THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR IN MICHIGAN: SOURCES OF GROWTH AND DECLINE

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ABSTRACT

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by

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The investigation of the Knights of Labor in Michigan raises doubts about existing interpretations of American industrial development which rely on the assumption of limited working class militance confined within a narrow consensual framework. Michigan workers engaged in a variety of economic and political struggles in the 1880's. These experiences were a primary source of the rapid growth of the Knights of Labor. The rank and file of the Knights approached a statistical cross section of the state's working class population. However, the leadership did not. Moreover, this leadership was hostile to the implications of a militant mass organization. A factional struggle between this conservative leadership and spokesmen for a more militant mass-oriented policy destroyed the organization. The decline of the Knights of Labor in Michigan was, thus, not the result of conflict with trade unionism, conflict with the American Federation of Labor, or negative public reaction to the Haymarket bombing, theories most frequently advanced to explain it. Rather, the organization's decline resulted from the failure of its leadership to respond to the needs and desires of its rank and file.

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INTRODUCTION

I began this study out of a desire to go beyond the terms of the usual conflict-consensus debate on the character of American social development. As a beginning graduate student, I was attracted on the basis of political predisposition to the conflict side of the debate, but I gradually became convinced of the weakness of critical forces and movements in American history. I concluded that this weakness was closely tied with the inability of radical movements to develop a substantial and stable mass base. In other industrial societies this base is found in the labor movement and in working class political development in general. The question to me, then, was why, despite a long history of often violent activity, the American labor movement has failed to develop as an independent political force.

I was initially drawn to the 1930's as a period in which such working class political development was discussed as a real possibility, but I quickly became convinced that the failures of the 1930's had their roots in a much earlier stage of American development. The terms of the debate within the labor movement in the 1930's were already fixed. They can be traced back to at least the 1880's, when, perhaps for the last time, the basic directions of the entire labor movement were still an open question. Beginning in the late 1870's, there was a marked increase in strikes,

boycotts, independent electoral campaigns, cooperative ventures, organization, and an uninhibited discussion of the nature of industrial development and of the desirability of various forms of organization.

The rapid growth of the Knights of Labor in the 1880's was a reflection of this spontaneous activity and a source of further development and experimentation. The Knights of Labor provides an excellent opportunity to study the sources of later debates in the labor movement over both ideology and method of organization. Moreover, the failure of the Knights was a crucial event in the rise to dominance of a conservative working class political outlook.

Previous studies of labor organization in the late nineteenth century have been based almost exclusively on the writings and speeches of national leaders. This dependence on national leadership sources inevitably has lead to an elitist perspective which fails to understand the spontaneous rank and file origins of working class activity. In an attempt to reach the level of the rank and file, to the active but often inarticulate worker, I have confined myself to a study of the Knights of Labor in a single state, Michigan. The elusive common man may still have evaded me; the letters of a Muskegon lumber mill worker or a St. Clair baker may be those of local militants, not typical workers. Nevertheless, at the local level we can see the internal dynamics of organization which are clouded at the national level.

Paralleling the national pattern, working class activity and militance increased in Michigan from the late 1870's to the mid-1880's. The membership of the Knights of Labor increased correspondingly. Statistically the Knights of Labor approached a cross section of the working class in Michigan, but the leadership of the Knights of Labor at the

state level was far less representative of either the working class or of its own rank and file. The Michigan Knights of Labor split into pro- and anti-Powderly factions (Terence V. Powderly, the Grand National Workman, or national president), the former dominating the bureaucratic organization at the state level, the latter dominating the District Assembly in Detroit and some local assemblies in other cities. Opposition to Powderly was not based on any single issue but did follow a general ideological direction which was more militant and more amenable to notions of class conflict than that followed by Powderly and his allies. The factionalization and resulting decline of the Knights in Michigan does not seem to have been based on conflict with the A.F.L. or trade unionism, but rather a direct result of internal ideological dispute.

Two important themes emerge from the study of the Knights in Michigan which may have wider significance for the study of late nineteenth century industrial development. First, working class activity in Michigan preceeded organization. Workers became politicized through activity and gravitated towards the Knights of Labor as the only available mass organization. Politicization here consists of essentially three things: first, that workers began to think in terms of their interests as workers in contradistinction to more enveloping terms such as producing classes; secondly, that they began to recognize commonalities of interests with other workers; and finally and most importantly, that they began to consider the relationships between their personal and local problems and larger questions of social organization. Politicization was thus not synonymous with class consciousness; workers who were politicized in the above sense could still be hostile to notions of class conflict. What was crucial was the recognition that personal problems of employment,

wages, and status were not only personal but also political questions, and that the causes of these problems were rooted not merely in individual failure but in social structure and political decision.

The recognition of the antecedence of activity and politicization to organization is necessary for understanding the second major theme, that the decline of the Knights resulted from the conflict between the desires of a leadership which was hostile to the implications of mass organization and the needs of an aggressive rank and file. The growth of the Knights was not a slow process of proselytization and conversation, but a rapid influx of enthusiastic militants. While the conservative leadership was frightened by and even hostile to this influx, the new rank and file demanded action and was angered by indecision and opposition to strikes. Although sufficient data has not yet been uncovered to show that the social origins of the anti-administration faction of the Michigan Knights were substantially different from those of the leadership, nevertheless, the evidence for previous rank and file politicization merges with evidence of the unrepresentative character of the Knights leadership and evidence of widespread criticism of leadership policies to suggest a prima facie case for internal conflict as the source of the Knights' decline.

The evidence of working class activity and politicization is presented in Chapter 1. The representative mass character of the Knights of Labor and unrepresentativeness of the leadership is documented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 explores the ideological conflicts within the Knights which led to their collapse. Finally, Chapter 4 suggests some wider implications and areas for further study.

Chapter 1.

Working Class Militance in the 1880's

I.

A brief investigation of key strikes in Michigan in the 1880's reveals the growing militance and politicization of Michigan workers which produced the rapid growth of the Knights of Labor. A miners strike in Houghton County as early as 1873 is mentioned in the State Militia files in the Executive Office Papers of Michigan. Sheriff Bartholomew Shea wrote the Govenor asking for military assistance in order to quell disturbances arising out of a strike by 1500 miners demanding wage increases and an eight hour day. "The rioters have rescued prisoners from me and taken arms from my men ... want troops very badly ... one company will only be looked upon with contempt ..."[1] Two companies were sent. A similar strike in Marquette County in 1874 is also mentioned, but few details were recorded.[2]

A strike by three hundred workers against the Muskegon Boom Company in 1881 was the beginning of a two year struggle against the lumber mill owners in Muskegon which lead to the formation of a Workingman's Party, the organization of a Workingman's Union, and a District Assembly of the Knights of Labor. The initial demands of the striking Boom Company employees had been a wage increase from $1.75 to $2.00 a day and full pay

[1] Executive Office Reports, B149-F1, MHC.

[2] Ibid., B149-F2.

for all time on the job even if inclement weather forced halts. The temporary capitulation of the Boom Company lead to a mass meeting on October 2, 1881, attended by three thousand people who demanded "Ten Hours or No Sawdust," a slogan that was to be the rallying cry of Michigan lumber workers in the next five years. Six thousand lumber mill workers went on strike.[3]

The strike continued into 1882. In the local elections that spring the Greenbackers combined with the Workingman's Union to form a Workingman's Party. Although the Democrats and Republicans combined to form a Citizens' Ticket, the Workingman's candidates were elected by the largest majority ever in a city election. That fall the Workingmen elected F. W. Cook, a local lawyer and spokesman for the strikers, to the state legislature where he attempted to introduce a ten hours bill. Cook was later prominent in the legal defense of Tom Barry and D. C. Blinn, Saginaw Valley Knights of Labor leaders arrested during the Saginaw Valley Strike of 1885.

The Boom Company tried to break the strike by bringing in strikebreakers recruited in Canada. The Sheriff appealed to the Governor for troops to protect the Boom Company and despite the objections of the newly elected Workingman's Mayor, Nelson DeLong, the Governor sent four companies of state militia.[4] The first group of eighty-three strikebreakers arrived in May, 1882, but went over to the strikers. One of them, William Freer, revealed a well developed sense of class solidarity.

[3]All above and subsequent information presented on the Muskegon strike is from a Master's Thesis by Daniel James Yakes, Ten Hours or No Sawdust: A Study of Strikes in the Michigan Lumber Industry, 1881-85. (Western Michigan University: 1971)

[4]Executive Office Reports, B149-F3, MHC.

> When we arrived here we were not molested by the strikers in any way, and we joined them of our own free will. We had fully decided that if we should find a strike here in progress we should do nothing to work against the interests of the workingman. The majority of us intend to return, if money is furnished, as we are not overburdened with wealth. We fully understand what this strike is for.[5]

The mill owners and strikers eventually reached a compromise, the owners agreeing to reduce daily hours from an average of eleven and one half per day to eleven hours Monday through Friday and ten hours on Saturday. The Knights of Labor organized District Assembly 55 in Muskegon in 1882 and reported two hundred two members on July 1, 1882, and five hundred thirty members July 1, 1883.[6]

The Muskegon strike was a prototype for similar strikes in other lumber mill towns. In Menominee one J. H. Fitzgibbon, described as "an itinerant workman,"[7] helped organize the Menominee River Laboring Men's Protective and Benevolent Union. Five hundred workers attended the first meeting. The organization started its own newspaper, the Menominee Laborer, due to the hostility of the existing local press, and voted to boycott all others. Boycott notices were published in English, Norwegian and French. The union affiliated with the Knights of Labor, and struck for ten hours. An undated roster of Michigan local assemblies probably issued in late 1885 (judging from the numbers of the Local Assemblies),

[5]Yakes, Ten Hours, p. 62. Quotes Muskegon Daily Chronicle, May 6, 1882.

[6]Knights of Labor, General Assembly Proceedings, Seventh General Assembly, p. 528, LC.

[7]Yakes, Ten Hours, p. 76.

after the strike, lists three local assemblies in Menominee.[8]

The 1884 strike in the twin mill towns of AuSable and Oscoda likewise led to further organization. Both were company towns. Pack Wood and Co., for example, owned one hundred ten buildings in a section appropriately called Pack Town.[9] Other company tenements were known by such colorful names as Dead Sable, Hardscrabble, Stovepipetown, and Piety Hill. Only five hundred eighteen individuals out of 5480 citizens in Oscoda and AuSable owned property. Some employees paid one-third to one-half of their annual wages back to their employers in rent.[10] Perhaps even more galling was the practice of some employers of holding back part of their employees wages until the end of the season as a bond to guarantee "satisfactory work." A successful six day strike in August, 1881, reduced the hours in the mills from twelve to eleven per day.[11] On June 17, 1884, workers in the Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company struck in response to a circular issued two days earlier by the company which stated, "Your wages are $1.37½ per day. If you work until the close of the season and do satisfactory work, you will receive 12½ cents a day more. If you do not agree to the above, report to the office at once."[12]

The Oscoda Salt and Lumber Company workers were joined by workers

[8]Labor Archives, Wayne State University, Wieck Collection. The numbers of local assemblies were issued in order; the highest number on the list is LA 4924 which would date the list as late 1885.

[9]Yakes, Ten Hours, p. 76.

[10]Michigan Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Annual Report II, pp. 3P, 56; quoted in Yakes, Ten Hours, p. 76.

[11]Ibid., p.77.

[12]Neil Thornton, Cash Every Saturday or No Sawdust (Tawas City, Michigan: 1969), pp. 3-4. (pamphlet)

from the other mills in town. The strikers marched through the two towns carrying banners demanding restoration of the previous season's wages, which had been reduced that spring, and cash payment every week. The mill owners demanded that the Sheriff request state militia from the Governor "to protect property and suppress riot." Governor Josiah W. Begole responded with two companies of state militia from Bay City and Alpena and the gunboat Effie L. The mill owners also hired twenty-two Pinkerton detectives.[13] The Michigan Labor Journal in Alpena, the organ of the Knights of Labor in that city, described the strikers' reaction:

> The strikers were dumbfounded when they saw the soldiers coming. They had only asked for their rights, and asked for them peaceably. It seems as if everything imaginable was done to provoke them to violence ... they (the millowners) seem determined to reap vengeance on the men ... they have charged quite a number with assault and various other trespasses.[14]

On June 24, 1884, D. C. Blinn arrived from Bay City to organize the first local assembly of the Knights of Labor.[15] The strike ended a week later when three of the seven mill owners agreed to the workers' demands and two others agreed to consider them if their men would come back to work.

The AuSable-Oscoda lumber strike was followed the next year by a strike against all the lumber mills in the Saginaw Valley, involving over eighteen thousand men employed in more than one hundred mills.[16]

[13]Neil Thornton, Cash Every Saturday or No Sawdust (Tawas City, Michigan: 1969), P. 5. (pamphlet)

[14]The Michigan Labor Journal (Alpena), June 28, 1884.

[15]Yakes, Ten Hours, p. 91.

[16]C.V.R. Pond, Report on the Saginaw Valley Strike, Executive Office Papers 234-7, Office of the Commissioner of Labor (Lansing, Michigan: July 23, 1885).

The previous year the Knights of Labor had elected Tom Barry, an axe-maker from East Saginaw, to the state legislature. Barry was already a nationally prominent leader of the Knights, having served as General Assembly (national convention) delegate from Saginaw in 1883 and 1884 and member of the National Executive Board for 1883-84. Barry introduced a bill establishing the ten hour day as a legal maximum in all industrial establishments in the state. The bill was passed in the spring of 1885 in an amended form which allowed longer hours if waivers were signed by the employees. The bill was due to go into effect September 19, 1885. Most bills had traditionally gone into effect on July 1, and the state Commissioner of Labor, C.V.R. Pond, believed that this confusion over dates was the cause of the strike. A Bay City lumber inspector interviewed by Pond agreed.

> I heard this strike talked over as early as the first of June, it was the general talk for weeks. The men thought the ten hour law went into effect July 1 and planned to strike immediately after the Fourth.

According to Pond, his interviews revealed the strike had been widely discussed in Bay City bars over the Fourth of July holiday.[17]

It is, of course, possible that this confusion over dates was the source of the strike, but this seems unlikely. Pond claimed local officials assured the workers the bill would take effect September 19, not

[17]C.V.R. Pond, Report on the Saginaw Valley Strike, Executive Office Papers 234-7, Office of the Commissioner of Labor (Lansing, Michigan: July 23, 1885). Pond was consistently hostile to the strike claiming it was foisted on "the very large majority of men ... sober, industrious, and peacable," by political agitators seeking personal gain. LA 3185 of the Knights of Labor in Filer City addressed a resolution to the govenor, which was endorsed by District Assembly 83 in Manistee, condemning Pond's report as "one sided ... misleading ... evidently ... calculated to damage the reputation of Hon. Tom Barry ..." and asking for Pond's immediate removal. Executive Office Reports 243-7.

July 1, and that the workers simply refused to believe them. It seems more likely that workers were afraid the mill owners would refuse to honor the law or would abuse the waiver clause, and that they decided to take decisive action at the height of the season to force compliance. Tom Barry, the author of the bill, was in Saginaw before the strike when talk was widespread, and he made speeches in both Saginaw and Bay City during the first week of the strike. The workers trusted Barry, and he was certainly aware of the date the law he had written was to go into effect, yet he urged expansion rather than cessation of the strike. Strike leaders claimed the millowners had refused to discuss the issue with the workers before the strike, and this certainly could not have inspired confidence in their willingness to comply with the law. The workers' fears were indeed confirmed after September 19 when several mills either refused compliance outright or forced workers to sign the waivers as a condition of employment.[18]

There is evidence that many mill owners welcomed the strike. Pond said some mill owners claimed they were operating at a loss, despite wage reductions, because of low lumber prices. W. B. Rouse, the owner of the Bay City mill where the strike started declared, "My docks and salt sheds are full ... it would be a benefit to me if the strike did not end for a month ..."[19]

The local Knights of Labor, who were officially silent until the end of the first week, offered to arbitrate. The mill owners refused. The Knights offer of fifty strike marshals from their ranks to keep peace was likewise ignored by city officials who appealed to Governor

[18]Detroit Labor Leaf, September 30, 1885.

[19]Executive Office Reports 243-7, C.V.R. Pond.

