery as % of All Capital
1890			
Newspaper	59.0	50.7	29.0
Book and Job	58.9	86.2	50.8
1900			
Newspaper	37.4	63.2	23.6
Book and Job	56.4	89.3	50.4

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Table III. Investment in Machinery, Ratio Between Expenditures on Capital and Labor, and Ratio between Investment in Machinery and Labor Costs in Newspaper and Book and Job Printing in 1890 and 1900 (New York and Brooklyn)

	Investment in Machinery	Capital/Labor	Machinery/Labor
	NEWSPAPER		
1890	$6,682,420	2.82	.82
1900	$9,646,972	5.31	1.25
	BOOK AND JOB		
1890	$7,486,295	2.10	1.16
1900	$9,632,219	2.47	1.25

Table IV. Absolute and Proportionate Increase in Investment in Machinery, Ratio Between Expenditures on Capital and Labor and Ratio between Investment in Machinery and Labor Costs in Newspaper and Book and Job Printing from 1890 to 1900 (New York and Brooklyn)

Increase in	Investment in Machinery		Capital/Labor		Machinery/Labor	
	amount	%	amount	%	amount	%
Newspaper	2,949,799	(44.0)	2.49	(88.3)	.43	(52.4)
Book and Job	2,145,924	(28.7)	.37	(17.6)	.09	(7.8)

(Source: Tables II, III and IV were calculated from data in Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in Cities**, pp. 649-681; and Twelfth Census (1900) **Statistics of Manufactures**, Part II, pp.620-628.)

The increase in the capital-labor ratio in newspaper printing (See Table III.) from 2.82 in 1890 to 5.31 in 1900 cannot be attributed to a greater proportional stress on investment in machinery, for as indicated in Table II investment in machinery as a proportion to all capital expenditures actually declined during the same period. The $5.31 newspapers spent for every dollar allocated to labor costs in 1900 was devoted to other aspects of publishing besides production. Newspapers assumed high adminstrative costs as they sought to coordinate production, circulation, advertising and financial responsibilities, and spent a considerable amount of their revenue on promotion and distribution. Moreover, as the major dailies began putting out larger newspapers in the 1890's, they expanded their facilities, with some like the **New York Herald** and **New York Tribune** moving from "newspaper row" between City Hall and Wall Street up into mid-Manhattan. Yet the

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magnitude of the newspapers' investment in machinery should not be underrated because between 1890 and 1900 the sales value of the goods produced per worker in newspaper printing jumped 34 percent compared to that of only six percent in book and job printing. Perhaps equally impressive, these gains were achieved with an actual reduction in the employers' wage bill by six percent.(18)

Behind these figures lay a transformation of the printing process itself and the nature of the printer's work. Until about 1880 manual typesetting of galleys prevailed. In composing rooms in the major newspapers and the smallest jobbers, compositors "made up" printed matter, arranging the hot type within cases. Compositors were responsible for justifying the type, filling in empty spaces to set each line in uniform columns. While compositors were expected to know the basic rules of grammar, punctuation and spelling, they usually were supported by proofreaders whose responsibility it was to uncover any typesetting errors. This responsibility carried considerable pressure, as Malcome Brown, editor of **The Union Printer**, observed, for if a compositor erred he might receive a "gentle call down" from a foreman, but if a proofreader did likewise, he could face "pre-emptous" (sic) suspension or discharge. Once a galley had been composed and proofread, it was prepared for printing in a process called "imposition". This required the careful placement of the type in consecutive order as it would appear on a printed and folded sheet onto an imposing stone made of slate or Italian marble. The stones in turn were mounted into horizontal frames and sealed with plaster.(19)

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Beginning before the Civil War, and accelerating by leaps and bounds in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a series of technological innovations swept the industry. Typesetting and typecasting were mechanized to the extent that all phases of composition, formerly distinct, were on their way to becoming integrated. Stereotyping (the use of printing plates cast from moulds of pre-set type) was being made more uniform, reliable and flexible. Press work was becoming capable of handling a greater variety of functions and volume of matter; and photoengraving was developing into a sophisticated process, capable of permitting the reproduction of color pictures.(20)

Of the four stages of printing, composition and press work experienced the most sweeping changes. More than 100 patents were issued for a variety of typesetting equipment between 1840 and 1885. It was during the remaining years of the nineteenth century, however, that the technological innovations most transforming the printing industry appeared. By 1895, the U.S. Patent office had authorized 1,000 patents for a variety of typesetting machines. Most worked on a similar percussion principle whereby the pressing of the keyboard pushed type through narrow channels. What distinguished one from another was the method by which the type was released.(21)

In typesetting machines, the linotype, originally introduced by the Brooklyn manufacturer Ottmar Mergenthaler in 1885, paved the way for the transition from manual to mechanical composition. A keyboard operator released the typed matrices from their respective holders by selecting a key, and then the linotype automatically formed lines of brass matrices and spaces. Once a line was complete, the operator with a

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touch of a handle, waist high to his/her right, ignited the automatic progression of operations: from justifying to "casting" where a bar or slug of type was made, and then to depositing where the type was placed into a galley. **The New York Tribune** was the first newspaper to deploy the linotype in 1886, and within ten years more than 3000 were in use in newspaper composing rooms throughout the country.(22)

In the 1880's the MacMillan composing machine was introduced. The machine's forte was its versatility; it handled different sizes of type and automatically exchanged thinner spaces for wider ones. In 1894, further refinements permitted automatic distribution of type from one line to another. In 1890 Rogers and Company introduced a typograph, similar in format and technique to the Remington typewriter. An operator sitting in front of a keyboard touched the appropriate keys and pressed a pedal to justify and space the lines. The matrices which made the characters were carried automatically to their original positions so that they could easily be reactivated. The entire process of justifying, casting, and depositing a typed line required five seconds if driven by foot and three seconds if belt-driven. Six years later a similar device, the Dow composing machine, arrived on the scene. It could process from size five to size twelve type, and like the Rogers typograph, automatically shifted keys and inserted the appropriate spaces to justify the type. (23)

The introduction of typesetting machines increased the productivity of compositors and lowered labor costs. The New York Typographical Union #6 estimated that a linotype operator could on the average set 27,000 ems in an eight hour day (an em is a unit of measurement for the number of spaces occupied by type; some characters

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were wider than others and therefore contained more ems). Varying by the skill and experience of the operator and the kind of copy he or she worked with, a compositor could set the same amount of type by machine in anywhere from one-fifth to one-eighth the time he/she could by hand. More importantly, from the employers' perspective, accompanying this greater output in composition was a reduction of labor costs by more than one-half for every four pages.(24)

Simultaneously, modifications in older versions of presses and the development of new models expanded the capacity of the printing industry. The standard rotary press introduced in the 1850's underwent a series of refinements, including the addition of the "double supplement" press in 1882, which proved particularly valuable for newspaper production. Developed by R. Hoe and Company this press contained a triangular shaped steel bar that facilitated collecting and folding and turning bars which directed paper into a single folder. The double supplement permitted the use of plates with two or four pages of matter and hence its name. **The New York Herald**, which originally used the press, could print in a hour 20,000 twelve page papers and 10,000 twenty-four page papers. Within the next thirteen years, other presses were introduced which allowed for the printing of larger newspapers at a faster rate. The quadruple press either consisted of four presses two pages wide, or two presses four pages wide, and could generate in a hour 48,000 eight page papers or 24,000 sixteen page papers. In 1895 the octuple press which contained eight four page cylinders appeared, and boasted a capacity of running off 24,000 thirty-two page papers in one hour.(25)

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While most of the technological advances were specifically designed for newspaper production, some originated in book and job printing. In 1885 book and job firms began using a monotype. Operating on the same principles as a linotype, the monotype contained a keyboard with a perforated paper ribbon consisting of notches for each character. The keyboard was attached to a typecasting machine which automatically cast, spaced and trimmed columns of type. Initially attractive to magazine publishers, by 1897, when its sixth version was introduced, the monotype became popular with newspaper publishers too. The demands of book and job production prompted other innovations as well. Printers of sheet music found the steam press an efficient addition, for where it required 25 hours for a hand press to print 1000 copies of four sheets of music, a steam press could print the same amount in a third of the time. Publishers of pamphlets deployed binding machines which could turn out 1000 36 page pamphlets in ten minutes. Book and pamphlet publishers turned to stitching and book covering machines which completed the equivalent amount of work done with the use of needles and brushes in a third of the time.(26)

The changes in printing methods and technology not only altered the way compositors and pressmen worked, but affected their position in the labor process, job security, earnings and basic working conditions. However, the impact technology had on the printers' working lives was far from even or consistent. A case in point is the printer's role in the labor process.

Newspaper and book and job publishers sought through the use of linotypes and monotypes a continuous flow of production, but even as late as 1900, this had not been realized. "Takes", the handwritten copy

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to be set, had to be picked up, and the completed galleys had to be delivered to the press room. These tasks offered linotype and monotype operators a break from the monotony of typesetting, and partly lessended the pressures for greater output, which under different circumstances could have riveted operators to their machines. Some models of typesetting machines, moreover, required more than one person to operate efficiently. This technical feature counteracted the potential loneliness linotype operators might experience. Monotypes, in particular, were delicate machines, subject to frequent foul-ups which slowed the pace of work. Operators, therefore, had to devote special attention to the machine's quirks, thereby adding the skills of the mechanic to those of typesetting. (27)

On the other hand, in the pressroom, the deployment of presses capable of doing faster and longer runs introduced a new division of labor and increased the number of responsibilities assumed by workers. Instead of the simple division between journeymen and apprentices, crews, varying in number according to the press, became the norm. A crew consisted of a head pressman with as many as ten assistants or helpers. In some crews the head pressman was known as a headman, and the assistants named according to their specific tasks: tension or brakeman, oiler and plater, paper hustler and paper handler. Head pressmen oversaw operations, watched the ink flow and the rotation of the rolls of paper, or "webs" and made the necessary adjustments. Brakemen operated the lever which controlled the movement of the web and especially checked for the danger of a web choking or breaking. The oiler/plater lubricated and otherwise prepared the presses for operation. In this standard nomenclature the colorful names assigned to workers were replaced by

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rather dry job classifications. For example, apprentices who removed the printed copy as it completed its press run were called "flyboys", but under the new division of labor came to be known simply as paper removers. With the improvements in stereotyping techniques and color printing, press room workers in particular devoted more time and care to the preparation and maintenance of equipment. Worn out stereotype plates had to be replaced, composition plates washed, ink fountains refilled and dull knife blades changed.(28)

In short, as the printing technology became more sophisticated, diversified and high powered, the production process became more intricate and interdependent, simultaneously offering greater possibilities for efficiency and errors. In both the discontinuous work environment of the composing room and the continuous flow of production of the pressroom, printers retained a strategic position, for the system only could proceed smoothly if they performed their tasks skillfully and diligently.

The rapid deployment of typesetting machines, however, seriously challenged the printers' job security. By 1894, when fourteen of New York's newspapers were using 260 machines in their composing rooms, the ranks of hand compositors had dwindled. A study of nineteen shops by #6 of the ITU indicated that since the replacement of manual composition by machine methods, the number of regulars had declined from 1,327 to 823 and subs from 400 to 240, representing a decrease of 38 percent. Some newspaper chapels reported an even more precipitous decrease. **The New York Times** chapel saw the number of compositors cut by half in a six month period from 1893 to 1894, and **The New York Herald** Chapel indicated that in just one month's time the introduction of linotypes had resulted

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in the replacement of twenty-one regulars by twenty-seven "extras", who worked only on Saturdays. (29)

Yet what appeared to compositors as the beginning of a tidal wave of layoffs proved to be a temporary storm. By 1898 some newspapers showed an increase in the number of compositors, although the ITU held that each typesetting machine meant a loss of almost two jobs.(30) This suggests that instead of widespread displacement what was occurring was a smaller growth rate in the labor force than expected with the emergence of larger newspapers and the rapid expansion in circulation.

Tempering displacement were a number of factors. In the 1890's newspapers still had not introduced linotypes in the composition of advertising copy, and therefore, retained the services of manual compositors. Because of the volume of work and unanticipated last minute additions and deletions, many editors and publishers kept a reserve of compositors on the payroll. The speed attained by linotype operators before 1900 was relatively low. "Top" speed was reached only after years of experience and the cooperation of printers. **The Union Printer** repeatedly cautioned members to avoid speed contests for fear that higher production quotas and layoffs would follow. In recognition that typesetting machines were there to stay, the union pressed employers to hire only manual compositors as long as they could fulfill labor requirements. Moreover, they gained from employers a guarantee that compositors called into work would receive at least seven hours of work.(31)

Instead of long-term displacement of manual compositors what prevailed was a less visible phenomenon: a relative decline in the demand for compositors. Accordingly, between 1890 and 1910, Robert Max

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Jackson estimates, while the number of wage earners (of whom approximately half were compositors) in the printing of newspapers and books increased by 60 percent, there were 80,000 fewer typesetters than had hand composition persisted.(32)

The introduction of typesetting machinery also influenced printers' earnings. Manual compositors customarily were paid by the piece, usually per 1000 ems. However, with the advent of linotypes, compositors found that employers either eagerly reduced the rates, or demanded more production for each dollar in wages. Therefore, printers began to call for hourly or daily rates of pay. In 1886 letters to **The Boycotter** and **The Union Printer** stressed the advantages of time over piece work. Time work provided a more reliable and higher rate of pay, "one of them" argued, since compositors could avoid the penalties stemming from waiting for copy.(33) Likewise, a book and job printer contended that compositors in his shop sometimes waited three-quarters of a day for type to set. Furthermore, they saw their earnings reduced by all sorts of foul-ups:

> He suffers by short sorts and poor material. He sets his full share of lean and objectionable matter. He must wait all day, on occasions with nothing to do, and then work overtime at night. He may put in a full week, but is paid only for the work he has done by the piece .... (34)

Some dissented from this view, arguing that time work contained its own disadvantages, and that piece work per se did not pay at a lower rate. "Time hands", one printer contended, were "constantly under espionage", and, therefore, "must stick closely at work, or make believe they are doing so." Another suggested that favoritism among foremen who distributed choice copy to select compositors was responsible for

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unsteady and unequal earnings.(35)

The debate continued into the 1890's even though, by 1890, the overwhelming majority of printers in both newspaper and book and job production were time workers. "Nimrod", who worked at Fless and Ridge, a book and job shop, lambasted the "greedy cormorants" who tried to increase their piece work earnings by accelerating their pace on the monotypes, for they were insensitive to the fact that "hundreds of unemployed printers were walking up and down Park Row ... eking out a miserable life." A compositor employed by Trow and Company echoed this position. He argued that the speediest operators might benefit in the short-term from piece work, but in the long-term they would discover their rates lower, and thereby prove to be merely "suckers" to the employers who gained at their expense.(36) The frequency and intensity of debate suggests that although piece work statistically was not prevalent in the industry, it retained a foothold in some newspaper and book and job composition rooms.

The different standards of piece work and the specific ways work was distributed could result in wide disparities in printers' earnings. Since compositors were paid by the number of ems they set, "fat" matter (wide characters) as opposed to "lean" matter, such as technical terms, numbers and symbols was more desirable. A common complaint of compositors was that foremen and shop managers "culled" the fat and thereby deprived them of matter to increase their earnings. In shops where machine and manual composition coexisted the distribution of work became an issue of contention. Manual compositors often charged that foremen assigned the most lucrative matter or copy to machine operators working by time. In fact, even when piece work was the rule, compositors

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held foremen responsible for unjustly distributing work. In some cases, foremen trying to make a "good showing" with employers practiced a reward and punishment system with compositors who, in turn, recognizing the foremen's power, sought to curry favor with them. This often resulted in splits within chapels between rival alliances of compositors and foremen. (37)

The process by which substitutes ("subs" in printers' parlance) received work resulted in uneven earnings. In union shops regulars, too ill to work or desiring a day off, reserved the right to select standby "subs" paid by the day to cover for them. In newspaper printing employers found it useful to have additional compositors and linotype operators on hand in the event of production overruns or the inability of regulars to complete their work assignments. With the rise of larger newspapers in the 1880's and 1890's, foremen assumed more of the shopfloor responsibilites of overseeing production and managing personnel. Accordingly, they insisted on exercising their prerogative to reject incompetent subs selected by regulars and developed a vested interest in maintaining the loyalty of a coterie of dependable workers by providing them with a steady amount of work. Nevertheless, during this period foremen had not gained clear-cut control over the hiring of subs, nor had the selection process become systematized through union rules. Consequently, it was not uncommon for subs eager for the opportunity to receive "slugs" -- lines of matter set by machine -- to loan regulars money. This practice, a member of the **The World** Chapel ruefully observed, opened the door to abuse and created ill feeling among compositors denied work or choice assignments.(38)

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In nonunion shops some compositors found their earnings limited by the distribution of copy. Some of Brooklyn's newspapers restricted compositors to only the end line of advertisements, thereby, in the words of one victim of this practice, "robbing" compositors of between 70 and 80 lines per column. The remaining lines were treated as extra matter to be "made-up", that is arranged by linotype operators. Moreover, foremen exercised almost exclusive hiring powers and accordingly filled their departments with relatives and friends.(39)

Under these circumstances generalizations about printers' earnings are problematic. Nevertheless, a few do emerge from the data. Compositors employed in book and job shops earned at a lower rate than their counterparts working for newspapers. For example, among those covered by a union scale, from 1891 to 1895 book and job compositors earned as much as one dollar less a day than newspaper compositors. By the end of the decade the real annual earnings of book and job printers trailed their counterparts in the newspaper branch by $400. The disparity in earnings persisted because book and job composition tended to be less demanding; layouts were simpler and production schedules more relaxed. Moreover, the industrial structure of the book and job trade complicated efforts of printers to organize and establish union shops thereby relegating many compositors to working below the union scale. Yet where book and job compositors were covered by a union scale, pay rates varied according to the degree of difficulty of the work. Those setting type for reading books with "marked letters or spaced syllables", or school books in general, earned five cents more per 1000 ems. Those working with mathematical copy, spelling books and dictionaries with frequent abbreviations and accented letters received

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ten cents extra per 1000 ems. Compositors setting Greek and Hebrew words earned as much as three cents a word.(40)

In the newspaper branch, compositors earned at a higher rate if they helped to produce morning papers; in New York typesetters working by night were paid at 50 cents per 1000 ems and by day at 40 cents per 1000 ems, while in Brooklyn night workers earned at a 40 cents rate, three cents more per 1000 ems than day workers. Variety in pay rates persisted among newspapers too, even if they honored a union shop. Compositors at **The New York World** earned $4.25 a day for working on morning newspapers, while their counterparts at **The Sun** earned $4, which in turn was fifty cents per day more than what compositors employed by **The Star, The Journal** and **Times** earned.(41) Pay disparities among compositors working on different newspapers sprung from differences in the number of hours and each newspaper's ability to pay. It appears some newspapers awarded compositors overtime rather than employing extras, and because of shifts in advertising revenue newspapers occasionally, with the agreement of the union, adjusted their pay rates accordingly.

The variety in pay rates notwithstanding, it appears that the spread of machine technology did not adversely affect the earnings of printers. In 1891, Brooklyn typesetters earned a weekly wage of $22 working as linotype operators, four dollars more than they did as hand compositors. New York's compositors showed a steady increase in earnings from 1887 to 1899. The average weekly earnings of compositors working at the ten largest papers in 1887 was $21.40. In 1895 #6 members earned on the average about $24 for a 54 hour work week. Four years later, when virtually all newspaper composition was done by machine, typesetters earned almost $28 for a 48 hour work week.(42)

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Pressmen reaped the benefits of greater productivity levels with higher wages and shorter hours too. In the 1880's members of the four pressmen's unions, albeit at different levels, upgraded their standards. At the upper end, the Newspaper Printers Union #1 raised their nightly pay rates from $15 to $25 per week and their day rates from $12 to $18, while reducing hours from twelve to eight. At the lower end, New York Pressmen's Union #9, which represented pressmen in book and job shops, hiked their weekly earnings from a minimum of $7 and a maximum of $10 in 1882 to a minimum of $10 and a maximum of $14 in 1889, while cutting their work days from 12 to 10 hours. In the early 1890's this disparity in pay continued, although each union maintained a scale of at least $20, and collectively averaged $27. However, although for the rest of the decade pressmen showed little improvement in their earnings, their average weekly rates converged to $28 in 1899. In addition, in large measure because of the consolidation of pressmen's unions into locals of the International Pressmen's Union, they benefitted from a reduction of the work week from more than 54 hours to 45 during the same period.(43)

In general, these pay disparities were attributable to differences in night and day work as well as those in newspaper and book and job production. Both compositors and pressmen were compensated at a higher rate when working at night, and those employed on newspapers usually had a more steady supply of work than their counterparts in the book and job trade. The disparities among the pressmen's earnings also reflected the varying degrees of bargaining power exercised by the respective pressmen's unions, with those representing newspaper pressmen more effectively organized than those based in book and job shops.

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Improvements in pay rates resulted in comparatively higher earnings for New York's and Brooklyn's printers. The real wages of newspaper compositors in 1899 far surpassed the national average and those of compositors in every major city with the exception of San Francisco and Boston. Although New York's book and job compositors earned less than newspaper compositors, they claimed the highest annual real earnings in the country, eclipsing the average earnings of those in the major cities by more than $200. Meanwhile, New York's pressmen enjoyed the highest weekly pay and shortest work week in the United States, exceeding the next closest group of pressmen in Boston by six dollars.(44) The higher real wages earned by New York's and Brooklyn's printers reflected higher pay rates, which in turn were the result of the scope of unionization in the printing trades.

Accompanying high weekly pay rates and annual earnings was a relatively steady employment pattern. In contrast to garment workers and cigarmakers who experienced seasonal shifts in employment, compositors and pressmen showed little variation in the number of days they worked from one part of the year to the next. During 1897 and 1898, for example, the number of days worked per quarter did not vary by more than four in either direction. Accordingly, for compositors the earnings for each three month period hovered around $200 and for pressmen consistently increased to a high of $270, except for one quarter when earnings fell $40. (45)

However, printers did experience unemployment. During the same two year period, the unemployment rate for union compositors continued to run in double digit figures, reaching a high of twenty percent. Pressmen, in contrast, fared better, as a twenty plus percent

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unemployment rate in the first six months of 1897 sharply declined to a low of two percent in early 1898 and did not rise above six percent for the remainder of the year.(46) Compositors experienced higher rates of unemployment as a result of technological displacement following the deployment of linotypes and because of the influx of out-of-town compositors seeking to take advantage of the comparative advantage in earnings enjoyed by New York's and Brooklyn's compositors, especially in the book and job sector.

The printing occupation was not without its drawbacks. Work related health hazards plagued printers. Linotype operators sat on low stools which cramped their legs, and hand compositors sat on high stools which constrained the motion of their arms. More ominously, printers incurred a high incidence of respiratory illnesses, including tuberculosis, bronchitis and asthma, because of a dust-laden and poorly ventilated environment. One study, using the data on the ITU's outlays on the union's death benefit, estimated that 40 percent of the printers who died from respiratory diseases were under 33 years old. Printers also were susceptible to lead poisoning. This resulted from inhaling the dust particles emanating from drying type, or eating with hands filled with residues of lead. Chapel reports indicated many instances of printers complaining of throat disorders, dryness of the mouth and general lethargy. The heavy consumption of alcohol in which printers indulged during lunch and dinner breaks and while waiting for work assignments exacerbated the malady, leading one observer to recommend that the union wage a campaign against excessive drinking.(47)

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Despite occupational diseases and intermittent unemployment, printers enjoyed comparatively favorable conditions of employment. Their pay rates were higher than the average manufacturing worker (48), and other than New York's unionized building tradesmen, their workdays were the shortest. The printers' material status in large part was attributable to their collective strength, which in turn, rested on their role in the labor process and the structure of the printing industry.

Printers, especially compositors, forged a cohesive world of work that even machine technology could not destroy. Despite the apparently individualistic nature of composition, manual compositors and machine operators worked cooperatively. Heavy composition cases and "furniture", blocks of set type, often required more than one pair of hands to lift. Type could only be set if the characters were properly distributed, and even the most skilled compositor needed the backup of a proofreader who in turn counted on his assistant to either hold the galley or read the text to him. Even in offices where machine composition prevailed, it was common for two printers to be working side by side, one operating the key board and the other assisting with the justification of type.

The deployment of machinery also did not disrupt the intimate work atmosphere. Compositors did not have to endure the din of churning machinery, nor face confining stationary work. They could talk and move freely, and given the chronic delays in work, had much opportunity to do both. In short, no strict factory discipline ruled in the composing room. Foremen, despite their authority regarding work assignments, did not rule tyrannically as they did, for example, in iron and steel mills or textile plants. In fact, foremen were often union members and thereby

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subject to union work rules and peer group pressure. It was not uncommon for foremen and regulars to socialize together in a neighborhood tavern after work or in Chapel sponsored bicycle races, bowling matches, baseball games, picnics and dances.(49) This shared extra-work activity consequently attentuated the tension that could develop when foremen violated the compositors ' sense of fair play in the distribution of work.

Most critically technological innovation did not erode the printers' status. The use of linotypes and monotypes in the composing room or quadruple and sextuple presses in the press room did not deskill or devalue the printers' labor. Even the most advanced machinery of the period could not duplicate all of the printers' skills. Indeed the efficient operation of the depended on the astute judgement and painstaking care of its operators. Pressmen verified if the equipment was in working order and diligently monitored its performance, and overall took on more responsibilities. If anything, printers not only retained many of their skills but learned others. Linotype operators, given the way the machine functioned, had to learn how to type and to maintain the equipment minimally. Compositors still needed a working knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Even the advent of automatic justification features in typesetting machinery did not dispense with the compositors' ability to know when to hyphenate a word at the end of the line. Moreover, although most versions of the linotype justified type mechanically, the operator could expedite the process. The linotype justified type through the use of "space bands" the width of which shrank when the number of word spaces in a line grew. An experienced operator with a quick glance at the space band

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could determine if the remaining unused word space was less than the expansion capacity of the space band and thereby activate the appropriate key to start a new line. (50)

In addition, while the use of typesetting machines initially caused the displacement of hand compositors, the expansion of machine technology did not ultimately threaten the printers' job security. Linotypes and monotypes did not open the doors for the employment of lower wage workers. Unlike cigarmaking, women's role in the labor force remained limited and subject to job segregation. In contrast to the garment trades, recently arrived immigrants did not flood the occupation. The absence of any real or perceived threat from other social groups or workers allowed printers to adjust to technological change.

The timing of technological innovation also was important. Most of the printers working at the major daily newspapers and many employed by the larger book and job printing firms belonged to #6 of the ITU. By the 1880's, when the linotype was introduced, the typographers could count on the resources of a local and national organization with a 30year history of stability. No internecine rivalry between unions existed to permit employers to play one against another. In addition, because the ITU had established affiliates in virtually all of the country's leading cities, employers could not readily find substitutes for union printers. For this reason, among others, printers possessed sufficient strength to minimize the effects of technological displacement and insure that the jobs created by new machinery be filled by former hand compositors.

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Ironically, the technological transformation of the printing industry reinforced the standing of printers.(51) Greater investment in machinery raised the stakes of production, thereby making labor-employer conflict potentially more costly. This particularly was true for newspapers under the pressure of daily deadlines. Consequently, the American Newspaper Publishers' Association officially endorsed a policy of accommodation with printing unions, characterized by a willingness to negotiate agreements and to arbitrate differences. (52) Higher capital requirements also strengthened the market position of the firmly established New York and Brooklyn newspapers among which #6 and #98 of the ITU were based. In the book and job branch the ability of larger firms such as Theodore De Vinne and Trow's (both union shops) to invest in the latest typesetting equipment swayed New York's leading publishing houses not to contract out work to printing concerns in upstate New York, New Jersey and Connecticut since the new technology facilitated the cheaper production of books and magazines.(53)

The emphasis on machinery and capital in general as a factor in production also alleviated pressures to control labor costs. Wage bills could be held in check without reducing pay rates since per unit outlays on labor had been cut with the use of more efficient means of production. Complementing the productivity savings from technology was the drop in prices of such basic requirements in the production process as newsprint and ink, which fell by more than 100 percent from 1880 to 1900.(54) These factors -- a more costly susceptibility to interruptions in production, the specific market structure of the industry and the alternatives for controlling labor costs -- contributed to the ability of printers to share in the productivity

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gains technology fostered. As newspapers continued to increase their circulations and netted higher sales per worker, they were in a position to accede to many of the unionized printers' demands for upgraded pay scales and shorter workdays.

In brief, a description of the printers' world of work must not only account for a local and specialized business and labor market, the role of machine technology in redefining printing methods and the compositors' and pressmen's strategic role in the production process. It must acknowledge that the structure of the industry, market conditions and the printers' retention of their skills in the face of technological innovation all generated conditions of employment that were inextricably tied to the printers' status as union men and women. Union membership, then, as much as rising pay rates, relatively secure employment and shorter hours became a condition of employment -- a central feature of their world of work.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Robert Max Jackson, **The Formation of Craft Labor Markets** (New York: Academic Press, 1984), p. 137.

2. Charlotte Morgan, **The Origin and History of the New York Employing Printers' Association** (New York: Columbia University, 1930), pp. 12-14; **The Union Printer**, March 30, 1895; Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, Lawrence C. Wroth and Rollo Silver, **The Book in America: A History of the Making and Selling of Books in the United States** (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1952), pp. 212-215; New York State. Inspection Bureau, **Seventh Annual Report** (1892), pp. 113-211 and **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1898), pp, 177-215.

3. John Tebbel, **A History of Book Publishing in the United States,** Volume 2: The Expansion of an Industry, 1865-1919 (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1975), pp. 26 and 27.

4. **The Union Printer**, April 13, 1893; and August 15, 1896.

5. Inspection Bureau, **Seventh Annual Report**, pp. 71-90, 113-211, and 301-318; **Thirteenth Annual Report**, pp. 177-215; United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in Cities**, pp. 88-97 and 394-407; R.G. Dun and Company, **Reference Book Containing Ratings of Merchants and Manufacturers and Traders Generally Throughout the United States** (1895); and Edwin Emery, **The History of the American Newspaper Publishers Association** (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1950), pp. 13 and 14.

6. Morgan, pp. 10, 11 and 72.

7. Emery, pp. 13 and 14.

8. **Ibid**, pp. 16, 23 and 24.

9. **The Union Printer, passim**, 1892, 1896 and 1898; and Inspection Bureau, **Seventh Annual Report** (1892), pp. 113-211 and **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 177-215.

10. United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Population**, Part II, pp. 640, 641, 704 and 705; Inspection Bureau, **Seventh Annual Report** (1892), pp. 113-211 and **Tenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 375-389; and **The Union Printer**, November 10, 1894 and June 29, 1895.

11. Edith Abbott, **Women and Industry** (New York: D. Applelton, 1909), pp. 257 and 258; George Barnett, "The Introduction of the Linotype", John R. Commons, ed., **Trade Unionism and Labor Problems** (Boston: Gin and Company, 1905), p. 252. Ava Baron, "Woman's Place in Capitalist Production: A Study of Class Relations in the 19th Century Newspaper Printing Industry," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1981), 270-286.

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12. George Barnett, "The Printers," **American Economic Association Quarterly**, 10 (October 1909), 316-319; **The Union Printer, passim,** especially October 21 and 28, 1893, November 4, 1893 and February 3, 1894; and **The American Craftsman,** November 13, 1897. The introduction of women into the printers' workplace had its compensatory features, according to the editor of **The American Craftsman:** "Men grow gross when they herd too much by themselves, and the restraining presence of a bright girl ... has put a stop to much profanity...." Moreover, the entry of women, he contended, "induced proprietors to make the composing rooms more like offices than workshops." **The American Craftsman,** November 13, 1897. [Note: **The Union Printer** changed its name to **The American Craftsman** in 1895.]

13. **The Union Printer,** June 23, 1891 and March 23, 1895; Abbott, p.254; and Elizabeth Baker, **Technology and Women Workers** (New York: Columbia University, 1964), p. 45; and Richard Huss, **The Development of Printers' Mechanical Typesetting Methods,1822-1925** (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1973), p. 82.

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24. **Special Bulletin** Number 475, pp. 5, 50 and 51; and United States. Commissioner of Labor, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1898), p. 69.

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30. Commissioner of Labor, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1898), p. 69; and Jackson, p. 175.

31. **Special Bulletin** Number 475, p. 8; and Barnett, pp. 252-254 and 261.

32. Jackson, pp. 174 and 175.

33. **The Boycotter,** October 2, 1886.

34. **The Union Printer,** December 4, 1886.

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36. **The Union Printer,** May 16 and May 25, 1896; and United States Eleventh Census (1890), Manufacturing, **Statistics of Cities,** pp. 86-97 and 394-406.

37. **The Union Printer,** September 22, 1894; and **The American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking,** p. 270.

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44. Loft, pp. 286-289.

45. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Sixteenth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 860 and 861; and **Seventeenth Annual Report** (1899), pp. 168 and 178.

46. **Ibid.**

47 J.W. Sullivan, "The Printers' Health," John R. Commons, ed., **Trade Unionism and Labor Problems,** pp. 435-453; and **The Union Printer,** May 30, 1896.

48. Paul Douglas, **Real Wages in the United States 1890-1926** (University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 135-136.

49. See, for example, **The Union Printer,** June 23 and June 30, 1894.

50. Strauss, pp. 72 and 73.

51. Andrew Dawson, "Paradox of Dynamic Technological Change," **Labor History,** 20 (Summer 1979), 337 makes a similar observation.

52. Emery, pp. 45 and 46.

53. Tebbell, Volume 2, p. 659.

54. Lee, p. 104.

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WORKERS IN GILDED AGE NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN 1886–1898

by

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VOLUME II

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

1989

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CHAPTER NINE — THE LABOR ACTIVITY OF PRINTERS

Among New York's and Brooklyn's workers during the late Gilded Age, none showed a greater ability to organize collectively than printers. By 1886, compositors employed at the major daily newspapers and some of the larger book and job printing firms claimed membership in an union more than 30 years old. Similarly, compositors who set type for many of the German language newspapers had forged an effective union capable of improving conditions of employment. In most of the allied printing trades, especially press work and stereotyping, the movement towards unionization had made important strides by the mid 1880's. Through unions, printers were able to introduce standards covering pay scales, hours, work responsibilities and entry into the craft. While enforcement of these standards sometimes was problematic, organized printers mostly enjoyed relatively high pay rates, short workdays and some control over hiring practices, the distribution of work assignments and the pace of work.

From 1886 to 1898 the most dominant feature of printers' labor activity was the development of a "cooperative" unionism based on the common interests and the mutual respect of compositors, pressmen and stereotypers. Printers' unions learned from experience the advantages of cooperation, and accordingly moved to amalgamate parallel organizations, develop a union label, support each other's strikes and boycotts and participate in joint electoral and legislative lobbying campaigns.

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Cooperative unionism among printers, however, did not develop painlesssly. Printers' unions clashed in jurisdictional disputes and refused to honor each other's pickets or boycott calls. Number 6 of the International Typographical Union and #7 of the German-Typographia clashed over the issue of what union should represent compositors setting type in English and German, before they signed a mutual recognition pact in 1891. Pressmen represented in the ITU found compositors encroaching upon their craft and consequently formed an independent union, the International Printing Pressmen's Union. Inter-union conflict plagued pressmen as well; affiliates with the ITU, IPPU and Knights of Labor competed for members and union shops, commonly referred to as "card offices", until 1896 when the three negotiated a merger agreement.

Certain developments in the printing trades prompted union printers to overcome internecine conflict and forge closer working relationships. The rapid technological transformation of composition and presswork resulted in a growing specialization that sharply defined the crafts of typographers and pressmen. The introduction of linotypes and web presses made it less easy for typographers to do the work of pressmen, a not uncommon practice in the smaller book and job shops in the 1880's, which understandably irritated pressmen. The different demands of printing technology encourged a realization among both groups that harmony between the two could only occur if each maintained its own union. The recognition of the merits of autonomy also appeared in #6, as technological innovation accentuated the differences in the types of work done by compositors employed by newspapers and book and job firms. Book and job printers organized their own chapter in 1895

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which helped them to identify needs specific to their work experience, to discuss ways of improving their conditions of employment and to gain a greater voice within the higher echelons of the union.

More basic, technological change encouraged a recognition of common interests. Mechanization at the very least redefined the labor of printers — calling on them to learn new skills while making traditional skills obsolete -- and, most drastically, threatened many with displacement. Consequently, new issues demanded the printers' attention while other more persistent issues took on a greater urgency. Typesetting machines and more sophisticated presses accelerated the printing process and thereby prompted printers to consider the merits of pay by time rather than the piece and to insist on a clarification of the specific responsibilities of each grade of compositor and pressmen. The reduction in the relative demand for manual labor and the simultaneous increase in physical output attendant to mechanization pressured printers to pursue job security more vigorously and systematically as well as to insure that productivity gains would be equitably shared. Both compositors and pressmen, whether they worked for a newspaper or a book and job shop, regarded these concerns as important.

Lastly, the growth of employers' associations posed a challenge and opportunity for printers. Both the New York Typothetae, representing the book and job printing companies, and the American Newspaper Publishers' Association sought to standardize production methods and management practices. In turn, the New York and Brooklyn affiliates of the International Typographical Union and the International Printing Pressmen's Union found that the establishment of union standards could

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be expedited, for negotiations with members of an industry-wide organization raised the possibility that shop by shop differentials of pay rates and hours could be eliminated and that such issues as job security could be handled comprehensively.

As the implications of these developments were becoming clearer, union printers came to realize that cooperation among independent unions, the merger of rival organizations and mutual support during conflicts with employers was not only desirable but necessary. Cooperative unionism played a significant part in the improvement of printers' conditions of employment. In 1896 and 1897 pressmen achieved a reduction in their work week from 54 to 45 hours and increases in pay, and extended the union scale to previously unorganized offices such as the **New York Tribune** and **McClure's**. In 1898, with the complete backing of the Allied Printing Trades Council, #6 successfully pressed book and job printing firms for a nine hour day without having to resort to a strike or boycott. By the late 1890's hand compositors had established a prior claim for linotype positions, thereby alleviating the threat of technological displacement.(1)

In 1886, when workers across the nation were organizing for an eight hour day, New York's and Brooklyn's printers had established a network of unions representing more than 5000 pressmen, compositors, stereotypers and photo-engravers, among others. There were three pressmen's unions -- the Franklin Association, New York Pressmen's Union #9 and the Adams and Cylinder Pressmen's Association. The Franklin Association was the oldest, dating back to 1861. During its first twenty-five years the Franklin Association successfully warded off attempts by #6 of the International Typographical Union (ITU) to absorb its

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organization and continued to claim the most members, although both the New York Pressmen's Union #9, chartered by the ITU in 1883, and the Adams and Cylinder Pressmen's Association were growing rapidly.(2)

Three unions representing compositors coexisted, although, like the pressmen's unions, tension existed among the organizations. The youngest of these was #98 of the ITU based in Brooklyn. It was formed in 1874, and, after a shaky formative period, made inroads in some of that city's daily newspapers and book and job publishing firms. By 1886, #98 had organized five "chapels" (the name given by compositors to workplace union branches) consisting of compositors employed at **The Brooklyn Union, The Brooklyn Standard, The Brooklyn Times,** Appleton's Publishing Company and Saften and Company.(3)

Active in both New York and Brooklyn was #7 of the German-American Typographia, representing compositors working on German-American newspapers and printing companies specializing in German language literature. This union started in 1869 with 32 members. Despite the depression of 1873-1877, it grew steadily, and in the process helped to launch a national union. By 1880, #7 had developed sick and death benefits, a travelling card (providing assistance to members seeking work in other localities) and an out-of-work fund serving more than two hundred members. Six years later, this union had established eight "card offices", two of which -- **The Herald and The New Yorker Zeitung** -- were the results of boycotts. Probably more impressive, #7's 300 members had secured the eight hour day and gained recognition of their union label from the employers.(4)

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The oldest and largest typographical union was #6 of the ITU. Formed in 1852 at the founding convention of the National Typographical Union (the ITU's predecessor), it was an outgrowth of the New York Printers' Union that consisted exclusively of compositors at a handful of newspapers. During the first decade of its existence, #6 created a disability benefit that provided eligible members with four dollars a week and a death benefit that defrayed a portion of a member's funeral expenses and allocated 35 dollars a week to the surviving spouse. In response to the restlessness of book and job printers, who formed a separate organization (the New York Printers' Cooperative Union) which unsuccessfully sought recognition from the national union, #6 began to expand its base of support by pressing to upgrade the pay scales of all compositors within its jurisdiction. From 1860 to 1880, #6 augmented its benefit features, increasing the allotments for disability and death and introducing a temporary out-of-work fund in the wake of the Panic of 1873. By 1886, the union had also set up a pension for members 60 years or older. Indicative of its leading position among printing trades' unions in 1886, #6 had 3,500 members organized into 110 chapels. (5)

As the efforts of printers to organize gained momentum, conflicting trends in the relationships among unions emerged. On the one hand, calls for consolidation of parallel organizations and closer ties among compositors, pressmen and stereotypers became more common. On the other hand, rivalries among the pressmen's unions persisted, and relations between two of the typographical unions -- #6 and #7 -- remained strained until the early 1890's. In 1886, #6 and #98 of the ITU renewed an agreement negotiated the previous year that called for a mutual recognition of each other's jurisdiction. That same year the

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Central Labor Union created a Printing Trades Section which met weekly, consisting of delegates from #6 of the ITU, #7 of the German Typographia, the Adams and Cylinder Pressmen Association and the Franklin Association of Pressmen and Press Feeders, among others. The formation of the Printing Trades Section raised hopes that printers' unions could resolve their differences and garner support for their organizing campaigns, strikes and boycotts. (6)

In its first full year in operation, however, the Printing Trades Section failed to live up to its expectations. This occurred for two reasons. First, the multiplicity of the pressmen's unions forestalled attempts to establish a common ground. This problem stemmed from numerous factors. The specialization of work, especially with the introduction of web presses, gave rise to organizing unions by job title. Therefore, the Franklin Association tended to concentrate its recruitment efforts on press helpers and press feeders, and rarely on pressmen, with the exception of platen pressmen employed in small book and job shops who felt uncomfortable in the Adams and Cylinder Pressmen's Union. Meanwhile, the latter excluded press feeders because they were considered unskilled. The existence of distinct branches in the printing industry helped to promote the creation of separate unions for book and job and newspaper pressmen. Accordingly, the former represented the base of the Adams and Cylinder Pressmen's Association, and the latter joined the New York Pressmen's Union #9 or the Newspaper Printers Union #1 affiliated with the International Pressmen's Union. The competition among the newspaper pressmen's unions arose from a seccessionist movement within #6 and the ITU among pressmen who were dissatisfied with the typographers' domination of most union offices,

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their control over foremen in the pressrooms and their attempt to take pressroom jobs for themselves. The seccessionists, along with the Adams and Cylinder Pressmen's Union, in 1889 played leading roles in the formation of the International Printing Pressmen's Union, which for the next few years fought both against the ITU and the Knights of Labor to gain the exclusive rights to represent pressroom workers.(7)

Secondly, the compositors showed a propensity to act unilaterally and to cooperate reluctantly with other printing tradesmen. Despite, or because of, its repercussions for members of #7, #6 embarked on a campaign to increase pay scales without notifying the German language compositors and ignored the union's offer of cooperation. While the Adams and Cylinder Pressmen and the Stereotypers Union supported each other's drive for a nine hour day through coordinated strikes, #6, other than making nominal financial contributions and voting for resolutions, held its distance. Nevertheless, this did not prevent #6 from requesting the Printing Section's and the Central Labor Union's endorsement of its strike among the book and job printing and publishing firms in October, 1887.(8)

Efforts to confederate rebounded following the false start in 1887. Printers' unions discovered that internecine conflict curbed the potential of their power and therefore they sought a new modus vivendi. Number 7 of the German-Typographia and the New York Typographical Union forged closer ties, culminating, in 1891, in the chartering of the former as Local 274 of the ITU and the mutual recognition of each other's jurisdiction. This agreement occurred after the two unions resolved potentially explosive disputes. In 1888, members of #7 struck the book and job printing concern of Cherouny in pursuit of an eight

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hour day and union pay scale. The New York Typographical Union, for its part, claimed exclusive jurisdiction over all compositors setting type in English and refused to support #7's strike on the grounds that the German-Typographia's proposed pay scale with Cherouny was below standard. Following the strike, broken when #6 provided the employer with compositors, representatives from #7 approached the Executive Committee of #6 to discuss how to avoid a recurrence of self-defeating inter-union battles. Both unions reached an understanding indicating that at this shop all English language compositors would belong to #6 while all German language compositors would be subject to #7's rules and standards.(9)

Two years later, both unions became entangled in another conflict when **The New York Morning Journal** began to publish a German edition and approached the executive committee of #6 to provide the newspaper with compositors. #7, quite understandably, contended that since the work consisted of German language material their members should claim the positions, or, at the very least, that whoever set the type should be required to join the union. As an impasse developed, #7, enlisting the support of the United German Trades and German fraternal organizations, mobilized a boycott of the **New York Morning Journal.** In turn, the owners of the **New York Morning Journal** demanded that all members of #7 be compelled to join #6. This demand convinced Charles Dumar, President of the New York Typographical Union, of the need for negotiations between the two unions. (10)

Consequently, in February 1891 an agreement marking out the jurisdictional lines of each organization was finalized. #7, with #6's backing, would apply for a charter from the ITU as Local 274. With this

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as a precondition, the basic terms of the agreement would take effect. In the future, offices doing German language work exclusively would be in #274's jurisdiction, and any office currently controlled by #6 where compositors were setting type in German would be required to join #274. In 1894, #7 officially became #274 of the ITU. As a result, the German-American Typographia gained recognition of its union card, while preserving its benefit structure and scale of wages and hours. (11)

In the 1890's printers' unions continued to take the idea of federation seriously. #6 spearheaded the formation of a "local confederation" of unions in the printing trades. Consisting of the Stereotypers #1 and the United Bookbinders' Division #1 as well as #6, the Federation of Printing and Kindred Trades, aimed to promote union standards throughout the industry and to facilitate the amicable settlement of disputes between printers and employers. In 1894, inspired by the integration of the German-American Typographia into the ITU and an agreement between the ITU and the International Printing Pressmen's Union, which since 1889 had been striving to eliminate the conflict among pressmen's unions in New York and elsewhere, printers formed the Allied Printing Trades Council. This new federation included pressmen, press feeders, photo-engravers, mailers as well as stereotypers, bookbinders and compositors. It established a joint union label and began to explore ways to promote "fraternity" in the printing trades.(12)

Meanwhile, the pressmen's unions made progress in overcoming their divisions. In 1896, the New York Amalgamated Pressmen's Union, consisting of the New York Pressmen's Union #9 and the Newspaper Printers Union #1, the Adams and Cylinder Pressmen's Associated

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(chartered as Local 51 of the International Printing Pressmen's Union) and the Franklin Association of Press Feeders and Assistants signed a merger agreement, marking out the jurisdiction of each organization as locals of the IPPU. (13)

Propelling the printers' drive to unionize was their ability to introduce and enforce standards regarding pay, hours, apprenticeship and work rules. It was not coincidental that New York Typographical Union #6, the prime mover of the efforts to amalgamate, had been the most successful in pressing employers to accept its union scale. #6 was able to extend its position in the printing industry through a rather simple and direct process of collective bargaining. At general membership meetings the union deliberated upon the recommendations made by select committees regarding a "scale of prices". Once deletions and additions had been made, the union voted to adopt the scale as their set of standards. The union's executive committee was charged with the responsibility of overseeing the introduction of the scale, which they usually did by meeting with employers in informal conferences. In practice, these conferences rarely were bargaining sessions since union representatives were more interested in finding out when employers could be expected to accept the scale and not in negotiating specific provisions.

This approach was predicated on the employers' recognition of the New York Typographical Union and their agreement to hire only its members, which, in turn, rested on the union's ability to provide a reliable source of skilled labor that pledged to work only at the union scale. Yet, even as the union was to enlist more "card offices", it found it necessary to apply more direct pressure on employers to accept

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their scale. In 1887, for example, #6 called a strike in the book and job shops to gain increases in the basic pay rates. The strike produced a contract, negotiated with the help of New York State's Mediation and Arbitration Board, consisting of detailed provisions covering pay and apprentices. From 1883 to 1891, #6 conducted a boycott of **The New York Tribune** because it refused to accept the union's scale. This conflict, too, was resolved with the signing of a formal agreement calling for the newspaper's recognition of #6 and the union's pledge to resolve future disputes through negotiations.(14)

Moreover, because of the complicated nature of the pay scale, which included various rates for different kinds of work, the enforcement of union standards required the vigilance of work place chapels and a close relationship between them and the union's leadership. Therefore, when employers and foremen failed to honor the standards, the executive committee usually charged chapel chairmen with the responsibility of enforcing them. If the matter could not be resolved at the shop level, then #6's president and other officers directly intervened.

Union scales stipulated different rates according to specific branches of the printing industry, types of work and job categories. Newspaper typographers, pressmen and press feeders earned at a higher rate than their book and job counterparts. Typographers, pressmen and press feeders who worked at night on morning newspapers were paid at a higher rate than those setting type for evening newspapers. #6's 1887 pay scale provided 50 cents per 1000 ems (an em was the standard measurement of the width of set type) for newspaper compositors, with an overtime rate of 60 cents per 1000 ems for night workers and 43 cents

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for book and job compositors setting standard English matter. The scale of New York Pressmen's Union #9 in 1890 included weekly rates of $20 for newspaper pressmen and $18 for book and job pressmen working days and $24 for night pressmen in both newspaper and book and job offices. Likewise, press feeders working on evening newspapers earned $14 a week, two dollars more than book and job press feeders working by day, but four dollars less than all press feeders working by night. Overtime rates for pressmen and press feeders were uniform regardless of when and where the work was done: time and a third for every hour beyond the regular ten hours from Monday through Saturday, and double time on Sundays and holidays.(15)

Besides setting basic rates, union scales sought to promote stable and reliable earnings. Piece work compositors called in to work on morning newspapers who were without work any time between 12 and 2 a.m. were to receive a minimum of 60 cents an hour and $1.20 cents if they were without work between 2 and 7 a.m. The 1887 scale required an "equal distribution" of fat and lean matter (the former containing more ems than the latter) to piece and time workers. Moreover, it required that compositors were to be paid for "all matter set, from their cases by the office", even if the final copy was not published.(16)

Both newspaper and book and job compositors went to great lengths to "guarantee a fair wage" for those setting intricate and demanding matter. For example, compositors working on multicolumn newspaper copy such as court calendars, accounting tables, stock prices and baseball standings earned at a rate 50 percent higher than the standard of 50 cents per 1000 ems. The piece rates of book and job compositors setting foreign language material was anywhere from 16 to 400 percent more than

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those working on English matter. Five cents extra per 1000 ems was paid to compositors working on dictionaries, spellers and reading books, and ten cents extra was paid to those setting mathematical matter. In pursuit of a "fair wage" the New York Typographical Union also sought to reap benefits from the newest typesetting technology. As early as 1887, when some of New York's major dailies were just beginning to introduce linotype machines, #6 adopted pay scales especially for machine operators. The rates of compositors employed by the week (usually those working as linotype operators) were fixed at a weekly minimum of $27 and $20 for night and day newspaper work, respectively, and at $18 for book and job work. In 1887 newspaper linotype operators earned at a hourly rate of 50 cents and their book and job counterparts earned at 30 cents a hour. The 1891 scale was upgraded to stipulate the payment of the 50 cents rate even if no matter were supplied to operators, while the book and job hourly rate was increased to 35 cents for day work and 50 cents for night work. (17) These pay rate provisions signalled a determination by typographers to uphold union standards before rampant mechanization of composition could make earlier standards obsolete and seriously challenge #6's ability to protect its members' interests.

