WEAVING THE ETHNIC FABRIC
Social Networks Among Swedish-American Radicals in Chicago 1890–1940
Per Nordahl
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The present dissertation deals with how a segment of the Swedish immigrant group mobilized to be included in American society. Three Swedish-American working class organizations have been studied as to how they interacted to promote their interests in Chicago and the Lake View district during the first decades of this century. Reflecting political, cultural and economic aspects of the immigrant workers' lives the case studies indicate that Swedish immigrant workers constructed an organizational network parallel to the one they had left in the old country known as "folkrörelsesamverkan" (popular movement cooperation). Like in Sweden this network was constructed as a haven for social mobilization, with the exception that in the American context an ethnic aspect was added.

In the formative phase of their haven, historical retrospect and the defence of organized labor in the old country were important aspects of their activities. Through the educational and cultural programs that were organized, the group articulated and consolidated its position for interaction with American society including other ethnic groups. Political radicalism, including a pro-labor temperance movement, distinguished the group both within the Swedish enclave and the American labor movement. Nevertheless, in constant conflict and cooperation with other groups, new bonds of solidarity were developed which gradually enabled a re-definition of the group to include fewer ethnic and more class aspects. Once a wider definition of the group was implemented, the need for separate Swedish-American organizations decreased. Hence in the 1930s, by which time the Swedish immigrants had been included in the American labor movement, the Swedish-American labor movement also withered.

Keywords: ethnicity, class, labor movement, immigrant radicalism, social networks, international migration.
Weaving The Ethnic Fabric
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UMEÅ 1994
ALMQVIST & Wiksell International, Stockholm, Sweden
To Hanna, Emil, Rikard
and my own surprise
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Abbreviations

AAB: Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek (Stockholm)
ABF: Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (Workers’ Educational League)
AFL: American Federation of Labor
BA: Business Agent
BTC: Building Trade Council
CFL: Chicago Federation of Labor
CHS: Chicago Historical Society
CIO: Congress och Industrial Organizations
CLC: Chicago Labor Council
Comintern: The Communist International
CP: The Communist Party
EI: Emigrantinstitutet (Växjö)
FLP: Farmer Labor Party
FOOTALU: Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada
FoSR: Friend of the Soviet Union
FSSF: Förenade Skandinaviska Socialsitförbundet (United Scandinavian Socialist Federation)
IBPAT: International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades
IBPDPA: International Brotherhood of Painters Decorators and Paperhangers of America
ILD: International Labor Defence
ILP: Illinois Labor Party
IOGT: International Order of Goodtemplars
IOS: Independent Order of Svithiod
IOV: Independent Order of Vikings
IWW: Industrial Workers of the World
LU: Local Union
N.T. Ny Tid
NEC: National Executive Board
NOV: National Order of Verdandi
PDC: Painters District Council
S.S.: Svenka Socialisten
SAAGC: Swedish American Archives of Greater Chicago
SAFA: Skandinaviska Arbetareförbundet av Amerika
SAKC: Skandinavisk Arbetarkultur, Chicago (Scandinavian Workers’ Culture, Chicago)
SEL: Swedish Educational League
SLP: Socialist Labor Party
SMF: Svenska Målareförbundet
SP: Socialist Party
SSAF: Skandinaviska Socialistiska Arbetareförbundet (Scandinavian Socialist Federation)
SWEL: Scandinavian Workers’ Educational League
UoM/BHL: University och Minnesota, Bentley Historical Library
VOA: Vasa order of America
WHSM: Wisconsin Historical Society at Madison
WP: Workers’ Party.
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Per Nordahl
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Chapter One

Introduction

No one anticipated the dramatic changes that the international scene has gone through in the last decade. One of the main features of the changes that have occurred or are currently taking place is the process of redefinition of various national states. The question of ethnicity has thus once again become one of the key factors in the historical process. Sweden has also been affected by this process, as can be illustrated by the growing interest in Swedish national history and an increasing tendency towards xenophobia.

The recent international development has further emphasized the importance of an understanding of ethnicity as a vital factor in the process of social mobilization. The present study of the ethnic and social mobilization of a group of politically radicalized Scandinavians in Chicago will hopefully show that the American immigrant experience still maintains its validity as an important source for understanding what Peter Kivisto has called the ethnic enigma.¹

This study is not only relevant from the perspective of current international events. As no major study has been carried out on the Scandinavian-American or Scando-American labor movement, it is also relevant as a contribution to both Swedish and American labor and migration history. The present study, however, should only be seen as a small contribution toward this end and the mission to write a comprehensive history of the Scandinavian-American labor movement still remains to be undertaken.

Previous Research

The present study deals with four major research areas: American labor history, American ethnic history, Swedish emigration history and the history of Swedish popular movements.

The history of the American Labor movement has been given texture in an impressive number of studies. For decades perspectives on the American labor

movement were influenced by the works of John R. Commons at the University of Wisconsin. The perspectives of Commons and his associates, however, were very much in line with those of the American Federation of Labor, AFL, and its leader Samuel Gompers. Thus the writings of the so-called "Wisconsin school" had a tendency to focus on the ups and downs and internal disputes of the trade union movement while only briefly touching on radical organizations such as the Socialist Labor Party or the Industrial Workers of the World, IWW. This means that its historiography failed to capture the dynamics and complexity of the American Labor movement.²

It was not until the 1960s that labor historians started to ask questions on a scale transcending the union perspective applied by the "Wisconsin school". At that time there was a shift in focus toward the constitution and importance of ethnic groups within the labor movement. Pioneering in this field was Melsh Epstein who, in 1959, presented his study on the influence of communism among Jews.³

The revival of the discussion on ethnicity and the American Labor movement was also boosted through the growing number of various labor history publications that mushroomed during the 1960s.

Since then, numerous studies have been produced on various ethnic labor groups and their activities within the American labor movement. Early attempts to label labor immigrants as either conservatives or flaming radicals, have proven problematic as this level of generalization does not say anything about any group in particular.⁴

A growing general interest in ethnic groups and the persistence of their identity has, over the years, caused a radical change in the historiography of American immigration. In 1951 Oscar Handlin argued, in his now classic work *The Uprooted*, that the European immigrant left a Europe with no experience of the

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type of organizations that evolved in a *Gesellschaft* society and settled in an America, "without the whole complex of institutions and social patterns which formerly guided their actions".\(^5\)

According to Handlin this placed the immigrants in a situation where they "lived in a crisis because they were uprooted. In transplantation, while the old roots were sundered before the new were established, the immigrants existed in an extreme situation. The shock, and the effects of the shock, persisted for many years; and their influence reached down to generations which themselves never paid the cost of crossing".\(^6\)

Handlin's stereotype of the American immigrant was largely the result of his inclination to apply a "melting-pot" ideology in his interpretation, and it has been challenged ever since. Perhaps the most influential and sustained critique was presented by Rudolph Vecoli in his essay "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of The Uprooted".\(^7\) Vecoli challenged Handlin's thesis that the immigrants were cut off from their traditional social forms and values, and he questioned the validity of Handlin's "Uprooted thesis" concluding:

"The basic error of his thesis is that it subordinates historical complexity to the symmetrical patterns of a sociological theory. Rather than constructing ideal types of 'the peasant' or 'the immigrant' the historian of immigration must study the distinctive cultural character of each ethnic group and the manner in which this influenced its adjustments in the new world."\(^8\)

Basically this is what has happened ever since. Historians and sociologists have redefined immigrants into ethnic groups, and scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have followed up numerous ethnic groups and reported on their "survival strategies" in the New World, as Ewa Morawska has called them.\(^9\)

This also includes the research done on Swedish and other Scandinavian emigrants. The bulk of all the research was initiated through the extensive project "Sweden and America after 1860: Emigration, Remigration, Social and Political Debate" at the University of Uppsala in the 1960s. In answer to Frank Thistlethwaite's challenge, the Uppsala project focused primarily, though not

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5 Handlin (1973) p.5.
6 Ibid. p.6
8 Ibid. p.417.
exclusively on demographic aspects or conditions in Sweden. The project also emphasized comparative aspects, and several studies dealt with Swedes in America. Thus this project supplemented the two major studies done prior to the migration project at Uppsala - the statistician Gustav Sundbärg’s official reports on emigration published at the beginning of the century and the impressive work by the geographer Helge Nelson entitled *The Swedes and the Swedish Settlements in North America*, published in 1943. However, only a few of the reports from the Uppsala project touch even briefly on questions related to radical and organized labor in connection with emigration to America.

Through a series of conferences and projects initiated at a conference held at the University of Bremen in 1978, the role of the Scandinavians within the American labor movement was brought into focus. At this conference scholars from eleven European and North American countries met with the ambition of improving communication between scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. One of the main projects initiated at this conference, the "Labor Migration Project", set out to examine the acculturation of labor migrants in the Atlantic economies.


13 Dirk Hoerder (ed.), *American Labor and Immigration History, 1877-1920: Recent European Research* (Urbana Illinois 1983). This was also the name of the conference. For a listing of publications from the various projects initiated at this conference see Dirk Hoerder/Christiane Harzig (eds.), *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s-1970s. An Annotated Bibliography. Volume 1: Migrants from Northern Europe* (New York 1987) pp. 277-278.
Through this approach the project wanted to integrate "intra-European labor migrations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the trans-Atlantic migration of workers, thus avoiding the misleading paradigm of 'immigration' history as a one-way movement to the New World".  

That migration was no one-way trip appears to have been a living reality for organized labor in Sweden. As early as in the 1930s, August Lindberg, at that time chairman of the Swedish LO (the Swedish equivalent of the AFL-CIO) stated: "The history of the Scandinavian labor movement cannot be regarded as complete until the organizational activities of our countrymen in America has been described."  

There was also an attempt made in the 1930s to write the history of the Scando-American Labor Movement. A Swedish committee with representatives from various labor organizations including August Lindberg, was set up in order to organize an inventory and collection of material and information on this movement. A number of sub-committees were organized in the US, and an impressive amount of material was collected and sent to the Labor Movement Archives in Stockholm. Albert Pearson, a former editor of *Ny Tid*, journal of the "Skandinaviska Arbetareförbundet av Amerika", produced a manuscript covering the history of the Scando-American labor movement. The manuscript, however, was heavily biased by Pearson’s political perspective, which probably led the Social Democratic labor movement to drop the project. Instead it was Henry Bengston, long-time editor of *Svenska Socialisten*, who in his partly autobiographical book *Skandinaver på vänsterflygeln i USA*, became the first to describe some of the organizational projects undertaken by the radical Scandinavians in the US. Apart from Bengston’s work the topic has been touched upon only in a number of smaller articles.  

16 Albert Pearson archives. (AAB)  
In order to understand the process of acculturation it is thus evident that both pre- and post-migrational factors must be taken into account. The significance of this can be illustrated by Robert Östergren’s recent illuminating study A Community Transplanted. The Trans-Atlantic Experience of a Swedish Immigrant Settlement in the Upper Middle West, 1835-1915. Östergren followed a group from the Dalecarlia region of Sweden from their old community to their new one in the Upper Middle West where the immigrants became involved in a process of reconstructing their old community, culture and all.

In the light of the research that has been done since Handlin’s book John Bodnar has in his book "The Transplanted" come to the conclusion that:

The need now is to move beyond the restricted field of vision offered by studying one or more ethnic groups. [because] a meaningful level of analysis exists beyond the older view that immigrants were members of a particular ethnic group or that they were only humble workers.

18 (...continued)


Bodnar sees the immigrants as fragmented groups. Their adjustment is just not a question of the impact of American culture nor the culture of their country of origin upon them. Neither is their adjustment to be seen as a linear progression from a premodern holistic community to a modern atomistic one. This, he argues, would indicate a "clash of cultures". Instead, he suggests that we must study all the points where the immigrant families met the challenge of capitalism and modernity: the homeland, the neighborhood, the school, the workplace, the church, the family and the fraternal hall.\(^\text{21}\)

This will reveal a "continual dynamic between economy and society, between class and culture".\(^\text{22}\) The ultimate point that Bodnar stresses is that the immigrants were not passive victims of circumstances. The immigrants tried their best to sort out their lives and to act and react in their best interests in each new situation.\(^\text{23}\)

It is important to keep in mind that ethnicity can only evolve in group interaction or, as Sidney W. Mintz has phrased it, "You cannot, I think, have an ethnic group; you can only have ethnic groups."\(^\text{24}\) Various ethnic groups, and strata within these groups, have thus constructed various "survival strategies". Much of recent research has focused on this construction and the dynamic interaction between the experiences that the immigrants brought with them and their new context. The latter included both their relation to the American Yankee society in general and their relations to all the other immigrant ethnic groups and their cultures. All of these relations had to be negotiated in one way or the other and it is, as Bodnar points out, important to study not only ethnic groups *per se*, but also their interaction.

A thorough understanding of the pre-migrational context of the group of Swedes that I have studied is therefore essential, since the scope of organizations that my group of migrants re-established in America indicates that their previous experience was within the context of popular movements in Sweden.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) Ibid. p.xx

\(^{23}\) The interaction between pre- and post- migrational factors has more or less become a self evident condition in recent research. An important reference to this interaction is the context of labor migration analytically differentiated from that of migration of settlers. See Dirk Hoerder (ed.), *Labor Migration in the Atlantic Economies. The European and North American Working Classes During the Period of Industrialization* (Westport, Conn. 1985).

The formative years of the Swedish popular movements have been thoroughly scrutinized in a number of studies and projects. Herbert Tingsten’s work on the ideological development of Swedish Social Democracy, Tage Lindbom’s and Jörgen Westerståhl’s studies on the Trade Union Movement and Hilding Johansson’s work on IOGT should be mentioned as pioneering studies in this field. In 1965 the research project "The Functions of Class Society: The Popular Movements" headed by Sven Lundkvist and Carl Göran Andrae was initiated. With this project interest was shifted from monographic studies on separate organizations toward focusing on the function and interaction between different segments of the popular movements within a context of a changing society. The function of these movements has thus been described as tools for new or excluded social strata to obtain a fair share of social and economic resources. Lundkvist has also emphasized the democratic aspects of the popular movements since the programs and structures of these movements served as a training ground for a modern democratic society.

The studies conducted within this project have, however, been criticized for their insufficient explanation of the sources of the development of the popular movements. By failing to explain the connection between the forces and conflicts that lay behind the development of these movements it has been said that many of these studies lose some of their explanatory value.


27 For a critique of the project see Vagn Wåhlin, "Omkring studiet af folkelige bevægelser." in Historisk tidsskrift No.2, (1979). Torkel Jansson, Samhällsförändring och (continued...)
One of the two main arguments raised against the project is primarily that it fails to derive the evolvement of these movements from changes in Swedish society prior to the period studied. Secondly, since the project mainly focuses on urban settings, it also fails to analyze the most important changes, which primarily took place within an agrarian economy.

By applying a historic materialistic perspective and by choosing a more rural setting for his study, Torkel Jansson has supplemented the results of Lundkvist’s and Andrä’s project in his study, *Samhällsförändring och Sammanslutningsformer. Det frivilliga föreningsväsendets uppkomst och spridning i Husby-Rekarne från omkring 1850-1930* (Transformation of Society and Forms of Organization. The Rise and Diffusion of Voluntary Associations in a Rural District, 1850-1930).

Jansson argues that the relation between social change and the evolution of popular movements has to be studied on a micro level. "Aggregate data and a wider area of investigation", he claims, "cannot answer the question of how different groups were affected by and reacted to the constantly changing circumstances".  

Lundkvist starts his analysis with a set of already extant and influential ideas while Jansson stretches his ambition to establish the connection between economic and structural changes conditioning the evolution and influence of these ideas. They both, however, regard popular movements as instruments in a struggle for horizontal social integration of new strata within society.

Two recent studies which should also be mentioned are Ronny Ambjörnsson’s *Den skötsamme arbetaren. Idéer och ideal i ett norrlänskt sågverkssamhälle 1880-1930*, and Björn Horgby’s *Egensinne och skötsamhet. Arbetarkultur i Norrköping 1850-1940*. Just as Lundkvist and Jansson see popular movements as organized expressions of the transition from a *Gesellschaft* to a *Gemeinschaft* society, both Ambjörnsson and Horgby examine the dynamics of these movements on a microlevel. Central to both studies is the process of constructing a new ethic and identity as part of working class mobilization in an evolving

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27 (...continued)

*sammanslutningsformer. Det frivilliga föreningsväsendets uppkomst och spridning i Husby-Rekarne från omkring 1850 till 1930* (Uppsala 1982).


Gemeinschaft society. This process has to some extent displayed intriguing similarities with the dynamics within the group in my own study, with the exception that the Swedes in America also had to deal with the question of their ethnic identity.

Jansson concludes that exclusion of certain social strata from access to political influence motivated the mobilization of both the temperance movement and the labor movement. This has also been generally accepted as a good point of departure for an understanding of social movements.

As Michel Wieviorka has pointed out, the requirements for an ethnic movement to become successful are basically the same as for a social movement. Thus Wieviorka suggests that it would be relevant to speak about "ethnic social movements". In this respect Wieviorka's perspective becomes a bridge between discourses on social movements and ethnicity. This appears especially interesting since his perspective to some extent aligns with a recently formulated theoretical model by Eric Hirsch in which he draws on both exclusion and ethnicity as mobilizing factors for various groups within the Chicago labor movement.30

**Ethnicity and Ethnic Leadership**

Since the immigrants have become ethnic Americans, ethnicity has also become a key concept in the analysis of immigrant adaptation. The question of the character and function of immigrant ethnicity has also gone through some changes. The interpretation of ethnicity as a set of cultural characteristics and primordial attachments determined once and for all has been influential as advocated through the writings of anthropologists like Clifford Geertz and Harold Isaacs.31

A different interpretation has been used by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan who see ethnic groups much as interest groups. They have thus deemphasized the cultural component while stressing ethnicity as instrumentally

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and situationally mobilized for political gains. Among recent sociological and sociohistorical scholars the trend seems to be to treat ethnicity as a dynamic factor. Ethnicity is thus seen as a strategic tool or resource, "situationally activated and mobilized in the process of interaction between the immigrant and the host system".

In 1969, Fredrik Barth wrote that it was "the ethnic boundary that defined the group, not the cultural stuff that it enclosed." By referring to a certain degree of "interchangeability" of the "cultural stuff" many scholars have since supported Barth's notion of ethnicity in relation to boundary maintenance.

To some extent the present study does also support this notion. Parallels to the Swedes' activities and influences regarding e.g. education, temperance or organizational traditions can certainly be found among other groups.

But, even if there is a certain degree of "interchangeability" of the cultural components, their meaning and significance vary between groups. As Kathleen Conzen has pointed out, not only the boundaries but also the core of the ethnic


35 E.g. Werner Sollors, Beyond Ethnicity. Consent and Descent in American Culture (New York 1986) p.28. Also Glazer/Moynihan eds.(1975) in "Introduction"

culture needs to be studied since it was through their culture that ethnic groups affirmed meaning and legitimacy.\(^{37}\)

In order to come to grips with the "continual dynamic between economy and society, between class and culture" and the fragmentation of the ethnic groups, Werner Sollors' concept, "the invention of ethnicity" offers an interesting analytic instrument.\(^{38}\) Ethnicity is thus seen as a cultural construction achieved over historical time. Responding to constantly changing settings, ethnic groups are seen as dynamic actors who are continuously recreating themselves. This process embraces relations within the group, relations to the host society and relations between different ethnic groups. The concept further allows components of competition, cooperation and conflicts, or a mixture of these components in all group relations.\(^{39}\)

Since the groups were seldom homogeneous but divided by class, politics, religion, dialect or region of origin the process of group formation and definition served as a means to create a symbolic umbrella under which the group could be unified for maximum strength in the struggle for their specific claims. In this process the function of group leadership is a central one.

In trying to cope with the concerns of the amorphous entity of an ethnic group the immigrants clustered together in different formations with different types of leadership. In an article on leadership John Higham discerns three major leadership categories;

(1) received leadership, or leadership over an ethnic group, the leader deriving from preceding structures of authority a traditional claim upon the group; (2) internal leadership, or leadership that arises within the group and remains there [while] addressing the external world as its representative and advocate; (3) projective leadership, or leadership from an ethnic group, whereby an individual acquires a following outside of the group with which he or she is identified and thus affects its reputation without being directly subject to its control.\(^{40}\)

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39 Conzen et al. (1990).

In my study I will mainly deal with the second of these categories - internal leadership.

The most important of the internal leaders were often the pioneering founders of the different organizations since to a great extent they came to shape the superstructures and formulate goals of the group. On a general level, these pioneers had to define and perform a number of tasks. These can be grouped into four major areas: Security and Services, Group Solidarity, Group Advancement and Defence of the Homeland.\(^{41}\)

How these different tasks were performed varied from group to group depending on both their own history and how the group was perceived by the new host society. In this regard the Swedes had few characteristics that were perceived negatively by mainstream America. They were white, highly literate, learned English quickly, were comparatively skilled and retained little loyalty to the "old country". Thus they could rapidly and easily become integrated into American society with few problems of discrimination. Many, perhaps even the majority, went through this process as individuals, never or rarely associating themselves with the Swedish-American ethnic community. Yet, for others, the ethnic community provided a vehicle to integration.\(^{42}\)

For the latter category, those who acquired their American identity through Swedish-American organizations, the immigrant churches were the prime supplier of their often felt need for psychological security. For material needs they gained security by organizing mutual-benefit societies. Other organizations were formed to help provide jobs, familiar food, housing, financial transactions and so on.

These organizations formed the foundation of a local ethnic community. Once this foundation was laid it was necessary to forge group-wide solidarity and consolidate the ethnic group. At this stage the fragmentation of the group often became evident. Being a Swede was not the same thing for an atheistic, politically radicalized painter and a religious, conservative shopowner. Thus a single person or organization seldom, if ever, gained the support of the whole ethnic group. Instead there was a constant struggle between different perceptions of what it meant to belong to a specific ethnic group and how best to make use

\(^{40}\) (…continued)


\(^{41}\) Ibid. pp.644-645.

of its specific heritage in its new context. In this struggle different leaders competed, cooperated or slandered each other. Victor Greene has identified three major types of leaders representing such different perceptions: nationalists, socialists and clerics. John Higham on the other hand offers an alternative classification along political, class or religious lines.43

Thus the homogeneity of ethnic communities should not be overestimated. Many studies have also noted the significance of the segmentation of the ethnic groups. Since the appearance of different fractions within an ethnic group suggests the possibility of alternative alliances and strategies for their integration into the American society it is thus important to study groups both in conflict and cooperation.44

Nevertheless, the appraisal of the function and force of ethnicity and ethnic leadership continues to be a key problem. In a recent study on ethnic politics in the nineteenth-century Chicago labor movement, Eric Hirsch has provided a thought-provoking textured history based on a model which offers both cultural and economic causes for the patterns of mobilization in the nineteenth-century Chicago labor movement.45 Hirsch presents the various strategies chosen by


Germans, Bohemians, Irish and Anglo-Americans and traces the motives for their separate choices back to the cultural baggage of each group as well as the various possible options at hand for these groups as they entered the Chicago labor market.

According to Hirsch, the Anglo-American worker took advantage of his position of being first on the market as well as being skilled. Thus he created craft unions that effectively excluded less skilled and newly arrived workers. The Anglo-American craft unions capitalized on this advantage in such a way that they perceived no need to challenge the system which fed them. The Irish, on the other hand, were much less skilled and therefore excluded from these unions. Consequently they could not pursue the same path of reformist strategy. Instead they developed a strategy based on gaining control of local politics. Once successfully established the Irish could supply their ethnic group with patronage jobs through the political spoils system. The Germans and the Bohemians were thus left in the vacuum created between the Anglo-American reformist union and the "Irish" political arena. Excluded from both of these paths they drew on their experiences from their native homelands. German political and labor radicalism and Bohemian free-thinking traditions thus became cornerstones of the evolvement of the militant and anarchist-influenced labor movement of Chicago.

Hirsch gives a number of examples of how the traditional theories of urban political movements have failed to explain crucial components within the history of the Chicago labor movement. As an alternative Hirsch argues that the concept of "haven" can be useful as an analytical tool.

In arriving at this conclusion, however, Hirsch tends to cut a number of corners to make his point. This can be illustrated by the fact that Hirsch fails to give a sufficient explanation for the evolvement of a number of strong craft unions based on ethnic branches which also included the Germans. Likewise, Hirsch pays little attention to strategies used by employers and local government to shape and alter ethnic conflicts and loyalties, strategies that might open up alternative interpretations of the dynamics of the Chicago labor movement.

In her recent study *Making a New Deal. Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, Lizabeth Cohen has included variables such as company policies, changing consumption patterns, and the evolution of a common mass culture. Hence she

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45 (...continued)
Ethnic mobilization, however, did also reaffirm ethnic diversity which sustained the duration of ethnic conflicts.

has been able to establish that the factors mentioned enabled the development of a new set of inter-ethnic relations which became crucial for the organizing of the CIO and for the formulation of demands which were jointly embraced by numerous ethnic groups - demands such as the call for general social and unemployment insurance backed by the state.47

The analytical model based on the concept of the creation of havens that Hirsch suggested can incorporate the variables used by Cohen, which makes his model even more interesting as an analytical tool.

Both Marxist and Revisionist class theories emphasize class consciousness as a prime motive for collective working-class mobilization. Class consciousness is assumed to derive from a shared common economic interest. However, what Marxist class theoreticians often fail to explain is why different groups with similar conditions choose different strategies. Even though contemporary Marxists have argued that the degree of separation of work and home as well as cultural, socio-structural and political factors play a role in the process of political mobilization they fail to present adequate analyses because, as Hirsch puts it,

they have neglected to stress the importance of movements based on ethnic community networks and sediments of solidarity rather than on the consciousness of objective class interests.48

Assessing the usefulness of classical social movements and collective behavior theories of urban social movements Hirsch points to the fact that one of the most important premises of these theories - that movement participants are drawn from the social and cultural marginals of society - is incorrect. An indication of this is that many of the revolutionaries in Chicago were skilled workers residing in persistent ethnic enclaves that could provide a political base for their mobilization. Contrary to what classical collective behaviorists claim these enclaves did not dissipate under the impact of occupational and residential mobility. According to Hirsch it is therefore more correct to speak of a,

recruitment of politically and perhaps economically marginal (but socially integrated) groups rather than socially marginal individuals when trying to explain revolutionary mobilization.49

49 Ibid. p.187.
In an attempt to come to grips with some of the shortcomings of the classical collective behavior approach, resource mobilization theories have been articulated. One of the basic premises for these theories is that the basis for mobilization was a rational response to exclusion from political power. Resource mobilization theorists make the assumption that in order to succeed these movements have to canalize their mobilization through centralized and bureaucratic organizations in opposition to older, decentralized and less formal organizational forms. This approach can to some extent apply to the Chicago case. The example that Hirsch gives on the Anglo-American union strategy could stand as an example of a case where resource mobilization theories might apply but still fall short of providing an explanation for the German-American anarchist movement, which was far from bureaucratic and centralized. These theories also fail to apply rational economic calculations as prime incentives in the participation of skilled German cigarmakers in the anarchist movement, where there was little chance of economic reward and a risk loosing one's life.

Hirsch concludes with the remark that although resource mobilization theories touch upon premises for mobilization on the micro level, they, as well as the other theories, still fall short because they tend to focus on deconstructive tendencies emanating from the processes of urbanization and industrialization. They have thus failed to observe, or at least underestimated, new or alternative bonds and relations that emerged from this society in transition.

Basically what Hirsch deals with is how each individual relates to his surroundings, how he is socialized and how this affects the way social mobilization evolves. One of the relationships that seems to be especially difficult to come to grips with is bonds and loyalties based on ethnicity. Hirsch therefore suggests what he calls a solidarity theory emphasizing these new relations which might bring us closer to an understanding of the different types of social mobilization that were manifested throughout the nineteenth-century Chicago labor movement.

**The Ethnically Segmented Labor Market**

A common but nevertheless incorrect assumption made when looking at the development of American society is that the country was based on free competition. It would be more accurate to claim that the society met by the

50 Ibid.
immigrants was competitive by means of exclusion. In the same way that England had tried to maintain control over its colonies, the rulers of the liberated America tried to maintain their control as new immigrant groups arrived with their claims. When these immigrants had the same cultural traditions, such as religion, history or language, other exclusive criteria had to be found.

The Anglo-American labor force organized itself and utilized its possession of trade skills to both bargain with employers and limit competition for jobs by excluding newcomers and less skilled workers from the trade unions, which in turn caused a segmentation of the labor market.

Once the segmentation of the labor market was established both employers and organized skilled labor could benefit from the system. The employers gained the possibility of increased exploitation of those excluded from the union while unionized labor improved their bargaining position by limiting the competition within their trade.

With this in mind Hirsch finds validity in both competition theorists, who claim that industrialization and urbanization can create situations where a formerly stable ethnic division of labor is disrupted, thus creating a new unstable and competitive phase, and in Michael Hechter's conceptualization of a cultural division of labor, which recognizes long-lasting ethnic occupational specialization within an urban labor market.\(^5\)

With the stage set in this manner newcomers and those who felt politically, socially or economically excluded fought back as best they could. The excluded found acceptance and support among their countrymen and they clustered together creating ethnic enclaves within the cities.\(^5\) Within the realm of these embryonic communities they tried to infuse meaning and security into their social lives. Many of these communities were also preserved over long periods

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\(^5\) Ibid. pp.196-197.

\(^5\) For an example of how ethnic organizations have been used as a shield see, Hartmut Keil, "The Impact of Haymarket in German American Radicalism" in International Labor and Working Class History No.29 (Spring 1986) pp.16-27, or the establishing of protected space by what Frank Parkin has called "Social closure" see, Frank Parkin, Marxism and Class Theory A Bourgeois Critique (London 1979). Roy Rosenzweig has discussed the role of the saloon as free space for the working class, cf. Rosenzveig (1983) p.35f. Mary Ann Clawson has also discussed the importance of free space in relation to class and gender strategies, cf. Mary Ann Clawson, Constructing Brotherhood. Class, Gender, and Fraternalism (Princeton N.J. 1989) p.257.
of time although the geographical location of the ethnic community changed, a fact which indicates that ethnic groups tended to move as groups.\textsuperscript{53}

Thus not only did industrialization and urbanization break down old loyalties and social bonds, it also created new ones in which ethnic networks became vital components in the construction of havens. Since the ethnic enclave was a relatively small community, recruitment and mobilization based on solidarity could be built chiefly through face-to-face interaction. However, each building block of each such movement was a relatively small and powerless group. In order to develop a more powerful structure these building blocks had to be connected and this connection was really what constituted a haven.

The model that was frequently used has been called a "federal group model". This model implies the ability to use "block recruitment", which means that through the leadership of each federal group it was possible to draw on a preexisting solidarity within that group to build a broader and stronger unity when needed.\textsuperscript{54}

As mentioned above, Hirsch examines the strategies pursued by Anglo-American, German, Bohemian and Irish labor. With the exception of the Bohemians, these ethnic groups were substantial in size and, in the way Hirsch portrays them, seem to have acted as homogenous groups. There are interesting convergences with at least segments of the Swedish and Scandinavian ethnic groups. Thus the concept of havens might be useful even when the activities of smaller, and maybe less homogenous, ethnic groups are to be analyzed. A fact which Hirsch himself brings up is that the Germans and Bohemians were able to build an alliance based on certain common premises, thus indicating that havens could also function as bridges between groups.

Apart from the above-mentioned studies by Lizabeth Cohen and Eric Hirsch, there are a number of other studies which have provided an illuminating context for my own case study on some of the Scandinavian radicals of Chicago's Lake View district.

The ethnic groups of Chicago have been scrutinized in a number of studies which more or less continue in the tradition of Robert Park and the so-called

\textsuperscript{53} In her recent study, \textit{Swedish Chicago: The Extension and Transformation of an Urban Immigrant Community, 1880-1920} (Northwestern University, Evanston Ill. 1990), Anita Olson has indicated that the persistence of the Swedish ethnic community was much more durable than previous research has indicated. She also points out that there has been a continuity of the ethnic community although the neighborhood itself from which it originated might have been dissolved.

\textsuperscript{54} Hirsch (1990) pp.203, 217.
"Chicago School". I have already mentioned Rudolph Vecoli and his pioneering work to steer ethnic history research in new directions. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A Jones, *The Ethnic Frontier* and *Ethnic Chicago* have also clarified many aspects of polyglot Chicago.

The works of Hartmut Keil and John Jentz have in a most illuminating way brought texture to the Chicago labor movement and its ethnic groups. Even though it is primarily the Germans and their activities they have examined, light has also been shed on other groups, including the Scandinavians.

A number of studies focusing on Swedish Chicago have also been conducted. Two of these, Gustav Hemdahl's *The Swedes in Illinois Politics. An Immigrant Group in an American Political Setting*, and Gustav E. Johnson's *The Swedes of Chicago*, were carried out quite early and are mainly descriptive. However, the studies by Ulf Beijbom and Anita Olson are both very impressive with regard to the huge amount of both demographic and social data on the development of the Swedish enclave in Chicago collected and assembled. Beijbom's study focuses mainly on the time period prior to when the Scandinavians managed to establish and maintain radical labor or trade union organizations, while Olson's study deals primarily with community building based on religious organizations.


Beijbom comes to the conclusion that the process of assimilation was more or less complete by the 1930s. Olson's study on the other hand indicates a continuous ethnic community building which extends far beyond the 1930s.

This indicates that different conclusions can be reached depending on what kind of ethnic institution or ethnic expression one is looking for. As the Swedes, in common with most other ethnic groups, were divided by class, ideology, religion etc. it might therefore be relevant to talk about competing havens within the group. In the case of the Swedes the group was sometimes identified rather as Nordic, thus including Danes, Norwegians and to some extent Finns. In other cases, such as indicated by Olson's study on the Covenant Church, the haven basically centers around a religious denomination.

The Purpose and Parameters of this Study

The prime purpose of this study is to establish how a segment of the Scandinavian population in the Lake View district of Chicago during the first decades of this century tried to promote their interests through social networks based on bonds of loyalties constituted by the dynamic interaction between class and ethnicity. The establishment and constitution of these networks are seen within the framework of the construction of a haven as a wider base for social mobilization. Hence my study will contribute to the on-going discussion of the role and function of ethnicity in both the process of social mobilization and the construction of group identity.

This study will also contribute to the historiography of the Scando-American labor movement. By giving texture to this movement and showing that within the Swedish-American community there were also undertones of political radicalism which at times managed to mobilize substantial numbers of Swedes and Scandinavians, the image of Swedish urban immigrants as merely Republican "voting cattle" can be nuanced. To meet the purpose of the study, three organizations representing the political, cultural and economical aspects of the


60 Similarities to the haven concept used by Hirsch can also be found in e.g. Richard Oestreichers' study on Solidarity and Fragmentation. (Oestreicher 1989) Instead of the haven concept Oestreicher uses a concept of, relations to sub-cultures. Another similar approach is also used by Aleksandra Ålund in her study Skydds murar. Etnicitet och klass i invandrarsamman-hang(Stockholm 1985) (Protective Walls. Ethnicity and Class in an Immigrant Context.)
immigrants' lives will be examined and analyzed concerning their role in the construction of the ethnic network which constituted a haven.

The first of these case studies deals with the forging of a Scandinavian branch of the Socialist Party in the Lake View district of Chicago. Through a survey of the activities in and around this club I will discuss the way in which the historical experience of the membership affected its strategy, as well as how this strategy was altered by a new and changing context.

The questions of the latent and manifest functions of the club as a social mobilizer, the process of legitimization and construction of a moral codex, the relationship to the temperance movement and other organizations will be analyzed from the perspective of the process of organizing a club within a haven. I will furthermore discuss the ambiguity of belonging to an ethnic branch of an American class-organization with connections to an international political movement.

The second case study examines the activities around the "Cooperative Temperance Cafe Idrott" in Chicago. Cafe Idrott was one of the cultural stages on which the construction an Swedish-American ethnic identity was played out. This section includes a discussion about who the actors were and what they saw as the purpose of the Cafe. Through a survey of its educational activities in the form of lectures and reading I will analyze how the process of acculturation was dealt with in this group.