Alger, an owner of one of the local mills, for the state militia. As in Oscoda-AuSable the year before, local citizens decided to augment the five companies of state militia with Pinkertons. The Alpena Labor Journal felt that the introduction of state troops to keep order was "prudent" but that "the mercenary hirelings ... should be exterminated, legally, if possible, but exterminated anyway." The Bay City Common Council which had been elected on the Greenback ticket with labor support directed the Board of Police Comissioners "to remove this standing menace from our midst."[20] A week later, the editor of the Labor Journal expressed fears that the Governor was "calling out the militia for no other purpose than to intimidate the laborers in the interest of his brother lumber barons ..."[21] But the editor warned "... when labor is oppressed beyond endurance, the property and wealth of the community are in danger and a standing army is no protection."[22]

The Knights of Labor in Bay City and Saginaw organized strike relief and made national appeals for aid. John Swinton's Paper, a leading national labor journal, reported on July 19, 1885, that Tom Barry had been arrested and the Governor had forbidden further meetings by the strikers.[23] Three weeks later, Swinton published an appeal from the secretary of the Relief Fund, W. G. Beard.

> ... Ten years of such service generally makes a physical wreck of our strongest men. Black slavery is no comparison to our condition. We receive the meanest pay, live in hovels, must

[20]Alpena Labor Journal, July 18, 1885.

[21]Ibid., July 28, 1885.

[22]Ibid., August 8, 1885

[23]John Swinton's Paper, July 19, 1885.

> feed, clothe, and doctor ourselves, and when we are rendered unfit to perform our work, we are thrown out like a useless treadmill ...[24]

District Assembly 88 of the Knights of Labor in Bay City appealed:

> To the friends of humanity, wherever found. ... Our district assembly has tried to adjust the differences by arbitration, but the lordly mill owners would not condescend to submit a single proposition to arbitrate upon ... During the strike we fed about 4000 persons and our local resources are about exhausted ...[25]

On August 26, 1885, the Detroit Labor Leaf reported "Grim determination on the part of the men ...", but the strike seemed to be collapsing. Most mills were again running, about half on ten hours. Only two thousand were still on strike. "The men at work give one day's pay every two weeks (to the strike fund) but this is not enough ..."[26] A month later the Labor Leaf reported "From the Saginaws - poverty again crushed by wealth - how long, O Lord, how long will such things be! ..." The Benjamin Franklin Assembly No. 3028 of Lansing reported on "The Ten Hour Law - its Erosion by the Slave Drivers of Michigan."[27]

The failure of the strike was followed by the lengthy trials of D. C. Blinn, Sheriff McIntyre (who reportedly was derelict in his duties because he developed undue sympathy to the strikers) and Tom Barry, who was indicted under the state conspiracy laws. The Labor Leaf declared that, "The Wealthy Capitalists of Saginaw (are) Determined to Land Him Behind Prison Bars."[28] The Barry defense, lead by F. W. Cook of

[24] John Swinton's Paper, August 9, 1885.

[25] Alpena Labor Journal, August 1, 1885.

[26] Detroit Labor Leaf, August 26, 1885.

[27] Ibid., September 30, 1885.

[28] Ibid., October 7, 1885.

Muskegon, was a new source of political agitation for the Knights of Labor. On October 7, 1885, Joseph Labadie, secretary of the newly formed Barry Defense Fund, reported contributions from the Shipcarpenters Local Assembly 2124 in Detroit, a plumber in New York City, a friend, and resolutions from various local assemblies urging repeal of the Baker Conspiracy Law under which Barry was indicted.[29] Barry was acquitted in 1886 and reelected to the National Executive Board of the Knights of Labor. Despite its failure, the strike was apparently a source of further organization for the Knights of Labor in Michigan.

The lumber mill strikes between 1880 and 1885 were the largest and most spectacular of the period. Many other strikes were reported ranging from a one day strike by workers on the Detroit, Mackinaw, and Marquette Railroad in May 1885[30] to the year long strike of three hundred shoemakers against the firm of Pingree and Smith in Detroit from May 1885 to March 1886.[31] Although the demands in nearly every case were quite limited, these strikes revealed widespread discontent; they began in nearly every case at the rank and file level and usually led, regardless of the outcome, to greater organization. The increase in all forms of working class activity reveals an increasing consciousness among workers of their interests as workers, and the increased use of the strike weapon suggests a greater recognition of collective interests and power. Finally, the increased desire of those who had engaged in strikes to affiliate with a national organization with a broad program suggests a process of

[29]Detroit Labor Leaf, October 7, 1885.

[30]Alpena Labor Journal, May 16, 1885.

[31]Melvin G. Hollis, Reform in Detroit (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 7.

politicization in which workers began to conceive of their problems as social and not merely personal and local.

II

The increasing success of independent working class political campaigns in Michigan during the 1880's confirms the process of working class politicization. The candidates and platforms of typical Workingman's Tickets rarely went beyond anti-monopolism or liberal capitalism, but their success nevertheless reveals politicization even if of an unsophisticated nature. Politicization as defined and political action are not synonymous, but the success of the latter is evidence for the existence of the former. The success of the Workingman's Party in Muskegon in 1882 has already been mentioned. The Grand Rapids Workman reported to John Swinton's Paper in 1885 that Grand Rapids was a "Knights of Labor City." The Knights had successfully elected ten out of sixteen aldermen, the mayor, and all but one of the city officials, every official of the county, and every state legislator and senator for the county.[32] In Bay City the Knights supported the Greenbackers in 1885 who elected the mayor, treasurer, comptroller, one alderman, and three constables.[33] Judson Grenell, a local leader of the Knights, described the growth of the labor vote in Detroit in an article in the Labor Leaf in 1885. He noted that in 1877 the Socialist Labor Party had polled eight hundred votes for mayor; in 1882 two "labor agitators" were sent

[32]John Swinton's Paper, July 26, 1885.

[33]Ibid., April 12, 1885.

to the state legislature; in 1884, the number increased to five.[34] In 1887, R. Y. Ogg reported to the State Assembly that the Knights had successfully elected thirty-eight of their members to the state legislature.[35]

Michigan Knights engaged in these political campaigns over the objections of the national leadership. At the national level, the Knights of Labor was officially non-partisan, and there was some opposition to any entrance into politics. At the 1884 General Assembly, Terence Powderly, the Grand Master Workman, spoke out against the formation of state assemblies because they would "promote scramble for office,"[36] but the Michigan Knights had already formed a state assembly in January 1884, for just that purpose. At the 1883 General Assembly, the delegate from Flint, Michigan, Local Assembly 2067 had introduced a motion, which was rejected, calling for "united action of labor organizations for a political platform." Nevertheless, the Detroit District Assembly issued a call for a meeting to form the Michigan State Assembly in December 1883. At the meeting, which was held January 11-13, 1884, the newly formed State Assembly passed a resolution demanding the removal of any clauses in the national constitution against political action.[37]

Politically oriented Knights rejected the major parties. In his

[34]Detroit Labor Leaf, August 26, 1885.

[35]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, Second Annual Session (1887), p. 55.

[36]Knights of Labor, General Assembly Proceedings, 1884, p. 575.

[37]Knights of Labor, Seventh General Assembly Proceedings, 1883, p. 463. Circular, "Knights of Labor - Michigan" folder, LC. Knights of Labor, Report of Proceedings, Michigan State Assembly, 1884, p. 11.

keynote address to the 1886 State Assembly, the State Master Workman declared, "... both parties are composed of men who have grown rich, or expect to grow rich out of the present system."[38] Many Knights saw the National Party as an alternative. The Labor Journal in Alpena declared, "The ark of our safety is at hand - the national party ... discord and disintegration are effectually doing their work in both old parties and the triumph of the new cannot long be delayed."[39] The cause of hard times according to the Labor Journal "... is to be found entrenched in constitutions, in statutes, in supreme court decisions, barricaded and protected by every department of our present government. To attack it with any hope of success requires the courage, ability, and brazen audacity of Ben Butler, ..."[40] the candidate of the National Party.

Butler's poor showing in 1884 was disappointing. Judson Grenell attributed the failure to Butler's tariff views. "Michigan is a state inclined to free trade or at least to tariff reform views and Butler lost many votes by his protection speeches in his first trip through the state."[41] George W. Irish of Grand Ledge wrote nevertheless, "I see no reason for being entirely disheartened ... We have accomplished much in the election to Congress of James R. Weaver from Iowa ..."[42] There are indications in John Swinton's Paper, however, that Grenell's explanation of Butler's failure was inadequate. Swinton had published a letter from

[38]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1886.

[39]Alpena Labor Journal, July 26, 1884.

[40]Ibid., June 21, 1884.

[41]John Swinton's Paper, December 7, 1884.

[42]Ibid., December 7, 1884.

Butler defending child labor because, "... Their work may be the only support of a crippled father or mother." An Admiring Reader declared, "We can't trust Ben Butler any more than Jim Blaine, or the coming Democratic candidate. Let's have a workingman's candidate." Another of Swinton's readers described Butler and David Davis, another third party politician, as "... rich old party hacks ... If they come to us, they come to get office. We don't want them ..." A week later a third correspondent stated, "... in my judgment J. A. Duryea has struck it about right - 'we don't want them'."[43] J. F. Bray, a Pontiac socialist, presented the most incisive criticism of Butler and the National Party.

> Our "ruling classes" - the men who control our parties and construct our platforms - believe that ameliorations of the condition of labor are all that are necessary ... they do not belong to the wageworkers and are ignorant of the undercurrent of thought and feeling reaching for higher social conditions. The National Party platform is a specimen. The men who made it looked upon the existing social order, with its class division into capitalists and wage earners as an established fact for all time.[44]

At times, political action was presented as an alternative to more militant activities. A Detroit worker wrote Swinton, for example, "... the ballot is the thing. A little piece of paper, with the proper principles for the bullets will shoot further and with more force than a gun."[45] But the criticism of Butler reveals also a growing sophistication and radicalization. The realization, even by the staunchest advocates of political action, that politicians often exploited working

[43] John Swinton's Paper, February 10, 1884; June 15, 1884, Admiring Reader, Brooklyn; February 3, 1884, J. A. Duryea, New York; February 10, 1884, "Love Letters."

[44] Ibid., June 29, 1884, "Why We Differ - Letter from Mr. Bray".

[45] Ibid., April 20, 1884.

class politicization for their own ends is further evidence of this growing sophistication. The Labor Journal, Butler's strongest defender in Michigan, cautioned that "The Knights of Labor should see to it that they are not tools for office seeking politicians who only attend meetings before elections otherwise never associating with workingmen," and "Professional politicians are a curse to the Knights of Labor. Keep the rascals out."[46]

The major parties responded to the threat of working class political organization by trying to buy off potential leaders with appointive positions. The Labor Journal lamented in 1886 that F. B. Eagan, one of the Knights leaders, had "sold his position in the legislature to Republicans for appointment as Deputy Commissioner of Labor." Eagan had been sent to the Upper Penninsula to convince Knights of Labor to vote Republican.[47] Eagan was certainly not alone in this respect. Of fifteen labor leaders described in a clipping from a Detroit newspaper in the mid 1880's, seven had received lucrative appointive positions including United States Consul at Windsor, Ontario, carrying a salary of $2,000; clerk for the State Treasury Department; and statistical agent of the Michigan Fish Commission. One of the eight non-appointees had left the state, one had retired because of ill health, and one had opened a small machine shop. The remaining five were all well known as radicals or socialists.[48]

[46]Alpena Labor Journal, January 24, 1885; August 22, 1885.

[47]Ibid., July 2, 1886.

[48]Undated clipping in Ross Scripbook (1: 17-20), Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library. The five radical non-appointees were Tom Barry, Joseph Labadie, Richard Trevellick (a nationally known labor agitator since the 1860's), Charles Erb (a Detroit leader of the Socialist Labor Party), and Axel Burman (a Manistee Knights of Labor leader).

Growing radicalization is also revealed in increasing interest in socialism. John Swinton's Paper reported from Detroit in 1884

> ... the labor movement here is on a better basis than in most other cities because of the Socialist propaganda, with tracts, phamplets, and labor papers, directing the minds of the readers to basic truths. The Knights of Labor have seventeen Assemblies.[49]

In 1885 the Detroit Labor Leaf reported on a demonstration by three thousand union men - many more would have participated but for "fear of being spotted by employers ... As an indication of the growth of a healthy labor sentiment, the fact that the socialists were allowed to take part in the procession is pertinent, as five years ago they were positively denied the privilege."[50] In the same year, Tom Barry and Judson Grenell introduced a motion at the State Assembly to form a State Labor Union or some other type of organization for the purposes of united action by the Knights of Labor, local trade unions, Grangers, and the Socialists.[51]

Of course, it would be presumptuous on the basis of scanty evidence to assume that very many workers became socialists, but the increasing tempo of working class activity in the early 1880's did produce an atmosphere of growing and wider ranging discussion in which further radicalization was certainly possible. For most of the participants, this was the first time they had attempted an organized investigation of the causes of their problems. They were at least willing to listen to all of the alternatives. A remark in the columns of the Detroit Labor Leaf reflected a widespread attitude: "Any ism which conscientiously tries to

[49] John Swinton's Paper, March 30, 1884.

[50] Detroit Labor Leaf, October 7, 1885.

[51] Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1885.

improve the condition of the people should be considered fairly on its merits."[52]

III

The growth of the Knights of Labor in Michigan was a reflection of the increase in working class activity. At the same time this growth in organization facilitated working class political action. The first local assembly in Michigan was organized in Detroit in 1878 by Joseph Labadie. The group was surrounded by elaborate secrecy - even the name was secret. Meetings were announced under the name of the Washington Literary Society, and the first newspaper published had three stars on the masthead in place of a name. The initiation fee was set a fifty cents and dues were fifteen cents per month.[53]

Secrecy was motivated by fear of employer harassment but interfered with further organization. As early as January, 1879, reduction of the level of secrecy was discussed. In April, 1879, dues were reduced to six cents per month. The Knights grew slowly. A second assembly was formed in Jackson in 1879 but as late as October 1881, the Knights reported only seventy-four members in these two local assemblies.[54]

Rapid expansion began late in 1881 or early 1882. Six local assemblies were reported in Michigan in January, 1882. By July, District

[52]Detroit Labor Leaf, September 20, 1885.

[53]Minutes of the Washington Literary Society, LC.

[54]Knights of Labor, General Assembly Proceedings, 1880, p. 213, L.C.

Assemblies had been organized in Detroit and Muskegon consisting of thirteen and eight local assemblies respectively. Twenty-three other local assemblies were scattered about the state.[55] By September, 1884, District Assemblies had been organized in Saginaw and Grand Rapids and by 1886 in Bay City and Manistee. (Table 1).

Official statewide membership statistics are not available after 1883. The figures for 1885 and 1886 in Table 1 are contemporary estimates. Further indications of growth in these years are local estimates of eight thousand members in the Detroit area and three thousand in the Bay City-Saginaw area in 1885.[57] The State Assembly Proceedings reported three hundred fifty local assemblies in the state in August, 1887, but gave no estimate of statewide membership.[58] The decline of membership after late 1886 or early 1887 can be inferred from the decline in membership of the State Assembly as shown in Table 2.

The State Assembly first met in January, 1884. The initial purpose was exertion of political influence at the statewide level. Affiliation by local assemblies was optional and the organization was very informal. Increasingly, however, some leaders of the State Assembly attempted to formalize organization and centralize authority in the State Assembly. This process was resisted by the District Assemblies and resulted in

[55]Knights of Labor, General Assembly Proceedings, 1883.

[56]Before 1885 - Knights of Labor General Assembly Proceedings. 1885 - estimate, John Swinton's Paper, October 1885. 1886 - estimate from undated clipping in "Knights of Labor - Michigan" folder, LC, judged to be late 1886 or early 1887 from context.

[57]John Swinton's Paper, October 13, 1885; Bay City Tribune, July 14, 1885, quoted in Yates, Ten Hours.

[58]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, Second Annual Session (1887), LC.