Of particular concern to unionized compositors was the impact of technological innovation on their craft. In the main, the New York Typographical Union accommodated to mechanization, in the belief that by not trying to block the introduction of typesetting machinery or to restrict output, the union would be in an advantageous position to safeguard the compositors' livelihood. In 1890, when the Cleveland based Rogers Company developed a new version of the typesetting machine called the typograph, the union's executive committee arranged with

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Mergenthaler and Company, the manufacturer of linotype machines, to send a delegation to observe the typograph at work. That same year a special committee charged with the responsibility of studying the industry's new technology reported to the union's general membership that most of the typesetting machines were effective, reliable and would become fixtures in the production process.(18)

There were two sides to the New York Typographical Union's approach to technological change. On the one hand, a few members recognized that the spread of machine technology would restructure the labor force and produce widespread displacement of manual compositors, and that the union should assist compositors to adjust to this inevitable development. The editor of **The Union Printer** advised members to accept the fact that "some must go". He recommended the union use its influence within the city's political clubs to gain its share of patronage so that "surplus" printers could find positions in federal, state and local civil service. "Sadie MaGuire" (a pseudonym), a frequent contributor to **The Union Printer,** likewise told printers they would be better off starting a new trade, although he offered few concrete suggestions on how this could be done. In a unique proposal an anonymous member called for the payment of a five dollar weekly supplement for ten weeks to former printers who found alternative employment in order to narrow the gap in the earnings of the old and current jobs. (19)

On the other hand, the union paid closer attention to the demands for job security (heard as early as 1886) and began to take steps through the union scale to prevent the technological displacement of manual compositors. Accordingly, the union sought to guarantee that newspaper publishers and book and job employers deploying the new

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technology hire only #6 members and that they adequately train manual compositors to operate the equipment. In 1893, the union instituted a rule that, in transitional shops where both manual and machine composition was done, only those who were members in the chapel for at least three months before the introduction of the shop's first machine could serve as linotype operators. A year later, however, this rule was overturned by the executive committee after it became apparent that it effectively excluded members of other chapels from landing linotype positions.(20)

The linchpin of the union's approach was the enforcement of the requirement that only journeymen printers, "trained in the trade as a whole" be employed as linotype operators. The union stressed this requirement for two reasons, although the deployment of typesetting machines narrowed the responsibilities of operators and shortened their training period. First, it reaffirmed the printers' self-image as craftsmen whose mastery of the trade depended on patient instruction and years of diversified on-the-job experience. Secondly, and more importantly, a broadly defined apprenticeship would protect members trained as manual compositors from technological displacement and maintain a demand (albeit artificial) for the skills of hand composition. As a prerequisite, journeymen were to serve four year apprenticeships, during which time they could not work on linotype machines until the last six weeks. The 1891 scale established a ratio of one apprentice per ten journeymen and limited newspaper offices to retaining no more than six apprentices simultaneously. To discourage the substitution of apprentices for journeymen, the union in 1896 set a "learner's" rate of two-thirds the minimum standard during the training

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period and prohibited the introduction of any additional apprentices on morning and evening newspapers for the next five years.(21)

Union spokesmen defended closing the doors of entry into the trade on the grounds that the expansion of labor saving machinery had created a "surplus" of printers and that the newspaper production process had become so complex that it was virtually impossible for an apprentice to to be trained as a "well rounded printer". At the behest of #6 and other locals, the ITU in 1898 reintroduced a prohibition (temporarily repealed in 1894) of the payment of bonuses to linotype operators except where the union scale was observed. Moreover, the ITU barred "speed contests" that threatened to raise daily production quotas.(22)

The union's efforts to promote job security bore results. Although technological displacement did occur, both the growing demand for composition (a product of the new technology's increased capacity) and specific contract provisions minimized its magnitude. By 1897, when virtually all the major daily newspapers and many of the largest book and job firms had introduced linotypes, typographs and monotypes in their composition rooms, the union had established that preference for machine work would be given to union members who had previously set type by hand.(23)

The spread of machine technology also inspired union compositors to consider new modes of payment -- by the hour rather than by piece. Time work, advocates argued, would promote steadier and higher earnings, since compositors would not be penalized for waiting for copy. Skeptics scoffed at the proposal, contending that the purported higher earnings resulted from the fact that time workers were given the choicest copy and that time work would lead to overbearing and constant supervision

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by foremen. This opposition not withstanding, the union in 1889 modified its scale, requiring time work to be the method of payment for machine composition. The scale also stipulated that matter be fairly distributed to both hand and machine compositors employed in the same office, exclusively reserving display advertisements which paid a higher than standard rate to manual compositors. In 1892, when complications developed in the enforcement of the "fair distribution" provision, the union's executive committee instructed chapels to prevent machine operators from "culling" the "fat" matter from composition stock tables. (24)

Related to the issue of job security was the length of the workday and workweek. From 1886 through 1898, union compositors in general supported a reduction in hours, although frequently members expressed their concern that the union's demands were too ambitious and potentially counter-productive. Consequently, the union moved cautiously after enthusiastically issuing calls for action. In April 1886, in the midst of the eight hour movement sweeping across the country, the Board of Delegates authorized a committee to "confer with other organs" to press for the eight hour day, and mandated union members employed in the same offices as members of German-American Typographia #7 to strike in sympathy with the latter's demand for an eight hour day. The New York Typographical Union, however, did not seek to amend its scale, let alone organize to strike over the issue. Instead, the union decided to cooperate with the ITU's campaign to introduce industry-wide standards. In practice, from 1886 to 1891 this meant a nine hour day and a 54 hour week. In 1891, encouraged by the success of the national union's drive and challenged by the growing use of typesetting machines, #6 adopted an

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eight hour rule for newspaper compositors.(25)

Although the rule was far from universally implemented, in the summer of 1893, proposals were raised for a seven hour workday for newspaper compositors operating typesetting machines, which in December the board of delegates endorsed. Some questioned the wisdom of this decision. Warren Browne, the editor of **The Union Printer**, argued that the union's priority should be to introduce a nine hour day in the book and job shops where ten hours was the norm. B. Greenberg regarded even the nine hour day as too far-reaching, since it would hurt book and job compositors paid by the piece and not create full-time jobs as promised by Browne.(26)

Others expressed their concern that the enforcement of the seven hour day would compel newspapers to require compositors to work overtime since production demands could not be met in seven hours, and therefore not create jobs. What was urgent, asserted members from the **Herald** and **Recorder** chapels, was a strict ban on overtime. In an editorial supporting this proposal, **The Union Printer** denounced the "pernicious system" of overtime because it "robbed" unemployed printers of an opportunity to work. In response, the Board of Delegates approved a five day work week in 1894 and requested the ITU to conduct a union-wide referendum on the rule change. In addition, the board of delegates reinstated a rule -- first passed in 1890, but laxly enforced -- prohibiting full-time compositors from working on both morning and evening newspapers, and another barring members from holding positions with more than one employer.(27)

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Neither action, however, satisfactorly appeared to address the problem. **The Union Printer** reported compositors working twelve to sixteen hours a day, and for one newspaper during the day and another during the night. To enforce the rules the union introduced a financial penalty of two days' pay for a first time violation, a week's pay for a second violation and the loss of one's union card for a third violation.(28) The five day rule, both before and after its adoption, produced controversy. In May 1894, members were advised to consider the proposed rule's probable harmful effects before voting. A five day work week would threaten the union's ability to control the selection of "floaters" (substitutes filling in for regulars) and open the way for foremen to choose their own men for the positions. One compositor adamantly called on members to vote against the rule, arguing: "All the situations (jobs or positions) are the property of the union and not of individuals".(29)

Two years later, letters to the editor of **The Union Printer** attacked the rule as "class legislation" since it applied to only one-third of the membership (compositors employed by daily newspapers), and charged that it ironically exacerbated the problem of unemployment because it made New York a more attractive job market for unemployed out-of-town printers. When the rule proved to be ineffective and too difficult to enforce, it was overturned, and in its place a requirement was introduced that any member earning the equivalent of a day's pay in overtime take an extra day off. This rule helped to provide work for irregularly employed substitutes ("subs", in printers' parlance) in newspaper composing rooms. However, its effectiveness was limited. Often printers worked only an hour or two of overtime, and therefore did not

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earn the equivalent of a full day's pay. In addition, in the book and job branch the use of subs never systematically developed because work varied from one shop to the next. (30)

Because of the growth of labor saving machinery and the onset of economic depression in 1894, printers found unemployment could not be prevented or alleviated simply by establishing new standards or rules. #6 created an out-of-work fund, considered self-help experiments, waived provisions of the pay scale and counselled its members to seek alternative occupations. The creation of an out-of-work fund, commencing with the introduction of a temporary one in September 1893, aroused vigorous debate. Opponents contended that relief would go into the "wrong hands" -- pariahs who maintained large savings accounts and worked part-time. They also argued that the benefit would provide an incentive for unemployed printers from other areas under the ITU's jurisdiction to enter New York's already crowded job market. Occasionally, criticism focused on the purported effects of out-of-work assistance. Hugh Matamney, a one time chair of the union's relief committee, felt the benefit was "unmanning" printers, encouraging fraud and deception and producing "pauperism".(31)

Nevertheless, the arguments of the benefit's supporters such as Eugene O'Rourke held sway. O'Rourke, a compositor at **The World** with 30 years of experience and a frequent delegate to ITU conventions, reasoned that the out-of-work fund would strengthen the union by helping to integrate those not "cradled in unionism" into the life of the New York Typographical Union and its chapels. In 1894 and 1895, the original temporary measure was renewed and amended three times, and in March, 1896 the fund was made permanent. In the temporary and permanent

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versions of the benefit, eligible members received five dollars a week if they were married and three dollars if they were single. The temporary benefit was financed through a five percent assessment on all members' weekly wages above ten dollars . However, when the union's relief committee reported being overwhelmed with applications for assistance in 1895, a general membership meeting in August authorized an expansion of the fund financed by a one percent assessment on the earnings of all members and a $1,000 loan from the union's general fund. Then in the following March, as prescribed by the ITU's constitution, #6 conducted a referendum on the formation of a permanent out-of-work fund. The proposal was carried, although not without considerable opposition. While **The World** and **The Herald** chapels voted overwhelmingly for the benefit, **The Tribune** and **The Sun** chapels split their votes evenly and **The New York Times** chapel voted against it.(32)

The New York Typographical Union acted effectively albeit deliberately in the establishment of an out-of-work benefit. Hesitancy and ineffectiveness, however, marked the union's proposed self-help measures. #6 operated a "house of call" where printers fraternized and came to find out about job vacancies. The "cave", as it was also known because it was lodged in a basement, earned a mixed reputation. Some printers expressed satisfaction with the jobs they obtained, while others complained that their employers paid by the week and not by the day and had an inadequate amount of work. In addition, the "cave", according to Warren Browne, became a center for the "drunken and disorderly", prompting him to recommend it be closed and replaced with a reading room. In 1894, the union also considered the founding of a daily labor newspaper to provide work to unemployed printers. A draft

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proposal projected a six page paper set by manual compositors who had been union members for at least three months. However, an ad hoc committee reported to the general membership that launching a paper was not feasible because the costs outweighed the potential benefits and public support was problematic. Three years later, #6 backed a proposal by the Mayor's Committee for Cultivation of Vacant Land by the Unemployed to purchase land in Pelham Bay Park. Enticed by a matching fund of $2,500, the union allocated funds to help unemployed printers start a farm. In 1898 100 former printers tried their hands at potato farming, but because of cold, damp weather and an outbreak of blight, the union lost enthusiasm for the project.(33)

To stem the tide of unemployment, the New York Typographical Union granted selective pay rate cuts. This action, as was customary, followed serious debate waged in **The Union Printer.** An anonymous compositor, called "sub", urged the union to reduce the scale for "time" printers who proofread, arranged, or "made up" the composed type by column and page, and prepared the frames holding type-filled galleys. This was appropriate, he asserted, because these printers earned more than the union scale, and, more importantly, it would create work for manual compositors. Edward McGovern, a compositor paid by the hour, considered the call for reducing the pay of "time hands" the inverse of sound union practice. Employers already knew how to cut costs, McGovern argued, without any suggestions from aggrieved printers. The "answer", as he put it, was not "envy or backstabbing", but a unified fight to gain a larger share of the surplus for all printers which the "present pernicious capitalistic system" prevented. However, the union resisted the calls for pay concessions until January 1897, when depressed

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conditions in the book and job branch of the industry indicated special measures were necessary. The executive committee was authorized to enter into "special agreements" with book and job concerns which faced increased competition from nonunion out of town shops. In the end, the union accepted temporary five cent reductions only for those paid by the piece and those who reprinted novels.(34)

Regardless of the issue or problem, the acid test of the union's influence and reach was neither the establishment of standards, the introduction of benefits, nor self-help measures. More importantly, it was the union's ability to enforce its standards, most clearly expressed in the "scale of prices". The responsibility of enforcement fell on the shoulders of the chapels which by the early 1890's, according to one observer, had become the "bedrock" of #6, a model of "pure democracy". Such a description emerged as a result of the chapels' growing power on the shop floor. Where foremen once assigned preferred work, such as advertisements and tables, to their favorites, chapel work rules specified the appropriate procedures. These rules also made seniority the guide in filling vacancies, sanctioned leaves of absences and granted regulars the right to select their own subs. Concerted effort was devoted to integrating foremen into the structure of chapels, first, by requiring them to be union members, secondly, by recognizing their authority to discharge incompetent printers and, lastly, by assigning them some responsibility for the enforcement of chapel rules. This approach was effective in discouraging the formation of "rings" of printers seeking to win the favor of foremen and thereby promoted high worker morale.(35)

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Because of the complexity and variety of typesetting, the enforcement of standards inevitably necessitated interpretation of union scales. Chapels often requested the union's executive committee to clarify the scale and guide them on how to apply specific provisions to concrete work practices. Throughout 1886, the executive committee heard reports from chapel representatives of **The New York Times, New York Journal, New York Herald** and **Irish World** concerning pay rates and job reponsibilities. Of particular concern to these chapel delegates was the price to be charged for advertisements, double column copy and illegible matter, and under whose jurisdiction advertisements should be set. The executive committee "ruled" that setting advertisements and double column copy should pay at twice the regular rate, and that employers, at their own expense, were to reserve time for the correction of illegible copy and otherwise insure that compositors not be prevented from earning a "fair" wage. Furthermore, the committee stipulated that advertising copy "belonged" to the compositor and that any deletions and additions were to be done within the office of origin, and not in the office where the advertisement might also be used. As a result of the frequency of the queries about advertising and double column copy, the union revised its scale in 1887 to explicitly cover them.(36)

The enforcement process also included overseeing the behavior of foremen and the review of standards that produced unanticipated effects. Foremen were taken to task for "illegally" and unjustly using their authority to discharge workers. For example, when a foreman at **The Mail and Express** dismissed four compositors, allegedly for "political" reasons, the union at a general membership meeting in January 1889 demanded his discharge and the reinstatement of the four. More common

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were disciplinary cases involving foremen who violated chapel and union-wide rules pertaining to hiring regulars and subs, the use of apprentices and the distribution of work. These violations were handled with punishments, including fines, censure and, most drastically, expulsion from the union.(37)

Occasionally, the executive committee, upon receiving evidence that strict enforcement of standards was counter-productive, postponed their implementation, or severely restricted their application. In 1896, when the printing industry was slowly recovering from the depression following the Panic of 1893, the executive committee overturned an earlier decision by the union's general membership body to enforce immediately the seven hour "law" in newspaper composition rooms. This action received the approval of the general membership at a stormy meeting where the charges of the executive committee's opponents that its behavior was unconstitutional were overwhelmed by arguments that a seven hour day could only be realized by striking and not merely by issuing rules. In 1897, delegates from the book and job Drummond chapel asked the union to change the scale providing "time" payments for the setting of mathematical copy and chemistry formulas in the hope that this would lower labor costs and thereby stem the loss of jobs to a competing Boston firm. The union honored the request upon the understanding the five cent extra for formula work would be temporarily waived but that the scale would remain intact. In 1898, at a special meeting called by the union's executive committee, the membership voted to rescind the decision to classify **The City Record** as a daily newspaper. Instead, the union redefined **The City Record** as a book and job office, since it feared that the application of the higher

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newspaper pay scale would encourage the publisher to mechanize production and thereby displace printers.(38)

Such decisions highlight the difficulty New York's union compositors had in maintaining a strict and universal application of their pay scale and work rules. Besides the extenuating circumstances of an economic slump, they faced the reality that some of the union's standards lacked the support of the membership. The union's stricture barring printers with regular positions from seeking additional work was often ignored, although it was introduced to create work for underemployed and unemployed printers. Consequently, not only did the union increase the penalties for nonobservance, but it instructed member foremen to verify that prospective employees were not on the payroll of any other newspaper or book and job firm. Similarly, both the ITU's six day work rule instituted in 1891 and #6's five day work rule in 1894 encountered rank and file resistance, even when the membership endorsed resolutions calling for the enforcement of the rules. On at least one occasion, this resistance received the blessing of a duly recognized body, when in 1891 the **New York World** chapel asserted that the ITU's six day rule "violated" #6's pay scale and therefore should not be enforced. Dissatisfaction with the five day rule became so widespread that it was not rigorously enforced and eventually dropped only two years after its introduction. Sometimes when a union standard aroused intense and pervasive opposition, the union promptly reversed its policy. President Samuel Donnelly, upon receiving letters and personal visits from compositors protesting a rule restricting all printers with the exception of foremen and superintendents from working more than five days a week for the next two months, brought the matter for the

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reconsideration of the general membership. Only one week after its passage, the membership, at an unusually large meeting, overwhelmingly voted to rescind the rule.(39)

Of equal importance were the employers' efforts to circumvent union standards. The expanded use of typesetting machines in newspaper offices in particular expedited this process. Compositors complained that newspapers contracted to do the composition for other publications and avoided paying the prevailing rate. Some, in addition, expressed concern about the payment of bonuses to linotype operators to produce "big strings" (additional proofs of set type) beyond the regular hourly rate. Another practice compositors found irritating was the sharing of matrices (the molds in which type was cast). Newspapers, at the behest of advertising agents, shared the matrices for advertisements, and thereby reduced the need for labor since the copy had only to be set once and not each time it ran in another publication. (40)

The union's response to these practices was varied. It insisted that the payment of bonuses violated the spirit, if not the letter of its scale, and pressed for the cessation of the practice. However, the union did not directly contest the practices of contracting and the sharing of matrices. Instead, it pursued the strict payment of the pay scale, contending that in the case of contracting it lacked jurisdiction, and confidently predicted that the reduction of the workday would curb its growth. As for the sharing of matrices, the union pointed to the observations of **The New York Times** chapel that the quality of reproduced advertising copy was so poor that newspapers found that the practice did not save time or reduce labor costs and that therefore it posed no long-term threat to compositors' jobs.(41)

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In sum, printers were successful within limits in their enforcement of union standards. They were most conscientious and thorough in upholding basic pay rates for piece work and time work, for hand composition and mechanized typesetting and for different kinds of copy. In situations where new management practices and production methods appeared to circumvent the pay scale, #6 showed an ability to resolve the problem in ways that avoided serious confrontation with employers. This sometimes meant that the union yielded to the employers' initiatives in recognition of the constraints on its power at the workplace.

The union tried to distinguish between the temporary expedients and permanent measures introduced by employers. As long as certain practices did not become pervasive and challenge the integrity of the union's pay scale and work rules, #6's leadership could, and did, tolerate them. Furthermore, when market conditions seemed to threaten a firm's survival, the union became even more flexible, not only choosing to ignore the enforcement of particular standards, but also redefining the standards themselves. Competition in the book and job sector in particular led #6 to adjust the pace at which new standards were introduced. In the face of more book and job work being sent to out-of-town firms, #6 had to accept the postponement of implementing a nine hour day until the ITU could confidently introduce the same standard in other nearby states. Otherwise, it was argued, employers from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and elsewhere would gain a competitive advantage, and thereby threaten the job security of New York's book and job compositors. In the newspaper trade a similar process occurred. When #6 and #98 merged in 1896, the enlarged union found that it could not

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simply introduce the same wage rates in Brooklyn as those prevailing in New York, because as New York's major dailies increasingly penetrated the Brooklyn market, Brooklyn's newspapers saw their circulation and access to advertising revenue challenged.(42)

In essence, then, enforcement involved a balancing act between the needs and expectations of the membership and the prosperity of the firm and industry upon which printers' income and job security depended. Complicating matters was the union's responsibility for mediating among the often divergent interests of machine operators and manual compositors, regulars and subs and journeymen and foremen. This, as it has been shown, resulted in different standards regarding pay scales, hours, job security and the distribution of work.

Besides work standards pertaining to pay, hours and job responsibilities, printers maintained certain standards of conduct. Union members were expected to act responsibly and with integrity, perform their duties diligently and skillfully and respect calls for strikes and boycotts. Aspiring members were constitutionally required to furnish proof of their "workmanship" and to provide witnesses testifying to their "sound" character to a select screening committee. Then, if candidates received a positive recommendation, their applications were subject to the approval of the general membership.(43) A disciplinary committee heard cases of members charged with violations of the union's by-laws. Printers whose work was demonstrated to be chronically shoddy could be expelled. Members misrepresenting themselves in their requests for benefits were fined as well as denied aid for a specified period. Even if a member did not technically violate any by-law, he/she was subject to the union's discipline. For example, when it

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was proven that Mary Bartlett, a veteran printer and original member of the Female Typographical Union #1 which merged with #6 in 1874, had "begged" for assistance from print shop proprietors while collecting an out-of-work benefit, she was censured and denied additional aid for three months. (44)

Anti-union behavior, however, received the severest response. Three compositors who failed to honor the union's order to support the eight hour strikes waged by #7 of the German-Typographia in 1886 were designated "rats", and accordingly expelled. Likewise, #98 of the ITU expelled nine members who "ratted" during its strike against **The Brooklyn Times** in 1894. Printers guilty of "backcapping" -- making disparaging remarks about the union and other union members -- if not formally punished, were ostracized by their respective chapels.(45)

Inherent in the union's strictures was a concept of "manliness" which held that union printers recognized their reponsibilities, thought independently and yet showed a willingness to cooperate. This concept was expressed in numerous ways. In an appeal, those who had not joined #6 were told to "do your duty as a man, wage worker and citizen", and asked, "have you ever wondered how it would feel to be a man?".(46) When witnesses verified that an applicant for membership slept at the shop where he worked and received three meals courtesy of his employer, he was considered too "servile" to be accepted into the ranks of #6. Members who thought drinking, cursing and personal attacks were acceptable forms of behavior at union meetings discovered that each could earn the guilty party fines from two to ten dollars, and, probably more telling, rejection by their peers. (47)

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The emphasis on upholding standards, both internally, among union members, and externally, vis-a-vis employers, did not preclude printers from identifying with the labor movement at large. Printers materially supported other workers and unions engaged in strikes. In addition, they joined others in New York's and Brooklyn's labor movement to elect like-minded candidates and to lobby for reform legislation.

Solidarity played a significant role in the strikes organized by printers. The unity of compositors and pressmen in the 1887 conflict with book and job firms resulted in the introduction of a comprehensive union scale covering pay and work rules for both groups. #6's honoring of a boycott of **The Brooklyn Citizen** and financial aid to members of Brooklyn's Typographical Union #98 in 1894 helped to produce a compromise settlement. Sympathy strikes by pressmen and stereotypers pressured Drummond and Company in 1896 to reinstate five compositors discharged for refusing to set intricate matter below union scale. (48)

Solidarity was extended to those outside the printing trades as well. #6's delegates to the Central Labor Union voted for a resolution denouncing the conviction of five leaders of the Carl Sahm Club (a musicians' union affiliated with the Knights of Labor) for "extortion" in the union's boycott of Thiess' saloon and music hall, and reaffirming organized labor's commitment to boycott any establishment selling beer manufactured by George Ehret and Company. At a subsequent general membership meeting in June 1886, the union appropriated $50 towards helping the CLU defray the legal costs of the Thiess boycotters and walking delegates of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners arrested while inspecting building sites for possible contract violations. When members of the Empire Protective Association struck the Third Avenue

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railway in May 1886, the compositors' union endorsed a boycott, publicized the names of members who rode the streetcar, contributed $50 to the strikers and appealed to the chapels for more funds. In later years, union printers financially assisted the United Hebrew Trades' efforts to publish a labor newspaper, loaned money to striking carpet workers in Yonkers, custom tailors and bookbinders in New York, and endorsed the Cigarmakers International Union's label, pledging not to patronize any place selling nonunion cigars.(49)

When the conflict between workers and employers resulted in the state intervening to suppress strikers, #6's membership in particular showed their support for strikers. In July, 1894 typographers passed a resolution supporting Eugene Debs, the American Railway Union and the Pullman boycott, and endorsing a rally called by the CLU to protest Debs' arrest and the use of federal troops to break the strike. The following January participants at a special meeting extended their "moral and financial" support to striking Brooklyn streetcar workers and condemned the "unjust and unwarrantable action of the tyrannical corporations" who sought to make their employees' conditions "little short of serfdom". In their resolution the printers attacked the use of the police and state militia and backed a boycott of the struck streetcar company. In addition, #6 loaned the streetcar men $1,000.(50)

The theme of mutuality was also evident in the political activities of New York's Typographical Union. #6 worked with the CLU and other printing trades unions in pursuit of concrete legislation. In 1887, the union mobilized for a rally launching a drive to abolish convict labor, outlaw Sunday "trading", establish a ten hour day in bakeries and on streetcars, create a state printing office, hire more

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factory inspectors and build parks in the New York's tenement areas. At the rally, John O'Donnell, #6's President, not only stressed the importance of such issues as convict labor and the state printing office, but underscored the need to "invade the alleys and Mulberry bends" with small parks and bathhouses. Later that year, a delegation of representatives from New York's and Brooklyn's typographical unions and the Knights of Labor joined Brooklyn State Senator Thomas McCann, armed with a petition signed by 12,000, to press legislators to pass a bill establishing a state printing office which would be responsible for the production of all official state documents and literature. Despite this effort and others, a Republican controlled State Senate repeatedly defeated the bill.(51)

The printers' campaign to abolish convict labor suffered a similar fate. Provoked by a bill passed in 1889 that sanctioned the use of prisoners to do the typesetting, electrotyping and press work in the reprinting of cheap novels, the New York Typographical Union, along with New York's pressmen's unions and upstate branches of the ITU made the issue a priority. In 1890, the State Legislature, following the lead of New York's and Brooklyn's representatives, enacted a proposal by Brooklyn Senator William McCarren, only to see the Governor veto the measure. Seven years later, despite the formation of the Allied Printing Trades Council of New York State to coordinate the lobbying, printers still could not gain the abolition of convict labor. (52)

Union printers prided themselves on their political commitment and sophistication. Printing tradesmen, especially from New York's Typographical Union, formed a bedrock of workers' support for Henry George's candidacy for Mayor in 1886. Organized into "printers'

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legions", they held rallies and marches, canvassed neighborhoods and served as poll watchers. Throughout the campaign, beginning with the petition movement to convince the author of **Progress and Poverty** to run as an independent labor candidate through election day, no group of workers was more consistent and visible in their participation.(53)

After the United Labor Party, formed in early 1887 to consolidate labor's political forces, fell victim to internecine conflict between socialists and followers of Henry George, printers embraced a bipartisan approach to electoral politics. Both Republican and Democratic candidates, based on their "character, record and disposition", received the New York Typographical Union's endorsement. At times the union showed a tendency to back anti-Tammany Hall Democrats and reform oriented Republicans. A case in point occurred in the 1890 race for District Attorney. Running for Tammany Hall was De Lancey Nicoll, a former Republican, whom **The Union Printer** described as a man whose "training, surroundings and associations are all such to preclude any sympathy with the industrial classes". His opponent, John W. Goff, supported by the County Democrats and the Progressive Municipal League (a bipartisan urban reform organization), in contrast, was seen as a "man of the people" who by his "own efforts raised himself to his present eminent position".(54)

As the Panic of 1893 became a full-blown depression, some printers called for more vigorous political action. **The Union Printer** took the occasion of a visit by John Burns, the British dockworker leader, to stress the wisdom of his maxim: "politics should never be allowed to enter trade unions, but trade unions should immediately enter politics". Accordingly, the New York Typographical Union was urged to form the

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"nucleus" of an organization that would encourage the nomination and election of labor's candidates and articulate labor's issues in the 1896 elections. Nevertheless, the union did not immerse itself in independent labor oriented political campaigns in 1896 nor during the rest of the decade. Instead, in the absence of a viable reform movement and faced with the weakness of the city's Republican organization, New York's Typographical Union did not hesitate to back candidates running on Tammany Hall's ticket. This was especially important if the union wanted to preserve its influence at City Hall and the state legislature.(55)

Amid the declarations of solidarity and commitment to social reform, union speakers and writers promoted a self-image of the printer as the bearer of the values and attributes of the respectable worker-citizen. **The Union Printer**, contrasted the "stalwart, prosperous and intellectual looking" typographers and other craftsmen who marched in the Labor Day parade in September 1890 with their less skilled "east side immigrant brethen".(56) Warrren Browne, the newspaper's editor, described #6 and the ITU as simultaneously "conservative" and "radical":

> We conserve among the masses the principles of fair play, good pay and a free man's workday, and we uphold the principle thou shall earn thee bread by the sweat of thou brow. We are radical in that we aim at justice down to the very roots of social organization and are sure that political and economic justice must come in good time. (57)

Representatives to the annual American Federation of Labor convention in 1895 favorably reported on the absence of "those flamboyant sentences about plutocratic aristocracy and capitalistic bigotry", and their replacement by "carefully prepared statistics and words of honest advice to workingmen". This demonstrated, in their eyes, that labor was "reaching a higher plane" with the help of "conservative men at the helm".(58)

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Strikes were not prominent in the labor activity of printers. Compared to building tradesmen who showed a propensity to strike whenever contractors refused to accede to union demands or abide by union standards, and garment workers who repeatedly struck to gain wage increases or to repel employers' attempts to rescind previously agreed concessions, printers found it less necessary to withdraw their labor to secure improvements in their conditions of employment. In this respect, the record of printers' strike activity was similar to that of cigarmakers. Few of their strikes involved more than one employer or large numbers of workers. Only one strike from 1886 to 1898 could be called industry-wide, and that one -- against book and job employers in 1887 -- covered one branch of the industry and lasted less than two weeks. During the same period, cigarmakers waged two large strikes -- in 1886 and 1890 against tenement house manufacturers -- each lasting more than two months.

While there were fewer strikes among printing tradesmen, they nevertheless were important to the participants. Printers deployed the strike weapon both offensively and defensively. Assuming an offensive position, book and job compositors confronted members of the employers' association, the Typothetae, with demands for a union shop and a graduated pay scale based on the complexity of work. In 1890, compositors struck the Trow Printing Company for an increase in the piece rate for three column work required by the publication of Trow's Business Directory. In 1895, members of the Hebrew Typographical Union #13, affiliated with the International Typographical Union, walked off their jobs to establish that linotype machines be staffed by two compositors, and not one operator, and that they receive $24 a week.(59)

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On other occasions, printers acted to prevent employers from violating union standards. #274 of the German-American Typographia and the ITU sought to stop a proprietor of a German-American newspaper from giving nonunion men preference for vacancies and promotions. In 1891, Brooklyn Typographical Union #98 called a strike against the **Brooklyn Daily Eagle** because the newspaper refused to accept the ITU's six day work rule. When 50 of the strikers were replaced by nonunion compositors, the union launched an unsuccessful seven year boycott that did not end until the union merged with the New York Typographical Union; only in 1905 did the union gain recognition from Brooklyn's leading daily newspaper. In 1894, members of #98 faced an even greater threat when three of Brooklyn's major newspapers found the union's concession of a ten percent cut in pay for six months inadequate. Instead, **The Brooklyn Times, The Brooklyn Citizen** and **The Brooklyn Standard** unilaterally cut compositors pay by fifteen percent for an indefinite period -- an action that prompted #98 to call a strike. In 1896, compositors at J.J. Little and Company struck to enforce the union scale stipulating that fat and lean matter be fairly distributed between time and piece workers. That same year, two other strikes occurred because printers tried to uphold union standards. In one, 78 typesetters at Wynkoop, Hallenbeck and Crawford walked off their jobs in support of proofreaders discharged for refusing to refund overtime pay. In the other, 36 compositors employed at Drummond and Company struck in defense of five co-workers fired for refusing to set intricate copy below union scale.(60)

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Some strikes involved workers who were not direct parties to the original conflict, that is, who did not have immediate grievances or report any issues of contention. For example, in the compositors' conflict with J.J. Little, stereotypers, pressmen and bookbinders — all represented by different unions — waged sympathy strikes. Members from Locals #23 and #51 of the International Printing Pressmen's Union refused to work until the demands of striking compositors at Drummond and Company were met. In 1898, typographers seeking to establish a card office at Globe Printing Company were backed by other printing tradesmen from twenty shops who refused to do the work contracted out by the company.(61)

Printers used other tactics in pursuit of their objectives. When employers were particularly recalcitrant, printers mobilized consumer boycotts. When it was clear that the strike against **The Brooklyn Citizen** would not be resolved quickly, #98 began a boycott that won the backing of the New York Typographical Union and other printing trades unions. To revive a withering strike at the **Irish World,** the New York Typographical Union appealed to its members to "exert every effort" to reduce the paper's circulation. Confronted with the probability that a strike would be ineffective, union typographers organized a boycott of the **New York Tribune,** lasting from 1883 to 1891.(62)

This conflict began when, in December 1883, less than one month after a strike settlement called for the employment of only union men, 64 union compositors were escorted from the premises by police under the orders of Whitlow Reid, the publisher of **The Tribune.** The union launched a newspaper to promote the boycott, **The Boycotter.** Officials from the New York Typographical Union and the ITU urged President Benjamin

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Harrison not to appoint Reid, a long-time, influential leader in the Republican Party, to any federal position, and advised members not to vote for any Republican candidates in presidential and congressional elections. Moreover, when New York's Board of Police Commissioners considered contracting with **The Tribune** to publish a register of voters, the union lobbied with city aldermen to block the arrangement, pledging in the process not to support any politician who approved the awarding of the city's printing contracts to the newspaper, or any other nonunion firm. The union called off the boycott in 1892 when **The Tribune** agreed to place union foremen in charge of the composing room. Two years later both parties negotiated a formal contract. **The Tribune** agreed to hire only members of #6 and honor the union's pay scale. In return the union pledged not to authorize any job action during the length of the agreement without providing **The Tribune** with at least 30 days of prior notification. In the event that chapel members conducted an unauthorized strike, the newspaper and union would cooperate to find replacements for the strikers. (63)

The New York Typographical Union applied a different form of economic pressure on W.B. Keller when that company in 1894 locked out nine women printers for joining the union. Realizing that Keller and Company was nullifying the effect of sympathy strikes by members of the Franklin Association of Pressmen and Press Feeders by farming out work to "cock robin" offices (small nonunion shops scattered in the vicinity of City Hall), the union offered a rebate of five cents per 1000 ems to any of Keller's customers if they had their work done in a union shop. This tactic resulted in a number of periodicals and journals severing their ties with Keller, leading to the firm's bankruptcy. (64)

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Strikes and boycotts by printers had mixed results. In general, the shorter the strike, the broader its base of support and the more vulnerable an employer was to a cessation of production and reduction in sales, the greater the likelihood that a strike would be successful. In 1889, the prompt and comprehensive strike of compositors forced publishers of **The Herald, The Sun, The World, The New York Times** and **The Mail and Express** to retreat from their plans for a reduced scale of wages on the same day they announced them. As a result of the compositors' decisive response, the newspaper publishers agreed to an upgraded pay scale, establishing an eight hour day for linotype operators and weekly minimums of $22 and $24 for day and night workers, respectively.(65)

The length or brevity of a strike often was related to the breadth of support it received. #6's dispute with Drummond and Company lasted only a week largely because of the timely sympathy strikes of pressmen. Consequently, the firm reinstated the five discharged compositors -- the original cause of the strike -- and agreed to make the workplace a union shop. The concerted campaign by book and job compositors in 1887 to gain a union shop and a clearly defined pay scale ended after two and half weeks with them gaining most of their demands, again because of the solidarity of other printing tradesmen.(66)

Broad support for a strike, however, did not guarantee unqualified success for strikers. Despite the participation of printers from a variety of the departments in J.J. Little and Company, typesetters were able to win only their demand that the union's scale for linotype operators be honored, and were forced to accept an arbitrator's ruling against the creation of a union shop and the union's claim that set copy

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was the typesetter's "property". #6's attempt to make the Globe Printing Company a union shop and press the firm to pay at the union scale ended in a truce with striking printers returning to their jobs in a shop that retained nonunion and union compositors. Similarly the strike and boycott of **The Irish World,** lasting three months, ended somewhat inconclusively, as the publisher agreed to hire only union compositors but refused to accept #6's scale of prices in its entirety.(67)

Equally important was the vulnerability of the employer to job actions. The strike against Wynkoop, Hallenbeck and Crawford was successful not simply because every compositor employed by the company stopped working in defense of the discharged proofreaders, but because the employer faced an impending production deadline. In contrast, J.J. Little and the Globe Printing Company were able to withstand the strikes of compositors and other printing tradesmen because they received the backing of the Typothetae, whose members temporarily helped the struck firms fill their customers' orders. During #98's strike against three Brooklyn newspapers the same tactics produced different results. **The Brooklyn Standard-Union,** heavily dependent on typesetting machines, could not readily recruit replacements, and therefore settled with the union in less than a week after the strike began. In contrast, **The Brooklyn Times** held out long enough against a strike and boycott to see more than half of the strikers unconditionally return to work. Between the extremes of a quick victory and protracted defeat, was the experience of **The Brooklyn Citizen.** The effects of a strike and boycott required almost eight weeks to take their toll on the newspaper. In part, because **The Brooklyn Citizen** discovered it could not find experienced linotype operators to replace strikers, further resistance

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at the risk of losing advertising revenue was considered too costly. Consequently, the newspaper reached an agreement with the union. (68)

A closer look at two of the larger and more important strikes illuminates some of these observations regarding the dynamics of worker-employer conflict in the printing industry. The first of these strikes pitted more than 1,500 compositors against approximately 100 book and job printing firms, many of whom were represented by an employers' association called the Typothetae. The New York Typographical Union sought the introduction of a pay scale calling for 43 cents per 1000 ems for standard composition and at least 53 cents per 1000 ems for foreign language work, and the establishment of "card offices" requiring all compositors to be union members and to be paid at union scale. When talks between officials of #6 and the Typothetae, through the auspices of New York's Mediation and Arbitration Board, failed to resolve differences between the two parties, the union ordered a strike on October 11, 1889. (69)

From the beginning the major bone of contention was the union's demand for a card office. Theodore De Vinne, the president of the Typothetae, felt that to "compel compositors to join the union would be unconstitutional and against the law". Edward Glacklin, President of #6, in response cited the precedent of "hundreds" of card offices. As the strike grew, eliciting the participation of pressmen, pressfeeders, stereotypers and electrotypers, over half the firms agreed to an upgraded pay scale, but only a few acceded to the demand for a card office. Complicating matters was an agreement reached between #6 and Henry Harper, the proprietor of Harper's, one of the industry's largest printing and publishing houses. It stipulated that instead of a card

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office, management pledged "not to employ nonunion men without notifying the union". This agreement provoked Burgoyne Quick Print Company, which had accepted the union demand for a "closed" shop, to charge that the union had "cheated" honest employers by "making fish of one and flesh of another".(70)

A week into the strike, hopes for a settlement were raised when the union modified its demand for a card office or closed shop, accepting in its place a pledge by employers to hire union men. Divisions in the ranks of the employers' association, however, ironically forestalled agreement on the proposal. Most of the larger book and job firms "welcomed" the union's revised position as the basis of a compromise, but the "small fry", the name #6 assigned to the small specialty print shops, remained unimpressed. The split in the Typothetae led Theodore De Vinne to contend that the association lacked the authority to act on the issue and threatened to leave matters at a complete impasse.(71)

The deadlock was broken when members of the Typothetae decided to settle as a group if not as an organization. Accordingly, 33 employers, with Theodore De Vinne leading the way, signed a detailed contract setting piece rates for different types of work, a minimum weekly pay rate and apprenticeship rules. In addition, the signatories promised to hire only union compositors from there on provided that #6 recognize that this did not require the discharge of any compositor currently not in the union. For its part, the New York Typographical Union and the other printing trades unions authorized most of their members to return to work, although it was not until two months later that the strike officially was declared over.(72)

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The second conflict involved members of Brooklyn Typographical Union #98 and three newspapers -- **The Brooklyn Times, The Brooklyn Citizen** and **The Brooklyn Standard-Union.** The strike erupted on March 31, 1894 after negotiators from the union and the Publishers' Association failed to reach a settlement on a new pay scale to be effective from April 1. The major obstacles were the publishers' insistence on a piece rate cut of 5 cents per 1000 ems and the printers' relinquishing of all rights to advertisements, tables and "fat" matter in general. Union spokespersons contended that if these demands were granted, compositors' pay would be reduced by as much as 20 percent, and any semblance of control they had over the distribution of work would be eliminated. The union, facing depressed economic conditions, was prepared to accept a 10 percent pay cut for the next six months provided that the employers committed themselves to renegotiate an upgraded scale thereafter. However, the publishers announced an unilateral 15 percent cut in rates to run indefinitely.(73)

The strike escalated quickly. At **The Standard-Union** all 37 compositors left their jobs and were joined by machinists who installed and maintained the linotypes. At **The Brooklyn Citizen** virtually all of the 75 typesetters respected the strike call, and with the exception of one typesetter, every one in the forty-seven member composition office at **The Brooklyn Times** struck. Initially the strikers had the upper hand, as all three newspapers were forced to publish abbreviated issues. During the first week, **The Standard-Union,** whose composition operations were almost completely mechanized, found it difficult to recruit reliable replacements, and consequently reached an agreement with #98, resembling the union's original position. Meanwhile, the other two

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newspapers attempted to outlast the strikers. **The Brooklyn Citizen,** with the help of **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle,** which since 1891 was nonunion, managed to publish regularly. At **The Brooklyn Times,** the return of nine original strikers and the recruitment of new compositors permitted the least mechanized of the three papers to publish.(74)

To overcome the waning of support among the strikers at **The Brooklyn Times** and to combat the resolve of the **The Brooklyn Citizen,** the union organized a boycott. In a circular, the striking printers appealed to businessmen, labor and the general public to appreciate their position: while the costs for rent, fuel and food did not decline, printers faced the prospect of lower incomes and endured the injustice of employers "importing" out-of-town workers to displace Brooklyn residents. Other union printers responded enthusiastically to #98's appeal. The membership of #6 endorsed the boycott and formed a committee to request merchants not to advertise in either newspaper. In addition, the New York Typographical Union voted to support the strikers' application to the ITU for relief, and pending the national union's decision, began a fund raising drive among its chapels. (75)

The effects of this support were dramatic. After eight weeks the strikers' unity remained intact and the circulation of **The Brooklyn Citizen** fell by almost one-third. In June, a breakthrough appeared imminent when John Delmar, who rejected all offers to compromise, resigned as president and was replaced by Thomas Kenna. Union officials confidently predicted that as long as the strikers held out, "**The Citizen** must give in or go out of business". However, it was not until late August, that **The Brooklyn Citizen,** in the wake of growing losses in

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advertising revenue and increased difficulty in finding dependable linotype operators, finally settled with the union. All the strikers were to be rehired and their replacements discharged. Conspicuously absent were any references to the union's pay scale; consideration of this issue was evidently postponed. In short, a stalemate resulted in a strike against **The Brooklyn Citizen.** The union mounted considerable pressure, but the paper was able to publish, albeit shorter editions, with the assistance of the nonunion **Brooklyn Daily Eagle.** Meanwhile, **The Brooklyn Times** had little difficulty overcoming the effects of the withdrawal of labor by union printers. Far less dependent on linotype machines, the newspaper's publishers could recruit local and out-of-town nonunion compositors. Consequently, after an initial period of effective mobilization, the strike lost its momentum as the majority of union members unconditionally returned to their jobs. (76)

As union printers approached the turn of the century, they had consolidated their position in the industry despite experiencing a few setbacks along the way. The New York Typographical Union, by 1897, had established "card offices" in about 150 newspapers and book and job firms who agreed to pay the union scale of wages and to hire exclusively union members. #6 claimed 5,000 members, an increase of 2,000 since 1891, and represented the flagship of the International Typographical Union. Less dramatic was the experience of the #7 of the German-American Typographia. Its union scale was observed in eight shops, the same as in 1886, and its membership held at 300. Its most significant achievement during the 1890's was the restoration of the pay sacrificed to attain an eight hour day in 1886.(77)

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Brooklyn's Typographical Union #98, in contrast, was less fortunate. A year after its bitter and protracted conflict with three of the city's largest daily newspapers, the union reported less than 100 members in good standing. In only two of Brooklyn's newspapers did the union maintain a presence, and even at that its pay scale remained lower than #6's and often went unenforced. These conditions prompted #98 and #6 to merge in 1896, and laid the foundation of the growth of the union in Brooklyn's printing industry. By 1899, a new scale set compositors' weekly rate at between $22 and $23, raised overtime rates for day and night workers and prohibited the introduction of additional apprentices. Nevertheless, the conditions of employment of Brooklyn's printers compared unfavorably with those of their New York counterparts, in part because the newly merged New York Typographical Union felt that an indiscriminate application of the scale prevailing in New York City would hurt Brooklyn's newspaper proprietors who were suffering from a drop in advertising revenue.(78) In sum, Brooklyn's Typographical Union did not fully recover from its poorly timed strike in 1894, and its efforts to improve compositors' conditions of employment were hampered by the fragile economic state of some newspapers which faced a struggle for survival between 1894 and 1898.

Between 1886 and 1898, New York's book and job compositors made the greatest strides. In 1887 they established the first comprehensive scale of wages and work rules and in 1891 won additional pay concessions. During the next four years wage rates remained steady despite the onset of a depression. These gains and others were made possible by the growing strength of #6 as a whole, and the ability of book and job compositors to make their demands the union's priority. In

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1895, they organized a chapter within #6 which provided the impetus to improve pay rates and reduce hours. The book and job chapter formed a committee to educate the membership on the need and feasibility of a nine hour day. Discussions at membership meetings centered on possible strategies to achieve this goal. Some cited the examples of the German-American Typographia and the British engineers' union, who temporarily gave up one hour of wages to secure a reduction in the workday and soon after introduced an upgraded pay scale. Others urged the vigorous promotion of the union label. One strategy, inspired by the experience of the London Society of Compositors, involved the deployment of a full-time organizer, or walking delegate, whose task it was to convince publishers of magazines and journals, merchants and government agencies not to have their work printed at "open" or nonunion offices. Another stressed citing the advantages of union labor to open shop proprietors and suggested soliciting the testimony of employers from card offices. (79)

The same year the book and job chapter was formed, the New York Typographical Union adopted two of its proposals, authorizing the president to appoint a walking delegate and endorsing the union label promoted by the recently established Allied Printing Trades Council. New York's book and job printers also received a boost from the intervention of the ITU, which for most of the decade had played a minor role in the efforts of locals to upgrade standards. In 1897, however, the national union adopted a uniform workday in book and job printing as official policy, and endorsed #6's declaration that the nine hour day would become effective January 1, 1898. #6 created a shorter workday committee and enpowered it to order a strike if negotiations with employers were

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unsuccessful. The committee distributed a circular written by Henry Cherouny, a member of the Typothetae, the book and job employers' association, which argued that the productivity of printers had increased with a reduction of the workday.

Printers supplemented this appeal to reason with firmness. Employers were given until December 19, 1897 (only two days) to accept the union's demands or face a strike. A day after the deadline, the major book and job firms, representing almost 90 percent of the industry, agreed to a nine and half hour day from Monday through Friday and a nine hour day on Saturday at $18 a week. Furthermore, the agreement stipulated that when the ITU decided the time was appropriate for the introduction of a nine hour day in the "competitive" district covering Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, it would take effect in New York and Brooklyn as well.(80)

The contract between the New York Typographical Union and book and job employers typified the growing ability of union printers to establish and enforce standards pertaining to pay, hours and work rules. Unlike 1887, when a strike by 1500 compositors and other printing tradesmen was required to wrest concessions from employers, in 1897 gains were made rather painlessly.

The contrast symbolized the maturation of the movement to organize printers into unions. Competition among rival unions representing pressmen and stereotypers had been curtailed if not eliminated. As exemplified by the Allied Printing Trades Council's efforts to gain passage of a convict labor bill and other measures in the state legislature and promotion of a joint union label, cooperation between union compositors and other printing tradesmen became more

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common. By not emphasizing strikes and boycotts union printers avoided alienating the public at large and provoking employers to challenge the existence of unions in the industry. Because of their adaptibility to economic adversity and technological change, printing trades' unions won the loyalty of their members as well as the respect of employers. Job security measures, pay rates recognizing the different demands on the skills of printers, and provisions for an equitable distribution of work offered union printers some influence over their conditions of employment. Rules covering hiring, promotions, dismissal and apprentices curbed the potentially arbitrary power of foremen and office managers. Union standards of conduct, aiming to discourage "backcapping" and "ratting", reflected the sensitivity to the weaknesses and strengths of individual workers, and thereby helped to develop a cohesive group self-image. Mutual aid, such as sickness, death and out-of-work benefits, a pension plan and the maintenance of a retirees' home, demonstrated that union printers took care of their own in times of need.

In short, compositors and pressmen helped to give new meaning to the term "organized labor" by developing a cooperative unionism which took steps to forge an effective unity among printers while recognizing the individuality of each craft. In the process, they built a movement employers simultaneously could not afford to take lightly, but need not fear, and one that prepared workers for the challenges of economic change and offered them respectability in a society often unfriendly to unions.

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FOOTNOTES

1. **The Union Printer,** June 16, 1894 and September 26, 1896; **A History of the 100 Years of Unions on the Tribune** (New York, 1941), p. 12; and New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Sixteenth Annual Report** (1898), p. 868.

2. **The Boycotter,** October 9, 1886; **The Union Printer,** January 8, 1887; and **A History of the 100 Years of Unions on the New York Tribune,** pp. 11 and 12.

3. George Stevens, **New York Typographical Union #6: A Study of a Modern Trade Union and Its Predecessors** (Albany: New York State Department of Labor, 1913), pp. 536-540; and **The Boycotter,** May 1, 1886.

4. Hugo Miller, **Zu Schutz and Trutz! 25 Jahrige Geschite der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Typographia** (Indianapolis, 1898), pp. 31-35; and Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 231 and 232.

5. Stevens, pp. 205-206, 261-264, 472-477, 497-498, 500, 504-505 and 533-534; and **The Union Printer,** December 1886.

6. New York Typographical Union #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** September 6, 1885 and August 18, 1886; **The Boycotter,** October 9, 1886; **The Union Printer,** January 8, 1887; and **The Leader,** October 5, 1887.

7. Elizabeth F. Baker, **Printers and Technology: A History of the Printing Pressmen and Assistants Union** (New York: Columbia University, 1959), pp.70-72 and 155-159.

8. Stevens, pp. 556-558; **A History Of the 100 Years of a Union on the New York Tribune,** p. 12; and **The Leader,** October 11 and 17, 1887.

9. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** June 3, 1888; and Miller, p. 35.

10. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** September 6, 1890; Miller, pp. 37 and 38; and Stevens, pp. 551-552.

11. Stevens, pp. 552-555; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** December 7, 1890.

12. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** June 1, 1890; Stevens, pp. 512-514; and **The Union Printer,** August 1, 1894.

13. Baker, pp. 157-159.

14. New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **First Annual Report** (1887), pp. 290-296; and Stevens, pp. 387-392.

15. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** April 17, 1887; Stevens, pp. 316-317; and Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), p. 239.

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16. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, September 4, 1887.

17. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, August 28, 1887, September 4, 1887 and March 7, 1891; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **First Annual Report** (1887), pp.292 and 293.

18. **The Union Printer**, September 6, 1890; Stevens, pp. 326-330; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, October 5, 1890.

19. **The Union Printer**, September 9, 1893, January 20, 1894, February 3, 1894, and November 14, 1896.

20. #6, **Minutes of Board of Delegates Meeting**, August 15, 1886 and January 22, 1887; and **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, December 3, 1893 and April 1, 1894.

21. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, March 7, 1891, February 3, 1895, May 3, 1896 and April 11, 1897.

22. **The Union Printer**, May 2, 1896, Edith Abbott, **Women in Industry** (New York: D. Appleton, 1909), pp. 256-258; George Barnett, "Collective Bargaining in the Typographical Union," Jacob Hollander and George Barnett eds., **Studies in American Trade Unionism** (New York: Arno Press, [1906] 1969), pp. 11-14; and George Barnett, "The Linotype," John R. Commons, ed., **Trade Unionism and Labor Problems** (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1905), pp. 268-269.

23. United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Special Bulletin**, Number 475, (Washington, D.C, 1929), p. 8 and Robert Max Jackson, **The Formation of Craft Labor Markets** (New York: Academic Press, 1984), pp. 174 and 175.

24. **The Union Printer**, December 4, 1886, February 26, 1890, May 16 and 25, 1896; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, October 5, 1890.

25. Stevens, pp. 371-375; #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, April 17, 1886; and **Minutes of Board of Delegates Meeting**, May 2, 1886.

26. **The Union Printer**, July 29, 1893, September 15, 1894.

27. **Ibid**, April, 21, 1894, September 22, 1894, October 6, 1894 and April 13, 1895; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, February 2, 1890.

28. **The Union Printer**, April 13, 1895; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, October 1896.

29. **The Union Printer**, May 12, 1894.

30. **Ibid**, December 26, 1896; Stevens, p. 481; and George Barnett, "The Printers: A Study of American Trade Unionism," **American Economic Association Quarterly**, 10 (1909), 221-225.

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31. **The Union Printer**, September 16, 1893, May 18, 1895 and July 11, 1896.

32. **Ibid**, August 25, 1894 and May 18, 1895; #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, May 6, 1894 and June 3, 1894; January 18, 1895, April 5, 1895 and August 4, 1895; April 5, 1896; and Stevens, pp. 478-479.

33. **The Union Printer**, January 18, 1896 and July 11, 1896; #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, September 2, 1894; and Stevens, pp. 481 and 484-486.

34. **The Union Printer**, January 13, 1894, January 20, 1894 and December 22, 1894; #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, January 6, 1895, May 12, 1895, and January 3, 1897; and Stevens, pp. 338-339.

35. **The Union Printer**, August 26, 1893; and Arthur Porter Jr., **Job Property Rights: A Study of Job Controls of the International Typographical Union** (New York: King's Crown Press, 1954), pp. 17-19.

36. #6, **Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, passim**, 1886; and Stevens, pp. 314 and 315.

37. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, January 6 and 13, 1889; and **passim**, March through December, 1894.

38. **The Union Printer**, November 7, 1896; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, September 5, 1897 and November 7, 1897, and November 13, 1898.

39. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, July 2 and 19, 1891, September 5, 1891, and January 3 and 10, 1897.

40. **The Union Printer**, October 7, 1893.

41. **Ibid**, May 16 and 23, 1896.

42. **Ibid**, March 23, 1895; #6, **Minutes of General Membership Meeting**, November 3, 1898; Stevens, p. 541; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Twelfth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 163 and 164.

43. #6 New York Typograhical Union, **Constitution and By-Laws**, 1886, 1888 and 1896.

44. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, August 2, 1891, March 3, 1895 and May 5, 1895.

45. #6, **Minutes of Executive Committee**, November 11, 1886; and **The Union Printer**, 1894, **passim**, especially November 2, 1895.

46. **The Union Printer**, August 9, 1890.

47. **Ibid**, March 7, 1896; and #6, **Constitution and By-Laws**, 1888 and 1896.

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48. **New York Sun**, October 11, 1887, Stevens, pp. 317-319; Mediation and Arbitration Board, **First Annual Report** (1887) pp. 288-291 and **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 240-243; #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, April 1, 1894; and **The Union Printer**, August 22 and 29, 1896.

49. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, May 2, May 9, June 4 and July 6, 1886, March 4, 1888, February 3, 1889, February 4, and August 5, 1894, September 1, and November 30, 1895, and September 5, 1896; and **The Boycotter**, May 15 and July 10, 1886.

50. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, July 8, 1894 and January 27, 1895; and **The Union Printer**, February 2, 1895.

51. **The Union Printer**, March 26, and May 7, 1887 and March 26, 1891; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, March 4 and April 1, 1888.

52. **The Union Printer**, March 1, 1890; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, April 5, and May 1, 1890, April 5, 1891 and February 7, March 7 and July 4, 1897.

53. **The Boycotter**, July 31, October 2, October 9, and November 6, 1886; **The New York Star**, September 26, 1886: **The New York World**, October 24, 1886; and **The Union Printer**, June 11, 1887.

54. **The Union Printer**, October 25, 1890.

55. **Ibid**, January 20, June 30 and December 8, 1894, and April 6, April 20, May 18, and November 2, 1895.

56. **The Union Printer**, September 6, 1890.

57. **Ibid**, December 7, 1895.

58. **Ibid**, December 14, 1895.

59. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 286-288; and **Ninth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 192 and 193.

60. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fifth Annual Report** (1891), pp. 398 and 399; **Sixth Annual Report** (1892), pp. 125 and 126; Stevens, pp. 405 and 406; **The Union Printer**, February 29, April 25, and August 22, 1896.

61. **The Union Printer**, May 2, 1896 and August 29, 1896; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 165 and 166.

62. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 246-248, and **Tenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 190-192; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, October 6, 1895.

63. **The Boycotter**, February 20, 1886; Stevens, pp. 387-392 and 395-396; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, August 2, 1890 and November 1, 1891.

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64. **The Union Printer,** August 18, August 25, September 1, September 15, and September 29, 1894; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** September 2, 1894.

65. Mediation and Aribtration Board, **Third Annual Report** (1889), pp. 281 and 282; **The Tribune,** July 23, 1889; and Stevens, pp. 323-326.

66. Stevens, pp. 318-321; and **The Union Printer,** August 29, 1896.

67. **The Union Printer,** July 18, 1896; Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Eleventh Annual Report** (1896), pp. 458-461 and **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1898), p. 166; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** October 6, 1895.

68. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 240-243; and **The Union Printer,** February 29, 1896.

69. Stevens, pp. 316-318; and **The Sun,** October 11, 1887.

70. **The New York Herald,** October 11, 1887; and **The Sun,** October 12, 1887.

71. **The New York Herald,** October 18 and 19, 1887; Charlotte Morgan, **The Origin and the History of the New York Employing Printers' Association** (New York: Columbia University, 1930) pp. 80 and 81.

72. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **First Annual Report** (1887), pp. 290-291.

73. Ibid, **Ninth Annual Report** (1894), p. 240; **The New York Tribune,** April 1, 1894; and **The Union Printer,** April 7, 1894.

74. **The Union Printer,** April 7, 1894.

75. **Ibid,** April 21 and June 9, 1894; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** April 1 and June 3, 1894.

76. **The Union Printer,** June 9, June 16, June 23, July 14, and August 25, 1894; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1894), p. 243.

77. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** November 1, 1891; **The Union Printer,** February 2, 1895, July 4, 1896; and New York Typographical Union #6 and Typographia #7, **List of Offices Paying The Scale.**

78. **The Union Printer,** June 1, 1895; #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting,** December 4, 1898; #6, **Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting,** November 3, 1898; and Stevens, p. 541.

79. **The Union Printer,** March 30, 1895 and June 22, 1895.

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80. **Ibid**, March 23, April 20 and May 11, 1895; George Barnett, "Collective Bargaining in the Typographical Union," Jacob Hollander and George Barnett, eds., pp. 162-172; #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, December 12 and December 17, 1897; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Twelfth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 163 and 164.

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CHAPTER TEN — THE WORLD OF WORK OF BUILDING TRADESMEN

Building tradesmen labored in an industry filled with anomalies. Probably no other industry reflected more clearly the economic expansion and growth of cities during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. No other industry mirrored the health of the overall economy more than the building trades. Few demonstrated the application of the principles of science more dramatically than the builders of suspension bridges and skyscrapers. Yet few industries deviated more from the patterns of late nineteenth century industrialization. Firms, as indicated by the number of workers and capital reserves, remained extremely small. Competition, despite the buffering impact of specialization, remained brisk. The industry was labor intensive and highly dependent on the skills of workers who, in the main, used hand tools and not machinery. Concomitantly, building tradesmen maintained their status as craftsmen: they enjoyed autonomy in their work and claimed higher pay, shorter workdays and more job security than most manual workers. In addition, during a period when the workforces of many industries consisted of women and immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, the building trades remained a male preserve and an occupational magnet for immigrants from Germany, Ireland and Great Britain and their native-born sons.

The relationship between urban development and the building trades industry was most evident in New York and Brooklyn. As the population of both cities grew from 1.8 million in 1880 to 3.4 million in 1900, the construction of residential and nonresidential buildings, as measured by the number of permits and their market value, rose steadily.(1) The

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process of urbanization in turn stimulated commerce and manufacturing, increased the demand for services required by industry and encouraged cultural and recreational activity. These found their physical expression in the construction of buildings: factories, warehouses, stores and banks necessary for the production and selling of goods; tenement houses for the recently arrived immigrants who made up the bulk of the industrial workforce, single dwelling private homes for the families of skilled workers and the middle class, schools for working class and middle class children; and churches, theatres, opera houses, dance halls and amusement parks to satisfy the residents' cultural needs.

The building trades were also a vital cog to New York's and Brooklyn's economy. As it thrived, so did the lumber mills, foundries and the factories that produced bricks, paints and glass; if it slumped the repercussions were felt by the manufacturers of both building material and equipment. The building trades industry possessed forward as well as backward linkages. A vigorous period of construction meant that businesses planned to expand their operations; individuals, banking on higher property values, were prepared to invest; and local authorities, anticipating higher tax revenues accompanying prosperity, sought to improve the city's infrastructure and develop its urban landscape. Conversely, a period of stagnation indicated that businesses found markets glutted and credit tighter, potential speculators were scared off by declining property values and government had fewer funds to spend. Accordingly, upswings and downswings of the construction industry suggested parallel changes in the business cycle. One study showed that during the rising phases of long building cycles covering

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on the average ten years, there were five times as many periods when the economy expanded rather than contracted, and during falling phases of the cycles, three times as many periods when the economy contracted rather than expanded.(2)

During the late Gilded Age, when New York's and Brooklyn's building trades industry flourished, the dominant characteristics of the industry became more pronounced. The number of employers and workers in the five major trades (carpentry, plumbing, painting, plastering and masonry) grew by more than one-third (from 66,000 to 90,000) between 1890 and 1900. Firms remained small, employing on the average (with the exception of those in masonry) fewer than 10 workers.(3) Only two firms involved in the building trades, the Jackson Architectural Iron Works and the Pelham Hod-Hoisting Company, commanded sufficient assets to warrant evaluation by R.G. Dun and Company, and both held capital reserves of less than $100,000.(4) The industry, within each trade, continued to be specialized. Contractors responsible for the carpentry work in a building tended to specialize in the laying of floors, the building of stairs, or the installation of windows and doors. Likewise, masonry firms concentrated on the setting of foundations, the construction of chimneys, or the making of cornices.(5) This specialization attenuated, to a certain extent, the intensity of competition suggested by the number of firms, since few employers directly competed with each other unless they specialized in the same type of work. Specialization in the trades, as well as low capital requirements, facilitated easy entry into the industry and inhibited any one or a handful of employers from capturing a dominant market position.

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Despite its growth, the building trades was an industry which invested proportionately few of its resources in fixed capital (land, physical plant, equipment and tools). In addition, for most of the specific trades, expenditures on labor equaled if not surpassed all outlays on capital. Expenditures on fixed capital constituted 1/3 of all capital investment in 1890 and 1900, and outlays on equipment and tools as a percentage of capital investment remained low, declining from 13 percent in 1890 to 12 percent in 1900.(6) As a result, the modest increase in the ratio between capital and labor outlays during the same period was attributable to greater expenditures on building material and not on new technology, nor for that matter on expanded facilities. Even the comparatively high capital-labor ratio in carpentry confirms this generalization. Fixed capital outlays constituted slightly less than forty percent of all capital investment, although in the "inside" carpentry shops specializing in prefabricated products, machinery was becoming a more important factor in production. This suggests that spending on material and supplies was the major cost item for both inside and outside carpentry firms. Only in masonry, which showed a dramatic rise in the capital-labor ratio, was an increase in expenditures on equipment and tools a significant factor. For example, during the 1890's pneumatic caissons and excavating machines among other machinery were being introduced into the masonry trade (See Table I.).