The third case study involves the organizational activities of the Scandinavian painters in Chicago in general, and of the Scandinavian Local No. 194 and the Swedish Local No. 637 in particular. In this study I will examine the ethnic profile of these locals and how they interacted with both the ethnic community and the American labor movement. Furthermore I will discuss possible motives for the actions taken by these locals and how these might be connected to the specific political and cultural profile of the leadership of these locals.

Through all three case studies I will try to establish how the organizations interacted as part of a strategy permeated by both class and ethnicity, thus giving them their specific character as Swedish-American organizations.

The three case studies are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, respectively. Some background will be given in Chapter 2 where the chronology of Swedish emigration and some data on the geographic distribution of the Swedish immigrants in North America is presented. A short general outline of the development of the American Labor movement will be presented in Chapter 3. Included in this chapter are also some general notes on the development and distribution of the language federations of Socialist Labor Party and Socialist Party of America. In Chapter 4, I will provide my case studies with a more
general context by featuring Chicago and its Swedish community. Finally I will summarize my results in a concluding Chapter 8.

Notes on Method and Sources

The Concept of Havens

A central concept of this study is the construction of havens as formulated by Eric Hirsch. The perception of the construction of such a haven can be illustrated by the organizational profile of one person, as in figure 1, describing Martin Sundström.

Figure 1. The Concept of Haven
Being a member of Café Idrott, the president of the Swedish Educational League, a Socialist and a member of the Painters L.U. No. 637, Martin Sundström was active within organizations represented in all three circles. Thus he stands as an example of the continuum of the tradition of "folkrörelsesamverkan" (popular movement cooperation), albeit interconnecting several organizations. To mobilize for the goals formulated by these organizations a certain amount of in-group solidarity had to be established. Once this solidarity was established the ability to mobilize gave the organizations a resource which could be used to form alliances. As the objectives of two or several organizations sometimes partially aligned, common ground for alliances occasionally existed.

Two examples of such alliances are, on one hand, the alliance between the Social Democrats and the Liberals when they fought for democracy at the end of the 1910s in Sweden and, on the other hand, the cooperation between the trade union movement and the Social Democratic Party in Sweden.

The alliances thus established are seldom permanent but have to be constantly renegotiated. Nevertheless, in both Swedish examples the establishing of these alliances enabled the formation of havens that sustained successful mobilizations.

The historical experience of the Swedes thus made them preconditioned for a basic setup of alliances. Hirsch's conceptualization shows striking similarities with what has become known in Sweden as "folkrörelsesamverkan" and, as ethnicity can only be understood in the context of group interaction, Hirsch's model provides an interesting tool for analyzing social mobilization on a micro level.  

In Sweden "folkrörelsesamverkan" is commonly understood as the interaction and cooperation between actors on three main stages, viz. trade unions, political and cultural organizations (included in the cultural sphere are fraternal and temperance lodges as well as the co-op movement, sports and educational organizations). This is also basically what is illustrated in Figure 1. The main difference between the Swedish haven and the Scandinavian-American haven was that in America organizations were not only based on class but also on ethnicity. Thus the political club or the trade union local were primarily organized along ethnic lines while at the same time being included in American organizations.

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Sources and Validity

Discourses on validity and interpretation of historical sources are topics for eternal debate. Some general remarks regarding the source material that has been used should thus be made.

Two of the concepts central for the interpretation of my sources have been haven and ethnicity. The concept of a haven has been formulated by Eric Hirsch while the concept of ethnicity as a constituent constructed over historical time has been formulated by Werner Sollors, Kathleen Neils Conzen and Rudolph Vecoli among others. Both these concepts indicate that my source material has been produced in a constructive context. As a personal note, and as a consequence of the fact that I find validity in both concepts, I myself cannot fully stand above this process of construction.

Writing on nationalism and ethnicity, Eric Hobsbawm has depicted the role of historians as follows: "Historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin-addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market."

Thus historians tend to become part of the construction of various identities. In the case of the Swedish-Americans this has meant that only some organizational expressions of the ethnic community have been recognized while others have been neglected. Possibly the most striking example of such neglect is that of the role of organized and radical labor among the Swedes. With the knowledge of this personal relationship to my topic I have examined and used my sources.

In the case study of the Scandinavian branch of the Socialist Party in the Lake View district of Chicago, one of the main sources has been the frequent reports published in Svenska Socialisten/ Facklan/Ny Tid. One problem with reports produced for publication is of course that they were part of the constructive process mentioned above. Reports on membership or attendance figures at meetings might thus have been exaggregated to give the desired impression. However, as far as it has been possible to cross check information given in the reports from the club or the organization, I have found a high degree of accuracy. The general patterns described in the published reports coincide with the general patterns and impression of accuracy displayed in minutes and reports from various clubs and lodges that have been examined.

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63 E.g. minutes from the Vega lodge of IOGT in Rockford or the minutes which have been used in connection with the studies done by a number of students at the Departement of (continued...)
As far as it has been possible oral sources have been used as a complement to the written and printed sources. Using the same critical assessment as with any other source I have found the information given by my informants useful both as regards specific information on details and as illustrations of a continuity of the constructive process. For a further discussion on the problems and virtues of the use of oral history as an historical source I refer to the works of Paul Thompson.

For the case study of Café Idrott and the Swedish Educational League I have had access to both the printed annual reports and accounts in various journals and newspapers. A high degree of accuracy in the information given has been indicated in this case as well.

A large part of the sources pertaining to the Scandinavian painters of Chicago has been lost. All the relevant minutes from both the Painters District Council No. 14 and local No. 194 have been lost in the course of moves between various locations. It has thus been difficult to follow up many interesting events. Most of the information on local 194 has been derived from a survey of the Painters Journal and The Chicago Union Painter. This survey was done by Steven Sapolsky who has generously shared his material with me, for which I am very grateful. In contrast, my prime source on the Painters Local No. 637 has been a complete set of minutes from that local.

As regards the activities of the painters I have also had access to the archives of the Swedish Painters Union in Stockholm including a collection of letters from painters in the US. Reports and articles in Swedish-American press have also been at my disposal.

For a general survey and assessment of the sources on Swedish emigration I refer to Lars-Göran Tedebrand's article "Sources for the History of Swedish Emigration" (in Runblom/Norman 1976) and also the chapter "Important Sources" in Beijbom's Swedes in Chicago (1971).

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63 (...continued)
History, University of Umeå. See reference to stenciled papers in the bibliography.

Chapter Two

The Period of Mass Emigration from Sweden

The year 1845 is said to mark the beginning of the period of mass emigration from Sweden to America. Disregarding the exploratory journeys made by the Vikings, Sweden had made an attempt to colonize a piece of America as early as 1638. The area around what is now Wilmington, Delaware, was known as the "New Sweden" colony between 1638 and 1655. As the colony was lost to Holland and the number of Swedes involved in this short and unsuccessful project never exceeded 350 it has had no other significance than as a symbolic reference for later emigrants.¹

In 1820 Sweden started to register passenger fees on sailing vessels. These registers have become a prime source for quantitative statistics on early emigration. Prior to this date the extent of the emigration can only be assumed. The general impression is, however, that the number of emigrants was insignificant.

The total number of registered overseas passengers during the period 1820 to 1844 was 563. Many of these were tourists or businessmen rather than emigrants in the sense of the term most commonly understood today. Among these early pioneering travelers were Gustav Unonius and Carl Friman who became important as inspirers and guides to many to come².

One of the first to be inspired by Unonius was Peter Cassel. He was a master-builder from the region of Östergötland in the southeastern part of Sweden. In 1845 he left Sweden and went straight to Jefferson County, Iowa and founded a "New Sweden" colony of his own.

¹ Sten Carlsson, "Chronology and Composition of Swedish Emigration to America." in Runblom/Norman (1976) pp.114 f.
A year later another "colony-founder" went to settle in the mid-west. This was Erik Jansson, who three years earlier had moved from Uppland to Hälsingland to establish a religious sect. However, he and his proselytes felt prevented from practising their religion in Sweden, and thus they decided to try their luck in the great land to the West. In 1846, the "prophet" Erik Jansson and his followers, the Eric Janssonites, founded the Bishop Hill Colony 25 miles south-east of Moline, Illinois. Even though Jansson was murdered in 1850 both his and Peter Cassel’s colonies managed to attract hundreds of emigrants from Sweden.3

![Emigration to the US and Immigration to Sweden, 1851-1930](image)

**Figure 2.** Source: Historical Statistics of Sweden (Stockholm 1955).

Throughout the 1850s and until 1863 the number of emigrants rarely exceeded 1,000 per year. This was partly due to the fact that the American economy was in a slump which reduced the pull-factor. It is also likely that the American Civil War tempered the drive to emigrate. In 1862 the Homestead Act became a strong pull-factor and during the subsequent years emigration successively increased.

In 1867 and 1868 large parts of Sweden were struck by crop failures and the following famine trigged the emigration. In the course of five years, 1868-1873, more than 100,000 persons emigrated. During the rest of the 1870s until 1879, the number of emigrants decreased to around 3,500 per year.

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3 Sten Carlsson (1976) p 116 and cited references. For more information on Erik Jansson and his sect see Kjell Söderberg, *Den första massuvandringen* (Kungälv 1981). According to Söderberg the "Janssonites" contributed greatly to the fact that Hälsingland during the 1840s contributed approximately 50% of the total number of Swedish emigrants.
In 1879, large sectors of the Swedish economy was struck by an economic crisis. When also the agrarian sector was struck the rate of emigration rose again. An all-time high was recorded in 1887 when 46,500 emigrants were registered. Between 1879 and 1893 more than half a million Swedes left their country. This figure represents more than 40% of the total overseas emigration between 1845 and 1930. During the period 1894 to 1899 emigration declined at the same time as remigration increased, which is why the net emigration declined during the 1890s. In 1894 only a little more than 9,500 persons emigrated, while over 7,000 returned. Behind this development lay a general improvement in the Swedish economy in the late 1890s while America during the same period was facing an economic recession.

In 1901 the time of compulsory military service for Swedish men was extended from 90 to 240 days. Although difficult to isolate as a push-factor, this change has been referred to as one reason for the escalating rate of emigration occurring at that time.

The general unrest in the Swedish labor market climaxed with the General Strike of 1909. This served as an important push-factor while a relatively prosperous economic situation in America during the pre-World War I period served as a pull-factor that affected pre-war emigration.

The First World War substantially limited but did not totally stop Swedish emigration. Even when the US entered the war in 1917 people dared to challenge the Atlantic Ocean. The last peak of the period of mass emigration was in 1923 when more than 26,000 Swedes left their country. This was also the only year that Sweden managed to fill its quota according to the immigrant quota laws imposed by the American administration in 1921.

During the 1920s the Swedish economy improved. This meant that those who would have emigrated in order to find employment were given an opportunity to find a job at home. At the end of the 1920s America was further stricken, now by the Depression, which reduced the prospects of finding a job by emigrating to America to almost nil.

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4On remigration see Lars-Göran Tedebrand, "Remigration from America to Sweden" in Runblom/Norman (eds. 1976).
Changes in the Social Structure and Regional Distribution of the Emigrants

Farming, forestry and fishing provided for 72% of the Swedish population in 1870 while only 13% gained their livelihood in industry. By 1930, the proportion employed in farming, forestry and fishing had diminished to 38% while the percentage employed by industry had increased to 33%.

With one exception each sector of the Swedish economy provided the number of emigrants proportional to the number of people occupied in each sector. The exception was during the first two decades of the 1900s, when emigrants from the industrial sector were slightly overrepresented.

During the 1840s, the first period of mass emigration, farmers and crofters constituted the majority of the emigrants. In 1840, 68% of the emigrants were registered as families. After 1868 this ratio sank to 25-29%, where it remained throughout the emigration period. Between 1901 and 1930 there was also a shift from group migration toward individual migration.

These transitional patterns are something which Sweden shares with other Scandinavian countries. Other emigrational patterns also align with emigrational patterns from the rest of Europe. Hence, among the earliest emigrants were often people who were threatened with deprivation of both their social and economic status in their home countries. Thus among the first to emigrate were farmers, crofters or middle-class civil servants. For these emigrants, departure was regarded as permanent since they were seeking to start a new career or acquire land in America. From the mid-1880s, however, the growing number of re-emigrants indicates that migration was no longer regarded as permanent.

Sweden was facing nascent capitalism in combination with a demographic transition which for the period 1810 to 1860 boosted the Swedish population growth to an average rate of more than 1% per year. Hence, a growing number


6 From the early to mid-19th century, Sweden was in the midst of changing demographic parameters. The demographic transition has theoretically been divided into four stages; 1) pre-industrial society, with high fertility and mortality and low population increase; 2) society in transition, with continuing high fertility but declining mortality and consequently high population growth; 3) society still in transition with both a declining mortality and fertility rates; and 4) modern society with both fertility and mortality stabilized at a low level and consequently with a more or less static population. From around 1800 the rate of mortality dropped while the rate of nativity remained on average the same. Infant mortality also started (continued...)
of farmers' sons were left without land to cultivate. Since the agrarian economy failed to support them they had to find their livelihood elsewhere. Some swelled the ranks of the working class but many chose to emigrate. During the latter part of the period the emigrants were thus recruited among the ranks of laborers which also meant that urban and industrial areas contributed an increasing number of people.

![Vital Statistics for Sweden, 1751 - 1940](image)

**Figure 3.** Source: Historical Statistics of Sweden (Stockholm 1955).

After the war the Swedish economy, including the wood and lumber industries, struggled with the post-war depression. Blacklisting and ideological disputes have thus been noted as part of the cause of the last wave of emigrants.

Regarding the regional distribution of the emigration it has been said to have been affected by four major factors. The first of these was the fact that cities usually offered opportunities for work and created an influential sphere where emigration as an alternative was curbed. Great distance from larger urban areas thus increased the propensity to emigrate.

Secondly, a shortage of land also made people more prone to emigrate. Up till the 1910s there was still a possibility of colonizing land in the northern part of

\[\text{...continued}\]

to drop from this time. From 1800 to 1900 the rate was practically cut in half. The result of these changes was that Sweden experienced a drastic rise in population growth. Between 1810 and 1860 the Swedish population grew at an average rate of more than 1% per year. Lars-Göran Tedebrand, "The Swedish Emigration to North America: Demographic Perspectives on the Transition." Paper presented at the conference "Transgressing Cultural Boundaries: Sweden in America" University of Minnesota, Oct. 19-21, 1988.
Sweden, which is one of the reasons why the northernmost parts of the country were relatively unaffected by emigration. Hence the two northernmost regions, Väster- and Norrbotten while constituting 17% of the Swedish population only provided 7% of the emigrant stock.

A third factor which affected emigration frequency was the ratio of immigrants in combination with an industry sensitive to changes in economic cycles. The higher the ratio of immigrants, the higher the frequency of emigration. Finally a strong and lasting tradition of emigration, or the "stock effect" as it has been called, appears to have had the effect of regenerating, not least, the mental conditions for emigration. "America fever" was a popular term for this effect and especially the "America letter" became a prime cause of infection with "America fever".

One or more of these factors played a role for a region stretching across the southern part of the country and hosting about 30% of the total population, which thus became the regional nucleus of Swedish emigration. It should be pointed out, however, that there were large regional and local variations as well as a shift over time. Thus, as mentioned above, there was a tendency toward regional diversification which during the latter part of the period also affected the northernmost parts of the country.

By the end of the period of mass emigration, some 20% to 25% of the population in Sweden had abandoned its country of birth. Of the approximately 1 1/4 million that emigrated to America some 200,000 found reasons to return to Sweden before 1930, and as remigration began to exceed the migration, the epoch of Swedish mass emigration to America had come to an end. From the 1930s Sweden became a country receiving immigrants rather than sending off emigrants.

Regional Distribution of Swedes in North America

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8 As defined by Sten Carlsson the regional nucleus of emigration was constituted by the following län according to number of emigrants in relation to population (administrative unit smaller than the equivalent of an American state but larger than a county): Hallands-, Jönköpings-, Värmlands-, Kronobergs-, Kalmar and Ålvsborgs län. If the northern part of Skåne, western part of Blekinge, southwestern part of Östergötland, western part of Dalarna and the westmost part of Örebro län is included the regional nucleus of emigration is defined. see also Carlsson(1976) p.133.
Where did the emigrants emigrate? Two factors appear to have been crucial for the settlement pattern of the Swedes. The first relates to the "stock effect". This means that people from the same village or region had a tendency to settle in the same region. The second factor relates to the economic structure of the home region. As, Hans Norman has shown in his study of emigration from Örebro "län", the people that emigrated from the industrial centers within Örebro län settled more frequently in industrial areas in America, whereas people from the same county but from rural areas were more prone to settle in rural areas in America.  

The settlement patterns of the Swedes in North America were by the geographer Helge Nelson plotted in the 1940s and his work still remains the standard work on the geographical distribution of the Swedish emigrants.

In correlation with these two factors the Swedes settled primarily in the Mid-west and in the northeastern states. During the latter part of the emigration period a growing number of Swedish emigrants found their way out to California but also to the northwestern states, Oregon, Washington and the province of British Columbia in Canada.

Helge Nelson's graphs on the number of Swedish emigrants in 21 of the most significant states indicate that the peak was reached between 1900 and 1910, with two. In Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas the number of Swedish emigrants peaked around 1890, whereas in the eastern states, such as New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, and western states such as Washington, Oregon and California, the number of Swedes peaked or even grew in the 1920s. This, however, does not change the fact that the Midwest continued to host the largest concentration of Swedes and other Scandinavians.

The big magnet of the American Mid-West was of course the city of "broad shoulders" - Chicago. But Chicago is not of interest just because of its concentration of Swedes and Scandinavians. Chicago was also a metropolis for the American labor movement. Thus, before entering the Chicago context a brief outline of some of the characteristics of organized labor in America might be appropriate.

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Chapter Three

The American Labor Movement

The American labor movement, including its various ethnic branches, evolved within the framework of American society as a whole. Some general characteristics of the development of this society should thus be pointed out.

As the Civil War ended in 1865 the economic initiative shifted from the plantation economy of the South to the industrial capitalism of the northern states. These industrial entrepreneurs came to spur an economic development greater and faster growing than the world had ever witnessed before. From 1860 to 1894 the US increased the gross value of its industrial production more than four times, thus becoming the number one industrial producer in the world. During the succeeding 25 years the US maintained this position and was by the end of the First World War the dominating industrial nation in the world.¹

There were a number of factors which enabled the American economy to go through this transition successfully. As America was a young nation it did not have to break down old structures in order to establish new ones. This was an advantage when it came to imposing new methods and new technology in both the agrarian and industrial sectors of the economy. A rapid structural transition of the agrarian sector created markets for tools and equipment produced by industry.

As the agrarian sector became highly mechanized, farm laborers often had to find jobs elsewhere. This relative surplus of labor within the agrarian sector came in handy for the factories, which were in desperate need of laborers. Nevertheless, the agrarian sector could not supply industry with all the labor force it required. Instead it was Europe with its immigrants that became the prime supplier of manpower.

The strong position of private ownership facilitated decision-making as to how or what to exploit or produce. Growth and expansion were further favored by

¹ This sketchy picture of the development of the American economy is based on Dudely Dillard, Västeropas och Förenta staternas ekonomiska historia (Lund 1970); Howard Zinn, A People’s History of the United States (New York 1980), chapters 11-12; Leo Huberman, Det amerikanska folkets historia (Stockholm 1973) pp. 164-214.
new financing and banking systems. As the American economy flourished it also became an interesting object for European investors who helped to secure a constant supply of capital for continuous expansion.

During this take-off period for American industry, conditions were optimal for the growth of companies. During the period 1880-1929 a number of small companies managed to grow into industrial and economic giants. This was accomplished through efficient exploitation of both labor and natural resources, the formation of cartels and a series of favorable and fortunate investments in combination with ingenious lobbying.

In the midst of this flourishing capitalism, the American worker tried to state his case. Like in many other countries it was the craftsmen and artisans who seized the initiative to organize the workers. A key factor which gave the skilled workers the impetus to act was the escalating attacks from industry trying to restructure the mode of production.

As early as 1828 a "Working Men's Party" was organized, said to be the first modern workers' party in the world. However, it was not until after the "Communist Manifesto" had been published in 1848 that socialist ideas made headway among the American working class. The period between the founding of the first workers' party and the end of the Civil War was characterized by a series of ups and downs with no major breakthrough for the labor movement. It was not until after the Civil War that the American labor movement gained momentum.

Knights of Labor

Both the number and the geographical concentration of laborers were key factors in organizing workers. With the expansion of American industry at the end of the Civil War the American working class grew. This created a situation favorable to organized labor.

The first labor organization which both gained substantial support and influence among American labor was the Knights of Labor. The organization was founded

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2 See e.g. Jane Cederqvist, Arbetare i strejk. Studier angående arbetarnas politiska mobilisering under industrialismens genombrott (Stockholm 1980) passim.

in 1869 by a group of German workers within the garment industry.\(^4\) It was initially a secret organization willing to accept all workers regardless of skill, nationality or sex. The only limitation was that a member had to be above 18 years of age and not a professional gambler, a lawyer, a pimp, a liquor salesman, a banker or a stockholder.\(^5\)

This meant that the Knights of Labor was an organization open to the middle class as well as to workers. Hence it did not believe in class struggle but instead advocated cooperation between employers and their employees for mutual improvement. This they believed to be achieved through organization, education and cooperation. In line with this opinion the Knights of Labor initiated a number of producers’ cooperatives. However, none of these projects succeeded though they left the Knights with some useful experience as to how to mobilize and organize their members.

Thus the growth of the Knights of Labor was sluggish and uneven at first. The organization did not adopt a platform until 1878, which allowed for local variations in the organization’s profile. Nevertheless, as it centralized its activities during the post-war depression and after the panic of 1873 the Knights started to make headway.

Another reason for the success of the organization was its model of organizing mixed assemblies along industrial lines. This model managed to sustain a local organization where separate unions along trade lines would have been too narrow.

An increasing number of local assemblies based on single trades ultimately broke down the resistance toward separate trade assemblies. A major shift occurred in 1879 when the window-glass workers were permitted to organize as a national trade association within the Knights.

Although membership increased during these years it fluctuated heavily and the turnover was substantial. Between 1879 and 1883 the order had initiated 86,000 members while during the same period it had suspended 54,000. The Knights of Labor reached its peak in 1886 with a membership of more than 700,000.

The relative success of the Knights should, however, not only be credited to the leadership of the organization. Local assemblies and the rank and file often

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\(^5\) Huberman (1973) p. 203.
fought bitter fights alone and without the support of their leaders. The militance of the rank and file of the Knights gave them an image of being "strike happy". This circumstance eventually struck back at the Knights in the aftermath of the Haymarket bombing when public sentiment focused on Knight-led strikes as being at the source of this evil deed. The Knights together with the rest of the labor movement went into a period of stagnation and decline. From this time on the Knights of Labor also started to lose the initiative to another, competing organization, The American Federation of Labor.

The American Federation of Labor Up to the Rise of the CIO

In 1881, a group of disaffected Knights of Laborers from Indiana formed a new, centralized labor organization together with the Terre Haute Amalgamated Labor Union. The organization was named the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada (FOOTALU) and it welcomed both skilled and unskilled workers into its ranks.

In 1886 the Knights came into conflict with the cigarmakers' trade union which belonged to the FOOTALU. This conflict resulted in a major clash between the Knights and the FOOTALU, and ultimately the formation of the American Federation of Labor, the AFL.

When the AFL was constituted in 1886 it represented about 140,000 workers and managed by the turn of the century to recruit yet another 400,000 members. At the peak of its influence at the end of the 1910s, the AFL organized about 5 million workers. An impressive figure indeed, but it was still only 12% of a potential 42 million workers. After 1920 the proportion of organized labor declined until the mid 1930s when the Congress of Industrial Organizations was organized. As the CIO organized unskilled and semi-skilled industrial workers the level of unionization doubled from about 10% in 1935 to about 20%, or 7,500,000, in 1937.

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In the shadow of the political failures of labor during the 1870s and the Haymarket incident in 1886, the political perspective of the AFL was limited to working within the existing two-party system. Although Samuel Gompers, the long-time and charismatic leader of the AFL, had attended socialist meetings early in his union career, he came to the conclusion that a separate labor party was not required and if political action was needed it would best be achieved through lobbying the already existing parties. Hence, the AFL developed its "pure and simple" unionism to fight less for visionary goals and more for immediate improvements for its members.11

The years 1919-1920 became years of demarcation for the American labor movement. Up till then industry had been trying to maintain its power by keeping the different ethnic groups separate. A basic theme in this strategy was to nourish and sustain and even create antagonism between different groups. The purpose of this was to divide the labor force which thus would be unable to challenge industrial management.

During the radicalization of the 1910s the American labor movement still managed to bridge some of its internal antagonisms and challenge industrial management. As it became obvious that the strategy to divide the labor force had failed industry started to strike back at the labor movement.

But labor relations still had to be managed. In order to maintain control, industry thus initiated a new form of labor management. The new policy aspired to tie the labor force closer to the company by offering it a plan for its social security. This, however, also meant that different labor and ethnic groups were brought closer together, thus creating an opportunity for new alliances between previously isolated labor groups.12

During the 1920s a new mass culture evolved as regards both consumer goods and entertainment, which further created a common ground for various labor and ethnic groups. Thus when much of the social program that industry had initiated during the 1920s collapsed during the Great Depression workers could fall back on their new and common experience when they responded to the crisis. Partly as a result of these experiences the need to build labor unity beyond the limits of the different separate trades was recognized. The result of this insight


12 On labor management and the conditions leading up to the formation of the CIO, see David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor. The Workplace, the State and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925 (Cambridge, N.Y. 1987) pp. 411 f; Choen (1990) passim.
ultimately paved the way for the forging of the Committee of Industrial Organizations in 1935, which in 1938 became the Congress of Industrial Organizations - the CIO.

**The Industrial Workers of the World**

The CIO was not the first organization to advocate industrial unionism during the 20th century. In 1905 representatives from various labor unions and political organizations met in Chicago to found a labor organization aiming at uniting all workers including non-skilled and immigrant workers. The organization founded at that meeting was named The Industrial Workers of the World - the IWW.

Approximately 60,000 workers were represented by some 200 delegates at the convention. Although estimates about the peak size of the IWW varies it is probably safe to say that it never surpassed 100,000 members\(^\text{13}\). However as the "Wobblie" organizers went to work they managed to make an impact on the whole nation ("Wobblie" is a common nick-name for a IWW member).

The goals of the organization were not to reform society but to replace it with a new, egalitarian society based on democratic committees on various levels. To achieve this goal workers had to unite regardless of creed, race, color, nationality, or level of skill of their occupation. This ambition and perspective was captured in the slogan "One big union", which also became the central slogan for the IWW.

Strikes were regarded by the IWW as a legitimate means to obtain the true value of what the workers had produced. Furthermore, the IWW saw the dynamics and organization of strikes and strike committees as a kind of school through which the workers could learn how to organize their coming new society. The Wobblies thus became involved in numerous strikes several of which were victorious but where several also developed into bloody massacres.

As the IWW set out to organize all workers it also welcomed unskilled workers which often were newly-arrived immigrant workers who had been denied entrance to the traditional trade unions. In the eyes of the American public this turned the IWW into a threatening militant organization with a large segment of foreigners. Hence, when the IWW leadership in 1917 strongly protested US engagement in the World War, nationalist sentiments spurred the authorities to

strike at the Wobblies and more than 100 IWW leaders were imprisoned. The general attack on organized labor and "the red scare" that was launched at the end of the 1910s broke the resolve of the IWW and although the organization still exists, it never recovered from that collapse.

The Swedish connection to the IWW has perhaps foremost been associated with Joel Hägglund or Joe Hill, as he called himself in the US. His symbolic value for the Swedes and Swedish-Americans is commonly known. However, there were also a number of other Swedish Wobblies that should be recognized for their impact on the Swedes and Swedish-American labor movement. One of them was Ragnar Johansson, to whom I will return in relation to both the Painter´s Union and the Lake View radicals. Another person who played an important role not only for the American Wobblies but also for the Swedish syndicalists was John Sandgren. He had considerable experience from both the Swedish and American syndicalist movements. In 1905, Sandgren took part in the preparations for the founding convention of the IWW. A few years later he was back in Sweden where he wrote articles for the syndicalist journals Brand and Syndikalisten. During his stay in Sweden he also wrote two theoretical books which became important for political development of the Swedish syndicalists during the 1920s. After he returned to America he edited an IWW publication named Solidarity in Cleveland, Ohio, for a short time. Around 1918-19, he left Cleveland to become the editor of a Swedish-language Wobblie paper named Nya Världen, published in Chicago. However, after a few months he went on to become the editor of the English-language Wobblie paper, One Big Union Monthly. There he stayed until late 1920 or early 1921 when he was dismissed on account of his persistent anti-Communist views. For a few years Sandgren continued to appear at various labor meetings. What he did thereafter is unfortunately unclear.

The Socialist Labor Party

As mentioned, some claim that the first workers' party in the world, the "Working Men's Party", was organized in America as early as in 1828. It was, however, not until after 1848 with the revolutionary movement in Germany and the publication of Marx's "Communist Manifesto" that socialist ideas made headway in America. Mostly, it was German revolutionaries who had left their country after the failed revolt in 1848 who dominated the radical arena. Several attempts were made to form socialist or radical labor parties but none managed to last for any length of time. Usually these early attempts to form parties resulted in schisms along ethnic lines. The different ethnic sections, however, often managed to persist as independent and separate organizations. This was the situation until the summer of 1876 when a Working Men's Party of the United States was organized in Philadelphia. The following year the party changed its name to the Socialist Labor Party (SLP).  

The heavy impact from immigrants can be illustrated by the fact that only 10% of the members of the newly organized SLP were born in America and of the 26 different journals and newspapers that supported the party only 10 were in English. The strong German influence can also be illustrated by the fact that out of these 26 papers, 14 were German, whereof seven were dailies.

The Scandinavians were among the groups that at least for a while managed to sustain a socialist paper. It was called "Den Nye Tid" and was published in Chicago. However, the time was not kind to these enterprises and by 1879 most of these papers had ceased to exist.

At quite an early stage the relationship between political and union activities became a topic of dispute within the SLP. The party split several times following

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16 There were two papers published in Chicago under the name "Den Nye Tid". The first appeared in 1872 and was supposed to have been associated with the Scandinavian section of the First International. The second appeared in 1877 and was started on initiative of a Danish and a Norwegian socialist leader. The exact relation to the SLP is however not established (Hoerder, 1987 pp.101 and 81, note 18).
disappointing election results and at times there were two groups laying claim
to the party name.\textsuperscript{18}

Under the leadership of Daniel DeLeon one fraction of the party took the poor
election result as evidence that the American worker was not yet ready for
independent political action. The activities of the SLP should instead be focused
on the economic arena - the labor unions.

For a few years Daniel De Leon and his SLP tried to reform the Knights of
Labor but in 1895 De Leon had come to the conclusion that this was impossible.
Instead he went on to organize a new central body, the Socialist Trade and Labor
Alliance, which included a number of unions sympathizing with De Leon’s
political perspective. SLP members were then forbidden to accept office in any
of the other unions and the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance declared war on
both the Knights of Labor and the AFL.

However, De Leon’s dualist policy was soon opposed within the SLP ranks.
De Leon responded to this criticism by excluding his opponents in 1899. By
eliminating all his opponents De Leon could dominate the SLP convention in
1900 totally. His own maximalist program was adopted without any
compromises. However, following the party split in 1899 and the adoption of
De Leon’s policy, the SLP became more and more isolated and gradually lost
whatever influence it had gained.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{The Socialist Party of America}

Since the SLP continued to focus on the economic arena with the maximalistic
program proposed by De Leon smaller groups within the socialist labor
movement started to move for political action. In the summer of 1901 delegates
representing some 10,000 members from these organizations held a convention
in Indianapolis to form the Socialist Party of America, SPA.

Right from the start the SPA was a rather heterogeneous organization which
included fractions that previously had left the SLP. There were also various
groups representing other smaller organizations, different religions, ethnic
groups, levels of education and so on. The complexity of the party created areas
in which it could interact with an extended group of people. Immigrant groups


\textsuperscript{19} H. H. Quint, \textit{The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement}
(Columbia 1953) p. 371.
retained a strong position within the movement. However, the fact that only 25 of the 124 delegates at the founding convention were born outside the US indicates that the socialist movement had lost some of its immigrant character.\textsuperscript{20}

Contrary to the monolithic atmosphere and policy of the SLP, the SPA hosted groups with somewhat different political perspectives. James Weinstein has isolated four different fractions within the party, each connected with one leading character.\textsuperscript{21}

On a political left-right scale Victor Berger, a German-born teacher and professional politician, was the front man for the right-wing fraction within the party. Berger advocated that the big financial trusts should be bought out instead of confiscated. Hence Berger received strong support from unions and he is further regarded as part of the constructive wing within the party.

Berger often cooperated with a Russian emigrant raised in New York, named Morris Hilquit. Hilquit, who represented orthodox marxism, was at the same time regarded as a "center man" within the party. As such he often came to play the role of the mediator between different fractions within the party.

To the left of Hilquit stood Eugene Debs, who perhaps was the most charismatic character of the party’s front men. He was born in the US to parents of French descent. Debs made his name as a successful union leader and was one of the founders of the American Railway Union. He refused, however, to work within the AFL, which did not prevent him from having good relations with Hilquit who was positive toward the AFL. Contrary to Berger though, Debs wanted the financial trusts to be confiscated instead of bought.

To the far left and representing the most militant wing of the party was William D. Haywood. Haywood was one of the leaders of the Western Federation of Miners as well as one of the leaders of the IWW. Haywood’s strong side, however, was not political theory but rather his involvement in the everyday struggle for bread and butter. Contrary to the other leaders he believed that the revolution was at hand. In 1912 he made a number of remarks which indicated his support of both sabotage and illegal actions as means in the class struggle. Due to these fatal remarks his career as political front man in the Socialist Party ended. Other leaders denounced his political view and removed him from the party leadership in 1913.

\textsuperscript{20} Bengston (1955) p. 37.

Although Debs was the most well-known and popular of the SPA leaders he showed little interest in the practical leadership of the party. Thus, both Berger and Hilquit obtained an unproportionally large influence on the party.

From the time of its organization in 1901 to the first split in 1912, the Socialist Party grew steadily. In 1901 the party had about 10,000 members, a number which had grown to 118,045 by 1912. That year, however, the discussions about Article II, Section 6, the so-called anti-sabotage clause, in the Socialist Party constitution began. When this clause was adopted some 20,000 members left the party, the majority of which went to the IWW.

During the period 1913 to 1917 the number of members of the SPA stagnated and even declined. At the convention in 1917 the party adopted the so-called "St. Louis Resolution" in which the party opposed US intervention in the World War. This became a turning point for the party and it started to recruit members again. In 1919, the SPA had once again more than 100,000 organized members.

![Membership of the Socialist Party of America 1903 - 1926](image)

Figure 4. Source: Weinstein, (1972) Facklan (Sept. 30 1921).

However, international turmoil (including the Russian Revolution of 1917), had radicalized large groups within the party. These groups constituted the growing left wing of the party. The left wing felt that the party leadership had become too restrictive and conservative, not the least on international questions. The tension between the left wing and the party leadership led to the major party schism of 1919 in which the majority of the party members left to form the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party.
Nevertheless, the SPA managed its best election ever by pulling almost one million votes in 1920. This success was, however, mostly due to the personal popularity of the party’s presidential candidate, Eugene Debs. After the split in 1919 the SPA in reality lost its role as the unifying labor party of America. By the mid 1920s the SPA had withered to less than 10,000 members.  

Decisive for the party split was its ambivalent stand toward the Third International. At a party convention in May 1920, it was resolved that the party should not be affiliated to any international organization. This, however, did not mean that the party resented the Soviet state or the Bolsheviks. By 1925 the SPA had, however, developed an anti-Soviet position.

**The Ethnic Language Federations Within the Socialist Party**

As mentioned earlier, the Socialist Party was in many respects a heterogeneous party. The different blocks within the party emanated out of several factors. Different conditions in various geographical areas constituted a basis for variation in political perspective just as there were differences between rural and urban areas.