Table 1

Knights of Labor Membership in Michigan*

Date	Membership
October, 1879	59
October, 1880	74
January, 1882	149
July, 1882	1241
July, 1883	2787
October, 1885	12000 (estimate)
1886-7	25000 (possibly unreliable estimate)

*Before 1885 - Knights of Labor General Assembly Proceedings. 1885-estimate, John Swinton's Paper, October, 1885. 1886 - estimate from undated clipping in "Knights of Labor - Michigan" folder, LC, judged to be late 1886 or early 1887 from context.

Table 2

Membership of Michigan State Assembly Knights of Labor*

Date	Membership
August, 1886	5556
July, 1887	4396
January, 1888	3721
April, 1888	4726
July, 1888	3216

*Drawn from State Assembly Proceedings.

jurisdictional disputes. The problem was never really solved. Most local assemblies in the larger cities looked to their district assemblies for central authority, but some refused to affiliate. All local assemblies not affiliated to district assemblies were directly affiliated with the national General Assembly. The position of the State Assembly was, thus, unclear after 1886. State Assembly leaders agitated for the abolition of the district assemblies and the recognition of the State Assembly as the mandatory intervening authority between local and national levels,[59] but the National Executive in effect created parity between the State and District Assemblies by recognizing the authority of both. In 1887, it attempted to solve the jurisdictional disputes by ruling that local assemblies could not affiliate with both a District and a State Assembly, but affiliation with either was still optional. The number of local assemblies affiliated with the Michigan State Assembly never exceeded one hundred fifty out of three hundred fifty assemblies.[60]

The jurisdictional problem was aggravated by growing factionalism within the organization. After 1886, the national organization began to split along pro- and anti-Powderly lines. Within Michigan the State Assembly became the focus of pro-Powderly sentiment while the District Assemblies, especially District Assembly 50 in Detroit (which was larger than the State Assembly), became the center of anti-Powderly agitation.

The jurisdictional dispute, therefore, was at times a mask for ideological conflict. The weltanschaung of Powderly and his supporters in

[59]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1886, LC. See for example: proposal to abolish District Assemblies, Ibid., 1888, p. 13.

[60]Ibid., 1887.

Michigan was a kind of Benthamite utilitarianism which accepted the assumptions of orthodox political economy both on the futility of strikes to alter "economic law" and the desireability of a "stake in society" theory of citizenship. They tended to view the purposes of organization as purely educational. "Wages is not the chief end of organization," declared the State Master Workman at the 1888 State Assembly, "Education is the desideratum. Strikes are folly when there are so many unorganized workers ready to take the striker's place."[61] Powderly combined radical sounding pronouncements about ending the wage system with assurances that he had no desire to disturb existing property relations. His private correspondence reveals an intense desire for the approval of the wealthy, which was mirrored by Michigan State Assembly leaders' pride in "the respect of all classes of people."[62] The combination of a vague utopian anticapitalism with a conscious desire for class collaboration and cooperation produced an ideology reminiscent of the muddle of Owenism, which satisfied prevailing middle class sensibilities, but was hostile to militant class action. Edward Bellamy's Nationalism represented the flowering of this philosophy in the late Nineteenth Century, and several labor leaders who were identified with the Powderly faction in Michigan commented favorably on his book.[63]

[61] Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1888, p. 13.

[62] Powderly to Hayes, December 9, 1888, for example: "I know there is spirit enough in some of our monied men to assist us now that we have slipped off the suckers skin. (Its other name is Barry.)" The organization had just expelled Tom Barry, who by 1888 had become the national spokesman of the anti-Powderly forces within the Knights of Labor. Also, Report of State Master Workman, Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1886.

[63] See: Charles E. Barnes to Joseph Labadie, May 29, 1889, LC.

Powderly's opponents also exhibited ideological confusion. Joseph Labadie, Powderly's most active critic in Michigan, could declare one week in his column "Cranky Notes" in the Detroit Labor Leaf, "There is no room in equity for profit on labor and the results of labor ...," while two months earlier he had written, "There is in competition, it seems to me, the incentive to climb to the highest point of civilization. It is not competition that works harm to the world's workers ..."[64] Nevertheless, Powderly's opponents generally supported strikes and other militant activity and displayed a healthy skepticism about the intentions of wealthy philanthropism. Judson Grenell, a leader of District Assembly 50, wrote in 1885, "... it is foolish or worse, to speak of failures. Only through strikes has progress been made, and only through strikes will there be an advance in civilization."[65] In 1886, the Detroit Labor Leaf sarcastically described the activities of one Mr. Muir, "a Christian philanthropist" and owner of the Eureka Ironworks in Wyandotte, who "runs a tramps' house but fired twenty-five union workers."[66]

The kind of moral uplift advocated by Powderly and his supporters definitely appealed to some segments of the middle class and to many skilled workers. The pro-Powderly leadership of the State Assembly was drawn primarily from these strata (see Chapter 2), but the organization they controlled reflected to a much larger extent the unskilled and semi-skilled masses of workers who, as the frequent strikes of the 1880's

[64]Detroit Labor Leaf, December 2, 1885; September 30, 1885.

[65]Alpena Labor Journal, September 26, 1885, reprinted from the Detroit Labor Leaf.

[66]Detroit Labor Leaf, March 17, 1886.

demonstrate, were clearly interested in something more than education and moral suasion.

Chapter 2.

The Composition of the Knights of Labor

I.

Analysis of available data demonstrates that the membership of the Knights of Labor in Michigan was representative of the state's working class in terms of class status, employment status, skill level, wages, hours, and national origin. It was somewhat less representative in terms of marital status, stability of employment, and home ownership. The leadership of the state organization was representative of neither the Knights members nor the working class. This disparity was one of the sources of ideological conflict within the Knights of Labor.

For purposes of statistical comparison, we will define class as an objective category irrespective of the individual's consciousness of his class status. The working class will be defined as all wage earners except professionals and all self employed manual workers and artisans. All other occupational categories including farmers, professionals, shop keepers, government officials and businessmen will be defined as non-working class. Housewives will be excluded from the data on the assumption that their class position would be the same as their husbands. Comparisons will be based on three sample groups representing all Michigan workers, Knights of Labor members, and Knights of Labor leaders.

The all workers group is based on data from the 1884 Michigan State Census and from the Reports of the State Bureau of Labor Statistics for the years 1884, 1885, and 1886. The sample group is thus not identical

in every case. The surveys of the State Bureau of Labor Statistics represent smaller samples from selected localities than the entire State Census. However, the samples are large enough and from a wide enough range of localities that major discrepancies are unlikely.

The Knights of Labor members group represents the membership of those local assemblies who responded to surveys taken by the State Statistician of the Knights of Labor in 1887 and 1888 and published in the State Assembly Proceedings in 1888 and 1889 respectively. Thus, although the sample represents quite a large fraction of the total membership of the Knights of Labor in Michigan, approximately three thousand out of a peak state membership of twenty-five thousand[67], it is a self-selecting group. The surveys were taken after the District Assemblies had withdrawn from the State Assembly, and include no information on members of local assemblies affiliated with the urban District Assemblies. Also by 1888 membership was both declining rapidly and becoming more rural as declining urban membership was replaced somewhat by new assemblies in rural areas. Thus, although the sample is quite large, it is probably biased towards a more rural and small town membership than was characteristic of the state's membership at its peak. For example, while thirty-one of the seventy-five delegates to the 1886 State Assembly, which still included the District Assemblies, came from towns with over ten thousand population, only eight of fifty-five local assemblies responding to the 1888 survey were in towns of over ten thousand. This rural-small town bias will be evident at times. Presumably responses from rural or small town assemblies would over represent non-working class elements and

[67]Undated clipping, "Knights of Labor - Michigan" folder, LC.

self-employed artisans. Since despite this bias, the Knights of Labor membership group conforms quite closely to the all workers group, it is likely that a more representative sample would merely further strengthen the conclusions reached.[68]

The Knights of Labor leaders sample is drawn from the delegates to the 1888 State Assembly. Information was found on thirty-seven of the fifty-seven delegates. Eliminating two housewives, the Knights of Labor leadership sample thus becomes the remaining thirty-five delegates for whom information is available. Lack of information on the remaining twenty delegates is not necessarily an indication of lesser prominence. All twenty came from small towns which had no city directories. Conceivably more damaging is the wide variety of sources used to gather information on the thirty-five who were identified including State Business Gazeteers, city and county directories, local histories and pioneer accounts, and the varying years in which the subjects were identified. Information on sixteen of the thirty-five was found in 1888, the year of the Assembly. Twenty-nine were identified between 1883 and 1893, within five years of the Assembly; but data for the remaining six could be found only for more distant years, in two cases more than ten years after the Assembly. It is possible that the status of some of these individuals

[68]Towns with over 10,000 population in the 1884 State Census:

Detroit	132,956	Kalamazoo	13,909	Saginaw	13,760
Manistee	10,367	Port Huron	10,388	Jackson	14,100
East Saginaw	29,085	Grand Rapids	41,898	Muskegon	17,825
Battle Creek	10,051	Bay City	29,412		

1886 Delegate Lists, Michigan Assembly Proceedings, Knights of Labor, 1886, pp. 6-7, LC.

Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, 1888 Survey, pp. 17-18, LC.

changed over time.[69]

Despite these problems, the results presented in Table 3 demonstrate the overwhelming working class character of the Knights members and a significant non-working class minority among the leaders. The Knights did encourage membership by non-working class sympathizers barring only doctors, lawyers, bankers, stock brokers, professional gamblers, and saloon keepers, but as Table 3 reveals, non-working class elements comprise only eight percent of the members surveyed. Even this figure was undoubtedly a great overestimate of the non-working class segment of the entire state membership because of the rural bias of the sample. Fifty-six percent of these non-workers were farmers. Eliminating farmers, only 3.4 percent of the membership was non-working class.[70]

If the employment status of the members and leaders of the Knights of Labor is compared to the working class the representativeness of the former and unrepresentativeness of the latter emerges more clearly. Since no direct evidence of employment could be discovered, it was necessary to devise an indirect method of estimating the relative percentage of wage earners and self-employed workers. All occupational categories listed in the 1884 census were classified on the basis of the likelihood, in the author's estimation, that workers in that category would be wage earners or self-employed. Such categories as agricultural laborers, mill hands, factory operatives, railroad employees, domestics, and clerks could easily be categorized as wage earners. Other categories were less self-evident, but it was assumed, for example, that the vast majority of machinists, cigarmakers,

[69]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1888, Delegate List, pp. 8-9, LC. For more detailed information, see: Appendix 2.

[70]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, pp. 18-19. Non-working class membership: farmers, 130; merchants, 79; professionals, 21; professional women, 1.

Table 3

Class Composition - Knights of Labor in Michigan*

	Working Class	Non-Working Class
Knights of Labor Members (2949)	92%	8%
Knights of Labor Leaders (35)	71%	29%

*Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, pp. 18-19. Non-working class membership: farmers, 130; merchants, 79; professionals, 21; professional women, 1.

Table 4

Employment Status of Working Class and Knights of Labor in Michigan*

	Wage Earners	Self-Employed Workers	Non-Workers
All workers (392,000)	76%	24%	
Knights of Labor Members (2949)	64%	28%	8%
Knights of Labor Leaders (35)	23%	49%	29%

*Drawn from 1884 Michigan State Census, 1889 Knights of Labor State Assembly Proceedings.

and stove makers were wage earners. Likewise it was assumed that categories such as blacksmith, tailors, and cabinet makers were largely self-employed. However, significant categories including carpenters, shoemakers, and hack men must have contained large percentages of both wage earners and self-employed workers. Since there is no valid way of estimating these percentages, all categories which might have included even a significant minority of self-employed are listed as self-employed. A listing of the classifications of major occupational categories is presented in Appendix A. Clearly this procedure introduces elements of innacuracy, and it underestimates the percentage of wage earners and overestimates the percentage of self-employed, but since the same criteria for classification are used for each of the three sample groups, comparability is maintained.

As Table 4 demonstrates, even allowing for major inaccuracies inherent in the method of classification, the results are striking. While over three-fourths of the state's working class were wage earners, and nearly two-thirds of the Knights members were wage earners, less than one quarter of the Knights leaders were wage earners.[71]

Examination of the skilled or unskilled status of the state's workers, the Knights membership, and the Knights leadership reveals an even greater disparity. Again an indirect method of estimating the percentages of unskilled and skilled workers is necessary. The following occupational categories were labeled as unskilled: Laborers, agricultural laborers, domestics, lumbermen, saw mill operatives, factory operatives, and 57% of railroad employees. A detailed breakdown of eighteen

[71]Michigan State Census, 1884. Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889.

thousand railroad employees in the 1886 State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report revealed 57% of these employees fell into the above unskilled category and into certain other unskilled occupations such as helpers, waterboys, and apprentices.[72] Lacking a similar breakdown of the ten thousand railroad employees listed in the 1884 State Census it was assumed that the percentage of unskilled workers was the same as in 1886. Admittedly some of the lumbermen and factory operatives could more properly be called semi-skilled, but as entrance into these occupations was relatively open, subject to availability of employment, they have been classed with the unskilled laborers. All other occupational categories are listed as skilled. The results in Table 5 indicate that slightly more than half of the state's workers were unskilled as defined, slightly less than one half of the Knights' members were unskilled, but only eleven percent of the Knights' leadership were unskilled.[73]

Taken together, the results presented in Tables 4 and 5 are conclusive. The overwhelming majority of the state's workers were wage earners and somewhat smaller majority were unskilled, but a clear majority of the Knights' leaders were either non-workers or self-employed skilled workers. Of the thirty-five Knights of Labor leaders, ten were non-workers, ten were self-employed skilled workers, seven were skilled workers whose employment status is in doubt, four were skilled wage earners, and four were unskilled wage earners.[74]

The statistical evidence of the unrepresentativeness of the Knights

[72]State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report, 1886.

[73]Michigan State Census, 1884. Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889.

[74]A more detailed breakdown of leaders appears in Appendix B.

Table 5

Skill Level of Working Class and Knights of Labor in Michigan*

	Unskilled	Skilled	Non-Workers
All Workers (392,000)	54%	46%	
Knights of Labor Members (2949)	45%	47%	8%
Knights of Labor Leaders (35)	11%	60%	29%

*Drawn from 1884 Michigan State Census, 1889 Knights of Labor State Assembly Proceedings.

of Labor leaders is further substantiated by other available information about some of these men. Two of them, for example, were factory owners - a cigar manufacturer from Mt. Clemens and the owner of a pail factory in Evart. A disgruntled ship carpenter from Bay City described the effects of this "dwelling together of the Lion and Lamb." One Congressman Wheeler, his employer "... is a member of the National Ship Builders' Union. His carpenters are members of the Knights of Labor, his superintendent is Master Workman of the Ship Carpenters Assembly in West Bay City." The ship carpenters had sent Mr. Wheeler to Congress to protect their interests, but he had recently lowered wages in his ship yard from $2.00 to $1.50 a day.[75] Another of the Knights' State Assembly leaders was the leading stockholder and former cashier of the Farmers and Merchants Bank of Nashville, an apparent violation of the prohibition against bankers. Still another, a former State Master Workman, was appointed clerk of the State Treasury Department, a lucrative patronage position, by a Republican administration hostile to organized labor.[76] The statements of these men reveal a patronizing attitude toward the masses of unskilled wage earners who made up the majority of the working class. State Master Workman Barnes, for example, declared in an 1887 interview,

> ... the order admits men of low morality (unskilled workers) to improve them ... it represents the interests of all producing classes ... farmers .... ministers are joining the Knights as well as some business men who realize that good wages for workers will increase business.[77]

[75]Detroit Onward, March 25, 1887.

[76]See: Appendix 2.

[77]Alpena Labor Journal, August 12, 1887.

II

Comparison of the wages, hours, and national origins of the State's workers and the membership of the Knights of Labor provides additional evidence of the representiveness of the Knights' membership. Data is not available for comparison of the Knights' leaders in these categories. Table 6 compares the wages of the Knights of Labor and all Michigan workers by sex and by occupation. The Knights of Labor State Assembly Proceedings gave weekly wage rates, while the State Bureau of Labor Statistics gave daily rates. In order to compare the two, the daily rates were multiplied by six. Although the six day week was prevalent, it was not universal in all occupations so this multiplication may be a source of error in some cases. The statistics for the two groups were gathered in different years, 1888 for the Knights, and 1883, 1884 and 1885 for all workers, but this cannot be a major source of error since national wage indexes constructed for the period reveal a variation of no more than two percent between 1888 and any of the earlier years. The results in Table 6 reveal that the mean wages of the Knights of Labor were lower than the working class average for all males, all females, and in most occupational categories.[78]

Table 7 indicates that the members of the Knights of Labor worked

[78]All Workers: all males and females computed from State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report, 1886; occupational categories for all workers computed as weighted averages from State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report (Wayne County), 1884, and State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report (other industrial areas), 1885. Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889. National wage indexes: Statistical History of the United States, p. 90, D74.