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Table I. The Ratio between Expenditures on Capital and Labor and the Ratio between Expenditures on Equipment and Tools and Labor (1890 and 1900) in New York's and Brooklyn's Building Trades Industry

	Capital\Labor*		Equipment-Tools\Labor	
	1890	1900	1890	1900
Carpentry	1.15	1.15	.13	.13
Painting	.59	.59	.09	.09
Plastering	.50	.74	.11	.14
Plumbing	.79	1.03	.10	.12
Masonry	.63	1.41	.07	.14
All Five	.84	1.04	.10	.12

* Explanatory Note. Figures should be read in the following manner: For every dollar spent on labor (wages) a certain amount was invested in capital. For example, in the carpentry trade in 1890 and 1900 $1.15 was spent on capital for every $1.00 spent on wages.
(Calculated from U.S. Eleventh Census (1890), **Manufacturing in the Cities,** pp. 88-97 and 394-407; and Twelfth Census (1900), Volume 8, Part 2, **Statistics on Manufactures,** pp. 620-628.)

The significance of labor as a factor in production, the movement towards specialization and the specific market structure of the industry had far-reaching implications for employers and workers alike. Outlays for labor among the various construction costs (raw materials, equipment, credit and taxes) rose in the 1880's and 1890's. Between 1886 and 1894 the tax rate on new buildings in New York City fell 22 percent and the price of building materials declined almost 10 percent. Meanwhile, wage rates increased by 25 percent from 1886 to 1892 and held steady even with the onset of the Panic of 1893 and ensuing depression the following year. This trend continued throughout the 1890's. One contemporary observer estimated that labor costs in the construction of residential housing climbed by more than 30 percent between 1890 and 1900.(7)

Employers lacked the prerequisite comprehensive technological innovation to permit the subdivision of the production process, the substitution of machinery for labor and the reduction of per unit costs. Consequently, they developed other strategies to meet the challenge of

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escalating wage bills. Instead, they sought to gain control over the hiring, firing and training of workers and to prevent building tradesmen from restricting output. When strong enough, employers tried to escape the reach of unions, and failing that, tried to circumvent union standards concerning pay, hours, apprentices and work rules. Employers' attempts to gain a measure of control over the workplace provoked strikes by building tradesmen, some of which involved members of other trades besides those who initially began the strike.

Employers in the 1870's and 1880's also gradually developed a new means of allocating labor and organizing production called subcontracting. Subcontracting worked as follows: a manufacturer interested in opening a factory, a city council authorizing the construction of schools, or a developer investing in the building of residential housing came to terms with a building contractor who agreed to complete the project with all its specifications in a given period of time and at a specific price. Contractors then had the task of finding the labor to do the job. Middlemen, sometimes operators of a plumbing or carpentry firm, but usually outright agents of the contractor, supplied the labor requested by the contractor within the cost stipulated by the contractor's agreement with his client. In general, contractors provided subcontractors with the necessary building material, although in plumbing this responsibility was left to subcontractors who knew much more than general contractors about the specific types of pipes, washers, nuts, bolts and miscellaneous paraphernalia of the trade. In short, the subcontractor's ability to furnish dependable building tradesmen at an acceptable price secured his relationship with the contractor.(3) This system was advantageous to employers because it

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lowered their financial risks, simplified the responsibilities of overseeing production and managing the workforce, and promoted the supply of skilled labor, trained and experienced in a specialized branch of the building trades.

Subcontracting reinforced specialization and the local and competitive market structure of the industry. Above all, subcontracting contributed to the prevalence of small firms and promoted relatively easy entry into a market stressing short-term, flexible relationships between builders and clients, and between employers and workers. Since capital requirements were low and many building tradesmen owned their own tools, the subcontractors' primary responsibility was supplying an adequate and reliable supply of labor. Consequently, subcontracting tended to slow down the development of employers' associations and the perception of common interests upon which the former were based. Moreover, they hindered employers and unions from reaching agreement on conditions of employment and creating mechanisms to resolve differences without resorting to strikes or lockouts.

Until the late 1880's most employers' associations were restricted to a specific locality and to a specific trade. In addition, they were ad hoc organizations, formed in the heat of battle with striking and boycotting building tradesmen. In 1886, New York's contractors, dissatisfied with the informal sharing of information on the sources of labor and material available through the Builders' Exchange, organized a conference to promote cooperation among employers across the building trades. The following year, they sent representatives to Chicago where the National Association of Builders was founded. Yet the process of cooperation developed slowly. In most employers' associations membership

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remained voluntary until the late 1890's. More significantly, in New York and Brooklyn, despite the interdependency of certain trades in the production process, employers hesitated at forging links. Contractors in carpentry kept their distance from master framers who organized their own association, and the employers of plumbers and steamfitters formed their own groups, although their employees worked side by side performing related tasks.(9)

In the 1880's and 1890's two factors accelerated the formation of more cohesive and active employers' associations. The first (which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter) was the aggressiveness of building tradesmen in unionizing to improve their conditions of employment. From 1890 to 1892 in particular, this aggressiveness resulted in a wave of sympathy strikes, some of which tied up construction of New York's and Brooklyn's largest buildings. The second concerned the introduction of new building materials, the development of creative engineering techniques and the deployment of machinery in parts of the production process. These all helped to standardize construction methods and technology, thereby increasing the incentive for employers to pool their resources.

By 1898, the building trades had experienced a number of innovations that changed the nature of construction work. In brief, iron and steel were increasingly being used at the expense of wood, and electric power was being deployed in ways that allowed for the erection of taller and larger buildings. In the late 1880's, structural iron and steel, made more accessible by the Bessemer process, replaced cast iron and wood for building frames. In 1885, a technique developed by E.L. Ransome permitted the insertion of twisted steel bars to reinforce

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concrete so that the cement based concrete used in foundations could withstand more tension. The laying of foundations was also facilitated by the invention of the pneumatic caisson. Using compressed air, it allowed brick to be substituted for concrete in the laying of foundations for piers and bridges. The pneumatic caisson passed its first test in the construction of the twenty story Manhattan Life Insurance building in 1893.(10)

The application of motive-power also was important. Steam powered shovels and excavating machines expedited the clearing of ground, a prerequisite for all construction. Hod-hoisting machines and cranes first introduced in the 1890's allowed engineers to lift heavy iron and steel beams, bulky stones and all sorts of material used by building tradesmen. These complemented the development of elevators: a steam driven model invented by W.B. Baxter, Jr. in 1887 and a electric powered version, devised by E.P. Otis in 1889 which inspired the construction of "elevator" buildings and later, at the turn of the century, "skyscrapers".(11)

Other forms of technology were applied to specific types of work. Inventions such as the brick cleaner, paint spray gun and floor finishing machine simplified the tasks of building tradesmen and increased their productivity. Others, particularly in the "inside" branch of the carpentry trade, involved the use of highly adaptable saws to produce prefabricated doors, closets and windows, and left "outside" carpenters with the responsibility of installation.(12)

The impact of both subcontracting and technological innovation on building tradesmen, however, was uneven. Plumbers, plasterers and bricklayers/masons apparently were not adversely affected by the growth

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of subcontracting. "Respectable bosses" paid at rates conforming with union standards. Only among the masonry laborers was a concern expressed about those who built for "speculators by paying as little as they can".(13) In contrast, carpenters and painters found their trade plagued by those who specialized in recruiting the cheapest available labor for contractors. Union carpenters in particular found this practice, commonly called "lumping" (because middlemen assumed the responsiblity of fulfilling orders for carpentry and in turn sublet the work), objectionable.

"Lumping" resulted in lower pay rates, greater work loads, a higher incidence of injuries, dilution of skills and shoddy work. Because the "lumper", or subcontractor, secured his business by underbidding his competitors, carpenters in his employ faced the pressure of piece work and speedups. Carpenters working by the piece earned 20 cents for fitting and hanging a pair of sash, and 25 cents for hanging a door. A carpenter performing such tasks in a six room house could expect to earn no more than $15 for 60 hours of labor.(14)

"Lumping" received bitter criticism for its threat to the status of full-fledged journeymen carpenters. **The Carpenter**, the official journal of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, charged that "skilled mechanics" were being transformed into "hatchet and screwmen" by those who knew nothing about designing blueprints, making calculations, or skillfully handling a tool, but instead specialized in "sweating with a vengeance". **The Carpenter** took the occasion of the collapse of a building at 1087 Madison Avenue in New York to stress the shoddy work lumping promoted. Citing testimony given at the trial by architects, the paper's editor held that "poorly fitted doors, creaky

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boards and floors, poor joints and open mitres" were inevitable results of a system that valued speed and the reduction of labor costs above quality work.(15)

What irritated union carpenters most was the threat lumping posed to the integrity of their craft. Those employed by subcontractors were expected to carry their own material (customarily laborers or hod-carriers did so), and make their own "mitre" boxes (these contained bevel-shaped blocks of wood and facilitated the planing of surfaces) at their own expense and on their own time. Consequently, the carpenter as craftsman faced the prospect of "losing his independent principle, his mental energy, self-respect and even his very manhood". (16)

The introduction of new equipment, construction methods and building material likewise had mixed effects. Such innovations made the work of hod-hoisting engineers, responsible for the lifting of material, and structural iron workers and housesmiths, whose tasks included the building of architectural frames and arches, more critical in the production process. The development of creative ways to use tile, cement, brick, marble and other building materials stimulated the need for tile layers, masons and varnishers among others. A greater capacity to erect more elaborate structures and the enactment of building codes sensitive to public health requirements stimulated a demand for more plumbers and laborers assisting them. This was reflected in a 47 percent increase in the number of plumbing firms and a 57 percent increase in the number of plumbers between 1890 and 1900. For carpenters, technological change, especially the introduction of machine produced prefabricated wooden parts, meant a decline in the need for all-purpose craftsmen and an increase in the demand for specialized workers such as

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millwrights, shinglers and ceiling workers. Nevertheless, between 1890 and 1900 the number of "on site" carpenters rose by 28 percent. In contrast, the number of woodworkers producing doors, sashes, blinds, frames and other goods fell by 31 percent; at the same time the number of woodworking firms and the sales value of their products increased. This development reflected the technological displacement resulting from the introduction of sanders, which could smooth the equivalent amount of wood as twelve manual workers, and compound carvers, which were able to cut as many exact reproductions as done by thirty-six woodworkers using hand saws. (17)

The absolute growth in the number of carpenters, however, could not overcome the fact that the rate of increase was relatively lower than other building trades. In 1894, Peter McGuire, the General Secretary of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, saw a direct relationship in the introduction of new building material and products and the position of carpenters(18):

> With the introduction of iron and steel frames in the larger buildings, with iron and stone staircases, tile floors, tile or metal wainscoting, with cornices and bay windows in many cases of material other than wood and with numerous changes going on, the chances of steady employment of carpenters is extremely uncertain.

The impact of technological innovation was uneven as well. For example, it did not result in a change in the composition of the building trades' workforce. As in 1890, the majority of building tradesmen were foreign-born, with more than 80 percent immigrants or their native-born sons. Both the Irish and Germans maintained their position in the workforce, each representing about a 1/4 of all carpenters, painters, plasterers, plumbers and masons/bricklayers. First and second generation Irish represented a plurality of plasterers,

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plumbers and masons, while German immigrants and their native-born sons were prominent among painters and carpenters. During the 1890's recently arrived immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe began to enter the building trades, albeit very selectively. For example, only among masons/bricklayers did Italians constitute a significant proportion (approximately 1/5) of the skilled workforce. In the main, Italian building tradesmen were hod-carriers or common laborers who carried the tools and material, or otherwise performed the tasks assigned to them by their skilled counterparts. Russian Jewish immigrants were almost entirely missing from the ranks of building tradesmen with the exception of painters of which they represented almost 10 percent.(19)

Yet, despite their relatively low numbers and clear segregation in the workforce, unionized building tradesmen, drawn from the ranks of the more established "older" immigrants, perceived the "newer" immigrants as a threat. Representatives from two locals of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners singled out "saw and hammer" men from Sweden and Poland for criticism because they worked for as low as 50 cents a day. David Callanan, President of the Amalgamated Painters and Decorators of New York, charged that Italians and "Polish" Jews were taking work away from union painters: "we have lost all the work done east of Third Avenue from the Battery to the Harlem River." John McGonigle, Secretary of the Bricklayers' and Masons' International Union #30 in Brooklyn, contended that Italians who began as laborers "got to the wall" by replacing men serving four year apprenticeships.(20)

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These threats -- both perceived and real -- to the job security of some building tradesmen, however, were not attributable to any technologically induced "degradation" of work. In the case of carpenters and painters, subcontracting was in part responsible for the hiring of nonunion men with minimal training to perform some of the more routine tasks of the trade. The growing specialization in carpentry discussed earlier also facilitated the use of workers who knew nothing else but how to put on a door, or hang sash. Among bricklayers and masons, there is little evidence that nonunion Italian workers were replacing union men on New York's and Brooklyn's major construction projects such as office buildings, hotels, or public edifices. Their employment as nonunion workers sprung not from "lumping", or subcontracting, nor for that matter from any intrinsic characteristic of the trade. More pertinent was the contractors' growing demand for labor, especially in renovation, which the unions had difficulty in supplying. In addition, the high initiation fees and dues of the Bricklayers' and Masons' International Union effectively excluded from union membership recently arrived immigrants seeking to enter the trade and instead encouraged them, as in the case of Italians, to organize their own mutual aid societies and unions.

Placed in their proper context, the problems associated with the entry of recently arrived immigrants into the building trades becomes clearer. Although job competition from the use of Italian and Russian Jewish workers did not appear an issue in large construction sites, on smaller sites, especially in renovation and repair work, the employment of recently arrived immigrants crowded the job market. Consequently, experienced building tradesmen looking for work between job assignments

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often found these alternative sources of employment less accessible. A more common problem, recognized by officials from New York Locals #7 and #34 of the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union, was the migration of "birds of passage" from Great Britain who arrived in the spring and returned to their homeland in the fall, and, because of their temporary status, were willing to take jobs with employers not observing union standards. Similarly, the availability of a pool of workers unfamiliar with the prevailing wage rates strengthened the hand of "lumpers" who paid carpenters a flat rate for completing specificed tasks, and thereby made it more difficult for the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the Amalgamated Society to introduce uniform pay scales.(21)

Although technological innovation did change how building tradesmen worked, it did not erode their status as craftsmen. They worked with hand tools that required the utmost training, experience and skill to master. As craftsmen they applied the principles of science and mechanics to construct buildings that were durable and sound. They demonstrated a practical knowledge of equipment and material, including knowing what tools and supplies to use in given situations, and how to improvise when parts and material were lacking. Their responsibilities demanded that they take exact measurements and perform their work with precision-like accuracy. Moreover, some building tradesmen, such as bricklayers, plasterers and painters, had the opportunity to display their artistic talents in the course of creating ornamental walls, ceilings, columns and cornices.

Even carpenters, whose craft had experienced mechanization in certain phases, remained highly skilled workers. Outside, or on-site, carpenters still deployed hand tools, including planes, mitre boxes,

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saws, drills, hammers and screw drivers. With these tools carpenters cut beams and pillars, constructed roofs and carved ornamental moldings. Much of their work required a knowledge of geometry and trigonometry, an ability to visualize spatial relationships, not to mention eye and hand coordination. Some carpenters had developed the skills of draftsmen, capable of drawing detailed diagrams of elaborate roofs, columns, porches and fences. At the very least, carpenters needed to know how to read blueprints which described how doors were set, roofs were framed, or how the foundations of bay windows were constructed.(22)

Assisting carpenters were handbooks written by carpenters who had become builders, and regular advice columns in the monthly union newspaper, **The Carpenter.** These kept carpenters up to date with the latest techniques and the newest material and tools. Carpenters learned how to lay floors more efficiently, remove rusty nails and make glue from rice powder and boiled skimmed milk. In one edition of the newspaper, carpenters (framers,to be more precise) received instructions on how to construct a roof. They needed to consider the climate, paying close attention to windy conditions in designing the slope of the roof and to figure how much pressure the material could withstand. The inclusion of a table showing the capacity of slate, cypress and pine per square foot facilitated the process. Nevertheless, carpenters/framers had to be sure that the beams, posts, rafters and cross bars (also called "struts") were of uniform thickness.(23) This required carpenters to calculate the dimensions of the roofs' components and to cut and plane each precisely. Furthermore, the union paper reminded carpenters of other responsibilities of craftsmanship. As emblematic of their pride

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in their work, they were expected to carefully maintain the tools of their trade and replace inadequate ones:(24)

> It is only the slipshod workman who will be content to use rusty tools of antiquated design and out of order .... It is analogous to a really superior musician drumming away on an old and worn out instrument.

Bricklayers also had a broad range of responsibilities. Included among their tasks were the erection of walls, the making of footpaths and sidewalks, the construction of chimneys and fireplaces and the laying of foundations. The last task was especially demanding. Bricklayers were required to build continuous trenches and shafts that could accommodate many layers of bricks or stones. They had to consider the thickness of each layer and the distribution of weight and pressure -- factors requiring accurate calculations and painstaking care. Bricklayers used a variety of hand tools to complete their tasks. The most basic was the trowel, which they deployed when spreading mortar, "bedding" bricks and filling in joints between the spaces of face bricks. Club hammers, moulds, chisels and "frenchmen" knives allowed bricklayers to cut more accurately and to trim more neatly. Rubbing stones helped to smooth the faces of brick, and "surveyors' levels" facilitated the laying of level foundations.(25)

Bricklayers' work consisted of a blend of artistry and mechanical skill. For example, they created cornices for the facades of buildings whose ornamental appearance belied their technical exactness. This combination of creative expression and mathematical preciseness was best exemplified in the process of "bonding". The binding of bricks varied by style and specifications -- some horizontal, some diagonal and others oval. Not unexpectedly then, the demands of bricklaying led to increasing specialization. It was common for bricklayers to emphasize

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one type of work such as cornice making, the erection of arches and columns, or the laying of foundations, and not to try to master them all. (26)

Although less specialized than bricklaying, the work of plasterers was nevertheless also demanding. Plastering was an intricate process. Minimally plastering required two coats, with hotels and office buildings requiring three, and each coat involved a number of steps. For example, during the application of the first coat, known as "pendering", plasterers had to sweep the surface thoroughly with a wet, hard broom to remove the residues of lime. After spreading the plaster, commonly made of Portland cement and sometimes stucco (an Italian blend of lime, plastic and cement), plasterers "scratched" the coat with a tool, appropriately called a scratch, in preparation for the next coat. The second coat involved a set of procedures called "floating" or "browning". This was done after the first coat had dried, and required special care to ensure that the surface was smooth and straight. The application of the third coat was called "setting" and consisted of two steps. Setting required the use of "floats" -- blocks or boards with rectangular-shaped surfaces and one or two handles on the other side. Floats allowed plasterers to obtain a surface with a uniform and even texture. Then to complete the third coat, plasterers used polishing trowels and "stock" brushes to eliminate any blotches or dull spots. The entire process, especially work on cornices and mouldings with their ornamental designs, combined the style of an artist and the technical know how of a craftsman. (27)

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The work of painters was even less specialized than that of plasterers. Most painters doubled as paperhangers, and some also performed the tasks of varnishers. Painters used a variety of hand tools. Many of these, such as trowels, floats and knives, were refinements of bricklayers' and plasterers' tools. Others, including different types of brushes, scrapers and paint mills, were unique to painters. Painters' brushes varied by length, width and shape. Some were used only for walls; some reserved for crevices; some specially designed for fresco painting; and still others were exclusively deployed on furniture. At a time when many painters processed their own paints in paint mills, they needed to appreciate the subtleties of pigments and to understand the "relation of color to paints and color harmony". In addition, since painters worked on different grades of wood and stone, they had to know how certain paints, dyes and finishers interacted with the material they were painting. Fresco painters (those working with water colors on undried plastered walls and ceilings) learned how to draw and design, and, in the truest sense of the term, were "artists". Painters as paperhangers were masters of practical knowledge. They knew how to make their own paste from starch or flour, to determine how much paste to use on ceilings and side walls and to adjust the paste's strength for burlap which was heavier than paper. Painters who varnished faced the painstaking challenge of removing all dust from hard wood surfaces and had to be careful to apply the proper type and strength of varnish. (28)

None of the building trades encountered greater demands than plumbing. The building codes of New York and Brooklyn delineated procedures for the installation and testing of plumbing, and stipulated

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what material and the size of pipes to be used in specific circumstances. For example, New York's plumbers were required to use a three inch pipe when connecting drains to sewers and a four inch one when installing main soil pipes, to insure that water closets were waterproof with marble, slate or tile, and to carefully test all sewers, water-mains and gas connections. (29)

Because of a greater sensitivity to public health criteria and the development of improved material, most of the work of plumbers involved repairs and alterations. In the construction of new housing, installation of sinks, baths, water closets and drains claimed most of the plumbers' attention. Some plumbers, however, specialized. Steamfitters, a specific grade among plumbers, had the responsibility of connecting a building's water tank to the city's supply system and of installing its hot water boiler, paying close attention to the pressure necessary for efficient and safe operation. Likewise, plumbers who worked as gasfitters had to be sure that no gas could escape from the equipment or pipes. This required all plumbing to be securely fastened and adequately reinforced to sustain the accumulative pressure of gas.(30) As with other building tradesmen, they worked with relatively simple but adaptable hand tools: wrenches, pliers, pipe cutters and sink waste augers, used to clear blockages in drains.

In short, plumbers' work emphasized exactness, thoroughness and quality control. Consequently, contractors, employing plumbers and journeymen alike, sought ways to restrict entry into the trade to only those most qualified. Journeymen upheld four year apprenticeships under the close supervision of the most experienced plumbers, while contractors and employers were successful in introducing a board of

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examiners to assess the knowledge and skill of prospective plumbers. By the late 1890's trade schools, such as the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, were offering intensive courses on plumbing and gaining the acceptance of the Journeymen Plumbers, Gasfitters and Steamfitters Union, although not at the sacrifice of enforcement of certain apprenticeship regulations. (31)

The building tradesmen's conditions of employment were commensurate with the responsibilities they assumed and the skills they exhibited. Their hourly wages were higher and their workdays shorter than virtually all manufacturing workers. Nationally, building tradesmen averaged between 34 and 35 cents an hour and worked 9 hour days compared to 33 cents for unionized manufacturing workers and 14 cents an hour for nonunionized manufacturing workers who averaged 10 hour days. In New York and Brooklyn, the relative advantage in pay rates and hours was more dramatic. Most organized building tradesmen earned at the miminum of 40 cents a hour, and some like bricklayers and plasterers earned 50 cents an hour, while virtually all claimed an 8 hour day by 1890.(32)

These generalizations notwithstanding, differences in wage rates existed by trade, union status and specific union affiliation. During the 1880's and 1890's bricklayers were the highest paid building tradesmen. Members of New York's Bricklayers' and Masons' Union reached $4 a day in 1884 and their Brooklyn counterparts in the Bricklayers' Benevolent and Protective Union attained that rate in 1886. Members of both unions retained that rate through 1895 (the last year for which data on hourly rates are available), during which time they lowered their workday from 9 to 8 hours. At the other end of the

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spectrum, in the 1880's housesmiths/architectural iron workers received $2.75 a day for a 9 hour day, and between 1890 and 1895 experienced a cut of five cents with no reduction in the workday.(33)

Unionized building tradesmen were consistently paid at higher wage rates than their nonunion counterparts. During the 1890's the average daily wage rates of the former exceeded the latter's by about $1, and proportionately by more than one-third. Organized plasterers' relative wage advantage was the greatest -- $1.50, or 60 percent -- and unionized housesmiths' the lowest -- at 45 cents per day, or 20 percent.(34)

During the 1880's, at any rate, differences within a trade, according to the specific type of work and union affiliation, were most prevalent among carpenters and the allied trades. Indicative of localized labor markets throughout the building trades, carpenters in New York earned at a higher rate than their Brooklyn counterparts. For example, during most of the 1880's members of New York locals of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners received on the average twenty-five cents more a day than members of Brooklyn locals. This same differential also existed in the daily pay rates of members of New York's and Brooklyn's United Order of American Stairbuilders. Stairbuilders, by virtue of the intricate nature of their work, in general commanded a higher wage rate than carpenters and framers. Union stairbuilders' daily pay rate was $3.50, twenty-five cents more than that claimed by most union carpenters (at least until 1890) and fifty cents more than union framers.(35) In addition, differences in pay rates occurred because of competition among unions. Until the late 1880's four distinct carpenter unions existed -- all of which competed

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for members and exclusive contracts with employers. As a quid pro quo for securing a closed shop agreement with subcontractors, which guaranteed employment to only members of a designated union, some local unions accepted lower wage rates. In the case of framers, the increased use of iron in the construction of architectural frames reduced the demand for framers and thereby tended to hold down wage levels.

The gains made by New York's and Brooklyn's building tradesmen were particularly impressive when compared with the prevailing conditions of employment of building tradesmen from other cities. For example, in the 1890's New York's carpenters' hourly earnings surpassed those of their counterparts from Chicago, San Francisco, St. Louis, Philadelphia and Boston and other cities by at least 20 percent, and only carpenters in Chicago and St. Louis, where the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners had established a strong base, enjoyed an eight hour day. Similarly, New York's painters claimed a comparative advantage in wages and hours over painters from virtually every eastern and western city; only Chicago's painters achieved an eight hour day, and they earned at a lower hourly rate, and only San Francisco's painters earned nearly as much. Plasterers and plumbers received higher wages and worked fewer hours a day than they did in other major cities, with the exception of San Francisco, Denver and Chicago, where conditions of employment approximated those in New York. Less consistent was the comparative advantage of New York's bricklayers' conditions of employment, as their hourly wage rates were equalled if not exceeded by bricklayers from five other cities, including San Francisco and Denver. In general, in the country's older cities whose rate of physical growth was relatively slow, or where union labor had not sunk deep roots,

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earnings were lower and workdays longer than those in New York or Brooklyn. Only in rapidly expanding cities further west, where the demand for commercial facilities and housing correspondingly boosted the demand for the labor of building tradesmen, and where unions were vigorously organizing, as was the case in San Francisco and Denver, did building tradesmen do as well.(36)

While building tradesmen enjoyed relatively high wages and short workdays, they faced chronic unemployment. Job security was a persistent issue of concern because of the intrinsically seasonal nature of much of the work and the building trades' sensitivity to cyclical downturns in the economy. Even during expansionist phases of the business cycle, a significant proportion of building tradesmen were out of work (See Table II.). In 1890, the frequency of unemployment (the percentage of workers unemployed some time during the year) was at least 15 percent in all five of New York's major building trades, as it was in Brooklyn's with the exception of plumbers. In both cities most building tradesmen who experienced unemployment were out of work for three months or less. However, about a third experienced bouts of unemployment lasting between 3 and 6 months, and almost 10 percent were out of work for more than six months.(37) The average length of unemployment was 3 and 1/2 months, although this did not mean that building tradesmen were continously unemployed for this period. More likely building tradesmen experienced more than one spell of unemployment during the year. Unemployment rates, measuring the average proportion of workers out of work at the same time, were considerably lower (See Table II.). However, in the case of New York's bricklayers and plasterers, unemployment rates were about 10 percent, and in Brooklyn, about 8 percent. In general, the

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frequency of unemployment and the average rate of unemployment in Brooklyn's building trades industry were lower than those of New York,in part because New York was more popular with out-of-town building tradesmen looking for work.

Table II. Unemployment Rates and The Frequency of Unemployment in New York's and Brooklyn's Building Trades (1890)

	New York		Brooklyn	
	Rate	Frequency	Rate	Frequency*
Bricklayers	10.9%	39.2%	7.8	27.9
Carpenters	5.5	21.9	4.3	16.0
Painters	6.5	24.0	4.8	17.6
Plasterers	9.3	35.7	7.8	27.7
Plumbers	4.0	14.9	2.3	8.6
All Five	6.6	24.6	4.8	17.7

* Explanatory note. Frequency of Unemployment was calculated by dividing the number of workers unemployed in 1890 by the total number in the workforce. The unemployment rate was calculated by multiplying the frequency of unemployment by the average length of unemployment and then dividing by twelve. Concepts and methods of calculation were drawn from Alex Keyssar, **Out Of Work** (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 51, 53, 357 and 358. The source of the data is U.S. Eleventh Census (1890) **Population**, Part II, pp. 640, 641, 704 and 705)

If unemployment was a regular phenomenon, its occurrence varied by individual trade. In 1895, during the second year of a depression following the Panic of 1893, members of the Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators in New York and the Progressive Painters' Union in Brooklyn worked less than seven months, while officials of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners reported that the trade was "brisk" and the President of the Framers' Union #1 in Brooklyn indicated that work was more "plentiful" than any time in the previous three years.(38) Both during prosperous and hard times, bricklayers' unemployment rates and frequency of unemployment were the highest among building tradesmen. Because bricklaying/masonry was done exclusively outdoors, the weather could disrupt work. Moreover, harsh winters could hold up manufacturing and transportation of the brick and stone required by bricklayers. In

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contrast, plumbers who experienced unemployment not nearly as often performed their jobs inside and therefore were relatively unaffected by the weather. Equally important, the demand for plumbers remained strong. Repairs due to misuse and faulty installation and renovations because of the upgraded standards of building codes produced a constant flow of work for plumbers. By comparison, plasterers found few jobs in renovating and were generally employed for a very restricted phase of construction, unlike carpenters and even some painters who doubled as paperhangers.

Some of these same factors influenced the timing of unemployment. In general, unemployment was most frequent between January 1 and March 31, eased during the next three months, declined precipitously during the summer and then began to climb again in late fall. In 1897, during the first quarter about 1/2 of the union bricklayers, carpenters, painters, plasterers and plumbers were out of work, but between June 1 and September 30 less than 1/5 were unemployed. The following year this pattern continued, although with mild variations. Only bricklayers reported half of their ranks unemployed during the first quarter; in the four other major building trades one out of every four union members was unemployed. Meanwhile, during the summer quarter unemployment among union plumbers and painters dropped to less than 3 percent, and unemployment among union bricklayers declined to an annual low of 30 percent. The comparatively high rate of unemployment even in the summer arose from the annual influx of "birds of passage": British immigrant bricklayers and masons who typically accepted jobs paying below union scale before they returned home in the late fall. However, among plasterers unemployment rose to almost 60 percent in the spring, and

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hovered around the 50 percent level during the customarily busy summer months. Ironically, it appears that union plasterers who enjoyed among the highest pay rates and upheld the strictest work rules defining the time spent on each task helped to make their craft so attractive to out-of-town plasterers that an over-supply of labor was the result.(39)

Not surprisingly, there was a relationship between employment and earnings of building tradesmen. Plumbers, whose rate of unemployment was consistently the lowest, experienced little variation in their quarterly earnings. In 1897, their average quarterly earnings varied not more than $9, and in 1898, fell by no more than $13. Meanwhile, bricklayers, whose rate of unemployment was generally high, saw their average quarterly earnings increase steadily during 1897, especially from the winter to the spring months. During the first quarter in 1898, their earnings fell, and the rest of the year they began to rise again, although they did not reach the 1897 peak. The improvements in quarterly earnings through most of 1897 and 1898 despite high rates of unemployment suggest that the period of unemployment, except during the winter months, was relatively short, and that when bricklayers did find employment, they tried to maximize their income by working overtime, which customarily paid at time and a half.(40)

In contrast, the earnings of union plasterers, painters and carpenters dramatically changed from one quarter to the next. The earnings of plasterers and painters showed the same ebb and flow as the annual employment patterns, peaking during the busy seasons and plummeting during the slack seasons. The quarterly earnings of plasterers rose and fell in alternate seasons, in 1897 reaching a high of $186 in the winter, falling to a low of $159 that same spring, and

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then rising to almost $180 during the summer. In 1898, they peaked at $218 in the spring and steadily declined to an ebb of $136 in the late fall. Likewise, the earnings of painters in 1897 fell from the winter to the spring, then rose in the summer and again dropped in the fall. The following year earnings either declined or remained at a consistently low level until the summer months when they jumped more than 70 percent to $241.(41)

Frequent fluctuations in the quarterly earnings of plasterers and painters occurred because of the position of each craft in the building trades' work cycle. Plasterers and painters entered a construction site usually after bricklayers, carpenters and plumbers finished their tasks, and, unlike some bricklayers and most carpenters, worked for a relatively short time at the same site. The relatively high quarterly earnings in the winter of 1897 appeared to be the result of a precipitous rise in construction following a three year economic slump.

On the other hand, carpenters' earnings displayed no clear pattern. Average quarterly earnings varied dramatically from one quarter to the next, increasing and decreasing regularly in alternate quarters, although unemployment steadily decreased from April to November. In 1897, carpenters' earnings were highest in the winter and summer months, that is during the high and low periods of unemployment, respectively. Ironically, in 1898 they were the highest in the winter months when twenty-five percent of union carpenters were out of work -- the most in any quarter -- surpassing the previous and subsequent quarterly earnings by $70.(42) There is no apparent explanation for such an unpredictable swing in earnings. It is quite possible that carpenters adjusted to the anticipated spells of unemployment in winter months by working overtime

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whenever they could, and that the experience in 1898 reflected the limitations of data covering only two years and therefore was not representative of longer trends.

Seasonal unemployment and dramatic shifts in the earnings of some building tradesmen over the course of a year influenced the thrust of labor activity. Since building tradesmen on the average were unemployed for about three months a year, they sought to maximize their earnings during busy seasons, and to adopt measures that would provide them with some job security. Building trades unions stressed the introduction of strict standards on pay -- prohibiting piece work, and requiring double time for working overtime and on Sundays and legal holidays. Eliminating piece work was especially important not only as a way of regulating earnings but also as a means of controlling the pace of work and work loads. Union carpenters, for example, regarded piece work, or "lumping", as a direct threat to their status as craftsmen. It reduced the demand for skilled labor, pushed them to work harder and faster, and consequently exacerbated the trade's chronic unemployment. The eight hour day became a benchmark for organized building tradesmen because it was assumed that a reduction in the workday would stimulate employment. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the International Bricklayers' and Masons' Union provided a travellers' benefit to assist unemployed members to relocate in search of work. Furthermore, **The Carpenter** regularly informed its readers of labor market conditions in those parts of the country where locals existed.(43)

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Building tradesmen developed elaborate apprenticeship regulations to control the number of workers entering their respective crafts and to persuade employers to hire only qualified union members. Through collective bargaining agreements union plasterers and painters attempted to limit the number of apprentices hired by employers, the Journeymen Plumbers' Union prohibited apprentices from doing certain tasks, both the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters sought to prevent apprentices from being used as a source of "cheap" labor and locals of the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union reserved apprenticeship positions for members' sons. Virtually every building trades union defined apprenticeships as "rites of passage", rewarding those who fulfilled the requirements with the rights and benefits of union membership.(44)

Organized building tradesmen also created work rules that sought to regulate the pace, and thereby the amount of work, and to protect the autonomy of the respective crafts. The Operative Plasterers' Society and the Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators negotiated contracts with employers that stipulated the number of workers and time required for specific types of work. Union carpenters and bricklayers contested the lumpers'/subcontractors' emphasis on cost cutting and speed by maintaining standards of craftsmanship, insisting that time consuming work procedures were necessary to avoid "botched-up" work. The duties of union carpenters, framers and stairbuilders were carefully delineated to avoid one group doing the work of another. Attempts to reduce job competition, however, sometimes produced conflict among building tradesmen. Bricklayers and stonemasons vied for exclusive "jurisdiction" over work using cement, and plasterers and cement workers conflicted

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over who should be responsible for the finishing of concrete floors. (45)

Chronic seasonal unemployment notwithstanding, building tradesmen attained a material status unsurpassed by few other workers. Wage rates for most building tradesmen rose continually in the 1880's and stabilized during the next decade even in the midst of a depression. Real wages improved throughout the period as wholesale prices for essential goods declined steadily beginning in 1889. As the industry's cyclical phases of expansion exceeded those of contraction, building tradesmen enjoyed a relative earnings' advantage over other production workers. (46)

In addition, building tradesmen experienced little of the pressures, anxieties and loss of independence associated with industrialization. Both the pace and scope of technological innovation during the late Gilded Age was limited, thereby leaving building tradesmen's relations of production essentially intact. Hand tools still prevailed even with the introduction of new architectural techniques, equipment and material. Building tradesmen remained craftsmen who, by virtue of training, experience and knowledge, did their work with hardly any evidence of overbearing managerial oversight. They labored in an informal environment where frequent breaks to smoke or to drink were common. Nor was talking while working precluded by the din of machinery, the scolding of foremen, or the pressure of piece rate production.

Moreover, the intricate nature of building construction inhibited any serious attempts to standardize production. With the exception of carpenters, who in some cases worked with prefabricated material,

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building tradesmen did not face the prospect of performing routine tasks. A detailed division of labor, increased work loads and speedups were not the experience of building tradesmen. Although specialization became more prevalent among carpenters and bricklayers, plumbers, plasterers and painters were responsible for many different types of work in their respective crafts. Where specialization did exist, it did not devalue the labor of building tradesmen. Carpenters employed as shinglers or ceiling workers and bricklayers working as foundation layers or chimney makers retained skills that required considerable time to master, and helped to make these specialists indispensable.

Favorable conditions of employment, autonomy on the job and a strategic position in the labor process helped to nurture trade union organization. In turn, trade unions tended to reinforce these characteristics of the building tradesmen's world of work. A labor market with a growing demand for skilled workers fostered a greater self-worth among building tradesmen; autonomy on the job helped to develop a group identity based primarily on craft and secondarily on ethnicity and a strategic position in the labor process provided building tradesmen with leverage vis-a-vis their employers. Furthermore, because construction work proceeded in a particular sequence, building tradesmen discovered that their conditions of employment were interdependent. Delays in the work of bricklayers because of poor weather forced carpenters to wait before beginning their tasks.(47) Carpenters' strikes could disrupt the work of stairbuilders and framers, and job actions by plasterers could prevent painters from doing their work.

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Building trades unions "exploited" these characteristics of the industry. Work rules essentially codified the practices of craftsmen who knew first hand how to do their jobs efficiently and diligently. These rules sanctioned on the job autonomy by gaining the employers' official recognition of the building tradesmen's craftsmanship. Apprenticeship regulations enabled building tradesmen to influence the supply of labor and thereby contributed to the development of a closed labor market. Closed shop provisions sought to maintain union wage rates and promote job security, thereby making union membership more attractive. The careful timing of strikes and reciprocal calls for support from other building tradesmen increased the impact of job actions on contractors and subcontractors who were pressed to complete construction projects on schedule. Mutual support in the form of sympathy strikes curbed the ability of employers to unilaterally change conditions of employment and narrowed their prerogatives to hire, fire and allocate labor.

The work experience of building tradesmen and trade union organization were symbiotically related. A premium on skilled labor, job autonomy and the strategic position in production, promoted the self-esteem and common identity that inspired building tradesmen to organize collectively. In turn, unions became the primary means of preserving building tradesmen's favorable conditions of employment, and became in the eyes of many, both inside and outside the labor movement, the source of their status as an elite in New York's and Brooklyn's working class.

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FOOTNOTES

1. United States. Tenth Census (1880), **Population**, pp.521; and Twelfth Census (1900), **Population**, Part I, p.clxxxviii; **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac** (1898), p. 331; and Clarence Long, Jr., **Building Cycles and The Theory of Investment** (Princeton University Press, 1940), appendix.

2. John R. Riggleman, "Building Cycles in the United States, 1875-1932," **Journal of the American Statistical Association**, XXVIII (1933), 63-71; and Asher Achinstein, "Economic Fluctuations," Seymour Harris, ed., **American Economic History** (New York: McGraw and Hill, 1960), p.40.

3. United States. Census Bureau. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in the Cities**, pp. 88-97 and 394-407; and Twelfth Census (1900), Volume 8 Part 2, **Statistics of Manufactures**, pp. 620-628.

4. R.G. Dun, **Reference Book Containing Ratings of Merchants and Manufacturers and Traders Generally Throughout the United States** (1895).

5. Robert Christie, **Empire in Wood: A History of the Carpenters Union** (Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 25 and 26. Robert Max Jackson, **The Formation of Craft Labor Markets** (New York: Academic Press, 1984), p. 137; Frederick Hodgson, **Encyclopedia of the Building Trades,** Volume I (Chicago, 1907), pp. 88-99; and **Practical Bricklaying, Self-Taught** (Chicago, 1907), pp. 2 and 3.

6. United States. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in the Cities,** pp.88-97; and Twelfth Census (1900) **Statistics of Manufactures,** pp. 620-628.

7. Long, Appendix; and Hodgson, **Encyclopedia of the Building Trades,** Volume 5, pp. 115 and 116.

8. John R. Commons, **Trade Unionism and Labor Problems** (New York, 1905), pp.65-67; Christie, pp. 26 and 27; and William Haber, **Industrial Relations in the Building Industry** (Harvard University Press, 1930), pp. 59 and 60.

9. Clarence Bonnett, **History of Employers' Association in the United States** (New York: Vintage Press, 1956), p. 335; and Jackson, pp. 213-218.

10. Haber, pp. 16 and 19-24; and Carl Condit, **American Building: Materials and Techniques from the First Colonial Settlements to the Present** (University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 233-236.

11. **Ibid**, pp. 16-19 and 29-32; John W. Oliver, **The History of American Technology** (New York, 1956), pp. 408 and 409; and James M. Fitch, **American Building: The Forces That Shape It** (Boston:Houghton Miflin, 1948), pp. 170-174.

12. Christie, pp. 27 and 79-81; and Oliver, p. 408.

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13. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eight Annual Report** (1890), pp. 123-124.

14. **John Swinton's Paper**, February 17, 1884; Christie, p. 27; and **The Carpenter**, May 1894.

15. **The Carpenter**, May 1894 and November 1896.

16. **Ibid**, January 1894.

17. Christie, pp. 25-27 and 81-85; U.S. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in Cities**, pp. 88-97 and 394-407; **Population**, Part II, pp. 640, 641, 704, and 705; Twelfth Census (1900) **Statistics of Manufactures**, pp. 620-628; and **Occupations**, pp. 634-641.

18. Cited by Haber, p. 36.

19. Calculated from U.S. Eleventh Census (1890) **Population**, Part II, pp. 640, 641, 704 and 705; and Twelfth Census (1900), **Occupations**, pp. 634-641

20. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Sixteenth Annual Report** (1898) pp. 1044-1048 and 1050-1053.

21. **Ibid**, pp. 1041, 1042 and 1045; and Edwin Fenton, **Immigrants and Unions: A Case Study, Italians and American Labor, 1870-1920** (New York, 1975), pp. 145, 146 and 412. The tendency of a crowded job market, exacerbated by the influx of immigrants, to frustrate unions' quest for uniform wage rates was expressed by an official of Local # 509 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners in 1889: "it has been a continual struggle to maintain that (union) rate and we never have been completely successful in doing so even for all members of the unions." Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eight Annual Report** (1890), p. 129.

22. **The Carpenter**, March 1893 and March, May, July and August 1896; and Haber, p. 37.

23. **The Carpenter**, May and June 1881, August 1882, April 1884, and May 1896.

24. **Ibid**, December 1885.

25. Hodgson, **Encyclopedia of the Building Trades**, Volume I, pp. 11-40 and 159-161; and **Practical Bricklaying, Self-Taught**, pp. 1 and 2.

26. Hodgson, **Encyclopedia of the Building Trades**, Volume I, pp. 59-76, 82-85, and 88-99.

27. Hodgson, **Encyclopedia of The Building Trades**, Volume III, pp. 99-117 and 140-163.

28. Frederick Hodgson, **Modern Painters' Encyclopedia** (Chicago, 1907), pp. 43-53, 313-342, and 429-430; and Haber, p. 42.

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29. **New York City Record and Building Trades Directory** (1887); and **The Plumbers Trade Journal, Gas, Steam and Hot Water Fitters' Review,** September 15, 1897.

30. **The Plumbers Trade Journal, Gas, Steam and Hot Water Fitters' Review,** February 15, 1897; and **Labor Compendium,** March 21, 1897.

31. **The Plumbers Trade Journal, Gas, Steam and Hot Water Fitters' Review,** April 15, 1897, February 15, 1898, March 15, 1898, and October, 1898.

32. Paul Douglas, **Real Wages in the United States 1890-1926** (University of Chicago Press), pp. 135, 136, 139, and 140; Albert Rees, **Real Wages in the United States 1890-1914** (Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 33; and New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896) pp. 724-779.

33. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eight Annual Report** (1890), pp. 114-118 and 144; and **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896), pp. 724-779.

34. Calculated from Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896), pp. 724-779.

35. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eight Annual Report** (1890), pp. 127-132, 141-143 and 170-171.

36. United States. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin #499: **Wages in the United States From Colonial Times to 1928,** pp. 164-171, 202-205, and 208-211. [Note: data for New York includes Brooklyn as well.]

37. U.S. Eleventh Census (1890) **Population,** Part II, pp. 640, 641, 704 and 705.

38. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 285-288.

39. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fifteenth Annual Report** (1897), p. 423; **Sixteenth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 868-869; and **Seventeenth Annual Report** (1899), pp. 96-106.

40. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Sixteenth Annual Report,** pp. 854 and 855, and **Seventeenth Annual Report,** pp. and 174 and 228.

41. **Ibid.**

42. **Ibid.**

43. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Eight Annual Report (1890), p. 144; Lloyd Ulman, **The Rise of the National Union** (New York, 1955), pp. 57-64 and 78-79; **The Carpenter, passim,** especially April 1887, September 1887, and January 1889; and Jules Tygiel, "Tramping Artisans: The Case of the

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Carpenters in Industrial America", **Labor History** (Summer 1981), 355, 362-365, and 374.

44. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourth Annual Report** (1886), pp. 119-126, 136, 137, 156, and 157; **Eight Annual Report** (1890), p. 157; and James Motley, **Apprenticeship in the Building Trades** (New York, 1906), p. 279.

45. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eight Annual Report** (1890), p. 156; Haber, pp. 40 and 41; United States. Commissioner of Labor. **Eleventh Special Report** (1904), pp. 27-29.

46. For discussion of building tradesmen's relative wage advantage, with an emphasis on carpenters, see Robert Max Jackson, **The Formation of Craft Labor Markets**, p. 149.

47. Peter McGuire of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners attributed much of the carpenters' unemployment to the interdependence of building trades' work: "There is a great deal of lost time among carpenters waiting for the plasterers and the bricklayers ...." See **The Carpenter**, April 1886.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN — THE LABOR ACTIVITY OF BUILDING TRADESMEN

No other group of workers showed a greater capacity to organize than did New York's and Brooklyn's building tradesmen. In the late Gilded Age bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers and plumbers developed unions that enabled building tradesmen to secure the highest wages and the shortest workdays of any production workers. Through unions they were also able to establish work rules and apprenticeship regulations that protected their job autonomy and modulated the viscissitudes of the labor market in their crafts. In fact, building tradesmen came to associate union membership as a condition of employment itself, inextricably linked to their privileged material status as craftsmen who avoided most of the problems experienced by other wage workers.

Their unions, which in large part grew because of the building tradesmen's indispensable role in the production process, nurtured a stronger craft identity and a greater appreciation of the value of their labor. In turn, as the advantages of trade unionism became more manifest, they became more intent on defending their favorable conditions of employment against what they considered to be the encroachments of employers.

Their experience as trade unionists and skilled workers promoted a confidence in their abilities that found expression in militant labor activity. Like printers, building tradesmen expected their unions to enforce the standards of their craft. But much more than compositors or pressmen, they showed a propensity to conduct strikes to enforce them. Moreover, like printers they attempted to forge an effective network of unions, although they found the realization of this goal uneven.

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These tendencies -- a combativeness against the violation of union standards and the checkered development of cooperative unionism -- was most evident in the outbreak of sympathy strikes which reached a peak between 1890 and 1892.

By 1890, unions had grown in most of the building trades in New York and Brooklyn, many of which were affiliates of national organizations that had emerged in the previous decade. In the five major trades -- carpentry, masonry, painting, plastering and plumbing -- one in every four workers was a union member. Bricklayers constituted the most unionized, and painters, the least unionized of the five (See Table I.). Bricklayers and masons, unlike most building tradesmen, were employed directly by general contractors and were more likely to work in larger crews. Moreover, masonry involved a greater use of machine technology and required higher expenditures in fixed capital than most of the building trades, thereby making it more difficult for journeymen bricklayers/masons to become contractors. Consequently the lines demarcating journeymen and contractors were sharp. In addition, collective bargaining was more feasible than in most of the building trades since decisions over conditions of employment were centralized within the contractors' jurisdiction and not dispersed through the subcontracting system common in most of the construction industry.

Painters worked in a trade which shared few if any of these features. Many worked alone or with one or two assistants and were hired by "boss" painters who maintained the barest of shops, stocking few tools (since painters usually owned their own) and supplies (since contractors usually provided the paint and other material). No appreciable distance separated employer and worker; in fact, it was not

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uncommon for painters to be self-employed, doing custom-type work for clients, as well as becoming subcontractors or proprietors of their shops.

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that only a minority of building tradesmen became union members. For many, high earnings, job security and favorable working conditions were attributes of the occupation, and therefore they felt union membership was unnecessary. For some, the costs of union membership exceeded the benefits: initiation fees and dues were high, and demands to attend meetings too exacting. More fundamentally, by joining a union, building tradesmen might incur discrimination in job assignments, or face outright dismissal. Finally, the hopes, if not expectations, of becoming independent subcontractors reduced the urgency and long-term advantages of union membership for some building tradesmen.

Table I. Estimated Proportion Of Union Membership in Selected Building Trades in New York and Brooklyn Combined (1890)

	# in Trade	# in Unions	% Unionized
Bricklayers	9,966	3,500	35.1
Carpenters (A)	23,201	5,868	25.3
Carpenters (B)	23,201	3,661	15.8
Painters	19,842	3,307	16.7
Plumbers	10,567	2,640	25.0
All Four Trades (A)	63,576	17,495	26.3
All Four Trades (B)	"	15,268	24.0

Explanatory Notes: (1) In classification Carpenters (A) the number of unionized framers and stairbuilders are included since the work of both were specialities of carpentry, although in some cases stairbuilders used other material besides wood. In Carpenters (B) the number of unionized framers and stairbuilders have been omitted in recognition that both maintained unions distinct from those of carpenters. (2) The number of plasterers in unions is not clear for 1890. In addition, the 1890 Census undercounted plasterers or subsumed them under the occupation of bricklayer/mason. In any event, the data is not reliable to calculate the proportion of plasterers in unions and therefore it has been omitted from the table. (3) Unionized paperhangers have been included with painters since the latter often did the tasks of the former. (4) Unionized plumbers include gas fitters and steam fitters,

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although it was not until the late 1890's that all three were organized into the same union. They have been included because the 1890 Census data on the number of plumbers contains gas fitters and steam fitters, and plumbers often were responsible for fitting the gas and steam systems in buildings.

[Sources: United States. Census Bureau, Eleventh Census (1890) **Population,** Part II, pp. 640, 641, 704 and 705; New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 141 and 142; **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac** (1891), pp. 144-146; and Martin Segal, **The Rise of the United Association: National Unionism in the Pipe Trades, 1884-1924** (Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 48.]

Notwithstanding the different rates of unionization, some common organizational features developed. In New York and Brooklyn virtually all the building trades unions participated in each city's central labor union and a joint Board of Walking Delegates -- a coordinating body whose representatives had the authority to call job actions in the construction industry. Membership in these organizations was particularly significant in light of the multiplicity of labor unions in some of the building trades. At least four different carpenter unions vied for influence, and even with the merger of two of the largest -- the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the United Order of Carpenters -- in 1888, vestiges of the other unions survived well into the mid-1890's. Among painters some of the unions coexisted with little friction. Fresco painters formed a separate union in recognition of their specialized work. The German House Painters, consisting of no more than 500 members at its height, represented those who primarily worked on already constructed and occupied homes rather than on newly built houses. In contrast, the Brotherhood of Painters, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and the Progressive Painters, members of the Knights of Labor, fought jurisdictional battles. This tension between the AFL and Knights of Labor also appeared among plumbers, marble cutters, tile layers, and stone masons. In general, the

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affiliates of the Knights of Labor did not fare well; of the 36 local assemblies in New York and Brooklyn representing building tradesmen in 1886, only fifteen survived beyond 1888, and less than a third existed in 1893 on the eve of a severe depression.(1)

The formation of unions by ethnicity also contributed to the multiplicity of organizations. German building tradesmen formed the German Painters' Union and the German Framers' Union, and Italian immigrants established separate unions for masons and marble cutters. Ethnically based unions emerged for two reasons. First, in some of the building trades, particular immigrant groups had maintained enclaves -- Germans in carpentry and painting and Italians in masonry, stonecutting and marble work. Second, at least among Italian building tradesmen, it was necessary to organize separately because the established unions, in the main dominated by first and second generation Irish and British workers, did not welcome the Italian newcomers who they felt crowded the labor market. Even when separatism did not prevail, building trades unions acknowledged the ethnic diversity of their membership. For instance, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters organized six German locals in New York and two in Brooklyn and one each for Scandinavian and "Hebrew" carpenters, and the Fresco Painters had a branch for their German members.(2)

Between 1886 and 1898 building tradesmen sought to curtail, if not eliminate, the competition among their unions and to accentuate the common interests that transcended the specialized divisions of their crafts and the diverse ethnicity of their ranks. This objective met with mixed results as the experience of carpenters, plumbers and painters suggests. The movement to consolidate carpenters' unions

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followed shortly after the formation of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners in 1882. For five years the Brotherhood had great difficulty establishing a base either in New York or Brooklyn. In the former city the United Order of Carpenters, formed in the 1870's, was strong. In the latter city the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, consisting of Irish and British immigrants, many of whom had been members of the same union in their homelands, impeded the Brotherhood's progress. The Brotherhood also faced a challenge from the Progressive Carpenters which had established five local assemblies, consisting of about 1,000 members, by 1887. (3)

In that same year, however, New York's and Brooklyn's carpenter unions began to take preliminary steps to end the competition among them. Faced with common problems of coping with an influx of out-of-town carpenters and the growth of "lumping", where subcontractors employed nonunion workers at lower wage rates, these unions recognized the shortcomings of trying to reach contracts with employers that would guarantee employment only to members of one organization. Accordingly, in 1888 representatives of the four unions created the United Trade Committee, which agreed to recognize each other's union cards and issued a uniform scale of wages and work rules. Then, at a conference in Philadelphia, delegations from the Brotherhood and the United Order led by Peter McGuire and Henry Trener, respectively, negotiated a formal merger, thereby, in the words of **The Carpenter**, "demolishing the Chinese wall" separating the two organizations. The merged United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners recognized the autonomy of locals and districts over the administration of benefits, the collection of dues and the selection of officers, and extended benefits covering illness,

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disability and funeral expenses to former members of the United Order. In order to clarify its priorities, the union prohibited the use of funds for "political purposes", including demonstrations and "receptions for public men"; however, expenditures to celebrate Labor Day and to "further the interests of the trade and labor" were sanctioned.(4)

Less than a year after the merger, the United Trade Committee broke up as some of the remaining smaller unions formed a rival coalition to protect their respective jurisdictions. Undeterred by this development, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters was successful in bringing a number of organizations under its banner. Locals of the German Cabinet Makers joined in 1889 and 1890, and, under the pressure of economic depression, the House Framers' Union affiliated in 1894. In the following year, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and the United Brotherhood mutually agreed to recognize each other's union cards and to block the recruiting efforts of other carpenters unions, thereby effectively isolating the Knights of Labor's Progressive Carpenters. By the end of the decade the process of consolidation was essentially completed, as virtually all of New York's and Brooklyn's 7,800 unionized carpenters were members of the United Brotherhood. (5)

Efforts to overcome divisions among plumbers' unions were less successful. In the early 1880's, after incurring a defeat in a strike for higher wages, union plumbers reorganized themselves into local assemblies of the Knights of Labor. In search of greater autonomy and an effective organization, New York's and Brooklyn's plumbers led a drive to establish the National Association of Plumbers, Steam Fitters and Gas Fitters. The Knights' General Executive Board responded by forming

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National Trade Assembly 85, exclusively open to plumbers. In 1886, only two years after the birth of the National Association, most of the New York and Brooklyn locals, the bedrock of the young union, seceded to join the Knights as National Trade Assembly 85. Initially, the two groups cooperated. They held a joint convention to explore the possibility of the mutual recognition of each other's union cards, and Local Assembly 1992, the largest in the National Trade Assembly, contributed money and supplies to striking members of the National Association who set up a cooperative in Milwaukee.(6)

In part, cooperation between the two organizations stemmed from the perception that regardless of union affiliation plumbers faced similar problems, especially a difficulty in controlling entry into their craft in the face of the employers' unilateral attempt to revise apprenticeship regulations. But it also reflected the specific areas where each organization had influence: the National Association's growth in the mid-west, and the National Trade Assembly's confinement to the New York metropolitan area. Locally, any **modus vivendi** was disrupted by the four-month strike in late 1886 when employers gained control over the apprenticeship system.(7)

Over the next three years plumber unionism became more fragmented. The steam fitters broke away from Local Assembly 1992 to form a separate organization, and a group of New York members of the National Trade Assembly #85 formed the 59th Street Society with the hope of affiliating with the National Association. In 1889, in order to stem the tide of fragmentation and to cope with an increasingly crowded labor market, representatives from the local assemblies in the National Trade Assembly and their counterparts in the National Association negotiated the terms

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of a merger and called the union the United Association of Plumbers, Steam Fitters and Gas Fitters.(8)

Where the relative weakness of plumber unionism in New York and Brooklyn encouraged a movement towards amalgamation, its subsequent resurgence resulted in another secessionist drive. In 1895 Local 2 of the United Association, with 1,250 members and a contract with the employers that recognized a closed shop to its credit, formed the Amalgamated Society of Journeymen Plumbers and Gas Fitters. The underlying reason for the split was Local 2's desire to control the influx of out-of-town plumbers, a development apparently encouraged by the fact that the national union was unable to maintain a uniform fees structure. In some mid-western cities, for example, members of the United Association were paying as much as $40 less in initiation fees than their counterparts in Local 2. In addition, many in Local 2 felt the benefits did not compensate for the costs of affiliation with the national union. The Amalgamated Society became the leading union among plumbers in New York, Brooklyn, Newark and Jersey City, and retained this position until 1902 when it merged with the United Association. The merger followed an intensely fought three year battle between the two organizations for exclusive closed shop agreements which convinced leaders of both unions that their rivalry had became too costly. (9)

Painters encountered even greater difficulty in amalgamating their unions. In the 1880's the major painters' union was the Progressive Painters, affiliated with the Knights of Labor and officially recognized by the Central Labor Union in both New York and Brooklyn. In 1889 a national union, the Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators, was formed and soon after won a charter from the American

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Federation of Labor. Attempts to build a strong base in New York and Brooklyn met resistance not only from its rivals within the Knights of Labor but other unions as well, including the A.F.L.'s United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.