But just as important as the geographically based blocks was the sub-structure of ethnically based language federations. The Finns became instrumental in the recognition of separate ethnic organizations within the party as they got organized as early as 1904 and joined the party as a separate branch. However, membership was individual and it was not until 1907 that their organization was recognized as a separate federation within the party. At an SPA convention in 1908 the party decided that it also would welcome and recognize other groups or language federations. Until 1910 the Latvian Socialist Federation had developed a similar status to that of the Finns. In 1910 the SPA altered its constitution so that any socialist language federation with more than 500 members was welcome to apply for membership in the party. This paved the way for a number of ethnic organizations to join the party during the following years. In 1911 South Slavic, Italian and Scandinavian organizations joined. In 1912 came Hungarians and Bohemians. In 1913 came Germans, Jews, Sloveni-

22 Weinstein (1972) p.77.
23 Ibid.
ans and Poles and in 1915 Ukranian, Lithuanian and Russian organizations were linked up with the SPA. As a result of this almost 33,000 of the SPA's more than 80,000 members belonged to a language federation when the United States entered the First World War.\(^{26}\)

Over the years some of these language federations acquired a substantial number of halls and meeting places and became financially quite solid. Hence the Finns in 1913 owned between 65 and 70 assembly halls estimated to be worth 600,000 dollars. They furthermore kept their own printshop and college. The college, alone, the Workers' College of Smithfield, Minnesota, ran at an expense of about 6,000 dollars per year.\(^{27}\)

The relative strength and independence of the language federations was not only a positive asset for the SPA. The average revenue from the language federations, for example, was a little less than 20% of that of the English-speaking members, a matter which caused some irritation within the SPA leadership. But the leaders could do little about this since their control of the federations was limited by what the interpreter reported. The interpreter was appointed by the language federation which further reduced the party's ability to gain control over the federations. The ability to reduce the autonomy of the federations was also limited by the fact that the IWW was making headway within the federations. In order to put an end to this the party was forced to grant the language federations the right to expel members. This right meant that federations gained in power and influence rather than losing it to the party leadership.

With the major party schism of 1919 the language federations were either expelled or left the party voluntarily. The bulk of the various language federations went to the new communist parties. Once again the Finns played a central role which can be illustrated by the organization of the Workers' Party in 1921. At that time the Finns constituted almost 50% of its membership.\(^{28}\)

For the Finns, just as for segments within most other ethnic groups, these socialist organizations represented an attempt to mobilize a strategy of survival. Such attempts were also orchestrated by segments of the Swedish community and the other Scandinavian groups.


\(^{28}\) Kostiainen (1978) p. 25.
There were two socialist organizations through which most of these activities were canalized at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The first and oldest of these was Skandinaviska Socialistska Arbetareförbundet - the SSAF, affiliated with the Socialist Labor Party. The second was the slightly younger but somewhat larger Skandinaviska Socialistförbundet - the SSF, was affiliated with the SPA.

There were also a number of independent Scandinavian workers or Scandinavian Socialist clubs as well as Swedish or Scandinavian branches of the IWW. These will be dealt with as they interacted with the group of the study.

Although the study mainly deals with a number of local Chicago branches of the SSF, a quick glance at some general characteristics of both the SSF and the SSAF might give a more detailed context to the case studies.

**Skandinaviska Socialistiska Arbetareförbundet, SSAF**

It would not be completely wrong to state that the forging of the Swedish labor movement runs parallel to the period of mass emigration from Sweden (1860-1930). Consequently, an increasing number of immigrants brought experience from the Swedish labor movement with them.

To some extent, this experience did not differ from the experience of laborers in other countries, but the Swedes also brought with them unique traditions and experiences molded by Swedish history. This history features, for instance, a rather progressive and pro-labor Temperance movement, as well as the early and very close ties between the trade union and the political branches of the Labor movement. The relatively late breakthrough of the Swedish labor movement meant that the programs and methods of popular movements such as the Temperance movement or the free Churches, became partially transplanted into more class-oriented organizations such as unions or political parties.

Fred Nilsson has in his study of emigration from Stockholm indicated that people with this kind of experience had a higher tendency to emigrate than others. Although no extensive study has been done as to how many of the early pioneers of the Swedish labor movement emigrated it is still evident that the loss of labor leaders through emigration was recognized by the organizations at that time.

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Men like Erik Nordman and Atterdag Wermelin, mentioned as pioneers of the Social Democratic movement, or Karl Adolf Hedlund, Wallentin Wald, Alfred Luthman and Gustav Rudquist, pioneers within both the political and trade union movements, are all men who were recognized for their contributions to the labor movement before they emigrated.\textsuperscript{30}

Although Nilsson’s study starts in 1880 it is plausible that people involved in organized labor also had a higher tendency to emigrate during the time period prior to his study. It is therefore no surprise that we find Scandinavians connected with organized labor in America as early as the 1860s.\textsuperscript{31}

Many of these "labor" organizations, however, were controlled by a verbal and offensive middle class, and attempts by blue collar workers to raise questions related to politics or labor were effectively stopped. The leadership of these organizations cultivated an educational tradition. However, as Ulf Beijbom points out in his book \textit{Swedes in Chicago}, they also did their best to keep these organizations from being anything other than mutual help and benefit societies.\textsuperscript{32}

The 1870s brought many changes to the American economy. A growing tension between different actors on the economic scene brought about a radicalization in many organizations. This meant that many workers abandoned middle-class oriented organizations and joined or organized more working-class oriented ones, such as socialist or trade union organizations. The great influx of workers of all nationalities, representing different labor traditions, also led to the establishment of a number of ethnic trade union branches.

As a result of the emigration from Sweden and other Scandinavian countries there were Scandinavian Socialist Labor Party sympathizers organized in both New York and Chicago in the 1870s.\textsuperscript{33} Even though these groups withered they still represent the first contacts with the SLP by the Scandinavians.

From the mid 1880s, however, these connections became more stable. The Scandinavian Socialist Club that was organized in New York was one of the clubs that became especially influential in the organizing of the Scandinavian socialists. Instrumental in organizing this club was the grand old man of the organized Scandinavian radicals in New York, David Westerberg.

\textsuperscript{30} Nordahl (1987) pp. 22 f.
\textsuperscript{31} Beijbom (1971) p.330.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. pp. 330-332.
He was born in Gothenburg, in 1825 and followed his father in his trade as a shoemaker. At the age of 21 he started to travel as a journeyman through Europe. During the ten years that he moved about in Europe he acquired extensive knowledge about the cabbler's trade but also about the struggle for socialism. During his time in England he stayed in the same house as Karl Marx with whom he also became a personal friend. At the time of his arrival in New York he thus immediately commenced to organize his fellow Scandinavians.

The bonds with the old country appear to have been strong within the club, since its members managed to sell about 50 subscriptions to the first issue of *Social-Demokraten*, the legendary labor newspaper in Sweden. The club also became instrumental in the organizing of Skandinaviska Socialistiska Förbundet.34

At Christmas, 1894, the first issue of the journal *Skandinavisk-Amerikanska Arbetaren* was published by Skandinaviska Socialistiska Förbundet in New York. In 1896 the Danish-Norwegian section of the newspaper evolved into a separate

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paper which was moved to Chicago and published as *Arbejderen*. The name of the New York journal was shortened to simply *Arbetaren* (the Worker). Westerberg was of course one of the forces behind the paper and its first editor became the above-mentioned Erik Nordman. But, when the SLP split in 1898 and the majority of the Scandinavian organization went with the DeLeon fraction, Westerberg and Nordman both jumped ship.

Nevertheless, the paper had a circulation of 1,850 copies in 1896, a number which increased to between 3,000 and 4,000 during the 1910s. At the end of the 1910s, however, the number of members who either had been conscripted into the army or had returned to Sweden caused the number of subscribers to drop somewhat.

In 1904 Skandinaviska Socialistiska Förbundet was reorganized and Skandinaviska Socialistiska Arbetareförbundet (SSAF) was founded. The prime objective of this organization was said to be to recruit presumptive members to the SLP, or as it was expressed in the constitution of the SSAF: "The purpose of the federation is to unite all the political clubs and organizations where the Scandinavian languages are spoken and where the Socialist Labor Party is recognized as the only party of the working class and where the organization of the working class along industrial lines recognizes the class struggle as the means for the establishment of the cooperative society." However, the SSAF did not differ from most other ethnic organizations in that ethnicity also came to function as a tool for social mobilization. One way this happened was by drawing on loyalties to and admiration for the heroic labor organizers of the old country. This was for instance practised by the Providence branch of the Skandinaviska Socialistiska Förbundet as it tried to recruit more members. During the winter of 1900 a member of the club raised the question of bringing over August Palm from Sweden to hold a series of meetings. The motion was seconded by a number of other Scandinavian socialist clubs and a "Palm committee" was set up to arrange his meetings. As a result of this Palm, who was a flamboyant speaker and known as "the father of socialism" in Sweden, came to America in mid-September of 1900. During more than two

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36 SSAF Convention minutes 1919 p.13. (AAB, Stockholm)
37 SSAF Constitution and By-laws (New York 1914) p.7.
38 See e.g. Rudholm (1990).
months Palm thereafter traveled the northeastern and midwestern states and spoke at numerous meetings, some of which drew almost 2,000 people.\textsuperscript{39}

As John Higham has pointed out the defence of the homeland is one function which often becomes a key objective for ethnic organizations. This was also the case for the SSAF, although this defence was primarily directed to a specific segment of the Swedish population, namely the working class.

\textbf{Plate 2.} August Palm (the man with the beard against the banner in the back) on a picnic together with a Scandinavian socialist club in New York at the turn of the centuries.

In 1909, when the labor movement in Sweden called for its first general strike, the SSAF came out in defence of the Swedish strikers. The campaign was a success, managing to send more than 30,000 dollars to the strikers.\textsuperscript{40} The defence of the Swedish workers hence became a trigger for the growth of SSAF.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Pearson, pp. 27-28 and August Palm, Ögonblicksbilder från en tripp till Amerika (Stockholm 1901) \textit{passim}.
  \item Bengston (1955) p. 48.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Through the various activities in support of the strikers in Sweden the organization became more widely known within the Scandinavian community and it is mentioned that in 1909 the SSAF had almost 1,500 members divided into more than 40 clubs around the country.\textsuperscript{41}

Although information on the SSAF membership is quite fragmentary it appears that the year 1909 was the peak year for the organization. As indicated by Table 1, the average membership during the 1910s appears to have fluctuated around 500 members, while those who also managed to pay their dues totalled an average of 360 members.\textsuperscript{42}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\hline
Total & 208 & 283 & 1500 & 663 & 800 & 603 & 743 & 629 & \textbf{230} & & & \\
Gdst & 147 & 228 & - & 472 & 423 & 394 & 465 & 545 & 515 & 480 & 141 & 170 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{SSAF Membership, 1905 - 1923. (total and in good standing)}
\end{table}

Sources: Bengston (1955); \textit{Arbetaren} (New York); SSAF Convention minutes.

In 1920 the SSAF suffered a severe setback as a group around Anders H. Lyzell, editor of \textit{Arbetaren}, left the organization to negotiate a merger with the SSF. With this split membership sank from 480 to 258. The minutes from the SSAF convention held in 1924 reveals that the organization had not been able to recover as the total membership was listed at only 230 members.\textsuperscript{43}

The burden of supporting the journal \textit{Arbetaren} was from this time on borne by a constantly shrinking group of members. In 1927 the responsibility for the paper was taken over by the Socialist Labor Party and a campaign to raise funds for the paper was launched. This campaign failed as only 750 of the 3,000 dollars expected floated in. Thus the National Executive Committee of the SLP decided to discontinue publication of \textit{Arbetaren} as of December 1928. When the paper was closed the SSAF also withered. Individual clubs might have continued their activities for a number of years but the SSAF's career as a national organization had come to an end.\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} See \textit{Arbetaren} (New York); Bengston (1955) and SSAF convention reports.
\textsuperscript{43} Bengston (1955) p.171 and minutes from the SSAF convention of 1924, p.4.
\textsuperscript{44} Albert Pearson, "The Swedish Press in New York. Arbetaren 1894-1929" (typescript, Minnesota Historical Society); Brook (1969) pp.113 f.
\end{flushright}
The regional distribution of the various SSAF branches basically followed the regional distribution of the Scandinavians living in the US. Possibly because the SSAF was the earlier of the two major socialist language federations it tended to remain stronger in the areas where it had first been established, namely on the east coast, in the New England district and in the midwestern states. However, as the initiative shifted to the Socialist Party and the Scandinavians moved further west, the SSAF failed to make headway in the areas later colonized by the Scandinavians. (For an illustration of distribution and size in 1910 and 1920 see Appendix 1. Table 3. p 220).

The Scandinavian Socialist Federation, SSF

As mentioned above, the initiative within the socialist labor movement shifted from the Socialist Labor Party to the Socialist Party of America after the turn of the century.

It was not until 1910, however, that activity among the SPA-oriented Scandinavian socialist clubs reached a level where it was felt necessary to form a national organization. The initiative to form a national organization was taken by a joint committee of the clubs in Chicago. Late in 1909 this committee sent out a call for a national convention of all the Scandinavian socialist clubs in the US. The convention was held July 2-4, 1910 in Chicago and resulted in the formation of Skandinaviska Socialistförbundet - the SSF (Scandinavian Socialist Federation).

The federation immediately decided to apply for membership in the SPA and following the example of this party they did not appoint a chairman of their own.45 (On size and geographical distribution see Appendix 1. Table 4. p. 222).

SSF Activities

The prime objective of the Scandinavian Socialist Federation was to be an organization for socialist propaganda and education. The two hubs around which most of the SSF activities revolved were its newspaper Svenska Socialisten and various propagandistic and educational activities.

Svenska Socialisten was started in 1905 by a Swedish-American named A.A. Patterson. The following year, however, it was sold to John Halldén and Oskar Öhgren, who in turn sold the paper the same year to a Swedish-dominated socialist club in Rockford. When the SSF was organized the paper was taken over by the federation and moved to Chicago in 1911. The same year a Danish-Norwegian socialist paper named Social-Demokraten, was also started in Chicago. Hence, these two journals became central in the activities of the organization, partly because they were needed as a public face but also because the papers constantly needed financial support to survive.

The circulation of Svenska Socialisten, or Ny Tid as the paper was called after 1922, flucturated between four and five thousand copies. In its peak year, 1916, it was printed in six thousand copies. With such a small number of copies and an even smaller stock of subscribers it was difficult to make ends meet financially. In 1915 the SSF started its own print shop which substantially cut production costs. The print shop furthermore managed to produce a small economic surplus which was used to support the finances of the papers. Nevertheless Social-Demokraten had to be shut down in 1921 to secure the continuing publication of Svenska Socialisten.46

The SSF was also affected by the international political turmoil that followed the Russian revolution. When the SPA split in 1919 the majority of the SSF supported the left opposition and the policy of the Third International. However, the SSF did not affiliate with any of the newly-organized communist parties but chose to remained an independent propaganda organization.47

When the SSF decided to leave the SPA one of its main profiles and long-time editor of Svenska Socialisten, Henry Bengston, left the SSF and resigned as editor of the paper. With the new political direction of the SSF a new editor was appointed and the name of the paper was changed to Facklan in 1921 (The Torch). When a splinter group from the SSAF merged with the SSF in 1922 to form Förenade Skandinaviska Socialistförbundet (FSSF; the United Scandinavian Socialist Federation) it also merged its paper Folket (The People) and the joint paper took the name Ny Tid (New Age). With varying editors this paper continued to be published until 1936 when lack of funds and a shift in policy caused the organization to discontinue the paper.


47 On the party SSF split see Bengston (1955) pp. 161 f. and the minutes from the SSF convention in 1920, "Förhandlingar vid Skandinaviska Socialistförbundets Kongress i Chicago, Ill. den 3, 4, 5 och 6 September 1920" (AAB).
Before that, however, the organizational status and affiliation of the Scandinavian Socialists had been altered a couple of times. The issue of party affiliation was brought up in connection with the merger between the SSASF splinter group and the SSF. In the course of the general political development a closer affiliation to the Workers' Party was deemed desirable among many members. But not all members. The Scandinavian Wobblies and other syndicalists who had joined the SSF when it left the SPA bitterly opposed any party affiliation since the absence of a party affiliation was a condition for their membership. Nevertheless, a majority within FSSF wanted a closer relationship to the Workers' Party and thus in 1922 the FSSF became the Scandinavian Socialist Federation of Workers Party.

The political development of the Workers' Party included both a shift of name to the Communist Party and a closer alignment to a Bolshevik party system. This party system did not embrace separate ethnic federations. The various foreign language federations were instead replaced by auxiliary organizations of workers' clubs. Party membership was made individual but membership in a workers' club was still open to non-party members. As the ethnic division within the party and the labor movement in general persisted, despite CP doctrines, the need for a more solid and independent organizational structure to manage and mobilize these ethnic fractions had to be recognized. The CP eventually changed its policy and as a result of this Skandinaviska Arbetarförbundet i Amerika - SAFA,( the Scandinavian Workers' League of America) was established in 1928.

Much of the political work that was accomplished was propagandistic. In this the paper Svenska Socialisten/Ny Tid functioned as its primary tool in this work. In one sense the paper represented a public aspect of the organization. The organization saw the road toward the realization of their political program as a matter of bringing knowledge and insight to its present and presumptive members, with propaganda as one aspect of this journey.

On a local level, however, the various workers' clubs also had to take on ingroup or internal aspects of organizational life which thus often made the local club represent the more social aspects of individuals lives. Club meetings were thus orchestrated in ways that would be both entertaining and instructive.

But there was also an area where the objectives of the organization were to be accomplished through the educational dynamic of the practical experience of the everyday class struggle and the internal activities of the party and its allied organizations. In a local context the various SSF branches were thus tied in to the interaction between ethnic networks.
THE LOCATIONS OF VARIOUS SETTLEMENTS ARE SOMETIMES APPROXIMATE. THE NEIGHBORHOODS WERE NEVER TOTALLY HOMOGENEOUS. THE SIZE OF THE COLOR CODED AREAS IS NOT INDICATIVE OF THE DENSITY OF THE POPULATION.

THE LOCATION OF THESE SETTLEMENTS WAS BASED ON CENSUS DATA, PARISH AND CONGREGATION RECORDS, GENERAL HISTORIES AND OTHER SOURCES INCLUDED IN THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HISTORIC CITY – THE SETTLEMENT OF CHICAGO. FOR EASIER REFERENCE THE PRESENT STREET PATTERN OF THE CITY HAS BEEN SHOWN IN A LIGHT SCREEN.

Chapter Four

The Chicago Scene

In the process of America's industrial and economic expansion, Chicago with its location on the southwest shore of Lake Michigan became one of the most accessible cities in the Midwest. The city was founded in the 1830s but did not expand massively until after the American Civil War. Up till 1880 the city had grown to be the third most important manufacturing city in the country with a population exceeding half a million people.

In 1871 Chicago was struck by a great fire that laid large parts of the city in ashes. The rebuilding of the city drew large numbers of workers to the booming construction industry. As the city grew, opportunities to find work also increased for the growing number of immigrants making their way westward.

When the immigrants came it was often as a result of what has been called a migration in stages. This meant that the immigrants had been advised by previous emigrants where to go.\(^1\) Once in the city it was not unusual that a fellow countryman would help them to get settled or find a job. But at the same time the immigrants had to comply with whatever free space was available and that in turn was partly dictated by the policy, sentiments or prejudices in the community at large. The Swedes, however, being white, fairly skilled and literate Protestants did not have to face the same problems getting settled as many other ethnic groups.

Around 1910 the Swedes of Chicago were one of the major ethnic groups in the city. As illustrated in Table 2, the Swedish stock in Chicago constituted almost 10% of the city's total population in 1890. Their proportion of the Chicago population from then on, however, slowly declined. Nevertheless the absolute number of first- and second-generation Swedes remained well over 100,000 throughout the 1930s.

The first cluster of Swedes in Chicago emerged mainly in the 1850s on the Near North Side, just north of the north branch of the Chicago River. By the

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\(^1\) On chain migration and the axis between delivering and receiving communities see Sune Åkerman, "Time of the Great Mobility. The Case of Northern Europe", 1st European Conference of the International Commission on Historical Demography (Santiago de Compostela, Spain 1993) pp. 73-99.
1860s this cluster had moved a bit further north to the area around Chicago Avenue, to what was known as "Swede Town". Up till the 1880s this was also the single largest concentration of Swedes in Chicago.

Table 2. First- and Second-Generation Swedes in Chicago, 1850-1940.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chicago population</th>
<th>1st and 2nd Gen. Swedes</th>
<th>% 1st Gen.</th>
<th>% Of Total Chicago Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>29,693</td>
<td>230^2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>109,260</td>
<td>870^3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>298,977</td>
<td>6,154</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>503,185</td>
<td>12,930</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1,099,850</td>
<td>103,399</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1,698,573</td>
<td>144,719</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>2,185,283</td>
<td>109,356^4</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>2,701,705</td>
<td>121,326</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>3,376,438</td>
<td>140,913</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>3,397,000</td>
<td>110,198</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Johnson (1940), Beijbom (1971), Mayer/Wade (1969), Lindmark (1971).

As the Swedes got settled they managed to improve their conditions and thus they also tried to find better housing. Initially, most newcomers were forced to settle in whatever free space proved available. This often meant that they had to settle in older residential areas that had been abandoned by earlier immigrant groups as they moved up the social ladder. In the case of the Swedish enclave

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^3 Ibid..

^4 Ibid.

Italians and Blacks started soon to move into the neighborhood which made it even more heterogeneous and thus less attractive to the Swedes. Hence the Swedes were further motivated to move northward and westward.6

This residential pattern - filling the gap left by previous immigrants in the centre of the city and later moving toward more newly-erected and generally more hygienic residential areas on the outskirts of the city - was not unique for the Swedes but rather an experience shared with many other ethnic groups.

It should also be noted that there was also a group of people for which the stay in Chicago was temporary. But as Dirk Hoerder has pointed out, whether they returned to Europe or moved on westward their actions were "goal-directed and network-supported. Migrants might experience extreme changes and suffering, but few were 'uprooted'."7

One of the North Side areas where the Swedes went through this experience was the Lake View district around N.Clark Street and Belmont Avenue. Lake View had up till the 1870s mainly been a rural community where livestock trading and farming dominated. Entering the 1880s the area gradually changed into a more urban setting. A survey done in 1940 suggests that during the period between 1880 and 1894, known as the "Golden Years" in Lake View, almost half of all the homes in the district were built.8 During the 1880s four churches were erected while between 1890 and 1919 approximately twenty fraternal lodges were established in the area, but only two churches. Thus the Swedes of Lake View had by the time they entered the 1920s a fairly high level of institutional completeness which is said to be one of the characteristics of a mature ethnic community.9

The importance of Lake View as a Swedish enclave peaked during the 1910s when it was challenged by the growth of Swedish clusters further to the north and northwest. According to the 1930 census there were little more than 8,500


9 Raymond Brenton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants" in American Journal of Sociology 70 (2), pp.193-205.
inhabitants in Lake View of which 51\% were Swedes. The second largest ethnic group was the German with 10\% of the inhabitants.\(^{10}\)

In this context the Swedes, like most other nationalities, started to build an ethnic community with a variety of institutions to meet the needs of their everyday lives. The ethnic community, however, did not necessarily coincide totally with the ethnic neighborhood. Rather, it grew out of the process where the Swedes, in a wider context, met their new host society. This process was not based on fixed relations but rather on a constant flow of dynamic in-group and out-group relations.

It is important to keep in mind that the ethnic group was not homogeneous. It was, just as the society it had left behind, fragmented into class, gender, age, as well as religious and political conviction or regional origin. This fragmentation, however, did not always dictate the actions taken by the group. Temporary alliances between various fractions were always possible. In order to understand the transformation of the Swedish immigrant group it is thus essential to keep this dynamic diversity in mind.\(^{11}\)

Before returning to Chicago and the Lake View Swedish community and its radical labor component it would thus be relevant to provide a quick sketch of how the Swedes and their mosaic of organizations were constituted in Chicago.

First on the scene, in the late 1840s, came the churches; but soon there was also a need for a less family- (and religiously-) oriented type of organization, catering to the unmarried or single immigrants. By the late 1850s the Svea Club was thus organized to "edify and ennoble" and "advise and assist" its members.\(^{12}\)

The Svea Club, however, developed into a club mainly catering to the upper-middle class. Nevertheless, Svea became the model for several similar clubs that mushroomed during the following years.

By the 1870s, yet another type of organization started to make headway in Swedish-America as various orders and fraternities were formed. At first these were American orders that founded Swedish lodges or grand lodges. Among these were organizations like the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Phythia or the Knights of Honor. Also the International Order of Good Templars managed to

\(^{10}\) See Allswang (1971) pp. 226-227. Numbers based on the 1930 census tracts 84 and 85 which include the core of Lake View.

\(^{11}\) A good example of how various alliances can be established and influence the outcome of social action is given in Richard Jules Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation. Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900* (Urbana Illinois 1989) passim.

\(^{12}\) Ibid. p.58.
organize the Swedes and quite successfully so. For instance, in 1916 it was estimated that more than half of the 24,000 IOGT members were Scandinavian.  

By the late 1880s the Swedes were ready to form their own independent orders such as the Independent Order of Svithiod, the Independent Order of Vikings or the Vasa Order of America, all of which were present when the Lake View Scandinavian Socialist Club was organized in 1908. By the end of the first decade of the 1900s, approximately 18,000 or 27% of all first-generation Swedes were enlisted in one of the more than 40 churches that had been started in Chicago. A decade later, the Swedes had organized more than 145 social organizations, among which the Viking and Svithiod lodges alone hosted almost 20% of the first-generation Swedes.

Another important institution is the ethnic press. Like most other ethnic groups the Swedes and Scandinavians managed to support a substantial number of periodicals. It has been estimated that between 1851 and 1910 there were more than 1,500 periodicals started by Swedes in America. However, due to the short lifespan of many of these publications and frequent mergers and name changes the actual number should probably be substantially reduced. Nevertheless, in 1910, 290 of these publications were still in circulation. None of them were dailies and 58 of them were weeklies. By broadening the scope to include all Scandinavian weeklies, the total number of weeklies rises to 94. The peak year of Swedish and Scandinavian newspaper publishing was 1910. During the subsequent three decades the number of weekly publications was reduced by 66% to a total of 32 weeklies in 1940. The bulk of the newspapers were published in the state of Illinois where of course Chicago was the main publishing centre.

It is not my intention to elaborate on the role and function of the ethnic press. Still it should be mentioned that the press played a crucial role in the formation of the ethnic community and, as indicated by the short and sketchy organizational outline presented above, the Swedes managed to organize what was needed in order to achieve a state of institutional completeness.

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14 For more detailed information on the membership and activities of these lodges see Olson (1990) eg. pp. 181 f.
16 Lindmark (1971) p. 222.
17 On the role of the ethnic press and publishers see Ulf Beijbom, "The Printed Word in a
Most of the social organization were aiming at preserving Swedish culture and providing and strengthening social networks. These in-group networks (including their beneficial programs) provided a kind of basic security. But by creating various political structures the Swedes also took actions to promote their out-group relations.

Swedish-American Political Mobilization in Chicago

While the above represents some of the measures taken in order to provide a sense of in-group security, the Swedes also organized to promote their interests in the political arena as well as on the labor market.

In 1858 a number of Scandinavians got together to form the Union Scandinavian Republican Club, probably the first Scandinavian-American political club in Chicago. The following year the newspaper *Hemlandet* (The Homeland) moved from Galesburg to Chicago. Thus the Swedes obtained an important channel for political expression. Through the newspaper the Swedes also indicated an early affiliation to the Republican Party. It was primarily the party’s policy against slavery and its stand on the homestead question that attracted them. In 1863 a Scandinavian Democratic Club was organized mainly in opposition to the conscription laws. From the experience of the Irish in local Chicago politics, the Scandinavians found it imprudent to support the Democratic Party due to the strong Irish influence. However, it was not only a matter of not supporting the Irish but also a dislike of Democrat policy. The majority of the Scandinavians eligible to vote thus tended to vote Republican.

During the early 1870s the Republican dominance was broken by the formation of a People’s Party or "Opposition Party" which focused on trying to reform the corrupt city government. The People’s Party, however, was a joint venture between representatives from both the Irish and the German populations which gave the Republicans an opportunity to attack this political constellation by

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17(…continued)


playing on strong anti-Irish and anti-German sentiments among the Scandinavians. Furthermore, when the People’s Party was unable to reform the city administration, the incentive to support the party faded. The People’s Party also made the mistake of not showing the Swedes respect by offering them a place on the ballot. This created a feeling among the Swedes that they were expected to cast their votes regardless of whether they would get anything in return or not. The same could also be said to be true for the Republican Party which rarely granted the Swedes a candidate for an important political office. A group of Swedes felt that the only way out of this dilemma was to organize and display political unity and strength. Thus, in 1879 the North Side Swedish Political Club was established. But the Swedes were split as to what strategy to follow. The succeeding fraction, however, was the one in favour of endorsing the Republican Party. Thus the initial ambition of garnering political influence for the Swedes was thus betrayed and the club became just another partisan group.

Another obstacle that the Swedes encountered in their struggle for political influence was the difficulty of creating alliances with the other Scandinavians. During the 1880s many Swedes and Norwegians quarrelled over the future of the Union between Sweden and Norway. Nevertheless, several Republican clubs were organized throughout the city and the state during the 1880s and in 1894 they joined to form the Swedish-American Republican League of Illinois.19

From this time the Swedes started to gain some influence within the ranks of the Republican Party. Through the Swedish-American press the Republican Party was also portrayed as the only honest and decent party while the Democratic Party was accused of being the mastermind behind the ballot frauds and everything else that was improper in Chicago politics.

Occasionally opposition to the Republican Party would arise. In response the Republican partisans would slander their opponents with accusations of supposed connections with the Irish and their Catholic religion. This was often enough to stem the tide of criticism, since the Swedes were overwhelmingly Protestant.20

However, with its growing influence the League began attracting ambitious politicians. Fred Lundin was perhaps the most influential of these when he became the Republican political boss in City Hall around the turn of the

19 Johnson (1940) p.40.

20 Ibid. pp. 53 f.
century. He started out his political career by backing up the William Lorimer political fraction and was subsequently elected to the state senate using the League as a base. But after his ill-advised support of the unpopular Allen Bill, he failed to get reelected. By then, however, he had learned how to use the political machine to his own advantage and his ethnic connection was only used when it served his own personal interests. Consequently, on a number of occasions, he tried to obstruct the political career of other Swedes within the Republican party and his support among Swedes faded.

Lundin’s political career is difficult to analyze since from that time on he mostly acted as a political boss. He always denied his own political power in public while at the same time being the man who had the last word in approving the Republican party nominations. His political influence reached its peak when William Hale Thompson was elected mayor in 1919. But the power of Lundin was shaken by the financial scandals through which he had made a small fortune in kickbacks given by businessmen whom he had granted favors. Mayor Thompson was not let in on this and soon their political paths parted. Through his break with Thompson Lundin was also dethroned as political boss. Although he never lost his influence completely, he never managed to regain his position as boss and by 1928 his days of political power were over.

It is difficult to appraise how much support Lundin received from the Swedes, but it might be symptomatic for the Swedish contribution to Chicago politics that when another Swede came close to making a political career Lundin helped to block him out. In 1912 Lundin opposed Charles F. Hurburgh who was endorsed by the Swedish-American Republican League in the gubernatorial race. Likewise Lundin in 1915 and 1919 opposed Judge Harry Olson’s attempts at seeking the Republican nomination for mayor.

Lundin’s main political incentive appears to have been business and first and foremost his own business. But, although the Swedes in general gained little through the influence of Lundin, they still remained loyal to the Republican Party. Looking at the mayoral elections of 1919, 1927 and 1931, however, indicates that this republican stronghold was broken only in 1931 when the Democrat Anton Cermak defeated the Republican Mayor Thompson. According

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22 Ibid. p. 44 f. and also Jan Olof Olson, Chicago. (Bonniers 1958) pp. 117 f.
to John Allswang's study on ethnic voting patterns, 58% of the Swedes voted for the Democratic candidate in that election.\textsuperscript{23}

Despite the strong dominance by the two major parties there was at the same time an ethnic mobilization among a group of Scandinavians with different political aspirations. Part of this mobilization manifested itself as the Scandinavian Socialist Club of Lake View on the Chicago North Side. In the following I will elucidate how this club interacted with other Swedish, Scandinavian, ethnic-American and American organizations in order to obtain its goals.

\textsuperscript{23} Allswang, p.161.
Map 3. Meeting places in Lake View, Chicago

1. IOGT- Hall, 1041 Newport Av. (also used by the SSF)
2. 3414. Halsted St.
5. Scotts Hall.
6. Clifton Hall.
7. SSF’s meeting hall.
8. Bellmont Hall.
9. Wells Hall.
10. Lake View Hall.
Chapter Five

Organized Political Radicalism among the North Side Chicago Swedes

Although it would be fair to say that the Republican Party represented the political perspective of the majority of the Swedes there was also another Swedish Chicago, one which had been infused with ideals of a new social order granting the working man his dignity and the full value of his labor. This was the Swedish Chicago of the political left.

To optimize their prospects in the new environment a number of radicals established organizations and social networks similar to those which had supported them back in Scandinavia. One of these organizations was the Scandinavian Socialist Club of Lake View.

In order to successfully mobilize the Scandinavians on a micro level the club had to articulate answers and responses to needs among its present and potential membership. When trying to analyze the activities around the club it might thus be useful to make a distinction between the manifest and the latent or tacit purpose of the club. The manifest purpose of the club was articulated in by-laws, resolutions and statements made to those outside the group. The latent or tacit function of the club, on the other hand, was related to more immaterial values and qualities. Important aspects were thus to provide a place for people to meet and talk about their problems or simply to have fun or find a mate. In other words, a place where their identity could be affirmed and protected.¹

In order to meet these demands the club had to arrange activities that responded to both the manifest and latent functional level. However, the distinction between these two levels was not always fully understood by those involved and this occasionally caused problems and conflicts within the group. As James R. Barrett has pointed out, the demands made on and expectations that were raised by an organization like this were formulated within the framework of its

¹ On latent and manifest functions of an organization see R.K Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York 1968) p.73f. For a comparison with how German radicals in Chicago used their organizations as a protected free space see Hartmut Keil, "The Impact of Haymarket in German American Radicalism" in International Labor and Working Class History No.29 (Spring 1986) pp.16-27.
members' transitional consciousness. Barrett also suggests that the immigrants' geographical transition left them embracing multiple identities that were not necessarily entirely idiosyncratic. In the case of the Lake View club this meant that for some, membership was primarily socially motivated. For others it might have started as a social matter but developed into a politically conscious choice. For still others, the ideological incentives might have been a key factor to start with but their experience, perspectives on life and politics may have driven them elsewhere.

When the Scandinavians came to the US they had to act within a society divided and segmented by class, race, gender, and/or ethnicity. The workers emigrating around the turn of the century brought with them the experience of cooperation between the labor movements in Scandinavia. This experience and the similarities between their languages made it quite easy for them to identify themselves and organize as Scandinavians. The group of radical Scandinavians was thus identified to include Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and to some extent Finns.

Their connection to the past affected their perspective on the American labor movement and hence also the way in which they became involved. Thus one of the issues which mobilized the Scandinavian workers in America and which eventually resulted in the formation of the Scandinavian Socialist Federation, SSF, was not a local issue but the defense of the workers in the 1909 General Strike in Sweden. Defending a perceived interest in their country of origin was in no way unique for the Swedes but rather, as John Higham has pointed out, one of the key factors in ethnic mobilization and thus one of the main functions of an ethnic leadership.

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4 Juel N. Christensen in 1918 referred to the 1909 Swedish general strike as one of the major incentives for the formation of the Scandinavian Socialist Joint Committee (S.S. Jan. 24, 1918). A similar effect can also be observed for the Scandinavian SLP branches (see appendix A).

When the radicals tried to mobilize the Scandinavians they did not only have to relate to individuals but also to a number of other Swedish or Scandinavian organizations. Interorganizational cooperation and interaction was in no way new to these immigrants. On the contrary, with their historical background they were in one sense preconditioned to it. Stemming from the popular movements of Sweden and Scandinavia, the IOGT, NOV and educational societies all belonged to the group of potential allies.