Table 6

Wages of Working Class and Knights of Labor in Michigan

	Males	Females	Barbers	Blacksmiths	Boilermakers
Knights of Labor Mean Weekly Wage	$ 9.70 (2477	$ 4.07 (58)	$11.50 (16)	$11.01 (48)	$11.82 (11)
All Workers Mean Weekly Wages	$10.44 (55,314)	$ 5.46 (7668)	$ 9.45 (47)	$11.96 (407)	$13.15 (81)

	Butchers	Carpenters	Cigarmakers	Store Clerks	Coopers
Knights of Labor Mean Weekly Wage	$ 9.72 (32)	$12.05 (228)	$10.00 (16)	$ 8.36 (47)	$ 9.15 (33)
All Workers Mean Weekly Wages	$10.32 (116)	$11.84 (1886)	$10.86 (219)	$11.55 (51)	$10.14 (152)

	Engineers	Laborers	Machinists	Masons	Millers
Knights of Labor Mean Weekly Wage	$12.97 (30)	$ 8.02 (1205)	$11.47 (51)	$14.78 (65)	$10.40 (10)
All Workers Mean Weekly Wages	$14.40 (216)	$ 8.23 (5636)	$12.39 (514)	$15.60 (179)	$13.15 (39)

Table 6 - Continued

	Molders	Painters	Railroad Employees	Sailors	Shoemakers
Knights of Labor Mean Weekly Wage	$13.94 (24)	$11.92 (65)	$ 8.30 (70)	$ 8.82 (14)	$ 9.72 (29)
All Workers Mean Weekly Wages	$13.40 (391)	$11.68 (462)	$10.08 (51)	$10.76 (31)	$ 9.87 (278)

	Street Car Drivers and Conductors	Tanners and Curriers	Tinsmiths	Wagonmakers	Other Trades
Knights of Labor Mean Weekly Wage	$11.48 (200)	$11.71 (21)	$11.96 (15)	$11.44 (18)	$10.13 (115)
All Workers Mean Weekly Wages	$10.24 (54)	$ 8.95 (56)	$11.52 (89)	$11.66 (102)	

	Domestics	Dressmakers	Others (Female)		
Knights of Labor Mean Weekly Wage	$ 2.45 (11)	$ 4.63 (15)	$ 5.04 (23)		
All Workers Mean Weekly Wages	$ 2.23 (180)	$ 5.44 (136)			

*All Workers: all males and all females computed from State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report, 1886; occupational categories for all workers computed as weighted averages from State Bureau of Labor Statistics report (other industrial areas), 1885. Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889. National wage indexes: Statistical History of the United States, p. 90, D74.

Table 7

Hours Worked Per Day*

	Mean Hours Per Day
All Workers	10 hours, 26 minutes
Knights of Labor	10 hours, 31 minutes
National Average	9 hours, 48 minutes

*Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, Table 2. State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report, 1886, pp. 11, 39, 41. Statistical History of the United States, p. 72, D 76.

nearly the same hours per day as the rest of the state's workers. The figures of ten hours, twenty-six minutes per day and ten hours, thirty-one minutes per day respectively, are in both cases higher than the national average for 1886 of 9.8 hours.[79]

The ethnic composition of the Knights is again similar to, although somewhat more native than, the working class as a whole. (Table 8). A breakdown by nationalities, Table 9, indicates a greater percentage of British and Canadians and smaller percentages of other nationalities in the Knights' foreign born than the foreign born workers in general, but this result may be due to the different locations from which the samples were drawn.[80]

This data (Tables 3-9) indicates that interpretations of the Knights of Labor which have emphasized their non-working class character and retrogressive orientation are in error for Michigan. The Knights have been pictured as a motley crew of idealistic and backward looking reformers, intellectuals, farmers, and disgruntled artisans whose view of the world was based on the outmoded categories of Jacksonian anti-monopolism. Such interpretations have been based on examination of the national leadership of the organization. Results for Michigan show that the leaders of the Michigan State Assembly did conform to this pattern, but previous emphasis on elite sources has overlooked the fact that the mass organization

[79]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, Table 2. State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report, 1886, pp. 11, 39, 41. Statistical History of the United States, p. 72, D76.

[80]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, p. 18, Table 4. State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report, 1886, Tables 27, 33. The SBLS Survey was taken in Grand Rapids, East Saginaw, Kalamazoo, and AuSable, Marquette, and Houghton Counties. The Knights sample was drawn from mostly smaller towns around the state.

Table 8

Nativity of Knights of Labor and Michigan Workers*

	Native	Foreign
Knights of Labor (2987)	65.5%	34.5%
Working Class (66,549)	57.2%	42.8%

*Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, Table 2. State Bureau of Labor Statistics, Report, 1886, pp. 11, 39, 41. Statistical History of the United States, p. 72, D76.

Table 9

Ethnic Background of Foreign Born Workers*

	Great Britain and Ireland	Canada	Germany	Norway Sweden Denmark	Other
Knights of Labor (1130)	30%	41%	14%	10%	6%
Working Class (7621)	26%	24%	18%	16%	15%

*Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, Table 2. State Bureau of Labor Statistics Report, 1886, pp. 11, 39, 41. Statistical History of the United States, p. 72, D76.

at least in Michigan, did not.[81]

Of course differences in social background between leaders and mass membership do not necessarily mean that those leaders did not represent the membership's wishes and beliefs. However, abundant evidence (as will be shown in the next chapter) does exist to indicate ideological disagreement between the leadership and at least some sections of the organization's membership. No records of local discussions about the election of State Assembly delegates have been discovered, but certain observations do suggest that the fact of election is not by itself sufficient evidence of representativeness.

First, most assemblies did not send delegates; thus, although the State Assembly spoke for the entire organization, it was elected by only a small minority of the membership. One reason for the failure to send delegates undoubtedly was expense. Delegates paid their own traveling and living expenses unless defrayed by the local assemblies, and many assemblies probably were too poor to send delegates. The fear of loss of several days wages and perhaps a job itself undoubtedly prevented most members from volunteering for selection. Thus, the choices for convention delegate, if one were sent at all, might have been based as much on financial abilities of the potential delegate as on his representativeness of the membership.

Second, the fear of employer harassment inhibited selection of public spokesmen. The Calumet and Hecla Mining Company, for example, issued an order in November, 1885, directing the immediate dismissal of

[81]Gerald Grob, Workers and Utopia (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969), for example.

any Knight of Labor.[82] Workers who became prominent through their leadership positions were often blacklisted. Axel Burman, the State Master Workman in 1886, was blacklisted by all of the mill owners in Manistee.[83] Evidence from other states indicates that this was a widespread practice. A leader of the Knights of Labor in Cambridge Port, Massachusetts, in a letter to Terence Powderly, identified harassment of leaders as a major source of the organization's decline, "... local leaders become so well known as to be unable to get employment."[84]

Thirdly, the means of apportionment of delegates was one to an assembly regardless of size. Given the factors inhibiting the selection of delegates, it was thus clearly possible for the representatives of a few small town assemblies to dominate the machinery of the organization contrary to the wishes of the majority. At the 1888 Michigan State Assembly, for example, J. H. Mathewson, representing the ten members of the Mendon, Michigan, Local Assembly, had an equal voice with Martin Perkins representing the three hundred forty-four members of Battle Creek Local Assembly 1960.[85] Clearly then, given abundant evidence of criticism of the organization's leadership, there is no reason to assume that the elective process insured the selection of leaders who represented the views of the rank and file.

[82] The Iron Agitator, November 14, 1885.

[83] "The Labor Champions", Ross Scrapbook (1:17-20), Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

[84] W. B. Patterson to Powderly, November 18, 1887. PP.

[85] Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, p.24, Membership, July 1, 1888.

III

General comparisons indicate that the membership of the Michigan Knights was representative of the state's working class population. Investigation of employment rate, marital status, and property ownership, however, suggest that the member of the Knights was likely to be more stably employed, less geographically mobile, and more likely to have a family than the average Michigan worker. Table 10 shows that, despite employer hostility, fewer Knights than the average of all Michigan workers suffered loss of work, and those that did were out of work for shorter periods of time. Table 11 indicates that a much larger percentage of Knights were married than of all workers, and Table 12 shows that a much larger percentage of Knights owned their homes and were presumably less mobile.

As studies by Stephen Thernstrom and others have shown, workers in the nineteenth century did experience a high degree of geographic mobility.[86] Many of the Leaders of the Knights in Michigan, Tom Barry and Joseph Labadie, for example, had led the life of tramping artisans early in their careers. Frequent advertisements in labor papers such as one in the Detroit Labor Leaf in October, 1885, seeking the whereabouts of William Timms, "... last heard of in LaPorte, Indiana. His parents are sick ...", is one testimonial to the number of wandering workers.[87] The

[86]Stephen Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress (New York: Atheneum, 1969).

[87]"The Labor Champions," Ross Scrapbook (1:17-20). Detroit Labor Leaf, October 7, 1885.

Table 10

Unemployment*

	Number Losing Time in Previous Year	% of Sample	Average Number of Days Lost by Those Losing Time
Knights of Labor	1,064	40%	95
Working Class	41,534	52%	130

*Working class data from State Bureau of Labor Statistics 1886 Survey, Table 39. Knights of Labor data from State Assembly Proceedings, 1889. SBLS data given as number of days lost in previous year, while Knights data given in number of weeks. Knights figures multiplied by 6 for comparability. Ommitted were those listed under the categories of time lost "5 weeks or less" (58) and "over 26 weeks" (22) since the exact number of weeks lost cannot be determined. These ommissions and multiplications introduce only slight inaccuracy.

Table 11

Marital Status*

	Married		Single	
Knights of Labor Males	2,064	73.9%	737	26.1%
All Workers Males	27,982	53.2%	24,656	46.8%
Knights of Labor Females	174	78.3%	48	21.6%
All Workers Females	751	9.6%	7,045	90.4%

*Working class data from State Bureau of Labor Statistics 1886 Survey, Tables 27, 33. Knights of Labor data from State Assembly Proceedings, 1889.

Table 12

Home Ownership*

	Owning		Renting	
Knights of Labor	711	(51%)	678	(49%)
Working Class	11,995	(20.8%)	45,710	(79.2%)
Selected Areas:				
Buchanan				
Knights of Labor	47		27	
Working Class	63		155	
Muskegon				
Knights of Labor	2/3		none	
Working Class	251		1483	
West Bay City				
Knights of Labor	25		25	
Working Class	316		1245	
Bay City				
Knights of Labor	25%		75%	
Working Class	686		2628	
Grand Rapids				
Knights of Labor	13		9	
Working Class	1313		4407	
Holland				
Knights of Labor	5		16	
Working Class	154		295	
Lowell				
Knights of Labor	27		26	
Working Class	56		184	
East Tawas				
Knights of Labor	35		37	
Working Class	117		213	
Hillsdale				
Knights of Labor	70		85	
Working Class	93		389	

*Working class data is from the State Bureau of Labor Statistics 1886 Survey, Tables 27 and 33. Knights of Labor is from State Assembly Proceedings, 1888. Information for the Knights was presented in very unsystematic fashion; some assemblies reported exact numbers, but many gave percentages, fractions, or such designations as "all but 5", majority, etc. Only exact numbers have been included in the calculations, but many of these totals are also suspect as they are given in round numbers. Furthermore, definitions of owning and renting may vary from case to case. It is first not clear either in the case of the SBLS or the Knights whether home ownership includes those whose homes were mortgaged. Secondly, SBLS breaks down non-home owners into three categories - renting, boarding, living with parents - while the Knights make no distinctions. For these reasons the results in this Table, particularly of the Knights, should be considered much more unreliable than any of the other tables. Nevertheless, the unexpected discrepancy between the Knights and all workers was quite surprising and merited inclusion.

minutes of a cigarmakers' local union in Saginaw reveal that the organization maintained a tramp fund for the support of wandering union members.[88]

A large percentage of the work force in Michigan was employed in occupations such as agricultural laborers, mill hands, lumbermen, and miners which recruited many young, single, transient men. While these occupations made up about twenty-four percent of the working class in the 1884 State Census, they made up slightly less than fourteen percent of the Knights surveyed in 1888.[89]

On the basis of evidence uncovered thus far, it is only possible to speculate about the reasons for this pattern of apparent discrepancy with the earlier tables. It seems plausible that workers who lived in a community for some time, who had homes and families which they could not abandon easily, were more likely to form an organization or to join an existing one. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Knights would include a somewhat larger percentage of more stable married workers.

It is also conceivable, although still highly speculative, that this type of individual, who would be more integrated into his community, and thereby the predominantly conservative culture, would be less likely

[88]Minutes of Cigarmakers' Union 130, Saginaw City, November, 1885, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

[89]Lumbermen, mill operatives, miners, saw mill operatives, and agricultural labor totaled 93,086 in the 1884 State Census. This was 24% of the approximate total of 390,000 listed under working class occupations. The Knights survey in State Assembly Proceedings, 1889, included 367 in these categories out of a total of 2,646. It is possible that the difference is a result of the method of reporting. Secretaries of the Knights Assemblies which consisted of unskilled and possibly less literate mill hands and lumbermen may have been less likely to respond than the more stable assemblies of skilled workers.

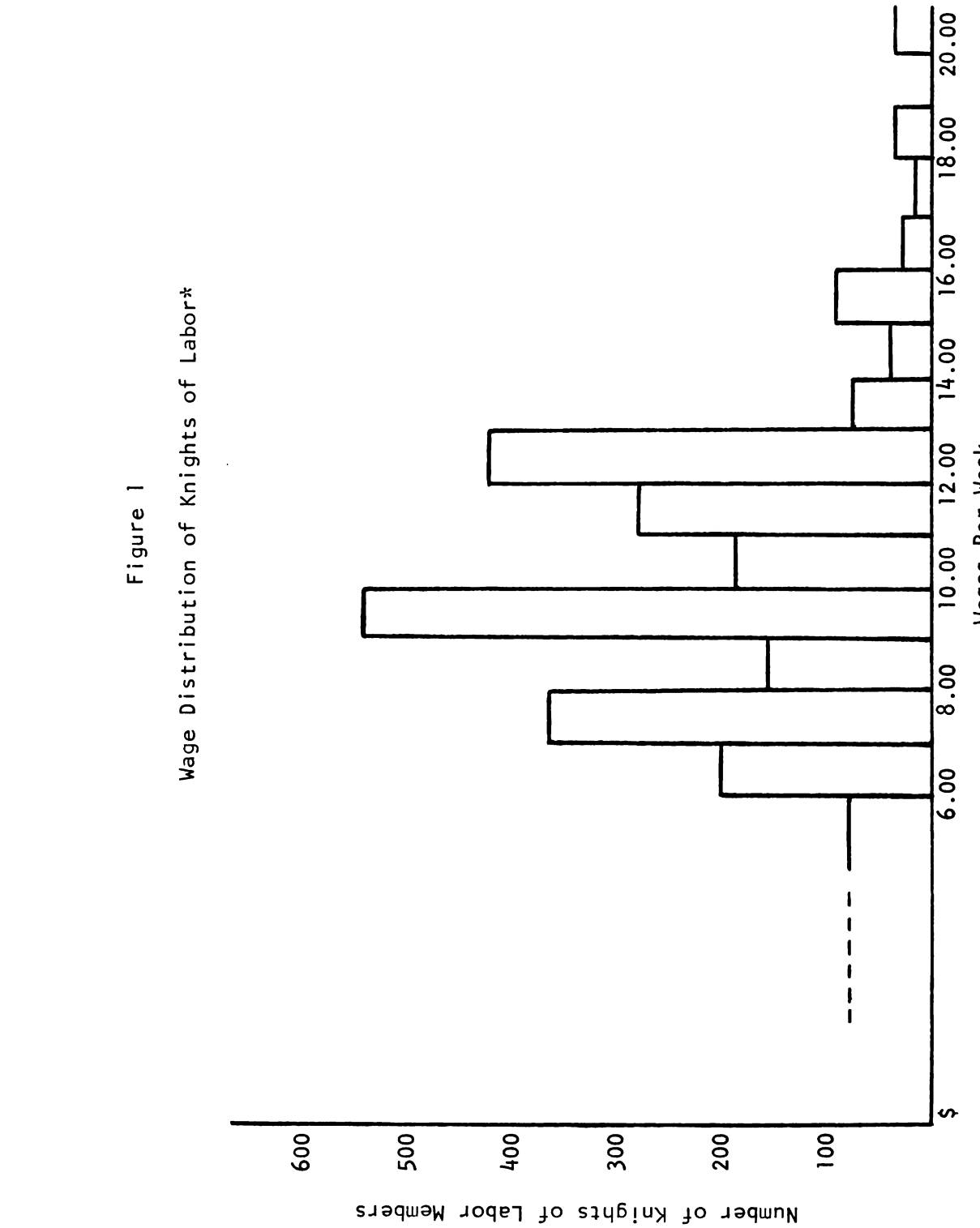
to take risks or drastic action. This more stably employed worker, although still a minority of the membership, may then have been the political base of the conservative leadership. Such workers with a larger standing in the organization would undoubtedly be familiar with procedures, possible better versed in current arguments, and more able to combine easily with like thinking friends than the migratory or semi-migratory workers who were less familiar with the local organization and local conditions. The recent arrivals would be less able to exert organized influence even when they had superiority of numbers.