The immediate issue of contention was the establishment of Local 182 of the Brotherhood of Painters, representing paperhangers, and its quest for recognition from the employers and the Central Labor Union. In turn, the Progressive Painters charged that the new local admitted paperhangers who were expelled by the Paper Hangers' Union, which sat on the Board of Walking Delegates, the coordinating body of the unions in the building trades. Despite the appeals of Jack Elliot (General Secretary of the Brotherhood of Painters) to Samuel Gompers to intervene in the union's behalf, and the mediation of the Central Labor Federation, formed by the New York unions with close ties to the Socialist Labor Party in 1891, Local 182 remained isolated.(10)

In 1891, at the urging of leaders of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, the Board of Walking Delegates sanctioned strikes to pressure the employers to dismiss members of Local 182. Three years later, Local 161 of the Brotherhood of Painters was the target of a series of strikes by carpenters, plasterers and varnishers among others. In both instances the employers yielded to the strikers' demands in order to avoid additional costly delays in construction. The widespread opposition to the Brotherhood of Painters among New York's and Brooklyn's building trades unions was attributable to the influence of John Archibald, President of the Paper Hangers' Union and Chairman of the Board of Walking Delegates, as well as to the respect earned by the Progressive

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Painters as a result of their consistent participation in sympathy strikes in support of carpenters and plasterers. Not until 1902 did the Brotherhood of Painters gain the support of other building trades unions, when its president paid $17,000 to obtain representation on the Board of Delegates, and not until 1906 did the rivalry between the unions among painters subside with the defection of members of the Amalgamated Association of Painters (a small independent union not recognized by the AFL) to the Brotherhood of Painters.(11)

Identifying the reasons for the different degrees of success in the efforts of carpenters, plumbers and painters to consolidate their unions is difficult. Nevertheless, a few can be offered. Carpenters, the most successful of the three groups, possessed a few advantages. First, the Brotherhood of Carpenters was led by Peter McGuire, a respected trade unionist who, because of his earlier participation in the socialist and labor movements, had made important contacts in New York and other cities. Second, the severity of the problems carpenters faced made amalgamation of their unions more urgent. Under the pressure of the spread of lumping, the growth of prefabricated material and the ever present possibility of crowded labor markets because of the carpenters' penchant for travelling in search of work, unions in many of the country's largest cities came to recognize their common interests and appreciate the necessity of cooperation.

From the plumbers' ranks, on the other hand, no leaders emerged with the vision or force of personality of a Peter McGuire, who tirelessly advocated the principles of cooperation and mutual respect.(12) Moreover, although plumbers in various cities shared a concern about apprenticeship regulations, circumstances specific to the

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city's labor market hindered the process of consolidation. In other cities where wage rates were not as high as in New York, affiliates of the United Association of Plumbers maintained lower initiation fees and dues.(13) As members of a national union, plumbers expected their cards to be honored wherever the United Association existed, and since it was apparently easier for plumbers in Cincinnati, St. Louis and Milwaukee to become members, New York's and Brooklyn's locals potentially faced a greater challenge to influence the terms by which plumbers could enter the trade. This situation produced dissatisfaction with the United Association which lacked the organizational resources to convince its affiliates of the benefits of a national union. Moreover, the fact that Local 2 was able to gain a contract providing favorable conditions of employment without any assistance from the national union impressed plumbers in New York and Brooklyn that they could sustain a viable independent union.

Meanwhile, painters suffered from a number of serious handicaps. The push for a unitary organization of painters, paperhangers and decorators by the Brotherhood of Painters challenged the autonomy of the existing unions representing each group. In New York and Brooklyn members of these unions perceived the Brotherhood as an "outside" organization interested in creating a domain where painters and paper hangers, through unions supported by the Board of Walking Delegates and the Central Labor, had managed to secure a shorter workday and higher wages. In short, the impetus for consolidation did not originate with New York's and Brooklyn's painters, as it did in part with carpenters and, intermittently, in the case of plumbers. Compounding the Brotherhood's difficulties was chronic internal wrangling between

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eastern and mid-western locals, resulting in each section claiming to be the official national union. Lastly, the fact that Peter McGuire supported the position of the New York locals of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners in backing the Progressive Painters and the Paper Hangers' Union made it extremely unlikely that the AFL, through the auspices of Gompers, would intervene on behalf of an upstart union whose leaders lacked McGuire's prestige. (14)

Although their efforts to consolidate parallel unions were not uniformly effective, building tradesmen were consistently able to improve and defend their conditions of employment. Wage rates steadily rose in the 1880's and remained relatively stable even in the midst of a depression following the Panic of 1893. Almost without exception building tradesmen in New York and Brooklyn who were covered by a union contract had attained a nine hour workday by 1890, while some, including carpenters, framers, fresco painters, plasterers and plumbers had won an eight hour workday. Bricklayers in New York and Brooklyn saw their hourly pay rates climb from 40 cents in 1884 to 50 cents in 1890 as a result of a collective bargaining agreement encompassing 400 firms in the Mason Builders' Association and 3,500 members of the Bricklayers' and Masons' International Union. Carpenters benefitted from the amalgamation and cooperation of their unions. By 1889 daily wage rates reached an average of $3.50 in New York and $3.25 in Brooklyn compared to an average of about $3 earlier in the decade. Members of the Operative Painters' Union, whose rates fluctuated between $3 and $3.50 from 1880 to 1885, established a minimum rate of $3.50 along with a nine hour day in 1886. These standards remained unchanged until 1891, when union painters gained an eight hour day. New York's Plain and

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Ornamental Plasterers' Society did not improve on its pay scale in the 1880's, although the union did gain a cut in the workday from ten to eight hours. Meanwhile, Brooklyn members' wages rose by twelve percent and their workday was also reduced to eight hours. From 1883 to 1890 New York's union plumbers claimed a daily pay rate of $3.50 which increased marginally during the first half of the ensuing decade. On the other hand, the wage rates of union plumbers in Brooklyn rose 40 percent between 1883 and 1890, when they reached $3.50 per eight hours, and held steady for the next five years. (15)

Besides upgrading pay rates and shortening the workday, building trades unions were often successful in codifying rules into collective bargaining agreements with employers. The employers' acceptance of these rules reflected their acknowledgement of the building tradesmen's strategic role in the production process and their need for a reliable source of skilled labor uninterrupted by costly job actions. Unionized building tradesmen considered the rules significant because they promoted job security, regulated the supply of labor -- thereby helping to maintain higher wage rates -- and defended the integrity of their crafts.

Foremost among the rules were provisions establishing "closed shops", which required contractors and subcontractors to hire exclusively members of a specified union, or, when closed shops were not feasible, as in the case of the Housesmiths' Union, pledges to grant union members hiring preference. Concomitantly, unions required their members not to work with any building tradesmen who were not members of "bona fide" unions, viz. those recognized by the Board of Walking Delegates. The Fresco Painters extended this rule even further, as it

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called on members to withdraw their labor if a co-worker had been fined or suspended by his union. Such a requirement also applied to building tradesmen who, either willingly or tacitly, accepted the employers' failure to abide by a union's standards on pay or hours. Therefore, carpenters, framers and fresco painters were obligated to refuse to work with any one in their respective trades who was not paid time and half after eight hours.(16)

Other rules aimed to define the terms of apprenticeships so that entry into the trade did not result in undermining the status of journeymen. These addressed eligibility requirements, the length of apprenticeships, the number of apprentices and who was responsible for their training and work. Most unions required that new apprentices be no older than twenty-one, and some like the Operative Plasterers set an age limit of seventeen. In principle unions felt they should help select apprentices, but in practice few did. The Journeymen Plumbers sought a veto power over the employers' choice of apprentices, but were rebuffed in a strike in 1886. Only locals of the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union had any authentic control over the selection process, as they reserved the majority of apprenticeships for members' sons. Unions had uneven success in determining the ratio between apprentices and journeymen and the length of apprenticeships. Local Assembly 1992 of the Knights of Labor, representing plumbers, stipulated a ratio of one apprentice for every four journeymen, but in more than half of the plumbing shops surveyed in 1886 apprentices outnumbered journeymen. In contrast, the Operative Plasterers' Society was able to enforce its rule limiting each employer to three apprentices regardless of the number of journeymen. Even with the introduction of machine technology and the growth of

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specialization in building trades work, unions maintained lengthy apprenticeships. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters set a four year period while the Bricklayers' and Masons' International Union and Amalgamated Society of Journeymen Plumbers established a five year apprenticeship.(17)

The responsibility for training apprentices varied by craft. In plumbing and bricklaying employers and journeymen shared the responsibility, while in carpentry either foremen or employers oversaw the instruction of apprentices. In either case, building tradesmen found fault with the apprenticeship system. Plumbers risked damage to their tools at the hands of inexperienced apprentices; therefore, the International Association of Journeymen Plumbers in the mid-1880's and the Amalgamated Society in the 1890's expressly prohibited journeymen from providing apprentices with any tools. Moreover, as evidenced by union carpenters' complaints about the haphazard training of apprentices, it was not uncommon for subcontractors exclusively to supervise apprentices and deploy them as they saw fit. (18)

Some unions also attempted to exert influence over apprentices' conditions of employment. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters' by-laws encouraged local affiliates to admit apprentices during the last year of their terms, and some New York and Brooklyn locals assumed responsibility for redressing apprentices' grievances. The Journeymen Plumbers established separate locals for "junior journeymen" which oversaw the enforcement of their scale of pay and hours. The Operative Plasterers prohibited employers from lending and exchanging apprentices, and the Bricklayers denied employers the right to discharge apprentices and helped to reassign apprentices when employers went out of

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business. (19)

Building tradesmen, either through rules officially sanctioned by their unions or through practices made legitimate by the demands of their craft, exerted a measure of control over the work process. An elaborate agreement between the Operative Society of Plasterers and the Employing Plasterers' Society stipulated the number of coats required in different types of rooms and surfaces, established the size of work crews in relation to the amount of work and indicated the length of time expected to complete each phase -- scratch coating, browning and hard finishing. Although not formalized into a contract, plumbers had attained de facto influence over their work pace and work methods. This autonomy emanated from two aspects of the plumbers' work experience. First, plumbers' responsibilities were intricate, and in many cases specifically were defined by building codes that became more thorough in the 1880's and 1890's. The fitting of pipes, the connection of gas mains and the testing of steam and gas equipment required methodical care. Second, plumbers had to demonstrate their competency to a Board of Examiners and thereby earned the necessary credentials of craftsmanship, a status that both employers and journeymen acknowledged. (20)

The building trades unions owed their relative success in introducing work rules, apprenticeship regulations and closed shops to the nature of the production process and specific features of the construction industry. In construction work no effective mechanism existed to assess the performance of workers until the product was completed. For example, if plumbers installed pipes incorrectly, or if bricklayers laying a foundation "botched" the job, the effects might not be noticed until after the building was occupied. Consequently, it was

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in the employers' interest to hire the most responsible workers, and for building tradesmen to maintain the highest standards if they sought to influence the supply of labor and exercise control over their work. Indeed, building tradesmen exploited this aspect of construction work, convincing employers that union labor was the most skilled and dependable.

In addition, the building trades unions benefitted from the fact that demand for commercial and residential buildings was relatively inelastic -- that is, insensitive to changes in the price of the product. Although construction costs per square foot declined by more than 200 percent in the 1880's and 1890's (mainly because of new architectural techniques and technological innovation), the sales price for housing and commercial space per square foot rose dramatically.(21) Contractors could expect healthy and steady profits not only because of the inelasticity in demand, but because production costs could easily be passed on to clients even if the buildings remained unoccupied or unsold. In brief, not only did employers have incentives to recognize the value of union labor, but they could afford to accept many of the union standards.

Within this context, employers consented to closed shop provisions, union work rules and codetermination of apprenticeship regulations to ensure a steady supply of workers and minimize the possibilities of work stoppages. Unions representing plumbers, plasterers and bricklayers signed pacts that obligated their members to work only for those contractors or subcontractors belonging to employers' associations who accepted a closed shop. Many collective bargaining agreements in the building trades explicitly required unions

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to resolve alleged violations of the contract by conferring with employers. For this purpose, the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union, the Operative Plasterers' Society and the Enterprise Association (representing steam fitters) formed joint arbitration committees with their respective employers' associations. However, this method of adjudicating disputes did not preclude strike action, for rarely did a contract stipulate that unions would not authorize walkouts during the life of the agreement. In addition, contracts customarily recognized the right of the union's walking delegate to visit worksites to verify whether employers were honoring the agreement. This was a significant concession, since most building trades unions empowered their walking delegates with the authority to call strikes. (22)

Higher wages, shorter hours, job autonomy and regulated apprenticeships were not only emblematic of the privileged status of skilled labor. For many building tradesmen they were synonymous with union membership: the results of cooperation, group discipline and effective organization. Fundamentally, conditions of employment emanated from the breadth of influence unions possessed at the workplace. The ability to secure exclusive recognition for the organization and exclusive hiring for its members became a union's raison d'etre and a powerful incentive for building tradesmen to join. Moreover, since employment itself might depend on being a union member, the stakes of trade unionism were substantial. Therefore, building tradesmen were keenly sensitive to the employers' attempts to circumvent, if not violate, union standards. If membership in a union were indeed significant, it meant being prepared and able to defend the pay rates, hourly provisions and work rules that building tradesmen associated with

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their craft.

Building tradesmen's readiness and ability to defend their union standards rested on their work experience, their role in the labor process, the structure of the construction industry and an ethos of cooperation that their unions engendered. Most building tradesmen worked in small groups, usually consisting of no more than ten workers.(23) Because of the crews' size and the demands of the work, building tradesmen developed intimate ties. Workers within a specific craft often knew each other and came to depend on each other for assistance in the routine performance of their jobs. Newcomers to a building site were easily identified, and if they did not integrate themselves into the work group, they might not be able to work effectively. If it became known they were not union members, they faced ostracism and the likelihood of not being able to work at all. In short, building tradesmen were subject to peer group pressure, an important source of the vitality of their labor activity.

Building tradesmen enjoyed leverage vis-a-vis their employers because construction work placed a high premium on the labor of craftsmen whose knowledge and judgement could not be embodied in labor saving technology. In some crafts, building tradesmen combined the abilities of a mechanic and the talent of an artist -- skills in short supply. Consequently, contractors and subcontractors had reason to adjust to the presence of unions and attempt to establish amicable relations with them. Those failing to do so, or acting so boldly as to oppose their standards on pay, hours and job security, faced the immediate problem of locating an alternative source of labor.

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Other factors made the second option a risky endeavor. First, the sequential and interdependent quality of the production process increased the possibility that conflicts with one group of workers could erupt into strikes, involving workers who voiced no immediate grievances or issues of contention with their employers.(24) For example, if plasterers walked off their jobs, painters employed at the same building site could not continue to work even if they chose to do so, simply because the latter necessarily waited until the former completed their work. Framers, responsible for laying out roofs, also would find it difficult to perform their duties if carpenters withdrew their labor before they had finished erecting the walls, floors and ceilings. And if hod-hoisting engineers or derrickmen struck, virtually all construction work would grind to a halt.

Secondly, because certain disputes could not be resolved through negotiations before work had been completed at a given site, most building trades unions authorized their walking delegates to call strikes.(25) This allowed building tradesmen to act swiftly and decisively. In contrast to cigarmakers or printers who conducted a vote of the membership or executive board to decide if strike action was necessary and feasible, building tradesmen acted more like soldiers marching to the orders of their officers.

In addition, building trades' employers, unlike their counterparts in printing and cigarmaking, had very flexible labor needs. These varied seasonally, according to the size of the project and the type of work. For example, the demand for labor was greater in the spring and summer, the number of workers needed in the construction of office buildings far surpassed that needed for building single dwelling homes and the

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need for decorative wallpapering or ornamental plastering was greater in a plush Fifth Ave hotel than in a downtown tenement building. To fulfill their multiple and flexible labor needs, many contractors and subcontractors turned to the unions' walking delegates who supplied the required number of workers if the employers agreed to hire only union members at union rates.(26) The timely and reliable supply of labor spared the employers who honored a closed shop the effort and expense of recruiting workers, and it provided them with a competitive advantage against other subcontractors in securing the services of highly specialized craftsmen such as decorative plasterers and fresco painters. Therefore, it was in the employers' interest to reach a **modus vivendi** with unions and to avoid the costly interruptions in production that would ensue if labor disputes boiled over into sympathy strikes. Moreover, in the bricklaying and masonry trade many subcontractors were former union members who appreciated the raison d'etre of trade unions; in fact, some retained their union membership in recognition that their status as employers was precarious.(27)

Building tradesmen, attendant to their status as craftsmen, articulated a creed of camaraderie, mutuality, and individual responsibility that deepened the meaning of trade unionism for its participants. **The Carpenter**, the monthly journal of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, stressed these values most poignantly through the poems of T.C. Walsh, President of New York Local 63, and the writings of Peter McGuire, the union's General Secretary. In one of his most evocative poems, Walsh sought to appeal to the building tradesmen's sense of manliness, pride and fraternity:

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I long to meet my fellow man
And greet him as a "brother"
And know his thoughts as mine, doth plan
Success for one another.

When sickness comes, my brother nigh
A helping hand to give
His goodness quiets my children's cry
And bids one hope to live.

That I for him might do the same
If sickness should him smite
Thus brotherhood thy very name
Gives friendship's true delight.

What a fool is he who will doth stay
In one path of dire disgrace
Without a friend to cheer his way
But "Scab" stamped on his face.

Scab! How foul that wretch appears
To us on unions' roll
Nor scorn nor derisive jeers
Can weaken his foul soul.

O' why will he not be a "man"
And join us as a "brother"
And lend his aid to our great plan
"Success for one another". (28)

The Carpenter also underscored the importance of an ethical code of behavior in editorials, articles and advice columns. One selection entitled, "What Labor Men Say", told readers "not to backbite each other", "not to identify themselves with any political party of the capitalists" and "to agitate with a view to the general enlightenment of the membership". A reprint from **The Painter,** published by the New York Painters' Union, identified the duties of a union "man". Among these were the obligation to attend meetings and discuss issues in a "friendly spirit", the responsibility to help fellow unemployed members find employment and the need to assist other building tradesmen organize unions. Purportedly a commitment to trade unionism was edifying, for by asserting a "high sense" of the position of a union man, a building

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tradesman would develop mental "vigor and strength" and "raise the union in the opinion of others". (29) In short, the conscientious fulfillment of the responsibilities of union membership promoted self-respect and personal growth which enabled unions to gain acceptance from employers and the general public.

To Peter McGuire, the nurturing of trade union values meant preparing workers to advance labor's cause in other ways besides gaining the respect of employers. To him the essence of trade unionism was cooperation and "solidarity": the antithesis of the "egoism and spirit of submission" that capitalist relations of production engendered. Unions could "emancipate" workers from both material and intellectual deprivation. By establishing well-funded and well-administered benefit plans covering sickness, unemployment and funeral expenses, they could offer workers some protection against life's uncertainties and thereby help them maintain an adequate standard of living. By helping members to develop new skills, such as public speaking and organizing meetings, by encouraging the discussion of political, economic and social issues, and by founding libraries, unions could enrich the lives of workers and provide them with the inspiration and confidence to tackle the challenges facing labor.(30)

Above all, unions prepared workers to assert their rights against employers who were not persuaded by labor's moral claims to an eight hour day and liveable wages. This role took on a greater urgency now that "avaricious employers", McGuire noted, "are resorting to lockouts and the blacklist and taking undue advantage of dull times in the building trades". McGuire felt building tradesmen and their unions needed to "combine their forces" and recognize their common

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interests.(31) Towards this end, following the successful merger of the United Order of Carpenters and the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, he urged the formation of local and regional Building Trades Leagues. In a pamphlet, originally distributed at the 1891 Labor Day parades in New York and Chicago, he generalized from the carpenters' experience to advocate the principle of organizational cooperation and labor solidarity:

> When one is attacked all are alike ready to rush to the rescue. The more complete and perfect the chain of distinct trade organizations, the less will be the resistance offered in time on the part of the employing builders and contractors.(32)

Nevertheless, building trades unions found that admonitions, words of advice and forceful appeals to shared values were in themselves insufficient to develop the group discipline necessary for effective labor activity. Consequently, building trades unions established strict standards of conduct and enforced them vigorously. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and the Bricklayers' and Masons' International Union maintained rules against drunkeness, slandering of officers, fraudulent claims for benefits and the misuse of funds. In 1890, when the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners in New York was preparing for a possible strike to secure the eight hour day, the chairman of the union's strike committee urged members to avoid drinking and to reject violence to prevent the "monopolists the chance to say carpenters committed unlawful acts". Bricklayers singled out the behavior of "union wreckers" who "deliberately, and with evil intent", ignored the union's strike call, and levied fines against the guilty parties. For their part, the Carpenters regarded strikebreaking as a grievous offense against the interests of the membership and treated offenders harshly with suspension or expulsion.(33)

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Building tradesmen through their unions also projected a collective self-image that demonstrated their camaraderie and fraternity with other members of the "family" of labor. On May 1 and in early September building tradesmen along with other workers participated in what contemporary newspapers described as "festivals" and "parades". Both May Day and Labor Day celebrated the workers' rightful place in American society and reaffirmed organized labor's determination to secure the eight hour day, the benchmark of workers' economic and social rights for many in the movement.

Building tradesmen played prominent roles in these activites in 1890 and 1891, during the crest of a wave of sympathy strikes. During the May 1 "festival" of 1890, 15,000 members of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, Fresco Painters, German Painters' Union, United Framers' Union and Local 11 of the Bricklayers' and Masons' International Union marched up Broadway to Union Square behind banners which read "The Toilers Produce, the Idler Enjoys", "1,000,000 Unemployed", "a Handful of Millionaires Own Half the Country" and "Eight Hours for Work, Eight for Rest and Eight Hours for What We Will". On September 1, 1890, 17,000 joined the Labor Day march endorsed by New York's Central Labor Union. Charles Rogers, Chairman of the Board of Walking Delegates and President of the Marble Cutters' Union, served as the march's Grand Marshall and led contingents from the Housesmiths' Union, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, the Granite and Stone Cutters' Association and the Empire Association of Steam Fitters.(34) In the 1891 commemoration of Labor Day building tradesmen were equally prominent. Representatives from the Steam Fitters, Progressive Painters, Progressive Varnishers, Slate and Metal Roofers, Granite

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Cutters and Housesmiths served on the many committees responsible for organizing the day's activities, including the publication of a handbook containing poetry, essays on the "dangers of the sweating system" and public education for working class children, and a summary of the People's Party platform. (35)

In sum, many factors contributed to the ability of building tradesmen to develop viable unions and wage effective strikes. Small work groups fostered a common identity among practitioners of the same craft. The interdependency of the production process helped building tradesmen to recognize the possible benefits of mutual support in labor-employer disputes. The flexible labor needs of employers and contractors and their premium on the skills of experienced craftsmen increased the bargaining power of the walking delegates in whom the unions had vested considerable authority. Moreover, since subcontractors' relations with contractors depended on completing work on schedule, frequent disruptions of production could jeopardize their ability to win future contracts. Lastly, the efforts of the unions to instill building tradesmen with a shared sense of purpose was significant. Through the philosophy of trade unionism by one of the labor movement's most visionary leaders, poetic appeals to the "manliness" of workers and the enforcement of strict rules of conduct, organized building tradesmen articulated an ethical code of behavior which emphasized the virtues of responsibility, discipline and cooperation without which trade union action would have been less effective or rewarding. These values were reaffirmed in a "movement culture", not entirely distinct to building tradesmen, which found its broadest expression in the workers' celebration of May Day and Labor

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Day.

These aspects of the building tradesmen's work experience, union organization and cultural activity influenced the frequency, dynamics and vitality of their strikes. The strike became the building tradesmen's primary means of enforcing union standards. Walking delegates did not hesitate to call members to put down their tools to pressure contractors and subcontractors to pay the union scale, observe overtime provisions and honor the closed shop. Between 1887 and 1894, 37 percent of the approximately 4,000 reported strikes in New York State occurred in New York's and Brooklyn's building trades industry. A significant proportion of these strikes were sympathy walkouts. Of the 1,450 strikes involving building tradesmen, 35 percent elicited the participation of workers who were not direct parties in the dispute. The number of sympathy strikes peaked at 350 from 1890 to 1892, when they surpassed wages, employment of nonunion men and the reduction of hours as causes of labor disputes.(36)

Other features of the building tradesmen's labor activity stand out. Although they showed a strong propensity to strike, their walkouts, even when they were supported by more than one union or craft, usually targeted only one establishment or one employer, were brief and consisted of few workers. Strikes spanning an entire trade were noteworthy because they were rare. The bricklayers waged a major strike in 1884, when they attained a basic scale covering pay and hours, and then for the next two decades remained quiescent, addressing their differences with employers through negotiations, mediation and arbitration. The plumbers fought one protracted battle with their employers over the apprenticeship system in 1886 and thereafter focused

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their energies on winning closed shop agreements. Both the framers and carpenters had many skirmishes with employers, but except in 1887 when framers struck for two weeks to gain a nine hour day and higher wages, and 1894 when 2,500 members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners ceased working for one week to eliminate the "lumping system", their strikes were not long or broadly based.(37)

In general, after building trades unions established the basic framework for upgrading conditions of employment, such as closed shop provisions, pay and hour standards and work rules, future efforts to improve them did not necessitate strikes. For example, by 1891 most union building tradesmen gained the eight hour day with a minimum show of force. The Operative Plasterers' Society, the Journeymen Plumbers, and the Empire Association of Steam Fitters achieved this breakthrough through negotiated settlements. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters' effort for the eight hour day was so painless and thorough that one observer commented: the "employers with few exceptions looked at the matter pleasantly and made no trouble with it".(38) The United Framers' Union meanwhile struck 115 contractors for one day before the Employing Framers' Association acceded to the union's demand. Only the metal roofers and the housesmiths had difficulty in securing a reduction in their hours. The former won an eight hour day after a two month strike sustained by financial contributions from the carpenters', bricklayers' and plumbers' unions. The latter failed to win a nine hour day despite waging a six week long strike which tied up work at Manhattan's criminal court building, the Astor Hotel and Carnegie Hall.(39)

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The exceptions nevertheless proved the rule: the overwhelming majority of strikes in the building trades involved the enforcement of standards that the unions suspected the employers of violating. Building tradesmen were provoked to strike because contractors or subcontractors hired nonunion workers, failed to pay accrued wages at a specified date, ignored overtime provisions or threatened the autonomy of a particular craft. In short, most of the building tradesmen's militancy was in defense of previously won gains, rather than making new inroads.

Probably the most impressive feature of the building tradesmen's strikes was their high rate of success. From 1887 to 1894 80 percent of the strikes in New York City's building trades ended with the strikers winning some, if not most, of their demands. During the same period, about two-thirds of all strikes in New York State and slightly more than a half of all strikes in the United States ended successfully for strikers. The rate of success of sympathy strikes in New York's building trades was comparably even more noteworthy, as 70 percent of these strikes were successful while less than half of the sympathy strikes in all industries throughout New York State experienced a similar outcome.(40)

The successful record of New York's building tradesmen in their strikes was largely attributable to the extensive network of trade union organization and collaboration, the vulnerability of the industry to job actions by a handful of workers which could rapidly expand to other crafts and the uneven development of employers' associations which could help sustain firms targeted for strikes. What should not be overlooked, however, is that the effectiveness of the building tradesmen's strikes varied with the relation between forces in a trade.

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The bricklayers who showed the lowest propensity to strike, and the carpenters who participated in the most strikes from 1887 to 1894, both experienced higher than average rates of success. In contrast, the effectiveness of strikes by plumbers was inconsistent: from 1887 to 1889 plumbers' strikes ended in defeat as frequently as in victory, but from 1890 to 1894 their rate of success was comparable to that of strikes by other building tradesmen.

Both the bricklayers' and masons' low propensity to strike and high success rate stemmed from their position in the labor process. Their labor was required primarily in the early stages of construction work, most critically when the foundations were laid, although in the erection of multi-story buildings they worked at later stages as well. Because they often worked before other building tradesmen were expected to perform their duties, they could expect no sympathetic support if they struck. Therefore, they tended to de-emphasize the use of strikes; instead, stressing their strategic role in construction work, they counted on direct talks with employers to resolve alleged violations of collective bargaining agreements. Yet the same factors that made frequent strikes either unnecessary or unwise influenced the prospects of success for the strikes of other building tradesmen. Accordingly, Peter McGuire strongly advised locals to avoid calling strikes before bricklayers began their work, if they expected their walkouts to be effective, in recognition of their importance in production.(41)

Another factor provided bricklayers and masons leverage without the need to strike. They generally worked directly for contractors who were responsible for the overall construction project. In other words, the absence of subcontracting as a means of organizing production and

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allocating labor allowed bricklayers to apply pressure at the center of the decision making process. Therefore, although the Mason Builders' Association was one of the best organized employers' associations, it did not pose an obstacle to effective labor activity. In fact, the extensive degree of organization by both workers and employers contributed to a stabilization of relations, occasionally interrupted by short strikes to which employers had little difficulty accommodating.

Meanwhile, union plumbers faced a group of employers who were better organized than they were. For a considerable part of the 1880's and 1890's New York's and Brooklyn's plumbers vacillated as to whether they would ally with a national union, and concomitantly had difficulty in establishing a unified organization to challenge the employers. This was most evident when the Journeymen Plumbers struck in 1886 to gain a greater say in apprenticeship terms. The recently founded union sought to put into practice standards the master plumbers considered an usurpation of their prerogative. A year after the strike, representatives from the Master Plumbers' Association were instrumental in the formation of the National Association of Builders, an industry wide employers' association, based in Chicago.(42)

By 1890, trade unionism among New York's and Brooklyn's plumbers had rebounded from the 1886 defeat. The Journeymen's Plumbers' Union stressed the negotiation of agreements with employers that included a closed shop in return for a pledge that union members would work only for employers who were members of the Master Plumbers' Association.(43) In the ensuing years the union cautiously deployed the strike weapon to pressure individual employers to honor its pay scale and hourly provisions and occasionally supported the strikes of carpenters,

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framers and other building tradesmen. A growth in membership, a change in strategy, and a growing stability encouraged by reciprocal exclusive pacts with employers enhanced the position of union plumbers. Therefore, when they struck for their demands, they did not risk a wholesale confrontation with a united front of employers, and when they supported other striking building tradesmen, they rarely had to fear the employers' retaliation.

The carpenters encountered more organizing obstacles than bricklayers, and more potential threats to their basic conditions of employment than plumbers, but nevertheless developed the means to confront these challenges effectively. The growth of subcontracting complicated efforts to establish uniform wage rates and workdays, not to mention to enforce the union scale, for, in many cases, carpenters' unions did not deal directly with builders or general contractors responsible for work being done at many sites. However, a merger between the two leading unions -- the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the United Order of Carpenters -- and a pact with the third, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, enabled New York's and Brooklyn's carpenters to avoid the draining jurisdictional disputes that plagued the painters' and housesmiths' unions, and created a base, which the plumbers appeared to lack, from which they could launch strikes involving many worksites and workers. In addition, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners displayed an ability to identify problems and establish priorities so that, in the words of Peter McGuire, they did not "enter strikes for any trifling cause or fanciful wrong". For example, the carpenters' campaign against "lumping" did not result in a major strike until 1894, seven years after the merger

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creating the United Brotherhood and four years after the union attained relatively uniform wage rates and an eight hour day. Even after a victorious strike the union explored less confrontational ways to convince contractors to assume responsibility for the employment of carpenters.(44)

Few major strikes erupted in New York's or Brooklyn's building trades industry between 1886 and 1898, but those that did illustrate some of the more prominent features of the labor activity of building tradesmen. In 1886, despite the concerted drive by many unions to gain a reduction in the workday, only the plumbers' strike, called over the issue of apprenticeship regulations, involved a significant number of building tradesmen and lasted for more than a week.(45) The issue of apprenticeship became urgent since the number of apprentices was growing at so alarming a rate that in many plumbing firms they equalled the number of journeymen. William Flood, Recording Secretary of the Journeymen Plumbers, argued that if the growth rate of apprentices continued for another five years, an overabundance of plumbers would result, threatening the journeymen's job security and leaving a plumber "unable to support decently a family on the pittance which he can only expect when supply and demand are so unevenly balanced". (46)

Consequently, the union sought a greater role in the selection and evaluation of apprentices, hoping that entry into the trade could be more closely regulated and thereby restricted. Union representatives contended that since journeymen trained the apprentices they should set the rules, including eligibility requirements, the length of apprenticeships, the basic content of the training, the ratio between apprentices and journeymen and the method of judging the competency of

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apprentices. The Master Plumbers' Association agreed with portions of the journeymen's apprenticeship guidelines — the starting age of sixteen years, a five year term of training and the prerequisite that apprentices possess basic reading and math skills. However, they disagreed with the more critical aspects of the journeymen's regulations. They rejected the ratio of only one apprentice for every four journeymen, the journeymen's claim to veto the employers' nominees for apprenticeship and the union's right to sit on a board of examiners that evaluated apprentices after their five year training period as infringements on the employers' ability to run their businesses.(47)

In late August, when talks between the two groups failed to resolve these differences, the Journeymen Plumbers began the strike. Three months later, with no break in the impasse in sight, the Board of Walking Delegates endorsed sympathy strikes at some of New York's largest construction projects where "scab" plumbers were working. Yet despite the support of carpenters, steam fitters and masons, the plumbers failed to make much headway. By Christmas about half of the 1,000 strikers had returned to work without any tangible gains except the assurance that forfeiting their union membership would not be a condition of employment. The strike limped along through February with scattered outbreaks of sympathetic action occurring at building sites in the Wall Street area. In essence, the strike petered out without the union of the Board of Walking Delegates officially calling it off.(48)

However, the plumbers' defeat after a protracted struggle did not result in irreparable damage to the union. Both during and after the strike there was no bitter wrangling between the two parties or any erosion of mutual respect, leading one observer to report that the

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strike was fought "almost with good humor".(49) In addition, the Journeymen Plumbers remained intact and retained its pay scale. In the next few years union plumbers regrouped, forming the largest locals in the United Association of Plumbers, and slowly began establishing closer relations with the Master Plumbers culminating in exclusive closed shop agreements. In the following decade, union representatives and employers joined forces to lobby the New York State Legislature successfully to introduce a formal examination to assess the "practical and theoretical" knowledge of junior plumbers upon completion of their apprenticeships. In addition, the Journeymen Plumbers gained seats on the Plumbers' Board of Examiners, which the Master Plumbers' Association had controlled exclusively during the 1880's. (50)

Between 1887 and 1889 no large building trades strikes occurred, and in general the level of industrial conflict ebbed. In that three year period there were less than 400 strikes of which approximately 25 percent were sympathy walkouts. In 1890, however, strike activity became more widespread and intense, with one-third of the slightly more than 300 walkouts being sympathy strikes. This resurgence of conflict continued for another two years with the number of strikes in 1891 and 1892 each surpassing that of any year in the previous decade.(51) The growth in labor militancy occurred in large part because of an upswing in the construction industry which reduced the risk that unemployed workers would take the jobs of strikers, and a more finely tuned network of trade union organization which facilitated the use of sympathy strikes. In addition, the development of employer associations and closer cooperation among them resulted in longer and more hotly contested strikes.

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In 1890 the largest building trades strike in New York and Brooklyn involved the Housesmiths' Union. On April 8, 1890, 50 members of the union struck the Hecla Architectural Bronze and Iron Works in Williamsburg, Brooklyn because the owners Paulson and Eger resisted the union's demands for a closed shop, a nine hour workday and recognition of the walking delegate's right to visit worksites. Three days later the Board of Walking Delegates authorized a general sympathy strike when two walking delegates inspecting for nonunion men were denied access to the Williamsburg premises. More than 1,000 carpenters, framers, gas fitters, painters, plumbers, and stairbuilders respected the strike call, and the following day the employers promised not to withhold permission to visiting walking delegates.(52)

The next year the Housesmiths stood at the center of a sympathy strike which pitted the building trades unions against the Boss Roofers' Association and the Iron Manufacturers' Association. At issue was the Housesmiths' demand that the eight hour day be put into effect on May 1. The Iron Manufacturers' Association, consisting of 60 firms, claimed New York and Brooklyn housesmiths earned 25 percent more in nine hours than housesmiths in other cities did in ten hours and argued that because regional competition was brisk they could not afford to reduce hours and maintain the same daily rate of pay. In addition, J.M. Cornell, one of the leaders of the Iron Manufacturers' Association, charged that the Housesmiths' Union demanded the firing of members of the Architectural Iron Workers' Union, an AFL affiliate. To the Housesmiths these claims were a "subterfuge" for the employers' unwillingness to consider the "justice" of the eight hour demand. (53)

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Not discouraged by the employers' recalcitrance, in late April the housesmiths prepared for what they thought would be a brief strike. Already 1000 framers were out on strike for an eight hour day, an action the housesmiths regarded as sympathetic. On April 30, 3,000 housesmiths walked off their jobs, interfering with work at a number of large construction projects in Manhattan, and the next day the strike swelled to 4,500 participants. Nevertheless as the strike continued, support from other building tradesmen was not immediately forthcoming. The Board of Walking Delegates announced it would authorize a general walkout only if other firms besides the Jackson Architectural Iron Works hired nonunion men. This caution stemmed from the rivalry between the Housesmiths' Union, affiliated with the Knights of Labor and the Architectural Iron Workers' Union, both of which were members of the Board. A walking delegate from the Architectural Iron Workers, Otto Hohensee, saw the origins of the friction between the two organizations in the Knights of Labor's inability to persuade the Iron Workers to affiliate and the Housesmiths' refusal to cooperate in an eight hour campaign. George Warner from the Housesmiths' Union denied there was tension between the "outside" housesmiths represented by his union and the "inside" housesmiths, many of whom were members of the Architectural Iron Workers.(54)

This cautious approach also reflected the balance of forces on the board where representatives from AFL affiliates such as the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union sat alongside officials from the Progressive Painters' Union, the Progressive Varnishers' Union and the Paper Hangers' Union among other affiliates of the Knights of Labor. Also, there were a number of

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independent unions, including the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, Local 2 of the United Association of Plumbers, and the Steam Fitters' Union who wanted to avoid taking sides in an apparent jurisdictional dispute.(55)

Yet the fact remained that when the Architectural Iron Workers reached a separate agreement with the Iron Manufacturers' Association on May 4, the unity in the ranks, so vigorously emphasized by the Housesmiths' Union, disintegrated. Equally significant, the other building trades unions continued to grant only limited support to the housesmiths as sympathy strikes took place at only a few worksites. However, when it appeared that the union's survival, and the members' jobs, were at risk, the Board of Walking Delegates intervened to help the Housesmiths reach a settlement that stipulated that the employers would rehire all the strikers they could accommodate on the old terms, that is, without an eight hour day. Those housesmiths unable to secure employment would be compensated through a strike fund augmented by contributions from member unions. (56)

In 1892 the most noteworthy strikes featured the carpenters and housesmiths. The former resulted in an unqualified victory for the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, and the latter was unquestionably a victory for the employers, leaving the union barely intact. At issue in the carpenters' strike was John Downey's hiring of cabinet makers to do the work of carpenters below the latter's wage and hour scale. After Downey disavowed an agreement announced by the Board of Walking Delegates in mid-February, calling for the dismissal of five cabinet makers, the board ordered all member unions to support the carpenters by striking all worksites where Downey employed men.(57)

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A strike committee consisting of representatives from the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, the Progressive Painters and the Steam Fitters' Union among others oversaw the setting of pickets at the Hotel Waldorf and Hotel New Netherlands, and convinced officials of the Building Material Drivers' Union not to deliver any material to the two hotels until the strike was settled. Construction on the two hotels, as well as the Metropolitan Life Insurance Building and the Criminal Court Building, stopped. Consequently on March 3, less than two weeks after the strike began, John Downey and Company acceded to all of the carpenters' demands: that the cabinet makers work at the carpenters scale of $3.50 for an eight hour day and nonunion men be discharged.(58)

The immediate issue in the Housesmiths' strike of 1892 concerned the hiring of nonunion men by the Jackson Architectural Iron Works, the union's old enemy. What began as a job action at the Criminal Court Building in late May became a showdown a month later between the Housesmiths, the Public Cartmen's Union and the Building Material Handlers' Union against the Iron League and the Building Material Dealers' Association. When the Jackson Architectural Iron Works refused to dismiss the nonunion housesmiths, the Board of Walking Delegates threatened to call for strikes wherever Jackson's products were used.(59)

This decision only strengthened the employer's resolve. The Iron League passed a resolution signed by 40 firms declaring that all members of the Housesmiths' Union would be fired and only "faithful" housesmiths would be considered for rehiring. The Iron League scrupulously kept a blacklist aimed at weeding out leaders of the Housesmiths' Union and

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delegated the authority to foremen of member firms to determine who was eligible for reinstatement. Furthermore, when the Public Cartmen's Union pledged not to deliver any building material to contractors with whom the Iron League had contracts, the employers took punitive action. Accordingly, thirteen members of the Building Material Dealers' Association signed a resolution requiring cartmen to abide by the orders of only the dealers, and when the cartmen ignored this policy, 23 of them, refusing to handle material used by two of the struck companies, were fired. (60)

The cartmen and building material handlers retaliated by agreeing to strike the thirteen signatories of the resolution. Concentrating their efforts on barges in the East River and Hudson River, the cartmen deployed what one local newspaper called "rather forceable arguments" to prevent Italian laborers from unloading bricks destined for building sites. Nevertheless, the sympathy strike in support of the housesmiths was losing momentum. Members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners refused to honor the Housesmiths' picket lines, recalling that union's lack of support for the carpenters' strike against John Downey earlier in the year. Instead, the strike's focus shifted from the Architectural Iron Works and the Iron League to the Building Material Dealers' Association. 1,500 building and allied tradesmen, including carpenters, framers and plasterers, among others, at more than 100 building sites joined the strike in support of the cartmen and building material handlers. (61)

As the strike wore on for two more months, the employers gained the upperhand. In early August a united front of building material dealers, brick dealers and building contractors began to recruit

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nonunion replacements for striking cartmen and material handlers. Simultaneously, sympathy strikers from the building trades unions returned to work in the hundreds, leaving the strike on the verge of collapse. Striving to reverse the tide, the Progressive Painters' Union started a campaign to convince building contractors to buy only from building material dealers who employed union labor. Pursuing this initiative, the Board of Walking Delegates reached an understanding with a number of contractors that they would purchase material from unionized dealers. Consequently, on August 9 the Board officially ordered an end to the strike, although no formal settlement had been signed with the employers.

Meanwhile, the strike had taken its toll on members of the Housesmiths' Union. The union's strike fund had been exhausted by mid-July, and the financial assistance from other unions did not compensate for the estimated $500,000 in wages lost during the strike. The cooperation and determination shown by the Iron League proved overwhelming, as most member firms enforced the blacklist religiously and used their contacts with out-of-town employers to recruit workers and purchase supplies. In brief, the employers simply were able to outlast the strikers who faced the prospect of losing their jobs if they persisted. Consequently, after six weeks virtually all of the striking housesmiths applied for reinstatement with their previous employers, deserting the union in the process. (62)

The strikes during this period of intense industrial conflict illustrate both the vitality and limitations of the building tradesmen's labor activity. Whether or not they ended successfully, they elicited an impressive breadth of participation from a variety of building

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tradesmen and allied workers among material handlers and cartmen. Strikers demonstrated a strong commitment to the principle of mutual support in recognition that the mobilization of as many workers as possible at a worksite or within the industry increased the likelihood of success.

On the other hand, building trades unions discovered that they could become entangled in their own web of interlocking relationships. In the housesmiths' and cartmen's disputes in 1892, sympathy strikes grew out of control as support for one group of workers triggered similar action on behalf of others who came to the defense of those who initiated the strike. Organizing support for the Housesmiths' Union was difficult enough given the determination and unity of the Iron League, but when the Board of Walking Delegates confronted the task of defending the cartmen and building material handlers, it became involved in a struggle that threatened to engulf many unions.

The secret to the success of the building tradesmen's strikes was quick, timely and targeted action. Strikes by workers involved in key phases of construction and against individual employers at a few worksites produced the intended results: a sudden halt to all work and a satisfactory settlement of the issues of contention. In this scenario the building tradesmen held the advantage since contractors and subcontractors could lose business to their competitors if work stoppages continued unabated. This was particularly a concern where an agreement between a union and an employers' association had been honored by most parties, and where the strike targeted a firm that ignored the agreement or had never signed it in the first place. Such a maverick employer risked opposing the union without the support of other

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employers. The 1892 strike against John Downey owed much of its success to the fact that carpenters were able to concentrate their forces against one employer and at a few worksites. In the 1891 and 1892 Housesmiths' strikes, however, the struck firms were hardly mavericks; in fact, they were leading members of an employers' association which aggressively sought alliances with other employers' associations in the industry to rebuff the strikers.

The strikes from 1890 to 1892 shed light on two other aspects of the building tradesmen's labor activity. As discussed earlier, most strikes in the building trades concerned the enforcement of standards or the defense of previously won gains, and not the introduction of new standards. Building tradesmen were extremely effective in preventing employers from circumventing union pay scales, ignoring overtime provisions or violating closed shop agreements. The success of the Housesmiths' strike against Paulson and Eger in 1890 was largely attributable to the ability of the union and the Board of Walking Delegates to place the firm on the defensive for its violation of an understanding that walking delegates would be permitted to visit worksites pursuant to their union responsibilities. The building trades unions understood that upholding the right of walking delegates to visit worksites was central to their ability to enforce standards and that they could not yield on such an important issue. For their part, Paulson and Egar could afford to give ground since they were not relinquishing any significant authority over their business operations or granting workers any material benefits that might reduce the firm's profits. Moreover, settling on the strikers' terms might improve relations with the Housesmiths' Union, thereby reducing the prospects of

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future strikes. The successful strike against Downey also involved the enforcement of union standards; in this case, hiring only members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners at the union's scale of wages and hours.

The strikes also demonstrated that unity among building trades unions was not always durable. The Housesmiths' relationship with other unions represented on the Board of Walking Delegates illustrates this most dramatically. During their strike in 1891 for a nine hour day, tensions between the Housesmiths' Union and the Architectural Iron Workers' Union, ostensibly because of the former's overzealous efforts to integrate the latter into the Knights of Labor, led to a split in the strikers' ranks. The following year, the Housesmiths failed to win the support of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, one of the most influential building trades unions. In fact, at some sites union carpenters took the places of striking housesmiths.(63) In contrast, the Carpenters and other building trades unions extensively mobilized in defense of the cartmen and building material handlers.

During the rest of the decade few if any conflicts approached the intensity or the breadth of the housesmiths' and cartmen's-material handlers' strikes. In 1894, however, the carpenters flexed their muscles in two disputes: one, to pressure New York's Board of Education and the contractors responsible for construction of the city's schools to pay at union rates, and the other to eliminate the lumping system which threatened to undermine union standards. The first strike waged by 2,000 carpenters and sympathetic building tradesmen halted work at 50 construction sites. Two weeks after the strike's commencement the Board of Education and contractors, under pressure to complete work on the

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buildings before the school term began, agreed to honor the pay scale of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and rehire all the strikers. (64)

Then in early September, less than a month after the school strike, union carpenters mounted a coordinated campaign against the lumping system. In an unprecedented show of cooperation among the A.F.L. affiliated United Brotherhood of Carpenters, the independent Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, and the Knights of Labor affiliated Progressive Society of Carpenters, the three unions declared a joint strike. On the second day of the strike nonunion carpenters, paid from 50 cents to $1.00 less than their union counterparts, walked off their jobs. Faced with the disruption of work at 250 mid-Manhattan construction sites, eight of the largest contractors pledged to hire carpenters directly and to sever their ties with the subcontractors. As scattered sympathy strikes by plasterers, steam fitters and elevator builders broke out in the Wall Street area, many more contractors settled on the unions' terms. Ten days into the strike only a few contractors overseeing work at six Harlem building sites continued to hold out. However, by the end of the month they, too, agreed to the unions' demands.(65)

Thereafter labor activity simmered down throughout the building trades. The carpenters resorted to strikes to compel individual employers to respect union pay rates and the eight hour day; only on one occasion, in 1896, was the conflict extensive. Even so, it was limited to construction sites in the Bronx and lasted less than a week, as virtually all of the 65 contractors agreed to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners' scale. As an alternative to strikes, union carpenters sought to convince the contractors of the wisdom of

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resolving problems amicably. From 1895 to 1898 New York's District Council of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners reached understandings with contractors and architects that excluded the use of nonunion and out-of-town prefabricated wood products. Capping the union's success was a pact signed with the leaders of the General Contractors' Association, including Otto Eidletz and P.J. Walsh, and the Builders and Master Carpenters that required all employers to use only union made material. (66)

The carpenters' approach was representative of a shift in the relations between building trades unions and the employers. As both groups became more effectively organized, the preconditions for a systematic form of collective bargaining developed. Strikes, either to secure additional gains or to enforce established standards, had proven to be costly to unions even when they were successful. Similarly, the stakes for employers who refused to respect the position of unions were high. Therefore, it could be in the mutual interest of unions and employers to establish a stable **modus vivendi.**

Since the mid-1880's the bricklayers had set an example by negotiating contracts that minimized the need for strikes. Their conciliatory unionism, which at one time distinguished them from other building trades unions, and resulted in their absence from the Board of Walking Delegates, by the late 1890's had become more common. The unions representing plumbers -- locals of the National Association of Journeymen Plumbers and the Amalgamated Society of Journeymen Plumbers -- accommodated to the strength of the Master Plumbers' Association by successfully lobbying with the employers' group for legislation that established tighter licensing requirements and guaranteed union

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representation on the board of examiners which was responsible for enforcing apprenticeship standards.(67) And, as already noted, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners reached an understanding with the industry's most influential contractors that raised the union's hopes that less confrontational relations and a return of prosperity would usher in a period of growth.

As union building tradesmen approached the turn of the century, old patterns in their labor activity continued and new ones emerged. The effective enforcement of union standards and their extension to additional employers reinforced the association of favorable conditions of employment with union membership, thereby strengthening the unions themselves. The network of interlocking relationships through the Board of Walking Delegates and the interdependency of building tradesmen in the labor process remained a vital force. Difficulties with competitive unionism within the same trade persisted. Two plumbers' unions existed -- one affiliated with the national organization and the other stubbornly independent -- and union painters continued to be plagued by internecine conflict paralleling the split within the national union.

Simultaneously, tendencies apparent in the early 1890's became more pronounced by the end of the decade. In recognition of the dominance of local industrial and labor markets, local affiliates retained a substantial degree of autonomy. Increasingly, though, the national organization assumed a greater role in the affairs of building trades unions.(68) The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners vigorously implemented a policy of equalization of dues and benefits and uniform membership regulations among locals and districts. In 1897 the request of New York's District Council for funds to assist

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its campaign against the use of nonunion made building material was honored by the national union only when it abided by the General Executive Board's ruling to discontinue charging members of newly founded locals a $5 fee for working cards.(69) In subsequent years the national unions among plumbers and painters effectively reorganized, which enabled them to bring New York's and Brooklyn's organizations into the fold, thereby ending over a decade of competitive unionism.

More significantly, New York's and Brooklyn's building trades unions demonstrated a more accommodationist orientation in their activity. More found the example of the Bricklayers and Masons attractive and likewise sought to negotiate contracts which included mechanisms for resolving grievances and adjudicating disputes. The Carpenters discovered that contractors were amenable to accepting the standard of union labor so long as it was good business to do so, and therefore they did not have to resort to strike action as frequently. Journeymen plumbers and their employers realized that they both stood to gain from cooperating on the issue of apprenticeship that previously caused them to clash.

In short, building tradesmen appeared to be developing a new community of interest. No longer did the community simply include members of the same craft and other unionized building tradesmen, for by the late 1890's unions and employers had found some common ground. Where the decade began with a series of showdowns in large sympathy strikes, it closed with an informal pact acknowledging that each group was too strong to force the other to bend to its will. However, the question remained: could the building trades, characterized by labor conflict for so long, sustain this **detente**?

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FOOTNOTES

1. **New York Sun**, May 2, 1886; **Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac** (1891), pp. 144-146; William Haber, **Industrial Relations in the Building Industry** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), pp. 276-305; Gary Fink, ed., **Labor Unions** (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977) pp. 44-46, 49-51, 285-286, and 289-291; and Jonathan Garlock, **Guide to the Local Assemblies of the Knights of Labor** (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 313-338.

2. **The Carpenter**, January and March 1897; Walter Galenson, **The United Brotherhood of Carpenters: The First Hundred Years** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 17; **Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac** (1891), p. 146; and Edwin Fenton, "Immigrants and Unions: A Case Study, Italians and American Labor," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1957), pp. 141-142.

3. **The Carpenter**, September and October 1886, and June 1887; and **The Sun**, May 2, 1886.

4. **The Carpenter**, May 15, June 15, and July 15, 1888.

5. **Ibid**, April 15, 1889, November 1894, August 1895, and January and March 1897; and Galenson, pp. 77 and 78.

6. Martin Segal, **The Rise of the United Association: National Unionism in the Pipe Trades, 1884-1924** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 20-26; and **John Swinton's Paper**, August 29, and September 19, 1886.

7. Segal, pp.28-30; and New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **First Annual Report** (1886), pp. 156 and 157.

8. Segal, pp. 36-40.

9. **Ibid**, pp. 48, 101, and 102; and **The Plumbers' Trade Journal, Gas, Steam and Hot Water Fitters' Review**, November 1, 1898, p. 282.

10. American Federation of Labor Records. The AFL and the Unions: National and International Records from the Samuel Gompers Era (Sanford, North Carolina, 1982), Jack Elliot to Gompers, September 15, 1890, December 26, 1890, February 5, 1891; and **The Workmen's Advocate**, August 23, 1890 and February 28, 1891.

11. **The Workmen's Advocate**, March 14, and 21, 1891; and American Federation of Labor Records, Elliott to Gompers, April 27, 1891; New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 37, 38, 39 and 41; and Haber, pp. 297 and 298.

12 For an insightful discussion of McGuire's conception of unions' potential, see Mark Erlich, "Peter J. McGuire's Trade Unionism: Socialism of a Trade Union Kind?" **Labor History**, 24 (Spring 1983), 165-197.

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13. Segal, p. 48; and United States. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin #499, **Wages in the United States From Colonial Times to 1928**, pp. 209-210.

14. Fink, ed., **Labor Unions**, pp. 271-274. McGuire backed the position of the New York and Brooklyn locals in recognition of the friendly relations between the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the Progressive Painters in both cities and the influence affiliates of the Knights of Labor had on the Board of Walking Delegates. If the UBCJ had supported the Brotherhood of Painters against the Progressive Painters, an all-out war between building trades unions affiliated with the AFL and Knights of Labor might easily have ensued. Such a conflict might have proved particularly risky for the UBCJ since until 1888 it had difficulty establishing a base in either New York or Brooklyn.

15. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 114-118, 127-132, 149, 155, 156, 159, and 160-162; and **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896), pp. 724-779. Increases in building tradesmen's wage rates were even more impressive in light of declining living costs. A study conducted by New York State's Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1892 showed that retail prices for food, cooking accessories and fuel dropped between 1886 and 1892. Nation-wide data for the 1890's showed a similar decline in retail food prices, at least until 1897, and a corresponding increase in the real wages of all workers even during the depression of 1894-1897. The real weekly earnings of building tradesmen in the United States rose consistently until 1897, when they began a six year period of stability. The real earnings of unionized building tradesmen steadily climbed in the 1890's except from 1895 to 1896 and from 1897 to 1898. Thereafter their real earnings rose annually until 1918. See Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Tenth Annual Report** (1892), pp. 279-283; United States. Bureau of Labor, Bulletin #113, **Wages and Hours of Labor, 1890 to 1905**, pp. 20-21; and Paul Douglas, **Real Wages in the United States, 1890-1926** (University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 134-137.

16. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report**, pp. 145 and 158; **Ninth Annual Report**, pp. 814-818 and 854-857; and Segal, pp. 28-30.

17. Haber, pp. 131, 136 and 137; **The Carpenter**, March 1887; and Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourth Annual Report** (1886), pp. 119-126, 136, 156, and 477, and **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), p. 157; and James Motley, "Apprenticeship in the Building Trades," George Barnett and Jacob Hollander, eds., **Studies in American Trade Unionism** (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1906), pp. 283-285.

18. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourth Annual Report**, pp. 119-126 and 156.

19. **Ibid**, pp. 116, 125, 137, 156, and 172-199; and **The Carpenter**, September 1896.

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20. **The Plumbers' Trade Journal and Gas, Steam and Hot Water Fitters' Review,** February and March 1898; Segal, pp. 15 and 16; and Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 156-157.

21. Real Estate Record Association, **A History of Real Estate, Buildings, and Architecture in New York City During the Last Quarter of a Century** (New York: Real Estate Record Association, 1898), pp. 113 and 123.