The strong historical connection between the temperance movement and the labor movement put the Swedes in a unique position compared to most other radical labor groups in the US. When analyzing their organizational network some components of the temperance movement should thus also be included.

But there were also organizations that were more unfamiliar because they had evolved in America. As such they embodied a new blend of ideological subtones and more or less explicit claims or allegations as to what being a Swede was. The club was, literally speaking, located at the intersection between these Swedish, ethno-American and American organizations. Hence, the formation of the club and the social network to which it belonged went through a continuous reappraisal of these other organizations and ideas.

**The Radical Scandinavians Get Organized**

As the working class entered the national scene in Scandinavia it tried to forge its own perspective on society. Journeymen picked up new ideas as they made their apprenticeship journeys on the European continent, and as urbanization and industrialization altered the Scandinavian countries a Socialist labor movement evolved. Many of these labor pioneers were compelled, by blacklisting or general disappointment with their prospects in Scandinavia, to emigrate to the US. Thus the Scandinavians are recognized as having organized supporters for the Socialist movement in the US as early as the 1870s. Prior to the 1890s they tried to maintain both organizations and a radical press, without any real

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5 (...continued)

success. It was not until the 1890s that the radical Scandinavian laborers were able to get organized in a more permanent way. By the mid-1890s both union and ethnic political branches were organized within the American Labor movement. I shall return to how Scandinavian painters got organized and fought for their rights but first I want to take a closer look at how Scandinavian radicals pursued their task in the Chicago context.

During the latter part of the 1890s a number of Scandinavian socialists in Chicago met and organized a Scandinavian branch of the Socialist Labor Party. Later on the branch moved its office from the North Side up to the Lake View area. Some of the pioneers of the North Side branch came from the east coast where the party originated. Although there is no irrefutable evidence, this might indicate that there was a certain degree of organized agitation among the Scandinavian political radicals.

At any rate, conditions in general appear to have been ripe for the forging of these radical political organizations. First the Socialist Labor Party dominated but as it became more and more dogmatic it lost its ability to attract new members. After the turn of the century the Socialist Party succeeded it as the main magnet attracting Scandinavian radicals.

The first club, or society, in Chicago linked with the Socialist party was organized on 24 September 1904, and was called "Scandinavisk Socialist Føreining for Chicago og Omegn" (Scandinavian Socialist Society of Chicago and Vicinity).

Among the founders of this club were many prominent Norwegian labor leaders. Some of them returned to Scandinavia after the club had been successfully established. These were men like Adolf Bay, who returned to become an officer of the Norwegian Bakers Union. Another was Martin Tranmæl, who returned to become one of the most distinguished leaders of the Norwegian Labor Party. Another, Claus Nicoll, had been part of the first group of labor representatives ever elected to the local government of Bergen in Norway before he emigrated.

But the club also organized people like Andrew Wigsnes, the secretary of the Scandinavian Painters Union, Local No. 194, one of the most influential and

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8 N.T. April 22, 1929.
radical union locals in Chicago at the time. This indicates that the club was well plugged into the American Labor movement and the Socialist Party right from the start. Hence they were also well acquainted with the premises of the Chicago Labor movement and its ethnic fragmentation.

Consequently the club knew how to target the Scandinavian neighborhoods in particular. This soon resulted in the formation of other Scandinavian branches around the city, and as new branches were organized a need to optimize their propaganda evolved. The city was thus divided up between the branches and the club accordingly changed its name to "17:de Wards Skandinaviske Socialist Förening".

The activities of the branch had up till this time been centred around Halsted Street and Milwaukee Avenue. But the Scandinavian population in this area had began to move further northwest to the area around Humbolt Park. The club followed and thus its name referring to the 17th Ward became inadequate. It changed its name again and this time it became "Scandinavisk Socialist Branch Nr.1".

The bulk of the members of the branch had been of Norwegian descent but as the branch moved to the Humbolt Park area they encountered a growing number of Danes. However, the Danes apparently maintained a network of their own because on 5 May 1907 at Jacobsen Hall, at the corner of Wabansia and Washtenaw Avenues, the Karl Marx Club was organized by a group of Danes. Like the Norwegians the Danes contributed to the Karl Marx Club with some of their most prominent labor leaders. One of them was Frank Hurop, founder and first chairman of the Danish Blacksmiths and Machineworkers Union.10

With two Scandinavian branches in the same district there was a growing need to coordinate their propagandistic work on a more permanent basis. Thus these two clubs took the initiative of establishing a Scandinavian Socialist Agitation Committee which included people from the whole city. Through the activity of this committee a number of branches were organized in Chicago and its vicinity. This organizational drive culminated in 1910 with the national convention and founding of the Scandinavian Socialist Federation.

10 Christensen. (1940) p. 6.
The Founding of the Lake View Scandinavian Socialist Club, Branch, No. 9

As mentioned above, the joint Scandinavian Socialist Agitation Committee was quite successful in its organizational drive. In 1908 its activities paved the way for a Scandinavian Socialist Party branch in the Lake View District.\textsuperscript{11}

The founding meeting was held on 26 April at Clifton Hall, at the corner of Clifton and Belmont Avenues. On that occasion some 20 people signed up as members. During the following three years Clifton Hall also served as meeting place for this club.

The initiative to organize a Lake View branch was initially taken by a number of Swedes within the English-speaking 25th Ward SP branch and the above-mentioned Scandinavian joint committee. The preparatory work was done mainly by Charles H. Sand, Carl A. Dawn and Chas. Wretling. They had all been active within the Socialist movement for several years.

The first couple of years were quite sluggish for the club and through the winter months of both 1909 and 1910 the club slumbered. Although it failed to recruit new members in its infancy it still managed to do considerable work agitating for the newspaper \textit{Svenska Socialisten}. The newspaper was published in Rockford but was moved to Chicago and Lake View in the early summer of 1911. From that time on publishing the paper became the top priority for the Lake View Club.

It was not until the spring of 1915, however, that the Lake View branch managed to enrol an increasing number of people. Between then and 1918 the branch grew to the size of about 230 members.

Figure 6 illustrates the growth and decline of the Lake View club between 1908 and 1934. It features two distinctive peaks which need to be commented upon. First of all it is obvious that the total number of club members was never in the range of making it a "mass organization". Due to the high membership turnover, however, the number of people that had a personal relationship with the club was substantial. Hence the club could in one sense still have claimed that epithet. In 1913 John Dawn, a long-time member of the club, claimed that from its start the club had enrolled a total of approximately 400 members while at the time it only hosted a total of 25 members.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} S.S. May 2, 1918.
\textsuperscript{12} S.S. July 17 1913. A survey of the New Year greetings published in S.S. during the (continued...)
Secondly, behind the two peaks is hidden the fact that during the period there was at least one shift of the nucleus of the club. The first inner circle of members brought many of the traditions of the Swedish popular movements in their baggage. However, during the latter part of the period, from roughly the mid-1920s, contemporary observers indicated that the members came with substantially less first-hand experience of these movements. Whether these observers' statements were well founded or not has not been possible to verify. Nevertheless this still indicates that there were noticeable differences pertaining to the experiences of the immigrants. Thus in one sense there was a continuity but in another sense one could talk about two membership constellations constituted by slightly different experiences or traditions.

1910s indicates a high membership turnover. Of the 21 names on the lists published in 1913-14 only 6 could be found among the 38 names published in 1916. The membership statistics further show that over a period of a couple of months the total number of members could vary more than 100% (Nordahl 1985 p.44). According to Erik Jansson, secretary of Scandinavian Workers League in 1929-30, the names published were the club membership (interview Oct.6 1990). I would also like to thank Patrik Johansson, Vuollerim, for his assistance on the survey.

13 N.T. July 7, 1929. It was explicitly stated about the new members of the North Side Workers Club that they had no prior experience of any organizational work. It is thus plausible that this assessment of the newcomers would be just as accurate for those that settled a few blocks further south.
The Socialist Party contributed a sense of openness since it provided a context for co-existence and dialogue between various fractions both within and peripheral to the party. But both the formation of the Soviet Union and the Third International influenced the club. The period after the party split, from the early 20s till the first half of the 1930s, thus conceal partly contradictory tendencies.

On the one hand American society created a wider common ground for interaction between different ethnic groups, but on the other, class interests clashed. The demand from the Comintern for subordination by each national Communist party thus limited the opportunities for alliances, and this often created tensions between the Comintern-inspired party policy and the day-to-day experience of the club members.

Creating an Ethnic of Their Own

The significance of self-identification in relation to social mobilization is a wellknown fact and has been recognized by numerous scholars. In the case of the German workers in Chicago both Hartmut Keil and Heinz Ickstadt have pointed out the importance of the ethnic workers' culture. Ickstadt has indicated the importance of subcultures as a kind of glue that held the sub-groups together. Keil on the other hand has also pointed to the fact that several of these subcultures can exist simultaneously in the same ethnic neighborhood, just as among all other ethnic groups there was an organizational plethora reflecting ideological and confessional differences. He stresses that these organizations were not used arbitrarily. Instead they competed or even feuded with each other.14

To be perceived as a legitimate political alternative the Scandinavian Socialist Club of Lake View thus had to present its ideas to the public and distinguish itself from other alternatives at the same time. The club thus became involved in a dual process of defining what it was and what it stood for and what it was not. This was done in several ways. Svenska Socialisten time after time pointed

out the potential competence and capability of the working class, as if to say "Yes, the workers can do it if they only believe in themselves", and "Yes, you have the right to demand a better life here and now".

The way in which questions were raised was very much a result of the context in which they were formulated. Not necessarily religion but definitely the church was perceived as having denied the working man his right to a decent life by postponing the days of reward until after death - provided one qualified for a place in heaven. Borrowing heavily from church symbolism the Socialists and other radicals placed their "heaven" here on earth.  

Religion and in particular the church were thus challenged as the sole legitimate creators of a moral codex. When the club therefore arranged public meetings the program often included lectures with titles such as, "The Under-class - its Own Saviour.", "Are We in Need of Salvation?" or "The Fight between Religion and Science."  

But the question of the meaning of life was also raised by other groups and organizations related to organized labor. These organizations and their meetings or debates were not necessarily seen as competitors but rather as allies. One such organization was the Scandinavian Liberty League. Its origin is somewhat unclear but it appears to have been more an ad hoc organization. Judging from some names connected to this organization its political profile seems to indicate freethinking Syndicalists. At any rate, the Scandinavian Liberty League frequently arranged lectures or debates addressing topics like "Does the Devil exist?" or Should the Bible be Considered Reliable or is it a Compilation of Fairy Tales?".  

The local branch of the IWW and temperance organizations also challenged the church and its religion with debates and meetings asking "Was Christ an historical person?" or "Does the individual continue to obtain consciousness after death?". The latter of these meetings was held in the lodge "Fria Tankar" (Free Thoughts) of the National Order of Verdandi (NOV). The lecture was delivered by Wilhelm Södergren who often was used as lecturer or speaker at the Lake View Club meetings.

15 On the practice by organized labor to relate to religion and the rhetoric used by clergymen see also Herbert Gutman, Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America (New York 1977) pp.79 f.


17 S.S. May 8 and June 6, 1912.

By taking part in these meetings all of these radical organizations, with the exception of the SLP branch, became involved in a joint venture which over time developed into a haven in which all could work. The kind of personal network that held their haven together could be illustrated by the fact that when Södergren was asked to give a lecture at the lodge "Fria Tankar" he might very well have been asked by his friend and member of NOV, Wallentin Wald whom he knew from his time back in Stockholm.

Hence, the church and what it represented was rejected within the context of these radicals’ haven. But that rejection was purely negative and they still had a need to articulate proper morals and ethics. Consequently the Lake View Club brought up the issue of alcohol consumption at their meetings as a question of ethics. This resulted in a resolution opposing all sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages at any arrangement sponsored by the club or the League. This resolution was also sent out to all the other local branches to be put to a vote. In the case of the Lake View Club one could say that the question was an academic one since during long periods the club used the IOGT Hall as its meeting place.

Nevertheless, the Scandinavian Socialist Club of Lake View and the other radical organizations in the area continued to concern themselves with ethics and morals, similar to contemporary discussions and debates back in Sweden. The issues that were addressed stretched from sexuality to the potential benefits of gymnastics and whether thoughts affected personal character.

According to *Svenska Socialisten*, the more conservative "Church Swedes" must have felt threatened by this frontal attack on their moral and ethic conventions, and probably in the hope of silencing this new challenge, one of the IWW speakers, Ernst Holmen, was reported to the authorities. One of the

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19 *S.S. May 8, 1913.*

20 Early in 1913 the Lake View branch of the IWW arranged a series of meetings dealing with moral issues. On 26 Jan. Wilhelm Södergren spoke on "Love and Marriage, Can sexual problems be solved with free love - the gospel of frivolousness?". On 2 Feb. Ernst Holmen, a journalist from Stockholm, spoke on "Public Moral and Prostitution" and on the 23 Feb. Ragnar Johanson spoke on "The Working Class and Sexual Reproduction" (*S.S. Jan. 23, 1913.*). All of these three speakers were quite familiar with the debate about morality and sexuality that just a few years earlier had been initiated in Stockholm by their friend and colleague, journalist Henrik "Hinke" Bergegren. For a good survey of the Malthusian debate in Sweden see Hjördis Levin, *Masken uti rosen. Nymalthusianism och födelsekontroll i Sverige 1880-1910. Propaganda och motstånd* [With summary in English] (Stockholm 1994).

21 *S.S. Jan. 23, 1913, April 13, Oct. 8, 1914,

22 *S.S. Feb. 13, 1913.*

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speakers, Ragnar Johanson, was eventually deported because of his active support of the Syndicalist movement.

Defining and Negotiating their Haven

If challenging traditional Christian morality, as articulated by the church was part of the process of creating and constructing a philosophy or ideology of their own, the members also had to deal with the more organizational aspects of their lives. According to their perspectives on morals and ethics they had to apprise which organizations could qualify as allies, real or potential. How this appraisal was articulated can be demonstrated by a scrutiny of the early years of "Svenska Nationalförbundet" (Swedish National League).

In the early fall of 1911 the Lake View Club raised the question "Can the Swedish workers of Chicago gain anything from the Swedish National League?". The following week it was reported that the club had found the aims of said organization admirable but, since the organization at present was subordinate to the interests of a select few, socialists were recommended not to become associated with it in any way.\(^2\) In the case of the Swedish National League it was quite a clear that it was excluded from the radical haven.

But the inner dynamic of the radicals' haven also had to be negotiated. Even though the IOGT was included in it, the exact relationship had to be established. The significance of the temperance question can be illustrated by the ensuing discussion as the Club addressed the topic, "Is the temperance movement of greater importance than socialism?".\(^4\) Apparently, the answer to this question was not self-evident as the discussion continued over several meetings. It appears as if once the club leadership was committed to forging consciousness among its membership about the necessity of a socialist organization, it really pushed its efforts to the limit.

A few months after first raising the question of the relationship between socialism and temperance the club declared in a resolution, "as only socialism can bring satisfactory solutions to the questions of society a Socialist should not take part in any other organizational activities than through the Socialist Party".\(^5\) The resolution, however, was not accepted by a unanimous vote. A minority at

\(^{21}\) S.S. Sept. 6 and 13, 1911.
\(^{24}\) S.S. Nov. 22 and Dec. 6, 1911.
\(^{25}\) S.S. Dec. 6, 1911.
the meeting still believed that working through other organizations could bring opportunities to disseminate information about socialism. As many times before a resolution taken by the club majority did not alter the actual course of its members’ lives and they thus held on to their membership cards in whatever other organizations to which they happened to belong.

In January 1914 the constitution of the radicals’ haven was quite explicitly negotiated. At that time, representatives from a number of organizations belonging to their haven discussed the question, "Is the present division among Chicago’s Swedish workers destructive? If so, which organization should they join to best serve their interests?".

At that time, two major fractions appear to have existed within the haven - one advocating the Socialist Party and another sympathetic to a syndicalistic perspective. One of the speakers at this meeting was Theodore Johnson, editor of the journal Revolt. He claimed that the organizational division of Swedish-American labor was harmless as long as there was unity on concrete issues such as the struggle for the temperance and cooperative movements. Ragnar Johanson, a painter by trade and well-known syndicalist, spoke in the same spirit, although he recognized the importance of the Socialist Party despite his own personal disbelief in political action. According to the report, the majority of the meeting was still in favor of the Socialist Party. It was also pointed out that the discussions at the meeting were held in a friendly atmosphere.

Thus it is obvious that, despite some minor differences concerning the organizational set-up, both the temperance movement and the cooperative movement had been identified as allies with whom one could work.

Although the strategic construction of its haven was quite well defined it did not prevent the club from contemplating other tactical arrangements. Back in Sweden the nascent labor movement had built alliances with progressive elements within the liberal movement with references to the Swedish experience the matter was discussed at a club meeting in December, 1914.

By referring to the positive experience from Sweden, Henry Oström raised the question of whether Socialists could support candidates from other parties. The majority of the club was not willing to accept this. Despite his unpopular stand on this issue, Oström was elected chairman of the Lake View Club shortly

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27 Eg., Hjalmar Branting’s seat in the Swedish parliament was provided through the Liberal ballot.
thereafter. However, Oströms’ question was also raised by others. A few months later the issue was brought up at a public debate between Frithiof Werenskjold and Wilhelm Södergren. Werenskjold spoke in favor of voting for the Socialist Party candidates while Wilhelm Södergren this time opposed his strategy.

This tension between two political strategies illustrates that the haven was a construction of several networks or subcultures. Therefore the haven existed on the premises that these networks were partly integrated and overlapping. Exactly how they overlapped and interacted was not self-evident but had to be negotiated. When sympathizers of the Socialist Party and the IWW met these networks were obvious. However, in other instances, the nature of network loyalties was not as transparent. Perhaps the most difficult problem was how to handle the ambiguity of ethnic and class loyalties, in other words, loyalties toward their ethnically-based language federation and the class-based American mother organization.

**Divided Loyalties**

As mentioned earlier the initiative to organize the Lake View branch emanated from the joint action taken by the English-speaking SP branch of Lake View and the Scandinavian Socialist Joint Committee. It is perceivable that the English-speaking and the Scandinavian branches were motivated by the perspective of a joint struggle for an American Socialist state. For the Scandinavians, however, this perspective appears to have been tempered by their specific interest to defend themselves as newcomers and as an ethnic group.

As mentioned before, the main issue mobilizing the Scandinavian workers to organize the SSF were not local ones but the defense of the workers in the 1909 General Strike in Sweden. It might thus be symptomatic that two of the most rewarding organizational drives used organizers visiting from Sweden.

Around the turn of the century August Palm, known as the father of socialism in Sweden, made a couple of successful organizational tours. In 1916 "Texas"

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28 *S.S.* Dec. 10 and 12, 1914.
29 *S.S.* Feb. 25, 1915.
30 J. N. Christensen in 1918 referred to the 1909 Swedish general strike as one of the major incentives for the formation of the Scandinavian Socialist Joint Committee. (*S.S.* Jan. 24, 1918). A similar effect can also be observed for the Scandinavian SLP branches (see Table 1. p.53).
Ljungberg, a well-known and very popular labor organizer and temperance man, honored Swedish America with a lengthy and quite successful lecture tour during which several new clubs were organized.\textsuperscript{31}

At the farewell party thrown in honor of "Texas" at Cafe Idrott, Henry Bengston remarked that "Texas" tour had proven that exchange and cooperation between the movements in the old and new countries was possible. This cooperation was considered desirable by the Swedish-American labor movement, although the desire does not appear to have been mutual. As early as 1913, Bengston had in an editorial criticized the Swedish labor movement for its neglect of emigrated brothers and sisters in comparison with the IOGT and how it maintained the bonds between the two countries.\textsuperscript{32}

\textbf{Plate 3.} Einar "Texas" Ljungberg. The temperance people have often been regarded as being dull or stiff, a judgement that might be debated. Here the temperance- and labor organizer Einar "Texas" Ljungberg strikes at strategic pose with SSAF's organ, Arbetaren (The Worker).


\textsuperscript{32} S.S. June 6, 1913 and Aug. 17, 1916.
Nevertheless, the Swedes continued to keep close track of what was going on in Sweden throughout the 1910s. *Svenska Socialisten* continuously carried a page with general news from different Swedish regions and special events in the Nordic countries continued to mobilize the Scandinavian workers of Chicago. When the radical journal *Brand* had financial problems or when workers defending their right to strike clashed with the law back in Sweden, *ad hoc* committees were immediately organized in their defense.33

This interest, however, was also a cause of irritation. Time after time it was pointed out by Anglo-American socialists as well as by the leaders within SSF that it was not proper for Scandinavian labor in America to pay more attention to their country of origin than to what was going on in their own neighborhood.34 This does not mean that the Lake View club was isolated from the English-speaking SP branch of the 25th and 23rd Ward. On the contrary, this club and the SP branch frequently cooperated throughout the 1910s. However, it appears as if the initiative was primarily taken by the SP branch and not the Lake View club. Through *Svenska Socialisten* the club informed its members of various upcoming SP meetings while the main focus remained centred on its own activities. This ethnocentrism caused the secretary of the SSF, Juel N. Christensen, to publicly criticize the journal.35

Despite the fact that the SSF and the Lake View club were criticized for their lack of interest in the American scene the tendency toward Americanization was still noticable during the latter half of the 1910s. This was evident by the growing number of Anglo-Americans speaking at their meetings. One reason for this might well be that by mid-1917 it was reported that the Scandinavians were the fastest-growing ethnic group within the Socialist Party in the Chicago region. It is therefore understandable that the Socialist Party felt it should pay more attention to the Scandinavians.36 The English-speaking branch of the Socialist Party thus dedicated more time to the Scandinavians and tried to spur them to take on more responsibility and shift their focus toward the American movement.

However, the response from the Scandinavians was not an uncritical approach to the Socialist Party or the American labor movement in general. At an early stage they had identified the cooperative movement as a movement about which.

33 E.g. S.S. Aug. 9, 1912 or Feb. 20, 1913 on the Amalthea Defense Committee.
36 S.S. May 24, 1917.
the Scandinavians and the Americans felt differently. In 1912 this issue caused the Lake View club to bring up the question of why American Labor cared so little for the cooperative movement. As far as I discern, however, this discussion did not result in a statement addressed to the Socialist Party regarding the matter.

Instead it was the temperance question that mobilized the Scandinavians to act. At the 1917 convention of the SSF they decided to send a resolution to the Socialist Party convention addressing the temperance question exactly as had been done in the program of the Social Democratic Party of Sweden. Yet another question that caused the Lake View club to act was the Workman's Compensation Act which it felt the Party should move to radically improve. Actions like these indicate that although the Scandinavians primarily focused on their own group and organizations, they also assumed responsibility toward the English-speaking organizations.

Still, the purpose and objectives of the political organization were very much of a social nature. This may be illustrated by the following satire of a club meeting published in Svenska Socialisten. The piece represents the ambiguity between the latent and manifest purpose of the club, reflecting the ambiguity between being a political subject while at the same time acting as an exuberant human subject.

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"Minutes from the Cabinet from the Lake View Club-meeting of January 3rd, 1918.\textsuperscript{38}

\section{1.}

At the time of the opening of the meeting, or rather one hour after the announced time of its opening, two members were present. One of them, the secretary, appointed the other, comrade Malmquist, to chair the meeting. Malmquist thanked the numerous chairs for the confidence they had given him.

\section{2.}

The secretary was also present.

\section{3.}

After the minutes were read an announcement about the "Red Week" was read which led to a lively discussion. Many suggestions were made on how to raise funds. Finally comrade Allen's proposition that each member should sign up for one dollar was adopted.

\section{4.}

Comrade Henry Bengtson requested to be excused as he could not stay as long as usual this time. His request was granted since legitimate reasons were at hand.

\section{5.}

The financial secretary reported that if so many had not been in arrears with their dues for December many more would have been in good standing and if more members would have been in good standing there would not have been so many in arrears. The present chairs saw this as self-evident which is why no one requested to be granted the floor.

\section{6.}

The secretary read a lengthy and interesting report which was applauded as the silence continued while chairman Malmquist disappeared under the table in his chairman's seat for about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, Nils R. Swenson took the opportunity to reveal his latest passionate love story and Eric J. Ericson presented an anecdote which was not bad. The latter put the editor in a stage of utter amusement since he thought it was new. As Eric notified that he had read it in the latest issue of \textit{The Swedish Socialist} there was widespread amusement while the editor quickly regained his composure. The cacophony from the press section, however, disturbed the temperate tenor John W. Carlson who is boss (or was it bass?) in the choir "The Comrades" where he is also "executive". He addressed the present chairs, in his eternally gentle

\textsuperscript{38} S.S. Jan. 17, 1918.
manner, and moved that this and all the following reports should be accepted. Comrade Otto Dawn, who is also an executive, seconded his motion. He spoke, as usual, at length and with much more vigor compared to the previous speaker. He alleged that something ought to be done to get the chairs to speak and participate more effectively during their meetings. The newly-elected chairman, who excused himself for his bad hearing, expressed his firm conviction that it would be a slim task to get stones to talk compared to some of the club members of both newer and older date. Undersigned wondered whether it would not be appropriate to try a set of self-playing piano stools, thus sympathizing with the remark made by Dawn.

The debate was now over and Carlson’s motion was adopted by silence. Malmquist clubbed.

§ 7.

Thus ensured of approval the head of the financial auditors, comrade Noord, took the opportunity to present the not yet completed report on the financial status of the club. The chairman thanked him.

§ 8.

Comrade Oscar Borg arrived.

Simultaneously the first female arrived. A slender, blush-cheeked young Miss as it seemed and Nemo proclaimed that we ought to table our cigars as he started to brief himself about the newcomer. Undersigned could inform him that his chances were slim since the lady usually was accompanied by her husband, Oscar Borg. Nemo swiftly recommenced his smoking.

§ 9.

Comrade Sahlström reported from the Central Committee of the 23rd Ward that there was nothing to report.

§ 10.

The clubbists stared to drizzle in in odd numbers. Some movie at some nearby "show" must have been disappointing.

§ 11.

The alderman candidate for the 23rd Ward gave a speech in which he among other things congratulated the club for its vitality and its large membership. The chairs pricked up their ears.

§ 12.

After these strains a well-deserved break was taken. A visit was paid to the kitchen department where the
zealous and obliging comrade Elin Solström had put in some hard time, and for which she was rewarded with more labor as the mugs became due for washing. The class society in miniature.

§ 14.

At this time the program of the evening commenced, during which the most peculiar things happened. The club members did not drizzle in anymore, they poured in. Nemo now had all the difficulty in the world trying to keep track of all the beauties. Eric pulled one of his one thousand and one stories. If each of us had a fraction of his memory we occasionally might be able to recall that the club assembles each Thursday (at eight pm and not at midnight) and that the financial secretary is elected not just for his pleasure. If we then had his ability to communicate the millenium would be at hand and socialism accomplished - in Lake View.

Nils R. Swenson now accounted for his performances. How he in the East had conquered the mighty dragon S.L.P. and how he managed to save numerous fair maidens for the (hearty) red ideas and how he finally had managed to convert a minister who strangely enough believed in God. The presentation was good even though it contained some contradictions such as the fewer public meetings at a location the harder it is to compete against them.

Before the speech was over it was so crowded that our engaged friend, the big wobblyie, had some difficulties mastering the pushy crowd which is why he arranged a "soapbox-surplus-meeting" in the hall, probably believing that the next time Solström would reward him with some free coffee for his effort.

§ 15.

Undersigned made the following propositions which were tabled:
1) From now on the meetings will start at 11 pm.
2) The agenda will be followed in reversed order starting with the program, preferably a lecture by Nidlov and ending with - well that would be the opening of the meeting, wouldn't it? Perhaps a little too paradoxical to be adopted.

§ 16.

As nothing else was permitted to be said the meeting was closed with the singing of the hymn.."Thy Red Sun Rises Once Again" as it was morning.

Fairly correctly copied, signified by Lucidor.
Despite persistent ethnocentrism among the Swedes there was a gradual shift of focus toward the American scene. A long-term upswing in the construction industry put the carpenters and other labor groups within the building trade in a favorable bargaining position. Large numbers of workers were also drafted into the army as the First World War approached. Simultaneously there was an increased demand for many of the products of Chicago industry, like steel from the large metal-works on the Chicago South Side or packed meat to feed the European armies from the city's food industry. This limited competition for work spurred organized labor to advance its positions. Progressive leaders of the Chicago Federation of Labor had launched successful union campaigns at the stockyards which created a feeling that the time had come to advance the cause of labor.

However, the demand for workers during the 1910s also opened up possibilities for blacks to enter the Chicago labor market. Thus the question of race entered the agenda in a vivid and visible way and added to the antagonisms between different ethnic groups. For industrial management, race and ethnicity became a powerful instrument in the struggle to counter the advancement of organized labor. Through the traditional method of "divide and conquer", employers managed to break up much of the unity that had been established when the unions were organized. By 1919, tensions between blacks and other groups exploded in the race riots of July which left 38 people dead and more than 500 injured.

But it was not only issues related to the labor market that made people aware of who they were. The First World War raised the question of national defence and national loyalty, bringing the role of ethnic loyalty and identity into focus in a very tangible manner. Again, this was a situation which affected the entire international labor movement. The collapse of the Second International can stand as an example of the magnitude of the impact and role of national and ethnic identity.

The Scandinavians were not unmoved by the situation. The question of how to improve conditions for labor in general and Scandinavians in particular was

brought up over and over again, not only at the club meetings but also at lodge meetings of the IOGT. As a result of the discussions within the IOGT a radical reform party was organized within the IOGT in 1916. The chairman of this party was C. J. Kronlöf, member of the Lake View Club. This radicalization was also expressed through the program presented at "Svenskarnas Dag", a yearly picnic arranged by the IOGT. The Scandinavian Socialists felt that the time now had come for a new and radical culture. A series of articles that ran in Svenska Socialisten echoed this theme and references were made to the experiences from Scandinavia where the popular movements had been used as tools to win the Scandinavian people for Socialism.

Sometimes the response to the rapidly changing world of the emigrants was somewhat more challenging. One of these occasions was when more than one hundred men in Rockford, Illinois, collectively refused to be drafted into the army. Many of these men belonged to the SSF branch or the Swedish-American IOGT lodge Vega in Rockford. Another expression of their mobilization was their engagement in the cooperative movement which they saw as part of their alternative culture.

But as mentioned, the turmoil and tensions that thrived within the international labor movement were also evident within the SSF and the Lake View Club. While the tensions within the Socialist Party grew, the SSF also kept track on what was going on in Sweden. In February, 1919 Hjalmar Branting and the Social Democratic Party were criticized for an alleged shift toward liberalism. In March the SSF held a conference in Chicago where it decided to oppose the Social Democratic International and favor the Zimmerwald conference. In April, Carl Lindhagen's "Humanist manifesto" was appraised and condemned. It was stated that if adopted, his manifesto would make the "Vänstersocialisterna" (Left-wing socialists) incapable of taking charge of any struggle whatsoever.

41 S.S. Sept. 14, 1916. Other devoted temperance men and frequently used speakers at both IOGT and club meetings included Ludvig Noord and Frithiof Werenskjöld, both with their roots in the Scandinavian temperance and labor movements. See eg. S.S. Nov. 30 and Dec. 7, 1916. On Werenskjöld see also Bengston (1955) pp. 89-93.

42 Eg. S.S. June 20, Nov. 28, 1918 or June 5, 1919.

43 On the draft resistance see Bengston (1955) pp. 113-117. A. Pearson manuscript. Lars Wendelius, (1990) p.47, or the minutes of IOGT lodge Vega no.40, June 1917. On cooperative engagement see S.S. Mar. 22, May 24, 1917, June 20, 1918, Jan. 22, 1920. Once again Ludvig Noord appears as one of the individuals who bridged the gaps between several organizations thereby uniting them in one network or haven.

44 S.S. April 17, 1919.
Later on during the summer, *Svenska Socialisten* also reported on the convention of the SSU, the Social Democratic youth organization, though somewhat less critically.

Meanwhile, the SSF and the Lake View club also kept tabs on the fractional battles within the Socialist Party of America. In a resolution the Lake View club condemned both the National Executive Committee and the oppositional fraction; the NEC for not listening to its members, and the opposition for its inability to wait until the upcoming party convention before making its move. Still, the majority of the SSF sided with the left-wing opposition in this battle, leading to the decision to leave the Socialist Party as of 13 September 1919.\(^{45}\)

As the majority of the SSF supported the leftist opposition within the Socialist Party the fractional struggles also spilled over to the SSF and the Lake View club. Bad feelings and political differences can thus to some extent explain the dramatic drop in membership that occurred in the club.

But 1919 was not only the year of political division; it was also the year of the "red scare" tactics orchestrated by the authorities, Pinkerton's, the police and employers. The enthusiasm that was launched by the First World War armistice of November 1918 and which was articulated throughout America as the cry for "industrial democracy" had come to a halt and improvements won by organized labor during the war years were challenged and lost as employers fought back.\(^{46}\)

During the war many club members were hesitant in pursuing their ambition of returning to Scandinavia, but as the war ended this accumulated need and desire to return was released. Furthermore, developments in society in general and on the labor market in particular boosted this desire as the 1910s drew to a close. A growing number among the pioneers and leading activists of the SSF chose to return to Sweden or redraw their party affiliation. Among those who left the Lake View club were such leading people as Henry Bengston, long-time editor of *Svenska Socialisten* and one of the pillars of the whole organization; Ludvig Noord, frequently-used speaker, devoted temperance man and active within the co-op movement; and Nils R. Swenson, editor of *Svenska Socialisten*, organizer and a frequent speaker at many of the SSF's arrangements.

The growing number of returnees caused *Svenska Socialisten* to comment on the matter. The prime incentive for this development was, according to the journal, that America had denied its new inhabitants their basic right to cultivate


their natural sense of ethnic belonging. It was also suggested that expectation of improving their situation back in Sweden had increased among the returnees as both the Social Democratic Party gained in strength and many of the problems of democracy were being solved.\(^\text{47}\)

\textbf{The Lean Years and the Search for New Alliances}

The breakaway from the Socialist Party created a situation which, from another point of view, was positive for the club. Without having to pledge fealty toward the Socialist Party it could probe the possibility of other organizational alliances. This option materialized at once as the local Scandinavian IWW organization immediately approached the SSF and the Lake View club for the purpose of investigating the prospects for a merger. The Scandinavian wobblies said that since the SSF was no longer a political party and as they all were in favor of industrial unionism, a merger would be desirable. An additional reason which probably motivated the IWW branch to seek a merger with the SSF was that their Swedish-language newspaper, \textit{Nya Världen}, had folded due to failing finances and that through a merger it would gain access to \textit{Svenska Socialisten}. After a few months of debate the Lake View Socialist Club and the Lake View Scandinavian IWW branch merged, which meant that an additional 12 members joined the Lake View club.\(^\text{48}\)

Despite the fact that the merger with the IWW branch meant an influx of new members, the events of 1919 must be regarded as a partial collapse of the haven of the radical Scandinavians. This setback did not mean that they had lost their momentum entirely. The mere fact that the Scandinavian IWW branch and the Lake View branch of the SSF merged can serve to illustrate their continuous efforts to regroup their forces and reorganize their haven.

As the membership dropped the character of the club activities changed. It was mentioned that most of those who had left the club were "old revisionists". Regardless of whether or not this was true many of the drop-outs had still been loyal and competent activists who knew how to organize and run meetings and

\(^{47}\) On returnees and people leaving the organization see \textit{Doggyning} (Chicago 1920) p.32 (A.A.B.) and S.S. April 23, May 7, June 4, Aug. 13 and Oct. 22, 1920.

\(^{48}\) On the discussion about the merger see S.S. Nov. 6, 1919, Feb. 26, and Mar. 11, 1920.
with their departure the club suffered a terrific loss. Their responsibilities were put in the hands of the few that still remained within the organization, who were thereby forced to start all over again at establishing new bonds of loyalty.