The earlier tables on wages and hours present mean figures constructed from aggregate statistics for the membership of the Knights of Labor in Michigan. Such means may conceal the possibility that the membership was composed of many types, none of whom corresponded to the mean. The disparity between Tables 10-12 and the earlier information may be an indication of the differences within the composition of the membership. Table 13 gives a breakdown of wage data from which the mean wage was constructed. The pattern is not a narrow bell-shaped curve, with a cluster about the mean, but consists of large groups varying widely in their distribution. This data suggests at least that the above speculations merit further investigation.

Nevertheless, it is clear that social differences existed between the leadership of the Michigan Knights of Labor and the mass membership. Newly organized and politicized workers hoped to use the organization as a vehicle for improving their condition. The skilled and middle leadership feared that aggressive action would discredit and destroy it entirely.

Figure 1

Wage Distribution of Knights of Labor*



*See: Table 1, Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1889.

Chapter 3.

Moral Uplift Versus Mass Action: Ideological Conflict Within the Knights of Labor

I

The cleavages within the Knights of Labor eventually produced clear pro- and anti-administration factions (pro- and anti-Powderly). Defenders of the administration advocating a cautious policy feared the potential created by the influx of 1885 and 1886. Although the leaders of the opposition shared no common ideology, they were united in common disgust with the overcautious and anti-democratic policies of the organization's leadership both at the state and national levels. The pro-Powderly leadership of the state assembly was decidedly more middle class and skilled than the rank and file of the Michigan Knights. Although it cannot be shown that the critics of the state leadership had markedly different backgrounds (the key anti-administration spokesmen, Tom Barry, Joseph Labadie, and Judson Grenell were skilled workers), their ideological positions represented a defense of the interests of the unskilled against the more particularistic and socially conservative sections of the organization. Thus there seems to be a clear relationship between the early militance of rank and file workers, the social differences between the rank and file and leadership, the emergence of factions with clearly pro- and anti-democratic implications, and finally the mass desertions and collapse following the defeat of the anti-administration critics in the

late 1880's.

The division of the Knights of Labor in Michigan into increasingly bitter pro- and anti-Powderly factions after 1886 followed a national pattern. As early as February, 1886, widespread national criticism of the organization's leadership had provoked Powderly into issuing an executive order declaring that a local or district assembly

> which issues a circular or paper in opposition to or contradiction of any command or order from the G.E.B. (General Executive Board) is guilty of insubordination and may be suspended ... circulars, appeals and protests issued from local or district assemblies without the sanction of the G.E.B. must not be read in the assembly to which they are addressed.[90]

Dissenting locals and districts ignored these orders, but Powderly continued to attempt to forestall criticism. His collusion with the Home Club, a secret clique composed primarily of leaders of the New York District Assembly 49, was denounced at the Cleveland special session of the General Assembly in May and June, 1886, and an investigation was ordered. However, according to Norman Ware, Powderly suppressed the investigation in exchange for Home Club support of his salary increase to $5000 and extension of term of office from one to two years.[91]

By late 1886, according to Tom Barry, Powderly's opponent on the Executive Board, the chief activity of the board was to crush internal opposition. Barry revealed in 1888 that Powderly had employed a spy system at the 1886 Richmond Convention to keep track of all delegates suspected of being hostile to the national leadership. All suspects were numbered in order to make it easier for the hired spies, who were paid

[90]Norman Ware, The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-1895 (New York: Vintage, 1929), P. 383.

[91]Ibid., pp. 111-12.

out of the Knights general funds, to keep track of them.[92]

Powderly maintained control of the organization but was unable to squelch the opposition. As the Minneapolis convention of October 1887 approached, Tom Barry and William Bailey, the two dissenting executive board members, were publicly denouncing Powderly and the Executive Board and touring the country to gain support for the coming convention. Powderly was deluged by critical letters from all over the country. His critics accused him of sabotaging strikes by his own members, misallocating funds, and using dictatorial and autocratic methods. Requests for assistance had been repeatedly ignored. When pressed for financial aid by striking locals, Powderly pleaded financial weakness. For example, at the 1886 convention, he opposed granting $10,000 to the tanners and curriers of Peabody, Massachusetts, who had been locked out because of membership in the Knights. Barry claimed, however, that the order had $137,000 in the bank and had just spent $50,000 for a Philadelphia mansion as the organization's new headquarters.[93]

Symbolic was Powderly's response to the letter from G. S. Wimberly of Battleboro, North Carolina, dated November 7, 1887. "... a small crowd amounting to about 80 members" had been "... meeting regular every Friday night for about two months waiting for some one to organize us ... want you to send some one to our rescue ..." The letter was stamped by Powderly NO ANSWER REQUIRED.[94] Four days earlier T. Andrews, Master

[92]"The Knights of Labor Scathingly and Bitterly Denounced," clipping marked October 6, East Saginaw; MacGregor Scrapbook, LC.

[93]"Powderly Belabored", Detroit Evening News, November 16, 1887, in "Knights of Labor - History" file, LC.

[94]G. S. Wimberly, Battleboro, North Carolina to Powderly, November 7, 1887, PP.

Workman of Local Assembly 10093, Biloxi, Mississippi, had written,

> ... must we do just what the factory men say if so it was of no use of Organizing a lodge of K. of L. ... We had better disband and not Pay our monthly dues ... and forward our charter from whence it came.[95]

Mr. Andrews went on to explain that the assembly was forced to strike by employers, had received pledges of support from other assemblies, had written the General Executive Board twice and telegraphed once, but received no answer. Since they were affiliated directly to the G.E.B. (rather than with a district or state assembly), they believed they needed G.E.B. permission to strike. Powderly replied that the men did not understand the principles of the order and counseled patience.

> Up to the time you were organized the men of your place submitted to wrongs and impositions, they did this for years and it could not be expected that a reform of abuses could be brought about so hurriedly ... an investigation will be made in your case.[96]

The Minneapolis Convention in October, 1887, opened amid bitter credentials disputes in which Powderly succeeded in unseating several hostile delegates.[97] Barry and Bailey refused to sign the Executive Board report, claiming it falsified expenditures in an attempt to conceal financial irregularities. Barry denounced Powderly from the floor, describing how he had broken the Chicago stockyard strike by ordering the workers back to work on penalty of expulsion even though several of the owners had already agreed to the strikers' demand for the eight hour day. John Hayes, General Secretary, had secretly contributed the order's funds

[95] John T. Andres, Biloxi, Mississippi, November 3, 1887, to T. V. Powderly, PP.

[96] T. V. Powderly to John T. Andrews, November 9, 1887, PP.

[97] Including Mrs. Marian Todd of Michigan, Labor Journal, October 21, 1887.

to political campaigns of friends in Maine after Powderly had forbidden similar contributions to the Workingman's candidate for Chicago mayor, Robert Nelson. Finally, Barry and his allies argued that Powderly was supporting the judicial murder of the Chicago Anarchists who had been unjustly accused in the Haymarket bombing.[98]

Powderly responded by demanding the expulsion of Barry and Bailey. He declared from the speakers' platform that anarchists were trying to murder him because he opposed anarchy. Although he failed to achieve the desired expulsions, he succeeded in defeating a resolution demanding clemency for the Chicago Anarchists by declaring that the order would never be able to hold another General Assembly if it became identified with anarchy.[99]

Powderly's opponents held a rump convention in Chicago after the General Assembly and set up a Provisional Committee for the purpose of forming a new organization. But although many locals and districts expressed anger at the results of the Minneapolis Convention, few were willing to abandon the order. Joseph Labadie returned to Detroit from the meeting of the Provisional Committee, submitted his report to District Assembly 50, and resigned from the Knights of Labor in disgust.[100]

Barry, however, vowed to fight on. "I have made up my mind to fight the gang and I shall do so regardless of the consequences ..."[101] But most of his allies either quit the rapidly disintegrating organization,

[98]"Powderly Belabored," Detroit Evening News, November 16, 1887, in "Knights of Labor - History" file, LC.

[99]Ibid.

[100]Charles F. Seib to J. Labadie, Chicago, November 23, 1887, LC; John Ehmann to Labadie, Wheeling, West Virginia, February 13, 1888, LC.

[101]Barry to Labadie, September 9, 1888, LC.

or were expelled by the Powderly controlled Executive Board. Although Barry received enthusiastic welcomes when he spoke to large crowds in Toronto and New York, he was unable to mobilize and organize this sentiment. Powderly retained complete control. At the 1888 convention in Indianapolis, both Barry and Bailey were expelled by overwhelming majorities, but the delegates who expelled them represented less than one-third as many members as the delegates to the Richmond Convention only two years earlier.[102]

II

Factional lines in Michigan do not seem to have been clearly drawn until just before the Minneapolis Convention of October, 1887, although there were already some indications of division at the 1886 State Assembly. A resolution urging General Assembly delegates to vote for Powderly as General Master Workman was passed, but a similar resolution recognizing the service of Tom Barry and urging him to remain on the Executive Board was tabled. A year later the State Assembly resolved to "... support and strengthen the administration as now given us by our General Master Workman T. V. Powderly."[103]

By that time, candidates for General Assembly delegates were recognized as pro- or anti-Powderly men. James Hamilton, a St. Clair baker and State Assembly delegate in both 1887 and 1888, explained in a letter

[102]Barry to Labadie, September 19, 1888, LC; Toronto, April 2, 1888; New York, October 5, 1888, LC.

[103]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1886; State Assembly Proceedings, 1887, p. 37, LC.

to Powderly just after the Minneapolis Convention that he had voted for John M. Decker as General Assembly delegate "because he was a Powderly man."[104]

District Assembly 50 in Detroit was the center of anti-Powderly sentiment. Joseph Labadie, one of Powderly's most bitter critics, was elected General Assembly delegate. His report of the Minneapolis Convention was a scathing denunciation of Powderly and the national administration. Labadie held Powderly personally responsible for the execution of the Chicago Anarchists. The General Master Workman had made an "illogical, cowardly, brutal, and violent speech" on the resolution to support them. "I hold him as much responsible for the murder committed in Chicago last Friday (the execution of the anarchists) as anyone connected with the most unfortunate affair." He concluded,

> ... I have declared open warfare upon those who use this order or the labor movement for immediate gain at the expense of its future development. The present general officers of the Knights of Labor must go before the order can proceed on its rightful mission towards a just settlement of social and industrial evils. Large salaries and large powers have unfitted them to lead a labor movement successfully.[105]

The District Assembly began the open warfare that Labadie urged by authorizing the printing of his report for widespread distribution.[106]

Powderly was bitterly aware of Labadie's opposition. "... Joe Labadie makes a very unfair report," he confided to his secretary, "but I will get even with him."[107] Powderly was convinced "that Labadie did not

[104]Jas. M. Hamilton, St. Clair, Michigan, November 17, 1887, to Powderly, PP.

[105]"Powderly Belabored", Detroit Evening News, November 16, 1887, in "Knights of Labor - History" file, LC.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Powderly to Emma (Fickenscherr), November 22, 1887, PP.

represent the true sentiments of DA 50 ... There are good men in the order in Detroit," he wrote his friend A. M. Dewey, "... but they sit quietly down and allow a few active men to run away with them ... they have elected a man who is known to oppose the true principles of Knighthood ..." Perhaps aware of the true weakness of his position in Detroit, he admitted that he was "... acquainted with no one there in whom I have confidence outside of Devlin and yourself ... Can you not sit down with Devlin, make out a list of the good members of the Order and endeavor to have them bestir themselves?..."[108]

But Devlin wrote Powderly three weeks later that the situation in Detroit was more hopeless than he had realized. Labadie had presented his report the night before.

> ... we had quite a time in the DA. last evening ... something must be done and that soon to counteract the influence of Bro. Labadie ... I believe ... and others who do not take stock in anarchy that it is absolutely necessary that you should come to Detroit ... I would not write asking you to come if I did not know that you are perhaps the only one who can right the wrong that is contemplated ...[109]

Dewey indicated a week later that his position in Detroit was untenable. He had defended the order from "that bloodthirsty element ... which would wreck the movement upon the shoals of anarchy." He pleaded with Powderly for a job on the Knights' national journal because "... the Labadie gang in Detroit have determined to make it 'hot' for me there, and I don't propose to give them the chance any longer ..."[110]

[108] Powderly to A. M. Dewey, October 23, 1887, PP.

[109] John Devlin to Powderly, Windsor, Ontario, November 16, 1887, PP.

[110] A. M. Dewey to Powderly, Binghamton, New York, November 25, 1887, PP.

The debate over the Minneapolis Convention was hotly contested in the Saginaw Valley. District Assembly 88 in Bay City sent Powderly a strong resolution of support, but John Decker, one of the State Assembly's General Assembly delegates, warned Powderly that "... the delegate from District 74 (East Saginaw) has I am told commenced to make his report on the street corners." Decker had been traveling from assembly to assembly defending Powderly, but felt he did not have sufficient information to counter Barry's charges. "... the Locals here have asked the District Master Workman to call a joint meeting of all the Locals in the two Saginaws and hear both sides ... I expect Bro. Barry will be present." Decker asked Powderly for "a full statement ... I want all the light I can get ... it is very necessary everything should be done for there is a division of sentiment ..."[111]

A year later the Detroit Onward reported that Powderly had maintained control. "... persistent war ... has been waged on all who were outspoken opponents of the centralizing and despotic tendencies of Mr. Powderly and his friends ..." Critics had simply quit. "The great majority of those left in the order today are satisfied with him." But the Knights had "no hope for the future ... the order today does not represent the masses." The results of Powderly's Pyrrhic victory" ... are to be seen today in a membership of less than one-fifth."[112]

Barry returned to Saginaw after his expulsion at the Indianapolis Convention in 1888 to organize a new movement, The Brotherhood of United

[111]A. W. Dosland, R.S. D.A. 88, West Bay City, November 7, 1887 to Powderly; J. M. Decker to Powderly, East Saginaw, November 24, 1887, PP.

[112]"Knights of Labor - Disunion in the Past - No Hope for the Future," Detroit Onward, December 1, 1888, LC.

Labor. He wrote Labadie, "I have letters from more than three hundred people asking me to start a new movement. I have concluded to do so."[113] Powderly directed Hayes to "send $100 of the educational fund to T.M. Sheriff of Michigan ... We must have a man at work at once in Michigan to counteract the effect of Barry's ravings and Sheriff is in the field already."[114]

Barry succeeded in chartering a few locals in his new Brotherhood in the Saginaw Valley, but Onward reported that the Federation of Trades was "... absorbing the vitality which used to characterize the Knights of Labor."[115] In 1889 the Michigan Federation of Labor held its first meeting with Labadie as the organization's first chairman. Barry, however, recognized a crucial weakness of the trade union federation. "... the trades require the moral support of the very numerous class of Laborers who can't be organized into the trades..."[116] The MFL made token efforts at organizing the unskilled in federal labor unions, but Barry's criticism proved true in the 1890's. Despite the increasing size of the working class, the MFL was far weaker than the Knights had been in the 1880's and as late as 1901 reported only twenty thousand members.[117]

[113]Barry to Labadie, undated, LC.