22. Segal, p.48; Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report,** pp. 145 and 158; **Ninth Annual Report,** pp. 814-818 and 854-857; **John Swinton's Paper,** March 3, 1887; and Clarence Bonnett, **The History of Employers' Associations in the United States** (New York: Vantage Press, 1956), pp. 350-352.

23. Small work groups prevailed not only in the building trades industry of New York and Brooklyn, as observed by Michael Kazin, "Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades, 1896-1922" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1983) p. 135.

24. This was one reason why the building trades were susceptible to sympathy strikes according to Frederic Hall, "Sympathetic Strikes and Sympathetic Lockouts," **Studies In History, Economics and Public Law,** Columbia University, 10 (1898), 52 and 53.

25. See John R. Commons, **Trade Unionism and Labor Problems** (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1904), pp. 65-67 and "New York's Building Trades," **Quarterly Journal of Economics,** 18 (1904), 411 and 412; and Motley, "Apprenticeship in the Building Trades," for the influence of decentralized and fluid structure of construction industry on the development of the walking delegate.

26. Erlich, "Peter J. McGuire's Trade Unionism", pp.181 and 182.

27. Harry Bates, **Bricklayers' Century of Craftmanship: A History of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' International Union** (Washington, D.C.: Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' International Union, 1955), pp. 7 and 9.

28. **The Carpenter,** October 20, 1890.

29. **Ibid,** December 15, 1888 and December 1891.

30. **Ibid,** October 1892; and Erlich, pp. 193 and 194.

31. **The Carpenter,** September 1891.

32. **Ibid,** April 1891.

33. Lloyd Ulman, **The Rise of the National Trade Union** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 127-133; and **The Herald,** May 3, 1890.

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34. **New York Tribune,** May 2, 1890 and **The Evening Telegram,** May 2, 1890.

35. Central Labor Union, Official Handbook, September 7, 1891.

36. Calculated from United States. Bureau of Labor, **Tenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor** (1894) **Strikes and Lockouts,** Volume I, pp. 618-642.

37. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourth Annual Report** (1886), pp. 156, 157, 198 and 199, **Fifth Annual Report** (1887), pp. 184 and 185, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 142 and 143; and **New York Tribune,** September 4, and 8, 1894.

38. **The Carpenter,** June 15, 1890.

39. Bureau of Labor, **Tenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor** Volume I, p. 743; **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle,** July 28, 1890 and May 1, 1891; **The Sun,** May 2, and June 12, 1891; and **The New York Tribune,** June 13, 1891.

40. Calculated from the **Tenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor,** Volume I, pp. 618-942 and Volume II, pp. 1700-1708.

41. **The Carpenter,** September 1891; and Haber, pp. 286-287.

42. Segal, pp. 15, 16 and 28-30; and Bonnett, pp. 293 and 294.

43. Segal, pp. 36-40 and 48.

44. **The Carpenter,** September 1891, November, 1895, May, June and October 1897, and May 1898.

45. Only the varnishers and fresco painters actually waged strikes in quest of a nine hour day, and except for a handful of cases the unions and employers settled within a week. **The New York Tribune,** May 7, 9 and 10, 1886.

46. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourth Annual Report** (1886), p. 115.

47. **Ibid,** pp. 158, 159 and 477.

48. **John Swinton's Paper,** November 14, 1886 and April 12, 1887; and **The Leader,** November 8, 10 and 12, 1886.

49. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourth Annual Report** (1886), pp. 198 and 199.

50. Segal, p. 46.

51. **Tenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor,** Volume II, pp. 1700-1708; and Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Seventh Annual Report** (1889), pp. 287-299.

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52. **The Sun**, April 12, 1890; **The New York Tribune**, April 12, 1890; **The Herald**, April 12, 1890; and **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle**, April 13, 1890.

53. **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle**, May 1, 1891; **The Sun**, May 1, and May 2, 1891.

54. **The Sun**, May 3, May 5, and May 6, 1891; and **The Herald**, May 5, 1891. During the strike George Warner from the Housesmiths' Union strongly affirmed the union's independence from the Knights of Labor and the AFL, declaring: "We do not care for the head or tail of the two national organizations." Despite this public position, tensions between the two unions were authentic even if they were not simply a manifestation of the conflict between the AFL and Knights of Labor.

55. It appears that the Knights of Labor in New York and Brooklyn were able to maintain a base only in a few industries during the 1890's. Fifteen local assemblies representing building tradesmen existed after 1890, with eight functioning until the Panic of 1893, and four surviving the four year depression that followed. The Knights were also still very active among transportation workers. Even as late as 1898, there were six local assemblies consisting of streetcar workers, elevated railway employees, and assorted cartmen and delivery men. In contrast, the Knights had virtually disappeared from the cigarmaking and printing industries. In the garment trades, of the thirteen local assemblies existing in the 1890's, seven folded in 1891, when the United Garment Workers was formed and the United Hebrew Trades made organizing strides.[Jonathan Garlock, **A Guide to the Local Assemblies of the Knights of Labor** (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1982); and New York State. Bureau of Labor Statisics, **Seventeenth Annual Report** (1899), pp. 282-314.]

Nationally, the Knights' fortunes differed. Between 1890 and 1892, membership grew from 120,000 to 130,000, but thereafter it declined rapidly. Nevertheless, as late as 1897, 3,000 local assemblies existed, many of which were created after 1890. This data, Jonathan Garlock and Richard Oestreicher suggest, calls into question the conventional view that the Knights of Labor was a moribund organization after 1890. See Jonathan Garlock, "A Structural Analysis of the Knights of Labor: A Prolegmenon to the History of the Producing Classes" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1974); and Richard Oestreicher, "A Note on the Knights of Labor Membership Statistics," **Labor History** (Winter, 1984), 102-108.

56. **The Herald**, May 16, 1891; **The Sun**, June 12, 1891; and **The New York Tribune**, June 13, 1891.

57. **The New York Tribune**, February 18, 1892; and **The Herald**, February 19, 1892.

58. **The New York Tribune**, February 24, 25, and 26, 1892 and March 3, and 4, 1892; and **The Sun**, February 26, 1892.

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59. **The Sun**, May 26, 1892; and New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Sixth Annual Report** (1892), p. 29.

60. **The Sun**, June 25, and 28, 1892; **The New York Tribune**, June 26, 1892 and July 19, 1892; Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Sixth Annual Report**, pp. 30 and 31; and **The Journal of the Knights of Labor**, June 30, 1892.

61. **The New York Tribune**, July 20, and July 22, 1892; **The Sun**, June 23, 1892, June 26, 1892 and July 31, 1892; and **The Journal of the Knights of Labor**, June 30, 1892.

62. **The New York Tribune**, August 5, and August 9, 1892; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Sixth Annual Report**, p. 31.

63. **The Sun**, June 26, 1892; and **The Journal of the Knights of Labor**, June 30, 1892.

64. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 44 and 45.

65. **New York Tribune**, September 4, 1894; **The Herald**, September 5, 8, and 15, 1894; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report**, p. 52.

66. **The Carpenter**, November 1895, July 1895, April 1896, August 1896, May, June and October 1897, and May 1898.

67. Segal, p. 48.

68. See Lloyd Ulman, **The Rise of the National Trade Union**, for a discussion of the development of national unions in the building trades.

69. **The Carpenter**, October 1898.

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS TWELVE - FOURTEEN: THE WORLD OF WORK, TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AND LABOR ACTIVITY FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

In the preceding chapters the discussion of printers, building tradesmen, cigarmakers and garment workers highlighted the distinctive experience of each group. Attention focused on the basic conditions of employment, the particular forms of production, the concrete workplace relations and the collective activity of these workers to adjust to, as well as change, their "world of work". The rich variety in the experience of these workers requires an analytical comparison which discusses the specific ways their working lives differed, explains the sources of the diversity in each group's world of work and examines the implications of this checkered pattern for understanding the development of trade unions, the breadth and depth of labor activity and working class life in a large industrial and commercial city.

Such an inquiry does not preclude identifying common features in the work experience and labor activity, but proceeds on the premise that the shared status of wage earners selling their labor power to those who owned and/or controlled the sources of wealth did not constitute a sufficient condition for the development of a unitary working class. On the other hand, neither does this comparison follow a pluralist path, treating each group of workers as a separate occupation in which the terms of employment, including the means of entry into a trade, work practices and prerequisite skills, talents and knowledge, inevitably fostered divergent occupational identities, and predictably led to pressure group activity by unions pursuing their own special

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interests. Instead, the forthcoming discussion attempts to integrate an appreciation of the specificity of the workers' experience with an understanding of their common points of reference to discover to what extent we can speak of a shared experience among workers in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn.

The comparison is divided into three chapters. The first chapter examines the spectrum of the conditions of employment within each industry and among the trades, and suggests some reasons for this diversity. The following chapter explores why some workers were more able to form viable unions than others, and identifies the factors contributing to workers'/unions' ability to influence conditions of employment. The final chapter discusses the particular forms of labor activity, including attempts at collective bargaining, strikes, boycotts, union label campaigns and political action, and assesses their significance for each group of workers and the labor movement as a whole.

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CHAPTER TWELVE — CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Two key observations emerge from an examination of the conditions of employment among the four groups of workers: first, within each group there were disparities in pay rates, hours and earnings, which reflected differences in skills, intensity of effort, complexity of the work and product lines. Second, a wide range in pay rates, earnings, hours and regularity of employment existed between each group. At the upper tier were printers -- pressmen and typographers -- followed by building tradesmen. At the lowest tier were garment workers (with the notable exception of clothing cutters) whose weekly pay rates averaged about half those of printers, and whose maximum quarterly earnings did not approach the minimum quarterly earnings of either typographers and pressmen. In the middle were cigarmakers and cigar packers whose basic conditions of employment, at least for those in unions, were better than most garment workers but considerably less favorable than those of printers or building tradesmen.

Variety within the conditions of employment prevailed in occupations demanding a high degree of skill and in industries where the production process still depended on craft. This was true in those occupations in which the skill requirements were less complex and where the production process relied on a detailed division of labor embodied in team work and promoted in part by machine technology.

In the case of printers, who retained their position of craftsmen despite technological innovation, disparities in pay and hours reflected differences between the newspaper and book job branches of the industry and the greater levels of productivity offered by typesetting machines.

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In general, newspaper typographers earned at a higher rate whether paid by piece or time than their book and counterparts. The pay gap could be as much as $1.50 a day or ten cents per 1000 ems, the standard measure of type. This differential existed largely because newspaper material was more difficult to set and the newspaper's production schedule was more stringent and intensive. Within a newspaper composing room differences in pay rates were common as well. Typographers employed on morning papers who worked by night earned 50 cents more a day or up to 10 cents more per 1000 ems than those employed on evening editions working by day. Typesetters usually paid by time earned more a week than hand compositors customarily paid by the piece; for example, in Brooklyn's unionized newspapers the former earned $4 more a week in the early 1890's. Other pay rate differentials existed. These pertained to the intricate quality of copy and the difficulty of language. Therefore, typographers setting copy filled with algebraic symbols, frequent abbreviations and accented letters and working in Greek and Hebrew earned at a higher than standard rate.(1)

Given the variety of crafts within the building trades, it is not surprising to find a spread in the conditions of employment, in particular with pay rates. In the 1880's and 1890's union bricklayers and masons claimed the highest pay rate at $4 a day. By 1890 union carpenters and plumbers had established uniform daily rates of $3.75 and $3.50, respectively. Housesmiths, even when in unions, earned at lower rates than other building tradesmen; between 1890 and 1895 their daily pay rates were $2.75, and 50 cents less if not unionized. In addition, within a craft, pay rate differences appeared. Ornamental plasterers during the 1880's earned 25 cents more a day than did

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plasterers doing "plain" work. Union fresco painters earned $4 a day compared to $3.50 for house painters.(2)

Some of the differences stemmed from the more exacting demands on the labor of some building tradesmen. Ornamental plasterers, fresco painters and speciality bricklayers were craftsmen in the traditional well-rounded meaning of the term. They combined mechanical knowledge with artistic talent to produce both technically sound and aesthetically pleasing cornices, mantles, walls and ceilings. In other cases, differences originated and persisted because the strength of building trades unions varied. Housesmiths at one extreme had difficulty in extending their reach and suffered significant setbacks in strikes against employers in the 1890's. At the other end, the bricklayers had organized the largest percentage of workers in their occupation and had developed a stable relationship with their employers which rewarded labor peace with high pay rates and shorter workdays. Carpenters suffered from inter-union rivalry during most of the 1880's, and consequently their rates were not uniform and below those of bricklayers and plumbers. With the merger of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the United Order of Carpenters in 1887, and the subsequent cooperation with the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, pay rate differentials among union carpenters virtually disappeared, and they closed the pay gap between themselves and plumbers and bricklayers. In general, pay rate differences within a trade and among the trades in the construction industry closed during the 1890's, largely because of the amalgamation of unions within a trade and more consistent cooperation among unions.

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Cigarmakers' conditions of employment varied according to cigar style, method of production, job classification, work location and union local. Shops specializing in high quality long filler Havanas paid twice the piece rate than those making cigars with long seed tobacco. Piece rates were higher for shaped cigars than for the simple straight variety, but less than those for perfectos. In the small handicraft shops, where no detailed division of labor existed, cigarmakers' pay rates exceeded those where tasks were assigned to different workers organized into teams. In the latter environment, rollers earned at higher rates than bunchmakers who in turn earned more per piece than did tobacco strippers. The introduction of new technology also produced pay differentials. Work on suction tables paid $5 per 1000, one dollar less than mold work did. Further down the scale were the pay rates and hours of tenement shop workers. Rates as low as $3 per 1000 and no higher than $5.50 were reported by New York State Assembly Committee investigating the conditions of women workers.(3)

However, union membership did not erase pay differentials. Although most New York and Brooklyn locals of the Cigar Makers International Union had attained a minimum rate of $7 per 1000 by 1891, maximum rates varied considerably. Local 144 reported a high rate of $37 per 1000, more than twice as much as any other local. Locals representing cigar packers also reported pay differentials; New York Local 251 claimed a daily rate of $3 compared to $2 for Locals 213 and 292 in New York and Brooklyn, respectively. This broad sprectrum of pay rates among unionized cigarmakers resulted from the different styles and types of cigars being produced in their shops. Throughout the industry sharp distinctions in price existed between the higher quality cigars

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and the cheaper varieties, and these were translated into different pay rates.(4)

Differentials in pay rates and earnings were probably greatest among garment workers. As in the case of cigarmakers, differences reflected a diversity of product lines, multiple forms of production and a proliferation of job classifications attendant to a detailed division of labor. In 1895, cutters, the most skilled group of garment workers (virtually all men) and sewing machine operators earned $5 more per week working for merchant tailoring shops (specializing in higher grade coats) and cloakmaking concerns than they did for shops producing pants or shirts. Women finishers netted $2 more a week making cloaks than their counterparts employed in shops making pants and shirts.(5) These differentials reflected the higher prices employers received for cloaks and top quality coats. Moreover, in the case of cutters, another factor was significant: cutting material for cloaks was a more exacting process, which, if not done properly, would result in a substantial amount of waste.

Within a particular branch of the garment trades pay differences prevailed. These coincided with the growth of team work and the coexistence of inside and outside shop production. In the early 1890's among cloakmakers and coatmakers, operators assumed the highest position within a job hierarchy, followed by tailors/basters, pressers and finishers. Among the former, operators earned $10 more a week than finishers and $2 to $4 more than tailors and pressers. Among coatmakers, operators' weekly earnings exceeded pressers' and finishers' by $6 and tailors' or basters' by $2. (6)

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Compounding the multiple pay rates was the diversity in the forms of clothing manufacturing. Much of the production, especially in coatmaking, was done through contractors who received cut material from manufacturers and then hired workers to complete the necessary tasks. Their shops, called outside shops, and often damned as sweatshops, were either makeshift store-fronts or rooms in tenement flats. Production involved only a simple division of labor and rudimentary machine technology, often provided by garment workers themselves. Some of the work, including the finishing phases, was actually completed at workers' homes. There were also inside shops where almost the entire garment was produced from beginning to end. These shops varied by size and methods of production, but in general deployed more machinery and adopted a system of team work whereby operators supervised groups of two or three basters/tailors and pressers. In some of the larger factories, employing hundreds of workers, the Boston system appeared. This method of production involved a detailed division of labor in which each general phase of production was broken down to specialized operations, each with a corresponding job classification. In one such factory, there were ten distinct types of operators and six classifications of basters.

A study prepared for the U.S. Industrial Commission in 1900 compared and contrasted the conditions of employment in different types of garment shops producing coats. It found that in the outside shop managed by a contractor, operators and basters earned from $3 to $7 more per week than their counterparts in a large inside shop or factory using the Boston system, while pressers earned $1.00 less than pressers in inside shops. Yet the earnings advantage of operators and basters in the outside shop had its costs, since instead of working 60 hours a week,

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the standard in the other shops, the outside shop workers labored for 72 hours.(7)

Finally, as in the case of union carpenters in the 1880's and union cigarmakers in the 1890's, pay differentials existed according to union affiliation. Cutters in the United Garment Workers earned $6 more than members of the Gotham Association of Knife Cutters, and pressers in the United Garment Workers received $5 more than members of the Knights of Labor's Knee Pants Makers.(8) These differences in part stemmed from the fact that the United Garment Workers was stronger in the higher paying cloakmaking and coatmaking trades and drew most of their members from New York, unlike the Knights of Labor affiliates which were based in Brooklyn where pay rates were generally lower.

The diversity of pay rates complicates efforts to generalize about the conditions of employment of each group, not to mention to compare pay rates, earnings and hours among different occupations. Yet he available data suggests that the most fruitful framework of examination is with organized workers of each occupation. There is information for each group of workers -- both organized and unorganized -- on pay rates and hours covering 1891-1895 and on the number of days worked in three month periods, quarterly earnings and the percentage of union members unemployed from 1897 through 1898. (9)

Permeating the diversity in the conditions of employment within each occupation was the relative advantage held by organized workers. The gap in wages and hours was the most consistent and widest in the building trades and considerably less so in the garment trades. Union building tradesmen, from the most skilled bricklayers and plumbers to the less skilled building material handlers and building laborers,

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earned at markedly higher rates and worked shorter hours than unorganized workers. Members of the ten locals of Bricklayers' and Masons' International Union in New York and Brooklyn earned as much as two dollars more a day and worked two hours less per day. Building material handlers covered by a union scale received twice as much as nonunion workers while working twelve hours less a week. Among carpenters, plumbers, painters and plasterers, union members averaged a dollar more a day and worked eight and not ten hour days.(10)

Union printers also had better conditions of employment than their nonunion counterparts, although the evidence is more impressionistic since in the 1890's all of New York's major newspapers and the leading book and job firms observed a union scale. However, the wage concessions granted by the New York Typographical Union to some hard pressed book and job employers during an economic slump, and the efforts of three Brooklyn newspapers to force Local #98 to accept drastic wage cuts ndicate that the pay gap between union and nonunion printers was significant. In 1897 the executive committee of Local #6 agreed to a reduction of five cents per 1000 ems in the face of intense competition from nonunion and out-of-town publishers of reprinted novels. In 1894 **The Brooklyn Times, The Brooklyn Citizen** and **The Brooklyn Standard-Union** provoked a protracted strike when they sought a twenty percent reduction in the pay rate of compositors that would make them more competitive with the nonunion **Brooklyn Daily Eagle.**(11)

Union cigarmakers and cigar packers maintained a modest advantage in pay rates but enjoyed much shorter work weeks than nonunion workers. Members of Local 10 of the CMIU earned two dollars more a week than unorganized cigarmakers while members of Local 144 established

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piece rates that ranged from ten to fifteen percent higher than nonunion rollers and bunchers. The relative advantage of union cigar packers in New York was twenty-five percent and in Brooklyn approximately ten percent. The most prominent distinction between union and nonunion workers, however, was in the length of the work week; regardless of local, union workers worked less than 50 hours a week compared to a minimum of 60 hours among the unorganized.(12)

The situation in the garment trades was uneven. Cutters, regardless of union affiliation, earned at least $3.50 and as much as $10 more a week than nonunion cutters. Union pantsmakers, shirtmakers and vestmakers averaged $2 more a week than nonunion workers. However, among specific job classifications common in coatmaking and cloakmaking, the pay rate advantage was marginal or non-existant. This especially applied to the positions lower down the job ladder, such as basters, finishers and bushelers, filled mostly by women. The less consistent attern among garment workers reflected the tenuous position of most unions. They functioned in an intensely competitive industry which thrived by depressing wage rates. Except for the cutters' unions they represented workers whose skills were not scarce. Unlike unions among building tradesmen and printers which established either closed or union shops, they exerted scant influence over the labor market.(13)

In most respects, printers laid claim to a privileged material status as evidenced by high pay rates and earnings and short work weeks. During the period under study, printers, by virtue of more extensive unionization and greater industrial productivity, were able to improve wage rates and reduce the work week. Between 1887 and 1899 typographers increased their average basic weekly rate from $21.40 to $28 and cut

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their work week from 54 to 48 hours. Pressmen overcame the multiplicity in union organization, which in the late 1880's resulted in a broad spread in weekly rates from a minimum of $10 to a maximum of $25 and a 54 work week, and by 1899, under the banner of the International Printing Pressmen's Union, established a standard rate of $28 along with a 45 hour work week. New York's and Brooklyn's printers enjoyed the highest pay rates and shortest work weeks among their counterparts in other cities. Among compositors working on evening newspapers (viz. doing day work), New York's hourly pay rate exceeded that of compositors in Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco and St. Louis for most of the 1890's. Moreover, only compositors in St. Louis and Atlanta had comparably short work weeks of 48 hours or less. New York's pressmen working on evening newspapers had an even greater relative advantage over their out-of-town counterparts. Their hourly pay rate exceeded others by at least thirteen cents by the end of decade, and the length of their work week was equalled only by Boston's and St. Louis' pressmen.(14)

Of equal significance, printers experienced relatively regular employment patterns. Unlike most of the building trades, with the exception of plumbers and the garment trades, except for clothing cutters, printers did not encounter serious bouts of unemployment which resulted in inconsistent earnings. In 1897 and 1898, for example, the number of days worked by union printers did not vary much in any three month period, and the quarterly earnings of compositors/typesetters in particular remained remarkably stable (See Table I.). Pressmen's quarterly earnings fluctuated somewhat more than compositors', but to a lower degree than unionized carpenters, painters, cigar packers and

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garment workers (See Tables II, III, IV.). Above all, pressmen's earnings were comparatively high; their quarterly average of $229 being surpassed only by the plumbers' average of $251 over the same period. Mild variations in the number of days worked and quarterly earnings indicated that for typographers unemployment was not acute, although it appeared to be endemic to the occupation. The typographers' average unemployment rate was higher than the pressmen's largely because of technological displacement resulting from the introduction of linotypes. Furthermore, the specific employment pattern and high earnings suggested that unemployment might not be a traumatic experience threatening printers' standard of living.

Table I. Days Worked in a Quarter, Quarterly Earnings and the Percentage of Members Unemployed at the end of any Quarter for Union Printers (Typographers and Pressmen) — New York City (1897-1898)

	Typographers			Pressmen		
	High	Low	Average	High	Low	Average
Days^	62	58	60	77	70	74
Earnings	$209	$193	$200	$271	$192	$229
% Unemployed*	20.0	14.0	16.5	24.0	2.0	9.8

* Note: The average percentage of printers unemployed at the end of each quarter is an adjusted figure. To avoid distortions because of extreme maximums and minimums, the high and low figures have not been included in determining the average. This measure is used in Tables II-IV as well.

^ = It should be noted that the number of days worked per quarter constitute the average recorded for each group. For example, some pressmen worked more than 77 days, and others worked less than 77 days during the peak quarter. Since the unemployment figures represent the percentage of printers out-of-work at the **end** of each quarter, and **not** for the **entire** quarter, swings in the number of days worked and unemployment rates were not symmetrical. In short, unemployment data in this table and Tables II-IV do not indicate the length of unemployment, which, in the case of pressmen, was apparently brief. [Calculated from data in New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Sixteenth Annual Report** (1898) and **Seventeenth Annual Report** (1899), pp. 860 and 861, and 168 and 178, respectively.]

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Building tradesmen were among the most highly paid workers in New York and Brooklyn. Capitalizing on the demand for skilled labor and their strategic role in the production process, building tradesmen formed an extensive network of unions that resulted in favorable conditions of employment. With few exceptions the eight hour day had become standard by 1891, and daily pay rates exceeded three dollars and weekly earnings surpassed $20. Similar to the printers, the pay rates of New York's building tradesmen in the 1890's were greater than their counterparts from other major cities. Carpenters and painters in New York earned at least ten cents more a hour than those from such cities as Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Denver and San Francisco. Only Denver's and San Francisco's plumbers achieved a comparable hourly wage rate and an eight hour day. The wage rates and short workdays of New York's plasterers were only equalled by San Francisco's plasterers. On the other hand, New York's bricklayers had not attained such pre-eminence, as their wage rates were matched or surpassed by those of bricklayers in at least five other cities.(15)

High pay rates led to high weekly earnings, but as the experience of building tradesmen in 1897 and 1898 attests, irregular employment patterns challenged building tradesmen's material position. Among the five leading building trades, about one of every four union members was unemployed at the end of any three month period, and quarterly earnings often varied dramatically (See Table II.). Irregular employment and earnings were outgrowths of the ebb and flow of construction work. Harsh weather prevented delivery of needed building material or otherwise halted production. Strikes by one group of workers could compel contractors to lay off those not party to the conflict. Some building

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tradesmen such as bricklayers, plasterers and painters only worked at particular phases in the construction process, and therefore frequently had to seek new jobs once they had completed their tasks. Unemployment was endemic, but not as severe as the data indicates. Building tradesmen were out-of-work on the average about three months in a year, but rarely was this continuous. Unemployment usually lasted only weeks, viz. only between job assignments. Moreover, unemployment was predictable and usually more frequent and protracted in the winter months. This allowed building tradesmen to adjust the interruption in their earning capacity by working overtime during peak seasons, saving money while they worked and temporarily moving to cities with less crowded job markets.(16)

Table II. The Number of Days Worked Per Quarter, Quarterly Earnings and Percentage of Union Members Unemployed At the end of each quarter — New York and Brooklyn Building Tradesmen in 1897 and 1898

	Bricklayers			Carpenters		
	High	Low	Average	High	Low	Average
Days	51	44	48	66	50	60
Earnings	$196	$167	$179	$248	$149	$183
% Unemployed	57.1	18.3	37.2	41.7	13.1	21.0
	Painters			**Plasterers**		
	High	Low	Average	High	Low	Average
Days	72	41	51	55	35	47
Earnings	$241	$134	$166	$218	$136	$180
% Unemployed	57.8	2.9	24.0	83.0	15.7	41.7
	Plumbers			**All Five Trades**		
	High	Low	Average	High*	Low*	Average
Days	75	68	71	75	48	55
Earnings	$268	$241	$251	$234	$165	$192
% Unemployed	51.9	2.5	20.4	58.3	10.5	28.4

* Average high and low figures for all five building trades.
[Calculated from same source used in Table I.]

Cigarmakers and cigarpackers covered by a union scale earned less than printers and building tradesmen, but worked comparably short work weeks and experienced less fluctuation in the level of employment compared to most grades of building tradesmen. In the early 1890's the minimum piece rate for cigarmakers was $7 per 1000 cigars. Cigarpackers

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in New York earned $3 a day while the daily pay rate of their counterparts in Brooklyn was $2. Cigarmakers and cigar packers, both in New York and Brooklyn, claimed an eight hour day by 1891. In general, unemployment was relatively infrequent and the amount of earnings relatively stable for cigarmakers and cigarpackers. However, women's quarterly earnings were lower than men's, although women cigarmakers on the average worked the same number of days in each quarter in 1897 and 1898 (See Table III.). These differentials occurred because women were more likely than men to work as bunchmakers and strippers and not rollers. In addition, a greater proportion of women worked in shops using suction tables and specializing in cheaper grades of cigars which paid at a lower rate.

Table III. The Number of Days Worked Per Quarter, Quarterly Earnings and the Percentage of Union Cigarmakers and Cigarpackers Unemployed in 1897 and 1898 — New York and Brooklyn

		Cigarmakers			Cigarpackers		
		High	Low	Average	High	Low	Average
Days	Women	71	56	63	74	38	53
	Men	69	61	64	80	53	70
Earnings	Women	$104	$58	$86	$93	$55	$74
	Men	$120	$95	$110	$200	$115	$161
% Unemployed (both)		22.4	10.2	13.6	38.0	1.3	7.6

[Source: See Table I.]

Garment workers experienced the least favorable conditions of employment among the four trades. Their wage rates, quarterly earnings and magnitude of employment were lower than cigarmakers and their frequency of unemployment was even greater than building tradesmen who faced the seasonal lulls in construction work every year. These conditions were common for men and women, although among cloakmakers and coatmakers men's quarterly earnings on the average surpassed women's. Only clothing cutters claimed pay rates, quarterly earnings and employment patterns comparable to printers and most building tradesmen (See Table IV.).

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In the early 1890's members of unions in the women's and men's clothing industries claimed ten hour days from Monday through Friday and a nine hour day on Saturday or Sunday while union cutters worked a 54 hour week with Saturday as a half-day. Cutters earned at least $3 a day, coatmakers, depending on job classification, from $1.50 to $2.50 and pantsmakers, shirtmakers and vestmakers, no more than $2. Relatively low pay rates and long work hours were not the only features that distinguished garment workers from printers, building tradesmen and cigarmakers. No other group of workers experienced such levels of unemployment at the end of any quarter during 1897 or 1898, and only carpenters, painters and plasterers incurred such wild swings in their quarterly earnings. Yet even the lowest quarterly earnings of these building tradesmen equalled if not exceeded the maximum quarterly earnings of garment workers.

For garment workers unemployment was not only chronic but acute. During the slack periods — which varied by specific product line, but usually occurred in late autumn and early winter -- entire shops and factories closed down for weeks, if not months, at a time, resulting in mass layoffs. Garment workers adjusted to these circumstances in rather expected ways. Just as building tradesmen did, they tried to work as many hours as possible during the peak seasons. Unlike building tradesmen, however, entire families were mobilized to work to compensate for low wage rates and irregular employment. Some garment workers showed an ability to anticipate the probability of hard times and managed to save money from their earnings. Such contemporary observers as Ray Stannard Baker writing in **The Commercial Advertiser**, Jacob Riis in **How the Other Half Lives** and Abraham Cahan noted how frugal garment workers

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could be, thereby permitting them to avoid selling family possessions to pawn shops or depending on relief during spells of unemployment.

Table IV. Number of Days Worked Per Quarter, Quarterly Earnings and Percentage of Union Members Unemployed in Selected Garment Trades in 1897 and 1898 (New York and Brooklyn)

		Coatmakers			Cloakmakers		
		High	Low	Average	High	Low	Average
Days	Women	85	26	50	68	31	48
	Men	76	34	56	78	34	45
Earnings	Women	$127	$25	$62	$110	$39	$68
	Men	$123	$48	$87	$189	$58	$120
% Unemployed	(both)	76.0	3.0	47.4	99.0	13.6	38.5

		Shirtmakers			Pantsmakers~		
		High	Low	Average	High	Low	Average
Days	Women	77	45	66	62	47	59
	Men	78	43	65	75	45	57
Earnings	Women	$91	$46	$65	$105	$79	$92
	Men	$117	$46	$80	$126	$74	$91
% Unemployed	(both)	65.0	2.6	10.6	73.7	1.9	25.8

		Jacketmakers			Cutters (Men Only)		
		High	Low	Average	High	Low	Average
Days	Women	72	34	51	73	60	66
	Men	66	36	51			
Earnings	Women	$132	$37	$67	$232	$188	$208
	Men	$140	$63	$88			
% Unemployed	(both)	60.0	5.9	24.0	22.4	3.9	8.8

		Garment Trades Excluding Cutters			^Garment Trades With Cutters		
		High*	Low*	Average*	High*	Low*	Average*
Days	Women	73	37	55			
	Men	75	38	55	74	42	57
Earnings	Women	$113	$45	$71			
	Men	$139	$58	$93	$155	$80	$112
% Unemployed	(both)	74.7	5.4	29.3	66.0	5.2	25.8

Notes: ~ = Data on women pantsmakers available only for six quarters during 1897 and 1898; ^ = Data for men only; and * = Means for highs, lows and averages for garment trades
[Source: See Table I.]

To summarize, printers claimed the most consistently high earnings and enjoyed the most stable employment patterns among the four groups of workers. Building tradesmen too were among the most highly paid workers, but were plagued by irregular employment. Cigarmakers experienced little fluctuation in employment during 1897 and 1898, but

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their average quarterly earnings were well below those of building tradesmen not to mention printers; in fact, the highest quarterly earnings for male cigarmakers (who earned at higher rates than women in the trade) failed to match the lowest comparable earnings of building tradesmen despite the latter's encounter with drastic seasonal shifts in employment. Garment workers, with the notable exception of clothing cutters, experienced relatively low earnings and chronic unemployment. Even when cutters are considered, the average quarterly earnings of male garment workers (who in general earned more than women) was about half that of printers and three-fifths of building tradesmen (See Table V.).

Table V. Average Days Worked During Quarter, Quarterly Earnings and Percentage of Union Members Unemployed Among Printers, Building Tradesmen, Cigarmakers and Garment Workers — 1897 and 1898

	Printers		Building Tradesmen
	Typographers	Pressmen	
Days	60	74	55
Earnings	$200	$229	$192
% Unemployed*	16.5	9.8	28.4

	Cigarmakers		Cigarpackers	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Days	63	64	53	70
Earnings	$86	$110	$74	$161
% Unemployed(both)	13.6		7.6	

	Garment Workers		Male Garment Workers with Cutters
	Women	Men	
Days	55	55	57
Earnings	$71	$93	$112
% Unemployed(both)	29.3		25.8

*= Adjusted average unemployment percentage, i.e., excluding maximum and minimum figures.

This portrait of the range of the conditions of employment among the four trades suggests that the process of industrialization and economic change was uneven, and correspondingly the experience of workers within and across industries and trades was heterogenous.(17) It also calls into question the validity, or at least the applicability, of

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the thesis that industrialization had a levelling impact on the incomes and social status of workers. This interpretation of the social and economic transformation of American society between 1870 and 1920 stressed the importance of mechanization, a detailed division of labor, the deskilling of traditional craftsmen and the emergence of management strategies to secure control of the workforce and labor process.(18)

Within the printing industry and the building trades the scenario of technological displacement, deskilling and erosion of the craftsmen's autonomy, resulting in a relative decline in the position of skilled workers vis-a-vis machine operatives and manual laborers does not accurately describe what occurred. Printers and building tradesmen claimed incomes that provided them with high standards of living and an occupational integrity that withstood the introduction of new methods of production and organization of work. As Andrew Dawson has shown, the material position of printers among other skilled workers actually grew with technological transformation and reinforced the development of a distinct strata of workers who perceived their interests to be qualitatively different from those of most industrial workers, whether they labored in factories, mills, mines or shops.(19)

This growth of a privileged elite within the working class, however, was not technologically determined or the simple result of greater levels of labor productivity and higher profit margains. In an instructive study of typographers and carpenters, Robert Max Jackson explained how, in New York, unions helped to shape craft labor markets which maximized the demand for skilled labor and regulated its supply.(20) Undoubtedly the ability of printers and building tradesmen to organize collectively to defend the standards of their craft as well

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as adapt to changing technical and market conditions sheltered them from the vicissitudes of the business cycle and the forces of competition that in earlier periods had wrecked unions.(21) Union printers and building tradesmen during the 1880's and 1890's increasingly were able to make union membership a condition of employment among the leading newspaper and book and job publishing firms and among the major building contractors, and they thereby became the beneficiaries of the economic expansion attendant with industrialization.

In contrast, cigarmakers and clothing workers never were able consistently to exert the same influence over their conditions of employment. Again, the work experiences of each group underscores the significance of the heteregenous process of industrialization. In cigarmaking three forms of production -- factory, tenement house and small shop -- tensely coexisted, each promoting different conditions of employment and different contexts for labor activity. For reasons to be discussed later, cigarmaker unionism in New York and Brooklyn remained limited to the shops employing less than 100 workers, using the simplest technology and in general producing the more expensive styles.

In the garment trades, too, the structure of the industry was highly varied. Large factories which deployed machinery and a detailed division of labor stood alongside modest inside shops which were less mechanized and used a modified team system of production. In addition, there were outside shops which operated on the task system, paying set piece rates according to the number of garments sewn, pressed and basted. Production in these shops was particularly labor intensive, as contractors depended on low piece rates to encourage greater work efforts: in short, a faster work pace and longer work periods. The

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proportionate significance of each system of production differed according to specific sectors of the industry. For example, factory production of ready-made cloaks and suits was considerably more important than outside shop production, while in coatmaking and men's furnishings small inside shops as well as outside shops predominated. The highly diversified structure of the garment trades, including the labor market conditions it engendered and thrived on, influenced the course of workers' attempts to collectively organize. Because of factors to be explored later, the ability of garment workers to form effective unions and the severely limited presence of unions were inextricably tied to a highly volatile and stratified world of work where skill, ethnicity and gender could as easily divide workers as unite them in pursuit of common objectives.

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FOOTNOTES

1. New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **First Annual Report** (1887), pp. 290-293; New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourteenth Annual Report** (1896), pp. 724-777; **Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac** (1896); and **The Union Printer**, June 4, 1887.

2. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eight Annual Report** (1890), pp. 121-124 and **Fourteenth Annual Report**, pp. 724-737.

3. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 241 and 242; and Patricia Cooper, "From Handicraft to Mass Production: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories 1900-1919" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1981), pp. 2, 3, 70 and 71.

4. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eight Annual Report**, pp. 322-325 and **Fourteenth Annual Report**, pp. 336-339; and New York State. Legislature, Assembly, **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Condition of Female Labor** (1895), pp. 926 and 927.

5. United States, **Eleventh Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor** (1896), pp. 149-160.

6. **Ibid.**

7. United States. Industrial Commission, Volume XV, pp. 344, 347-350 and 364-366. The higher earnings of workers in outside shops was not common in the cloakmaking trade. According to testimomy from union representatives and factory inspectors, cloakmakers, regardless of job classification, earned more in inside shops, especially in those owned by the major manufacturers. This was why many cloakmakers chose to work in factories, although, as a tradeoff, they experienced more supervision and harsher disciplinary measures.

The coatmaking trade was more labor-intensive than cloakmaking. Higher productivity levels resulted from the use of a task system whereby workers' pay rates were pegged to the completion of a designated number of garments. Workers' earnings flowed from the effort of teams, so there was pressure on each team worker to intensify his/her work pace. Furthermore, it was often necessary for coatmakers to work longer hours to complete their tasks. In short, coatmakers, employed in the outside shops where the task system flourished, earned more than their nonunionized counterparts in the inside shops, because of greater work efforts. However, it should be noted that unionized coatmakers employed in inside shops earned at higher rates than outside shop workers who typically were nonunionized.

8. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourteenth Annual Report**, pp. 738-750.

9. This approach is not without its constraints, for it can be argued that by exclusively using the conditions of employment of organized workers as a basis of comparison, the forthcoming conclusions will be

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misleading. Without doubt the pay rates and hours of union members in each occupation were favorable compared to their unorganized counterparts. Yet the very consistency of this relative advantage enjoyed by organized workers facilitates a comparison of each occupation's conditions of employment. It must be acknowledged that a minority of workers in each occupation were union members, and therefore their conditions of employment did not prevail in their industries. However, if the conditions of employment experienced by union printers and building tradesmen were better than those of union cigarmakers and garment workers, than it can be assumed that these distinctions would hold for unorganized workers as well.

10. **Ibid**, pp., 724-737.

11. #6, Minutes of Membership Meeting, January 3, 1897; and George Stevens, **New York Typographical Union #6: A Study of a Modern Trade Union and Its Predecessors** (Albany: New York State Department of Labor, 1913), p. 338; Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 290 and 291; and **The New York Tribune**, April 1, 1894.

12. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Fourteenth Annual Report**, pp. 736-739.

13. **Ibid**, pp. 738-750.

14. **Ibid**, pp. 760-768; and United States. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin #499: **Wages in the United States From Colonial Times to 1928**, pp. 354 and 357.

15. **Wages in the United States From Colonial Times to 1928**, pp. 164-171, 202-205, and 208-211.

16. See Alexander Keyssar, **Out of Work** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), for discussion of the prevalence of unemployment among workers in industrial America and how they individually and collectively coped with the experience.

17. My understanding of the nuances and complexities of workers' experience during the industrial era have been enriched by recent scholarly work. Most useful to my concerns have been Herbert Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," **American Historical Review** 78 (1973), 531-588; David Montgomery "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century," **Labor History** 17 (1976), 485-509 and **The Fall of the House of Labor** (Cambridge University Press, 1987); Harmut Keil and John Jentz, **German Workers in Industrial Chicago, 1850-1910: A Comparative Perspective** (Northern Illinois University, 1983); Richard Oestreicher, **Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1877-1895** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Steven Ross, **Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); and Jules Tygiel, Workingmen in San Francisco, 1880-1900," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1977). Some

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of the more insightful studies have examined the uneven development and impact of industrialization in other countries. They include Raphael Samuel, "The Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in mid-Victorian Britain," **History Workshop** 3 (Spring 1977), 6-72; Royden Harrison and Jonathan Zeitlin, editors, **Divisions of Labor, Skilled Workers and Technological Change in Nineteenth Century England** (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1985); and Gregory Kealey, "The Honest Workingman," **Labour/Le trauvailleur** 1 (1976), 32-68.

18. The more recent studies which stress the homogenization of work and the erosion of the craftsmen's status under the force of mass production, scientific management and larger units of production include David Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, **Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 94-164; Dan Clawson, **Bureaucracy and the Labor Process: The Transformation of U.S. Industry, 1860-1920** (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980); Richard Edwards, **Contested Terrain** (New York: Basic Books, 1979); and Harry Braverman, **Labor and Monopoly Capital** (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979). This work avoids the error of painting with too broad a stroke as did such classical writers as Frederich Engels, **The Condition of the Working Class in England** (Oxford: Basil Blackwell [1844] 1958); and Max Weber, **The Theory of Economic and Social Organization** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947). However, as a group, these authors overstate the breadth of the transformation of the labor process and relations of production and the rate at which it was occurring during the late Gilded Age and Progressive Era.

19. Andrew Dawson, "The Paradox of Dynamic Technological Change and the Labor Aristocracy in the United States, 1880-1914," **Labor History**, (Summer 1979), 325-351; and "The Parameters of Craft Consciousness," Dirk Hoerder, ed., **American Labor and Immigration History, 1877-1920: Recent European Research** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983),

20. Robert Max Jackson, **The Formation of Craft Labor Markets** (New York: Academic Press, 1984).

21. My thinking on how unions allow some workers, especially those strategically situated within production, sharing customary work practices and working under relatively nonhierarchial conditions, to advance their collective interests and erect structures that protect them from job competition and alternative standards of labor has benefited from Elliot Freidson, "Occupational Autonomy and Labor Market Shelters," Phyllis Stewart and Muriel Cantor, editors, **Varieties of Work** (Beverley Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1982), pp. 39-54.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN — WORKERS' ABILITY TO ORGANIZE AND THE PRESENCE OF UNIONS

The marked variation in the conditions of employment, especially between printers and building tradesmen, on one the hand, and cigarmakers and garment workers, on the other hand, and the elite position of cigarpackers and cutters in their respective trades was a central feature of workers' experience in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn. Unmistakably, the variation in pay rates and earnings reflected the existence of multiple labor markets. These were the outgrowth of their respective industries and were in varying degrees the result of the intervention of unions representing workers in the four trades. Prominent among the factors shaping the context in which the conditions of employment developed were the structure and intensity of competition in the industry, the type of demand for its products, the productivity of labor and the specific composition of capital. These factors influenced the potential collective bargaining power of unions in two basic ways: first, by outlining the possibilities and constraints in the unions' efforts to influence either the supply or demand of labor and thereby its price, and secondly, by accentuating the leverage or lack of leverage workers commanded when they waged strikes and boycotts.

The ebb and flow of market conditions fundamentally facilitated and hindered workers' attempts to organize unions. Printers claimed the most favorable and garment workers the least favorable conditions of employment, while the former were considerably more likely to be union members than the latter (See Table I.).

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Table I. Number of Organized Printers, Building Tradesmen, Cigarmakers and Garment Workers and the Percentage in the Industry and/or Occupation in Unions (New York City — 1899)

	Printers*	Building Tradesmen^	Cigarmakers+	Garment Workers~
# in Unions	12,753	25,470	4,879	17,836
% in Unions	(A)45.2	—	23.8	20.5
	(B)57.0	28.3	—	11.4

Notes: * = Printers include typographers, pressmen, stereotypers, lithographers and engravers of whom typographers constituted approximately half of total.

^ = Building tradesmen consist of bricklayers and masons, carpenters, painters, plasterers and plumbers. Included among painters are paperhangers and varnishers in recognition that many painters did the work of the other two trades and because they were counted in the U.S. Census figures indicating the number in that occupation. The classification of plumbers incorporates gas fitters and steam fitters essentially for the same reasons painters include paperhangers and varnishers.

+ = Cigarmakers include cigarpackers as well as rollers and bunchers.

~ = Garment workers consist of cloakmakers, coatmakers, pantsmakers, shirtmakers, vestmakers, cutters and pressers.

The percentage in unions has been determined from two bases: (A) the number in the industry and (B) the number in the occupation. For printers and garment workers figures have been provided for (A) and (B) to underscore the caution with which the rates of unionization should be approached. In the case of printers, it appears that the census enumerators undercounted the actual number of printers, since they were instructed only to count those who drew most of the income from the stated occupation. This probably meant that part-time printers, whose ranks were growing with the spread of typesetting machines, were not included. In the case of garment workers, the base figures for (A) cover those employed in men's and women's clothing within the so called "factory product" sector as well as men's furnishings and shirtmaking. The first two categories undoubtedly did not include many of the industry's outside shops which by their very nature escaped the tabulations of census takers and factory inspectors. Therefore, (B), since it includes all who declared their major occupation to be tailor, seamstress, machine operator, etc. is a more accurate base from which to calculate the percentage of garment workers in unions. For building tradesmen and cigarmakers only one rate is given -- (B) for the former and (A) for the latter — since the alternate rate is based on unreliable figures and therefore misleadingly inflates the figures.
[Soure: Calculated from New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Seventeenth Annual Report** (1899), pp. 96-159; U.S. Twelfth Census (1900) **Statistics of Manufactures**, Part 2, pp. 620-628; and **Special Reports: Occupations**, pp. 634-641.]

Because the relationship between the printers' pre-eminent material position and their status as union members and the garment workers' lower economic position and their relatively unorganized status appears

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so clear-cut, the discussion of the factors influencing the emergence of labor markets and the ability of unions to bargain collectively should begin by addressing the question: why were some workers able to form viable unions and others hindered in their efforts?

While a greater proportion of printers were union members than building tradesmen, cigarmakers and garment workers, in all four trades union membership was the exception not the norm. This suggests that for many workers joining a union was not necessary, attractive or feasible. For some craftsmen, high earnings, job security and satisfactory working conditions were features of a chosen occupation and they therefore found the unions' **raison d'etre** personally irrelevant. For others, the cost of union membership outweighed the benefits, because initiation dues and fees were high, the demands on members to attend meetings were excessive, or even more ominously, joining a union resulted in discrimination and outright dismissal.(1) For still others, even when the potential advantages surpassed the disadvantages, the opportunities to join a union were severely constrained by the immediate circumstances of their work experience. For example, tenement house and outside shop production cut cigarmakers and garment workers off from most union organizing efforts.

The sources of the ability of printers, building tradesmen and cigarmakers to organize collectively were varied; however, a few features stand out. These include: the possession of high levels of skill, a strategic location within production, the relative absence of machine technology, the prevalence of a simple and nonfragmenting division of labor and the development of occupational structures that helped to foster social cohesiveness.

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Those in each of the four trades who showed the greatest propensity to form and sustain unions were skilled workers who assumed a primary importance in their respective industries. Compositors, bricklayers, carpenters and cigarmakers/packers, to name a few, possessed a variety of skills which required considerable time to master. Setting type, laying foundations, constructing roofs, rolling and grading cigars required more than manual dexterity and the careful use of hand-tools. Compositors needed to know how to spell and punctuate, carpenters had to take precise measurements, and cigarpackers, by just looking at a cigar, were expected to assess its style and type. Some of these workers were authentic craftsmen who were simultaneously artists and mechanics. Fresco painters, ornamental plasterers and masons working on cornices contributed to the erection of attractive as well as structurually sound buildings. Moreover, these skilled workers had to become problem solvers while performing their tasks. Compositors faced the challenge of justifying copy without leaving gaping spaces between words, pressmen had to judge the proper amount of ink to add and adjust the equipment to avoid damage to the plates, and building tradesmen occasionally had to improvise with inadequate material.

In short, the demand for printers, building tradesmen and cigarmakers who could fulfill their responsibilities was as great as the supply was limited. For employers in these trades, quality craftsmen reduced production costs and promoted more secure economic opportunities. Errors in advertising copy could cost a newspaper a major source of its revenue while attractively and accurately set copy could enable a book and job firm to gain additional orders. Plumbers who

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failed to properly install pipes and gas systems could cost their employers future contracts while reliable plumbing work could net exclusive contracts with general builders. Cigarpackers mistakenly labelling cigars could result in dissatisfied customers who would discontinue future orders with a firm, while rollers using just the bare minimum tobacco required in a quality cigar meant lower outlays for material. Likewise, cutters who used their knives precisely permitted manufacturers and contractors to reduce costs and maximize the yield of cloth.

The value of dependable skilled workers to their employers and the strategic role they played in the production process was magnified by the level of technological development in their respective trades.(2) Not until the mid-1880's were typesetting machines introduced in composing rooms of New York's newspapers, and by that time the New York Typographical Union had been well established. The building trades, despite some technological innovation in carpentry and masonry, remained dependent on traditional hand-tools. Cigarmakers in the 1880's were just beginning to encounter bunch-making machines, and not until the next decade did they face the challenge of suction tables. During most of the period in which the New York locals of the Cigar Makers International Union grew, the mold (a simple device, introduced in the 1860's) rather than machinery was the foremost form of technological innovation.

In essence, no technology had been developed in printing, the building trades or cigarmaking that permitted the reproduction of the craftsmen's skills and the simplifying of the production process until most of the unions created by these skilled workers were already intact. Furthermore, even when machine technology became more pervasive, their

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status did not automatically decline. The use of linotypes and monotypes did not deskill typographers, for in fact the efficient operation of these machines required a reskilled workforce; nor did it result in a wholesale displacement of hand compositors. The growing deployment of bunchmaking machines did separate the roles of rolling and bunching, and thereby facilitated the introduction of less skilled workers along with a more detailed division of labor through team work.

However, the effects of this development should not be exaggerated. First, within this new division of labor, rollers retained many of the valued skills while cigarpackers' skills appeared to be virtually untouched. Secondly, many employers found the machine technology not to be worth the investment even when they had the required capital, because it either did not lead to the production of cigars of consistently first-rate quality or was considered unsuited for the making of the highest grades which were lucratively billed as hand-made products. Consequently, the original core of the cigarmakers' union was not immediately eroded by technological innovation or new production methods. Instead, during this period of industrial change the union's ranks expanded to include bunchmakers and filler breakers, a growing proportion of whom were women.

A high skilled status, a strategic role in the production process and in the firm and the limited scope of technological innovation fostered an occupational identity and craft autonomy, which in turn underpinned a social coherence that nurtured collective activity. Employment for printers, building tradesmen, and to a lesser extent, for cigarmakers meant not simply a job or position, but a line of work or well defined trade. Obtaining a position with an employer represented

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an opportunity to practice one's craft which, by virtue of experience and expertise, the craftsman was qualified to perform. Accordingly, entry into the trade was formally or informally regulated.

Apprenticeships, either instituted at the craftsmen's insistence, or to satisfy the employers' need for reliable skilled workers, defined the path of prospective printers, carpenters and cigarmakers. Apprentices usually learned the required skills and gradually tackled more demanding tasks under the guidance of senior skilled workers. In addition to learning what to do and how to work, apprentices learned how to act within their craft. For example, printers discouraged individuals from currying favor from foremen in order to gain choice copy or a more attractive work assignment. Carpenters advised apprentices on how to resist the efforts of subcontractors to speed up work. Cigarmakers condemned any worker who risked becoming "servile" by living in quarters owned by the employer.

In a less proscriptive vein, printers, building tradesmen and cigarmakers integrated aspiring journeymen and new workers into work groups by socializing during and after work hours. Printers waiting for copy and building tradesmen held up by lack of material had ample opportunity to talk, play cards and to drink. Printers organized bicycle clubs, open to foremen, journeymen and apprentices. Cigarmakers employed in the smaller handicraft and mold shops enjoyed a convivial atmosphere where idle gossip and discussion of current affairs easily mixed with the work routine. Gompers testified that in his younger days as a full-time roller it was not uncommon for one worker to be "assigned" the responsibility of reading a newspaper to his shopmates.(3)

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The latitude within the workplace enjoyed by many printers and building tradesmen and some cigarmakers was symptomatic of craft autonomy. In the broadest sense, the organization of production within the printing industry and the building trades was "worker-directed". Compositors, pressmen, carpenters and plumbers among others worked with little supervision. Moreover, supervision was not the responsibility of nonproductive personnel, but instead of fellow craftsmen.(4) In the building trades, bricklayers and painters occasionally doubled as workers and "managers", making decisions over labor requirements and work assignments. In the garment trades, cutters oversaw the preparation of cloth, and tailors in the custom-made trade and operators in the ready-made men's clothing industry hired and trained members of their teams and supervised their work. (5) Even those craftsmen who did not assume supervisory roles were expected, as experienced practioners of their trade, to complete their tasks without frequent instructions and persistent oversight. If problems arose it was customary that craftsmen would first seek assistance from co-workers and not foremen. Furthermore, since many craftsmen (building tradesmen as a rule, cigarmakers, clothing cutters and hand compositors) owned their own tools, once employers provided them with the necessary material, they possessed the means to work.

Nevertheless, autonomy rested more on the way workers performed their labor activity than on the prevailing technology. Building tradesmen who worked with a variety of hand-tools, and compositors who increasingly in the 1890's were forsaking the composing stick for a linotype, both experienced autonomy on the job. Usually building tradesmen worked within small groups in which individuals often

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completed specialized assignments. A crew of carpenters would divide the work according to the specialities or particular skills of its members, although if help was needed on one phase, a carpenter working on another could be asked to assist. However, the growing specialization in masonry, carpentry and plastering evident in the 1890's often meant that bricklayers skilled in building walls were not adequate for the laying of foundations, or carpenters adept at hanging doors were not qualified to build stairs or roofs.

Within construction work another feature of the production process promoted craft autonomy. Quality control or assessment of performance usually was contingent on the completion of the product, i.e., there was no mechanism allowing for frequent feedback. If work was shoddy, it might not be discovered until another group of building tradesmen -- whose ability to fulfill their responsibilities depended on the successful completion of work by another trade --- began to work. Yet if plumbers' work was faulty, or if bricklayers laying a foundation "botched" the job, the damage might not become visible until after the building was occupied. For this reason, it was in the interests of contractors and subcontractors to hire the most dependable and responsible building tradesmen and for craftsmen to maintain the strictest standards if they sought to influence the supply of labor. In fact, building tradesmen seeking to create viable unions exploited this aspect of construction work, convincing employers that union workers were the best in their trade and thereby helped to shape a craft labor market to their interests.(6)

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The circumstances encountered by typographers were more complex. As the size of newspaper offices and book and job operations grew, and more of the typesetting became mechanized, the need for supervision of production correspondingly rose. Foremen, who were under greater pressure to meet production deadlines given the technical capacity to turn out larger newspapers, were responsible for assigning copy and overseeing proofreading and corrections in both manual and mechanized composition rooms. However, as much as office managers counted on foremen to ensure speedy and quality work, the foremen's ability to supervise was constrained by custom and the dynamics of the production process. Traditionally foremen emerged from the ranks of journeymen where they had earned the reputation of being the most skilled typographers. In their capacity as foremen they were still called on to set intricate type or perform other duties of compositors. Moreover, they continued to belong to the same social circles as they previously did, sharing their leisure time with journeymen playing cards, drinking beer in nearby taverns and participating in the union sponsored recreational activities. In fact, foremen were typically union members who occasionally assumed leadership positions within their respective chapels, and therefore they were responsible for observing and enforcing union work rules.(7)

Secondly, although linotypes integrated the tasks of distributing and justifying type, certain aspects of typesetting remained basically intact. Most of linotype and monotype models used in the 1880's and 1890's were operated by two typographers, one operating the keyboard and the other assisting with the justification of type. Typesetters continued to depend on the backup of proofreaders who in turn counted

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on assistants to either hold the galley or read the text. In addition, the typographers' miscellaneous responsibilities, such as picking up "takes", the handwritten copy to be set and the delivery of galleys to pressrooms, provided a freedom of movement that alleviated the potential tedium of mechanical typesetting. In short, the limitations of the new technology and the demands of typesetting did not measurably erode the printer's relative autonomy at the workplace.

Numerous other interrelated factors, including the composition of the workforce, the expectations of workers and the rate of labor turnover, appear to have influenced the ability of workers to organize collectively. Although immigrants and their offspring constituted the majority of the workforce in all four trades, there were some significant differences in the specific ethnic composition. Among printers and building tradesmen in general, the foreign-born were a minority. Instead native-born sons of immigrants represented the bulk of the labor force. Among the immigrants filling the ranks of printers and building tradesmen, the Irish, German and British were most conspicuous. In contrast, the majority of garment workers and cigarmakers were first generation immigrants, and with the inclusion of their native-born offspring, they virtually predominated to the exclusion of non-immigrants and their children. Among the more established immigrant groups from Northern and Western Europe, only the Germans played an important role in the cigarmaking and clothing industry workforces, but during the 1890's their proportionate position was being eclipsed by newer immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, namely Russian-Polish Jews, Austrian-Hungarians and Italians.