Once again the remaining activists had to cultivate in-group relations in order to forge a strong and coherent group. In order to obtain this end their activities became more "social". The club started to encourage members to bring their families to its activities, whether it was a meeting at someone's house or a theatrical evening at the IOGT lodge. The various complaints about the lack of camaraderie that surfaced at that time can thus be seen as an expression of the need for strong bonds of friendship and loyalty which once again had become more palpable.49

In an attempt to reorganize and strengthen the base of the club it not only utilized preexisting structures such as the IOGT lodges, it also got involved in constructing new ones. As the SSF became an independent organization its purpose was redefined as working for the spiritual and cultural advancement of the Scandinavian people alongside its socialist goals.50 The decline in membership in the SSF clubs was seen as a confirmation of the need for an intellectual and cultural revival among Scandinavians. Therefore, during the Christmas of 1919, when the IOGT Scandinavian Grand Lodge of Illinois had held a series of educational seminars based on the Swedish example of adult education, the question of organizing a Worker's Educational League was raised.

The inspiration for this particular project came from Sweden and the "Arbetarnas Bildnings Förbund" (ABF). The idea was met with approval and it was decided to send out invitations to IOGT lodges and Socialist and independent educational organizations. Half a year later, in July of 1920, representatives from the IOGT Scandinavian Grand Lodge of Illinois, the SSF, Studieförbundet Verdandi, Svenska Studieförbundet and Chicago Sydsidas Föreläsningssällskap met and constituted Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund, or ABF. There were also a number of other organizations that, due to the long distance, were prevented from attending but still sent statements confirming their affiliation.51

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50 The purpose was defined by Oscar W. Larson in a speech delivered at a Lake View club meeting on Jan. 31, 1920. See S.S. Jan 29, Feb. 5, 1920.
51 Organizations affiliated but not present were the Eastern IOGT Grand Lodge, Scandinaviska Föreläsningssällskapen of Seattle, Nya Sverige Tryckeri och Förlagsföreningen of Worcester (S.S. July 23, 1920).
It appears, however, as if the time was not ripe for this kind of cooperation. Most of those who initiated the ABF came out of the SSF and due to the collapse of this organization many of the SSF clubs had great difficulties in continuing their activities. Hence their responsibilities toward the club prevented them from mobilizing for the ABF in a sufficient way. Whatever organizational or educational work that was done thus continued to be done by each organization exactly as before the formation of the ABF.

However, the need for cultural revival remained and as the ABF came to nothing the SSF soon started to direct its members to the lecture series organized by Svenska Bildningsförbundet or the IOGT instead.52

As mentioned, the SSF clubs engaged in a number of new organizational combinations. One of them was the Friends of Soviet Russia (FoSR). In the fall of 1921 the program committee of the Lake View Club invited representatives from a number of IOGT lodges and some other organizations to be constituted as a subcommittee to the national body of the FoSR.53 The meetings of the FoSR were often social in nature and they regularly managed to mobilize and draw a substantial number of people.

As the FoSR was mobilizing in support of the first worker's state, a cause which most radicals considered noble, it could draw both on loyalty toward participating organizations and the need of individuals to maintain, nourish and expand their social network. Through the support of projects like this the club expanded the area in which it could get in touch with presumptive members and thus strengthened its base again.

For the Lake View Club, 1921 and 1922 also meant that it became involved in yet another merger. This time it concerned a schism within the Scandinavian SLP federation, Skandinaviska Socialistiska Arbetare Förbundet (SSAF). One of the fractions within the SSAF sought cooperation and finally merged with the SSF. This merger was accomplished on a national level and resulted in the formation of the United Scandinavian Socialist Federation, FSSF.54

52 At least two members of the Lake View Club sat on the organizing committee, G.L. Larson and Eric J. Ericson, S.S. Feb. 12, 1920. See also the accounts of Gust. L. Larson on workers' educational work in Swedish Chicago, N.T. June 19, 1926 or the IOGT study program eg., N.T. Oct. 14, 1922.

53 The other organizations represented were the IOGT lodges Idrott, Idoghet, Svenskarna i Illinois, Jupiter, Förgät mig ej; the socialist choir Kamraterna; and the SSF branch from Austin, Ill. See also S.S. Sept. 7, 23, 1921.

54 See also Minutes of the Lake Vew Club of S.S.A.F. Jan 11 and 25, 1922 (A.A.B.).
Although the merger with the Scandinavian SLP branch of Lake View meant a reinforcement of the Lake View Club it did not last long. As the two organizations merged they once again embarked on the process of defining their purposes and goals. These were defined as a continuous struggle for industrial unionism but also intervention in conservative trade unions to fight for bread-and-butter issues. In this discussion the FSSF developed a position which pushed the organization closer and closer to the Worker’s Party. The Lake View Club, however, was divided on the issue of the relationship to the Worker’s Party. In March, 1922 the club voted against an affiliation only to follow the majority of the organization into the Party seven months later.

This reorganization, however, did not come without a price. The members of the former Lake View IWW branch had approved of the merger with the Socialist club a couple of years earlier on the premises that the club was independent and lacked any party affiliation. As the Lake View Club once again linked up with a political party many of these former IWW members consequently left the organization. The fact that many of the IWW sympathizers had been competent organizers and leaders forced the Club to stage a number of supplementary elections to fill the positions that had become vacant due to the departure of the Wobblies.

The drop in membership was something that the club had in common with most other clubs. In order to maintain and strengthen their positions the various Scandinavian Worker’s Party clubs in Chicago started to pool their resources. This meant that the clubs frequently arranged ambulating joint meetings. One week down on the South Side and the next week in Lake View or on the West Side. By doing this they both strengthened their in-group loyalty as well as maintained the image of a group capable of attracting and mobilizing a large group of people.

The loss of members created both a sense of bitterness and potential threat. Bitterness, because by leaving the party its former members were deceiving the cause that those still in the organization were fighting for. In an implicit way they denied the necessity of the party as well as the Leninist theory of the revolutionary party and thus became a potential threat to the faith and conviction of those still organized.

The socialists/communists saw the party as the heart and brain of their haven and those that did not want to fall in line were perceived as deserters who were

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55 S.S. Mar. 24, 1922.
56 S.S. Mar. 31, Nov. 11, 1922.
detaching or distancing themselves from the core and leadership of their haven. The sense of detachment and distance emerged regardless of whether or not the deserters still remained within their haven through their engagement in Cafe Idrott, for example.

In this perspective it is not surprising that criticism surfaced at that time. Club members felt that an exclusive cultural elite was evolving within the haven and in a comment to the annual meeting of the Cooperative Temperance Cafe Idrott in 1922 the reporter maintained that those who took the initiative to the cafe had all taken part in the Swedish labor movement of 1905 and 1909 and that the purpose of the cafe had been to create a meeting place for the "movement-people" who came to Chicago from Sweden. But, according to the reporter the energy devoted to the cafe apparently had made the pioneers a little too refined to mingle with the cafe's ordinary visitors.57

This critique served a dual purpose. First, to defuse the frustration of having to see members leaving the organization, and secondly, to hold the haven together by appealing to the loyalties that had been the incentive to create the various worker's cultural institutions in the first place.

But as the FSSF affiliated with the Worker's Party it also, in a more direct way, became part of another haven - a haven that transcended ethnic boundaries through its focus on class. This new alliance resulted in a set of new structures of which "The Lake View Open Forum" became one of the first. Even though the Open Forum was a joint arrangement between the Worker's Party and the Scandinavian Lake View branch, the programs and lectures presented at the Open Forum did not appeal to the Scandinavians in Lake View and thus attendance at their meetings declined during the winter and spring of 1923.

According to the club, one of the reasons for this development was a dearth of Swedish-language speakers.58 Behind this lay the fact that it was not only what was said that mattered, but whether it was said in Swedish or English. The preference for the Swedish language was not only a matter of understanding; it was also a vital component for the in-group relationship and the sense of

57 N.T. Nov. 11 and 18, 1922. The same kind of arguments resurfaced in the midst of the radicalization of the early 1930s, when the club once again felt that there was a cultural elite which tried to distance itself from the roots and alleged historical mission (N.T. May 23, 1931). It is also worth noticing that by alluding to the "movement people" (rörelse-folket), meaning all of those involved in the various popular movements, the reporter confirmed that there was an unspoken contract or siblingship between these organizations.

58 N.T. Nov. 11, Dec. 1, 9, 1922, Mar. 31, April 7, June 2, 1923.
belonging. This was not always articulated but, in a pragmatic way, became obvious as more people could be attracted if the speaker lectured in Swedish instead of English.

The problem of identifying the importance of camaraderie and strong in-group bonds was pertinently captured in a comment made after the joint May Day celebrations of 1923. One of the members involved in the preparations for the program complained about the emptiness he felt after the evening. "The struggle becomes the essence - the product...what?" To his own surprise he had to admit that the evening itself had not been his reward; instead, he found it in the preparations themselves, made together with friends and comrades. As this was more the social side of his engagement it was also symptomatic that the highlight of the program that day had not been politics or a flaming speech but a dramatic play.\(^{59}\)

The collapse of the political section of the radicals' haven also affected other parts of it. If the FoSR and the ABF were results of initiatives taken by members of the Lake View Club, there were still numerous other projects or organizations that were launched by other groups within their haven. Some of these projects were perhaps less conventional than others. Nevertheless, many of them stand out as prime examples of the perpetual struggle fought by the immigrants to comprehend their new and rapidly changing world. One of these far-reaching projects was headed by Wilhelm Södergren, formerly on the political left and a frequent speaker at meetings of Scandinavian radicals.

**Out on a Limb**

The political turmoil and fractional fights on the political left deprived many of their faith in socialism. When the idea of socialism as a substitute for paradise faded some climbed out on a limb, reaching to the spirits for reconciliation. Perhaps the most spectacular of these projects was launched by Wilhelm Södergren. Södergren became active in the radical labor movement back in Sweden. He emigrated to America after the General Strike of 1909 and became a frequent speaker and lecturer among the radical Scandinavians of Chicago. Owing to his predilection for ethics and morals he also became absorbed in questions dealing with human existence. Once he set out on this path he gradually became a devoted spiritualist.

\(^{59}\) *N.T.* May 5, 1923.
Among those attracted to the spiritualists were quite a few radicals and this circumstance provoked the members of the Lake View Socialist Club, particularly since Södergren had been perceived as "one of them". And since the spiritualists drew respectable numbers to their meetings they had become competitors for members and thus a potential threat to the club. By March 1921 the spiritualists had stirred up so much ill will within the Lake View Club that the club felt motivated to arrange an anti-spiritualist meeting featuring August Seymore, a speaker from the Socialist Party, as their exorcist. The meeting, however, did not turn out at all like the socialists had hoped. Not that anyone became possessed by spirits but because Seymore's behavior was too disrespectful. In a commentary on the meeting Gustav L. Larson wrote in Svenska Socialisten that Seymore's method of argument was so sloppy that he lost all credibility. The spiritualists on the other hand, Larson remarked, presented their thoughts in a way that won the respect of the audience. Larson remained respectfully sceptical. After this embarrassing encounter there were no further debates or comments on the matter in Svenska Socialisten.60

Although the spiritualist project might seem somewhat odd, it still symbolizes the vitality and ingenuity displayed by these people in their search for meaning. The sensations of the spirits, however, were soon to be replaced by something altogether different.

A New Wave of Immigrants and the Revival of the Club

The disappointment felt during the Spring of 1923 was soon to be replaced by a sense of revival as the last big wave of immigrants from Sweden entered the US. With this wave came a number of experienced organizers and speakers who could provide the club with Swedish-language speakers.

The growing number of newcomers in the neighborhood meant that the club once more attracted a new group of potential members. With parties, dances and lectures it tried to reach these newcomers. In order to define and profile itself, the relation to the church and its religion as well as the temperance

60 S.S. Feb. 11, Mar. 18, 1921.
question and conditions back in Sweden once again came up as topics for
lectures and discussions.\textsuperscript{61}

Still, the issue that really brought people together was the restrictive immigrant
policy imposed by the Coolidge administration. Many immigrants felt
intimidated by Coolidge's policy and this was something that the Scandinavian
labor radicals made use of. Through a number of meetings they tried to create
unity around the defence of the newcomers.\textsuperscript{62} The Lake View Club, however,
was split on what political conclusions to draw from this situation. The
ideological stance within the Worker's Party and the Third International was at
this time to push for Americanization and an integration of all the language
federations into the Worker's Party. The idea was that all language federations
should be dissolved and their members join the mother party instead. This policy
was met with a great deal of criticism from the language federations and
therefore the policy was gradually nuanced. In 1925 the federations were
replaced with auxiliary organizations of workers' clubs which in practice meant
that ethnicity persisted as the criterion for club membership. This status
remained until 1928 when the ethnic factor was confirmed as the Scandinavians
were reorganized in relation to their mother party and became Skandinaviska
Arbetarförbundet i Amerika (SAFA - the Scandinavian Workers League of
America).\textsuperscript{63}

Nevertheless, the reorganizations in 1922/23 and 1925 created a period of
insecurity within the Scandinavian clubs. On one hand immigrants felt that they
and their organizations were being circumscribed by authorities and thus needed
the support of their clubs, while on the other hand, as loyal Worker's Party
members they should encourage Americanization.

On a propagandistic level the Lake View Club and \textit{Ny Tid} continued to stress
the necessity of an affiliation with the American labor movement as the only
valid long-term strategy. The importance of Swedishness was rejected since the
labor movement was seen as the only "country" worthy of the working class.
Thus the Swedish-language press was seen only as a bridge over to the American
labor movement.\textsuperscript{64}

At the same time, and though seemingly contradictory, mobilization continued
along ethnic lines. It was specified that the prime targets for the clubs' activities

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{N.T.} Feb. 9, 1924, Feb. 7, May 9, Dec. 12, 1925.
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{N.T.} April 12, 1924.
\textsuperscript{63} Michael Brook, "Swedes" in Hoerder/Hartzig (eds. 1987) pp. 143-144.
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{N.T.} Jan. 17, 1925.
were to be: labor unions, temperance and educational organizations, organizations which were commonly organized along ethnic lines. With the purpose of infusing a class struggle perspective into these organizations and their programs the club members were expected to take part in these organizations.

Exactly how these activities were to be fashioned was at first not articulated. The only condition proclaimed was that club members should not run for office in these organizations. This approach turned out to be mainly propagandistic with few concrete and immediate demands. It furthermore proved inadequate or insufficient as an instrument for mobilizing people.65

But, as mentioned, the Coolidge administration advocated a restrictive immigration policy which included the proposed registration of all foreign-born individuals in the US. Many immigrants perceived this as a threat to both their personal integrity as well as their ethnic organizations. This created a mental base for organizational mobilization and unity.

A New Unity: In Defence of the Foreign-Born

Perhaps the most important field of activity for the Scandinavian radicals from 1925 and onward was the continuous struggle to build a united front in defence of the foreign-born and their organizations.

Prior to 1925 Chicago labor had organized a Labor Defence Council. On the initiative of this body similar organizations were organized all across the country. In the summer of 1925 all these organizations were brought together under the national umbrella organization called the International Labor Defence, ILD. This was an organization that for a number of years played a central role for the Lake View radicals.

Although the ILD was not referred to as one of the target organizations mentioned above it still gave the Scandinavian radicals of Lake View an opportunity to defend their ethnic organizations in a class context. Hence, in November 1925, the Scandinavians organized their own ILD branch. Several Scandinavian organizations were represented but it was the Lake View Scandinavian Worker's Club that actually took charge of it.66 Thus yet another

65 N.T. Nov. 7, 1925.
66 On the founding of the ILD and Lake View Club representation, see N.T. July (continued...)
organization was added to the haven of the Lake View Scandinavian radicals and at the same time another bridge linking them to the American labor community was built.

But the defence of the foreign-born was also built on a purely ethnic base. In June of 1926 this organizational work resulted in a major conference with 57 delegates representing almost 6,000 members from various Scandinavian organizations. Keynote speaker at this conference was Arne Swabeck from the Worker’s Party and a member of the Scandinavian Karl Marx Club as well.67

Apparently there was a strong need for an organization along these lines because it was decided to call to another conference within less than two months’ time. At the subsequent conference held in July, the possibility of turning the movement into a national organization was discussed. Since the previous conference even more organizations had joined and the convention was said to represent about 10,000 members.68 The success of these two conferences gave the Scandinavian communists, as they preferred to call themselves at that time, a taste of some of the potential of a broader unity and thus a larger haven. However, unity was not achieved without some friction. As the Scandinavians gained the experience of working with other organizations of the periphery, or even organizations outside their haven, they were also reminded of some of the characteristics of their ethnic group. They realized that their ethnic group was divided both by class and culture. They were also made aware of how old structures were used to resist and prevent changes, like the ceremonies used by various organizations.69

In order to counter these flaws the idea of a Scandinavian Worker’s Educational League was once again raised. The network went into action and in January 1927 the founding convention of "Skandinaviska Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund i Illinois" was held. About 30 delegates from 26 various clubs and organizations representing some 7,400 members took on the task of promoting and refining the culture and education of the Scandinavian-American working class.70

66 (...continued)
25, Nov. 21, 1925, May 5, 1927.
67 N.T. May 6, 1926.
68 N.T. July 7, 1926.
69 N.T. Aug. 18, 1926.
70 N.T. June 19, 1926, Feb. 5, June 25, 1927. Other organizations represented at the convention were: Scandinavian Fraternity of America, Vasa Order of America, IWW, (continued...)
Of the delegates to this convention eleven represented IOGT lodges. One delegate, Gunnar Stone, was also a member of the IOGT but at this time he represented the Lake View branch of the ILD which shows how closely they were related.

In one sense all of this was positive for the development of their haven. They made new friends and established new bonds of loyalty facilitating mobilization. This process, however, required manpower, manpower that sapped the Lake View Club which then more or less collapsed. All the leading members of the club were busy with everything but their own club. The worker’s club was thus in reality left without leadership and others who were attracted by the club were left adrift.71

When push came to shove, the Swedish radicals were more loyal to their ethnic bonds than to the party. This is illustrated by the fact that the club activists preferred to defend their own ethnic organizations over organizing and mobilizing for the mother party, the Worker’s Party.

The weakening of the club once again made the Scandinavian branches pool their resources as members from the South Side branches helped reorganize the club. The newcomers were once again given lectures about the necessity of downplaying Swedishness and ethnic origin in favor of a class perspective.

Furthermore, signs of a political working-class radicalization began to manifest within their haven. The officer responsible for political questions within the IOGT, their election intendent, delivered in his recommendations a message with a clear working-class perspective. Due to the IOGT bylaws, however, the election intendent could not recommend any specific party. Nevertheless, his recommendations appear to have reflected a trend among the IOGT members because at a joint meeting with the Lake View Club and the youth lodge Idrott they went one step further and advocated a revolutionary working class organization as the obvious choice of ally in the struggle for a permanent solution to the temperance question.72

As the US economy went deeper into its slump the Lake View club had more opportunity to act politically. One example of this occurred in 1928 when two elderly people claimed to have been shamed by a retirement home up in Evanston. The IOGT was part owner of the retirement home and when news of

70 (...continued)
Scandinavian Workers Educational Society, Studieklubben Vågbrytaren. Lake View ILD branch. See also draft of founding document of SABF (AAB).

71 N.T. Dec. 8, 1927.

72 N.T. Oct. 15, Nov. 19, 1928.
this scandal was spread by *Ny Tid* and the Lake View Club, the IOGT felt obliged to withdraw its support of the home and side with the two maltreated pensioners.\(^7\)

Small events like this gave the club a public face which must surely have benefitted the club's ability to recruit new members. The club further strengthened its position by the fact that the high ratio of unemployment, in combination with a sluggish economy, deprived the labor unions of much of their ability to provide security. Hence people started to turn to political organizations as an alternative strategy for ethnic and social mobilization. There were even demands raised for a re-orientation of the IOGT toward a class-struggle organization.\(^7\)

Signs of radicalization occurred within their haven and the radicals managed to mobilize people in defence of the foreign-born. However, even if the radicals gained some momentum it was not only a result of their own activities. The upheaval discernable at noticable during the end of the 1920s was perhaps just as much a response to a society on the brink of a major crisis.

### From the Great Depression to the Popular Front

As the economic slump deepened poverty and unemployment figures grew to staggering proportions. People did not have to look far to encounter the grim face of the Great Depression. For the communists the signs of the Depression were all indications of the dying capitalist system. This was also what the Lake View Club explained to its fellow countrymen from soapboxes all around the Lake View district. Every now and then the police came to break up their meetings. The methods used by the Chicago police often left those on the receiving end with both physical and mental wounds of police brutality.\(^7\)

Erik Jansson, secretary of the Scandinavian Workers Federation of America around 1930 remembers one such confrontation.

I remember one occasion when I attended a meeting with the joint committee set up to collect money for *Ny Tid*. We met at the Scandinavian

\(^7\) *N.T.* Sept. 24, 1928.

\(^7\) *N.T.* June 24, 1929.

\(^7\) *N.T.* Aug. 16, 1930. Interview with Erik Janson, Farsta, Sweden. Secretary of Skandinaviska Arbetareförbundet and located in Chicago at the time.
Workers Federation headquarters which was located on what we called "Snuff Boulevard", that is on Bellmont just across the street from Cafe Idrott.

At the same time the Young Communists were holding a meeting out there, just opposite Cafe Idrott. We often held our meetings there, you see. Stefan Swanson was chairing the joint committee meeting that I was attending and Stefan was sitting next to the window. As he happened to glance through the window he burst out: Dammit, the police are coming and they’re pulling down Haldman. You see, Haldman was an old German who always helped out when the youngsters held their meetings while at the same time pushing the journal Daily Worker. That was good because he had the ability to get people’s attention...

Anyway, the police were then trying to pull him down from the stand before the communists had started their meeting. At this point Swanson asked if the joint committee meeting should be adjourned so that we could go down and support the communists’ meeting or if we should continue. Well, we decided to adjourn the meeting and rushed down to help them. And we were ten to twelve young, healthy men that dug in on the side of the communists. The police then regrouped to form like a wedge aiming for the stand and the speaker. Well, with the depression and all quite a large crowd that had gathered, so there was one hell of a fight.

They pulled down Haldman all right, I mean he was some sixty or seventy years old, so he didn’t put up much of a struggle. Then there was this young girl who took the stand - you know, we always had another speaker standing by in the case the first speaker was pulled down or arrested - but as the police attacked the stand it started to tilt. So, to avoid getting injured the girl jumped down from the stand. Then came this man, a policeman though he was not wearing a uniform, and grabbed her. I thought: Now she’s gonna catch hell for encouraging people to defend the meeting. So, I grabbed her and freed her from the policeman holding her. I turned around just long enough to get a glimpse of her as she escaped into safety by running into the alley.

Then as I turned around the damn cop stuck a gun in my belly. That just made me blow my top and I nailed him smack on the chin. He flew a good bit along the gutter and I figured there was no reason to bail out so I stuck around. I kind of wanted to see what the guy was going to do next, you see. Well, as he staggered to his feet and saw me he turned around and ran off like his pants were on fire. I guess he thought I was some kind of
professional boxer since I had managed to knock him out with one clean punch.\textsuperscript{76}

The recollections of Erik Jansson illustrate not only the willingness among these political radicals to fight to defend their civil rights but the presence of the German named Haldman also indicates that by the end of the 1920s connections were being made across ethnic lines.\textsuperscript{77}

At any rate, the Lake View radicals used experiences such as the conflict remembered by Erik Jansson as examples of why the workers needed to get organized and fight for their rights, including freedom of speech. The membership statistics from between 1928 and 1933 support the notion that there was a growing number willing to subscribe to the political formula presented by the Scandinavian Communists of Lake View.

The total membership increased during those years from 40 to 165 members. Meanwhile, however, the number of members in good standing sank from 30 to 22. The reason for this discrepancy is not clear. It might indicate that people just could not afford to keep up with their dues, as was the case within Local No.637 of the Painters’ Union. The constitution of the group of new members, however, might imply an alternative explanation for this neglect.

One circumstance to consider is that many of the members that joined the club during the years around 1930 were recent immigrants. Some settled in the Lake View area but the newcomers also became part of the residential migration from the center of the city toward its suburbs.

For the Lake View club this meant that many of their presumptive members settled further north and as the number of Scandinavians increased in various enclaves on the North Side the question of organizing a second club further north was brought up. In 1929 this club materialized. Compared with the Lake View club the North Side club displays a striking difference; of the 60 members organized by the North Side Club, none had any previous experience of any organizational work. This meant that they were not nor had not even been members of the IOGT.\textsuperscript{78}

Given the fact that one of the key achievements of the early labor organizations was its role as discipliners of the working class, the implication of a new group of members with less or no experience of any organizational work might thus be

\textsuperscript{76} Interview with Erik Jansson, Farsta, Sweden. Oct.6 1990.

\textsuperscript{77} On ethnic cooperation see also Cohen (1990) p.365.

\textsuperscript{78} N.T. July 7, 1929.
that they were, if not totally, at least less morally motivated to put membership dues on top of their list of priorities.

This change in the constitution of the group might also, to some extent, explain why drunkenness among youngsters started to appear as a new phenomenon at club arrangements. Whether the drunken behaviour was displayed by members of the club or not is hard to determine. It is clear, however, that the club as such reacted against the appearance of intoxicated Scandinavians at its meetings.79

But if these radicals were upset by the sight of a drunken youngster at a dance arranged by the club, what feelings must have been stirred up at the sight of a breadline, or a family of unemployed being evicted from their home, or a friend and member of the club being gunned down by the police while demonstrating against police brutality?80 Judging from the reports in Ny Tid these turbulent and hard times certainly upset the club members. But also people on its periphery were affected by the increasing social tensions and thus became emotionally motivated to get organized. Attendance at club arrangements and a glance at the membership statistics clearly indicates this.

In other words, one segment of the Scandinavians was trying to forge a haven from which it could defend its interests. By drawing on their own historical experiences the Scandinavians thus tried to create a context that could support and convey their notion of what was right and what was wrong. In the midst of this process, however, their notion of what was on the agenda was challenged by another segment of the Swedish enclave in Chicago.

In 1932, the Swedish National Society (Svenska Nationalförbundet) launched a campaign to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the death of King Gustavus Adolphus. For the Swedish National Society the ambition was to establish a connection between Sweden and America, thus giving the Swedes a legitimate place within American society. This ambition was displayed in the program of this celebration where tableaux with King Gustavus Adolphus, Leif Ericson, the Swedish colony in Delaware and George Washington were to be presented.81

Apparently, the bias and connotation of this set-up sent a message which the members of the Lake View club just could not accept. The traumatic experience of the Depression led them to respond by asking what is more important: "Royal Flatter or Class Struggle?". To counter this, to their mind, royalistic and chauvinistic enterprise they launched a counter-campaign. The club stated that

79 N.T. Jan. 10, 1931.
80 N.T. Feb. 4, Mar. 3, May 12, 1932.
81 N.T. Aug. 11, 1932.
Gustavus Adolphus, known for his deeds in the Thirty Years' War in the 17th century as a great military leader, had no relevance whatsoever to the Swedes of Chicago today. The only relevance of the King, the club claimed, would be if someone wanted to prepare the ground for an attack on Soviet Russia and that was something that members strongly resented both as Swedes and workers.\footnote{A counter campaign was launched that ran Sept. 2-10, 1932. See \textit{N.T}, May 5, 12, 19, July 14 and Sept. 1, 1932.}

In 1911, the Lake View club had concluded an evaluation of the Swedish National Society by stating that the organization had become a tool for the interests of a limited number of individuals.\footnote{S.S. Sept. 6, 13, 1911.} Twenty years later the antagonism between the club and the Society was reaffirmed, a good illustration of the fact that the Swedes were not a homogeneous group. Instead they continued to be divided into smaller sub-groups fighting among themselves from their specific perspectives, and in this particular case it was clear that the Swedish National Society did not belong to the group of organizations included in the haven of the radical Lake View Scandinavians.

In 1932, Skandinaviska Arbetareförbundet received signals from the Comintern and the international labor movement that the situation was ripe for a "united front from below". In one sense this was what the club had been trying to achieve for a number of years now. However, with the experience of the Swedish National Society boosting its chauvinism and royalism, the club must have felt a strong desire to identify its enemies but also its friends and potential allies.

With this in mind it was only logical that the SAFA altered its policy. If a united front was to be built the legitimacy of the organizations involved had to be recognized. However, due to the often exclusive policy advocated by the Workers Club during what has become known as the "third period", or ultra-left period of the Comintern, it had become difficult to recognize anything but the Communist Party.

Nevertheless, this turn in policy came in 1933. At that time the SAFA had to admit that the assimilation process had not gone as far or as rapidly as anticipated. Instead the experience from the previous years indicated an unbroken need for language federations and ethnic organizations among the Swedes as among other ethnic groups.

A comparison was made with the Norwegian radicals who had abandoned their ethnic organizations, leaving them in the hands of conservative chauvinists. Thus
there was no unity among the Norwegians in the struggle for their rights, SAFA’s journal Ny Tid claimed.\textsuperscript{84}

In the case of the radical Swedes it had, in fact, primarily been through the process of mobilizing in defence of the foreign-born that they had been able to reconstruct their haven. Even though one could claim that it was a pragmatic policy, a key factor for the success of this mobilization lay in the recognition of the role and importance of ethnic organizations.

However, the shift in political direction that surfaced in 1933 was only the beginning of a turn toward a more populist policy. As the threat of a new war in Europe grew, the Comintern formulated the tactics of the Popular Front.

These tactics were based on the hypothesis that the main threat to the workers was fascism and war. Consequently, class tensions deriving from exploitation by a national capitalist class and all other antagonisms had to be subordinated to the struggle of constructing the Popular Front.

For SAFA and the Lake View Club this meant that they continued to work for the unity of all Scandinavian Organizations. The basis for this work was to continue to push for unity for the defence of the foreign-born. To this agenda was added support for a national unemployment insurance as well as an old-age pension and social insurance.\textsuperscript{85}

In the course of pushing for their new agenda the radical fraction among the Scandinavians managed to unite a number of Scandinavian organizations into something called the Scandinavian Workers’ Unity League.\textsuperscript{86} This organization was quite impressive inasmuch as it represented almost seventy branches from eight of the leading Scandinavian-American organizations plus a number of independent organizations.\textsuperscript{87} It is likely that the Lake View club played a central role for the Unity League since both the chairman and the secretary, Paul Fröjd and Arthur Johnson, respectively, were well-known members of the club.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{84} Ny Tid, Jan. 5, 1933.

\textsuperscript{85} See “Resolution” from Scandinavian Workers Unity League dated March 17, 1935. (in Arthur W. Michell papers, C.H.S.)

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid. The organizations were: Vasa Order Of America, Independent Order of Vikings, Independent Order of Ladies of Vikings, Scandinavian Workers League, I.O.G.T. Independent Order of Svithiod, Scandinavian Fraternity of America. There were further listed six Danish and Norwegian organizations plus thirteen independent clubs or organizations.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid. see also Ny Tid, Feb. 9, 1928, Mar. 4, 1929, Aug. 23, 1930, Jan. 10, 1935.
Despite the fact that the club successfully engaged in projects like the Scandinavian Workers’ Unity League, it was unable to capitalize on that. The inability to draw new members was, however, not unique for the Lake View club but a problem shared with the other Scandinavian workers’ clubs in Chicago.

It was reported in the columns of *Ny Tid* for instance, that the internal life of the clubs had lost its spark and that in order to maintain a meeting hall the clubs had decided to jointly rent a hall located at 944 Belmont Avenue.\(^8\)

Nevertheless, while the Scandinavian clubs struggled for their survival they still managed to mobilize substantial numbers of people at meetings, which were of a more social nature. Furthermore, as Lizabeth Cohen has pointed out, by the 1930s various ethnic groups had managed to find a wider common ground for interaction which was also reflected in the activities of the club. An increasing number of meetings were held in cooperation with other ethnic groups.\(^9\)

For the Scandinavian Workers’ League as well as for the Lake View club the indigent financial situation of their newspaper, *Ny Tid*, had always been a major problem. From the Great Depression this developed into a constant struggle to raise enough money to finance the next issue.

During 1935 the League was furthermore shattered by a small fraction within the federation which was in favor of the international left opposition within the Comintern. This opposition had a different view of how the struggle against fascism was to be fought. According to *Ny Tid*, however, the strategy of the opposition would jeopardize the Popular Front. Therefore the journal was filled with accusations of betrayal and cowardliness and the opposition was soon eliminated through expulsion.

It appears, however, as if the surgery was successful but the doctor lost his patient, because as the Scandinavian Workers’ League struggled to maintain a political profile suited to fit the petty bourgeois segment of the Popular Front, club members lost their motivation to rally for their workers club or their League.

Furthermore, as the economy slowly picked up and capitalism seemed to recover the communist perspective lost some of its attraction. The CIO was organized and the New Deal and the Wagner Act were in effect and in 1936 there were reports of increased wages in the construction industry. For workers

\(^8\) *N.T.* Apr. 11, June 13, 1935.

\(^9\) On ethnic cooperation see Cohen (1990) p.365 and *N.T.*, Feb. 20, Mar. 5, 1936 on club meetings planned or held with Czech, Lithuanian, Croatian or Ukrainian organizations.

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looking to improve their conditions this suggested that the economic arena might be more favorable to work in.

In this scenario the leadership of the Scandinavian Workers' League decided that since the working class was not ready to take on a revolutionary fight there was no need for the League as such for the time being. Hence, the members could do more good if they could commit themselves to working with the Popular Front without having to carry the responsibility of keeping the clubs alive as well. Ny Tid was thus shut down after recommending that the members now more wholeheartedly should devote themselves to unity work.91

The Scandinavian Workers' Clubs in Chicago did not vanish all at once. Their members continued to take part in the American labor movement and some clubs continued to arrange meetings and carnivals for a few more years. Notices on their activities, however, became increasingly scarce and it appears that on April 24, 1940, when the Karl Marx Club held its final meeting, the last of the Chicago clubs folded.92

As this club was dissolved it was concluded that the Scandinavians had contributed greatly to the cause of labor in America and it was further noted that many former club members now held high positions within the American labor movement.

Conclusion

The summarizing remark made when the Karl Marx Club was shut down in 1940 was that several of its members held high positions within the American labor movement. Regardless of whether this was true or not the essential issue is that this was how it was perceived by the last members of the Karl Marx Club. They might just as well have said, "We are no longer excluded. We have been accepted and integrated since our men now hold high offices within the American labor movement".

Certainly, their vision of a socialist society had not been realized but, as one club member noted in 1923, the reward was not the result but the comradeship or esprit de corps felt during the struggle. In other words, being part of the

91 Ny Tid. July 9, 16, 1936.
92 Christiansen (1940) p.10.
movement. The road to acceptance and inclusion, however, had been long and troublesome.

When the Swedes came to Chicago they encountered a fragmented city made up of ethnic neighborhoods and a likewise segmented labor market. To stake out their place in this context the Swedes acted like other nationalities and constructed a haven of their own. The constitution of this haven was based on what the immigrants brought with them. Part of this tradition was a socialist labor movement.

The mobilizing issues among the Scandinavian socialists were not only local ones but perhaps more significantly the solidarity felt with the labor movement back in Sweden. As the Scandinavians got organized they became a force that the Socialist Party had to reckon with. The Scandinavian Socialist Club of Lake View is an example of this since the incentive to forge this club was a result of the efforts of a group of Swedes within the Socialist Party. The club was organized in 1908 but the first couple of years were quite docile. It was not until the journal of the Scandinavian Socialist Federation, *Svenska Socialisten*, was moved from Rockford to Chicago and Lake View in 1911 that the club became more stable. The membership, however, still hovered around twenty people and it was not until after 1915 that it started to increase. By 1918 the club had grown to include about 230 members.

During those years this group of people went through a process of defining who they were and who they were not. This meant that the club related itself to various fractions within both the American and the Swedish-American communities, finding allies and enemies in both camps. In some cases class became the base upon which solidarity was built while in other cases ethnicity was the decisive factor. However, there were clear preferences as to with which groups the club chose to build alliances. The Socialists basically continued to build on the loyalties and networks that had been established among the popular movements back in Sweden. This included the temperance movement, the cooperative movement, trade unions, adult educational societies and other cultural organizations related to labor.

In the great ideological battle that in 1919 split the Socialist Party into a reformist and a revolutionary fraction, the majority of the membership of the Scandinavian Socialist Federation sided with the revolutionaries. This internal political turmoil was also reflected in the Lake View club. The schism in the Socialist Party led to a reorganization of the club as well as a renegotiation of the various alliances the club had established.