[114]Powderly to John Hayes, Scranton, December 13, 1888, Hayes Papers.

[115]Various clippings in the Barry Scrapbooks (Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan) give glowing accounts of the BUL's progress with membership quoted as high as 40,000, but the organization did not last beyond 1890 or 1891. "Knights of Labor..", Onward.

[116]Barry to Labadie, February 25, 1889, LC.

[117]Michigan Federation of Labor, Convention Proceedings, 1901, LC.

III

At times as factional debate descended to the level of personality struggle and petty wrangling over alleged financial mismanagement, ideological distinctions were obscured, but these debates within the Knights of Labor reveal fundamental philosophical disagreements over the nature and goals of the labor movement. Perhaps most irreconcilable were the basically different conceptions of organization. This difference arose at the national level within the General Executive Board between Powderly and Barry and at the state level between the leaders of the State Assembly and their opponents in the District Assemblies.

The leaders of the State Assembly conceived of the Knights of Labor in terms modeled after a middle class debating society. "The more I consider and reflect upon the subject," said the State Master Workman in 1887, "...the more fully I am convinced that the entire work of the organization is moral uplift, ..."the elevating of the masses intellectually and morally, and the lifting of the lower to a higher plane of thinking and living."[118] Vast numbers were not crucial. Even as his order was disintegrating, Henry Allen, the State Master Workman in 1890, foresaw a "grand triumph ... to all efforts for the uplifting of the masses."[119] "Our principles," declared the Labor Journal are "Intelligence, sobriety, industry."[120]

[118]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1887, LC.

[119]Henry Allen to Labadie, Schoolcraft, Michigan, July 6, 1890, LC.

[120]"Our Principles," Michigan Labor Journal, June 21, 1884.

Indeed, the rapid growth of the organization was disconcerting to those who saw their goals in terms of education and moral uplift. The Labor Journal feared that it was growing too rapidly and "gaining agitators" who did not understand that "The real object of the order is EDUCATION, not revolution and the destruction of the business interests of the country ..."[121] As early as 1885, the state Assembly warned that "locals should exercise increased caution in admitting members - admitting only those whose record is guarantee of loyalty to our principles."[122]

The fear of growth was based on ambivalence towards the masses of unskilled workers. Morally oriented conservatives conceived of their organization as an exclusive society confined largely to skilled workers and middle class sympathizers with sufficient character to appreciate the order's elevated moral fiber. "The blackball ... is one means of self-protection which we fear, is sadly neglected by the Knights of Labor," lamented the Labor Journal.[123] "For skilled and unskilled labor to unite in one organization is one of labor's great mistakes ... the great unorganized hosts of idlers are laboring man's worst enemies ... without the assistance (or rather the existence) of this army of idlers and loafers monopoly would not compete for a moment against organized labor. The bummer element is monopoly's protection."[124] State Master Workman Barnes more charitably allowed that the order should admit men of "low morality

[121]Alpena Labor Journal, March 19, 1886.

[122]Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1885, Resolution #5, LC.

[123]Alpena Labor Journal, March 19, 1886.

[124]Ibid., November 26, 1886.

to improve them," but the editor of the Labor Journal appeared more skeptical of the prospects for improvement when he declared his opposition to the eight hour day "and kindred nonsense ... Workingmen would just waste extra time in brothels and gambling dens."[125]

Militant action was useless and dangerous, these conservatives argued, until the process of education and moral uplift had succeeded because "The fault's not in our system of government, it is in the people themselves." Capitalists held power simply because they were smarter. "So long as a minority can monopolize the intelligence," remarked the Labor Journal, "it will monopolize everything else."[126] What should workers do? Terence Powderly cautioned a Kentucky local to

> Go slowly, act cautiously, and go half way or more than that to meet the employers in a friendly spirit ... maintain the dignity of your calling and let conciliation prevail in all your dealings with your employers.[127]

How was intelligence to be acquired? It "can never come through a shotgun," the Labor Journal argued. "It must come through the industry and sobriety of the people themselves, assisted by a good library."[128]

In contrast to this philosophy of moral uplift and selective membership, Tom Barry, Joseph Labadie, Judson Grenell and their supporters conceived of an all emcompassing and fighting class organization. They agreed on the need for education; Grenell complained to Labadie about the lack of class consciousness. "The people know how to produce wealth,

[125]Alpena Labor Journal, August 12, 1887; May 7, 1886.

[126]"Objects of Knights of Labor", Alpena Labor Journal, February 21, 1885.

[127]Powderly to Marquis L. Vestal, Esq., November 11, 1887, PP.

[128]Alpena Labor Journal, February 21, 1885.

but the masses are still as babes when approaching the subject of its scientific and equitable distribution."[129] But education would come only through a process of active struggle where people learned through their own experiences. It could not be handed down by leaders or moralists.

Tom Barry explained that his new Brotherhood of United Labor, in contrast to the Knights, would be "progressive and agressive." "... we have endeavored to bring the labor movement down to the hearthstone, to the individual," he declared.

> ...success or failure rests with us individually as well as collectively, for in the world's history of the struggle of the toilers, no movement has ever been a success where the people were dependent upon leaders, hence the necessity of teaching self reliance to the masses.[130]

"If ever a solution of the social problem is found it must be done through the honest, earnest, active, and intelligent aggressiveness of the working people."[131]

Militant action was education in itself. Strikes were beneficial according to Judson Grenell, even when the workers lost, because of the experience gained. "... it is foolish or worse to speak of strikes as failure. Only through strikes has progress been made, and only through strikes will there be an advance in civilization."[132]

Joseph Labadie was incensed at Joseph Collins, the editor of the Labor Journal, for his denunciation of strikes. Collins had declared that "... if they (the Knights of Labor) persist in countenancing

[129]Judson Grenell to Labadie, Undated, LC.

[130]"Organic Law of the Brotherhood of United Labor - 1889", Explanatory Circular to the Working People of America, LC.

[131]Ibid.

[132]Alpena Labor Journal, September 26, 1885.

strikes - under any circumstances - and encouraging boycotts of any kind, we are against them." Labadie admitted that some strikes might be ill advised, "... but for a labor paper to say it is against a body of men who would strike under any circumstances is to put it on the side of the worst capitalist." Strikes were only a symptom of "a diseased industrial system" and would not solve the basic problem by themselves but "... When men have just cause of complaint, and can remedy their grievances by a strike, not to strike is cowardly." Collins replied simply that workers "should boycott whiskey" rather than their employers.[133]

To Tom Barry attitudes such as those displayed by Collins were the root cause of the Knights' decline.

> It is about time that those who occupy positions of recognized leadership in the Knights of Labor should cease to condemn the enforced doings of the honest masses who are sincerely endeavoring to protect their interests.[134]

While the Labor Journal argued that "... the ballot ... (is) ... the only medium through which redress for the wrongs of the laboring masses can ever be attained," the Detroit Onward felt this was self-deception. "It is no use deluding the people any longer with the idea that they elect anybody ... The people vote but they have nothing to say as to who they will vote for."[135]

The Detroit Labor Leaf urged workers to arm and train themselves for self defense.

> I am not yet convinced that a revolution or any great change in economic conditions can or ever will be brought about by

[133]Alpena Labor Journal, December 10, 1886.

[134]Barry Scrapbooks, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan.

[135]Alpena Labor Journal, June 21, 1884; Onward, November 1, 1888.

> the ballot ... working people should be armed with something better than mud balls, sticks, and stones when the whole powerful machinery of government is turned upon them at the bid of capital.[136]

Nor was this only idle talk. Advertisement in the Labor Leaf solicited recruits for the Detroit Rifles. Prospective members who were members of a trade union or the Knights of Labor and could supply their own arms were urged to apply at the offices of the Labor Leaf. A worker identified only as WINCHESTER explained why.

> ...When you have a gun and know how to use it you are not so likely to have trouble ... should trouble come the capitalists will use the regular army and militia to shoot down those who are not satisfied. It won't be so if the people are equally ready, like their forefathers of 1776.[137]

The conflicting attitudes within the Knights toward the goals and scope of organization and the means of accomplishing goals were based on conflicting assumptions about class relations. Although the Knights argued for abolition of the wage system, men like Collins did not mean to imply by this an indictment of the capitalist class. It was not from their employers, according to Collins, that workers should look for redress. "Capital justly earned and honestly invested is entitled to a reasonable reward ... riches are no sin when acquired by industry and good management."[138]

It was therefore, unjust to make unreasonable demands of capital. "Combinations of laboring men have no more right to force employers to raise wages than combinations of employers have to force workingmen to work for starvation wages ..." There was no conflict between labor and capital, they should "be allies not enemies," and workers should "demand

[136]Detroit Labor Leaf, August 26, 1885.

[137]Ibid., April 21, 1886.

[138]Alpena Labor Journal, June 6, 1885; September 27, 1884.

justice for both." Acquisition of wealth was beneficial to mankind. "Society would relapse into barbarism if we should remove the stimulus and incentive to acquisition ... Every man has a right to be as rich as the rest of mankind will let him be."[139]

Thus, what abolition of the wage system meant to Collins was that every worker should seek to be his own employer, i.e., to become a capitalist. "Capitalists are not to blame for monopolizing the earth," but rather the refusal of workers to recognize the true causes of their poverty.

> Want of intelligence among the laboring masses is the primary cause of hard times. ... there is no conflict between capital and labor; the conflict is between the intelligence and ignorance of the parties concerned. When laborers become the intelligent class they will be the capitalists.[140]

The only barriers to success, according to the Labor Journal, was "class legislation" by which "all men are not equal before the law." The place then, for workers to uphold their interests was at the ballot box. Instead of striking, the Labor Journal urged workers to "VOTE AS YOU STRIKE: IN SOLID COLUMNS" to strike down monopolistic legislation.[141]

Perhaps the clearest indicator of the Labor Journal's attitude was a featured column entitled "HOW TO GET RICH", by Ben Butler, late National Party presidential nominee. Butler urged workers to buy property "preferably improved", which bears rent.[142] How Alpena workers, who were practically starving, according to the Labor Journal, would acquire the money to buy property is unclear. Perhaps the local real estate agents

[139]Alpena Labor Journal, March 11, 1887; June 14, 1884; April 9, 1886.

[140]Ibid., December 26, 1885; February 21, 1885.

[141]Ibid., September 27, 1884; April 9, 1886.

[142]Ibid., October 7, 1887.

would accept their "intelligence, sobriety, and industry" as collateral.

J. F. Bray, a frequent correspondent in the Labor Leaf denounced the absurdity of such advice. "The idea of limitation of wealth by law, taxation, or familiar means is fallacious ... our class divisions into employers and employed was responsible for all the social and governmental evils."[143] Judson Grenell wrote in the Labor Leaf that labor was demanding "... deliverance ... from the degradation of a system which metes to the worker only a bare subsistence from all the wealth he creates."[144] Individual escape from such degradation was impossible according to Tom Barry. "... trusts and combinations of capitalism ... makes it absolutely necessary that the toilers should combine their forces for mutual interest and protection."[145]

Various alternatives to class collaboration and moral uplift were proposed by leaders of the anti-Powderly group in the Michigan Knights. Bray argued unambiguiously for socialism. The Detroit Onward, one of the more conservative anti-Powderly critics, proposed Henry George's single tax as an alternative to socialism. "Single taxers are true conservatives", Onward argued.

> They propose to secure what others seek - perfect freedom and equality for all citizens, through the simplest form of taxation, instead of changing our entire form of government or overthrowing it completely.[146]

The Labor Leaf took a more eclectic approach. "Any ism which conscientiously tries to improve the condition of the people should be

[143] John Swinton's Paper, June 1, 1884.

[144] Detroit Labor Leaf, December 2, 1885

[145] Explanatory Circular, LC.

[146] Detroit Labor Leaf, September 30, 1885; Onward, April 25, 1890.

considered fairly on its merits,"[147] In 1886, in response to popular demand, according to the editors, the Labor Leaf began a series on the principles of socialism. Joseph Labadie argued without philisophical labels that the labor movement should oppose interest on money, profit on labor and rent on land.[148]

Thus, although they were sympathetic to various radical ideologies, the radicals in the Michigan Knights and the organizers of the anti-Powderly faction had no comprehensive clear and consistent ideology in common. What held them together other than their common antagonism to Powderly and his sympathizers was a conception of organization that was both all encompassing and militant, and a conception of class which argued that all workers had common interested which conflicted with those of the employing or business class. The practical importance of these common assumptions was the resulting willingness to support all struggles initiated by workers even when they felt that individual strikes might be ill advised, and feelings of active solidarity which lead them to defend all workers subjected to political or judicial attack even when they had philosophical disagreements with the victims.

This genuine sense of solidarity was perhaps best illustrated by Barry and Labadie's defense of the Chicago Anarchists. For the Labor Journal, there was no problem of conscience. The week after the Haymarket incident, the paper declared the distrubance was merely

> ... caused by the foolish interference of the police with a meeting of unorganized anarchists and socialists of foreign extraction brought here by the capitalists of this country under contract to compete with honest Labor. Knights of

[147]Detroit Labor Leaf, September 30, 1885.

[148]"Cranky Notes", Detroit Labor Leaf, December 2, 1885.

> Labor had nothing to do with these strikes and riots. Let the Chicago capitalists and their own foreign laborers fight it out among themselves. It's only a family quarrel.[149]

When the verdict of death was handed down the Labor Journal applauded.

> It may have a moralizing influence on those un-American agitators who believe that the grievances of an oppressed people can be redressed by bombs of Dynamite, and banishment of such men is necessary to the preservation of the Republic.[150]

Labadie had some philosophical misgivings about the Chicago Anarchists. Although he also considered himself an anarchist, he thought the Chicago anarchists were hasty in their advocacy of violence.

> ... many anarchists hope to reach the goal of their ideal only through the slow process of evolution, but not by the sanguinary methods proclaimed by Most, Schwab, "The Alarm", and that class of people.[151]

Nevertheless, he never hesitated in defending them from what he saw as a purposeful political attack by Chicago capitalists. August Spies wrote Labadie from the Cook County jail two months before his execution thanking him for his support.

> Friend Labadie - It is most gratifying to us to see that in the general stampede of cowardly retreat there are at least some voices who boldly and fearlessly proclaim the Truth.[152]

It was Powderly's refusal to condemn what Labadie saw as "judicial murder" which lead Labadie to abandon the Knights. He continued to agitate on the question long after the execution and provoked a major quarrel at the 1890 M.F.L. convention by his reference to the "judicial murders".

[149]Alpena Labor Journal, May 7, 1886.

[150]Ibid., August 27, 1886.

[151]Labadie to Richard T. Ely, June 4, 1885, cited in Sidney Fine, "The Ely-Labadie Letters", Michigan History, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 1-32.

[152]August Spies to Labadie, County Jail, Chicago, Illinois, September 7, 1886, LC.

In contrast, the 1887 Michigan State Assembly of Knights, after declaring its loyalty to Powderly, announced in no uncertain terms, "We denounce Anarchy and sectional strife, and recognize no flag save the stars and stripes of our common country."[153]

IV

Within two years of Labadie's resignation at the end of 1887, the Knights of Labor had declined into insignificance. However, the labor movement and working class activity did not decline markedly. The collapse of the Knights is thus problematical and historians have presented several theories to explain its rapid decline. Those most frequently mentioned are adverse public reaction to the Haymarket bombing, employer harassment, rivalry with trade unions, and an outmoded ideology and form of organization. The evidence for the Knights of Labor in Michigan suggests that at least for Michigan these explanations are inadequate.

The Haymarket theory simply contradicts available evidence on membership trends. During the period immediately following the incident, the Knights experienced their most rapid growth. Decline in membership began only a year later. There is no evidence that Michigan Knights suffered any adverse publicity as a result of Haymarket.