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The composition of the four trades differed by sex as well. The building trades was exclusively a male domain, and the printing industry -- the introduction of machine technology notwithstanding -- remained dominated by men, with women relegated to the positions of distributors and proofreaders' assistants. The majority of cigarmakers in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn were men, but the proportion of women in the industry grew during the 1890's from one-third to almost one-half. Women predominated in three of the four major branches of the clothing industry with the exception of the men's clothing industry where they constituted approximately two-fifths of the labor force. Significantly, the composition of cutters differed from that of tailors, pressers or basters; in the main, they were of Irish, Scottish or German lineage, and exclusively men.

The specific composition of the respective trades was important for a number of reasons. Immigrants from Great Britain, Ireland and Germany in the 1880's often continued occupations they entered in their original homeland. Moreover, they often had lived in an urban-industrial environment and had participated in trade unions before settling in the United States. Joining the ranks of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union, the New York Typographical Union and the German-American Typographia were Irish, British and German immigrants who belonged to comparable organizations in their original homelands. In addition, immigrants from Great Britain, Ireland and Germany arriving in New York and Brooklyn in the 1880's and 1890's entered well developed ethnic communities containing a network of voluntary associations, including churches, fraternal organizations and mutual aid societies. These institutions helped to provide a stability

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to the life of immigrants, or, at the very least, ease their transition to a new society. They also served as potential bases of support for working-class organization by affording immigrant workers the opportunity to learn the skills of public speaking, administration and financial management as well as supplying them material and moral sustenance in the midst of strikes.

The background of Russian-Jewish and Italian immigrants, and the timing of their arrival in the United States, was dramatically different. Many of the inhabitants of the Pale of Settlement migrating to the United States had no documented skill and trade, or were peddlers barely eking out a living, and those who worked in the garment trades or cigarmaking did so under quite different conditions: they were employed in artisan-owned and -managed shops located in small towns, commonly called shtetls. In any event, a significant number of the first generation of Eastern European Jewish immigrants were not as well prepared for life in an urban-industrial society as their Western and Northern European counterparts.

This was true too for most of the Italian immigrants arriving in late Gilded Age New York. Most originated from the rural South where they worked as day laborers on latifundias, tilled small plots of land and labored in stone quarries and lead mines. Those among them who were dissatisfied with these limited economic opportunities left with the hope of finding employment that would allow them the means of returning home as land owners. Psychologically, then, many Italian immigrants were not ready to adjust permanently to a new society.

Equally important, both the first generation of Jewish and Italian immigrants faced the imposing challenge of community building, for no

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settled communities with firmly grounded institutions welcomed their arrival. Much of the Jewish and Italian immigrant experience between 1880 and 1900 was intertwined with the difficulties of developing the means to balance the competing claims of cultural change and traditional ways of life, and thereby introduce a measure of stability amidst alien surroundings. An important implication of the findings of Irving Howe, Daniel Bell, George Pozzetta, Edwin Fenton and others is that the confidence, self-esteem, social cohesiveness and institutional resources necessary for effective working-class mobilization, including the formation of unions, were lacking before the Progressive era.(8) It was not coincidental that cloakmakers and others in the women's apparel industry did not successfully establish the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union until after the seeds of community building planted by the first generation of **landsleit** had been watered and nourished by the next generation of immigrant workers.

The contrast between the immigrant composition of the printing trades and building trades on one hand, and garment workers, on the other hand should not be overdrawn. First, there were a number of skilled tailors among Jewish immigrants who had worked in factories and had tasted urban life in Warsaw and Lodz before arriving in New York. Among Italian immigrants there were bricklayers, stone masons and shoemakers who had been members of mutual aid societies and unions in their homeland. In addition, among the ranks of the first major wave of Jewish immigrants, there were intellectuals — students, teachers and writers — who were active in Russia's socialist and radical movements. They proved not to be so immersed in the daily travails of adapting to a new society to discard their political commitments as if they were

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outworn clothing. Instead, they formed the core of activists spearheading the drive to organize unions in the garment trades during the 1880's and 1890's. Simply stated, the specific composition of the immigrant population which supplied New York's clothing industry with its workers also accounted for the impetus to create unions.

The situation of clothing cutters also cautions against overstating the contrast between the composition of the different trades. Even with the new sources of immigrant labor, the majority of cutters were "older" immigrants, some of whom had entered their occupation in their original homelands. For these skilled workers, ethnicity appeared to be less significant a factor in encouraging union organization than their key position in the clothing making process. In any event, the Gotham Association of Knife Cutters and the cutters' locals in the United Garment Workers received support from other craft unions, most of which also were led by first and second generation Irish and German workers.

For Jewish immigrants entering the garment trades, what was critical was not just the different expectations borne of their old world experience, but the specific opportunites granted them by their adopted homeland. If the independence and prestige afforded by self-employment or a skilled trade were simply hopes in Eastern Europe, in New York's Lower East Side and Brooklyn's Brownsville they seemed to be less elusive goals. In an industry where capital requirements and entrepeneurial abilities were relatively undemanding, the path towards self-employment apparently had few barriers.(9) For many operators, tailors and pressers employed in the cloakmaking and coatmaking trades, the primary purpose of work was to earn the necessary income to become a

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contractor and hire others to work for you.

In this context, union membership was problematic since it demanded more than it offered. A ten hour day might limit total earnings, and calls to strike to improve wage rates in the short-term meant loss of income and even loss of a job. To many immigrant garment workers, participation in a union was temporary, since they perceived an escape route from the status of wage earner.

Similar expectations were shared and realized by building tradesmen as well. Some carpenters, taking advantage of the industry's variable labor needs, low capital requirements and decentralized market structure, became "lumpers" — subcontractors who paid journeymen a flat rate for a particular job. Painters, possessing the knowledge of their craft and the necessary financial resources, established their own businesses. These opportunities were becoming more limited for building tradesmen in the 1880's and 1890's, but remained accessible to garment workers during this period. Even with the rise of factories and the virtual disappearance of tenement sweatshops at the turn of the century, the small inside shop continued to be a fixture in the men's clothing industry.

Nevertheless, the dynamics of expectations born out of the immigrants' experience did not result only in one course of action. Undoubtedly, a former peddler, merchant and artisan tailor might have considered wage work a necessary, albeit undesirable, interlude before attaining the independent status of self-employment. Yet the same expectations and hopes for improvement rather than generating docility or a stoic acceptance of conditions could, under certain circumstances, encourage an assertive attitude.

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Because wage rates, earnings and employment followed the trajectory of a roller-coaster, immigrant workers expecting imminent personal success were often spurred to act collectively and boldly. Accordingly, the same operators, basters and pressers so preoccupied with earning a livelihood would withdraw their labor in the hope of gaining higher pay rates. The frequency and rhythm of strike activity in the garment trades in part resulted from the swings in the mood of workers whose sense of well-being and aspirations could be upset by the cost-cutting practices of contractors and manufacturers.

However, it must be emphasized that an inclination to strike can not be equated with a commitment to trade unionism. As the annual ritual of strikes attests, many garment workers formed ad hoc unions to press employers to yield to their demands, and then lost interest in them as soon as the strike ended, be it successfully or not. The temporary interest in unions shown by many garment workers sprang from the hope that when the next busy season occurred they would be contractors, and the perception that union membership carried too many demands on their time and energies. Moreover, few of the garment worker unions offered members such benefits as sick pay, an out-of-work allowance, or compensation for funeral expenses. Of course, the tendency of garment workers to form "seasonal" unions set in motion a vicious cycle, since in the absence of stable unions, benefits could not be financed, and without the different types of mutual aid, many workers did not find unions attractive. In sum, the composition and the background of the labor force in the garment trades laid the groundwork for a volatile labor movement where militant activity overshadowed the efforts to build more durable trade unions.

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Less unequivocal was the importance of gender/sex in the composition of the workforces in the four trades. The numerically significant role played by women in the garment trades, and to a lesser extent, in cigarmaking tended to handicap workers in these industries from organizing collectively. Women's participation in the wage-earning labor force was largely contingent on their age, phase of their life cycle and family responsibilities.(10) The majority of women who worked in the clothing and cigarmaking industries in particular, and in manufacturing in general, were between 16 and 25 years old, that is, when they were single, childless and still living with their parents.

Yet, although wage work outside the home provided young women with the opportunity to grow personally and experience a measure of independence,(11) they still remained bound to their immediate families. Because their fathers were usually employed in low wage jobs where seasonal unemployment was rampant, their earnings were essential for the family's welfare. Young women also were expected to assist their mothers in performing household chores and caring for young children. These obligations within a family wage economy (12) were clearly defined and accepted by daughters and mothers alike. Wage work would remain young women's major contribution to this family economy until they married, when it was assumed that their interests would turn to raising a family and caring for a husband.

Not suprisingly many women in these circumstances lacked the time, energy, or deep interest to join a union or participate in union activities.(13) This was more salient for married women whose return to employment outside the home was usually prompted by a family crisis: the loss of the primary breadwinners' contribution due to a strike, unemployment, illness or death.

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Not only did personal responsibilities overshadow the potential advantages of union membership, but the unions in the clothing and cigarmaking industries did not make organizing women a priority. Meetings often were scheduled at inconvenient times and held at unattractive locations above, or adjacent to, noisy and smoky saloons, thereby discouraging women from attending. In addition, since women in cloakmaking and coatmaking were more concentrated in the lower paying and less prestigious positions of busheler and finisher rather than operator, tailor or presser, male garment workers tended to undervalue their importance to union campaigns. Characteristically, the Cloakmakers' and Operators' Union reached a settlement with the employers in the Triple Alliance strike that expressly excluded women from all its provisions. Meanwhile the United Garment Workers chartered only two locals of female coatmakers, despite their steady support in the strikes fought by the United Brotherhood of Tailors in 1895 and 1896. Hampered by what delegates to the national union convention in 1895 called "the lack of necessary cooperation from other tailor unions", the two locals — #16 in New York and #90 in Brooklyn — had dissolved before the end of the decade. (14)

The record of the Cigar Makers International Union was more ambiguous. Officially women were welcome to join (the CMIU and the International Typographical Union being the first two national unions to constitutionally admit women), and at the turn of the century about one-fifth of the membership in the New York and Brooklyn locals were women. However, women continued to be under-represented within the union relative to their proportion of the industry's labor force. This was due in part to the resistance many male cigarmakers had in accepting women

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as union standard bearers, since they were too readily associated with the spread of team work, machine technology and tenement production — all of which were perceived to threaten members' pay rates, hours and job security. Despite evidence that suction tables were becoming permanent features of the cigarmaking process, the union barred membership to any roller or buncher working with this technology. This essentially restricted the number of women who were eligible to join the union since the largest manufacturers employing hundreds of workers depended predominantly on the labor of women. Furthermore, during the period when union cigarmakers regarded tenement house production as the epitome of urban squalor and economic exploitation, tenement house workers were **personae non grata.** Notwithstanding the arguments of some New York leaders, the national union strictly enforced its rule excluding them from membership. It denied benefits to tenement house workers admitted by a local and threatened local officers who violated this stricture with disciplinary action.(15)

The composition of the labor force also tended to reinforce specific structural characteristics of an industry. In the garment trades, for example, there was a high rate of labor turnover. Clothing shops opened and closed in a highly unstable market where success depended on keeping labor costs low and underselling competitors. Establishing an inside or outside shop necessitated minor outlays in physical plant or machinery, and therefore new producers emerged regularly. The entering and exiting from the industrial market meant alternating phases of additional employment opportunities and displacement for garment workers. Exacerbating this inherent instability were the seasonal cycles of production which predictably resulted in

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factory closures or extended periods of unemployment during the winter months. The availability of women to do wage work served the purposes of manufacturers and contractors who had flexible labor needs, and who, at any rate, were not prepared to provide employees with long-term employment. Fluctuating levels of labor demand were not necessarily a problem for women, since their participation in wage work was generally episodic — in tune with the needs of the family economy and household responsibilities. Moreover, women had developed other means of earning income in the absence of wage work, including taking in boarders and mending and cleaning clothing. In brief, an abundant supply of workers who could readily adjust to the idiosyncracies of the industry's production cycle contributed to the persistence of economic instability that retarded the efforts of garment workers to unionize and improve their conditions of employment.

Implicit throughout the discussion of the sources of workers' success and failure to organize unions has been an acknowledgement of the varying degrees of effectiveness workers had in collectively influencing their conditions of employment. In practice, the process of building viable unions and the ability to wrest concessions from employers were mutually reinforcing, for a union that could not increase wages or reduce hours nor enforce these gains would have difficulty in retaining the loyalty of its members, not to mention increasing its membership.

Simply put, unions' prospects for growth and influence depended on maximizing both the benefits of membership and the costs of nonmembership. The more of an influence a union had over wage rates, the length of the workday, entry into a trade, job security, methods of

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upgrading, work loads and work rules, the more attractive union membership became. Likewise, the more compensation, if not protection, a union could offer workers facing unemployment, illness, injury, old age and death, the more likely it would be to elicit the support of its members.

The strongest unions emphasized not only the incentives of trade union organization, but the disincentives of remaining outside the fold. Accordingly, the New York Typographical Union, the local affiliates of the International Printing Pressmen's Union, and most of the building trades unions established closed or union shops which made union membership a condition of employment. Union cigarmakers and clothing cutters, lacking the power to regulate the terms of employment, stressed the aspect of mutual aid to promote viable organizations. The United Garment Workers and the United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers, encouraged by the examples of the printers' and cigarmakers' unions in advancing their union labels, sought to pressure employers to honor union standards and thereby sink more stable roots for trade unionism among garment workers.

The effectiveness of the unions' attempts to broaden their influence among workers and to deepen their presence at the workplace by securing agreements with employers emanated not just from workers' concerted activity alone. Specific stategies and tactics produced results when a combination of conditions were present. The pressure workers and unions brought to bear on employers had the most lasting impact when market factors, including the type of demand for a product and the degree of competition, as well as the particular relationship between capital and labor requirements, left employers more vulnerable

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and/or allowed them to make concessions without sacrificing control over their businesses and jeopardizing their ability to grow.

A way to illuminate the influences on the breadth and depth of trade union organization is to look more closely at where unions in the four trades organized most effectively. Printers were more successful in organizing unions in the newspaper branch than the book and job sector of the industry. In New York, Local # 6 had formed chapels in every major daily with the exception of **The Tribune** from 1883 to 1891. In Brooklyn, #98 had organized three of that city's major daily newspapers between 1886 and 1894. Within the book and job sector, both typographical unions had managed to win contracts with many of the larger firms, but the majority of employers publishing books, periodicals and commercial literature did not honor a union scale.

The strength of unionism within the newspaper branch can be attributed to four factors: the particular inelasticity of demand, the perishability of the product, the degree of competition and the physical concentration of workplaces.(16) The demand for newspapers was relatively insensitive to fluctuations in price and generally consistent both during periods of economic expansion and contraction. A newspaper's market value was severely time bound, since few consumers were interested in reading a paper if it were not an up-to-date issue. Therefore, a timely interruption in the production of a daily newspaper by printers could cost newspaper publishers an important share of the market. Competition in the newspaper trade was restricted by high capital requirements which tended to discourage easy entry into the market. Competition was structured by the existence of a number of sub-markets consisting of different readerships according to the language in

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which the paper was printed, how often it was published and its area of distribution. Moreover, demand for newspapers among readers and advertisers exceeded the publishers' capacity to produce them, indicating that newspaper firms potentially possessed considerable influence over the price of the product. Lastly, most of the daily newspapers were either published in lower Manhattan between City Hall and the New York Stock Exchange, along "newspaper row", or within a one mile radius in downtown Brooklyn.

Some of these conditions were lacking in the book and job branch of the industry, while others were less salient. The demand for some products such as books, magazines and trade publications was relatively inelastic, but publication of circulars, handbills and promotional literature in general was sensitive to both price fluctations and general economic conditions. The shelf life of most the products of the book and job sector were less perishable than those of newspapers, thereby reducing the possible impact of the printers' withdrawal of labor. The book and job trade was highly specialized and oriented to the specific needs of customers. In one sense, this channeled competition into several minimarkets and thereby protected publishers of books or magazines from specialists in commercial literature such as advertisements. However, within each specialized market competition could be intense, as demand for printed material rarely exceeded productive capacity. This was particularly true in the reprinting of cheap novels where the market was not local, and in the production of promotional material where demand was more volatile. Moreover, the units of production in book and job publishing were more dispersed than in newspaper publishing, thereby complicating the printers' efforts to form unions.(17)

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These differences aside, printer unionism developed in the newspaper and book and job sectors where common conditions were present. First, the larger the workplace and the more capital assets a firm had, the more likely it was that printers would belong to a union. This was because the printers' unions made organizing the major newspapers and book and job firms a priority, in the hope of establishing industry-wide standards, while the larger employers realized that the recognition of unions did not interfere with their ability to prosper, or, more positively, promoted the development of a stable, productive labor force. Of the 50 union chapels for which the number of printers are known, 40 percent were formed in workplaces of at least 100 workers, and the overwhelming majority of the remainder in firms employing more than 50 printers. Local Number Six had established chapels in six of the nine book and job firms with a value of at least $100,000, and union chapels existed in two-thirds of the most capitalized firms, valued at $1,000,000 (18).

Secondly, both sectors were capital intensive where expenditures on machinery were rising proportional to labor. By 1900, newspaper publishers and book and job employers were investing a $1.25 for every $1.00 spent on wages. This feature was significant because there was comparatively less pressure to reduce labor costs than in the construction industry, cigarmaking and the garment trades, all of which were labor and not capital intensive. Therefore, workers could more readily share in the gains generated by higher levels of productivity.

Thirdly, the increased outlays in machinery did not mean a reduction in the size of the workforce, nor more importantly, an erosion in the strategic position of printers in production. The number of

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printers grew between 1890 and 1900,(19) although the increase was probably at a lower rate than it would have been had not linotypes and monotypes been introduced. Compositors remained highly skilled workers whose efficient operation of typesetting machinery maximized the output of the new technology. Printers were irreplaceable; although typesetting machines simplified production, it did not entail the hiring or the upgrading of less skilled workers, not simply because of the technical requirements of the new technology, but because there were no grades of workers within the workforce who could easily be trained to set type. This situation contrasted sharply with industries undergoing comprehensive mechanization such as boot and shoemaking, cotton textiles and steel making where stitchers and lasters, mule spinners and puddlers, respectively, faced internal competition for jobs from less skilled members in the industry. (20) The fact that printer unions were well organized at the inception of the major technological changes, and from an early stage recognized that newspaper and book and job publishers were intent on mechanizing composition, helped typographers to adjust. Accordingly, the New York Typgraphical Union and the German-American Typographia emphasized access to jobs and reached an understanding with many employers that only union members would operate typesetting machines.

In the other three trades a different picture appeared. The presence of unions was not uniformly related to capitalization and size of firms, product demand and concentration or dispersion of production. For example, in the building trades, construction firms possessed meager assets compared to major manufacturing concerns in other industries, and accordingly were not rated by the mercantile agency, R.G. Dun and

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Company. Moreoever, the average number of workers per building trades firm was below ten for all but bricklaying and masonry which averaged approximately 25. Bricklayers and masons were the most highly organized building tradesmen, as about one of every three in that occupation, compared to one of every four in the other major construction trades, were members of unions.

Nevertheless, firm size in itself seems not to have been the critical factor. Bricklayers had less opportunity to become contractors and subcontractors than carpenters or painters, for example. They also were more likely to work directly for general contractors than plumbers, carpenters and painters. Some bricklayers and masons labored at different phases of the construction process, and not at just one or two distinct stages. Working in larger groups, blocked from attaining self-employed status, responsible to contractors who oversaw the entire building project, assuming a multipurpose role in production, bricklayers developed the group identity and wage-earner consciousness that encouraged an interest in trade unions and possessed the bargaining leverage that made unions feasible. These preconditions for viable trade unions were not absent in the other building trades, but were less prevalent than in bricklaying.

The building trades shared other industrial features. First, demand for construction of commercial and residential buildings was relatively inelastic — that is, remaining steady even as product price changed — although not insensitive to general swings in the business cycle. Although wage rates rose, construction costs per square foot fell by more than 200 percent between 1879 and 1897. Simultaneously, the sales price for housing and commercial space per square foot increased

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dramatically.(21) This was a measure of improvements in architectural techniques, more versatile building materials and technological innovation that expanded the construction industry's capacity, as well as the booming demand for buildings attendant to a growing city. Reinforcing the market conditions that promised contractors generous and reliable profits was the fact that contractors could readily pass on production costs to consumers even if the buildings went unsold or unoccupied. These features of the construction industry facilitated the growth of unions and provided them with more leverage since contractors could grant building tradesmen higher wages and shorter hours without jeopardizing their market position.

Secondly, the very magnitude of construction meant that work was often dispersed over many sites. As outlying areas in Brooklyn (for example, Brownsville and Flatbush) and in New York, such as Harlem and Morrisania, were being developed, small crews of building tradesmen found employment working on one and two family houses. Since many of these construction sites were scattered and managed by newly founded contracting and subcontracting firms, established unions discovered it was difficult monitoring who was hired and under what conditions they worked.

For these reasons, building trades unions tended to concentrate their organizing efforts on contractors and subcontractors involved in larger projects such as commercial and industrial buildings, hotels, apartment houses and public offices where greater numbers of building tradesmen would be employed. In sum, the structure of the industry, including the type of product market, the high levels of demand for specialized, skilled labor and the dispersal of work places influenced the likelihood that building tradesmen would join a union.

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In cigarmaking, where both large scale factories and small shops existed, the pattern of union presence differed from the printing industry. Whereas compositors and typesetters were more likely be union members among the major newspaper and book and job publishing firms, union cigarmakers were more likely to be employed in the smaller, lower capitalized shops and not the bigger more capitalized factories. Even during the drive by the New York affiliates of the Cigar Makers International Union to organize filler breakers, bunchmakers and rollers in 1890, only three manufacturers employing between 360 and 500 workers agreed to honor the union scale. In 1898, among the seventeen manufacturing firms whose capital assets were $100,000 or above, only five honored the union's 48 hour work week. Meanwhile, ten of the sixteen manufacturers whose capital assets were below $100,000 maintained a 48 hour week.(26)

The virtual lack of a union presence among the larger manufacturers stemmed from a series of interrelated factors. The major employers were instrumental in forming the Cigar Manufacturers' Association in 1886, and reconstituting it in 1890, to keep the union at bay. Under strong competition from manufacturers in upstate New York and rural Pennsylvania, the employers aimed to keep labor costs as low as possible — and maintaining an open shop was part of their overall strategy to do so. Most of these manufacturers had mechanized production and divided the labor process through the use of bunching machines, suction tables and team work. A few of the larger manufacturers also operated tenement based shops which tended to specialize in cheaper styles.

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Given the unions' prohibitions against admitting tenement house workers and those working with suction tables, cigarmakers employed by the major manufacturers were outside the union's targeted constituency. Instead the union concentrated on organizing workers engaged in making higher grade cigars and in shops using handicraft methods or molds. This approach was feasible because despite technological innovation, there remained a healthy demand for hand rolled cigars, especially among those tobacco shops whose customers included connoisseurs. Not until 1896 did the union change its approach somewhat when a membership referendum ratified an amendment to the CMIU's constitution permitting cigarmakers employed in union shops to work on suction tables and in teams and allowing locals to admit filler breakers and rollers except in places where the new technology and division of labor had already been introduced prior to the amendment's enactment. (23)

This shift protected the job security of union members and potentially expanded the union's base. However, despite the union's implicit recognition of the employers' insistence to modernize production, it stressed defending its institutional position and not aggressively organizing those who, by virtue of production methods and the location of work, were deemed cannon fodder for employers seeking to circumvent if not erode union standards.

The experience of garment workers to a certain extent conforms to the generalization that as the size of workplaces grew, and as the division of labor became more detailed, workers were more likely to unionize. The United Garment Workers, according to Charles Reichers, the union's General Secretary, drew the majority of its members in shops employing between 20 and 100 workers where men outnumbered women by two

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to one. The Operators' and Cloakmakers' Union prior to its major strike in 1894 had organized some of the largest manufacturing firms, including leading members of the Cloak Manufacturers' Association, whose workforces ranged from 150 to 600 employees, while the average size of the four nonunion firms which were the initial focus of the strike was about 100 workers. Although the evidence is fragmentary, it appears that the cloakmakers' union had more success in organizing the more highly capitalized firms in the industry. Of the four manufacturers with whom the union had maintained agreements and for whom an R.G. Dun rating is available, two possessed assets valued between $100,000 and $500,000 and one at $1 million. Meanwhile, of the seven manufacturers which operated nonunion shops or prompted strike action by circumventing union agreements, only two were capitalized at $100,000 or more.(24)

Workplace size was just one factor that influenced the development of unions in the garment trades. One of every five workers in the women's ready-made clothing industry (mostly cloakmakers), and one of every four men's ready-made clothing workers (consisting of coatmakers, vestmakers, pantsmakers and others) belonged to a union in 1899. In both industries large workplaces were rare; indeed, the proportion of workplaces with more than 25 workers (approximately the threshold level in Reichers' estimation) in the cloakmaking and coatmaking trades — the core of union organizing efforts in the 1890's — was slightly more than 10 percent in the former and about 6 percent in the latter. All contemporary evidence, from the testimony of union officials and the accounts of strikes, suggests that union members were concentrated among a small proportion of firms, those employing more than 25 workers.

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The preponderance of small workplaces, however, was symptomatic of other features of the garment trades, which tended to retard unionization. In the men's clothing industry, especially in the coatmaking trade, shops run by contractors thrived. These outside shops were often transient operations, established at the beginning of the busy season, and closed once the manufacturers' orders were filled. Moreover, contractors relocated operations to escape factory inspectors attempting to enforce laws against tenement house production, or to avoid paying rent to the leasers of storefronts and lofts. Not surprisingly, this mobility among employers contributed to a high labor turnover, which hampered the organizing efforts of the United Garment Workers representing operators, tailors and pressers. In the women's clothing industry, outside shops existed as well, but not as pervasively as in the men's clothing industry. During the 1890's, cloakmakers had intermittent success in organizing unions and establishing trade agreements, although by the end of the decade the leading union, the Brotherhood of Cloakmakers had grown. This was largely the result of the consolidation of the cutters' and operators' organizations.

While the prevalence of petty production and outside shops blocked the growth of unions in the men's clothing sector, the specific composition of the labor force in the women's clothing sector appeared to influence the prospects of the cloakmaker unions. In the former sector, men represented the majority of all workers with the exception of finishers, while in the latter sector women outnumbered men in most job classifications except operators. This was especially the case in the larger shops and factories. As indicated earlier, the lack of priority given to organizing workers further down the job ladder, the

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episodic quality of women's participation in wage labor outside the household and women's gender-defined expectations and familial responsibilities meant that both sectors at best were selectively unionized. The impact of the sex composition of the labor force on unionization can be observed if we calculate the percentage of workers from each sector in unions under the following conditions: if the proportion of women in the labor force of each sector was equal and if the rate women and men joined unions remained constant. Under these conditions, the rate of unionization in the women's clothing sector would have increased significantly, and the unionization rate in the men's clothing sector would have fallen dramatically (See Table II.).

Table II. The Change in the Percentage of Workers in Unions in the Women's and Men's Clothing Industry if the Proportion of Women in the Labor Force of Each Industry was Equal (1900 —New York and Brooklyn)

	% Women	% in Unions	Adjusted % in Unions	Change
Women's Clothing	57	21.3	29.4	+8.1
Men's Clothing	32	25.2	17.1	-8.1

(Calculated from U.S. Twelfth Census (1900) Volume Eight, **Statistics on Manufactures**, pp. 620-628; and New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Seventeenth Annual Report** (1899), pp. 30-33.)

Identifying more sharply the sectors in the the four trades where workers were most likely to unionize calls into question some of the more common explanations for the growth of unions. In a provocative study of working class formation and transformation, David Gordon, et al, argue that in the late nineteenth century work relations were undergoing homogenization.(25) This was reflected in the increase in the average size of worksites and the accelerated introduction of machine technology. These inter-related developments opened the way to the emergence of a drive system in production involving increased work loads, a faster workpace and more hierarchical methods of labor control, all of which provoked workers to organize collectively.

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Less concerned with technological factors, Robert Max Jackson stresses the size of business establishments in the formation of both unions and employers' associations in the printing and construction industries.(26) Drawing on the work of Mancour Olson and Sherill Cleland (27), he argues that larger workplaces meant the growth of impersonal patterns of management and worker relations, and indicated a greater reservoir of resources available to employers to standardize conditions, including terms of employment.

The first condition referred to a potentially heightened need for unionization, and the second development offered the greater possibility that employers would be prepared to bargain collectively. Within this context, workers would be less inclined to identify with their employers, share common interests, or have ready access to them if grievances appeared. Increasingly employers would designate responsibility to managers and personnel officers for the decisions over hiring, firing, work assignments, scheduling and handling of workers' complaints. In short, as the relationship between workers and employers became more distant and the supervison of production became more professionalized, workers felt more intensely and urgently the need to organize unions to act as intermediaries with employers.

For their part, employers, or more exactly, manufacturing firms, might find it worthwhile to rationalize production and business operations by reaching agreements with unions over pay, hours, work efforts and procedures to redress grievances and resolve disputes. In this way, they could promote stability in the labor force, increase productivity and regulate some of the conditions affecting their market position. Both middle-size and large business establishments could

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benefit from developing a **modus vivendi** with unions. However, the larger firms, unlike middle-sized firms, possessed the financial and technical resources to explore methods in pursuit of their economic interests other than bargaining with unions. Essentially then, larger employers had less of an overriding incentive to accept unions and more ability to resist their organizing efforts.

These explanations for the development of unions and the emergence of an accommodation between labor and employers are not unconvincing; however, some of the primary features underlying the homogenization of conditions were missing or less prevalent in the four trades, and other circumstances and developments were at least as important. Therefore, some of the key players did not perform their roles as predicted by these explanations.

In only one of the four industries (printing) did machinery, as measured by the ratio of expenditures to labor costs, constitute a significant part in production. While in all but the construction industry large and highly capitalized firms appeared, most employers maintained quite modest operations. In fact, even in the printing trades, where unionization was most firmly established, not to mention the cigarmaking and the clothing industry, petty and dispersed enterprise thrived. True, printers in the small and negligibly capitalized shops failed to unionize. However, rollers, in small shops owned and operated by entrepenuers with limited assets, appeared to be at the core of the Cigar Makers International Union in New York and Brooklyn.

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Workplace size and the market position of an employer were only consistently important factors in the printing industry, where the typographers effectively organized the major newspapers and book and job firms. In the garment trades, cloakmakers apparently had more success with the largest manufacturers, employing over 200 workers, and not among the middle-size firms employing between 50 and 100 workers, or the contractor-run shops where fewer than 25 workers labored. In contrast, in an industry where large-scale factories were rare, the coatmakers formed unions among small and middle-sized firms.

More important than size was the location and the degree of physical concentration of production and the immediate circumstances encountered by workers. In cigarmaking and the garment trades, tenement house shops and outside shops, respectively, constituted formidable obstacles for organizing. Workers were physically isolated from others in their trade, and only temporarily hired by employers who frequently closed operations, to reopen them at some other site.

Typically, those working in sweatshops and tenement houses were newly arrived immigrants whose experience in their original homelands prepared them for the harsh realities of life in their adopted homelands. Fleeing persecution and poverty, they discovered a "land of dollars" offering the allure of personal improvement if only they worked hard and accepted their lot. This surely posed a challenge to immigrant workers; but in their struggle for survival, it was a plausible path to follow. The realities of power were too stark to ignore: the same person(s) who provided shelter also supplied a chance to earn a livelihood. Tenement house cigarmakers knew joining a union risked raising the ire of the landlord-employer who then could both

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evict and fire workers in one clean stroke. Even if the home was not a workplace, the likelihood a Jewish immigrant worked for a **landsleit**, personal acquaintance or family friend, left the recently arrived immigrant not only dependent on his goodwill but emotionally bound as well. Accordingly, union activity could too easily result in loss of a job and disgrace in the eyes of significant others. Other options existed for a dissatisfied worker in outside shops: they could seek more lucrative employment elsewhere, or channel their energies to accumulate enough money to become contractors themselves.

Besides these subjective and objective circumstances, other factors were influential. Establishing stable unions involved maintaining a consistent presence at the workplace, which in turn was contingent on achieving and defending gains. In the garment trades, even when outside shop workers showed an interest in organizing, cloakmaker and coatmaker unions found it extremely difficult to improve their conditions of employment. Contractors, not unreasonably, contended it was not in their power to grant pay rate hikes were since they paid wages out of a set price offered by manufacturers for the production of each garment. To pay any more would mean reducing the contractors' profits or leaving none at all. Furthermore, asking manufacturers to raise their prices could mean that contractors jeopardized their future business ties, since the key element in their success to win contracts was by underbidding their competitors. In the simplest market terms, contractors were price-takers and not price-makers who survived by keeping labor costs to a bare minimum. Not suprisingly, when contractors faced with strikes that threatened to disrupt production agreed to improve wages and reduce hours, they looked for the first opportunity to circumvent the terms of the agreement.

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Instead, unions targeted manufacturers in their campaigns to improve conditions of employment. The most capitalized firms, assuming a more prominent position in the market, could afford to make concessions to unions without jeopardizing their long-term economic performance. Moreover, they had the power either to raise the price they paid contractors, thereby allowing outside shop workers the opportunity to win wage hikes, or to eliminate contracting as a method of allocating work. In practice, in the mid-1890's the Brotherhood of Tailors and the Cloakmakers' and Operators' Union and, later in the decade, the Brotherhood of Cloakmakers, pursued both approaches, although over time agitation for the abolition of contracting became more prevalent.

A more selective strategy was logical for other reasons. Winning contracts with the largest manufacturers, especially those who led the employers' associations, could set standards for key segments of the industry. By concentrating on introducing and enforcing these standards among the leading manufacturers, union membership could become more attractive. In addition, the unions could build a firm base from which they could extend their influence into the less easily organized areas in the clothing industry.

The Cigarmakers took a different tack. They followed the path of least resistance. Small cigarmaking shops were often run by former journeymen who were union members. They more likely produced for a local rather than a national market, and therefore were more vulnerable to direct pressure, including strikes and consumer boycotts. Conversely, the advantages of honoring union price scales were readily apparent: a steady supply of skilled workers, especially important in the rolling of

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expensive high-quality cigars, in which many of the smaller shops specialized, and access to a market dependent on the patronage of other unionized workers who visited local taverns, restaurants and theatres.

The large manufacturers, on the surface, could economically afford to pay the union scale, but because they tended to produce for a national market and faced intense competition from other firms located in lower wage areas, they had less incentive to accommodate the CMIU. Moreover, the most capitalized manufacturing firms had the resources to withstand union pressure. They could mechanize, deploy team work, operate tenement house shops and establish other worksites, thereby both reducing the need for skilled workers from whom the CMIU drew its support, and securing an adequate supply of labor in the event of a strike. Consequently, union cigarmakers first emphasized removing one of the sources of the manufacturers' strength. In 1877 they struck to pressure members of the Cigar Manufacturers' Association to halt tenement house work, and during the 1880's and 1890's, in the wake of the strike's defeat, they tirelessly sought legislation to abolish the system.

It has been shown that the opportunities and constraints facing workers trying to organize emanated from a combination of economic and social factors. Among economic influences were the structure of industries, including the ease or difficulty of entry into a market, the organization of production and work patterns and the conditions of employment these engendered. Particular aspects of working class life, such as the varied background, expectations and challenges of immigrants and their native-born offspring as well as the dynamics of women's participation in wage labor were the major social factors that affected

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the impetus to unionize and the prospects of success.

The foregoing discussion implicitly recognized that the concrete work/occupational experiences of printers, building tradesmen, cigarmakers and garment workers influenced the specific labor activity of each group. Now that the reasons some workers were more successful in organizing unions have been examined, it is necessary to shed more light on the particular dynamics of labor activity and its underlining significance.

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FOOTNOTES

1. For an insightful use of a cost-benefit approach to trade union development, see Colin Crouch, **Trade Unions: The Logic of Collective Action** (London: Fontana Books, 1982).

2. John T. Dunlop, "The Development of Labor Organization: A Theoretical Framework," Richard Lester and Joseph Shister, eds., **Insights Into Labor Issues** (New York; Macmillan Company, 1948) regarded the skilled workers' strategic role in production as a significant factor in their success in organizing in the nineteenth century and their role as cells of industrial unionism in 1930's among automobile and steel workers.

3. Samuel Gompers, **Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography** (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1925), pp. 80 and 81.

4. See Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Bureaucratic and Craft Administration of Production," **Administrative Science Quarterly**, 4 (September 1959), 168-187 for a discussion of the technical and market factors in the building trades which fostered craft worker centered modes of organizing work.

5. Harry Bates, **Bricklayers' Century of Craftmanship** (Washington, D.C.: Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' International Union, 1955) pp. 7,9 and 11; and Melech Epstein, **Jewish Labor in the U.S.A.** (New York: Trade Union Sponsoring Committee, 1950), pp. 87 and 107. Also see Benson Soffer, "A Theory of Trade Union Development: The Role of the 'Autonomous Workman'," **Labor History**, 1 (Winter 1961), 141-163 who stresses the significance of craft autonomy among printers, building tradesmen, cutters, coal miners, puddlers and molders in overseeing production and hiring subordinate workers, including helpers, assistants and laborers.

6. Stinchcombe, 170; William Haber, **Industrial Relations in the Building Trades** (Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1930), p. 375; Robert Max Jackson, **The Formation of Craft Labor Markets** (New York: Academic Press, 1984), pp. 24-26; and Crouch, pp. 58-62.

7. Elizabeth Baker, "The Printing Foreman-Union Man: A Historical Sketch," **Industrial and Labor Relations Review**, 4 (1951), 223-235; and George Barnett, **The Printers: A Study of American Trade Unionism** (Cambridge, Massachussets: American Economic Association, 1909), pp. 212-215.

8. Irving Howe, **The World of Our Fathers** (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1976); George Pozzetta, "The Italians of New York City" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1971); Edwin Fenton, "Immigrants and Unions: A Case Study, Italians and American 1880-1920" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1957). Daniel Bell's observation in "Jewish Labor History," **American Jewish Historical Quarterly**, 46 (March, 1957), 258 is especially pertinent: "a whole host of institutions with which Jewish unions are often historically allied were already in existence in the first years

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... before the Jewish unions gathered strength and became permanent bodies."

9. Similar observations have been made by historians studying the Jewish immigrant in New York City, including Moses Rischin, **The Promised Land: New York's Jews 1870-1914** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962); and Thomas Kessner, **The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

10. Lynn Weiner, **From Working Girl to Working Mother** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Leslie Tentler, **Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, **Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); Barbara Klaczynska, "Why Women Work: A Comparison of Various Groups -- Philadelphia, 1910-1930," **Labor History**, 17 (Winter, 1976), 73-87; and Joan Younger Dickinson, "The Role of the Immigrant Women in the United States Labor Force 1860-1890" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1975).

11. See Sarah Eisenstein, **Give Us Bread, But Give Us Roses: Working Women's Consciousness in the United States, 1890 to the First World War** (New York: Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1983); and Susan Glenn, "The Working Life of Immigrants, 1880-1920" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1983) for an assessment of the personal impact of wage work outside the household on young first and second generation Jewish and Italian women.

12. My thinking on women's participation in the wage-earning labor force has been enriched by Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, **Women, Work and Family** (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978) from whom I drew the concept of family wage economy. Also helpful has been Bettina Berch, **The Endless Day: The Political Economy of Women and Work** (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

13. Alice Kessler-Harris, "Where are the Organized Women?" **Feminist Studies** 3, (Fall 1975): Carolyn McCreesh, "On the Picket Line: Militant Women Campaign to Organize Garment Workers 1880-1917" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1975); and Alice Henry, **The Trade Union Woman** (New York: D. Appleton, 1915).

14. New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report** (1890), p. 246 ; and Mabel Hurd Willett, **The Employment of Women in the Clothing Trades** (New York: Columbia University, 1902), pp. 179-184.

15. For example, see **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, January 1894.

16. On the importance of market structures and the degree of competition on labor activity, see Dunlop, "The Development of Labor Organizations", pp. 175-178; Jackson, pp. 27-29; and Royden Harrison

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and Jonathan Zeitlin, eds., **Divisions of Labour: Skilled Workers and Technological Change in Nineteenth Century England** (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1985), pp. 10-14.

17. On some of the structural features of book and job sector that discouarged unionization, see Ava Baron, "Women and the Making of the American Working Class: A Study of Proletarianization of Printers," **Review of Radical Political Economics**, 14 (Fall, 1982), 28.

18. R.G. Dun and Company, **Reference Book Containing Ratings of Merchants and Manufacturers** (1895); New York State. Inspection Bureau, **Seventh Annual Report** (1892), pp.113-211; and **The Union Printer**, April 23, 1892.

19. To provide a precise rate of increase in the number of compositors is difficult since the census data for manufacturing both in 1890 and 1900 consists of all production workers, and the 1890 data on occupations includes bookbinders, engravers, stereotypers, lithographers and pressmen as well as compositors. By all accounts, compositors represented the majority of the printing trades' labor force. Therefore, it can be assumed that the growth in the number of all workers in newspaper and book and job publishing applies to compositors as well. The constraints of the data notwithstanding, the approximate rate of increase was between four and six percent, depending on the specific data base used. The rate has been calculated from the U.S. Eleventh Census (1890) **Manufacturing in the Cities**, pp. 88-97 and 649-681; **Population**, Part II, pp. 640-641 and 704-705; Twelfth Census (1900), **Statistics of Manufactures**, pp. 620-628; and **Occupations**, pp. 634-641.

20. For influences on the skilled workers' ability to adapt to technological change, especially to modulate its effects on their conditions of employment, see Irwin Yellowitz, **Industrialization and the American Labor Movement 1850-1900** (Port, Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1977); and Jonathan Zeitlin, "Engineers and Compositors: A Comparison," Harrison and Zeitlin, eds., **Divisions of Labour**, pp. 236-241. For the impact of technological change on skilled workers focusing on displacement, see Blanche Hazard, **The Organization of the Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts Before 1875** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1921); Victor Clark, **History of Manufactures in the United States**, Volumes I-III (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1929; and David Brody, **Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), chapter 2.

21. Real Estate Record Association, **A History of Real Estate, Buildings, and Architecture in New York City During the Last Quarter of a Century** (New York: Real Esate Record Association, 1898) pp. 113 and 123.

22. R.G. Dun and Company, **Reference Book** (1895); and Inspection Bureau, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 224-358.

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23. R.G. Dun and Company, **Reference Book.**

24. **Ibid**; and Inspection Bureau, **Ninth Annual Report** (1894).

25. David Gordon, et al., **Segmented Work, Divided Workers,** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), especially chapter three.

26. Robert Max Jackson, **The Formation of Craft Labor Markets,** pp. 24–30.

27. Mancur Olson, **The Logic of Collective Action** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965); and Sherill Cleland, **The Influence of Plant Size on Industrial Relations** (Princeton University Press, 1955).

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN — THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF LABOR ACTIVITY

Each group of workers faced a distinctive world of work that created the context in which their efforts to adjust to the rigors of industrial life and improve their economic and social position developed its content and form. Many of the goals and strategies of organized labor were not distinctive to any single group of unionized workers. Instead, a hierarchy of needs and objectives evolved over time that represented long and short-term developments in a trade. Unions stressed a strategy or a tactic because of its anticipated results, which in turn reflected the relative strength of each group of workers and their respective employers. Accordingly, the shifting tides of labor activity followed the rhythm of the uneven ability of workers to make their world of work more tolerable, if not satisfactory.

The hierarchy of concerns expressed by a particular group of organized workers emanated from specific developments within their trade or industry. In general, the four groups of organized workers concentrated their efforts on increasing the compensation for their labor and defining the commensurate work effort. Yet there were differences among the four trades on the best method of determining pay rates and the relative importance assigned to reducing the length of the workday. Moreover, because of technological innovation, job security became a priority for some workers such as typographers and clothing cutters.

Only building tradesmen consistently sought hourly or daily wage rates; in fact, agreements between unions and employers explicitly prohibited paying workers by the piece. The carpenters in particular

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made hourly pay rates a standard of union membership in their campaign against "lumping" -- a system whereby subcontractors paid carpenters a flat amount for completing a task. Because organized building tradesmen insisted on hourly or daily pay rates, they were particularly interested in determining the length of the workday. Accordingly, building trades unions included in their pay scale a higher rate for overtime and holidays. In addition, they vigorously pursued a reduction in the workday without a reduction in pay rates. The bricklayers and plasterers, among the most highly paid building tradesmen, made the eight hour day their primary objective in the 1880's and, by 1887, had set a standard for union carpenters, framers, plumbers and painters who, by 1891, managed to secure the eight hour day while increasing their wage rates.(1)

In the printing trades both time and piece rates existed. Pressmen established pay scales calling for daily rates pegged to a certain number of hours per shift. Compositors earned according to the number of ems they set, and this rate varied by the difficulty of the copy and the time of day the compositor worked. However, with the advent of linotypes and monotypes, the New York Typographical Union (# 6) adopted hourly and daily pay rates within its "scale of prices". The introduction of time payments encouraged printers to focus their attention on the length of the workday. Typographers employed in book and job composing rooms sought to achieve a nine hour day, a standard in the newspaper sector since 1887. Moreover, reducing the workday became one of the ways #6 tried to create work for unemployed members. In 1893, the union required all linotype operators to work a seven hour day, but when this rule provided regularly employed typesetters with

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additional overtime rather than expanding employment opportunities, it was rescinded. The shift from piece rates to hourly rates nevertheless became the centerpiece of the union's strategy to standardize pay levels, discourage speedups and prevent the technological displacement of compositors.(2)

Locals within the Cigar Makers International Union, with the exception of those representing cigarpackers, negotiated piece rate pay scales which varied according to the type or grade of cigar. Piece rate payment was popular among cigarmakers, especially those working with the simplest tools, since it allowed them more latitude during the workday. So long as they produced the expected number of cigars, they could choose when to begin work, take longer and more frequent breaks and leave early.(3)

Union garment workers alternated between simply trying to increase the specific piece rate and attempting to introduce a time-based pay scale. Cloakmakers, for instance, sought to combine higher piece rates with a shorter (ten hour) workday and introduce weekly payment of wages in order to regulate earnings and the commensurate work effort. Coatmakers, on the other hand, aimed to eliminate piece rate scales when they struck in 1894 and 1895.(4) Much of the garment worker unions' interest in increasing and standardizing pay rates stemmed from the seasonal shifts in demand for labor, a highly fluid job market and intense competition among employers. The unions hoped that the establishment of basic pay standards would create more work for their members, provide them with more secure earnings and marginalize the proprietors of outside shops.

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In the more highly paid trades, the establishment and defense of wage standards was inextricably tied to access to jobs. Accordingly, organized workers sought to control the means by which others could enter a trade and thereby regulate the supply of labor in an industry. In pursuit of these goals, unions stressed the formation of closed or union shops and the creation of rules governing apprenticeship. The New York Typographical Union and local affiliates of the International Printing Pressmen's Union forged agreements with the publishers of the major newspapers and leading book and job employers stipulating that only duly recognized union members would be hired to work in composing and press rooms. New York's and Brooklyn's building trades unions negotiated exclusive hiring pacts with contractors, which not only required the employment of bona fide union members but obligated union members to work only for those contractors and subcontractors who belonged to a recognized employers' association. Most of the building trades unions adopted rules directing members not to work with nonunion workers. Moreover, their agreements with the employers explicitly recognized the right of building tradesmen to strike if the closed shop was not honored. Cigarmakers and garment workers also valued the union shop, but rarely were able to gain it. CMIU locals appeared to be more successful in pressuring employers to honor union standards, while the Cloakmakers' and Operators' Union, the Brotherhood of Tailors and the United Garment Workers occasionally were able to secure agreements with manufacturers that embodied union standards and pledged to sever ties with contractors who failed to abide by them. (5)

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The apprenticeship regulations developed by unions shared common features. They all aimed to set a ratio between apprentices and journeymen and define the length of service. Most attempted to clarify the responsibilities of apprentices if not restrict the ways employers might use them. Some provided apprentices with protection against mistreatment by employers. The Cigar Makers International Union limited apprentices to three a shop and expected them to serve three years. The United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association permitted one apprentice for every cutter and also set a three year term. The New York Typographical Union maintained a ratio of one apprentice for every ten compositors, limited a shop to no more than six and called for a four year term. The typographers' regulations also stipulated that apprentices be trained on linotypes only during the last six weeks during which time they were to earn at two-thirds the rate of journeymen. The apprenticeship regulations of building trades unions varied, but in general the length of service was four or five years, and the ratio one apprentice for every journeymen. Other rules covered specific aspects of apprenticeship. The Operative Plasterers' Society prohibited employers from lending or exchanging apprentices; the Amalgamated Society of Journeymen Plumbers established separate locals for "junior" plumbers which oversaw enforcement of their pay scale; and the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners acted on behalf of apprentices who faced discharge or reassignment.(6)

For workers facing the threat of technological displacement, the defense of closed/union shops and the enforcement of apprenticeship regulations were critically important, but, as the experience of compositors and cutters indicates, neither approach guaranteed job

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security. When newspaper and book and job publishers began to introduce typesetting machines, union printers explored ways to control their impact. A rule limiting linotype work to only those who were chapel members for three months before the introduction of the shop's first machine proved to be impractical and even counterproductive. Instead, #6 pressed the employers to train and hire only union members -- journeymen who were skilled in the trade as a whole -- for the positions created by the new technology. In addition, the union initiated a rule that linotypes be staffed by two compositors, thereby stabilizing, albeit artificially, the demand for typographers. However, in the mid-1890's when technological innovation accelerated and the economy was in the throes of a depression, #6 adopted an out-of-work benefit, and chapel leaders through **The Union Printer** advised members to seek alternative sources of employment such as the civil service.(7) Similarly, cutters found it difficult to control the effects of the introduction of long and jagger knives. Efforts by the United Cloak and Suit Cutters' Association and the Gotham Knife Cutters to "outlaw" their use were unsuccessful, and even strict enforcement of apprenticeship regulations failed to prevent unemployment. Both unions provided members with financial assistance while they were out-of-work, and the Gotham Knife Cutters ran a labor bureau through which members could apply for work.(8)

Unemployment resulted not only from technological innovation. Building tradesmen and garment workers experienced widespread unemployment as part of the seasonal swings in their respective industries. Cigarmakers too found that demand for labor fluctuated as inventories piled up and markets became glutted.

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Unions addressed the intrinsic insecurity of employment in a number of ways. In the building trades they pushed for high wage rates, overtime provisions and closed shop agreements, and vigilantly defended these measures with strikes and boycotts, many of which elicited the mutual support of different crafts in the industry. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union provided members with loans to assist them to find work in less crowded labor markets. The Cigar Makers International Union featured an out-of-work benefit as well as a travellers' benefit, which not only helped members to withstand the effects of unemployment, but protected the union against the prospect of desperate cigarmakers working below scale or undermining strikes in defense of union standards. None of the garment worker unions in the 1880's and 1890's developed the administrative apparatus, the financial resources or the organizational stability to subsidize an out-of-work fund or a travellers' benefit. Like the building trades unions they emphasized maximizing the ability of their members to earn as much as possible during the peak seasons. Garment workers, seeking assistance during the inevitable slack periods or extended economic slumps, instead relied on mutual aid societies which both Jewish and Italian immigrants formed shortly after arriving in New York and Brooklyn.(9)

Unions representing workers who assumed a central role in the production process instituted work rules that aimed to protect craft autonomy. These rules both delineated the prerogatives and responsibilities of craftsmen, and by their very nature limited the authority of employers and supervisory personnel. New York and Brooklyn locals of the CMIU maintained a "bill of prices" which stipulated that

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cigarmakers were not to reroll cigars unless being paid to do, prepare tobacco for rolling or pack cigars if unionized packers were present. Another rule prohibited foremen from dismissing rollers for shoddy work, restricting them to issuing a reprimand. Building trades unions adopted rules that limited contractors' and subcontractors' authority to discharging journeymen for gross incompetence only and codified the customary practice of selecting helpers and overseeing their work. The Operative Plasterers' Society made its work rules a cornerstone of its agreement with the Employing Plasterers' Society. These rules defined the number of workers, the specific sequence of work and the appropriate time for each task.(10)

The New York Typographical Union introduced rules that appeared to assume that a printer's job was a form of "property" to be used freely under certain guidelines by its holder. Some of the rules were in fact customary practices which originated decades before the advent of typesetting machines and newspapers that published seven days a week. Most fundamental was a compositor's claim to a situation (or position). A regular (full-time) compositor employed by a newspaper reserved the option of when to work and could choose a substitute to cover for him when he was not available.

Foremen often sought, with mixed results, to restrict the regulars' prerogative. In the 1870's and early 1880's foremen established sub-lists from which regulars could choose their temporary replacements. In 1883, the International Typographical Union, with support from #6, established a rule that eliminated the sub-lists. Nevertheless, the issue of selecting substitutes remained very much alive. To accommodate the foremen, who in many of the chapels had

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assumed leadership positions, and to protect the integrity of the regulars' situations, the union devised a new system. Foremen reserved the right to reject an incompetent substitute, but not before the regular's selection was given an opportunity to demonstrate his ability. However, as the capacity to publish larger newspapers grew, production schedules became more demanding, and with these developments pressures on foremen to control hiring mounted. At the turn of the century the ability of compositors to preserve their customary rights was clearly not absolute, although few compositors expected less from their union.(11)

Pay scales, hourly provisions, apprenticeship regulations, closed shop agreements and work rules all represented organized labor's attempt to introduce its standards in the relations between worker and employer. These standards were the primary means by which organized labor tried to modulate the effects of shifting market forces, if not contest the logic of the marketplace itself. In the most basic sense, they constituted a framework in which workers, through their unions, could exercise some control over their conditions of employment. Wage and hour standards in particular were to serve as a "law", created from sound principles, supported by legitimate authority and enforced equitably and universally. Minimum pay scales and hourly provisions were the results of labor's active intervention in the apparently natural process of free and open competition in which inequality among participants is taken for granted. (12)

These standards were not only economically important but embodied a social meaning as well. Union standards were emblematic of a distinct status of worker-citizen, unscarred by what such varied critics of the

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industrial system as Samuel Gompers, Terence Powderly and Henry George called the "degradation of labor". Higher wages and shorter workdays promised less insecure lives, greater opportunities to cultivate latent talents and the respectabilty attendant to personal growth.(13) Maintenance of apprenticeship regulations and work rules helped to instill pride in a worker's craft, promote self-esteem and develop an identity that distinguished them from those enamored of the trappings of wealth and those overwhelmed by the hardships of everyday survival.

For each group of organized workers, union standards contained nuances of meaning. Garment workers, with the exception of cutters, claimed little job autonomy and did not establish apprenticeship regulations and work rules. To them, union standards meant a more equitable relationship with those who provided immigrants and their offspring with an opportunity to earn a livelihood. As expressed by the young women and men who emerged from the ranks to serve as strike leaders, union efforts to upgrade pay rates and reduce the length of the workday offered workers both immediate relief from material deprivation and the hope that their children would enjoy the opportunity of escaping the confines of the ghetto. For cigarmakers, the union's "list of prices" and benefits available to members marked them off from tenement house workers whom they associated with the brutal exploitation of unscrupulous manufacturers and the urban squalor such behavior encouraged. For printers and building tradesmen, union standards -- the result of organized efforts to shape craft labor markets -- represented the due recognition of their position as craftsmen.

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The common thread running through these conceptions of union standards was the implicit, if not explicit, understanding that unions both reflected and transcended the environment which spawned them. Unions adapted to the social division of labor between the owners of the sources of wealth and a class of wage-earners by concentrating on how much of the social product workers should receive. Simultaneously, they articulated a code of behavior and introduced measures that offered an alternative to market relations.

That unions accepted the imperatives of capital accumulation while striving to empower workers so that they could defend themselves against the vagaries of a market economy did not necessarily pose a contradiction in terms, according to some of the American labor movement's leaders. Samuel Gompers argued that unions which were "pure and simple" were best suited to workers' short-term and long-term interests. By admitting only wage workers and explicitly excluding contractors, merchants, farmers and others who hired labor, i.e., by being "pure", unions would be able to address more consistently and coherently the concerns of those who owned nothing but their labor. These concerns, in Gompers' eyes, were "simple" bread and butter issues that stemmed from workers' immediate conditions of employment: wages, hours, work effort and job security among others. Developing his ideas within a Marxist framework,(14) Gompers stressed the leverage skilled workers in particular possessed if they used their economic power carefully and purposefully. Well organized strikes and boycotts could win concessions from employers and instill among workers the desire for more gains and the confidence to strive for them.

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Reviewing the unions' inability to weather previous economic crises in the 1830's, 1850's and 1870's, Gompers emphasized the need to pay close attention to the details of organization. Sharing this emphasis was Adolph Strasser, one of the key architects of a revitalized Cigar Makers International Union. He rejected the common explanation for organized labor's decline during depressions. Business cycles did not determine the unions' fate, he insisted. Rather internal shortcomings accounted for the unions' weakness in the face of plant closings and mass unemployment.(15) Inspired by the example of the Engineers' Society and other "new model" unions in England, Gompers and Strasser proposed that unions adhere to sound administrative and financial principles: dues and initiation fees should be adequate to support a permanent staff of organizers and representatives and to finance a whole array of benefits for members, and the costs of union administration should be equitably shared among local affiliates by equalizing revenue through a general fund.

In the 1880's and 1890's three of the national unions that figured prominently in the activity of organized workers in New York and Brooklyn had already adopted many of these recommendations. The International Typographical Union, the Cigar Makers International Union and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners all had in place a variety of benefits covering illness, death and unemployment. The ITU maintained a retirees' home in Colorado, and the CMIU introduced a pension plan in the late 1890's for superannuated members. These benefits underscored the social welfare function of unions in an era when the state's role in assisting people during times of need and personal crisis was conspicuously absent. Illness or injury to a bread

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winner severely lowered a family's standard of living, death forced spouses to go into debt to pay for funeral expenses and unemployment meant not only privation but a severing of ties with coworkers and union members. Union benefits offered some relief and promoted among workers a more intimate and durable allegiance to their unions. Buttressed by the knowledge that they were not simply compelled to fall back on their individual -- and often inadequate -- resources when faced with hardship, workers had more reason to appreciate the advantages of union membership and thereby would be more prepared to come to a union's defense.