When the club took on the task of recreating solidarity and coherency among the members it returned to focusing much more on the social aspects of their
meetings. For the Lake View radicals it thus became important to reaffirm its alliances with other Swedish-American organizations. Generally there was no problem in continuing the cooperation with the IOGT. The collaboration, however, did not generate new members for the club, which was taken as a sign of a lack of knowledge and a need for a cultural revival among the Scandinavians.

To infuse knowledge and culture the SSF organized the Workers Educational League together with the IOGT and a couple of other educational societies. Still, this project came to nothing since each participating organization was tied up by obligations of its own. There was just not enough skilled manpower to support yet another educational organization at that time.

Connections and interaction between various Scandinavian organizations was instead established in a wider Anglo-American working class context. Organizations like the Friends of the Soviet Russia and the International Labor Defence had connections with the American labor movement at large but also with its various ethnic segments. Through the local neighborhood committees of these organizations the Scandinavians established a network which not only included the Scandinavian radicals but also built bridges to other ethnic groups.

The importance of an ethnic context can also be illustrated by another joint venture, namely the Lake View "Open Forum". In this case, the lecture series jointly organized by the Workers' Party and the Lake View Scandinavian Socialist Club in 1922 did not have the ability to attract the Scandinavians in the neighborhood. The problem was apparently not politics but the fact that the lectures were presented in English rather than Swedish.

Nevertheless, the Scandinavian Socialists managed to create a new ethnic context when a new wave of Scandinavian immigrants arrived in 1923-24. Among these immigrants they found the speakers and lecturers they needed and the continuity and stability of the club was thus secured.

However, when the Scandinavian Socialist Federation became affiliated with the Workers' Party, its perspective on ethnic organizations became somewhat ambiguous. On one hand it was made clear that class was the only relevant category upon which to build solidarity and strength. Swedish-language journals and organizations were thus only seen as temporary bridges to the American labor movement.

While the rhetoric pointed at a class perspective the practice went in the opposite direction since the Scandinavians continued to mobilize and forge new ethnic organizations. While it is true that the organizational projects engaged in by the Lake View radicals held a class perspective, the base was not strictly class but rather *ethnic class*. Thus during the latter part of the 1920s the Lake View
Workers' Club could simultaneously mobilize on the basis of both ethnicity and class through an organization like the ILD.

It also appears as if this mixture of class and ethnicity appealed to the group of Scandinavian organizations that had constituted the radical haven before its collapse in 1919. Based on the defence of the foreign-born, the radicals managed to reorganize their haven. The momentum and potential strength generated by this reconstruction literally drained the incentives to mobilize for the political club. Everything was geared towards what was called the "unity work" and as a result of this the Lake View club was nearly dissolved. In this situation it would have been logical for the Scandinavian communists, as they called themselves by that time, reconsidered their perspective on the importance of ethnicity, but this was not done. Instead the Depression deprived the labor unions of much of their ability to provide financial and social security and people instead started to turn toward the political arena for redress of their grievances. New members started to flock to the club and they were once again given lectures about the necessity of playing down the role of national descent.

The Depression spurred both a political radicalization and mobilization not only within the SAFA and the Lake View club but within other organizations in their haven as well. Despite the ultra-leftist front policy advocated by the Comintern and the Communist Party, the Workers' clubs managed to mobilize their people on concrete, local issues. As they did so, they also found a common ground for fighting alongside other ethnic groups.

In 1933 the SAFA made an about-face in their policy, as the federation recognized the importance of the ethnic organizations. About the same time the Comintern also revised its "Front" policy. From that time the essential task was to build a Popular Front including as many as possible to fight against war and fascism.

For the Lake View club as well as SAFA in general this meant that they continued to work for unity against war and fascism but without having to agitate for and display their revolutionary class perspective. Along this route they cooperated with other ethnic groups and other parts of the American labor movement. Through this interaction they became included in American society. Thus when the SAFA's journal Ny Tid was discontinued in 1936 the initiative and momentum shifted to a wider arena in which the Scandinavians already knew and had established alliances with many of the other actors.

The story of the Lake View Socialist Club is thus the story of how a segment of one particular ethnic group prepared itself to fight for its vision of how and when to be included in its new host society. The members of the club generated strength and persistence to achieve their goal by recreating the structures through
which they had learned to fight in their old country. Bonds of loyalty and solidarity were created between the organizations which then became the building blocks of their haven.

Plate 5. The long-time editor of Svenska Socialisten Henry Bengston (with the hat), outside the Scandinavian Workers’ Publishing Society’s print shop on 2003 N. California Ave.
Chapter Six

The Castle by the Lake of Longing.
By Mauritz Enander

We are building a castle by the Lake of Longing
building with a thousand hands
And the sounds echo from bay and isle
around meadows of reeds on the strands.

The foundations were laid block by block
by our skilled persevering fathers
Now the walls we are raising log by log
and the art of bricks and mortar.

We hammer in our most wondrous dreams
of future hopes and happiness
and all that is noble and good and dear
and all that we wish for and all we feel.

Within ornamented walls in time shall live
the future generations we hope for
when the world no longer is evil and gloom
when springtimes more lovely will bloom.

In the groves shall wander a happier race
who rejoice in the summer and light
Where we now are swept by wintry winds
and shiver in stormy sighs.

From the bending fields which we have cleared
the harvest one day will be reaped
From fields which our labor has sown and
ploughed
the corn into barns will be heaped.

And all that we dreamed of in times of light
will come true in days ahead
in this house of our future and of our longing
midst the wilderness and stoney ground.

So we have been building for thousands of years
and will be building for thousands to come
until one day the castle will be ready
in splendour under the light of heaven.

As we from our forefathers’ age-worn hand
received our hammers and trowels
so our sons with the same brand
will build their pinnacles and towers.

Thus a castle is being raised by the Lake of Longing
the dream dreamt by millions of Eden
will never wither, will never die
despite the veil of darkness across our way.

One day it will be ready our castle by the lake
our building of a thousand hands
and our song will echo over fjord and isle
over the meadows and reedy strands.

______________________
1 Annual report of Café Idrott, 1924 p.16.
"The Castle by the Lake of Longing"

The Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott and the Creation of an Identity

Introduction

In the following study I will deal with how a segment of the Swedish emigrants with roots in the popular movements mobilized to stake out their place within their new environment in Chicago, Illinois. It is thus my assumption that by falling back on their experience from the popular movements a group of Swedish emigrants became part of the construction of an ethnic haven. I will also assume that since the Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott on the Chicago North Side evolved within the same line of traditions it was used as one of the stages where this construction took place.

In my study the Café will thus be seen as a stage on which some of the Swedish emigrants tried to formulate a strategy for their survival. This strategy included a struggle for ethnic leadership based on ethnic identity moulded by the cultural and ideological perspectives of those in the group around Café Idrott. I will thus try to establish who the actors were and what they saw as the purpose of the Café.

Through a survey of educational activities in the form of lectures and the founding of a library, as well as other activities staged at the Café, I will analyze how they tried to reach their goals. I will also put these activities in a perspective where they can be related to both the construction of, and the transformation of a haven for the Lake View and North Side Chicago Swedes with roots or ideals in conjunction with those of the popular movements in Sweden.
Swedes and their Coffee

Before Café Idrott is scrutinized, however, something should also be mentioned about the peculiar combination of Swedes and coffee. The custom of drinking coffee came to Sweden during the 18th century. For various reasons Swedish authorities did not entirely approve of the use of coffee. It was therefore banned for short periods. During these periods coffee-houses offered their customers different kinds of alcoholic beverages instead. In one sense the coffee-house thus took on the same kind of social function as the pub or saloon. This also gave the traditional coffee-house a reputation as a place of lewdness and coarseness.

When the ban on coffee was lifted a new and alternative kind of coffee establishment was born. In this establishment, in Swedish called "konditori", coffee and different kinds of pastry were served. Contrary to the old kind of coffee-houses women were also allowed to patronize these places.

A big boost for the use of coffee among the peasantry in the countryside came when the right to distil alcohol for household consumption was abolished in 1855. Coffee then replaced the "brännvin" or snaps as the drink of the nation. To drink coffee together or to offer someone a cup of coffee was at this time also seen as a sign of hospitality. Coffee and coffee-drinking have ever since been primarily associated with socializing in Sweden. This might also be illustrated by the fact that Sweden today has among the highest per capita consumption of coffee in the world. The café tradition was something that was picked up by some of the popular movements in Sweden and both the temperance and cooperative movement started their own cafés around the turn

\[2\] Coffee as such was known to a small number of Swedes from the mid-17th century but did not become more commonly known until the 18th century. See Sture Wilton, *Kaffe* (Stockholm 1967) p. 65. For further reading on coffee and the Swedes see, Marie Clark Nelson and Ingvar Svanberg, "Coffee in Sweden - A Question of Morality, Health and Economy" (Paper presented at the Fourth Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of Food and Society, June 1990, Philadelphia. Pennsylvania); Sigfrid Svensson, "Hur kaffet blev svensk nationaldryck" in Nils-Arvid Bringéus (ed.) *Mat och Miljö: En bok om svenska matvanor*, (Lund1970).
of the century. The organization of a Swedish temperance cafe in Chicago was thus an extension of a tradition that was well-known to Swedish organizers.

**The Organizing of Café Idrott: The First Year**

When a number of Swedish youngsters in 1913 took on the task of organizing a Swedish-American Temperance Café they were by no means first in trying to create a Swedish-American organization. As indicated earlier, the Swedes of Chicago had by then been organized in one way or the other for more than sixty years.

The café project was in one sense not breaking new ground as far as organizing the Swedes is concerned. It did, however, offer a new type of meeting place. Most of the social organizations were aimed at preserving Swedish culture and providing and strengthening social networks. In addition to this they also tried to establish some degree of security through different beneficial programs.

As the beneficial programs of Café Idrott were limited to free meals for some of its most poverty-stricken visitors during the Depression, the Café could not compete with other social organizations in this respect. The Café, however, had the advantage of being accessible every day, to both men and women alike, whereas most other organizations usually met on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. This, and a number of other factors, gave Café Idrott a different, but nevertheless, interesting position within Swedish-American organizational life. When, why and how this came about I will examine in the following.

In the summer of 1913 six members of the Scandinavian youth lodge Idrott of the International Order of Good Templars started to explore the prospects for a cooperative temperance café as an alternative to the saloons as a meeting place

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3 See for instance Catarina Lundström, "Kaféliv i Östersund under 1900-talet" (Paper presented at Dep. of Ethnology, University of Umeå. 1984). Lundström lists at least three different temperance and cooperative cafes of which the cooperative one, Kafé Fram, became the meeting place for both labor unions and the local organization of the Social Democratic Party. For unions using cafes as meeting places see G. Henriksson-Holmberg, *Svenska Målariarbetare Förbundets Avdelning 1. Stockholm. 30 År.* (Stockholm 1914), p. 18.

for Scandinavian youth in the Lake View district of Chicago. As these youngsters saw some potential in the idea of a café project they decided to write and call the other 50 members of their lodge as well as the 350 members of the other Scandinavian IOGT lodges on the Chicago North Side to a meeting on July 29th.

Apparently the idea of a cooperative temperance café had not made much of an impression on the other IOGT members yet because, of the 400 called, only six new persons came to the meeting. This did not discourage the group, however, and they went on to form an Interim Board which immediately started to draw the outlines of the by-laws for a café.

To acquire a sufficient amount of money to make the café project take off, the group decided to sell 200 shares at $5 each. They were at the same time quite explicit that no interest would be paid on the shares. Any future profit would instead be accumulated in funds for expansion or for the coming needs of the café.

During the following two weeks this group agitated, man to man, at meetings and picnics and managed to convince yet another 12-13 people to sign up for shares in the café project. At a meeting on September 3 1913, the Café Society was formally founded and a board elected. At this meeting the question of a name for the café was resolved and a set of by-laws adopted. The first article which established the name and purpose read:

Art. 1.

The name of this society shall be "the Cooperative Temperance Café IDROTT, Inc." and its object shall be to work for the principle of total abstinence from intoxicating liquors, and in connection therewith to operate one or more reading rooms, where refreshments and non-intoxicating liquors may be served.

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5 On the earliest activities of the Café project see "Historik över Kafe Idrott" in Redogörelse över Kooperativa Nykterhetskafet "Idrotts" Verksamhet Nov. 8, 1913 - Dec. 31, 1914 (Emigrantinstitutet, Växjö Sweden) pp.3-5; also S.S. Aug. 14, 1913.

6 To the first board the following members were elected: Gideon Edberg, chairman; Fridolv Shipstead, secr; Josef Berg, treas; J.E. Edvinson and Amanda Sundberg.

7 At my disposal has only been a copy of the by-laws from 1924. It includes alterations and amendments from the annual meetings of 1916, 1917, 1922 and 1924. The by-laws were printed in two sections, one in Swedish and one in English of which the latter is quoted. See p.10.
The new board was given the mission of finding suitable premises for the café. Shortly thereafter they managed to find a 7-room apartment in a newly erected building at the corner of Belmont and Wilton Avenue, for which they on October 1st. signed a one year lease. With the acquisition of the apartment, the café project was well underway.

The timing of the project seems to have been well chosen because it was soon reported that half of the shares had been sold to 75 people and other organizations that had signed up as shareholders including, apart from the Idrott lodge, two other IOGT lodges and the Lake View branch of the Scandinavian Socialist Federation (SSF).

An interesting aspect of the initial group around the Café was that out of the 117 shareholders reported at the first annual meeting on January 14, 1914, approximately 25% were women. Initially they were also represented on the board through Mrs. Amanda Sundberg. But when she passed away in June 1915 she was replaced by a man. With the exception of one period during 1918 no woman was thereafter elected to the board. Through the 1910s and the 1920s the number of female members equaled roughly 20% of the total membership.\(^8\)

**Members of Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott, 1915 - 1930**

![Graph showing membership trends](image)

**Figure 6.** Source: Annual Reports of Café Idrott 1915-1930.

This lack of representation on the board, however, did not mean that women were excluded from important positions within the Café management. For a number of years Bertha Walden was a member of the literary committee which

\(^8\) 1913-1914 Års Redogörelse över Kooperativa Nykterhetskafe Idrott, p. 4.
was responsible for the selection of newspapers and books for the Café's library and reading room. From time to time women were also in charge of the daily operation of the Café. Nevertheless, over the period 1913 - 1931, men tended to dominate in the organization. This tendency is, by the way, nothing unique to the Swedes in America. A similar tendency can also be detected within the popular movements in Sweden at that time.9

Although the group working for the Café project was enthusiastic their ambitions were not equally well received among all IOGT members. The core of the Café group was apparently well acquainted with the fact that there existed at least two fractions with two different frames of reference: one fraction with older, established, Swedish immigrants who came 20-30 years earlier and another fraction with radicalized and more militant younger recent immigrants. This was reflected in the discussions about the Café and was touched upon in the society's annual report of 1913 -1914 where the "old leaders" of the Good-templars are quoted as having said:

They will never succeed, it is an idée fixe that they have got in their empty heads. 10

This seemingly harsh judgement was noted but not taken too seriously and the group of young enthusiasts continued their work for the Café.

In order to understand more fully how these frames of reference and fractions came about it might be appropriate at this point to briefly return to the Swedish scene.

Influential Roots

During the 19th and early 20th centuries Sweden underwent its "take off" in the transition from a rural-agrarian to an urban-industrial society. In this process and during the period up to the latter part of the 19th century one of the key elements in modern Sweden was constituted - namely the popular movements (folk-rörelserna).11

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10 1913-1914 Års Redogörelse över Kooperativa Nykterhetskafes Idrott p.3. Translation by the author. The original text in Swedish reads:"Det kommer aldrig att gå, det är en fix idé som de fått i sina tomma hjärnor"

(continued...)

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In chronological order these organizations were: the free churches stemming from the revivalist upsurge during the latter part of the 18th and first half of the 19th century; the modern temperance movement that developed mainly through the International Order of Goodtemplars from the 1870s; and finally the modern socialist labor movement that developed primarily during the 1880s.

Organized in a time of unrest and transition the popular movements in Sweden came to function as a tool of social and political integration for the new and evolving social strata within Swedish society. This was especially so in the case of the International Order of Goodtemplars (IOGT). This organization was founded in America around 1850 and brought to Sweden in 1879. Once in Sweden it developed into an organization that attracted a growing number of laborers. By 1910, the peak year of the organization, it comprised of almost 160,000 members of which the bulk were considered to be laborers. As such, the IOGT went through a phase of political radicalization. From an organization that initially opposed socialist ideas, it had by 1899 reached a stage of acceptance or truce with the socialists and their political ideology. This meant that many socialists chose to stay within the IOGT.

In order to illustrate the influence of the IOGT it might be relevant here to note that a biography of leaders within the Swedish popular movements, where more

11 (…continued)

11 I am using the term "popular movements" instead of "voluntary association" which frequently is used when the popular mass-organizations of Sweden are presented to an English-language audience. By using the term "popular movements", I wish to exclude an earlier form of organization which was predominately organized during the first part of the 19th century and which in Sweden are known as "associations". See Torkel Jansson, Adertonhudratalets associationer. Forskning och problem kring ett sprängfullt tomrum eller sammanslutningsprinciper och föreningsformer mellan två samhällsformationer, c:a 1800-1870 (Uppsala 1985).

12 On the development and function of the popular movements in Sweden see, Lundkvist (Uppsala 1977); Åberg (Uppsala 1975); Jansson (Uppsala 1982); Larsson (Motala 1972).


14 On this matter there seems to exist some confusion as Roy Rosenzweig seems to believe that since NOV, (Nykterhetsorden Verdandi) was organized in 1896, all radicals joined the NOV. This was not the case if for no other reason than the fact that lodges of the NOV were not organized in all areas of Sweden. See Roy Rosenzweig, Eight Hours For What We Will. Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920. (New York, Cambridge University Press 1983) p.263 note 61.
than 4,500 names are listed, shows that 1,075 of these had been or were members of the IOGT. The biography also shows that 322 belonged to the IOGT before they became politically active in the labor movement whereas only 8 first became politically active and only subsequently members of the IOGT.\textsuperscript{15}

Even if the temperance tradition had to a very high degree become a crucial part in the process of forming a Swedish working class "für sich", this tradition of temperance, sobriety and self-improvement was by no means something unique to Swedes. Seen as an attempt by the social actors to create "new" and alternative virtues in contrast to the "old" society and its "out-of-date" virtues this process is something that can be observed in almost all social transitions. Thus temperance and sobriety had been an essential element in the formation of the American labor movement prior to the Civil War. The war, however, tended to mute the most class-conscious and militant segment of the American working class. Much of the working class rebellion was transformed into reconciliation.\textsuperscript{16} Sweden, though, never went through a similar phase of turmoil in conjunction with the formation of its national working class. Nor was the Swedish labor market flooded with a mosaic of laborers from all corners of the world. The formation of a Swedish working class could thus continue to develop under the auspices of popular movements like the IOGT and Nykerhetsondern Verdandi, including their specific perception of industrial morality. It should, however, be emphasized that the formation of the popular movements in Sweden was not altogether a straightforward and smooth process, meaning that IOGT lodges were not necessarily always in favor of labor or otherwise politically progressive.

The radicalization of the IOGT did not please all its members. Some found the organization too radical and organized the NGTO, Nationalgodtemplarorden


\textsuperscript{16} Paul Faler and Alan Dawley have touched upon the development of an "industrial morality" wherein temperance was an essential component. They essentially identify two major groups; the Traditionalists who in different ways tried to cling to the old way of doing things, and the Modernists who accept the new mode of production but then are divided into loyalists who also accept the capitalist and the rebels who do not. See Paul Faler, "Cultural Aspects of the Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts, Shoemakers and Industrial Morality, 1826 - 1860" in Labor History, Vol.XV. No.3. (summer 1974), pp. 367 - 394. See also Alan Dawley and Paul Faler,"Working-Class Culture and Politics in the Industrial Revolution: Sources of Loyalism and Rebellion" in Journal of Social History, Vol.IX, No.4. (June 1976) pp. 466 - 480.
(founded in 1888), while others found the IOGT too conservative and went on to organize the NOV, Nykterhetsordern Verdandi (founded in 1896). The latter organization soon developed close ties with the labor movement (ties that still exist).

Despite these splits the IOGT remained the largest and most influential of the various temperance organizations and in the process of Sweden becoming a modern "Gesellschaft society" the IOGT came, as indicated above, to play an important role as a horizontal integrator.

It was also during this period that Sweden experienced the mass emigration to America, during which 1/5 of all Swedes ended up in America. Consequently, a growing number of emigrants brought experience of the burgeoning popular movements of Sweden with them.

As a product of amalgamated social changes this group is interesting, especially in the light of the fact that those who were involved in the popular movements in some way appear to have had a higher tendency to emigrate than others.

Thus, for the emigrants a new and often puzzling situation occurred when they brought with them organizations like the IOGT that actually had been founded in America decades earlier, been exported to Scandinavia and re-shaped according to Swedish norms and ideals, and finally been re-exported back to America with the emigrants. As such, many IOGT lodges became important actors in the construction of havens characterized by the same type of pro-labor and political radicalism as back in Sweden and it is also in this context that the pioneers and forerunners of the Café Idrott project are to be apprehended.

**Traditions Continued**

The first annual report of Café Idrott indicates that tensions originating in "generational" and ideological conflicts between the older and more conservative

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17 On Swedish emigration, see Runblom/Norman (1976).


immigrants and the more recent and radicalized immigrants might have been one of the reasons why the lodge Idrott was created as a youth lodge. 20

The radicalism that seems to have characterized the group around the café project can also be illustrated by the fact that the first Chairman of the Board, Gideon Edberg, was also a member of the editorial board of the weekly Chicago newspaper Svenska Socialisten (The Swedish Socialist). 21

Another feature that indicates what kind of target group the café project had in mind is the variety of programs presented at parties and rallies in benefit of the Café. A good example of such a program is the "party" arranged by the interim board on Saturday, October 11, 1913. This not only gives us an idea of the spectrum of activities but also the kind of popular interest that they received.

The program on this particular night started off with a musical piece followed by an opening address by Wallentin Wald. After the address, J.E. Edwinson delivered a short recitation. The audience was then "captured" by a one-hour speech made by Wilhelm Södergren, a long-time activist within the Swedish, as well as the Swedish-American, labor movement. The topic of his speech was "Monetary Interest -The Economic Oppressor. "In his speech he outlined how the struggle for a better society had to start in the hearts of the workers preferably through "the extermination of the roots of capitalism in the workers' minds". One way of doing this, he claimed, was by then not depositing their money at the Morgan and Rockefeller banks, which would then not be able to re-invest workers' money in businesses through which they intended to exploit them. 22

After Södergren's speech came the big IOGT-choir followed by a humorous performance by Hjalmar Petterson, better known as "Olle i Skratthult". 23 The last presentation on the program was a performance by the folkloristic dance group "Lekstugan" (The Playhouse) which, according to the review in Svenska

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22 On the whole program and Södergren's speech see, S.S. Oct. 16, 1913. p. 5.


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Socialisten, brought back memories of times gone by. The meeting was then closed with the adoption of a resolution addressed to the Swedish government for the release of the three men that bombed the vessel Amalthea in Malmö, Sweden where scabs were lodged. After the formal meeting there was a dance and the whole event was attended by some 800 people.

Regardless of the fact that we do not know what poem was recited or what songs were sung, the ideological profile of the evening could at least be characterized as "pro-labor". The speech delivered by Södergren was characterized by Svenska Socialisten as a "socialist speech" and the adoption of the "Amalthea-resolution" was, per se, an act in defence of the workers' right to strike. Given the kind of ideological profile that the initial group gave the café-project, it is quite plausible that many of the "old time" Goodtemplars hesitated to give their support to the project.

One group that did not hesitate to give their support, however, was the Scandinavian Socialist Federation. The SSF was founded in 1910 by representatives from nine different cities. The Scandinavians in Chicago, however, had been active forging independent organizations years before the founding of the SSF. The first local organization or club that had existed long enough to join the SSF had been organized by the Norwegians in 1904. In 1907 the Danes followed with their own club. Shortly thereafter a number of Swedes within the English speaking 25th Ward Socialist Party branch met with a joint committee for the Scandinavian branches to decide on a "Swedish" branch. The first meeting of the Swedish club was held on April 26, 1908. The club was called the Lake View Scandinavian Socialist Club after the neighborhood in which it was organized and from where most of the 20 people at the first meeting came.

24 The Amalthea-men were three young men, Anton Nilsson, Algot Rosberg and Alfred Stern, the first two sentenced to death and Stern to lifetime in prison for the bombing of a ship where a number of scabs were quartered and where one of them was unintentionally killed.

25 The cities were in Illinois; Chicago, Evanston, Rockford, Kewanee, in Wisconsin; Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee; Duluth in Minnesota and Kerney in New York. On the founding convention see Bengston (1955) pp.64-65.


27 S.S. May 2, 1918 p.6. At that time, there was already a club going under that name affiliated with the Socialist Labor Party. The fact that the Socialist Party Club still took the same name would indicate that the Scandinavian SLP club did not have many members or much influence.
In 1910, the SSF's Swedish-language newspaper, *Svenska Socialisten*, was relocated to the Lake View district from Rockford, Illinois. As mentioned above, Gideon Edberg became one of many links between Café Idrott and the Scandinavian socialists. As a sign of the good relationship between the Café and the Lake View Scandinavian socialists, the Socialist Club was invited to hold their meetings there right after the official opening of the Café, on November 8.\(^{28}\)

In return many of the activities and events arranged by the Café or by the different lodges within the Illinois Scandinavian Grand Lodge of the IOGT were reported and commented on approvingly by *Svenska Socialisten*. In the case of Café Idrott the newspaper saw it as a project well worth supporting. At this time, the blend of temperance and labor radicalism was rather unusual in the American context. In fact there were periods when the only newspaper, except for the IOGT- journals, that some lodges would advertise in was *Svenska Socialisten*.\(^{29}\) Likewise Café Idrott advertised in *Svenska Socialisten*, although not exclusively. Advertisements for the café could be found in other radical or pro-labor publications as well as in the politically more mainstream Swedish-American newspapers and journals.\(^{30}\)

The relationship between Café Idrott and the Scandinavian Lake View socialists should not be seen as a series of mutual favors. The support that the Café received from *Svenska Socialisten* and other Swedish radicals is to be seen rather as a result of a perceived common and mutual interest since the latter as socialists believed that the use of alcohol undermined the ability of the working class to become disciplined and well organized.

The mutual respect that the radicals and the IOGT lodges often felt for each other can be illustrated by the Jupiter lodge of the IOGT in Chicago. Several of its members were Café Idrott members as well. It should be noted that in 1888 the lodge pointed out that the abolition of alcohol would improve the status of the working class. In 1897 democracy, temperance and working-class issues were specifically linked. In 1913 the lodge started to advertise in *Svenska Socialisten*.

\(^{28}\) S.S. Nov. 13, p.8.

\(^{29}\) See for instance the IOGT lodge Vega in Rockford, Ill. during the early 1910s.

\(^{30}\) According to the Annual Report of 1913-1914 advertisements were published in, *Svenska Socialisten*, *Skandinaviska Goodtemplaren*, *Svenska Amerikanare*, *Verdandisten*, *Revolt*, *Svensk Amerikanska Familje-Journalen*, *Fridsduvan*, *The Juvenile Temple* and *Goodemplames Programbok*. The following years the only publications specified are basically a number of programs for different fraternal societies and churches. General advertisement is listed separately, as in the Annual Report of 1916 where $43.80 is listed under Advertisement.
Socialisten. Plans for worldwide peace based on a bourgeois perspective were rejected in 1916 and the following year the lodge cancelled one of their regular meetings in favor of the Swedish Socialists. In 1921 the lodge participated in the organization Friends of the Soviet Union and in 1925 it took upon itself to sell subscriptions to Ny Tid, the journal of the Scandinavian Workers' League. In 1927 the lodge joined Skandinaviska Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund. All this indicates the continuity of the close relations between the IOGT and the radicals.31

A Tool For Social Mobilization

Both the Scandinavian socialists and Goodtemplars brought with them strong influences from the ideas of the Enlightenment, including a general belief in individuals and their ability to improve themselves through knowledge.

In order to acquire knowledge the mind had to be disciplined and trained. Temperance, sobriety and reading were appropriate ways to achieve a trained mind. Especially within the Temperance- and labor movement the striving for self improvement was linked to an egalitarian approach. With respect to the political program of the labor movement this is quite obvious, but it was also manifested through the internal structure of the IOGT lodge where both men and women were admitted and the principle of "one man - one vote" applied. Moreover, the egalitarian philosophy of these popular movements was frequently articulated as a question of democracy where knowledge was seen as a fundamental component, necessary in order to make decisions that reflected one's "true" interests. Thus not only the content but the form of educational activities became interesting to the popular movements. Through a form of study designed not only to teach people to read, but also to discuss what they read, they would be trained to actively take part in the democratic process.

In Sweden at the turn of the century a temperance man and socialist named Oscar Olsson became instrumental in creating "studiecirkeln" - the study-circle. The study-circle was an organized form of studying in which reading and debating were organized in a democratic way. Each member of the circle would buy a book to be circulated among the members and then discussed. The responsibility for the introducing the discussions was likewise be passed from

member to member. The books that the circles accumulated over time were then to become the backbone of a library for the members of the organization. This collective method in the quest for knowledge soon became the predominating study form not only within the IOGT, but also within the popular movements in general. 32

Plate 6. Oscar Olson, the father of the "study cirkel", visiting Chicago in 1935. Olson is the man in the middle with the beard. The couple to his right is Herta and Gustaf Larson, two well known activists at Café Idrott.

32 On the educational traditions of the Swedish popular movements see Jonas Åkerstedt, Den litterate arbetaren. Bildningssyn och studieverksamhet i ABF 1912 -1930. (Uppsala 1967.) Erik W. Gatenheim. Studiecirkeln 75 år (Motala 1977); Bo Andersson. Folkbildning i perspektiv. Studieförbunden 1870 -2000 (Borås 1980). It should also be clarified that when I use the term "education" it is in the sense of acquiring knowledge in general as in "bildning" in Swedish and not as "utbildning" which is more equivalent to training for a specific purpose. It should also be noted that the study circle, as such, was not unique for Sweden. The study circle as practiced in Sweden had basically been in function in England at least as early as 1844, a fact that Oscar Olson also seems to have become aware of. See Oscar Olsson, Folkbildningsarbetet i England (Stockholm 1924) pp.22-25. For a survey on education and the English labor movement, see Brian Simon Education & the Labour Movement, 1870 -1920 (London 1974).
When Café Idrott was created the founders’ visions ran along the same ideological lines as described above. The Café was thought of as a place where Swedish youth could meet, have a cup of coffee and maybe something to eat, under conditions that would stimulate them to read and educate themselves.  

In this respect the Swedes did not act differently than many other ethnic groups. Education as a mean to constitute the group or to elevate the status of its members was frequently practised by other groups and social strata and it was therefore no unique event when the first annual meeting elected a Literary Committee.

Albin Johnson, Ludvig Carlson and Wallentin Wald were elected although the first two left the city during the year and were replaced by Gottfrid Whalquist and Ivar Fritz, who in turn were later replaced by others. During the first ten years it was Wallentin Wald that stood for continuity in the committee.

The task of the committee was twofold: to administrate and supply the Café with newspapers, journals and magazines, and to acquire appropriate books for the reading room. Once appointed, the committee established a number of guidelines for its work. For the policy of newspaper subscriptions their guiding principle was "No sectarianism". As far as the committee’s finances would allow they would supply newspapers, journals and magazines covering the political spectrum as well as religion and humor. A quick glance at the list of publications offered by the Café to its patrons indicates that the committee was able to live up to its principles. With an average of 34 different publications each year during the period 1914 to 1930 it managed to satisfy most tastes, possibly with a slight tendency in favor of radicalism and labor issues.

An interesting circumstance occurred in conjunction with the construction of the profile of the newspaper collection. One would assume that those who visited the Café would appreciate the opportunity to catch up with what was going on

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33 Although the matter is omitted in this chapter it should be mentioned that how and what to eat was a topic for much debate during the first years of the Café.


35 Café Idrott Annual Reports 1913-1914, p.11

36 For newspapers and journals as listed in the annual reports 1914-1930 see Appendix 3. Some Swedish-American newspapers might have appeared under slightly different names as a result of mergers. The number of publications varied between 24 and 42 each year.
in the old country through Swedish magazines and newspapers. This was apparently also the assumption of the literary committee and the Café thus started out with mostly Swedish-language newspapers. Due to a preference among the readers, however, the committee had to expand the number of American magazines. This circumstance could indicate that the group of people involved in selecting the newspapers and journals had a slightly different perception of the relation to the old country than the majority of those who used the reading room. It appears as if the committee became victims of their own inclination to draw on their Swedish experience as they tried to create an appropriate profile of the newspaper collection. Despite the fact that the number of Swedish-American newspapers declined over the period, the relationship between Swedish- and English language newspapers remained about fifty-fifty at the Café.

Since education was one of the key elements in this group's strategy for self-improvement it is also relevant to look at what kind of literature the Literary Committee advocated as "good" literature. It might also be of some interest to take a closer look at one of the persons who lent the committee and the library its profile - Wallentin Wald.

**Wallentin Wald**

Wallentin Wald was born in 1881 in the province of Scania, in the far south of Sweden. At an early age he moved to Stockholm where he learned his trade as a painter. He soon became involved in both politics and the union. He became a member of Stockholm's Northern Young Socialist Club, of which he also became chairman in 1907. In 1908 Wald was elected to the board of Local No.1 of the Swedish Painters' Union in Stockholm from which he also was named as delegate to the 1909 national convention.

37 On preference for American magazines see the remark by the Literary Committee in the Annual Report of 1915, p.9.


The year after the General Strike ("Storstrejken") in May 1910, Wald packed his suitcase and left his home country bound for America and Chicago. Exactly why Wald decided to leave is hard to determine, but given both Wald's political and union involvement it is most likely that his name, like many others that became involved in the labor movement, would show up on "blacklists" which would make it hard for him to find steady jobs. Wald, who also was an outspoken anti-militarist, had been sent to prison for a short period for spreading antimilitaristic flyers. Nor was the situation in his political club encouraging. The treasurer had just absconded with half of the club's treasury and, only a couple of months before Wald left Sweden, more than half of the club broke away to join the anarchists. By this time several of Wald's friends were already bound for America which makes it understandable if Wald might have felt that he wanted to start fresh elsewhere.

When Wald left Sweden, he was a fairly well-educated man. The political organization that Wald belonged to, the Young Socialists (Ungsocialisterna), strongly advocated education and reading as a vehicle for the improvement of the working class. This was a tradition that Wald and his friends brought with them, or as Henry Bengston, long-time editor of Svenska Socialisten and a personal friend of Wald wrote:

To give up their search for knowledge in their new surroundings was of course unthinkable for these still young people. Wald and some of his associates who made their home in Chicago and nearby cities made a start on the new soil by organizing the previously mentioned temperance group [The Temperance Organization Verdandi] which became the forerunner of the Study League Verdandi.40

That reading was something that Wald felt warmly for can also be illustrated by one of the letters that he wrote to one of his old colleagues back in Stockholm. When Wald came to Chicago he joined the Scandinavian Painters' Local No. 194 of International Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers. He was not totally overwhelmed by his new experience but appears to have registered what was going on with a sublime calmness, as he wrote:

What first struck me when entering the Union was the goodtemplarish ceremonies. For we who are used to seeing them as pure office routines they appear childish. The other surprise was that our local had a nice little library where the members could borrow free of charge…

40 Bengston (1964) p.160.
The library contains [books by] Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Marx, Rydberg, Strindberg and other prominent authors represented in English, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian. This gave me a reason to speak to the librarian (he is also an Esperantist,) who is Swedish but has been here for many years, which is the equivalent of losing all interest in idealistic work. He, however, is the exception to this rule, an active socialist and Goodtemplar and unionist who personally has not forgotten to acquire knowledge and culture.41 (Translated by the author).