Employer hostility was certainly a reality, but by itself it is also an inadequate explanation. In the early and mid-1880's such hostility seemed to produce greater determination. Persecution of strike

[153]Michigan Federation of Labor, Convention Proceedings, 1890, LC; Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1887, p. 40, LC.

leaders such as Tom Barry was in itself a major organizing issue. There is no evidence to indicate greater employer hostility in the late 1880's. On the contrary, there are indications that some employers accepted the existence of labor organization and displayed a greater willingness to arbitrate disputes.[154]

Disputes with the trade unions have been the major theme of several studies of the Knights which attempt to show essentially that the Knights lost in their rivalry with a growing AFL. Although there may be some validity to this explanation at the national level, it is not borne out in Michigan. References to dispute with trade unions are infrequent and balanced by evidence of cooperation. For example, Cigarmakers Local 130 worked closely with the Knights in Saginaw. After several unsuccessful attempts to settle disputes with employers in 1885, the local appealed to the local Master Workman of the Knights who successfully exerted pressure on the employers to comply with the local's demands. The local urged all of its members to join the Knights of Labor, and submitted an article to the national journal of the Cigarmakers urging closer cooperation with the Knights. Thus, at the time that Gompers and Strasser, the national leaders of the Cigarmakers were urging war on the Knights, Saginaw cigarmakers were urging closer ties.[155]

Finally we have the arguments presented most notably by Gerald Grob that the Knights were an outmoded organization based on a reformist middle class Jacksonian ideology which did not comprehend the nature of

[154] Knights of Labor, State Assembly Proceedings, 1886, Reports of successful arbitration, LC.

[155] Rivalry with trade unions is the major theme of Norman Ware, Labor Movement. Cigarmakers' Union 130, Minutes, Saginaw City, November 6, 1885, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

modern industrial civilization. According to Grob, the Knights were a dismal failure as a labor organization and were superceded by the hard-headed, down-to-earth AFL who succeeded because they accepted the reality of American conditions and society. The backwardness of the Knights, according to Grob, is exemplified by their assertion "that only the basic transformation of the structure of society could solve the difficulties of the working class."[156]

Grob's picture of the Knights is drawn from Powderly's correspondence and writings of other national leaders sympathetic to him. It is questionable whether Powderly's philosophy was so much outmoded as rather merely conservative, but Grob's characterization of Powderly adequately describes his philosophy and that of his supporters in the leadership of the Michigan State Assembly. It is certainly not adequate as a characterization of the Michigan Knights in general.

Nor does the MFL appear to be the new dynamic organization that Grob purports to find in the AFL. As Norman Ware has suggested, the AFL in the 1890's, rather than a new departure in trade union philosophy, may be better understood as a strategic retreat from a position of greater weakness.[157] This is certainly the case in Michigan. The convention proceedings of the MFL in the 1890's reproduce the ideological debates and cleavages of the Knights in the 1880's. The most important difference between the two organizations was the greater weakness of the MFL in the early 1890's. National membership statistics for the AFL reveal that the organization was less successful at mass organization than Grob

[156]Gerald Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 36.

[157]Ware, Labor Movement, p. xii.

has suggested. The peak membership of the Knights was close to one million while AFL membership hovered around a quarter million during most of the 1890's reaching half a million for the first time in 1900. It was not until the unionization drives of the First World War that the AFL exceeded the Knights peak of 7.5% of non-agricultural workers organized with a peak of about 11% in 1919. But AFL membership fell again in 1933 to 6% of the non-agricultural work force.[158]

Indeed close examination of the implications of Gompers' philosophy reveals greater similarities with Powderly than are at first apparent. Gompers' seemingly more practical recognition of the bargaining power of skilled workers did not negate his belief in laissez faire and class collaboration. Both Powderly and Gompers demanded not governmental support for labor but a redefinition of free enterprise which recognized the workers, particularly skilled workers, as solid citizens and free and equal competitors. Early MFL conventions debated, for example, whether labor organizations should support demands for shorter hours. Conservatives felt that such legislation was needed to protect the weak - women and children - but that it threatened the independence of the healthy male worker. An editorial in the June, 1923, issue of the American Federationist exhibits the persistence of this spirit:

> Wards of the State or Free Citizens
>
> ... wage earners are the full equals of all other citizens in

[158]Official membership statistics give a peak membership for the Knights of Labor about 730,000 in July, 1886, declining to 548,000 by July, 1887. In his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Attempts to Unify the American Labor Movement, Howard Gitelman estimates on the basis of the number of reports of new charters granted that the membership reached a peak of close to one million in late 1886 or early 1887 before declining to the July, 1887 figure; Statistical History of the United States, p. 72 D36-45, non-farm workers 1890; 13.38 million; p. 74, 1920: 30.5 million; p.72, 1930: 38.4 million. AFL membership, 1919: 3.26 million, 1933: 2.127 million, p. 97.

> their rights and privileges. American wage earners because of this fact are in no sense to be considered wards of the state, unfortunates who, because of their limited rights, or mental inability to protect themselves in the hurly-burly of life require the special protecting of the state.[159]

The problem from the point of view of a great many workers with either Powderly's utopianism or Gompers' more classic liberalism was that not only did they counsel acceptance of the existing order, but that even the limited model of worker-as-solid-citizen was so narrowly defined that it was impossible for those without skills or training to attain. We cannot know for sure why workers left the Michigan Knights of Labor, but we do know that most who left did not join the AFL.

The sequence of events is at least suggestive. In the early 1880's, growing discontent, strike activity and politicization characterized the situation leading to the growth of a mass labor organization in the mid-1880's. Then growing criticism emerged of the skilled and middle class leadership of that organization which sought to define its goals in terms antagonistic to the interests of the unskilled and semi-skilled. Following an unsuccessful assault on this leadership, the organization declined rapidly. Some of the remnants of the Knights helped to organize the new MFL in 1889, but the MFL remained an exclusive and generally passive group in the early 1890's. At the same time, the state's executive office files reveal renewed militance and solidarity among rank and file workers. Violent miners strikes were quelled by state troops at Houghton in 1890, and Osceola in 1892. In 1894, when the Gogebic County sheriff requested troops to subdue four thousand miners who had control of the mines and had fired on scabs and mine officials, the Governor was

[159] American Federationist, June, 1923.

unable to comply because the railroad engineers refused to move troops until they got orders from Eugene Debs. In Iron Mountain in the same year, according to local officials, five hundred workers marched down the main street behind a red flag demanding food and work. Officials complained they could not find sufficient deputies "not in sympathy with the rioters" to keep order. At Battle Creek and Delray, railroad workers vowed to stop all trains, by force if necessary, in solidarity with Debs and the American Railway Union. Finally in the late 1890's the MFL exhibited greater aggressiveness and growth after it came under Socialist leadership.

The sequence of events thus suggests that the ideological and factional disputes within the Knights in the 1880's may have been the primary cause of decline. According to Gerald Grob, "... the typical worker, lacking in a mature sense of class consciousness, was also an expectant capitalist or incipient entrepreneur."[160] How Mr. Grob discovered the typical worker or arrived at his opinions is unclear from the evidence in his study. The evidence for Michigan suggests, on the contrary, that many workers rejected the capitalist expectations of the kind of leaders Grob has described.

The objection might be raised that if so many workers were politicized why did the anti-Powderly faction fail? This problem merits further research, but a letter to Labadie from another organizer of the Provisional Committee provides one clue. "My position as a kicker is approved but not as a seceder. I could not get any assembly to attach itself wholly to the Prov. Comm ..."[161]

[160]Grob, Workers and Utopia, p. 166 fn.

[161]John Ehmann to Labadie, Wheeling, West Virginia, Feb. 13, 1888,LC.

More important, however, were the weaknesses of the anti-Powderly leaders themselves. Labadie and especially Barry tended to view the conflict in personal terms. The enemy was Terence Powderly, or later Samuel Gompers, but neither Barry nor Labadie attempted a coherent explanation of the implications of their opponents' policies and the relationships between the ideological disputes within the organization and a more basic critique of the capitalist modernization process. Barry seemed unable to view ideological disputes except in personal terms. He wrote Labadie in 1907, "Sammy Gompers is as big a grafter as Powderly was ...",[162] but provided no more explanation for the continued weakness of the labor movement which they both acknowledged.

After a brief career in the MFL and as a supporter of reforming Detroit mayor and governor Hazen Pingree, Labadie settled down to the life of anarchist poet and early day hippie. Barry, Labadie, and Grenell became supporters of Deb's socialist party, but none of them seem to have had a very sophisticated understanding of socialism. The failure of the radical leadership to provide discontented workers with a coherent and comprehensive critique of capitalist development was their crucial weakness.

[162]Barry to Labadie, September 2, 1907.

Chapter 4.

Implications for the Study of American Labor History

Clearly, some of the conclusions arrived at here demand further research and substantiation, but the data presented suggest at least that there are grounds to undertake more widespread study in earnest. If organizations such as the Knights of Labor were not only representative of many workers who were not actually members but also more militant at the rank and file level than would be expected from an examination of leadership sources, what may be needed is not only a reassessment of the Knights, but a major reassessment of basic assumptions about late Nineteenth Century industrial development.

It is generally assumed that the high level of political and social upheaval in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries was an unfortunate by-product of unprecendented social and economic changes: tensions and turbulence growing out of a "search for order."[163] Consider the following passage from a well known work.

> ... This was a period when the immense productive powers of the country were in transition from one system to another. The great problem was adjustment. Some turbulence was bound to attend the search for answers to the questions of what was fair and just and to the even more searching query of what was feasible and possible. That labor did not crystallize into a permanent party of discontent, not come to regard itself as a group apart from the community with no responsibility for the common welfare, was a tribute to the discernment,

[163] Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order (New York: Hill and Want, 1967.)

foresight and flexibility of both labor and capital.[164]

Labor and capital, according to this account, shared a harmony of beliefs: both shared a natural rights philosophy, both concurred in the nature and meaning of the industrialization process. Their dispute, after some initial confusion, was merely over the size of the paycheck or the length of the working day. Perhaps, if by labor we mean labor bureaucrats such as Powderly or Gompers, such harmony existed. But how do we know what workers, most or even many workers, thought? Certainly we cannot assume without considerable evidence that leaders of organized labor, which composed less than ten percent of the working class, were representative of all workers, particularly when evidence exists that many leaders were not even representative of the members of their own organizations.

In the essay cited above, the evidence of class harmony consists of two post facto arguments. First, labor had an opportunity to defend its interests through political action. "It (politics) simply asked them to the ballot box and vote their interests."[165] The alleged failure to do so is, therefore, evidence that workers did not see themselves as having basic interests different from their employers. Second, labor did not develop into a permanent underclass; are we, therefore, to conclude that discontent did not exist? The first argument ignores the persistence of independent tickets and third party attempts through the 1920's, the difficulties for workers to succeed in political action, and the wealth of

[164]Edward C. Kirkland, Industry Comes of Age (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1961) excerpt in Allen Davis and Harold Woodmen, eds., Conflict and Consensus in Modern American History (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1972) p. 121.

[165]Ibid., p. 109.

non-electoral political action engaged in by workers. The second it-must-have-been-so argument avoids analysis of contemporary evidence, and rests instead on the common assumption that consensus, stability, or order are norms and therefore not problematic.[166]

Consider, in contrast, some letters from the mid-eighties:

> ... The thing very plain for the working people to do is abolish the modern slavery - the private property system - and it is very likely this must be done by armed revolution.[167]

Just the raving of a crackpot? Perhaps. But this letter appeared on the front page of John Swinton's Paper, the most important labor paper in the 1880's, and was considered serious enough by Swinton, and representative enough of opinion held by many workers to merit a lengthy reply counseling political action over other means.[168]

> Wishing to know the principles of the Anarchists by which the men were murdered Nov. 11, I am refered to you by the Hon. W. G. Baumgardener for Information Being at work at the same mill with him as scaler And knowing that it is useless to depend on the Ballot or agitation to right the wrongs but by other means.[169]

Again, only one man, but a clue perhaps that apathy may not have been the only reason for lack of working class political activity.

Probably most workers were not as radical as these, although we really do not know. Certainly most strikes, even when bitter and hard fought, were not revolutionary or even proto-revolutionary acts. Yet, the prevalence of violent strikes and political demonstrations and of a kind of

[166]For an excellent discussion of this problem see: Barrington Morre, Jr., Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. 484-87.

[167]John Swinton's Paper, April 26, 1885: letter from Anders Sorengen, Marvin, Dakota.

[168]Ibid.

[169]Ed. A. Campbell to Labadie, Manistee, Michigan, November 16, 1887, LC.

insurrectionary mood which was more than just the fantasy of a few dreamers is striking. Viewed in context, a secret revolutionary group such as Burnette Haskel's International Working Man's Organization, which organized several thousand workers in the Far West and Rocky Mountain states, does not appear nearly so bizarre as it does in retrospect.[170] Nor did Johann Most, advocate of terrorism and inspirer of the Social Revolutionary Movement of the 1880's, appear to his growing number of disciples to be merely a charicature of the wild eyed anarchist.[171] Less than ten years after large crowds of workers battled police and troops with apparent spontanaeity in more than a dozen cities during the great railroad strike of 1877, the potential for revolutionary activity seemed far greater than it does today.

Nor were conspiratorial organizations something out of the mainstream of the labor movement or of working class culture. The Knights of Labor began in Michigan as the secret Washington Literary Society. An early member discribed how they organized the Detroit Trade Council in language similar to Communist descriptions of "transmission belts" in the early 1930's.

[170]Chester McArthur Destler, American Radicalism, 1885-1901, (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1946), Chapter V: a discussion of Haskell and the IWA and a reproduction of their plan of organization. According to material presented by Destler, the IWA exerted considerable influence within the Knights, placing at least one member (Joseph R. Buchanan) and possible several on the Executive Board.

[171]Johann Most was a German Social Democrat and anarchist who emigrated to America in 1882 after several years in prison and in conflict with German Social Democratic leaders. He assumed the editorship of Freiheit, a socialist newspaper, and through it preached the doctrine of terrorism and "propaganda by deed." He attracted considerable attention, gained some control over a variety of revolutionary socialist organizations, and a surprisingly large personal following.

> ... In those days the Knights of Labor was a secret body, no member being allowed to disclose the fact even that such an organization existed. It was slow work getting members, and some scheme had to be divised by which the most reliable material could be got as recruits to the Knights of Labor. ... a central body, composed of delegates from the several trade unions, should be formed. It was thought that in this way the Knights of Labor, would come in contact with representative trade unionists and use the trades council as a feeder to the Knights of Labor.[172]

Every labor paper discussed those who counseled insurrection and revolution, if only to criticize them, and although the prevailing sentiment was for rejection the tone was one of serious concern not ridicule. More militant papers such as the Detroit Socialist or Detroit Labor Leaf frequently printed discussions of armed self defense and appeals for the formation of workers' militias.[173] More important, while many labor papers opposed insurrection and disagreed with any form of radicalism, at least up until Haymarket nearly all were willing to view anarchists, socialists, and other radicals as a part of the same movement, mistaken perhaps, but working for the same goals and worthy of defense from unprovoked attack. As August Donath, editor of The Craftsman, wrote, "(I am) ... personally quite conservative ... but there is so much wrong all about us that only one devoid of good sense or of the spirit of man can stand idly by and let things drift from bad to worse."[174]

Powderly succeeded at the Knights' Minneapolis Convention in 1887 in defeating the attempt to defend the Haymarket anarchists by appealing

[172]Reminiscence of George W. Duncan in "Knights of Labor - Michigan" folder, LC. The LC has preserved parts of the original minute books of the Washington Literary Society.

[173]Detroit Socialist, May 11, 1878, interview with Albert Parsons; Detroit Labor Leaf, August 26, 1885.