Although he advocated many of the same ideas offered by Gompers and Strasser to build viable unions, Peter McGuire, one of the founders of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, stressed another dimension of trade unions. Trade unions taught workers the virtues of cooperation and group discipline, and in the process uplifted workers individually and collectively. By sharing common goals they promoted a consciousness transcending the boundaries of craft, trade and industry. By cultivating the seeds of solidarity through boycotts, union labels and sympathy strikes, they prefigured a class-based movement of workers. Above all, unions provided workers with the opportunity to develop the necessary skills for self-government, the **sine qua non** of an authentic democracy in which workers exercized their full citizenship rights: freedom from exploitation, ignorance, want and insecurity.(16)

The promise of trade unionism, although organically related to the process of union development, did not naturally become real. Effective labor activity entailed well organized unions which simultaneously drew on their members' strengths and overcame their

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weaknesses. Accordingly, unions raised standards of conduct that aimed to encourage inter-personal fraternity and group cohesion. Union newspapers and journals stressed such values as mutuality and responsibility, often subsumed under a creed of manliness.(17) **The Carpenter** featured the poems of T.C Walsh, a member of Local 64 in New York, which called on workers to recognize the reciprocity between the benefits and duties of union membership. McGuire, as editor, used its pages to laud the practical advantages of solidarity and urged members of the UBCJ to assist other building tradesmen in their organizing efforts. **The Union Printer** admonished typographers for behavior that undermined union fraternity. Editorials and letters from chapel chairmen attacked the "cowardly and unmanly" practice of "backcapping" whereby members secretly slandered and ridiculed each other. Its editor, Warren Browne, also took issue with the work of political cliques which risked turning the union's biannual elections into a breeding ground of fragmentation. **The Cigar Makers Official Journal** published the names of members who failed to repay their travellers' loans or fraudently obtained the benefit. Union members were particularly critical of workers who refused to honor a strike. Printers designated these workers as "rats", carpenters called them "bats" and cigarmakers used the more familar term, "scabs". (18)

Union constitutions and by-laws likewise identified conduct unbecoming of a union member and potentially dangerous to the organization. The Cigarmakers instituted strict rules defining benefit eligibility requirements and delineating the procedures that ensured accountability for the misuse of funds. The New York Typographical Union fined members for several forms of misconduct ranging from

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misrepresentation in order to receive benefits to drunken and disorderly behavior at union meetings. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the Bricklayers' and Masons' enforced strictures against drunkeness, slander and fraud with a graduated system of fines and expelled members found guilty of "union wrecking". The United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers maintained similar rules and supplemented them with laws against procuring money from other union members and discussing union business outside duly authorized meetings. (19) These rules and the admonitions in union newspapers and journals were important because their most active and staunchest advocates strongly believed that the recognition of the members' mutual responsibilities was necessary for the orderly functioning of an organization, and honoring an ethical code of conduct would inspire workers to join unions and sustain the labor activity that advanced their interests.

Unions pursued a combination of approaches and used a variety of tactics to pressure employers to accept their standards. In all four trades, unions sought "trade agreements" which would codify a craft's "price scale" and provide a means to resolve differences between labor and managment. Many unions adopted a union label, which represented the official recognition of union standards, and aggressively pushed for its endorsement through the power of persuasion and/or economic pressure. In the face of the employers' adamant refusal to recognize union standards, or in the event that employers violated agreements, unions waged strikes and organized boycotts. When the issues in contention or specific union goals addressed pervasive social problems and/or features deeply rooted in the fabric of an industry, then labor participated in electoral politics and lobbied legislators to support

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their proposals.

In late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn, industry or trade-wide agreements were virtually nonexistent. Neither unions nor employer associations had established the organizational base necessary to impose standards on pay rates and working conditions on their respective industries or the branches of industries. In the printing trades, #6 was able to reach an agreement with the New York Typothetae representing the largest book and job firms in 1887 which created a basic pay scale for compositors, and ten years later negotiated a contract with the employers' group that introduced a nine hour workday. However, the majority of compositors in the book and job sector remained outside the scope of these agreements despite the growth of both the union and the employers' association. In the newspaper branch of the industry, #6 individually reached agreements with firms rather than collectively through an employers' association. This approach proved feasible because the union concentrated on the publishers of the largest dailies who claimed the major share of the market.

In the building trades, trade agreements were also limited in scope. Only in bricklaying and masonry were unions able to obtain pacts with a sizeable proportion of employers.(20) In exchange for adopting a procedure to adjudicate disputes without first resorting to a strike, union bricklayers and masons won an eight hour day by 1886 and the highest pay rates among construction workers. A specialized system of subcontracting tended to prevent agreements between unions and general builders or contractors. Carpenters, painters, plasterers and plumbers among others signed agreements with select groups of subcontractors, loosely organized into employer associations. Many of the founding

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agreements establishing a closed shop followed on the heels of strikes and labor boycotts. Nevertheless, future contracts, unlike those in the bricklaying trade, did not reduce the level of labor conflict.

In cigarmaking and in the garment trades, the establishment of trade agreements was not only segmented but haphazard as well. Locals of the Cigar Makers International Union set pay scales and hourly provisions and gained the employers' recognition of them shop by shop and manufacturer by manufacturer. This approach reflected the highly differentiated market in the industry in which employers specialized in different styles of cigars. Even in the midst of major strikes, as in 1886 -- when leading members of the Cigar Manufacturers' Association announced a cut in piece rates -- and 1890 -- when the union mounted a coordinated campaign to oppose the erosion in cigarmakers' conditions of employment -- the ensuing agreements were between individual manufacturers and union locals.

In the garment trades, employer associations were the exception and not the norm. Usually these organizations were formed or resuscitated only in response to strikes. Moreover, employer associations represented groups with distinctive if not conflicting interests. In the cloakmaking and coatmaking trades, the manufacturers formed associations which expressly excluded proprietors of outside shops to whom they contracted to produce finished garments. For their part, the contractors organized to press manufacturers for a higher price and/or resist the demands of striking workers. This pattern of organization often produced an array of shifting coalitions. In the Triple Alliance strike of 1890, contractors joined cloakmakers and cutters to pressure manufacturers to accede to the strikers' demands. In

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1894, however, striking cloakmakers demanded that manufacturers do business only with those contractors who honored the union's standards. That same year the Brotherhood of Tailors, representing coatmakers, won the backing of the Clothing Contractors' Mutual Protective Association for its drive for the abolition of the task system, a ten hour day and weekly payment of wages. This support was a key factor in forcing independent contractors and manufacturers to come to terms. A year later, however, the ranks of independent and recalcitrant contractors swelled and the association played no visible role in a strike called by the union to prevent contractors from reintroducing the task system. In subsequent strikes and union label campaigns, the United Garment Workers and the United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers aimed their salvos at the contractors, hoping, in the words of one union leader, to "drive them out of the field altogether".(21)

Unions proceeded on the assumption that trade agreements, marking the recognition of the legitimacy of a party's claims, emerged after employers strongly felt the costs of not recognizing unions. Consequently, they sought to hurt the market position of employers who did not honor union standards by stressing the collective economic power of workers as a class. This strategy involved the combined approach of pushing a union label and mobilizing consumer boycotts.

Cigarmakers, printers and garment workers deployed this strategy with increasing frequency for numerous reasons. Union label campaigns supported by consumer boycotts were less risky for workers and unions. The stakes of a strike too often were the loss of jobs and the demise of unions. Unlike job actions, which evoked violence and bitter acrimony between workers and employers and among workers themselves, and

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therefore were controversial in the eyes of the general public, a concerted union label and boycott effort explicitly aimed to sway public opinion to back labor's cause by demonstrating that the growth of unions did not augur unrest and social instability. As a measure of public acceptance of union labels, there were a number of court cases which ruled that union labels constituted trademarks, signifying a product's quality, and legislation, which recognized a union's right to seek injunctive relief against employers.(22)

Equally important, this dual strategy tapped the strengths of the labor movement and its links to a network of informal community-based associations. These organizational resources and workplace-community relationships were also valuable for workers trying to outlast their employers in strikes. However, for reasons cited above, and the fact that the local market structure of some trades made firms vulnerable to boycotts, they were more significant in influencing the outcome of consumer label campaigns. The ability to agitate for acceptance of a union label presupposed the existence of cohesive organizations. The CMIU, which waged the most consistent union label campaign during this time, was a growing national union whose leadership played a prominent role in the American Federation of Labor, which by 1890 had eclipsed the Knights of Labor as the major workers' organization in the country. Within New York and Brooklyn, the CMIU had managed to integrate into its ranks the socialist led Progressive Cigarmakers, thereby laying the foundation for an unified labor movement among cigarmakers. The printers likewise forged an effective unity among the unions representing compositors, pressmen, stereotypers and lithographers when they formed the Allied Printing Trades Council in 1894.

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Moreover, the cigarmakers' and printers' unions, like most of New York's and Brooklyn's unions, participated in each respective city's Central Labor Union. This federation of unions increased the prospects of success for union organizing drives. Endorsements of union labels and pledges to support boycotts carried significant weight, for constituent unions faced ostracism and even expulsion from the Central Labor Union if they failed to respect a union label or boycott. Expulsion could be particularly risky, because with it official recognition of a union was withdrawn, thereby opening the way for a possible jurisdictional war with another CLU backed union. On the positive side, CLU endorsement of a union label meant extensive publicity of a union's cause. For almost a year, beginning in the fall of 1886, the Central Labor Union's decisions were publicized through a daily labor newspaper, **The Leader.** Moreover, union newspapers and journals not only reported on internal developments, but routinely informed readers of the activity of other unions and the CLU. Similar coverage of labor news appeared in the socialist press, including the German-language **Volkzeitung** and the Yiddish-language, **Arbeiter Zeitung.** Other organizational forums promoting support for union labels and boycotts existed. Unions of bakers, brewers, cabinetmakers and furniture makers among others coalesced into the United German Trades. Jewish immigrant socialists following this example organized the United Hebrew Trades, largely consisting of garment worker unions.

Such a range of support could set off a chain reaction of consumer pressure. For example, agreement to patronize only those establishments which sold cigars with the CMIU's blue label meant that unions would be more selective about where they held meetings and

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social functions, and union members and their families would be more selective about what taverns, music halls, theatres and dry-goods stores they frequented.

Reinforcing the potential effectiveness of a boycott in support of a union label were the bonds between trade unionists and members of the community. This was especially significant where an industry's workforce and union membership was concentrated among distinct immigrant groups. German and Bohemian cigarmakers, Russian Jewish garment workers and Irish printers participated in fraternal organizations, lodges and clubs that provided union members the opportunity to convince others to boycott businesses which did not honor union standards. In this way, unionized workers were able to compensate for their minority status and build bridges to the unorganized, the self-employed and middle-class residents of both cities.(23)

Even the existence of effective union label campaigns did not preclude the need for more militant labor activity. Where campaigns proved to be slow in developing, as in the case of the United Garment Workers' and the Brotherhood of Cloakmakers' efforts, or impractical to initiate, as in the case of the building trades, strikes prevailed. Strikes also represented a form of economic pressure in that they denied employers the use of workers' skills and talents. Unlike union label campaigns, however, their objectives might be short-term as well as long-term gains. Whereas recognition of a union label signified recognition of the union and its standards on conditions of employment, the resolution of strikes could simply mean concessions to pacify angry workers and no formal understanding between unions and employers.

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The outbreak of strikes in the four trades varied according to different market structures, shifting power relations between workers and employers and the limited scope of collective bargaining in each industry. Building tradesmen, followed by garment workers, showed the greatest propensity to strike, while cigarmakers and printers were considerably less inclined to strike. From 1886 to 1894 building tradesmen waged almost 1,600 strikes, and garment workers participated in slightly more than 600. This constituted more than one-half of the recorded strikes in New York and Brooklyn during this period. Meanwhile, strikes in the tobacco trades (including cigarmakers, cigarette makers and processors of tobacco) numbered less than 300, and in the printing trades slightly more than 100. The zenith of strike activity in the four trades as a whole occurred from 1890 through 1892, when over 1300 strikes, or 53 percent of all the strikes in the nine year period, erupted.(24) The greater frequency of strikes from 1890 through 1892 stemmed from two closely related factors: economic recovery from a slump that began in 1888, and the growth of already established unions in the building trades and cigarmaking industry and the emergence of unions among cloakmakers, pantsmakers and other garment workers.

Strikes occurred frequently in the building trades for a number of reasons. Production was dispersed among many worksites where workers from the individual crafts in general were employed for short periods. Therefore, resolution of disputes through negotiations, mediation or arbitration was not feasible. By the time union officials received reports of an alleged hiring of nonunion men, violation of union work rules or circumvention of a union pay scale, it was often too late to take action, let alone meet with the employers. The relatively fluid

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market structure where low capital requirements led to the appearance of new contractors and subcontractors (unknown to unions and employer associations) made it more difficult to introduce trade agreements. The growth of prefabricated materials used in carpentry led to a decline in the need for all-purpose carpenters and coupled with the attractiveness of New York's and Brooklyn's labor market to out-of-town and immigrant carpenters facilitated the spread of "lumping", the cost cutting practices of nonunion subcontractors. Moreover, most employer associations were loose-knit groups which lacked either the will or means to discipline members for violating trade agreements.

Consequently, enforcement of standards continually posed a challenge to building trades unions -- one they met by authorizing their walking delegates to call strikes as soon as contract violations were discovered. Strikes were also chronic because of the strength of the building trades unions. The major trades in the industry were organized into unions which had made significant strides in overcoming internecine rivalries. Leading the way was the merger of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and the United Order of Carpenters, and the pact between the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters. Similar amalgamation occurred among the plumbers in the 1890's and contributed to the ability of building trades unions to cooperate more closely. The establishment of the Board of Walking Delegates in the mid-1880's also was important since it provided a mechanism for mobilizing sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts -- a feature of labor conflict that the interdependency of construction work fostered.

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Similar industrial features contributed to the frequency of strikes in the garment trades. Becoming a proprietor of an outside shop required little capital other than funds to rent space to accommodate workers. Expenditures on equipment were not mandatory since operators in the coatmaking and cloakmaking trades often owned their own sewing machines. In addition, the basic material needed to produce finished garments were furnished by the manufacturers. The men's and women's clothing industries were intensely competitive as styles changed, markets quickly became glutted and production costs other than those for labor seemed uncontrollable. Contractors owed their ability to secure business from manufacturers predominantly to underbidding competitors, that is, by paying lower piece rates. Employer associations were as transient as some of the seasonal unions that appeared and disappeared, thereby inhibiting the development of stable relations between unions and employers.

Sharp seasonal disjunctions between busy and slack periods also encouraged strikes. In the busy fall months, workers struck in the hope of gaining wage increases, and under severe pressure to complete orders many employers, especially contractors, made concessions. Victories by one group of workers often sparked strikes by another group. Victorious pantsmakers inspired cloakmakers to strike in 1890, and the success of coatmakers in 1895 prompted jacketmakers, vestmakers and pantsmakers to wage strikes in 1895. However, victories frequently were short-lived, for during the winter employers would provoke a new round of strikes by cutting wages, or otherwise jettisoning agreements. This state of affairs led some unions like the United Brotherhood of Coatmakers and the United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers to adopt measures to discourage

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shop committees from calling strikes and to explore alternative tactics.

A lower level of strike activity by cigarmakers was largely the result of steps taken by the CMIU to discourage their outbreak. Taught by experience that widespread and uncontrolled job actions could severely damage a union, the CMIU introduced constitutional rules and procedures to make it more difficult for individual shop committees and locals to call strikes. Shop strikes required the approval of the local's executive board, and strikes by locals needed the sanction of the membership of other locals. Furthermore, the national union strictly barred authorization of strikes to gain a wage increase between November and April, when production normally ebbed. Failure to abide by these regulations meant that strikers would not have access to the union's strike fund -- a development surely expected to caution strikers attempting to outlast a determined employer. In sum, it was because the CMIU had restricted the autonomy of locals that strikes were not an easy option for workers. Unlike the garment trades, where chronic strike activity revealed the frailty of trade unionism, the lower propensity to strike in cigarmaking highlighted an appreciation of the union's strengths and weaknesses and thereby contributed to its relative stability.

The comparative absence of strikes in the printing trades was a measure of the strength of the unions representing compositors and pressmen. Strikes were infrequent because they were essentially unnecessary. An informal collective bargaining process short-circuited any latent militancy among union members. The New York Typographical Union won acceptance of its pay scale, hourly provisions and work rules

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by first demonstrating to the key publishers of daily newspapers that union or closed shops could be in their interests as well. By guaranteeing a steady supply of dependable and skilled workers who lacked any compelling reason to interrupt production, the union offered employers the prospect of industrial stability. This was particularly important in newspaper publishing because its product was extremely perishable. Even a one day strike could prevent an issue from being printed, costing a newspaper sales and advertising revenue. Once a closed shop was in place, it was possible for the union to influence the contours of the specific labor market, not only by regulating supply but by affecting demand as well. Enforcement of union standards was facilitated by the fact that in most composing rooms foremen were also union members and often chapel officers. A similar process occurred in the case of the pressmen. However, its development proceeded more slowly because of a multiplicity of unions, at least until 1889, when the amalgamation of the different unions began with the formation of the International Printing Pressmen's Union.

Although there were marked differences in the level of strike activity among the four groups, there were common features in the actual dynamics of their strikes. Most strikes were limited in scope: restricted to a single employer or worksite. Strikes targeting a group of employers or mobilizing a broad cross-section of workers in a sector or industry were rare. In the printing industry, only one major strike -- pitting typographers against book and job firms represented by the New York Typothetae in 1887 -- occurred between 1886 and 1898. In the construction industry during this period, only the plumbers' strike in 1887 over apprenticeship regulations, the housesmiths' push to gain the

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eight hour day in 1891 and the carpenters' attack against the lumping system in 1894 were trade-wide strikes. Cigarmakers waged only two broad strikes -- in 1886 and 1890 to combat wage cuts. Although the generalization holds for garment workers too, multi-employer and industry-wide strikes were less uncommon. The cloakmakers participated in three major strikes between 1886 and 1896 as did the coatmakers and pantsmakers.

Usually strikes were brief, lasting less than a week. In the printing and building trades, "quickies", beginning and ending on the same day, constituted a significant proportion of strikes. Moreover, the shorter strikes in all four trades were overwhelmingly succeessful, a pattern observed in other industries and at different historical periods.(25)

Finally, even among garment workers who often formed seasonal unions to pressure employers to improve wages and working conditions, an overwhelming majority of the strikes were officially sanctioned by a union. This feature of strike activity evidently was representative of industrial conflict in the country during the late Gilded Age. (26) The absolute and proportionate increase in union sanctioned strikes reflected the growth of unions, their more extensive influence at the workplace and their organizational development.

Less salient but nevertheless important features were common to the strike activity of the four groups of workers. Strikes in defense of previously won gains equalled if not outnumbered those seeking improvements and were among the longest, largest and most intensely fought walkouts. Virtually without exception, printers deployed the strike as a means to enforce a union pay scale, closed shop agreement

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or work rules rather than to introduce union standards. The most notable example was the strike called by the Brooklyn Typographical Union (#98) against **The Brooklyn Standard-Union, The Brooklyn Times** and **The Brooklyn Citizen** in 1894 when the three newspapers announced unilateral wage cuts. The one exception -- #6's strike in the book and job sector in 1887 to gain acceptance of an upgraded scale of prices -- nevertheless proves the rule.(27) In the printers' case, defensive rather than offensive strikes prevailed because many firms, especially the larger and more capital-endowed ones, appreciated that the recognition of union standards could be in their interest as well. In the building trades, most strikes aimed to compel contractors/ subcontractors to dismiss nonunion men, pay the union scale and respect overtime and Sunday provisions. Strikes to gain a reduction in the workday were unusual. The framers in 1890 and the housesmiths a year later struck to secure an eight hour day. Meanwhile, unionized workers in the five major trades won an eight hour day through trade agreements with employer associations. This aspect of labor conflict in the construction industry was particularly evident in the sources of sympathy strikes which became chronic in the early 1890's.(28)

Strikes ranged from the exclusive -- aimed at undermining a rival union or eschewing cooperation between unions -- to the inclusive -- eliciting the support of workers from other trades or job classifications and close cooperation between unions. In the building trades, in the early 1890's the Board of Walking Delegates refused to recognize the jurisdictional claims of the Brotherhood of Painters and approved strikes by carpenters and other building tradesmen in support of its rivals: the Progressive Painters' Union and Paper Hangers' Union.

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At other times, a neutral position by the board could have serious implications for a strike's outcome. In 1891 friction between the Housesmiths' Union and the Architectural Iron Workers' Union led the Board of Walking Delegates and the constituent unions to exercise caution in granting support for the strikers, and consequently contributed to the inability of the housesmiths to win an eight hour workday. (29)

While efforts were underway to create the Allied Printing Trades Council, a confederation of unions representing compositors, pressmen, lithographers and stereotypers, a clash erupted between two stereotyper unions. In 1894, members of the Stereotypers' Union #1 struck the **New York Tribune** demanding the dismissal of their counterparts in the Empire Association of Stereotypers. The New York Typographical Union withheld support for the strike, and **The Union Printer** denounced the divisiveness of the action. After the strike's failure negotiations between the two stereotyper unions led to a mutual recognition pact. (30)

Conflicts between unions also appeared among cigarmakers. During the winter of 1886 the Progressive Cigarmakers, backed by the Knights of Labor, rejected requests from New York locals of the CMIU to wage coordinated strikes against manufacturers who cut wage rates. Instead, the former reached separate agreements with the manufacturers which included recognition of the Knights of Labor's white union label. Later that summer, however, the Knights of Labor and the Progressive Cigar Makers fell out when the former body demanded that the Progressives renounce their union membership. This sparked an all-out war for jurisdiction, which produced an alliance between the Progressives and

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the CMIU, and culminated in a merger of the two unions.(31)

In contrast, some strikes featured mutual support among a cross-section of workers. Sympathy strikes assumed a prominent role in the labor activity of building tradesmen, constituting more than 25 percent of all walkouts between 1887 and 1894.(32) Work on construction sites often was brought to a halt when, in response to directives by walking delegates, an array of building tradesmen struck. The sequential and interdependent nature of construction work made sympathy strikes a particularly potent weapon. For instance, painters could not begin their tasks if plasterers walked off their jobs, and therefore had little choice but to "join" the strike. Sudden work stoppages could be costly to building contractors responsible to meeting production deadlines and subcontractors hoping to secure future business from contractors. Consequently, these circumstances provided building tradesmen more with leverage, allowing them to effectively enforce union standards.

Mutual support appeared in the printers' strikes, although less frequently than in those waged by building tradesmen. Striking compositors received support from allied tradesmen who were not the primary or original parties to the conflict. Stereotypers, pressmen and bookbinders struck in sympathy with compositors employed by J.J Little, a book and job firm. Members of the International Printing Pressmen's Union ceased working until Drummond and Company acceded to the demands of striking compositors. Printers from twenty book and job offices refused to do the work contracted out by Globe Printing Company struck by compositors seeking a union shop. Mutual support, however, did not necessarily lead to unqualified union victories. Strikers gained the

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reinstatement of five compositors dismissed by Drummond. On the other hand, compositors at J.J. Little managed to secure a pledge by the employer to honor the union's pay scale, but failed to establish a union shop. Likewise, #6's quest for a union shop at Globe went unfulfilled and the union had to settle for a return to the **status quo ante.** (33)

Garment workers occasionally showed a willingness to support each other's strikes. In 1886, cutters, buttonhole makers and finishers joined the strike organized by the Dress and Cloak Makers' Union representing operators. Despite this broad support, the demand that manufacturers cease contracting work to outside shops was not realized. Four years later, cloakmakers and cutters scored a victory in their strike against some of the major manufacturers represented by the Cloak Manufacturers' Association. The manufacturers granted the cutters' demands that they be rehired and paid for the days they struck, and agreed to hire only union operators, reinstate all striking cloakmakers and to introduce an upgraded pay scale. In 1895, members of the United Brotherhood of Tailors received the support of cutters in the United Garment Workers when the former struck to enforce the previous year's agreement calling for the abolition of piece work. The cutters refused to prepare cloth for any contractor not honoring the union's pay scale and ten hour workday. This support was crucial in pressuring many contractors to settle with the union, and at least temporarily helped the UBT to protect its gains. (34)

Where industrial conflict did not yield secure gains or trade agreements appeared to be an inappropriate context to pursue objectives, unions intervened in the political arena. Organized cigarmakers beset by the scourge of tenement house production and

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garment worker unions hindered by the prevalence of outside shops attempted to remedy their respective problems by pressing for legislation. The CMIU tirelessly agitated for a law that would prohibit tenement house work. After a Court of Appeals decision in 1884 overturned a bill declaring it illegal to use residential premises for manufacturing, union leaders joined public health officials and factory inspectors in lobbying for more effective legislation. Representatives of the United Garment Workers testified in front of the New York State Assembly committee investigating the conditions of women workers and a Congressional committee studying sweatshop work in the hope of convincing legislators of the need for tighter regulations. (35)

An effective system of factory inspection and the introduction of health and safety standards became centerpieces of the Central Labor Union's legislative agenda in the 1880's and 1890's, and won the support of unions whose members did not experience sweatshop conditions, such as the New York Typographical Union (#6) and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. Although legislative abolition of tenement house and sweatshop work escaped the grasp of union lobbyists, the CMIU and UGW were successful in securing bills that provided more factory and health inspectors and established standards for proper ventilation, sewage and building maintenance. (36)

Union printers had their legislative priorities as well. A coalition of unions led by #6 pressed for passage of a bill to outlaw the use of convicts in the composition, electrotyping and press production of cheap novels. Moreover, the printers' unions sought the creation of a state printing office that would publish government documents and literature at prevailing union rates. On both counts,

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these efforts were unsuccessful. Republican Governors repeatedly vetoed the convict labor bill between 1890 and 1897, and a Republican controlled State Senate continually defeated the state printing office bill. (37)

Building trades unions apparently were less interested in political action; this was probably because most of their goals could be, and were, pursued directly with employers. However, an alarming incidence of accidents resulting from inadequate safety procedures spurred some of the unions to become politically active. Locals of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union supported a "scaffolding" bill that required the erection of planks to protect workers from falling steel bolts, tools and miscellaneous material. The proposed bill held contractors responsible for ensuring that scaffolds were installed and subjected them to a fine of $500 and/or imprisonment for at least 30 days if they did not. These attempts of building trades unions, however, were thwarted as Republican Governors vetoed the scaffolding bill. (38)

Organized labor's intervention in the political process was not limited to lobbying for specific pieces of legislation. Unions played important roles in electoral campaigns as well. In 1886, a coalition of unions backed by the Central Labor Union launched the United Labor Party to advance the candidacy of Henry George for mayor of New York City. Unions representing printers, building tradesmen (including carpenters, painters and paperhangers), cigarmakers and tailors provided Henry George with the organization that made his candidacy viable. Each trade formed "legions" to mobilize support for a man who, **The Cigar Makers Official Journal** held, would help labor defend itself against

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"conspiracy laws, vindictive district attorneys and judges, and penal codes".(39) George's campaign featured mass rallies and marches in which workers from many industries and trades displayed their opposition to the "boodle" politicians of Tammany Hall and the Republican party. The Printers Legion, led by the New York Typographical Union, in particular canvassed neighborhoods to build support and provided poll watchers on election day. Participants and observers alike testified to the excitement organized labor's electoral efforts elicited: political discussions about purported solutions to monopoly, inequality and poverty abounded, and recently arrived immigrants from Germany, Russia and Italy in increasing numbers applied for citizenship so that they could vote.(40) This enthusiasm notwithstanding, George finished second to Abram Hewitt, the Democratic Party's candidate in a three man race, but ahead of Theodore Roosevelt, the Republicans' candidate, by netting slightly less than a third of the vote. (41)

No future election in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn aroused such widespread participation by labor. In 1887, whatever momentum had been created by George's strong showing was considerably dissipated when a split developed in the United Labor Party between the single-tax followers of George and members of the Socialist Labor Party over the ULP's political program. Consequently, the socialists formed the Progressive Labor Party and fielded its own slate of candidates, headed by John Swinton, to contest the ULP in the state-wide election. The Central Labor Union in New York refrained from endorsing either party's candidates, although George's prestige and Swinton's stature in the labor movement moved many of its delegates to urge the federation not to remain neutral. Most of the city's unions followed the CLU's

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example and did not support either party, nor for that matter endorse the candidates of the Democratic and Republican Parties. Some unions linked by membership in the United German Trades participated directly in the PLP's campaign. These included Locals 10 and 90 of the CMIU, the United Framers, the German Painters, the Tailors' Progressive Union and the Furniture Workers' Union of Brooklyn. Moreover, most of the PLP's candidates were from unions. Among those running for the State Assembly in New York City were Aaron Henry and Paul Siebert from Local 90 of the CMIU and Charles Scheite from the German-American Typographia. Rallies, parades and public meetings marked the 1887 campaign as it did in 1886, but unlike the previous year they were smaller and less frequent -- providing an omen of what was to come: poor showings by both parties with George garnering 37,000 votes for Secretary of State and Swinton, 3,000 for State Comptroller.(42)

In the next decade organized labor intervened cautiously in electoral politics. In 1890, efforts to launch a broadly-based campaign in New York's elections by opponents of Tammany Hall within the Democratic Party, called the County Democracy, and a coalition of reformers, known as the People's Municipal League, attracted only negligible support from the city's unions. The involvement of John Archibald, President of the Paper Hangers' Union and Chairman of the Central Labor Union, in organizing the People's Municipal League failed to win the official approval of the city's labor federation. Four years later, labor remained on the sidelines during Josiah Strong's "reform" candidacy for Mayor. Running as a Republican, with the support of an array of business and civic organizations, Strong emphasized the waste and corruption of Tammany Hall government (exposed by the Lexow

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Commission's investigation into graft by city officials and police officers). As in 1890, however, some of organized labor's primary legislative goals were either downplayed or ignored, including tenement house reform, more stringent factory regulations and effective enforcement of public health codes. Tammany Hall in contrast had carefully courted labor's support. By adopting measures such as introducing the eight hour day for municipal employees and requiring employers awarded city contracts to do the same, the Democratic Party's establishment demonstrated its willingness to reward unions for rejecting the appeals of reform candidates.(43)

Not even Henry George's attempt to rekindle the fires of labor's interest in independent politics when he ran for Mayor of Greater New York (including Brooklyn) in 1897 seriously challenged Tammany's base among the city's unions and workers. Denunciations of an industrial "plutocracy and monied interests" notwithstanding, George received the backing of only a handful of unions, and the Central Labor Union failed to reach a consensus on his candidacy. He, or more accurately his son (George died during the last week of the campaign), won only four percent of the vote, a far cry from his showing eleven years earlier.(44)

Third parties fared no better. The official labor movement's response to the overtures of the People's Party in 1892 was lukewarm at best. The Central Labor Union in New York did not endorse any candidate or party in the presidential and congressional elections, although some delegates "applauded the Populists' courage". No groundswell of support for a labor-populist coalition emerged among the major unions representing printers, building tradesmen, cigarmakers and garment

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workers. This applied to most unions in New York and Brooklyn with the exception of a few local assemblies of the Knights of Labor. In 1896 the Central Labor Union withheld its support of William Jennings Bryan — the Populists' candidate running for President as a Democrat -- in large measure because of the party's emphasis on the silver issue.(45)

The campaigns waged by the Socialist Labor Party in the 1890's appeared to generate more support, at least among some unions and workers. Constituent unions of the United German Trades (UGT) and the United Hebrew Trades (UHT) maintained close links to the SLP. Officials from the Furniture Workers, the Bakers, Local 90 of the CMIU in the UGT and leaders of the Cloakmakers' and Operators' Union, the Pantsmakers' and Pearl Button Makers' union among others in the UHT were open members of the SLP. During the depression years the SLP tried to capitalize on the discontent expressed by workers at public meetings and rallies called to protest against unemployment and the government's lacklustre response to the problem. The party ran a slate of candidates in the 1894 city-wide elections and again in the state elections of 1895. In both instances, SLP candidates netted less than five percent of New York's and Brooklyn's vote, although in six New York Assembly Districts they gained at least ten percent and in two Lower East Side districts, where East European Jewish immigrants and German immigrants constituted the bulk of the population, they polled thirteen percent.(46)

For the remainder of the decade socialist intervention into the electoral arena was virtually nonexistent. The Socialist Labor Party rapidly lost the backing of the older German immigrant based unions as well as the Jewish immigrant garment worker unions affiliated with the United Hebrew Trades. Under the leadership of Daniel De Leon, the SLP

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formed the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance to combat the influence of the AFL, and in the process launched a controversial campaign of "dual" unionism which was a significant factor in convincing Morris Hillquit, Abraham Cahan and other socialists active in the labor movement to join the newly formed Socialist Party of America in 1897.

In sum, the appeal of reform and socialist politics among New York's and Brooklyn's labor unions remained limited either to a handful of leaders or pockets of German and Eastern European Jewish workers in a few trades. Activists in the New York Typographical Union and the CMIU intermittently raised the call for labor to run its own candidates in **The Union Printer** and the **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, respectively, as well as at general membership meetings. However, even visits from British trade unionists such as John Burns, who was instrumental in forming the Labor Representation Committee to promote the election of trade unionists to Parliament, did not shake organized labor from its nonpartisan political approach. (47)

In general, both cities' unions maintained no formal links to any political party and remained very selective about endorsing candidates, especially in elections to federal and state offices. In local politics, it appears that many unions recognized the advantages of supporting Tammany Hall, which had cultivated a relationship with generations of Irish immigrants who composed a significant part of the membership of the printers' and building trades unions. In the mid-1890's Tammany also began to make overtures to recently arrived immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. Irish workers, who found George's critique of the concentration of wealth in American society and his advocacy of home rule for Ireland attractive in 1886, renewed their traditional

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loyalties to Tammany. In recognition that Tammany's power brokers provided jobs and financial assistance in times of need, Irish workers among others supported its candidates. These economic benefits identified with Tammany became particularly significant in light of the depression following the Panic of 1893. Whereas New York's labor movement felt it necessary in 1886 to challenge the city's political power structure, by 1897 the thought of standing in opposition to the two established parties only retained its strategic importance for a minority of unions and their members. (48)

Organized labor's incursion into electoral politics demonstrates that unions found, if they did not create, common points of reference. Unions were hardly disparate institutions representing the interests of a select group of workers. Joint political efforts and support for other workers' strikes and boycotts constituted a signficant undercurrent in the ebb and flow of New York's and Brooklyn's unions. Cooperation among unions became a **sina qua non** in pursuit of legislative reforms as well as in electing allies and spokesmen to office. This process was aided by the Central Labor Union which served as a sounding board for programatic proposals, an arena to identify common interests and priorities and a mechanism to support the initiatives of individual unions. The CLU's role in launching the United Labor Party and Henry George's candidacy in 1886, its development of a legislative agenda that incorporated the concerns of cigarmakers, garment workers and printers among others and its promotion of the CMIU's label underscored the labor federation's impact.

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To a great extent the breadth of the CLU's activity reflected the mutuality expressed by constituent unions. The CMIU gained the endorsement of 80 unions in New York and Brooklyn for its union label, while locals 10, 90 and 144 donated money to striking cloakmakers and coatmakers in 1894 and supported a proposal calling on the national union to assist the striking members of the American Railway Union financially. Union printers displayed similar support for workers outside their trade. Members of #6 contributed money to help defray the legal costs of walking delegates from the United Brotherhood of Carpenters arrested while inspecting building sites for possible contract violations. They advanced loans to striking custom tailors in Yonkers and contributed money to help the UHT publish a labor newspaper. The building trades unions appeared to be more inclined to assist one another than unions in other industries. However, most locals of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners endorsed the CMIU's and United Garment Workers' labels, and virtually all of the building trades unions agreed to boycott the Third Avenue Railway struck by members of the Empire Trade Association in 1886. Most garment worker unions were either too financially constrained or absorbed by their own strikes and boycotts to find the means to support materially those of other workers. Within the garment trades mutual support was impressive, most notably in the Triple Alliance strike in 1890, when cutters and cloakmakers stood up for each other, and the cloakmakers' protracted battle in 1894, when such unions as the Brotherhood of Tailors and the Tailors' Progressive Union contributed desperatedly needed funds to strikers denied assistance by Jewish philantrophic groups.

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Unions did more than mobilize their forces in pursuit of specific objectives when they tapped the workers' economic leverage, their ties to community based institutions and political strength at the polls. For many, participation in a union provided a rare opportunity to establish contacts with workers who, in most of their day-to-day circumstances, were kept apart by occupational, industrial, ethnic and residential distinctions. Although most union meetings were dominated by reports from officers, discussions of changes in the by-laws and the airing of grievances and complaints, on occasion guest speakers representing workers from other trades and unions appealed directly to the membership for their understanding and support. For example, when Rumanian and Russian shirtmakers addressed a group of Irish and German cutters at a weekly meeting of the Gotham Cutters' Association in 1889, they demonstrated that the union cause was indeed multicultural if not universal.(49) Here was proof that workers whose levels of skills and conditions of employment suggested an inferior status wanted to make the "house of labor" their home.

If direct contact at union meetings did not adequately personalize the broader meaning of the term, the labor movement, then participation in such political-cultural events as May Day and Labor Day marches did. Here workers from a cross-section of occupations and a variety of labor organizations -- some chartered by the AFL and others part of the rival Knights of Labor -- and whose political beliefs stretched across a wide sprectrum of socialism, anarchism and nonpartisan trade unionism reaffirmed their collective self-image as the "creators of society's wealth".

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In what contemporary newspapers appropriately called "festivals", workers marched behind banners marked by pithy slogans, proudly carried artifacts showing off their skills and assembled to listen to speeches reminding them that as worker-citizens they too often were denied the respect of other classes. In 1890, at one of the more ecumenical celebrations of May Day, thousands of cigarmakers, garment workers, building tradesmen and printers among other workers weathered a steady rain to march to Union Square where Peter McGuire of the UBCJ, Daniel Harris from Local 144 of the CMIU, Morris Hillquit from the UHT, Daniel De Leon from the SLP and S.E. Shevitch from the socialist newspaper, **New Yorker Volkzeitung**, spoke confidently of an impending era of workers' "emancipation". When the weather permitted it, these labor festivals culminated in picnics and/or parties featuring a variety of games and sports, rounds of dancing and a generous consumption of beer. These events helped to crystallize a "movement culture" which transcended in part craft differences, ethnic barriers, political tensions and conflicting organizational affiliations that threatened to fragment rather than unite labor. (50)

The points of contact experienced by unionized workers should not be overstated. Most union members were not consistently active, and therefore did not participate in the meetings, rallies and marches that broadened the scope of the labor movement. The specific location of industries, differentials in income and ethnic clustering tended to divide workers. Recently arrived Jewish immigrants congregated in New York's Lower East Side and, towards the end of the 1890's, in Brooklyn's Brownsville section because clothing manufacturers and contractors set up shop there, each area offered urban newcomers

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companionship and low incomes restricted their selection of housing. Printers and building tradesmen -- in the main Irish-, British- and German-born and their native-born sons -- lived in different neighborhoods from Eastern and Southern European immigrants and tended to display a greater residential dispersion because they earned higher incomes and labored in occupations in which physical proximity to the source of work was neither necessary nor feasible. Cigarmakers, increasingly drawn from the ranks of Bohemian immigrants, settled in New York's upper east side, where in the 1890's the largest factories and tenement house shops were located.

Different residential patterns that overlapped with unequal economic opportunity and standards of living meant a social distance existed between different groups of workers. Jewish immigrant garment workers might have little need to leave their immediate communities because their sources of livelihood, recreation and religious life were spatially coterminous. In their daily experience, then, encounters with native-born Irish and German printers and building tradesmen, or, for that matter Bohemian cigarmakers, were likely to be few and far between.

The normal lack of personal contact between different groups of workers and the organizational priorities of different local and national affiliations, therefore meant that whatever interaction was fostered by union activity was particularly significant. At the very least, it allowed workers whose only other "exposure" to those from different occupations, cultural backgrounds and communities was through the sensational press, popular theatre and dime novels -- all of which featured caricatures and dangerous stereotypes -- the chance to

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recognize that economic and social differences did not denote inferiority, and to reaffirm organized labor's stated creed of fraternity and solidarity.

However, the relationships between organized workers was often less direct. During the late Gilded Age, the practices of unions in the four trades displayed a tendency to converge. From the durable printers' unions to the seasonal garment workers' unions, more attention was devoted to the details of organization, especially the procedures and standards of conduct that promoted individual responsibility and group cohesion. By the end of the 1890's, the leading union in the women's clothing industry, the United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers, appeared ready to avoid the fate of earlier unions and adopted a number of measures that promised stability. Most of the unions, including those representing building tradesmen, were beginning to deemphasize the use of strikes as a tactic in the wake of their own experience and the experience of other unions in New York and elsewhere. Garment workers learned that strikes did not guarantee that the employers' concessions would translate into permanent gains. Building tradesmen realized that the same organizational network that enhanced the potentially disruptive effects of work stoppages by supporting sympathy strikes could also entangle them into damaging conflicts which threatened their bargaining position. Printers continued to be selective in their use of the strike weapon, limiting it to situations when other less confrontational means of resolving an impasse were absent or ineffectual. Cigarmakers, who for almost two decades knew first hand of how risky strikes were, aimed to control their outbreak through rigorous enforcement of constitutional by-laws.

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These lessons were reinforced by the experience of Homestead's steel workers, who in 1892 felt the wrath of the Carnegie Company's antilabor policies, and the fate of members of the American Railway Union who struck in support of workers at the Pullman Car Company in 1894 and saw their union decimated and their names added to an industry-wide blacklist. The Panic of 1893 and the three years of depression that ensued also had a sobering effect. Twenty years earlier an economic crisis led to intense and widespread conflict that left the labor movement severely battered. Survival and not ambitious attempts to improve conditions of employment appeared to be the safest approach to follow during hard times.

Moreover, evidence that other tactics, such as union label campaigns and exclusive closed shop agreements, allowed unions to introduce and enforce standards made strikes less necessary. Concomitantly, the effectiveness of less confrontational tactics drove home the benefits of cooperation to unions within the same industry or trade. In the building trades, rival unions among plumbers and painters had amalgamated or laid the groundwork for merger and union carpenters refined the working unity among their organizations. The United Brotherhood of Cloakmakers was consolidating its base among operators and establishing links with clothing cutters, thereby creating the foundation for an industry-wide union, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. Union printers had seemingly perfected the art of amalgamation and collaboration with the formation of the Allied Printing Trades' Council which united the organizations of compositors, pressmen, stereotypers, electrotypers and lithographers.

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Convergence nevertheless did not suggest a stable equilibrium had been attained by New York's and Brooklyn's organized workers. As the 19th century came to a close, the contours of a new era were becoming visible. The outlines of economic and political change seemed ambiguous, simultaneously raising expressions of alarm and hopeful anticipation. In the cigarmaking industry concentration and consoldiation of production was accelerating, conforming to patterns in the steelmaking, anthracite coal mining and oil refining industries. (51) Employers' associations were becoming more deeply entrenched and capable of disciplining maverick or breakaway firms, thereby allowing them to mount a more united front against unions, or if circumstances warranted it, to reach a more reliable **modus vivendi** with organized labor. (52) The former potential impact of stronger employer associations seemed to be simmering in the building trades where strikes had been chronic, and the latter, more promising possibility, was becoming more plausible in the printing industry where the American Newspaper Publishers' Association and the United Typothetae recognized the power of the New York Typographical Union and the affiliates of the International Printing Pressmen's Union.

Politically the terrain was becoming complex. On the one hand, disinterested parties in the general public showed an increasing sensitivity to the issues and problems that spurred workers to organize. However, on the other hand, many in the middle class, including storekeepers, professionals and salaried white collar employees, found the strikes and boycotts that dramatized labor's concerns threatening. In a period when industrial conflict increasingly carried political implications, entailing the use of court injunctions and military/police

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force, both employers and unions needed and sought allies. In the 1900's, when the reform impulse resonated in journalists' columns, settlement houses, women's rights organizations, university lecture halls and legislative chambers, both organized labor and employers vied for the imprimatur of a progressive public.

Employers tried to cultivate a favorable image by portraying themselves as respectable, law abiding members of the community, and to assume a high moral ground by justifying their practices in terms of individual rights, industrial efficiency and the welfare of society. For their part, organized labor valued respectability too, and for that reason presented its arguments for labor reform, collective bargaining and union standards in the familiar and popular rhethorical context of citizenship rights. Higher wages, shorter workdays and less onerous working conditions were seen as part of an American birthright, emblematic of the nation's democratic ethos and its exceptional development as an industrial capitalist society.

As one era gave way to another, the significance of economic combination, social activism and political mobilization would become clearer, and accordingly the labor movement would appreciate the challenges and opportunities these changes represented. Thanks to the experience of union printers, building tradesmen, cigarmakers and garment workers, New York's and Brooklyn's workers -- both organized and unorganized alike -- appeared ready to grasp the baton passed to them by their late Gilded Age predecessors and run the next leg in labor's long distance race to establish a place in American society.

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FOOTNOTES

1. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 114-118 and 127-132.

2. **The Union Printer**, July 29, 1893, September 15, 1894, and May 16, 1896; and #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, October 5, 1890.

3. Patricia Cooper, "From Handicraft to Mass Production: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories 1900-1919" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1981), pp. 50-53.

4. New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 14-16, 163-164, and 232-234; and **The New York Sun**, October 9 and 10, 1894 and July 28, 30, and 31, 1895.

5. For information on printers see, New York Typographical Union, **List of Offices Paying the Scale**; Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Sixteenth Annual Report** (1898), p. 868; and Elizabeth Baker, **Printers and Technology: A History of the Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union** (New York: Columbia University, 1959), pp. 167-173. On union/closed shops in the building trades, see Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 145 and 158. New York and Brooklyn affiliates of the Cigar Makers International Union claimed more than a hundred union label shops in 1887. See the **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, December 1887 and April 1888.

6. #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, March 7, 1891; **The Union Printer**, May 2, 1896; Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Third Annual Report** (1886), pp. 144 and 145, and **Fourth Annual Report** (1887), pp. 119-126; William Haber, **Industrial Relations in the Building Industry** (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1930), pp. 131, 136 and 137; James Motley, "Apprenticeship in the Building Trades," Jacob Hollander, ed., **Studies in American Trade Unionism** (New York: Holt and Company, 1906), pp. 283-295; and James O'Neal, **A History of the Amalgamated Ladies Garment Workers' Union Local 10** (New York, 1927), pp. 14-17.

7. **The Union Printer**, September 9, and 16, 1893, January 20, and August 25, 1894; #6, **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, February 3, 1895 and May 3, 1896; and George Barnett, "The Linotype," John R. Commons, ed., **Trade Unionism and Labor Problems** (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1905), pp. 268-269.

8. O'Neal, pp. 36 and 37; Gotham Knife Cutters' Association, **Minutes of Meetings**, October 14, 1887; and **The Garment Worker**, December 1895.

9. **The Carpenter**, April 1887 and September 1887; Lloyd Ulman, **The Rise of the National Union** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 57-64; **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, January and October 1887 and July 1891; Edwin Fenton, "Immigrants and Unions: A Case Study, Italians and American Labor, 1870-1920" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1957), p.477; Aaron Antonovsky, **The Early Jewish Labor Movement in the United States** (New York: YIVO

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Institute for Jewish Research, 1961) pp. 132 and 133; and Michael Weisser, **A Brotherhood of Memory: Jewish Landsmanshaftn in the New World** (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

10. In Gilded Age America other workers, including hat finishers, puddlers, iron rollers and machinists maintained a system of work rules reaffirming their craft autonomy. These rules were often infused with such values as independence, pride, mutuality and sense of duty. On hat finishers see David Bensman, **The Practice of Solidarity: American Hat Finishers in the Nineteenth Century** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); on iron workers see, John W. Bennett, "The Iron Workers of Woods Run and Johnstown: The Union Era" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1977); and David Montgomery, **The Fall of the House of Labor** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and on machinists, see David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Macnine Production in the Nineteenth Century," **Labor History**, 17 (Fall, 1976), 485-509.

11. On the evolving and, at times, troublesome relationship betwen journeymen printers and foremen, see Elizabeth Baker, "The Printing Foreman-Union Man: A Historical Sketch," **Industrial and Labor Relations Review**, 4 (1951), 223-235; and George Barnett, **The Printers: A Study of American Trade Unionism** (Cambridge, Massachussets: American Economic Association, 1909), pp. 212-221.

12. Beatrice and Sidney Webb, **Industrial Democracy** (London: Longman's, 1897) regarded unions' emphasis on developing and enforcing standards as an effort to impose a "common rule" on conditions of employment, and thereby introduce order to the chaotic world of the competitive market.

13. The eight hour day and six day work week was especially significant in this light. John Swinton deemed the eight hour day as a "moral and economic elevator" which would enrich the lives of manual workers whose existence too often was one of nothing but toil. The value of free time was expressed in a circular distributed by the New York Tailors' Union in 1886 when members were asked: "Have you got the time and means to visit Central Park....? Does your family or you go to hear public lectures?" See **John Swinton's Paper**, May 2, 1886; and Leon Fink, **Workingmen's Democracy** (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 10.

14. For a provocative and insightful interpretation of the evolution in Gompers' thought on trade unionism, see Stuart Bruce Kaufman, **Samuel Gompers and the Origins of the A.F.L.** (Westport, Connecticut Greenwood Press, 1973).

15. **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, June 10, 1878, cited by Kaufman, p. 97.

16. For more on McGuire's conception of trade unions, see Mark Erlich, "Peter J. McGuire's Trade Unionism: Socialism of a Trade Union Kind?," **Labor History**, 24 (Spring, 1983), 165-197.

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17. Similar expressions of an ethical code of behavior appeared in the **Journal of United Labor** and **National Labor Tribune.** Michael McGovern, **Labor Lyrics and Other Poems** (Youngstown, Ohio: Vindicator Press, 1899), wrote in the same spirit as T.C. Walsh, stressing from a puddler's view the fraternity of labor. Also see Montgomery, **The Fall of the House of Labor,** Chapter 1.

18. See, for example, **The Union Printer,** November 2, 1895; **The Carpenter,** December 1891 and March 1894; and **The Cigar Makers Official Journal, passim,** especially 1887 and 1388.

19. Lloyd Ulman, **The Rise of the National Trade Union,** pp. 124-141 demonstrates that many national unions in the 1880's and 1890's sought to establish more uniform rules concerning misbehavior and its punishment of affiliates. For example, the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union, the International Typographical Union and the International Molders' Union levied excessive fines and too readily expelled members.

20. In 1890, for example, six locals of the Bricklayers' and Masons' International Union in New York and Brooklyn representing 3,500 workers signed a trade agreement with the Masons' and Builders' Association covering 400 firms. New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Eighth Annual Report** (1890), p. 116.

21. For information on cloakmaker strikes in 1890 and 1894, see Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Fourth Annual Report** (1890), pp. 244-248 and **Eighth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 163-178; and Lorwin, pp. 48-55 and 79-82. For description of the coatmakers' strikes in 1894 and 1895, see **The Sun,** September 6, and 10, 1894 and July 30, 31, and August 1, 1895; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 232-234.

22 **Cigar Makers Official Journal,** November 1887 and December 1889.

23. See Harry W. Laidler, **Boycotts and the American Labor Struggle: Economicand Legal Aspects** (New York: Russell and Russell, 1913), pp. 82-97 for discussion of boycotts waged by unions in New York State from 1885 to 1892.

24. Calculated from Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Third Annual Report** (1887), pp. 726-729; and **Tenth Annual Report** (1894), pp. 1560-3.

25. See Colin Crouch, **Trade Unions: The Logic of Collective Action** (London: Fontana Books, 1982) and P.K. Edwards, **Strikes in the United States** (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).

26. Florence Peterson, **Strikes in the United States, 1880-1936** (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin #651, 1937); United States, Commissioner of Labor, **Tenth Annual Report** Volume II, p. 39; and Edwards, **Strikes in the United States,** p. 37.

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27. **The New York Herald**, October 11 and 12, 1887; New York State. Mediation and Arbitration Board, **First Annual Report** (1887), pp. 290-291 and **Ninth Annual Report** (1894), p. 240; and **The Union Printer** April 7, June 9, 16 and 23, and August 25, 1894.

28. **The Brooklyn Daily Eagle**, July 28, 1890 and May 1, 1891; **The Sun**, May 2, and June 12, 1891; and Frederic Hall, "Sympathetic Strikes and Sympathetic Lockouts," **Studies in History, Economics and Public Law**, Columbia University, 10 (1898), 52 and 53.

29. For a report of friction among painters' unions, see American Federation of Labor Records, Jack Elliot to Gompers, September 15, and December 26, 1890; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 37-39. See **The Sun**, May 3, 5 and 6, 1891, for discussion of tensions between the Housesmiths' Union and the Architectural Iron Workers' Union.

30. **The Union Printer**, October 13, 1894, December 18, 1894 and March 23, 1895.

31. **John Swinton's Paper**, February 7 and 14, 1886; Samuel Gompers Papers, Volume 1, pp. 365 and 366; and Norman Ware, **The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-1895: A Study in Democracy** (New York: D. Appleton , 1929), pp. 273 and 274.

32. United States. Bureau of Labor, **Tenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor** (1894) **Strikes and Lockouts**, Volume I, pp. 618-642.

33. **The Union Printer**, February 29, May 2, August 22, 1896; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1898), pp. 165 and 166.

34. **The Sun**, March 19, 1886 and July 10, 11, and 17, 1890; Louis Lorwin (Levine), **The Women's Garment Workers: A History of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union** (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1924), pp. 37 and 49-51; and Mediation and Arbitration Board, **Ninth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 229-234.

35. New York State. Legislature, Assembly, **Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Condition of Female Labor**, pp. 16 and 920-922; and Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 550-562.

36. New York State. Legislature, Assembly, **Report of the Tenement House Committee**, pp. 250-253.

37. **The Union Printer**, May 7, 1887 and March 1, 1890; and #6. **Minutes of Membership Meeting**, March 4, and April 1, 1888, May 1, 1890, April 5, 1891, and July 4, 1897.

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38. For more on the scaffolding bill, see New York State. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Thirteenth Annual Report** (1895), pp. 489-493.

39. **The Cigar Makers Official Journal**, November 1886.

40. For more on the Henry George mayoral campaign in 1886, see Louis Post and Fred Leubuscher, **An Account of the George-Hewitt Campaign in the New York Municipal Election of 1886** (New York, 1887); Thomas Condon, "Politics, Reform and the New York City Election of 1886," **New York Historical Society Quarterly** XLIV (October 1960); and Peter Alexander Speek, "The Single-tax and the Labor Movement" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1915). An invaluable source on the ethos and dynamics of electoral campaign is the Henry George Scrapbooks located in the Main Research Branch of the New York Public Library (Economics Division).

41. Samuel Cohen, **The Transplanted** (New York: the author, 1937) most dramatically remarked on the impact of George's candidacy on some immigrant workers: "At first it felt as if I had been struck with a blunt object. The blow seemed to remove a mental door, permitting light to flow upon countless, baffling problems."

42 .**The Leader**, September 9, and 19, and November 6, 1887; Speek, "The Single-Tax and the Labor Movement," pp. 92-100 and 140-142; and **The New York City Record** (1887).

43. Richard Skolnick, "The Crystalization of Reform in New York City 1890-1917 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1964) pp. 138-141; David Hammack, **Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century** (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1982) pp. 146-147 and 178-181 and People's Municipal League, **Minutes of the Executive Committee**, August 19, and 21, 1890.

44. Some of George's long-time supporters had mixed feelings about his candidacy in 1897. One in particular, Heber Newton stressed the "partisanship and narrowness" of the campaign. In a letter to George he observed: "Your present movement has not, however, sprung from the labor organizations and boasts itself distinctly not upon being nonpartisan, but upon being a party action." Henry George Papers, Heber Newton to Henry George, October 6, 1897. On the lack of union support for George's candidacy in 1897 see, Irwin Yellowitz, **Labor and the Progressive Movement in New York State, 1897-1916** (New York, 1965), pp. 186 and 187.

45. Eli Goldsmidt, "Labor and Populism in New York City, 1891-1896," **Labor History**, 13 (1972), 520-532; and **The Herald**, September 14, 1894.

46. Samuel McSeveney, **The Politics of Depression: Political Behavior in the Northeast, 1893-1896** (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Univesrity Microfilms, 1972), pp. 151-153 and 293-294; and Hubert Perrier, "The Socialists and the Working Class in New York 1890-1896," Dirk Hoerder, ed., **Immigration and Labor History, 1877-1920: Recent European Research** (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1983), pp. 111-134.

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47. See, for example, **Cigar Makers Official Journal**, September 1889 and October 1892; and **The Union Printer**, January 20, and June 30, 1894, and May 18, and November 2, 1895.

48. Martin Shefter, "Trade Unions and Political Machines," Ira Katznelson and Aristide Zolberg, eds., **Working Class Formation: 19th Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States** (Princeton University Press, 1985) convincingly argues that unions deferred to the hegemony of party machines such as Tammany Hall as long as "urban bosses" respected the unions' autonomy in their relations with employers, i.e. not restricting unions' pursuit of closed shop agreements and not deploying the police in labor-employer conflicts.

49. Gotham Knife Cutters' Association, **Minutes of Meetings**, March 14, 1890.

50. **The New York Tribune**, May 2, 1890; **The Sun**, May 2, 1890; and **The Union Printer**, May 3, 1890.

51. On the concentration and consolidation in the cigarmaking industry, see Willis Baer, **The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States** (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Art Printing Company, 1933), pp. 80–83. On the growth of mergers in American Industry, see Edward C. Kirkland, **Industry Comes of Age: Business, Labor and Public Policy, 1860–1897** (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967); and Ralph Nelson, **Merger Movements in American Industry, 1895–1956** (Princeton University Press, 1959).