Wald’s distinction between "knowledge and culture" (kunskaper och bildning) might well be understood as a distinction made by one who was familiar with the reading and educational traditions of the Swedish popular movements.42

In 1919, as the prohibition period started, the Temperance Organization Verdandi changed its profile slightly and became The Verdandi Study League. Wald continued his editorial career as he took on the task of publishing "Bokstugan" (The Book Cabin).43 Officially the magazine was published by the Verdandi Study League but it was actually a project led by Wallentin Wald. In a short period Wald managed to surround himself with a group of highly

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42 From the mid-1880s two different educational approaches had developed within the Swedish labor movement. August Palm was the main interpreter of the more class-struggle oriented approach. He claimed that if the worker wanted to read it should be books that taught him about society and how it works and what to do in order to change it. But, in order to be motivated to read, Palm held it plausible that the workers had their bellies filled first. Anton Nyström was the key spokesman for the other, more liberal approach. He claimed that socialism had to be built on science and love and not hate and ignorance, and that knowledge and education thus had to be seen in a broader sense where fiction was just as important as hard-core political literature. In January 1886 the two spokesmen met in a debate over what has become known as the "Stomach-question". Palms approach can be summarized as "first food then education" and Nyström´s as "food and education". Even if Palm came out as the moral winner of the debate at the time, it was Nyström´s more liberal approach that became most accepted within the labor movement(see Åkerstedt 1967, pp.24-30). The settlement of the conflict between these approaches was subsequently often referred to when the policy of the educational work within the labor movement was laid out. Still, in reality it was the study guides of the Goodtemplars and the Verdandi orders that were used. It took several years after the founding of "Arbetarnas Bildnings Förbund" (Workers Educational League) in 1912, before the organization even bothered to formulate its own policy and study guide. The attention given to fiction is thus noteworthy.

43 Wald continued to draw on Swedish influences as the name of his magazine, "Bokstugan", was at the time the same name as the magazine of the Workers´ Educational League back in Sweden.
qualified intellectuals. They succeeded in publishing 44 issues which were quite unique in comparison with what was otherwise being published in Swedish in America. The focus of the magazine was mainly on literature and science and with articles and reviews on these topics Wald and his associates hoped to guide the Swedish-Americans towards reading and developing independent thinking or "free thoughts".

**The Literary Committee and Book-borrowing**

The perspective that was outlined in "Bokstugan", where reading was seen as a vehicle for self-improvement for the workers, also became the principle for Wald's work on Café Idrott's Literary Committee. Although no policy for the library was published, the annual reports reveal some of the committee's priorities.

In the report of 1914 the committee stated that the works of Sweden's best authors had been ordered and that its ambition was to make the collection as complete as possible. They also explained apologetically why the works of Strindberg were missing. This was due to the fact that his collected works were soon to be published and the committee wanted to wait for this occasion.

The priorities of genres were listed as follows: Literature, Drama, Social Topics, Science, Health Care, Philosophy, Poetry, Travelogues, Cultural History, and finally, the booklet series of the Swedish Temperance Organization Verdandi.

The acquisition of books was achieved through purchases made by the committee and by donations from organizations or individuals. The most read author in the library collection was August Strindberg. Of the names and titles mentioned in the annual reports, the majority can also be found in listings of the most frequently read authors represented at the libraries of the ABF (The Workers Educational League) and the IOGT in Sweden.

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46 Annual Report 1923, p. 10. Some of the authors that the Committee found worth mentioning in their reports were: Carl von Linné, Verner von Heidenstam, C.J.L. Almquist, (continued...)
As indicated by Figure 6, the library experienced a steady growth in the number of borrowed books. Due to the incompleteness of statistics for the period it is hard to draw any extensive conclusions about the library and its use. The statistics available, however, indicate that, in comparison with the average use of the libraries of the ABF and IOGT in Sweden, the Café Idrott Library kept up to par, at least as regards the relationship between number of books and books borrowed. During the period 1916 to 1929 every book at Café Idrott was borrowed on an average of 1.22 times/year, almost exactly the same average as for the IOGT libraries in Sweden. The average for the ABF libraries, however, was slightly better at 2.31.47

Comparing the average number of loans per member, the Swedes around Café Idrott tend to lag behind with an average of 1.9 books borrowed per year and member. The equivalent number for the Goodtemplars who remained in Sweden, was 2.9 books per year.48

The Literary Committee was not too impressed by these statistics, or as they wrote in their annual report of 1930:

These figures, although they indicate a success for the library, are not that impressive since the number of book loans amounts to only 46 per week or 6.5 per day. Given the multitude of people that on a daily basis frequent the localities of the Café we can surely agree that these figures can be much improved.49

46 (...continued)

47 The ratio for the Swedish IOGT libraries was 1.2. For statistics see Åkerstedt (1967) p. 142.

48 Ibid. On membership statistics for the IOGT, see Johansson (1947), p.38.


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During the early 1920s the issue of opening up a branch of the Café in the Edgewater district, north of the Lake View district, was raised. In the summer of 1925 this issue was once again brought up as a suitable building was up for rent. At a membership meeting on June 29, it was unanimously decided to rent the space and as soon as possible open up a new branch. On September 11 the Branch at 5248-50 N.Clark St. was officially opened with a big party. The Literary Committee supplied journals and newspapers to the branch and a couple of years later, on June 24, a small branch library was also opened. Despite this and the fact that a library branch was commonly requested for the far North Side the branch library never managed to show satisfactory results. In the sources at my disposal I have found no discussion or explanation as to why this was the case. It could, however, be argued that the fact that the branch had problems in holding on its managers plus that the branch never managed to show a financial surplus during the period of my study, indicates that the North Side branch was not frequented as much as the main café in Lake View. Another factor which should be considered is a reference about the North Side Scandinavian workers’ club being host to a totally different group of members in contrast with that they, contrary to the older club members, had no previous

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50 Ibid. 1927, p. 17.

51 See financial reports on the N.Clark St. branch included in the Annual Reports, 1925-1931 as well as the Report of the Board, 1931, p.4. See also the Literary Committee’s evaluation in the Annual Report of 1930, p.10.
experience of any of the popular movements. This would then indicate that they were not fostered in the same literary and educational tradition which could explain their lack of interest in the library.\footnote{S.S. July 15, 1929.}

The Literary Committee, however, did not accept things as they were. It tried its best to find means and ways of being active. Thus, for the purpose of boosting literary interest and frequency of book lending a "Library Club" was founded at the main library in 1927.\footnote{Annual Report, 1927, p.5.} In the 1929 annual report the Literary Committee evaluated the function and routines of the library as well as the committee's own way of working. It presented a three-point program to meet the needs of the library and its users. The first point on its program was to reduce the committee from nine members to three. Secondly it suggested that a librarian should be hired so that the library could be kept open at regular hours. Finally, the Literary Committee was to continue to supply the library and the branch with journals and newspapers as well as taking care of binding new books.\footnote{Annual Report, 1929, p.6.} This "three-point program" was adopted by the annual meeting. The three-point program apparently met the expectations of the people involved since the following year the new routines were recommended to be continued.

The Literary Committee report from 1931, said that the number of loans had increased by more than 17% compared with the year before. This of course was noted with some enthusiasm. But at the same time it was noted that out of the 2,727 loans made, 2,262 were novels and other works of fiction. In the opinion of the new Literary Committee this was not satisfactory. Economics and social topics, according to the committee, were "intimately linked to each individual's existence", and needed to be promoted.\footnote{Ibid. 1931, p.5.} For this reason they had ordered a small booklet by Anders Örne, one of Sweden's most distinguished spokesmen for the cooperative movement, on the topic of "Economic fostering and crises", to be handed out to Café guests. The action taken by the committee can be understood as an expression of its deeply felt need to educate the workers, and its focus on economic and social issues, in the shadow of the depression, is not surprising.\footnote{On the "fostering" aspects of the labor movement see Hans Larsson, \textit{Tidstecken. Stockholms arbetarbibliotek och samhällskroppens utformning, 1892 - 1927} (Borås 1989) p.63.} This attempt to steer and influence the readers can also be seen as
Plate 7. Wallentin Wald (to the far right in the top row) in company with the celebrity. From the left in the front row, Carl de Dardel (Swedish Consul in Chicago), Carl Lindhagen (Mayor of Stockholm) Jane Adams, Otelia Myhrman and Hjalmar Lundqvist.

an example of a growing tendency towards a more diversified educational approach where practical and pragmatic aspects were given more space. This tendency was also noticeable during the 1930s in the educational profile of the ABF in Sweden.\textsuperscript{57} This development, however, was not always approved of and sanctioned by the leaders of the organization. The ideas or aims of the leadership apparently did not always coincide with those of the rank and file, a situation which seems to have also been at hand at Café Idrott.\textsuperscript{58}

At the Café there was another activity connected to the Committee where the same tendency was reflected - the lecture program.


\textsuperscript{58} Larsson, (1989) p.193.
Festivities, Lectures and Exhibitions

Besides keeping the ordinary Café services running the society also arranged a variety of parties and meetings. When the number of people returning to Sweden grew in the 1920s the Café occasionally put on a farewell party for the returnees. As the Café operation grew new facilities were added and parties for the public or those who had been involved in a specific project were sometimes arranged. In addition the society threw an annual party for its members and their families.

At the annual meeting of 1924 the Literary Committee was given the task of trying to arrange a number of gatherings which were to be both social and educational and a sum of $100 was granted for this purpose. A sub-committee suggested that the best way to spend the money was to arrange a series of lectures, free of charge for the members. A proposal was sent out to already existing lecturing societies in the Lake View area. As a result of this Café Idrott joined the Swedish Educational League (the SEL), as an equal partner and the committee’s suggestion that the Café should host the lecture series was accepted by the SEL.

In 1926 the Verdandi Study League joined the SEL and in 1928 the Scandinavian Workers’ Educational League also joined, which indeed turned Café Idrott into a flourishing center of culture and education for the Swedes of North Side Chicago. This case serves as a very good example of how the network constituting their radical Haven was constructed.

By 1927 the Literary Committee was reorganized and the sub-committee that had dealt with the lecture series and social gatherings was constituted as a separate committee. The cooperation with the SEL was initially seen as an experiment and it was not self-evident that it would continue. In the first couple of years only about 40 of the Café’s members took advantage of their free entrance to the lectures. Over the years the lectures became more and more

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59 Annual Report 1920, p.4

60 Annual Report, 1925, p.14. The Swedish Educational League developed out of a study circle which started in the Jupiter Lodge of IOGT in Chicago, the season of 1916-1917. The success of this educational program forced the lodge to expand this operation and in May 1917 "Svenska Studieförbundet" (Swedish Study League) was formed. After a few years it changed its name to the Swedish Educational League but also known as The Lake View Forum. On SEL see Gunnar Adolfson et al., Swedish Educational League (Lake View Forum): An Adult Experiment in Scandinavian Tradition (Chicago, Illinois System Press 1949).

61 See Gunnar Adolfson (1949).
popular, though not necessarily only among the members however, but the Committee felt that through the lecture series they had been able to both reach a growing number of knowledge-seekers on the Chicago north side and to make them aware of the existence of Café Idrott.

8. Café Idrott and Bakery at 3206-10 Wilton Ave.

In 1930 the Committee could report that the average attendance at the lecture series in the fall of 1929 had been 100 persons. By this time the lecture series was well established and although many of the other social festivities were cancelled due to the depression the lecture series went on as usual.62

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62 Annual Reports, 1925, p.14, 1927, p.17, 1929, p.4, 1930, p.13 and 1931, p.5. To get the number of dual members I went through the membership lists of Café Idrott and SEL with the exception of 1925 where the membership list of SEL was missing. The actual numbers for these years were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1924</th>
<th>1926</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1929</th>
<th>1930</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members:</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>%:</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.6</td>
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In relation to the lecture series, the personal symbiosis that existed between the participating organizations is noteworthy. Even though the Café members had free access to the lecture programs of the SEL between 1924 and 1930 about 15% of the members chose to retain their membership in the SEL as well. As regards individual members we can note that Wallentin Wald, the key figure within the Literary Committee, was also one of the leaders of the Verandari Study League. Gustaf L. Larson, Nils Linnberg, Ludvig Holmström and John L. Anderson were all influential in both the SEL and Café Idrott. In the case of Gustaf L. Larson he was also on the board of a third educational organization, the Scandinavian Workers Educational League (SWEL). Among the leadership of SWEL were furthermore two other members of Café Idrott, John Svedlund and Andy Holmquist. The above-mentioned John L. Anderson was also present at the founding of this organization representing his Goodtemplar lodge, Jupiter No.3. Martin Sundström should also be mentioned in this context as he was a member of both Café Idrott and a leading figure within the SEL while at the same time being active in Local No. 637 of the Painters’ Union. This once again illustrates the texture of their network but it also indicates that however active these organizations were the number of activists was limited. This, at least, seems to have been the case among organizations devoted to labor or with a somewhat radical inclination. If a "leadership" were to be identified, this group of activists is likely to have been the "core" of the radical fraction of the Northside Swedes.

The social stratification of the group that belonged both to the SEL and to Café Idrott indicates that the majority were skilled workers or people from the lower middle class, a pattern which does not deviate from the constitution of similar groups in Sweden.


64 The 37 names that were found listed in the City Directory of Chicago for the fiscal year 1926/1927 were occupationally listed as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cable splicer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Driftsman</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fact. workers/labor</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glassworker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maid</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toolmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Turnman</td>
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If we for a moment return to the lecture series that was organized jointly by the SEL, the Verdandi Study League, the Scandinavian Workers’ Educational League and a committee from Café Idrott and held at the Café, we see that it covered the topics displayed in Figure 8, below.

Figure 8 is based on the lecture programs of the SEL from 1920, 1924/25 to the season ending in the spring of 1940. Included are also the lectures presented by "I.O.G.T, Jupiter Studieförbund" for the seasons of 1916/17 and 1917/18, since the "Jupiter Studieförbund" was reorganized and became the Swedish Study League (Svenska Studieförbundet) in 1917. The lectures are sorted into five main categories: Literature, Sociology, Science, History and Politics. To categorize a lecture using its title alone can be misleading so these categories must not be understood as absolute. The lecture programs from the season starting in October 1934, however, contain a short abstract on each lecture so the risk for misinterpreting the content must be considered as minimal.

The focus on education within the popular movements in Sweden shifted during the 1920s and 30s. The most striking change during the period was the decline in lectures and study circles dealing with literary topics. As indicated in Figure 8, this can also be said to be one of the main tendencies of the lecture programs of the SEL during the same period. The other main feature of the lecture programs was the reverse tendency for lectures classified as "Politics". The development in Sweden towards an educational profile that strove for more basic skills related to the administration of society and its organizations can possibly be understood as a result of the socialization of the working class. A growing

65 In these categories are included Literature: lectures dealing with literature and authors as well as lectures on art and culture; History: political, economic and labor history; Politics: political science, union and labor politics, law, cooperation and temperance and alcohol politics; Sociology: psychology, philosophy and religion; Science: geography, physics, chemistry and medicine. In addition to the lectures that could be placed under the categories above were a number of meetings held that had the character of purely social gatherings or membership meetings where the societies’ internal affairs were discussed. These meetings (1-3 per year) were placed in the category "other" and are not displayed in the graph. They are, however, included in the total number of meetings per year which was used for the calculation of the percentage of lectures per topic. The total number of meetings per year and number of meetings falling under the category "other" were (with the exception of the season 1924/25 and 1939/40 where one page of the program is missing) as shown below.

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<tr>
<td>Meetings:</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Other&quot;:</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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interest in the study of foreign languages can in addition be seen as a result of an interest in the turbulent international political scene. The latter could also be said to be true for the group around Café Idrott, expressed, however, through the shift towards a growing number of lectures addressing political issues.

Another aspect that also should be considered in relation to the changing profile of the lecture series is the social function of the Café and its activities. The Café-project continued in the tradition of temperance and radicalism and can be seen as an instrument for horizontal integration as well as assimilation into American society. The leaders of the Café were, as touched upon earlier, well acquainted with each other as well as with the participating organizations. Furthermore, dual or even multiple membership was not uncommon. One can therefore claim that by the early 1930s these organizations had co-existed and cooperated for 20 years. It is also plausible that the profile of the lectures during the earlier years, with its emphasis on topics related to literature and history, was selected according to the need to constitute and consolidate the group. In Sweden this process was mainly related to the formation of the working class, whereas in Chicago the question of constructing an ethnic identity was added to the agenda.

As Lizabeth Cohen implies in her study *Making a New Deal*, another valid component in an interpretation of the shift in the focus of the SEL lectures during the 1930s might be that by this time, the group had found mutual ground for cooperation with other ethnic groups, which diminished the need to stress
consolidating factors. The group had thus matured and was ready and motivated to turn its attention outward.

A quick glimpse at not only the shift of subjects but also the shift of focus within the different subjects supports this assumption. If we look at the largest category of lectures presented during the first years of the period, literary subjects, we find that a typical lecture could deal with social tendencies within Swedish literature. On this subject the group would then for a number of meetings listen to and discuss lectures dealing with the writings of Almquist, Blanche, Fröding and Rydberg. By the end of this period, on the other hand, literary subjects were seldom touched upon and would take on more American perspective through lectures such as "An American Looks at Scandinavian Literature" or a review of a non-Swedish book.66

Historical lectures went through a similar development. During the first years of the period historical lectures were given titles like, "When Sweden Was a Great Power" or more general historical lectures like, "Causes of the Renaissance"67 whereas during the latter part of the period the American perspective became more evident through lectures such as "Washington - Lincoln, an American Tradition" or "Traitors in American History".68

Finally, the category of "Politics" which during the latter part of the period constitutes a large majority of all the lectures presented, demonstrates a similar pattern - a shift from a general informative or a Swedish perspective to an American and participatory perspective. The earlier years dealt predominantly with topics like the "Political development in Sweden during and after the war" and "American Parliamentary Practice"69. Occasionally a comparative perspective was presented on American and European democratic governments but the overall tendency was towards a focus on the American scene with lectures such as: "Should the United States Supreme Court Be Reformed?", "An Analysis of the 1938 Congressional Elections", and "Our Municipal Problems".70 This indicates a shift from an instructive or informative perspective to a much more participatory and interventionist perspective.

67 SEL program March 13, 27, 1925 and Oct. 21, 1925.
68 SEL program Feb. 17, 1939 and Feb. 23, 1940.
69 SEL program Feb. 8, 22 and Mar. 8, 1917, April 12, 1918, Ljus No.5 Feb.1920. p.3.
This list could of course be lengthened but the tendency is still clear. Even in the light of the turbulent international scene of the pre-World War II era the choice of topics often seems to relate to the American and local scene. This once again indicates that the group around Café Idrott and the SEL responded more to their needs as residents of Chicago and America than as immigrants from Sweden.  

This point of view is also maintained if we observe how both the SSF and the SEL articulated their policies on knowledge and education. In 1918 when the SEL summarized its first year of activities it was reported that several of their initial lectures had dealt with the implications of "belonging to Swedish or American cultural spheres". Aksel G.S. Josephson, one of the leaders of the SEL, concluded by declaring that "We who have come here have a dual homeland and live according to a dual culture. We Swedes have our old Swedish culture, our Swedish traditions from which we can't escape even if we want to, and the new American culture in the midst of which we live and to which we are obligated to relate. To find a common ground for these two cultures is a problem that each of us has to solve. To help the individual find a solution to this problem is one of the prime tasks of every Swedish-American educational institution and especially for the SEL with its ambition to promote culture, knowledge and self-studies." (Translated by the author).

Education was thus seen as part of a strategy for acculturation and integration into American society. This was also a part of the strategy that guided the Scandinavian socialists. Their perspective of integration was, however, also connected with a vision of an egalitarian and socialist society. Knowledge and science were thus seen as allies in the struggle against the power of the purse. What good would it do the working class if it were to seize control over all economic assets but were lacking the intellectual training necessary to handle it all? Café Idrott and the SEL were thus useful vehicles on the road to achieving that intellectual strength.

71 To indicate that this tendency continues well into the 1940s, see lectures like "the Changing Problem of Civil Liberties" (Oct. 29, 1943), "What to Do With the Government-Owned Warplant" (Nov. 26, 1943) of "Should Roosevelt Be Re-elected?" (Oct. 27, 1944)


73 S.S. October 3, 1918.
Another circumstance indicating that the people around Café Idrott were willing to adjust to and assimilate into the host society was the way in which they dealt with the financial problems that faced the Café during the depression. At this point two major strategies were at hand, either to intensify and enlarge the number of Swedish/Scandinavian organizations with which the Café could cooperate and thus become a more explicitly ethnic enterprise or to draw on the experiences of the evolution of a new mass culture and to open itself to American mainstream society. The leaders of the Café chose the latter strategy, to open up. In the annual report of 1930 they discussed how this was to be done. Basically, they expanded their field of advertising to include American newspapers and modified the menu by including dishes that would attract others than just Scandinavians.74

Even if the Café "Americanized" its profile, this did not mean that its "Swedishness" was restrained in any way. On the contrary, an ethnic touch was used whenever possible to promote the Café and what it stood for. In the same year, 1930, the annual meeting appointed a committee for the purpose of arranging a major exhibition of Swedish handicrafts. The committee advertised with information and a call for contributions in the Swedish newspapers of Chicago. What the committee apparently was not fully aware of was that they thereby had targeted a field in which numerous Swedes were involved and with which they could identify. Besides contributions from Chicago and the state of Illinois the committee received contributions and enquiries from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. More than 400 items produced by 140 craftsmen were sent in. The committee had to make a selection and at the exhibit 270 items representing 109 individuals were displayed. The exhibition opened on November 22 and closed on December 7, and during this time some 10,000 people were estimated to have visited Café Idrott. The committee was overwhelmed by this response and strongly recommended that the society make new attempts of similar nature.75

The success of the handicrafts exhibition can be understood as part of a revival of regional and provincial affection and loyalty. This regional loyalty was also expressed through the great variety of organizations which based their membership on people coming from a specific province (landskap) in Sweden. This type of organization mushroomed during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1938, there were

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at least 25 different provincial clubs, "landskapsföreningar", in Chicago representing all but 4 of Sweden's provinces.\textsuperscript{76}

An interesting feature of these provincial clubs is that they continued to prosper and show vitality in times when most other Swedish-American organizations started to decline. The reason why the Swedes shifted much of their focus from organizations appealing to "Swedish" sentiments to organizations based on provincial loyalties and feelings comprises an interesting phenomenon which deserves further research. One factor to consider might be that the identity of the Swedish immigrants was initially based on their perception of themselves as being from Småland or from Värmland rather than the abstract notion of being a Swede. Their regional identity was further maintained through dialects, food habits, and through a continuity in their choice of markers such as knitting patterns and clothing. This may well be an example of what some scholars have termed "cultural rebound".\textsuperscript{77}

There might also be other connotations to this phenomenon. By looking at the continued strength of the provincial clubs as well as the success of the handicraft exhibition as part of the process of "inventing ethnicity", a plausible interpretation may be derived.

The invention of ethnicity can serve several functions, among which is the definition of the group in terms of what it is and what it is not. Seen in this perspective the handicrafts exhibition could have provided positive symbols for the Swedes to identify and be identified with. Through the different items that were displayed Swedes could be associated with beauty, ingenuity and skill, they could be proud of being Swedish. The signals to American society were thus clear: We come from another place and with us we bring our ingenuity, our skill and our ability to create beauty while we do not resist becoming loyal Americans.

\textbf{The Declining Years}

Although several of the provincial clubs met at the Café it had great difficulties improving its financial results. The main reason for this was of course the depression, and Café Idrott was by no means alone in struggling to make ends


meet. A brief presentation of the financial side of the Idrott enterprise will further illustrate this.

Figures 9-11, presented below, are all based on the annual reports of Café Idrott, 1913-1931. The sole purpose of this short and sketchy presentation is merely to indicate the general development of the enterprise.

Since it is not mentioned elsewhere I will also briefly comment on the number of employees. The information is, with the exception of the years 1923-26 and 1928-29, not specified. Since these years were the peak years of the enterprise we can only assume that the number of employees was fewer in the preceding and following years. The number of employee during 1923 was 24, 1924: 33, 1925: 47, 1926: 50, 1928: 53, and 1929: 51. In 1930 the annual report mentions that due to the depression the café had to cut back in all fields including the number of employees.

As indicated in Figure 9 the financial turnover in 1924 became a "take off" year for the café. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, in November 1923 the Café moved in to its new premises on 3206-10 Wilton Ave. and secondly it extended its hours of business from a few hours per day to 6 am till 11 pm.

The financial surplus of the café and its bakery showed, with the exception of 1925, a gradually increasing tendency up till 1928(Figure 10). The dip in 1925 derives primarily from expenditure in connection with the opening of the Clark St. branch. After 1928 the depression made its mark when among other things the café provided some 30 to 35 people with a hot meal every day.
Financial Surplus for Cafe Idrott and Bakery, 1913-1931

![Graph showing financial surplus for Cafe Idrott and Bakery, 1913-1931.]

**Figure 10.** Source: Annual reports of Café Idrott, 1913-1931.

Financial Turnover and Surplus For the Clark Street Branch, 1925-1931

![Graph showing financial turnover and surplus for the Clark Street Branch, 1925-1931.]

**Figure 11.** Source: Annual reports of Café Idrott, 1913-1931.

As indicated by Figure 10, the economic development of the Clark St. branch never managed to produce a financial surplus. The slump created by the depression did not cause the same decline here as compared with the main café.
and bakery. The deficit for the branch increased only from a 1% loss to a loss of roughly 8%, whereas the main café went from a surplus of almost 13% to a deficit of 4.5%.

Information on the café's activities and financial status after 1931 is limited to what was reported in newspapers and journals and occasionally when the café is mentioned in secondary sources. It is thus hard to establish in detail why and how the Cooperative Café Idrott went into its final collapse. Contemporary observers, however, can give us a pretty good idea of some of the contributory factors.

Café Idrott was able to continue operations until the summer of 1934 when it was finally shut down. In an effort to save the café the whole operation was reorganized during the summer. When Café Idrott reopened in September the "old" Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott was managed by "Idrott Co-operative Society". The size of the supporting group was apparently the same as before. It was reported that 200 persons had signed up for 5 dollar shares in the new and reorganized society.78

From this time advertisements started to appear in the press for a Café Nord located at 5248 N.Clark Street. Since this was the address of the north branch of Café Idrott it is plausible that the Idrott Society had sold off the branch café to a private enterprise. If the leadership of the new society was trying to straighten out a tight financial situation this would make sense since, as indicated by Figure 11, the Clark Street branch had been unable to produce any surplus.

As mentioned earlier, these years were troublesome and not only for Café Idrott. In June of 1934 the decline of several Swedish-American organizations was discussed and commented in an article in Ny Tid.79 It was argued that one of the key factors in the general decline among the Swedish-American organizations was the decline in immigration from the old country. The journal was correct in its observation since after 1930 migration from Sweden came to an almost complete halt while remigration from the USA to Sweden exceeded the immigrants by thousands. However, by saying this the journal also suggested that the actual need of ethnic organizations for the Swedes in the US had also declined.

At any rate the depression not only deprived many of the café's patrons of their financial income but also quite often put them on the road looking for jobs,

78 Ny Tid, September 13, 1934 p.11.
79 Ny tid was the newspaper of the Skandinaviska Arbetareförbundet i Amerika, SAFA (Scandinavian Workers' Federation of America), formerly Scandinavian Socialist Federation.
which disrupted much of whatever stability there had been within the group around the café. An interesting aspect of organizational life was also addressed in the article mentioned above discussing the possible existence of a critical member-organization ratio. Judging from the reports and notices on Café Idrott this could have been a key factor in the decline of the café. Although the core group around the Café seems to have remained the same size, some of its members as well as others around it seem to have changed.

As indicated earlier there were strong ties between the political left and the IOGT among the Swedes. The influence of political radicalism, however, appears to have been somewhat uneven and the impact of the radicals and political left was canalized into certain lodges and enterprises such as Café Idrott. Thus it could be said that there was always a tension or a slight polarization within the Scandinavian grand lodge of the IOGT. This situation was not improved by the fact that the Swedish-American political left, during its ultra-left period, regarded the IOGT lodges as closely allied to the radical labor movement. By the late 1920s and early 1930s this led to an attempt by the Scandinavian Workers´ Federation to impose a program of their own on the IOGT.

The SAFA, which was close to the Communist Party, had developed in the same direction as the Third International and was thus seeing threats from fascists and social-fascists in almost every organization or individual that did not follow the policy of the Third International. This threat was, according to the SAFA, also at hand within the IOGT. The SAFA thus presented a re-orientation program for the IOGT based on the idea of a united front "from below". This program also suggested that the IOGT adopt a policy more in line with the "class-against-class" policy that the Communist Party was advocating at the time. This re-orientation program was then promoted by the Ny Tid and by SAFA members at lodge meetings. Judging from the debate and letters published in Ny Tid the discussions were often heated, as people were frequently accused of being traitors or fascists.

Despite the fact that some IOGT members claimed that there were more socialists within the Scandinavian Grand Lodge in the US than in the Communist Party back in Sweden, the ultra-leftist position taken by the SAFA was never

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80 Ibid. June 7, 1934 p.4.
81 The reorientation program (nyorienteringsprogram) was published in the February issue (1930) of Skandinaviska Goodeemplaren and was further promoted in editorials and articles in Ny Tid e.g. Nov.11, 1930 p.7; Nov.18, 1930 p.3; Dec. 27, 1930 p.37; Jan. 3,24,31, 1931; Feb. 7,14, 21 1931; Mar. 7,14, 1931.
widely accepted among the IOGT rank and file. This, however, did not mean that even quite moderate lodges would not raise a voice of protest if a conservative IOGT leader tried to use unfair methods to eliminate a communist opponent. Nevertheless, the tension created by the sharpening of ideological and class conflicts and communist agitation must have had a splintering effect on the group as a whole, a tendency that must have become even more apparent as the SAFA started to organize several competing cultural organizations.

In November of 1933 SAFA members founded an organization named Skandinavisk Arbetarkultur, Chicago - SAKC (Scandinavian Workers' Culture, Chicago). This organization, which originally was initiated by the Communist Party, was divided into different branches such as singing, music, literature, drama, chess and even a special section for atheists.

Quite soon after the formation of SAKC the group started to cooperate with inter-ethnic cultural organizations and after less than a year it joined the League of Workers' Theaters. This could well indicate that from this time the Scandinavians were looking as much to making connections with other nationalities as maintaining and recruiting new members among the Scandinavians.

It is, however, difficult to estimate to what extent this distracted attention from places like Café Idrott. Nevertheless, a working day still only provided a few hours of leisure time and since the activities of SAKC were never reported to have taken place at Café Idrott it must have accounted in part for the decline of the café.

During the mid 1930s yet another factor in the café's decline became evident. A growing number of reports indicates that a residential movement toward the northern and northwestern areas of Chicago and its suburbs affected the choice of meeting places.

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82 On socialist within the IOGT see: Ny Tid, Dec. 27 1930, p.7.
84 Ibid. May 3 1934.
85 Ibid. April 5, 1934 p.11 and Sept. 20, 1934.
86 Ibid. Sept. 20, 1934.
87 By this time the Scandinavians were well established within the trade union movement. The connections between politics and labor unions might possibly have served as an alternative avenue for ethnic influence. On the Scandinavian impact within labor unions see Richard Schneirov/Thomas J. Suhrbur (1988). On the residential movement, from the center of Chicago to more outlying areas see (continued...)
From late 1934 *Ny Tid* reports on growing activity in the Uptown Scandinavian Workers’ Club. The meeting place for this club was by preference Café Nord on 5248 N. Clark Street, the former north branch of Café Idrott. This would indicate that as a neighborhood meeting place Café Idrott was located too far south of where the bulk of the radicals were resided. Moreover it appears as if the group still living in the Lake View area preferred the Viking Temple at the corner of School and Sheffield Streets as their meeting place. The reason for this can only be speculated on. It seems, however, that both the locality and the rent policy of the Viking’s Hall suited several labor organizations. The Viking Temple had for at least 20 years been one of the meetings places preferred when a bigger hall was needed. Thus the Temple was used for meetings with prominent speakers such as Albert Goldman or when Sonja Branting (daughter of the former Prime Minister and Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Sweden) visited Chicago to give lectures. But the hall was also used by powerful union locals such as Local no.637 of the International Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America, also known as "the Swedish Local".

The last issue of the newspaper *Ny Tid* was dated July 16 1936. From this date information on the events at Café Idrott also becomes more sporadic. Judging from advertisements and reports in *Svenska Amerikanaren-Tribunen*, which was the main Swedish-American newspaper in Chicago, the café was from this time primarily used by provincial clubs. The educational committee continued to take part in the work of the Swedish Educational League which also continued to use the café for its lecture series. But despite the reorganization of the café in 1934 it never managed to regain its position as a leading institution and meeting place among the radical Swedes. In the fall of 1939 one of the most outstanding cultural enterprises in Swedish-American history was thus closed down.

88 (…continued)


90 According to the minutes of L.U. No. 637 one of the reasons why they preferred the Viking Temple as their meeting place was a "reasonable rent", see the minutes of Nov. 19, 1915. A couple of members of the local also served as Grand Chiefs of the Order of Vikings which might indicate that there was no particular hostility toward socialists or radicals since at least one of these men, Gustaf Carlson, was a socialist. There are also notes of the Vikings accepting the Temple being used as strike headquarters by the Painters’ Union see the minutes from Mar. 29, 1918.
The furniture and other inventories were sold to members and close friends and the café was then sold to a Swede, Karl August Karlsson. Karlsson, who was the owner of another establishment, intended to turn the café into an exclusive restaurant, "The Lake View Swedish Diner". His intention never materialized in the way he had anticipated and so the café was once again closed. By this time the small group of idealistic Swedish temperance youth who had once taken the initiative for the café no longer had the same ability to attract the North Side Swedes of Chicago. The cooperative idea that had once guided them in their efforts might not have been entirely lost but apparently the need for a meeting place such as Café Idrott had changed - at least in the Lake View area.

In 1891 a painter named Lindelöf wrote to his colleagues back in Sweden and said: "If one is to amuse oneself here, with something that is truly enjoyable, one has to organize the event oneself, which we did last Monday. We then had a light Swedish supper (svensk sexa) according to the customs.."

In 1946, a little more than half a century later, Henry Bengston explained the failure of SEL to capture the interest of the Chicago Swedes by referring to popular culture. He wrote:"Motion pictures and other forms of light entertainment seem adequately to fill the recreational demands of the general run of the people." In other words, when the Swedes came at the end of the 19th century they did not feel at ease with the culture of their new host society. Thus they organized events which enabled them to relate to familiar customs. Over the years, however, the popular culture of America became familiar to them and since they no longer felt excluded, the need to organize separately declined among the Swedes.

To use an analogy from the field of physics one could say that in the turmoil of the waves of influences that the Swedish immigrants had to face, for a while Café Idrott became a nodal point where the specific ethnicity, constituted by a mixture of components from the Swedish popular movements and American society, became amplified. As the waves of influences transformed and moved on, the nodal point moved on as well, and Café Idrott became history.

91 SAT. Oct. 12, 1939 p.14 and SAT. Nov. 16, 1939 p.12 (sect. II) also typewritten note on first page of the volume of annual reports deposited at Emigrantinstitutet in Växjö.

92 The Cooperative society Idrott was legally dissolved on Nov. 19th 1942 (Olson 1990, p. 371).

93 Letter form Lindelöf to Nyström at the Swedish Painters' Union in Stockholm, dated Chicago 1891-08-29 (SMF) Translation by the author.

94 Bengston (1949) p.37.
Conclusion

As the Swedish labor force went through the process of becoming a class "für sich" they took part in the forging of the popular movements of Sweden. In this process the popular movements left its mark on the Swedish working class and its outlook. This influence was also reversed and one of the products of this process was the creation of a comparatively radical and pro-labor temperance movement as well as a labor movement containing a number of leaders and organizers with their roots in the temperance movement. The concept of ethnic havens as bases for social mobilization, as formulated by Eric Hirsh, can here be used as a tool to analyze and understand the dynamics of how loyalties between groups were built up and used.

When the emigrants left Sweden to seek a better life across the Atlantic many of them continued to draw on their experiences from the temperance movement as well as the nascent labor movement. The establishment of the Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott in Chicago and the activities around the café is a prime illustration of this. The café became the meeting place where many of Chicago's North Side Swedes found an environment where they could meet, talk and eat, all in a familiar fashion together with their fellow countrymen. They could read their familiar newspapers or a book or go to a lecture and learn about many of the problems that they had to face as immigrants in a foreign country.