[174]August Donath to Labadie, January 12, 1884, Craftsman folder, LC.

to unity and arousing fears that the order's name would be tarnished with anarchy. In so doing, he provoked, according to General Secretary Litchman, the greatest crisis in the order's history.[175] Thirty-five delegates, nearly one quarter of the total, including two members of the Executive Board, bolted the convention and formed the Provisional Committee calling for support of the Haymarket defendants and formation of a new organization. After the executions, Powderly wrote to his secretary, "... he (Labadie) charges me with hanging the Anarchists - very good. I am sorry I cannot hang them all ..."[176] But as Litchman suggested to Powderly, even the convention delegates who had supported Powderly's position were far removed from any such malevolent spirit. "... it would need but little to turn against us many who were on our side in Minneapolis ... many who voted with us were only lukewarm in their fidelity ..."[177]

Many workers were shocked by Powderly's breach of solidarity. A German worker, apparently from Chicago, wrote eloquently,

> ... I think it is a sham about you to stand and tak the Floor in the convention and sai, if we tak ane acten in ther case, it will throw oure orgenasation in false light, like you was in favor of Anarchi. ... wasn't Parson a Brother Knight of Labor in goot standing? ... I belong to it myself but as soon as I her you would not tak acten ... for the 6 man I will step out and a good manny more ... the autority sould run the whol thing different ... for the Bennefit of the genuin working man not for Capitalist ...[178]

Another merely asked, "... are you not proud of your aiding in Hanging these men. We hope ... to your dying day may be haunted by the

[175]Charles H. Litchman to Powderly, November 12, 1887, PP.

[176]Powderly to Emma (Fickenscher), November 23, 1887, PP.

[177]Litchman to Powderly, November 12, 1887, p. 4, PP.

[178]G. R. to Powderly, October 17, 1887, PP.

spectire ..."[179] When Joseph Labadie returned to District Assembly 50 in Detroit to make his report on the Convention and then turned in his resignation from the order, hundreds followed him. The Haymarket anarchists may have been atypical in their role as self conscious revolutionaries, but they were certainly enough in touch with the spirit of the times that they were not aberrations.[180]

All this is not to suggest that insurrection or revolution were serious possibilities. Although far more people than we may have realized probably considered the idea, they were undoubtedly still a small minority of the working population. But it does suggest that the development process involved something more than mere adjustment problems within a consensual framework. Too many historians, if only unconsciously, assume harmony because sufficient evidence is not available to prove the contrary. Certainly we have sufficient prima facie evidence to warrant the counter assumption: deplorable living conditions; widespread strikes, boycotts, demonstrations; and political activity.

Consensus is not a fact, but a process. It is created and imposed. Workers and magnates were not equals freely arriving at mutual decisions. That workers were not revolutionary does not mean that their reactions to their alienation and oppression were either shallow or false. Are we to reject all the Knights' polemics about the dehumanization of wage slavery as mere rhetoric in a limited bargaining process? Are we to assume, because we cannot find out what the workers really thought and felt, that they had no far-reaching opinions, no quarrels over the

[179] W. M. Riley to Powderly, November 11, 1887, PP.

[180] His report was printed and widely distributed by Powderly's opponents. Copies, LC.

objectives of the industrialization process? Because they were unsuccessful in altering its directions, does that mean that those directions were their choices? That the working class did not develop into a "permanent party of discontent" does not mean that class consciousness or discontent never existed.

What we need to understand these questions is a social history of the industrialization process which assumes consensus as process as its starting point. What were the repressive and integrative factors in a Lockean social structure which stifled the development of independent political consciousness? How did working class culture (if indeed there was a working class culture) respond to these pressures? Why was it not able to withstand them?

The possibility of the Knights of Labor as a representative working class organization provides great potential for approaching these questions. The Knights were more successful than any organization for the next two generations in organizing workers in basic industries. Their success was temporary, but it was unique. Considerable amounts of archival materials exist (largely untouched by historians, who have used these collections only with an eye to leadership opinion) which give a glimpse of what ordinary workers must have thought and felt. The incoming correspondence in the Powderly Papers alone has over one hundred thousand letters from ordinary workers all over the country. When one sees such barely literate but nevertheless emotionally eloquent statements as that of the German immigrant pleading for the Haymarket defendants, one cannot escape the feeling that perhaps here is a level of popular consciousness which is usally not approached.

Here perhaps is the possibility for a sympathetic look at some of

the losers of history. With the victors we are well acquainted. But it is to the losers that we must look, not for antiquarian reasons, not even to celebrate unsung heroes or the common man (although these are also commendable objectives), but to gain an understanding of the complexities of the historical process which a mere recitation of events conceals. It is here that we can understand the nature of the interactions between classes, for the winners and losers, although they certainly did not enter into conflicts from positions of equality, were not fore-ordained. Perhaps free will is an illusion, but it is an illusion which the historian must maintain.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Occupation with 1000 or More Members
Michigan State Census, 1884

Appendix A

Occupations with 1000 or More Members
Michigan State Census, 1884

Categories:

1.	Non-Working Class	239,000 approx.
2.	Wage Earners	298,000 approx.
3.	Self-Employed or Status in Doubt	94,000 approx.

Occupation	Number	Category
Farmers	178,000	1
Farm laborers	55,347	2
Blacksmiths	6,985	3
Boot and shoe makers	3,726	3
Carpenters and joiners	22,551	3
Engineers and firemen	7,458	2
Iron and steel shop operatives	3,329	2
Lumbermen and raftsmen	7,314	2
Machinists	3,533	2
Masons	5,315	3
Mill and factory operatives	3,743	2
Dressmakers and seamstresses	10,435	3
Miners	7,703	2
Painters	6,673	3
Saw and planing operatives	15,979	2
Sawers, sawfilers, cutlers	2,213	2
Shingle makers	3,019	2
Tailors and tailoresses	3,296	3
Printers	2,301	3
Coopers	2,589	3
Cigarmakers	2,039	2
Carriage and wagon makers	2,188	3
Fishermen	1,989	3
Butchers	3,349	3
Brick and tile makers	1,307	2
Traders and dealers	3,569	1
Grocers	3,558	1
Druggists	1,483	1
Sailors	2,966	2
Saloon keepers	3,871	1
Clerks in stores	12,077	2
Draymen, hackmen, teamsters	7,681	3
Railroad employees (not clerks)	9,970	2
Hucksters and peddlers	1,591	1
Teachers	10,142	1
Physicians	3,300	1

Appendix A, Continued

Occupation	Number	Category
Government officials	1,634	1
Musicians	1,496	3
Laborers	85,913	2
Domestic servants	31,712	2
Barbers	1,833	3
Clergymen	2,422	1
Clerks	2,407	2
Hotel and restaurant employees (not clerks)	3,588	2
Lawyers	1,932	1
Gardeners, nurserymen, fruitgrowers	2,489	1
Boarding house keepers	1,014	1
Government employees	1,224	2
Hostlers	1,040	1
Hotel keepers	1,868	1
Launderers and laundresses	1,469	3
Trade and transport agents	1,007	2
Bookkeepers	1,766	2
Railroad clerks	1,593	2
Commercial travelers	1,886	2
Telegraph company employees	1,173	2
Salesmen	1,011	2
Bakers	1,151	3
Tinners	1,397	3
Woodturners and carvers	1,105	3
Cabinet makers	1,801	3
Harness makers	1,502	3
Millers	1,969	3
Stove makers	1,326	2

Appendix B

Michigan Knights of Labor
State Assembly Delegates, 1888

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State Assembly Delegates, 1888

C. A. Hough: SA delegate for LA 1931, Hastings; listed as county treasurer (Barry Co.), 1888 Michigan State Gazeteer and Business Directory; also in Portrait and Biographical Album, Barry and Eaton Counties; b. Ohio, 1846; Civil War veteran; cashier and stockholder, Farmers' and Merchants' Bank of Nashville; Republican; justice of the peace; Methodist; Mason.

A. C. Grobe: delegate of LA 2063, Flint; Augustus C. Grobe advertised as Tin, Cooper and Sheet Iron and Metal Roofer in 1888 Gazeteer.

J. M. Decker: delegate LA 2064, Saginaw; listed as carpenter, East Saginaw City Directory, 1884; GA delegate, 1887; active Powderly supporter.

Mrs. S. V. Decker: delegate LA 2994, Saginaw; wife of J. M. Decker.

W. D. Smith: delegate LA 2461, Ft. Gratiot; Wm. D. Smith listed grocer, 1888 Gazeteer.

James M. Hamilton: delegate LA 2886, St. Clair; self-employed baker, 1888 Gazeteer; b. in Scotland; M.W. LA 2063, LA 2866; Worthy Foreman, LA 2063; judge, LA 2866; 1887 SA delegate; Powderly man, supported Decker in campaign for GA delegate.

John McKay: delegate LA 2970, Midland; blacksmith, 1888 Gazeteer.

E. McNamara: delegate LA 4000, Traverse City; boot and shoe shop, 1888 Gazeteer.

Jacob Diehl: delegate LA 4176, Mt. Clemens; cigar manufacturer, 1888 Gazeteer.

C. G. Curtis, Sr.: delegate LA 5595, Plymouth; carpenter, 1888 Gazeteer.

A. B. Cook: delegate LA 6147, Northville; Benjamin, tile and brick maker, 1888 Gazeteer.

W. J. Smith: delegate LA 6305, St. Johns; harnessmaker, 1888 Gazeteer.

John Hughes: delegate LA 6853, Evart; Hughes and Charlton Pail Factory, 1888 Gazeteer.

Geo. W. Ayres: delegate LA 8400, Hillsdale; stairbuilder and architect, 1888 Gazeteer.

H. A. Hamilton: delegate LA 8920, Litchfield; Henry A., painter, 1888 Gazeteer.

R. W. Ostrander: delegate LA 3438, Kalamazoo; Richard W., carpenter, 1887-88 Kalamazoo City Directory.

Rose H. Frost: delegate LA 9092, Kalamazoo; widow David J., 1887-88 Kalamazoo City Directory.

James O'Grady: delegate LA 3494, Saginaw; laborer at Wylie Bros. (shingle and salt mfrs.), 1884 Saginaw City Directory; SA delegate, 1887.

Charles Hasse: delegate LA 3028, Lansing; Clerk of the State Treasury Dept., Lansing City Directory, 1890; State Worthy Foreman, 1886-7; b. Hamburg, Germany, 1848. Sawyer in Muskegon mill, blacklisted by millowners; J. P. in Fremont, Michigan; postmaster; member, Greenback-labor party.

George G. Van Alstine: delegate LA 10466, Lansing; clerk, Lansing City Directory, 1890.

A. F. Shafer: delegate LA 2667, Grand Rapids; Andrew F., furniture, Grand Rapids City Directory, 1890; SA delegate, 1887.

Appleton M. Smith: delegate LA 2423, Manistee; publisher of Manistee Times, prohibition and Republican paper, Michigan Historical and Pioneer Collections, vol. 1, 1888.

Thos. Ferguson: delegate LA 5561, Benton Harbor; Thomas C., carpenter in Berrien County Directory, 1899.

F. A. Pitts: delegate LA 7109, Shelby; Francis A., History of Manistee, Mason, and Oceana Counties; b. Rochester, N.Y., 1848; photographer in Shelby, 1878.

Rev. William H. Miller: delegate LA 4799, Chesaning; Portrait and Biographical Record of Saginaw and Bay Counties, Michigan; b. Scotland, 1833; U. S., 1846; blacksmith, laborer (farm), minister; Civil War veteran; 1887, farmer and preacher.

John J. Cornwell: delegate LA 3409, Battle Creek; Battle Creek City Directory, 1897.

Martin Perkins: delegate LA 1960, Battle Creek; janitor, public schools; Battle Creek City Directory, 1897.

W. W. Howe: delegate LA 3394, Jackson; Wm. W., traveler for Union Music Col, 1885-86 Jackson City Directory.

E. H. Beldon: delegate LA 3910, Horton; Eugene H., farmer, Jackson City Directory.

W. C. Pratt: delegate LA 5519, Norvell; Willis C., farmer, Jackson City Directory.

H. I. Allen: delegate LA 7946, schoolcraft; Henry I., railroad postal clerk, Schoolcraft Village, 1883 Kalamazoo City Directory; SA delegate, 1886, 1887; S.M.W., 1889-90.

C. W. DeBolt: delegate LA 5372, Mason; Charles W., blacksmith for Rogers' Manuf. Co., Mason, 1888-89 Lansing City Directory.

Stephen F. Headly: delegate LA 5752, Lansing; farmer, Shiawassee County Directory, 1894; owned property assessed at $3200 less $690 mortgage indebtedness.

E. Lofberg: delegate LA 5631, Adrian; painter, 1903 Adrian City Directory.

Joseph Lindsey: delegate LA 3871, Dexter; laborer, Ann Arbor City Directory, 1888.

Charles Beneway: delegate LA 8089, Tecumseh; worked at Birdwell's Levery, Tecumseh, 1883 Northern Lenawee County Directory.

J. B. Priest: delegate LA 8337, Clinton; James, carpenter, Clinton, 1883 Northern Lenawee County Directory.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

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An extensive bibliography on the Knights of Labor and the labor history of the late nineteenth century can be found in Gerald Grob's Workers and Utopia (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969). Rather than attempting to duplicate that effort, I will limit discussion here to the most significant sources for my work.

Manuscripts

The Joseph Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan was indispensable. The Convention Proceedings of the State Assemblies of the Knights for the years 1884-1889 provided most of the statistical information on the Knights' membership as well as some insight into factional division at the state level. Various folders of miscellaneous documents on the Knights of Labor and the Knights in Michigan contained information about the Knights' activities, structure, and internal divisions not available elsewhere. Along with personal correspondence from such key Powderly opponents as Tom Barry, it was thus possible to reconstruct some of the activities of the anti-administration faction both nationally and at the state level. Unfortunately, the incoming correspondence provided only scattered examples of membership opinion at the local level.

The Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library, the Labor History Archives at Wayne State University, and the Michigan

Historical Collections at the University of Michigan were all somewhat disappointing, although each provided some items of importance. The well-indexed scrapbooks at Burton yielded a few noteworthy newspaper clippings including a series of biographies of local labor leaders. The most important item at Wayne State, for my purposes, was the minute book of Cigarmakers Local 130 from Saginaw for the years 1885-87. The Michigan Historical Collections has a microfilm of Tom Barry's scrapbooks which are still in the possession of his descendants. Unfortunately, these consist exclusively of undated newspaper clippings, primarily from the years 1886-90, judging from context. Although these provide some insight into Barry's activities in a critical period, very little of the material is directly concerned with people or issues in Michigan.

The State Militia files in the Executive Office Papers at the Michigan State Historical Commission in Lansing were the most important source of evidence of working class militance and insurgence. These consist primarily of letters and telegrams from local officials describing the local situation and their reasons for requesting state assistance.

The Terence Powderly Papers and accompanying John Hayes Papers at Catholic University, Washington, D.C., were indispensable for the latter part of this study. The papers consist primarily of Powderly's letterbooks of outgoing correspondence, correspondence between Powderly and Hayes, and more than one hundred boxes of incoming correspondence. The sheer bulk of the latter was so overwhelming that I limited myself for this study to the period immediately preceeding and following the Minneapolis General Assembly, that is, the fall of 1887. The vast incoming correspondence has immeasurable potential which has been barely tapped by scholars.

Newspapers

The contrast between the Detroit Labor Leaf and the Alpena Labor Journal provides the most graphic illustration of the divisions within the Knights in Michigan. Both are available on microfilm from the State of Michigan Library in Lansing. The State Library has the largest holdings of local newspapers from the state, a source that I have largely neglected thus far in my research but which would probably provide a patient enough researcher with a great deal of additional information. I have likewise only partially exploited the extensive holdings of both state (largely Detroit) and national labor periodicals of the period in the Labadie Collection. The only national periodical used extensively in this study was John Swinton's Paper.

Miscellaneous

The published reports of the State Bureau of Labor Statistics beginning in 1884 were the primary source for statistical information about Michigan workers. These are available at the State Library. The General Assembly Proceedings of the Knights for 1880-87, bound in book form, are available in the Labadie Collection. The early years provide local membership statistics.

Several unpublished master's theses on subjects related to late nineteenth century Michigan labor all proved disappointing. The only one of real use was Daniel James Yakes, Ten Hours or No Sawdust (unpublished Master's Thesis, Western Michigan University: 1969) which provided information about several strikes and thus saved duplication of research effort. It was generally devoid of analysis. The same can be said of the pamphlet Cash Every Saturday or No Sawdust (Tawas City, Michigan: Tawas Herald, 1969) by Neil Thornton.