52. For information on the development of employers' associations, see Clarence Bonnett, **The History of Employers' Associations in the United States** (New York: Vantage Press, 1956).

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CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The general purpose of this study was to examine the labor movement in two of the nation's largest and most vibrant cities as an embodiment of working-class life in late Gilded Age America. It sought to integrate a description and analysis of the economic and social context of workers' lives with an appreciation of the breadth and depth of labor activity. Four groups of workers — each with their distinctive occupational structures — were the subjects of my research in the hope of capturing the diversity of workers' experience during a period of rapid and pervasive change.

In pursuit of this aim, three working hypotheses were validated: first, industrialization, including technological innovation, new production methods and a more thorough division of labor, was not uniformly experienced by workers. A variety of work patterns, spawning a broad range in conditions of employment and relations of production, emerged as each occupation, trade and industry faced different market pressures.

Secondly, the immediate impetus to organize at the workplace derived from the workers' specific encounters with employers attempting to increase productivity, regulate production costs, not the least labor, and exercise or obtain a prerogative over hiring, allocation of work and job performance. Both as a response to, and in anticipation of, the employers' pursuit of their interests, workers formed unions that identified a hierarchy of needs, developed a priority of objectives and adopted courses of action corresponding to each group's particular world of work.

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Thirdly, although the original push to organize emanated from the on-the-job experience of workers, the specific forms of labor activity they adopted received their inspiration from a variety of sources. The concrete ways by which workers attempted to improve their conditions of employment, defend the integrity of their crafts and make their work more tolerable reflected their ability to locate the vulnerable employers in their trades and maximize their own strengths or overcome their own weaknesses.

However, these efforts did not occur in isolation from each other. Workers learned from the experience of each other what forms of organization could best survive hard times and sustain effective action, and what strategies and tactics would enable them to wrest concessions from employers and uphold previously won gains. Union building meant movement building: a common identity, shared purpose and network of organizations, which in turn facilitated the ability of workers to organize, wage strikes, mobilize support for boycotts and launch union label campaigns. This cooperative labor activity in part compensated for the particularism of some unions, which at times engaged in internecine rivlaries and refused to honor the boycotts and strikes of other workers.

This activity drew on the experience of immigrant workers, both in their original and adopted homelands. Irish building tradesmen, stevedores and streetcar workers among others helped make the labor boycott, a tactic borne in the Irish peasants' resistance against British rule, a popular weapon in the labor movement. German immigrant workers, some of whom were veterans of the socialist movement in their homelands, stressed the importance of labor solidarity and cooperation

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among unions, and set an example by forming the United German Trades. Recently arrived Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe organized unions and waged strikes with a missionary zeal that imbued struggles to improve conditions of employment with a sense of moral urgency and ethical commitment.

As a corollary to this third observation, the labor movement resonated with various meanings for its participants, according to their ethnicity, occupation, skill and gender. The significance of the labor activity for the different groups of workers, then, stemmed not merely from the work experience that prompted them to organize in the first place, but from their multivalent position as immigrants (both recently arrived and established), as men and women and as craftsmen, operatives and sweatshop hands.

The economic growth of New York and Brooklyn and the work experience of building tradesmen, cigarmakers, garment workers and printers in the late Gilded Age demonstrated that if a pattern existed in the industrialization process, it was checkered. Few, if any, industries in New York and Brooklyn conformed to the conventional image of industrialization. Large scale units of production, marked by high outlays for machinery and physical plant, capital-endowed firms, oligopolistic industrial markets and expanding workforces filled by unskilled laborers or semiskilled operatives were the exception and not the norm in both cities.(1) Only the brewing, meatpacking and sugar refining industries shared most of these features -- and none of these constituted major sources of employment or generated huge sales revenues, as did the garment or the printing trades.

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In contrast, within the building trades, cigarmaking, garment and printing industries, few firms claimed substantial capital reserves, assumed a dominant share of their respective markets, or maintained large production facilities. Low capital requirements facilitated entry into the markets of the clothing industry and the building trades where the employers' ability to compete rested on their ability to recruit workers. In the cigarmaking industry, the demand for hand-rolled cigars made it possible for prospective entrepreneurs to set up shops with minimal outlays except for the rental of production facilities. Even in the printing industry where fixed and variable costs ran high, small ("cock-robin") shops, specializing in commercial literature such as handbills and posters, flourished.

Competition among employers — at times relentless and cut-throat — led to the evolution of strategies that aimed to minimize production costs and raise productivity. Technological innovation was one way employers tackled these challenges, but except for the printing industry, technical constraints posed by the production process, the lack of capital assets or a reluctance to change the **modus operandi** limited its application. (2)

In the printing trades, the introduction of linotype machines and improvements in multiple presses permitted the publication of larger daily newspapers at lower per unit costs. In cigarmaking, technological change proceeded cautiously. The most fundamental innovation was in fact the introduction of a simple device — a mold -- which enabled workers to roll more uniformly shaped cigars. Bunching machines made their entry into the industry in the 1880's, and in the next decade suction tables were introduced. Nevertheless, these innovations were adopted in the

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main by the larger manufacturers for the production of the cheaper grades of cigars. A healthy market remained for hand-made cigars, and the proprietors of smaller concerns who often could not afford the new equipment continued to hire cigarmakers experienced in handicraft methods. In the building trades, technological innovation also evolved selectively. In the 1880's and 1890's most of the changes in production involved the use of more flexible building material (reinforced concrete and steel) and the introduction of equipment that facilitated the lifting of material, such as elevators and derricks. In the garment trades technological innovation made few inroads. Instead, the men's and women's clothing industries, despite improvements in sewing machines and the introduction of heavy-duty shears and long knives, remained among the most highly labor-intensive manufacturing industries.

In recognition of the limited scope of technological innovation, employers in three of the four trades developed labor-focused approaches to the twin tasks of regulating production costs and increasing productivity. This was most evident in the garment trades. Employers sought to keep wages low while they increased work loads. Manufacturers of coats and cloaks often contracted out work to shops whose owners offered to complete the orders on schedule and cheaply. Contractors vying for business attempted to underbid each other, knowing that the key to their success was recruiting workers at low piece rates and intensifying labor output.

Employers tried to increase productivity levels by introducing a more detailed division of labor. In factories and smaller inside shops team work prevailed. Groups of three or four pressers, basters and

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finishers worked under the direction of operators. The earnings of individual workers were pegged to the teams' efforts in order to encourage a steady flow of production. In outside shops, especially in the coatmaking trade, the task system developed, whereby each team was expected to complete a certain number of garments in order to earn the set rate of pay.

In the cigarmaking industry employers also tried to implement a more detailed division of labor as well as resort to outside production. The use of molds, followed by bunching machines and suction tables, expedited the development of team work. Under this system, cigarmakers would take on the specialized task of rolling, while the newly created job classifications of bunchmakers and fillers would complete the other tasks of cigarmaking. Teamwork became pervasive in factories and shops producing the cheaper straight cigars and promoted the employment of women at lower rates of pay than those prevailing in handicraft shops. Manufacturers, hoping to fend off the competition of upstate and rural Pennsylvania producers, bought tenement houses and rented apartments to families on the condition they produce cigars. Men, women and children worked day and night at even lower piece rates than their counterparts employed in team work. Typically recently arrived immigrants with few employment opportunities, they labored under harsh conditions, knowing that failure to satisfy the manufacturers could mean eviction as well as loss of their livelihood.

In the building trades, the complexity of the production process and, concomitantly, the demand for skilled labor precluded the practices adopted by employers in the clothing and cigarmaking industries. Instead, the emphasis revolved around minimizing financial

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risks and securing a reliable source of labor. Consequently, a contracting system evolved whereby builders, or general contractors, relied on subcontractors in the specialized crafts to take responsibility for hiring and supervising workers, supplying the necessary tools and equipment and in the case of plumbing, providing the material as well. In carpentry, subcontracting involved an attempt to control labor costs. Subcontractors adopted the practice of "lumping" whereby they paid carpenters a lump rate for their work, rather than a hourly and daily rate.

The impact of technological innovation, a new division of labor and reorganization of production on workers varied by craft and, at times, by job classification. In the cigarmaking trade, new technology and the accompanying team work threatened to undermine the status of craftsmen, resulting in a deskilling of their labor, lower piece rates and less autonomy on the job. Handicraft cigarmakers adjusted to the introduction of molds after they recognized that neither their earnings nor craft integrity would be jeopardized. Bunchmaking machines and suction tables, in contrast, were regarded as unmitigated evils, to be resisted vigorously, and consequently, the Cigar Makers International Union barred membership to workers employed in shops using this technology.

At the other extreme, printers found that the introduction of linotypes, monotypes and more sophisticated presses did not essentially threaten their position in the labor process. Typographers remained highly skilled workers. If anything, their repertoire of skills expanded with the arrival of the new technology and their strategic position in production remained intact. What troubled typographers was the

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displacement of hand compositors as the publishers of the major daily newspapers and leading book and job employers mechanized composition work. Therefore, the typographers' unions — Locals #6 and #98 of the International Typographical Union, and the German-American Typographia — made job security a priority, an issue which they addressed by seeking closed shop agreements guaranteeing that hand compositors be hired as linotype operators at union standards.

Probably no other occupation was less adversely affected by technological innovation than building tradesmen. Bricklayers, carpenters, painters, plasterers and plumbers performed their tasks by using hand tools. Their work required the ability to calculate, judge and improvise, which no machine or piece of equipment could duplicate. Some building tradesmen were accomplished craftsmen, capable of making ornamental cornices and skylights, constructing elaborate staircases and painting richly decorated frescos. The only major detrimental effect of technological innovation was to reduce the demand for those who worked with wood and for the all-purpose carpenter. The growing use of structural steel meant more work for architectural iron workers and housesmiths and less for carpenters. Improvements in wood-working machinery promoted the use of pre-fabricated products, which in turn led to the growth of specialized carpenters who hung doors and sash and installed windows. Yet carpenters who specialized in stairbuilding and laying roofs were highly skilled workers who commanded high wages and favorable working conditions.

In general, subcontracting also proved not to challenge the building tradesmen's position. Building tradesmen were not subject to rigorous supervision and were respected for their ability and

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experience. Since subcontractors often were former building tradesmen, they appreciated the intricacies of construction work and the latitude required by building tradesmen to complete their work satisfactorily. Cost cutting efforts by subcontractors centered on the use of cheap material, or by striking deals with suppliers for bulk order discounts. Where they involved recruiting cheaper labor, as in "lumping" or the employment of handymen, largely recently arrived immigrants, they were mainly restricted to renovation work and smaller construction projects. Because the costs of production could be passed on to the consumer, it was easier for building trades unions to reach agreements either with subcontractors to hire only union members or with contractors to do business only with those subcontractors who honored the union scale.

In the clothing industry the employers' drive for greater productivity and lower labor costs had more dramatic effects. Virtually all garment workers irrespective of job classification experienced a downward pressure on their wages and long and arduous workdays. Moreover, because of the seasonal nature of the garment trades, garment workers faced regular periods of protracted unemployment, lasting up to three months.

To the extent that this experience was shared by garment workers the impetus to organize unions was pervasive. However, the very organization of production involved a hierarchy of labor. Cutters, the "aristocrats" of the garment trades, prided themselves on being skilled craftsmen whose labor was indispensable. They worked apart from most other garment workers, and, almost without exception, for manufacturers and other proprietors of inside shops. They earned higher wages, worked

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fewer hours and experienced shorter periods of unemployment than other garment workers. Operators assumed responsibility for hiring and discharging members of their teams. They often owned their own sewing machines, and because they commanded higher rates of pay than pressers, finishers and basters, some could save enough money to open their own shops.

Yet cutters confronted the threat of displacement and greater expectations of output with the introduction of the long knife. Operators, as did other garment workers, found that they had to produce more coats or cloaks to earn the same amount of wages because employers, exploiting the return of the slack season, increased the required number of tasks and/or cut piece rates. For these reasons, cutters stressed the need for trade union organization — maintaining craft unions in the 1880's and 1890's, and then helping to launch the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in 1900. Meanwhile, the operators assumed leadership in most of the union organizing drives and strikes during the two decades, especially at the beginning of the busy season, when garment workers usually sought to win increases in piece rates.

This survey of the impact of industrialization on four groups of workers demonstrates that their union organizing efforts spang not simply from the potential and real effects of technological change, new production methods, a new division of labor and other measures to raise productivity and control labor costs. Much of their labor activity stemmed from the advantages enjoyed by practitioners of a craft: pride in their work, a high social status in a society that respected industriousness and practical knowledge, a growing demand for their

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skills and their strategic position in the labor process. Printers, building tradesmen, handicraft cigarmakers and clothing cutters possessed skills not easily learned or mastered. Employers — as well as these craftsmen — recognized the worth of their labor and the significance associated with a shared occupation. Apprenticeship regulations defining the terms of entry into a trade, work rules clarifying the responsibilities and prerogatives of a craft and, in some cases, stipulating actual staffing levels and methods of work were stock and trade of most craftsmen who formed unions. These self-regulating practices adopted by organized craftsmen won either the tacit or the formal acceptance of employers who wanted to ensure a reliable source of skilled labor or to avoid the economic costs of job actions, and who identified with their former peers.

In printing, the building trades and cigarmaking, unions predated the advent of machine technology and innovative divisions of labor. By 1880, typographers employed by most of the major newspapers in New York and Brooklyn were respectively members of Locals #6 and #98 of the International Typographical Union, almost ten years before linotypes were being introduced. Bricklayers and carpenters had formed local affiliates of national unions, while painters, plasterers and plumbers had built strong city-wide unions by 1886. New York and Brooklyn locals of the CMIU were strengthening their base in the industry's smaller shops in the 1880's before bunching machines had become standard equipment and suction tables were used. Therefore, these unions were well situated and organizationally prepared to respond to some of the changes in their respective trades.

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The labor activity of those workers who had built viable unions by 1886, and those like the garment workers who had just begun to organize, illustrated many of the underlying features of the labor movement in New York and Brooklyn during the late Gilded Age. First, an ethic of mutuality pervaded the internal life of unions and the relationships among them. Mutual aid represented the cornerstone of the CMIU, the ITU, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, the Bricklayers' and Masons' International Union and the Gotham Association of Knife Cutters among others. Financial compensation to members too ill to work, injured on the job and to deceased members' spouses eased the discomforts of life and the grief of death. Out-of-work benefits and travellers' loans made it possible for members to adjust to the periodic seasonal downturns common in the building trades and the cyclical slumps in the nation's economy. The social welfare role played by unions was not only important because of the practical assistance these benefits offered. By stressing the obligation and virtue of "taking care of each other", unions engendered a commitment to trade union principles in general and loyalty to a specific organization. This identification with a union assumed paramount importance when workers and employers clashed in strikes, lockouts and boycotts. (3)

Mutuality was evident in the support workers gave cohorts within and outside their trade who were on strike. Although most strikes remained confined to one workplace or one group of workers, some elicited the participation of many workers from numerous sites and the backing of others not direct parties in the dispute.(4) Mutual support appeared most consistently among building tradesmen. Sympathy strikes,

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especially in the early 1890's, constituted a significant proportion of job actions, and contributed to the ability of building tradesmen to defend union standards. Even when sympathetic action was less frequent, it was significant. Typographers received the timely support of pressmen and stereotypers in strikes against individual book and job firms in the 1890's, and consequently extended the union's influence within the industry. Clothing cutters joined forces with cloakmakers in the Triple Alliance strike of 1890 and in 1895 refused to work for coat manufacturers who did not honor the Brotherhood of Tailors' union scale.

Most support, however, was less dramatic or ostentatious. It involved financial assistance to strikers, pledges to boycott the goods or services of employers and publicity for union label campaigns. Striking garment workers often received contributions from unions representing cigarmakers, building tradesmen and printers. Within the garment trades, unions donated money and organized fund-raising events, including plays and dances. Many of these efforts were coordinated by the United Hebrew Trades, a socialist-led federation of unions consisting of Eastern European Jewish immigrant workers who lived in the Lower East Side. This financial support was critical to garment workers, since their unions generally lacked any strike funds and strikes quickly ate up whatever savings some might have had.

The backing of boycotts and union label campaigns also was significant. Largely through various networks of unions such as the Central Labor Union, the United German Trades and the United Hebrew Trades and publications such as the **The Leader**, the **Volkzeitung** and **Arbeiter Zeitung**, workers could mount increasing pressure on employers

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who refused to accede to their demands. Firms producing goods sold within well-defined working class communities were most susceptible to boycotts.(5) Cigarmakers, printers and bakers found that boycotts served as an effective tactic. The Cigar Makers International Union, in particular, regarded the support it received from other New York and Brooklyn unions and workers in both cities as a turning point in its union label campaign.

As important as mutual support was to the effectiveness of labor activity and to the promotion of an identity with a larger labor movement, unions often failed to honor the ethic of mutuality. Internecine conflict and inter-union rivalry intermittently threatened to erode the bonds of fraternity and cooperation that the CLU and other federated labor bodies sought to nurture. Socialists and anarchists fought each other and vied for control of the garment workers' unions against nonradical leaders. This conflict intensified in 1893-1894, when the United Garment Workers and United Hebrew Trades refused to respect each other's constituent unions, and became most vociferous in 1896 with the formation of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, which the UHT joined.

Similar conflict surfaced among union cigarmakers. From 1882 to 1886, the socialist-led Progressive Cigarmakers clashed with the CMIU. In early 1886, the former raised the ire of the latter when it joined with the Knights of Labor to sign exclusive union shop agreements with members of the Cigar Manufacturers' Association. However, later that year, when the Knights of Labor attempted to swallow the Progressives, the two former antagonists merged forces.

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The printers' call for the confederation of existing unions in their industry fell victim to rivalries among typographers, stereotypers and pressmen. These rivalries were expressed in the refusal to honor strike calls and the signing of closed shop agreements at the expense of other unions. In the 1890's the amalgamation of unions in the printing trades made impressive strides, as unitary unions representing each respective craft were formed, and in turn the Allied Printing Trades' Council was created.

In the building trades, too, inter-union conflict erupted. Here rival national camps in the labor movement, the AFL and the Knights of Labor, propelled the disputes. For example, the Housesmiths' Union, affiliated with the Knights of Labor, and the Architectural Iron Workers, an AFL affiliate, competed for members and exclusive agreements with subcontractors. Through most of the 1890's, the Progressive Painters and the Paper Hangers' Union vigorously fought the efforts of the AFL chartered Brotherhood of Painters to build a base in New York and Brooklyn. The two Knights' affiliates launched strikes demanding that employers dismiss members of the Brotherhood. This split in the painters' ranks was not bridged until the mid-1900's, well after the Knights had declined both locally and nationally.

Jurisdictional disputes and rivalries between organizations notwithstanding, workers in established unions and those attempting to launch them showed a growing recognition of the benefits of inter-union cooperation and a clearer sense of shared purpose embodied in the labor movement. These tendencies reflected the unions' efforts to adjust to, if not overcome, specific structural features of their respective

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industries and the influence of the multivalent experience of New York's and Brooklyn's immigrant based working class.

In the building trades, unions authorized walking delegates to call strikes if employers violated union standards, and established the Board of Walking Delegates to coordinate strikes and boycotts. These measures facilitated swift and timely action, which was especially urgent since most building tradesmen worked at a site for only a brief time and new subcontractors not party to agreements with unions easily entered the industry.

Typographers, as well organized as they were within the newspaper sector, needed to strengthen their base in the book and job branch of the industry. In addition, typographers and other printing tradesmen were confronted by a more unified group of employers with the formation of the New York Typothetae and the American Newspaper Publishers' Association after 1886. Therefore, the New York Typographical Union began in 1887 to stress upgrading the conditions of employment of members in book and job shops, and in 1897 closely cooperated with the ITU to introduce a nine hour day in the New York metropolitan area and other eastern districts where the national union had jurisdiction. The establishment of the Allied Printing Trades' Council in this respect was significant because it enabled member unions to push a union label more effectively and support each other's strikes.

The Cigar Makers International Union stressed cooperation among constituent locals which aimed to promote more organizational stability. Locals were expected to honor the cards of travelling members, adopt comparable rates for dues and initiation fees and respect each other's rules. While these guidelines were constitutionally mandated by the

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CMIU's by-laws, other practices were the result of the initiative of locals. In 1890 New York locals formed a Joint Strike Committee, which was instrumental in organizing a series of coordinated walkouts against the larger manufacturers. In addition, union cigarmakers customarily refused to pack cigars if union cigarpackers (typically members of a different local) were on the premises.

In the garment trades, much of the ebb and flow of labor activity reflected the alternating tides of the industry. The demand for labor and availability of work reached their zenith in summer and fall, and fell precipitously in the winter. As a result, garment workers sought to improve their conditions of employment during the busy season. Ad hoc unions sprung up virtually every year to press employers for concessions. When the contractors, faced with the prospect of losing their orders, yielded to the strikers' demands, a strike contagion often ensued, enveloping entire branches of the clothing industry. However, with the predictable return of the slack season, contractors reneged on their agreements and reintroduced old piece rates or increased work loads. The appearance of new contractors and the frequent movement of older ones compounded the problem of defending whatever gains were secured through strikes. In addition, high turnover rates in the labor force complicated the efforts of organizers to build more durable unions. In effect, a vicious cycle set in. Because unions were unable to enforce trade agreements over wages and hours, they lost the loyalty of many of their members, who in turn awaited the return of the next busy season to regain lost ground.

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As the constraints of seasonal unionism became more apparent, union organizers developed alternative approaches. One approach, adopted most prominently in the coatmaking trade by the United Garment Workers, was to stress building a base among the more skilled workers, namely cutters and operators. Another, practiced by the Brotherhood of Tailors, affiliated with the UGW, and the Brotherhood of Cloakmakers after the bitterly contested strikes of 1894 and 1895, involved attempts to introduce mediation and arbitration procedures to resolve disputes and to institute strict constitutional guidelines discouraging "spontaneous" and unauthorized strikes.(6) A third strategy suggested that the larger manufacturers be the main targets of labor activity, on the premise that they employed a significant proportion of the industry's workers, could afford to meet the unions' pay demands and could pressure contractors to honor union standards. Despite different emphases, these approaches shared a common belief that successful union building depended on a sensitivity to the dynamics of the industry and an appreciation of the strengths and shortcomings of the workers themselves.

In the late Gilded Age, New York's and Brooklyn's workers were predominantly immigrants and their native-born offspring. First and second generation Irish, German and British filled the ranks of the building trades. Most printers were of Irish, British and German descent. Cigarmakers were typically German or Bohemian immigrants, about a third of them women. The overwhelming majority of garment workers were from Eastern and Southern Europe: Russian and Polish Jews, and to a lesser degree, Italians. In most of the garment trades, with the

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exception of men's clothing, women constituted the majority of the labor force.

The ethnic composition of these four groups influenced important aspects of their labor activity. Irish immigrant building tradesmen contributed to the development of sympathy strikes as a tactic in industrial disputes.(7) Sympathy strikes were labor boycotts which represented the workers' disapproval of the behavior of employers or other workers. For Irish workers, the boycott tactic embodied a cultural significance, borne in the experience of the Eire countryside where peasants refused to work for, or associate with, those who violated community standards — rent-gouging landlords and other collaborators with British rule. In the case of sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts that swept the docks in the early 1880's and the building trades in the 1890's, first and second generation Irish workers among others articulated a similar sensitivity. The standards at stake now were labor's and not the impoverished tenant's — but they were no less worthy of defense. (8)

A comparable sensitivity to traditional values was expressed by Jewish immigrant workers. For many refugees from the antisemitic environment of Tsarist Russia, labor activity meant more than a struggle for survival or assertion of one's rights. Efforts to form unions were deemed examples of moral courage and ethical responsibility. Strikes were held to be blows against injustice. Religious and non-religious labor activists evoked traditional biblical images of heroism and sacrifice, and aroused the hopes of personal deliverance and collective redemption.(9) Abraham Cahan in the **Arbeiter Zeitung** and organizers from the United Hebrew Trades called on sweatshop and factory hands to

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fulfill their destiny as a people. They raised the example of the ancient Hebrews' exodus to the promised land to rekindle a missionary zeal for the elimination of "wage slavery" and "capitalist exploitation". The young women and men who rose from the ranks of cloakmakers, coatmakers, pantsmakers and shirtmakers to lead the countless strikes that erupted annually in the garment trades spoke in a similar tone even if they did not share the same political vision. They also stressed a moral imperative to act and an indignation at mistreatment. Not suprisingly, then, union meetings teemed with emotion -- heated debates, fiery speeches and outbursts of collective anguish -- and the streets in the vicinity of struck factories and shops became scenes of verbal and physical confrontation.

What Joseph Schlossberg, one of the early leaders of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union called, "the broad and enobling social spirit of trade unionism" (10) inspired German immigrant workers, too. Cigarmakers, furniture makers, bakers and brewery workers constituted the base for the United German Trades, a coalition of unions that promoted mutual support and independent political action. Members of constituent unions represented the core of the Progressive Labor Party in 1887 and the Socialist Labor Party in the late 1880's and in the following decade.

Common to these German-based and socialist-inspired groups was an emphasis on the virtues and necessity of labor solidarity, the urgency of political agitation and the long-term benefits of autodidactic education.(11) Within the socialist milieu, trade unionism was one source of the collective consciousness that empowered workers. Participation in unions imparted the self-discipline and fraternity

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necessary for effective labor activity. Support for socialist candidates provided trade unionists with an opportunity to unite with workers from other occupations and different communities. Attendance at forums, lectures and classes that featured the study of political economy, natural science and literature contributed to the mental development of workers whose everyday experience in the factory or shop often was filled with drudgery and boredom. Marching to the rhythm of the Marseillaise and listening to the rhetorical tributes to the dignity of labor on May Day helped to instill an esprit de corps so critical for the growth of a workers' movement.

Nevertheless, in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn this conception of trade unionism was not unique to German workers or the socialist movement. Indeed, among the labor organizations formed by workers and their intellectual allies cross-fertilization was evident. The United German Trades provided the organizers of the United Hebrew Trades with the structural guidelines for the creation of a coordinating body of labor unions. Moreover, the former set an example of mobilizing support for strikes and boycotts, which the latter emulated in its efforts to tap the Jewish immigrant community for material and moral assistance to strikers. Both the United German Trades and the United Hebrew Trades received programmatic inspiration from the Central Labor Union, which in the 1880's was responsible for setting labor's political agenda. Among the common objectives of the three groups were the repeal of conspiracy laws that penalized workers for launching boycotts, the abolition of the sweatshop system and tenement house production, the enactment of factory legislation and the enforcement of eight hour laws on public works' projects. (12)

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The existence of a multiethnic working class contained implications for the meaning of wage labor for members of different ethnic groups, their inclination to identify with other workers from dissimilar backgrounds and the opportunity to explore common interests. The arrival of the "new" immigrants tended to accelerate the growth of job hierarchies where differential levels of skill became associated with particular ethnic groups. In the garment trades, this assumed the shape of clear demarcations between German and Irish cutters, and Austrian, Hungarian and German tailors, on the one hand, and Russian Jewish operators, basters and finishers, on the other hand. This suggests that perhaps it can not be assumed or postulated that a shared experience characterized work in a trade. However, one must resist the easy conclusion, which has been advanced by historians until recently, that the inherent chracteristics of the immigrants in the late Gilded Age and the Progressive Era hindered the formation of strong unions and the growth of a labor movement with deeper roots into the American working class. Some immigrants did organize unions, and when they did not, structural factors are a more persuasive explanation than the features of the immigration process or the immigrant groups.

Although many of late Gilded Age New York's and Brooklyn's newer immigrants did not join unions, some did. Eastern and Central European Jewish immigrants who became the core of the work force in the men's and women's clothing industries joined unions in the hope of gaining a more adequate compensation for their labor. Goaded by economic insecurity and inspired by the religious and secular evocations of mission and hope, garment workers mobilized for strikes that linked the

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workplace and community. Perhaps, during this period, only the Slavic immigrant workers in Pennsylvania's anthracite coal mines showed a comparable willingness and ability to marshall the resources of the workplace and community in their attempts to improve their conditions ofemployment, and they, too, frequently were considered to be unlikely recruits for unions or, worse yet, potential strikebreakers by native-born and more established immigrant workers. (13)

The recognition of the pivotal role of immigrants in the labor movement of New York and Brooklyn should not overlook other countervailing tendencies. For all their militancy, Jewish immigrant garment workers failed to build durable unions in the late Gilded Age. However, the primary sources of their difficulties laid with the structure of the industry itself rather than the lack of the prerequisite attitudes, values or consciousness. Maintaining an allegiance to unions was also made difficult by the inability of unions to defend workers from the seasonal tides of unemployment and reductions in piece rates endemic to the garment trades.

Moreover, low union density was not peculiar to garment workers; in most trades, even printing, plumbing and bricklaying, where immigrant workers in general represented a relatively lower percentage of the labor force and "new" immigrants in particular were barely present, the majority of workers were not union members. Other factors, including structural features of an industry, the social relations of production and the distribution of power between employers and workers, proved to be more influential than the specific composition of the labor force.

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Finally, it can be argued that the barriers to viable labor activity associated with the immigrant experience were essentially time-bound. For example, Eastern European Jews and Italians who emigrated to the United States during the late Gilded Age faced a similar adjustment process that their German and Irish counterparts did earlier in the century. Adaptation to the imperatives of industrial labor and urban life required a period of settling in when newcomers learned different modes of thinking and behavior, including the **modus operandi** of trade unionism and electoral politics.(14) For many Jewish and Italian immigrants this meant learning what it meant to be workers, since the former included those without any documented occupation, and landless peasants filled the ranks of the former, as well as developing a cohesive group identity. In short, the **landslayt** and the **paesani** experienced the twin challenges of integrating themselves into a multiethnic working class while building communities that would ease their transition into a strange, new society.

This study has shown that the dynamics of class formation, ethnicity and labor activity are complex, embodying contradictory tendencies and suggesting no clear, unilinear trajectory. This observation in part reflects a conscientious if not always consistent attempt to understand the working class experience and trade union development in late Gilded Age America within the strict historical framework of that period. In this way, it was hoped that the pitfall of retroactively reading a logic, an underlying theme and unmistakeable flow into earlier events could be avoided.

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Conventional views of the labor movement in the last two decades of the nineteenth century regarding the forms of industrial conflict, the orientation of trade unionism and the scope of political activity too often have been derived from later developments. For example, the AFL's uncompromising hostility to socialism and social reform, the narrowness and conservatism of craft unions and American labor's acquiesence to a minor role in a pluralist society — which to historians, labor economists, sociologists and political scientists have represented the earmarks of American exceptionalism and the symptoms of institutional maturity — have been considered to be perpetual features of the labor movement or at the very least to have had their roots in the nineteenth century.

Students of American labor too often have painted with a broad brush. Robert Hoxie, writing at the height of the AFL's battle with the insurgent syndicalistic Industrial Workers of the World, argued that craft unions were the natural byproducts of capitalism and the perfect breeding grounds of business unionism.(15) Selig Perlman, taking a long view of trade union development in a period of precipitous decline, suggested that the chronic insecurity induced by the business cycle created a "job consciousness" among workers and that therefore class consciousness with all its political implications was the construct of intellectual outsiders.(16) Gerald Rosenblum, in an attempt to explain why no viable labor party emerged in the United States and why business unionism flowered instead, stressed the impact of immigration, which "muted or damped down labor force mobilization ... and reduced, in the Marxist sense, the full formation of a working class."(17) In a similar vein, Gwendolyn Mink maintained that unions constituted "a movement of

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workers but not a class" which represented distinct interests in response to the groundswell of social and economic change that the new immigration epitomized. (18)

Yet whatever insights these arguments might possess, they miss the richness of the workers' experience and labor activity, and fall short of understanding the context in which events unfolded and workers tried to chart a course for their unions in the late Gilded Age. Participants in the labor movement exhibited, at different times and in different situations, both an inclusionist and exclusionist orientation. When employers, backed by the state apparatus, threatened the legitimacy of trade union activity and the existence of trade unions themselves, all workers regardless of occupation, skill, ethnicity and gender were summoned to take their places in the movement. To be sure, calls for working class unity and labor solidarity were expressed in a polyglot language drawing on marxist, populist and republican principles and images. In the main, even in their most adverserial expressions, they affirmed the rights of citizenship which were duly claimed by the native-born, Americans in the making and productive members of society.(19)

Exclusionist attitudes and behavior also were evident in the movement. Despite the fact that trade union leaders upheld the virtues of mutuality and viewed themselves as spokespersons for the unorganized as well as the organized worker, individual unions deemphasized organizing the less skilled, regarded women workers with ambivalence, and remained suspicious of certain groups of immigrant workers. Despite its open door policy towards women, the Cigar Makers International Union hesitated to organize bunchmakers and fillers (a significant proportion of them women) since these new job classifications were seen

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as a threat to the integrity of the cigarmaking craft. Despite their steadfast participation in the Triple Alliance strike in 1890, the Cloakmakers and Operators' Union and the Cloak Manufacturers' Association expressly excluded women from the terms of the agreement ending the dispute.

Notwithstanding their commitment to a series of labor reform measures that aimed to raise the standards of employment and remove the fetters on trade union activity, unions persued sectoral concerns as vigorously, and at times acted upon more narrowly conceived organizational interests. Building trades unions which valued the mutual support expressed in sympathy strikes also became embroiled in conflicts that threatened the interunion bonds responsible for the effectiveness of militant labor activity. Printers, who so ardently embraced the cause of labor reform in the Henry George campaign in 1886, subsequently took pride in their sober political realism: they granted their support to Republican and Tammany Hall candidates who agreed to vote for legislation that protected the printers' specific economic interests.

The coexistence of inclusionist and exclusionist practices, of mutuality and insularity, and of a shared set of goals and disparate, sectoral behavior suggests that few if any unqualified, normative conclusions can be drawn from the labor activity of New York's and Brooklyn's workers. The labor movement, as has been demonstrated, was Janus-faced, reflecting competing political currents, different organizational strategies and multiple ad hoc responses to the challenges of social and economic transformation. As such the movement made its way in a period of flux when larger and more powerful forms

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of business organization emerged, new production methods and technological innovation signalled a growing emphasis on productivity, and the state showed a greater willingness to protect the property rights of employers than to recognize workers' right of association.

Consequently, to attribute features, which appeared or became sharper at a later period, to the labor activity of late Gilded Age workers is to mischaracterize the movement. In their show of mutual support, their willingness and ability to cooperate politically, and their contribution to the ethos of an inclusive labor movement, building tradesmen and printers belied their purportedly ascribed role as insular, defensive-minded business unionists. If building tradesmen's and printers' conditions of employment were more favorable than most industrial workers, their higher earnings and shorter workdays did not earn them the designation "labor aristocrats", whose behavior could be predicted simply as an outgrowth of their material position. (20)

Joined by the cigarmakers whose leaders stressed the importance of adopting financial measures and codes of conduct that promoted stability and internal cohesion, this labor elite in the working class sought to show by example how the unorganized could organize themselves. Convinced that trade unions made it possible to enjoy the conditions of employment commensurate with their role as productive workers, or otherwise protected the privileges attendant to their status as skilled practitioners of a craft, their most articulate leaders emphasized the promise of trade unionism to the less skilled machine operatives, sweatshop hands and casual laborers.

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Nevertheless, it would be misleading to suggest that New York's and Brooklyn's workers had built unions that assumed the commanding heights of their industries. Trade union membership remained the status of a minority of workers, and trade union strength developed unevenly. Printers gained an extensive foothold in the newspaper branch but were less successful in the book and job trade. Cigarmakers maintained a beach-head in the small speciality shops but remained marginal in the larger factories which were becoming ascendant in the industry. Garment workers, despite the tireless efforts of socialists and others who sought to adopt sound organizational practices, found union building problematic, and the establishment of a framework for collective bargaining even more difficult. During the ups and downs of garment worker unionism only the cutters' labor organizations demonstrated durability.

If the organized workers of late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn left a legacy to future generations, it can be perceived in the types of unions they developed, the tactical lessons drawn from their industrial conflicts and the underlying significance of union membership in an industrial capitalist society. Printers, building tradesmen, cigarmakers and garment workers demonstrated that craft unions were viable even amidst mechanization, more sophisticated production methods and a more detailed division of labor. However, craft unionism did not entail a separatist labor movement; networks of unions within a trade and across industries provided support for strikes, boycotts and union label campaigns, and advanced a common legislative agenda.

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With experience as their guide, trade unionists recognized the need to build bridges to other groups in society which simultaneously feared labor-capital strife but which sympathized with labor's aims. Therefore, many sought to deemphasize the strike weapon, and deploy it with more discipline and sensitivity to its impact on public opinion.

Craft workers in some trades learned the importance of bridge building with operatives and other less skilled cohorts as well. This trend assumed greater prominence in the second decade of the twentieth century, with the emergence of a "new" unionism in the garment trades, machine-tools trade, steel manufacturing and the shipbuilding industry, and in the 1930's when organizations of craft workers became the original sources of strength in the creation of industrial unions by automobile, electrical goods and meatpacking workers.(21)

Above all, trade union membership in an age predating the advent of a welfare state served as comfort for workers encountering the uncertainties of life and offered some protection against the vagaries of a market economy. Workers turned to unions as well as mutual aid and benefit societies to cope with illness, injury, old age and unemployment. Even with the social welfare reforms of the last fifty years, workers expect their unions to take care of their own, and it is still upon this role that much of their loyalty to trade unionism rests.

In sum, workers in late Gilded Age New York and Brooklyn, through unions and other labor organizations, sought to ride the waves of industrialization without being drowned by its unpredictable and treacherous undertows. In the process they drew on traditions of protest whose sources included the original homelands of the nation's immigrants

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as well as the labor reform and socialist movements that emerged after the Civil War. Yet with an eye more on current circumstances and imminent possibilities, these union builders and mercurial movement participants alike addressed concerns in a manner that proved instructive to workers in subsequent decades. In their own unchartered but hardly haphazard way, they attempted to solve the conundrum facing organized workers before and since the 1890's: what needs to be done to overcome American labor's chronic minority position, and with it the lack of power that it entails and the insecurity it perpetuates?

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FOOTNOTES

1. Similar features characterized the industrial development of Detroit and San Francisco, according to Richard Oestreicher, **Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1877–1895** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986) and Jules Tygiel, Workingmen in San Francisco, 1880–1900 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, U.C.L.A., 1977). In contrast, Chicago's economic expansion featured the rise of larger units of production and more capital-intensive industries. See Hartmut Keil and John Jentz, **German Workers in Industrial Chicago, 1850–1910: A Comparative Perspective** (De Kalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1983).

2. For an analysis of the factors influencing technological development as well as its impact on workers, see Irwin Yellowitz, **Industrialization and the American Labor Movement 1850–1900** (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat, 1977) and Royden Harrison and Jonathan Zeitlin, eds., **Divisions of Labour: Skilled Workers and Technological Change in Nineteenth Century England** (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1985).

3. On the significance of mutual aid as a principle of trade unionism, see Mark Erlich, Peter J. McGuire's Trade Unionism: Socialism of a Trades Union Kind?," **Labor History**, 24 (Spring 1983), 165–197; Jules Tygiel, "Tramping Artisans: The Case of the Carpenters in Industrial America," **Labor History**, 22 (Summer 1981), 348–376; and Bruce Stuart Kaufman, **Samuel Gompers and the Origins of the A.F.L.** (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973).

4. According to David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century," **Labor History**, 17, (Fall 1976), 485–509; "Strikes in 19th Century America," **Social Science History**, 4 (Winter 1980), 81–104; and **The Fall of the House of Labor** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) mutual support represented a dominant characteristic of labor activity in the 1880's and 1890's. This was most evident in the strikes of machinists, railway workers, streetcar employees and longshoremen.

5. For useful data and instructive observations concerning labor boycotts, see Harry W. Laidler, **Boycotts and the American Labor Struggle: Economic and Legal Aspects** (New York: Russell and Russell, 1913); and Leo Wolman, **The Boycott in American Trade Unions** (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1916).

6. Proponents of mediation and arbitration, such as Meyer Schonfeld from the Brotherhood of Tailors, enunciated some of the basic concepts of the Protocol of Peace that the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union negotiated with the Protective Association, an industry-wide employers' group in 1910. See Hyman Berman, "Era of the Protocol: A Chapter in the History of the ILGWU, 1910–1916" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1955)

7. The influence of first and second-generation Irish on the labor movement was neither limited to the building trades or New York and

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Brooklyn. See Michael Gordon, "The Labor Boycott in New York City, 1880–1886," **Labor History**, 16 (Spring 1975), 184–229; David Brundage, "The Making of Working-Class Radicalism in the Mountain West: Denver, Colorodo, 1886–1903 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, U.C.L.A., 1982); Thomas Suhrbur, "Ethnicity in the Formation of the Chicago Carpenters Union, 1855–1890," Keil and Jentz, eds., **German Workers in Industrial Chicago**; and David Montgomery, "The Irish and the American Labor Movement," David N. Doyle and Owen Dudley Edwards, eds, **America and Ireland, 1776–1976** (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980).

8. On the cultural significance of the boycott tactic, see Gordon, "The Labor Boycott in New York City, 1880–1886".

9. Gerald Sorin, **The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals, 1890–1929** (Indiana University Press, 1985) provides an insightful examination of the sense of mission engendered by traditional Judaism which secular-minded Jewish immigrant socialists and anarchists exhibited.

10. Joseph Schlossberg, **Documentary History of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union (1914–1916)**, pp. ix and x.

11. By the 1880's, the Socialist movement in the United States had developed a richly textured cultural mileu. In large measure, this was the result of the efforts of German immigrants, many of whom were veterans of the 1848 Revolution and participants in the rapidly growing social-democratic movement in the 1870's. For studies that trace the influence of German-Americans on socialist politics and culture, see Paul Buhle, "German Socialists and the Roots of American Working Class Radicalism," Keil and Jentz, eds., **German Workers in Industrial Chicago** and **Marxism in the USA From 1870 to the Present Day** (London: Verso, 1987), chapter 1; and Carole Poore, "German-American Socialist Workers' Theatre, 1877-1910," Bruce McConachie and Daniel Friedman, eds., **Theatre for Working Class Audiences** (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985).

Although not primarily concerned with the role of German-Americans, Hubert Perrier, "The Socialists and the Working Class in New York, 1890–1896," Dirk Hoerder, ed., **American Labor and Immigration History, 1877–1920** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), documents the relationship between the Socialist Labor Party and some of the city's major immigrant groups. John Laslett's study of the socialist and radical presence in the labor movement, **Labor and the Left** (New York: Basic Books, 1970) attempts to place the role of ethnicity in perspective. While appreciative of the immigrant experience, including the traditions and values nurtured by specific ethnic groups, Laslett argues that immediate economic conditions represented the most significant factor in the emergence of a socialist base of support in the Brewery Workers' Union, the Boot and Shoe Makers' Union and the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union.

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The ethos of New York's and Brooklyn's socialist movement is conveyed in the first-person accounts of Morris Hillquit, **Loose Leaves from a Busy Life** (New York: MacMillan, 1934) and Abraham Cahan, **The Education of Abraham Cahan**, Volume I (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969).

12. For an understanding of the programmatic and organizational influences on the formation of the United Hebrew Trades, see Morris Schappes, "The Political Origins of the United Hebrew Trades, 1888," **Journal of Ethnic Studies**, 5 (1977), 13-44; and William Leiserson, "The History of the Jewish Labor Movement in New York City" (unpublished B.A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1906), pp. 32-38.

13. Victor Greene, **The Slavic Community On Strike: Immigrant Labor in Pennsylvania Anthracite** (South Bend, Indiana: Norte Dame University, 1961).

14. For a discussion of the settling in process among Irish immigrant workers with implications for other ethnic groups, see Daniel Walkowitz, **Worker City, Company Town: Iron and Cotton Worker Protest in Troy and Cohoes, 1855-1884** (Urbana: University Of Illinois Press, 1978), especially pages 101-142.

15. Robert F. Hoxie, **Trade Unionism in the United States** (New York: Appleton and Century Crofts, 1917).

16. Selig Perlman, **Theory of the Labor Movement** (New York: MacMillan, 1928).

17. Gerald Rosenblum, **Immigrant Workers: Their Impact on American Labor Radicalism** (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 29.

18. Gwendolyn Mink, **Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Poltical Development: Union, Party and State, 1875-1920** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

19. In the 1880's a consensus was emerging between socialists and non-socialists in the labor movement concerning the primacy of trade unions in the advancement of workers' interests. Although differences remained between these political tendencies, both believed that unions were institutions of, by and for workers exclusively. Moreover, the emphasis on organizing around "bread and butter" issues, and the need to develop financial resources in order to provide benefits and promote stability transcended political/ideological boundaries. See Hartmut Keil, "The German Immigrant Working Class of Chicago, 1875-1910," Dirk Hoerder, ed., **American Labor and Immigration History** and "German Radicalism, 1870's to World War I," Dirk Hoerder, ed., **Struggle a Hard Battle** (De Kalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1986); and Bruce Stuart Kaufman, **Samuel Gompers and the Origins of the AFL**, especially chapters 5 and 6.

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Moreover, the labor movement's language of protest expressed an overriding concern for the rights of "producer classes" and worker-citizens, which, in the eyes of many, the concentration of wealth and power threatened. For some historians, the labor movement in Gilded Age America retained an allegience to a republican ideology, whose origins predated industrialization. See, for example, Paul Buhle, "The Knights of Labor in Rhode Island," **Radical History Review** (Spring 1978), 39-73; Leon Fink, **Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982) and "Labor, Liberty and the Law: Trade Unionism and the Problem of the American Constitutional Order," **Journal of American History**, 74 (December 1987), 904-925; Barry Goldberg, "Beyond Free Labor: Labor, Socialism and the Idea of Wage Slavery" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1979); and Herbert Gutman, **Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America** (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), chapter 1. Building on this theme, David Montgomery, "Labor and the Republic in Industrial America: 1860-1920," **Le Mouvement Sociale**, 3 (April-June 1980) argues that a "moral universality" existed in the various organizational manifestations of labor protest in the late nineteenth century.

20. The concept of labor aristocracy has generated a great deal of debate in Great Britain, where its usage has gained currency among historians and sociologists. Its most noted proponent has been Eric Hobsbawm, **Labouring Men** (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), who delineated six criteria for determining if a group of workers earned the appellation. These included a "high level and regularity" of income, the prospects of social security, favorable working conditions, relatively comfortable living conditions, their relationships with other classes and strata within the working class and the opportunities of social mobility for their children. Henry Pelling, "The Concept of the Labour Aristocracy, **Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain** (New York: MacMillan, 1968) used similar criteria, and concluded that skilled workers, such as engineers (machinists), boilermakers, printers and building tradesmen, contrary to Hobsbawm's analysis, did not constitute a labor aristocracy whose material position "distinctly separated them from the lower strata" in the working class.

Other historians have criticized the use of the concept to explain the ascendant "reformist" tendencies in the British labor movement in late Victorian Britain and the working class' accommodation to capitalist society. See for example, Gregor McLennon, "The 'Labour Aristocracy' and 'Incorporation': Notes on Some Terms in the Social History of the Working Class," **Social History**, 6 (January 1981), 71-81; and H.F. Moorhouse, "The Marxist Theory of the Labour Aristocracy," **Social History**, 3 (January 1978), 61-84; and John Field, "British Historians and the Concept of the Labor Aristocracy," **Radical History Review**, 19 (June 1979), 61-85.

In the study of the American working class, the concept of labor aristocracy has not won wide scholarly acceptance. Recently, however, Andrew Dawson, "The Paradox of Dynamic Technological Change", **Labor**

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History, 20, (Summer 1979), 325-351, has forcefully argued that craft workers in construction, railway transport, boot and shoe making, textiles, mining and printing constituted a labor aristocracy. Based on their earnings, regularity of employment and general conditions of employment, Dawson estimates that about 12 to 14 percent of the working class in the United States between 1890 and 1914 belonged to a labor aristocracy.

Although I find his use of the term labor aristocracy to describe those skilled workers who enjoyed the most favorable conditions of employment wanting, Dawson's discussion of the skilled workers' two-sided craft consciousness is highly suggestive. For Dawson, those workers who represented the constituency of the AFL expressed a "laborist" consciousness that aimed to restrict management's power to control the workplace, while they simultaneously manifested an "exclusionist" consciousness that sought to distance themselves from unskilled laborers and semiskilled factory workers.

I have employed the term "labor elite" because unlike labor aristocracy, it does not imply the existence of an unbridgable social distance between different groups of workers and conflicting economic interests and political dispositions based primarily on workers' material conditions. In their ability to organize unions and mobilize support for strikes and boycotts, building tradesmen, printers, handicraft cigarmakers and clothing cutters demonstrated a doubled-edged thrust to their labor activity. On the one hand, these craftsmen who made up the bulk of New York's and Brooklyn's labor movement perceived that developments in their respective industries threatened their occupational status, or, in the words of the time, "degraded" labor socially and morally as well as economically. Therefore, most unions representing skilled workers sought to introduce and defend standards that aimed to control entry into an occupation, define work practices and uphold a craft solidarity.

At first glance, this feature of labor activity suggests an exclusionist orientation vis-a-vis the less skilled and unorganized. However, in fact, the maintenance of union standards showed a sensitivity to the encroachments by employers on the autonomy of craft workers and a defense against the competitive and acquisitive ethos represented by efforts to raise productivity and reduce costs at labor's expense.

21. For examples of alliances forged among workers across skill levels during the Progressive Era, see David Montgomery, "The 'New Unionism' and the Transformation of Workers' Consciousness in America, 1909-1922," **Workers' Control in America** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 91-112; David Brody, **Labor in Crisis: The Steel Strike of 1919** (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1965); Robert L. Friedheim, **The Seattle General Strike** (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1964); and Harvey O'Connor, **Revolution in Seattle** (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964). For the role of craft workers in organizing industrial unions in

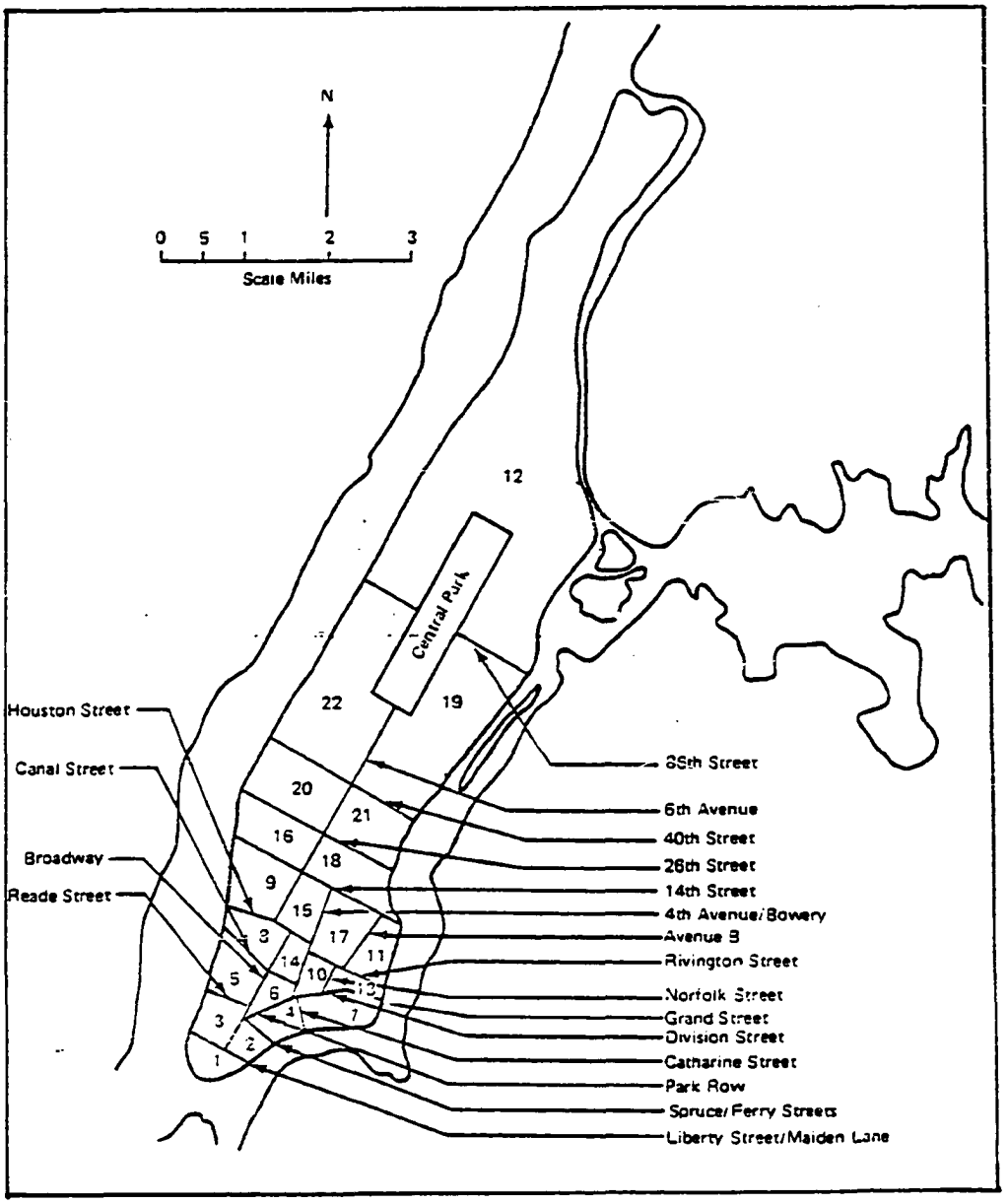
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the 1930's, see Sidney Fine, **Sit-down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937** (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969); Roger Keeran, **The Communist Party and the Auto Workers' Unions** (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1980); Ronald Schatz, **The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse, 1923-1960** (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1983); and Walter Galenson, **The CIO Challenge to the AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935-1941** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960).

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APPENDIX

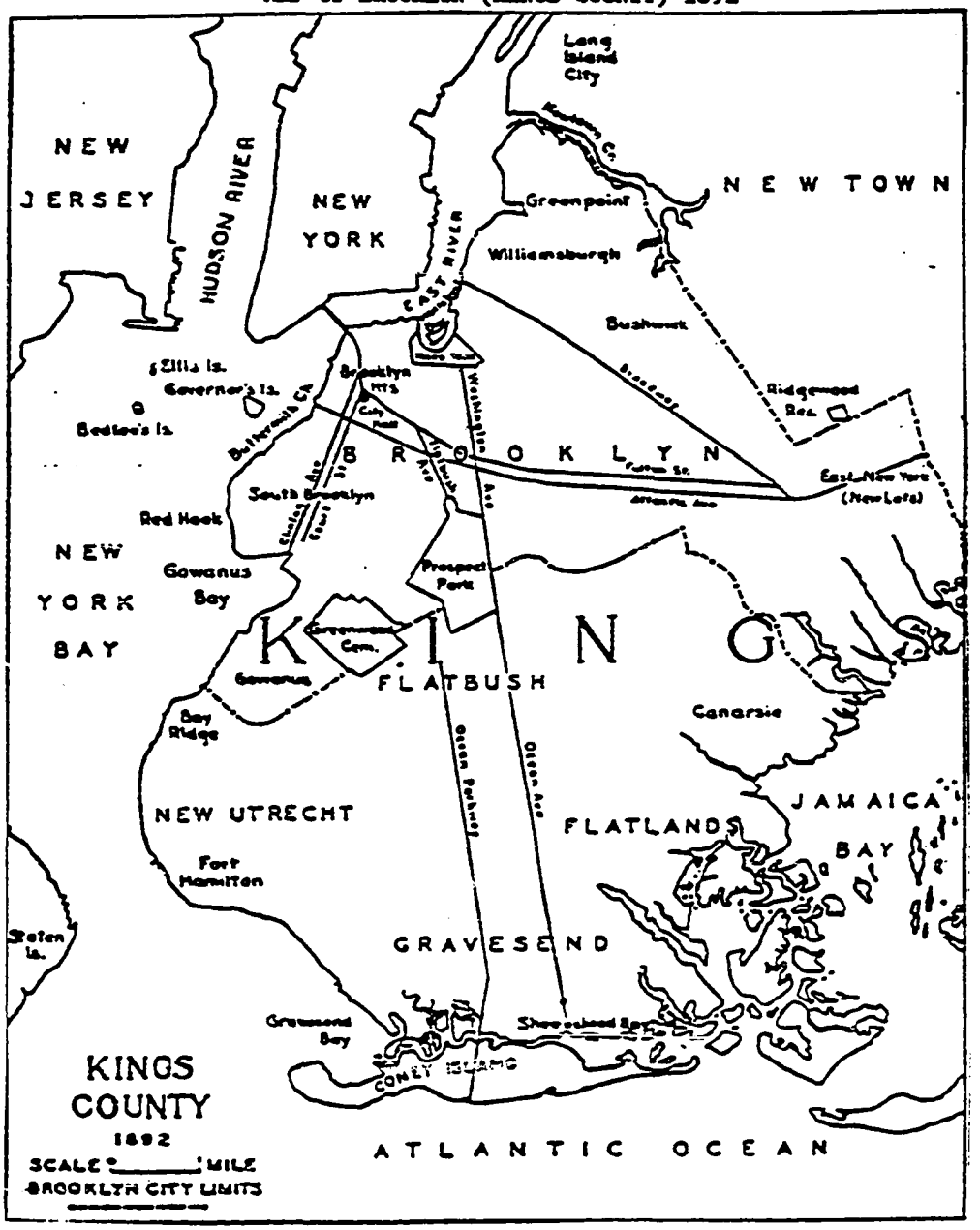
MAP OF MANHATTAN SHOWING ELECTION WARDS 1886



Source: Edward Berman and Thomas Pohl, **A Geography of the New York Metropolitan Region** (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company 1974)

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MAP OF BROOKLYN (KINGS COUNTY) 1892



Source: Harold Coffin Syrett, The City of Brooklyn, 1865-1898: A Political History (New York:Columbia University Press, 1944)

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