As the records have shown the constitution of the group around the café indicates that the inter-organizational and personal alliances that existed in Sweden were reconstituted among the radical Swedish organizations in Chicago thus creating a network of social contacts for the people around the café. By using Hirsh's concept of the ethnic haven it is possible to place the café project within a wider perspective. Thus it represents ethnic mobilization of at least a segment of the Swedish or Scandinavian enclave on the Chicago North Side.

The initial group of members appears to have had an inclination towards liberal or even socialist perspectives. Almost three decades of activities around the café altered their perspectives along with the constitution of the group. This process has to be seen within the context of both in-group and out-group relationships in which the objectives and constitution of the group were constantly renegotiated. In order to draw more extensive conclusions about the composition of the group, however, more information is needed, especially from the latter part of the period. Nevertheless, it appears as if a more mainstream part of the group
gained in influence while those who teamed up with the ultra-leftist policy of the Third International became more isolated.

Even though there were tensions between different fractions among Café members they still managed to reach a consensus. Emanating out of this group consensus they promoted their perspectives and their specific solutions. It is thus especially striking how the educational traditions of the Swedish popular movements were continued. The profile of both the library and the lecture series initially betrays great similarities to corresponding projects in Sweden. The group also demonstrates how over the years it altered its organizations in order to adjust to new situations. This becomes evident in the structure of the lecture program. The choice of topics indicates how the group was trying to build a group identity through common Swedish origins. It was, however, not a question of appealing to some obscure "Swedishness" in general. Through its activities it tried to present and promote specific qualities and characteristics from its past which could be summed up in temperance, literacy, and knowledge to be used in cooperation based on an egalitarian perspective for the common good. In order to sustain a group formation along the lines of these characteristics the lectures were focused primarily on historical and literary topics related to Sweden.

As the group matured and was able to draw more on experience from cooperation with other ethnic groups as well as experience of American society in general it tended to turn its attention towards contemporary problems. This was manifested by a shift in focus of the topics that were addressed in the lectures. During the latter part of the period the majority of the lectures dealt with political topics primarily focusing on the American scene. Simultaneously the approach of the lectures reveals a shift from an instructive or informative perspective to a much more participatory and intervening perspective.

The group around Café Idrott thus became an expression of a dynamic ethnic leadership "from within". It became involved in a process of continuous response to the changing settings of the group and its context. Seen and understood through the concepts of an "invented ethnicity" and the construction of an ethnic haven, the activities around the café thus served as an instrument for constant re-creation of the group as well as a stage on which their haven was renegotiated. But even so, conditions for this group of Swedes changed in ways that they could do little about. A decline in the number of new immigrants, the Great Depression and the residential movement to the more northerly parts of Chicago and its suburbs were factors that in the long run undermined the continuity of the Café. The attempts to impose the ultra-left policy of the Third International created tensions within the group. The majority found the policy
too extreme and it was thus rejected. These tensions were escalated even more since the leftist minority created competing cultural organizations which further undermined the existence of the café.

Several more influential factors such as the growing integration of the group into American society caused by interaction with other ethnic groups and society in general could certainly be added. However, seen as an attempt made by a segment of Swedish immigrants, with their roots in the popular movements of Sweden, to execute and promote a strategy of survival, the Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott became quite successful for a while and managed to serve its purpose well for a number of years. And as such it also indicates that the stigma of leaving one's native country does not necessarily have to turn the immigrant into a passive victim of circumstances.
Chapter Seven

Local Union No. 637 of the International Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America

Introduction

In my third case study I will examine Local Union No. 637 of The International Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America (IBPDPA). This local will thus represent a slightly different type of ethnic organization. Its ethnic character was primarily established through the constitution of its membership rather than its objectives. Still the local had to operate within the realm of a city where both residential areas as well as the labor market displayed a strong and persistent ethnic fragmentation.

Since the local was organized by a number of Scandinavians in the Lake View district and despite the fact that the membership was not exclusively Swedish or Scandinavian, the local became known as "the Swedish local". As such and with its location in Lake View it became part of the construction of a radical ethnic haven.

The 1870s brought many changes to the American and Chicago economies. The reconstruction of Chicago after the fire in 1871 boosted the demand for construction workers. With the growth of the city also came growing tensions between different actors on the economic stage which in turn brought about a radicalization in many organizations. As a consequence of this, many workers abandoned middle-class oriented organizations and joined, or organized, more working-class oriented ones, including the trade unions. The great influx of workers of all nationalities, representing different labor traditions, often caused an ethnic fragmentation of their organizations. Within the trade union movement this fragmentation then led to the establishment of a number of ethnic trade union branches or locals. Together with other skilled workers from primarily northern Europe they tried to promote their interests, which at least partly also included attempts at preventing newer immigrants with lesser skills from taking their jobs.\(^1\) By the end of the 1870s the number of Scandinavians organized in unions had led to the establishment of special ethnic branches in eg. the

\(^1\) Odd Lovoll (1988), pp. 165-72.
carpenters', the blacksmiths' and the machinists' unions and, as mentioned earlier, there are also reports of a Scandinavian branch of the Socialist Labor Party from this time.

Unfortunately, sources on radical immigrant activities from this early period are rare. This is due in part to the fact that many of these organizations were short-lived, small and without much influence. Still, it should be noted that the Scandinavians, together with the Irish and especially the Germans, belonged to the group of foreign-born workers with the highest level of union affiliation in Chicago at the time.²

**The Formation of a Scandinavian Painters' Union in Chicago**

During the 1880s the painters of Chicago made several attempts to organize; none of their efforts succeeded for any length of time. By 1890, however, conditions favored a union that would last and it is also from this time that it is possible to get a more detailed picture of the activities of the Scandinavian painters.

At that time the number of Scandinavian painters in Chicago was substantial and for that reason Charles Hanson took the initiative to call several informal meetings of his Scandinavian colleagues. They concluded that the time had come to organize a separate Scandinavian painters' local.

To organize as Scandinavians rather than as Swedes or Norwegians in isolation was by no means something new to these laborers. A Scandinavian perspective was quite common among labor organizations from the 1880s back in the old countries. The 113 painters that on October 1, 1890 held the first meeting as the Scandinavian local No. 194 thus merely continued an established tradition.³

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Figure 12. Source: Local No. 194 ledgers (SAAGC).

Their evaluation of conditions as necessitating a Scandinavian painters’ local proved more than merely accurate. From the very beginning new members joined the local in large numbers; by 1909 local No. 194, with its almost two thousand members, had grown to be the largest painters local, not only in America, but in the whole world.⁴

Since the local kept records of members and of the collection of death benefits for many years, it is possible to establish the ethnic profile of Local No. 194. To be entitled to draw death benefits from the local a member had to be in good standing for a certain period of time. The almost 400 persons mentioned in these records would thus have been members of the local during the earlier part of the 1930s and probably a number of years prior to that. These records indicate that the local could justly be regarded as Scandinavian (see fig. 12).⁵

There were, as mentioned earlier, strong ties between the temperance movement and the Swedish labor movement. A large number of Sweden's labor leaders got their first organizational training through a Good Templar or Verdandi lodge. It appears that the emigrants also took this tradition of temperance with them, since almost 25% of the members of local No. 194 were

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⁴ Painters Local No. 194's 50th Anniversary Souvenir Program (1940) pp.17 f.
⁵ For the rules for death benefits see By-Laws of Local No. 194, Chicago, Illinois, adopted 1911, revised in 1924 and 1942, pp.11-14.
total abstainers. In fact, the local’s sincere ambition to keep the union clean and democratic became its hallmark.

Delegates from local No. 194 were elected to serve on committees drafting by-laws for the Painters’ District Council (PDC) in Chicago and for the international union as a whole. Therefore local No. 194 immediately made its presence felt. After only one year of existence local No. 194 forced the chairman of the Painters’ District Council to resign. The reason for this dramatic action was that members of local No. 194 maintained that the former chairman had violated the principles of a labor union. The local continued to take action against similar violations during the decades to come.

However, local No. 194 was also a local with visions and ideals extending beyond internal union business. Looking through some of the surviving sources, one cannot help being struck by the wide spectrum of activities, and therewith also the ideas motivating these activities. The organizers seemed to be aware of some of the limitations of different activities but also of some of their logical extensions. Let me exemplify this by presenting a survey of issues that occupied the minds and the time of the painters.

Early on, Local No. 194 made demands that even today would be considered advanced or innovative. In 1895 the local began to campaign for a five-and-a-half-day work week, which was indeed established by the district council a couple of years later. Through the following decades the local continued to play a key role in the painters’ successful bargaining. The painters even managed to get a contract based on a five-day work week and six-hour day during the period prior to World War II.

In the process of improving conditions for union workers the risk of greed spreading among union members increased. Local No. 194 was well aware of this and adapted its activities in response to this threat. In an article in the journal *The Painter and Decorator* a member of local No. 194 explained:

> It is not uncommon to meet members who consider the union to be a mere automatic fighting-machine for the purpose of securing shorter hours and higher wages and run by a set of men called officers. They do not seem to realize that the purpose of a labor union is twofold, viz: theoretical or educational and practical; and no benefit will ever be of lasting character unless based upon and defended by an educated and intelligent working class... It should be remembered that the political,

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industrial and economic battle of today is no longer the battle of brute forces; it is the weapons of intelligence and knowledge that is going to bring victory to the arms of labor.  

Local No. 194 therefore sponsored on lecture series covering varying topics, ranging from lectures on "Consumption, Its Causes, Prevention and Cure", or how to arrange the insurgences of the locals, to briefings on current public affairs. To further encourage the active participation of members in the discussions, the local even published its own bulletin.

To build a strong local the leadership orchestrated its activities to include as many aspects of the workers' lives as possible. This meant that it also strove to include the elderly as well as the rest of the memberships' families. Consequently, the local arranged gatherings of a more social character, such as Christmas festivals or picnics, which activities were usually well-attended, with between five hundred and two thousand people showing up. On these more social occasions the local's position within a haven was indicated by the fact that it would also invite groups from other social or political organizations among the Scandinavians, such as the Scandinavian singing societies or children from the Socialist sunday school, who would perform a skit. For those members unable to attend these meetings for reasons of of age or sickness, the local arranged that some local member would visit them with a gift, a book from their library or some financial aid.

As mentioned earlier, there was an awareness of some of the limitations of the union, including where union influence stopped and political influence began. Not to say that a sharp line exists between these two realities, but rather a broad common ground. This meant that the local sent representatives to all the different types of organizational efforts undertaken by labor. In 1905 when the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) held its founding convention, local 194 made sure that it had two delegates present to observe and report back to the local. The course that the IWW pursued, however, apparently failed to gain the approval of local 194 and thus they decided to remain outside the IWW.

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7 The Painter and Decorator, July, 1907 pp.436-437.
8 Unfortunately only two copies of their bulletin seem to have been preserved. They can be found in the John Fitzpatrick papers at the Chicago Historical Society.
9 The Painter and Decorator, January 1917, p.57.
The official standpoint on political parties taken by the AFL and Samuel Gompers, was that labor should endorse any candidate, Democrat or Republican, that might support propositions in favor of organized labor and the unions. This tactic was appraised by the local in 1908 and found insufficient. Instead, the local advocated the Socialist Party as the only party representing the interests of the workers. When the Socialist Party started to crumble, the local decided to throw its support over to the Labor Party. In fact, the local was regarded as a socialist union local as late as the 1940s.

Even so, Local No. 194 consistently seized the opportunity of lobbying for labor through channels supplied by Republicans or Democrats. The local was thus instrumental in getting several laws passed on health and safety. More than anyone else in Local No. 194, John A. Runnberg, born in Sweden in 1866, should be given credit for the passage of these laws. As an organizer, educator and idealist, Runnberg started his carrier in Kågeröd, Scania, in the southern part of Sweden. At the tender age of fourteen he joined "Viljan", the local lodge of the International Order of Good Templars (IOGT). As Runnberg became involved in committees and elected to different positions, he received a thorough practical education in how to run an organization based on democracy and a high level of membership participation. He emigrated to America in 1891 and once he had settled he continued his temperance work in the Idoghet Lodge in Chicago where he took special interest in its educational activities.

As an artisan and painter Runnberg was initiated into local No. 194 on September 28, 1897. In 1906 Runnberg served one term as recording secretary for the local. This was the first of several offices that Runnberg was to hold in the decades which followed. He was also responsible for the local's library and, given his educational interests, this was no doubt a responsibility that he highly appreciated.


\[2\] On the passing of the Employers' Liability Bill, the Compensation Bill and the Occupational Disease Bill see *The Painter and Decorator* July, 1911 pp.436-437. See also "Our Golden Anniversary." Speech held by John A. Runnberg at local No. 194's 50th anniversary in 1940. (In John Fitzpatrick papers, Chicago Historical Society).


Runnberg was a remarkable man. Being a painter, but with a good head for statistics, he began to investigate and compile information on the health conditions of Chicago painters. When the first report was published in 1911 it soon became apparent that Runnberg's statistical material was the first survey ever done on the extent of lead poisoning in the United States. Runnberg continued to compile statistical information regarding the working and living conditions of Chicago painters and through the years he in effect became the statistician of the entire Painters' Union.¹⁴

¹⁴Runnbergs pioneering work on lead poisoning among painters received international attention as well. The first report was published in 1911 and after some years the League of (continued...
However, the work done by Runnberg and his associates would hardly have been possible without the support of their local and the ability to relate to the other painters' locals of Chicago, and perhaps this is really the essence of the relative success of these Scandinavian painters - a combination of the concern and participation of the members and the ability to establish alliances with other labor communities. An alternative understanding of this could thus imply that the haven to which Local No. 194 belonged was efficient in resolving the problems of social mobilization and integration.

But, even if Local No. 194 was prosperous as a union local, the demography of Chicago stimulated the emergence of yet another union local on the Chicago North Side, a local which was to be known as the "Swedish local", No. 637.

The Swedish Painters' Local No. 637

Since the minutes of Local No. 194 are lost it is difficult to establish the exact reason why Local No. 637 was organized. It is likely, however, that both the size of Local No. 194 and the emergence of the Lake View district as a Swedish enclave created the need for a new local. In any case, the matter was brought up in 1905 when a Local No. 637 was mentioned in the proceedings of the IBPDPA convention that year. Initially, there was some resentment among the other locals toward the organizing of a Lake View local. This opposition was nevertheless overcome and the charter of Local No. 637 is dated 30 May, 1906.15

The dissolution of the political union between Sweden and Norway at that time could possibly have created tensions between the Swedes and Norwegians in the Local No. 194, but at no time have I come across any indication of this being an incentive for the organizing of a "Swedish" local. However, whatever objections were made, they were resolved and on 16 June, 1906 Local No. 637 held its first meeting.

The meeting held at Wells Hall at 3142 N.Clark St. was opened at 8:30 P.M. by a Brother Evans, Vice President of the PDC No. 3 in Chicago. Of the

14 (...continued)
Nations did a survey of Europe regarding lead poisoning. Wanting to extend their survey to the US they found that the only material available was that compiled by Runnberg.

seventeen charter members, all but one came from Local No. 194. Most of these men were Swedes from the Lake View area and consequently, the local came to be known as the "Swedish" or "Lake View" local.

A board was elected at the first meeting, consisting of:
President: Theodore Nyberg
Vice President: Albin Johnson
Financial Secretary: A.O. Sandine
Recording Secretary: Gust. Bolling
Treasurer: F.O. Lindh
Conductor: Chas. Lindstrom
Warden: N.J. Anderson
Trustees: H. Harnstrom, C.E. Anderson and O. Forsberg
Delegate to the Painters' District Council: August Olson.

Theodore Nyberg was elected president but it appears as if the primus motor of the local was August Olson. His name keeps appearing in the minutes in connection with reports, resolutions and various discussions within the local. A few years later his name also starts to appear in Svenska Socialisten, the organ of Skandinaviska Socialistförbundet as well as on the membership list of Café Idrott.

Like most of the other charter members of Local No. 637 Olson came from Local No. 194 where, in 1899, at the age of 35, he had been initiated. It was also the first local he joined after his arrival in the United States. His background in Sweden is unfortunately not known but judging from the personal acquaintances he made in Chicago and the kind of activities he participated in it is likely that he had been involved in the Young Socialist movement back in Sweden. Nevertheless, once he joined the painters' union he earned the confidence of his fellow members and before joining Local No. 637 was elected recording secretary for the term of 1904.

The connection to Local No. 194 was also noticeable in other ways. Right from the start Local No. 637 established a tradition of cooperation with Local No. 194. But also Local No. 275, a local with a large German contingent, was swift in establishing good relations with Local No. 637. This threesome would prove to be more than just bedfellows. During the years to come it was often this

16 Olson's name appears on various committees and ad hoc groups often in connection with Wallentin Wald and Ragnar Johanson both of whom had a history within the Young Socialist movement. See e.g. S.S. Feb. 10, Mar. 13, 1913, Jan. 9, 1919 or Mar. 18, 1921. See also the annual reports of Café Idrott, 1913-31.
constellation of locals that constituted the core of the force mobilized to resist or implement changes.

In its first year, Local No. 637 was basically devoted to getting things going. The local had to find its own pace and profile. By-laws had to be adopted and the local had to make itself known among the painters on the North Side. Activities included discussions on how to run meetings and what issues to discuss.

Among the issues that were brought up and resolved during the first year was the need to establish some form of sickness benefits for the members of the local. A suggestion to set aside time for educational or entertainment activities after each meeting was also seconded and, as is often the case when an organization is established, its relationship to the church made it into the minutes.\footnote{17}

During the first years the local remained relatively small with just a few hundred members. According to its ledgers and the US census the average age of the members that immigrated between 1891 and 1900 was 20 years while those who came between 1901 and 1910 were two years older. In the latter group the mean time between their arrival and their union affiliation was two years whereas the former group spent about 8 years in the country before joining the union. In 1910 the average member of the local was a 34-year-old immigrant who had spent almost eight years in the country.\footnote{18} The membership was composed of approximately 80% Swedes, 15% Americans while the remaining 5% were mostly Germans and Danes.

Only 16% of the Swedes had married before they emigrated. However, by 1910 more than 50% of them were married and had children. 66% of the membership were married which can be compared to an average of 77% among all organized painters in Chicago.

The married Swedish painter generally had to support less then one child (0.8) per household while the average wedded Chicago painter had to support 1.43 children per household. From a financial point of view this was an advantageous situation for the Swedes since the per capita income thus became relatively higher when compared to other groups. This privilege, however, was not unique

\footnote{17 After some discussion the local decided not to let its to a Church Fair arranged by the Swedish Unitarian Church Womens' Alliance. At the following meeting the decision was unanimously reversed. Minutes, Oct. 6 and 13, 1906.}

for the painters but an advantage shared with Swedish-Americans in general as the family income for Swedes was higher than for both the average American and other immigrant families in Chicago. Furthermore, the favorable socio-economic situation that prevailed around 1910 continued into the 1920s and most likely also into the 1930s. This is indicated in John A. Runnberg’s two studies on the working conditions of Chicago painters in 1921 and 1929-1934. In 1921 the average member in the Local was 45 years old; 85% of them were married but still had only 0.95 child to support. The average painter in Chicago, on the other hand, was 43.6 year and had to support 1.13 children.19

At any rate, during its first years the local was quite small and mainly had to respond to what other, more influential locals were doing. The local was, however, steadily growing and hence gradually gaining in influence.

Members of Painters’ Local Union No. 637

![Graph showing the growth of Members of Painters' Local Union No. 637](image)

**Figure 13.** Source: Minutes of Local No. 637, 1906-1945.

The road to influence was not only based on the number of members. Influence also derived from the ability to understand and learn how to interact with the

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19 See John A. Runnberg, *Survey of the Working Conditions in the Painting Trade in Chicago 1921 as they affected the membership of the different LOCAL UNIONS under the jurisdiction of Painters District Council No.14.* (P.D.C. No. 14, Chicago 1922) pp. 9-11,15-16; *Survey of the Working Conditions in the Painting Trade in Chicago 1929-1934 as they affected the membership of the different LOCAL UNIONS under the jurisdiction of Painters District Council No. 14.* (P.D.C. No. 14, Chicago 1935) p.8. The average income for the members of Local No. 637 was almost the highest among the Chicago Painters. Local No. 637 also managed better than average in keeping its members employed through the Great Depression. On family income economic standards, see Johnson (1940) pp.26-29.
body of the other Chicago painters’ locals. This can be illustrated by the first attempts to get a member from Local No. 637 elected business agent (BA) or what the Swedes would call "ombudsman".

In 1908 the local nominated August Olson as their candidate for the BA job. All locals could nominate members to the office of BA. BAs were then appointed on the basis of the votes cast by the total membership of the locals under the jurisdiction of the PDC. However, Olson failed to gather enough endorsements and be elected BA.

One reason for this was probably that Local No. 637 had not yet understood the importance of organized support of the nominees from their own local. This became evident the following year when A.O. Sandine was nominated for BA. The fact that Sandine had not been given any financial support to campaign for his candidacy, as was claimed to be customary in other locals, led to a lengthy discussion. This resulted in the decision that future candidates and their campaigns should receive financial support from the local.

In one sense this could be regarded as just another step toward the strengthening of the local’s own position but it was in fact also a step toward ethnic mobilization. How elections became ethnically biased can be illustrated by another election held in 1908. The office of 6th General Vice President in the IBPDA was to be filled. Local No. 275 had nominated Emil Arnold, whom Local No. 637 was generally in favor of, while Local No. 194 had nominated Otto Damm, a Dane. At the ballot Local No. 637 went with the Dane.

This pattern of ethnic voting could perhaps be dismissed as mere coincidence, since arguments referring explicitly to ethnic origins rarely made the minutes. However, another election in which Otto Damm was also involved can be used to illustrate the fact that ethnicity was indeed an issue. In 1911, Gustav Carlson, a former officer of the Swedish Painters’ Union, but at that time a PDC delegate from local No. 194, wrote to his former colleagues informing them as to how it was trying to get Otto Damm elected to office instead of John Finnan. Carlson made a point of Finnan being an Irishman and Damm a Dane, who furthermore belonged to the (Socialist)Party.

20 See Local No. 637 minutes May 16, 1908.

The Year of Changes

In many ways 1909 was the year of changes for Local N.637. Back in Sweden the conflict between labor and capital was on the brink of a major battle while in Chicago, construction was on the rise which put the painters in a favorable bargaining position.22

As mentioned in regard to the activities of the Scandinavian socialist clubs, the labor market disputes in Sweden had a mobilizing effect. To some extent the same may be true for Local No. 637. In 1908 three young men in Sweden had bombed the vessel Amalthea on which a number of scab laborers were quartered. One of the scabs was killed and the men who had planted the bomb were sentenced to either death or life in prison. The Swedish King visited one of the scabs injured by the bomb. This was seen as a gesture which could be interpreted as sanctioning the use of scabs to do the work of striking workers.

In the tense situation between capital and labor the bombing itself was not defended. However, the movement defending the three men became a symbol for the defence of workers’ right to organize and take action in their own interests. This defence movement also reached the United States and in Chicago August Olson took active part in this movement. Consequently he also brought the matter up at his local and a committee of three was appointed to work with the defence.23

At the same time the largest conflict between organized labor and capital hitherto in Sweden was building up and becoming a fact in the late summer of 1909. This conflict was also reflected in Swedish America. In fact, of the money that was collected for the Swedish workers in conflict, almost as much came from the Scandinavians in America as from collections made in Sweden itself.24 The question of supporting the Swedish union men who had been locked out was also brought up at Local No. 637 and after a lively discussion it was decided to donate $50 for the purpose. The same year August Olson represented the local as delegate to the national convention of the IBPDPA. There Olson submitted a

22 On fluctuations of land value and new constructions in Chicago see Homer Hoyt, *Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago* (Chicago 1933) p.411.

23 Minutes of Local No. 637. Mar. 6, 1909.

24 The money collected in Sweden up till July 1910 amounted the sum of 250,191 SEK. whereas among the Scandinavians in USA 203,289 SEK. was collected. See: *Redovisning över den frivilliga insamlingen för storstrejken 1909* (Stockholm 1910) p.32.

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resolution in favor of financial support to the Swedish strikers. His resolution was passed and $1,000 was donated by the IBPDDA.25

But it was not only in Sweden that conflict was on the rise. Strange things were happening at PDC No. 3 in Chicago. William Sorenson, former Secretary Treasurer of the District Council and member of Local No. 194, discovered that financial transactions were taking place that had never been accounted for. One of these obscure deals concerned large sums of money ($4,000) which the General Executive Board had granted for the purpose of organizing a small number of wood finishers. With the exception of $300 none of this money was ever accounted for by the committee assigned to deal with this task (the above-mentioned John Finnan was among the members on this committee).26

In order to sort this mess out Sorensen approached Local No. 637 asking for its support. A committee of five was appointed by the local to cooperate with Local No. 194 on this matter. The discussions between Local No. 194 and No. 637 led to the formation of a joint committee with representatives from Local Nos. 180, 194, 275 and 637. This committee drew up a resolution in which complaints were made about how PDC No. 3 violated the by-laws of both the Council and the Brotherhood. This resolution was then adopted and sent to GEB. The actions taken by both the GEB and the PDC did not satisfy the membership of the locals in the joint committee. The conflict instead escalated to the point where the locals of the joint committee left the PDC and formed a conference board which was affiliated with the Building Trade Section of the AFL. The PDC responded by revoking the charters of those locals which failed to send delegates to the District Council. However, the locals refused to submit to the will of what they felt was the corrupt leadership of the Council.

The only locals at that time still affiliated with PDC No. 3 were a number of smaller locals, along with some special trades and the Business Agents. Facing the threat of losing all the major locals in Chicago the GEB was ultimately forced to dissolve the old Council and organize a new one which was given the number 14. The locals whose charters had been revoked were also reinstated without loss of bonuses and a committee consisting of delegates from various locals was appointed to draw up a set of new by-laws for the new PDC No. 14.


A.C. Anderson from Local No. 194 was nominated Secretary Treasurer ("the Boss") of PDC No. 14. Local No. 637 unanimously endorsed Anderson and to further ensure that he would be elected the local even imposed a $5 fine on members for failing to vote in the election to the PDC. No such fines were reported and Anderson was elected first Secretary Treasurer of PDC No. 14.

Thus, the year of 1909 became a turning point in the sense that Local No. 637 was able to mobilize its members for a fight in which they gained both a new district council as well as a sense of integrity. This new sense of integrity was also colored by both class and ethnic identity. Through their active participation in the defence movement for the "Amalthea-men" as well as their active support of the workers in the general strike of 1909 back in Sweden they reconfirmed both their class and ethnic origin. But by being drawn into the fight against questionable business methods within PDC No. 3 they were also confirming their position within American society. The constellation of locals which fought the methods of the old PDC, however, reveals that they at least partly used ethnicity as one criterion for their choice of allies. This means that they fell back on the security created by a shared history and resemblances in language or labor traditions.

Thus the mobilization to reorganize PDC No. 3 gave Local No. 637 (and probably all the other locals involved), a boost to its self-confidence. Even though the local had intervened in and affected the affairs of the Council prior to its reorganization, from this time on the local became even more externally oriented. This included a more active participation in the arenas of both politics and the trade union movement.

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Politics and Participation

From around 1910, Local No. 637 began to take a stand on political issues. Thus it decided to advocate Socialist Party candidates as its political spokesmen. In the following years the local also gave financial support to the Daily Socialist as well as the Milwaukee Social Democratic Herald.

By itself, or together with primarily Local No. 194, it also arranged for numerous political activists to speak before the members of the local. Sometimes it managed to engage internationally well-known men like the English labor organizer Tom Mann, who spoke about syndicalism and the present political situation in his homeland. On other occasions more locally well-known syndicalists like John Sandgren or socialist leaders like August Seymore or William E. Rodriguez laid out their perspectives. But there was also a group of political activists within the local itself, as well as within several of the locals with which Local No. 637 maintained close connections, who used the local as its tribune. Some of the more active individuals in this regard were August Olson, Fred Spolander, Ragnar Johanson, Ivar E. Nordström from Local No. 637; John A. Runnberg, Otto Damm, Arne Swabeck from Local No. 194; and Emil Arnold from Local No. 275. The local could thus keep track of what was going on in the political arena, including the Scandinavian branch of the Socialist Party. However, the members of Local No. 637 not only seated themselves to listen to the various political representatives who visited them, they also actively sent delegates to numerous political conferences and meetings to monitor the political debate. Frequently this also led to further actions by the local, such as when the local’s delegates to the Building Trades Council felt that the council favored the Democratic Party over the Socialist Party in 1912. Promptly the local sent a protest against the BTC action in this matter.

Local No. 637 continued to support the Socialist Party throughout the 1910s and when the Chicago Federation of Labor in 1918 called for support in organizing an Independent Labor Party (ILP), the local rejected the idea out of

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29 Minutes e.g. July 18, 1913 regarding correspondence from Scandinavian Agitation Committee (sub-committee of Scandinavian Socialist Federation).

However, this did not prevent the local from continuing to monitor the ILP. Especially section 11 of its program, the section which called for the immediate release of all political prisoners, drew the attention of the local. This was probably due to the fact that a couple of the local’s members had been sent to prison due to their connections with the IWW.  

By early 1920 the Painters’ District Council called to a meeting for the purpose of affiliating with the Labor Party. The continuing disintegration of the Socialist Party probably caused the delegate from Local No. 637 to make the recommendation that the local should support the Labor Party as well as the labor paper, the *New Majority*. The local voted against his recommendations, but apparently only for the purpose of accumulating more information about the party. After a couple of months the tide had turned in favor of the Labor Party and the locals decided to support the party by a voluntary donation of $1 per member.

The minutes, however, do not reveal if the local actually affiliated itself with the party. Other activities of the local during that and the following years suggest that the local maintained its independence by retaining the status of sympathizer. The locals hence continued to be generous in their support of the defence of both IWW members as well as members of the Communist Labor Party.

In 1921, the Socialist Party regained some of its momentum. Local 637 was at that time still open to many of the initiatives taken by the Socialists. In January the local accepted an invitation from the Socialist Party to send a delegate to a meeting for the purpose of organizing a Cook County May Day Council and to arrange for the celebration of May 1st as Labor Day. During the following year the local furthermore took part in or supported a number of other Socialist Party initiatives such as attendance at SP rallies or support of SP petitions.

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31 Minutes Nov. 29 and Dec. 13, 1918.

32 Ragnar Johanson was arrested in 1917 and sent to prison for his connections with the IWW. In 1918 J.R. Cordes was also sent to prison for his IWW connections. See minutes e.g. Oct. 19, 26, Nov. 9, 1917, Mar. 29, Sept. 6, 1918. On ILP interest, see minutes Jan. 3, 1919.


34 Minutes: e.g. Mar. 30, 1920. Acting on a request from two men with credentials from the Communist Labor Party it was motioned that the local should donate $100 for the defence of the party members. The chair ruled the motion out of order as it would be a contribution to a political party. The motion was then changed so that the money would be for the defence of one of the men who was a member of Local No. 194 and the motion was carried. During that same year the local was in favor of collections for imprisoned IWW members, e.g. Dec. 12, 1920.
Nevertheless, the Socialist Party eventually lost whatever momentum it had managed to regain and Local No. 637 thus turned its attention elsewhere. From this time, however, it appears as if the motivation for political action was declining within the local. In 1922 the local sent a delegate to a Farmer Labor Party conference in Chicago, but only after a request from the CFL. Shortly thereafter the local declined both to send delegates to a May Day conference arranged by the Workers Party and to purchase tickets for the support of IWW prisoners. During 1923, the Local scarcely took part in any of the FLP activities and in 1924 it was divided in its support for the Robert La Follette campaign.

After the La Follette campaign the local’s political engagement was reduced to a principal statement in favor of political action, made in a resolution for the Painters’ General Assembly in Montreal, Canada in 1925. During the rest of the 1920s activities within the local were focused on more internal union business or occasional support to the Wage Earners’ League, including its support of William Hale Thompson as the Republican mayor of the city.

It was not until the Great Depression that the motivation for independent political action from labor appeared as a topic at the union meetings again. Once again the local turned to the Farmer Labor Party. The local sent delegates to several meetings and conventions, as well as admitting speakers from the party to their local union meetings. At first the local declined to send any delegates but eventually reconsidered its decision. The political ambivalence displayed could possibly have been influenced by the fact that a certain Niels Kjar, a well-known Socialist, joined the local just before the local reconsidered.

However, the connections with the FLP came to nothing and instead the local affiliated itself with the United Front Conference. The delegates to this body were often selected from among the more radical elements within the local, or the "progressives", as they called themselves. This was probably due to the fact that many of these "Front" organizations were very much a product of the political left within the labor movement, and the locals' own radicals were thus also the ones who most strongly advocated them. This did not mean that the

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35(continued)  
36 Minutes: Jan.28, April 1, May 13 1921, Feb.10, April 4, June 16 1922.  
37 Minutes: Dec. 22 1922, Mar. 16.  
38 Ibid. July 31, 1925.  
40 Ibid. June 24, 1931.
"Front" policy and leftist political perspectives of the "progressives" were left unchallenged. In early 1935 the united front policy was openly criticized by leading members of the local. This criticism also motivated a movement within the local for the organizing of a new local in order to escape the leftists. However, the opposition failed to win the trust of the majority. Instead the local continued to take part in various "United Front"- inspired projects. But there were also differences within the progressive group which around the mid-1930s caused the progressives to regroup. This regrouping ran parallel to the political turn from the ultra-leftist front policy to the Popular Front policy advocated by the Communist Party.

In the summer of 1935 the experiences from joint actions taken by the Chicago labor movement as well as the abandonment of the sectarian policy practiced by the Communist Party, encouraged 53 local unions to call for the organizing of a Labor Party. This initiative was also monitored by Local No. 637. The local continued to send delegates to Labor Party conferences which in February of 1936 resulted in an application for membership in the Labor Party of Chicago.

During these years, 1935-37, the local was frequently visited by many speakers, both distinguished and more local talents. Professor Scott Nearing was one of the more frequent speakers. He would usually address topics on contemporary problems of organized labor in Europe or America. Dr. Alice Parson, attorney Albert Goldman, professor Maynard Kreuger, and Howard Scott were also numbered among the visiting lecturers. The local also accepted invitations, or bought tickets, for their members to visit lectures presented at other organizations’ meetings, such as when Sonja Branting spoke on political conditions in Germany or when the Scandinavian Workers’ Club held a meeting where Dr. Fred W. Ingvaldstad spoke on "Sweden: The Middle Way".

As far as political involvement goes it appears as if the local from this time also shifted toward a more "middle-way" strategy. The local continued to send delegates to Labor Party conventions, albeit more sporadically. It also submitted a resolution to the Painters’ General Assembly in 1937, urging the Painters’ Union to go on record in favor of a Farmer Labor Party on a national scale. Then in 1938 the local endorsed a resolution with an amendment to section 88

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40 Ibid. Feb.13 and 20, 1935.

41 Ibid. Mar. 20, 27, 1935. The local took part in a joint committee of locals from Painters’, Carpenters’ and Bakers’ Unions to organize a united action in favor of the "Lundeen Unemployment Bill" and the six-hour work day.

42 Minutes July 31, Aug. 28, Oct. 9 1935 and Feb. 5, 1936. When the certificate of affiliation with the Labor Party was received the local framed it; see minutes Feb. 12, 1936.
of the constitution of the Painters’ Union which stipulated that any affiliation with Communist, Nazi, German or alien-led organizations which were in opposition to the principals of the AFL would also be incompatible with membership in the Painters’ Union. This action appears to have been an attempt to reject influences from the political far left as well as the far right. However, this did not mean that the local rejected independent political action from organized labor. Nor did it mean that the local had abandoned its continuous interest in the political perspectives of the far left since during the period between 1940 and 1945 the Local continued to defend the Soviet Union and invited the secretary of the Communist Party in Illinois to speak at the local’s meeting. But all in all, the focus of the local’s interest did shift toward a more pragmatic policy of reforms. Hence, insurance and social legislation or health plans, took up more and more time at the meetings.

The political involvement of the local had thus since the early 1910s gone from a more or less unanimous support of the Socialist Party, via numerous attempts to organize and maintain an independent political labor organization, in the form of a Workers’ Party, Farmer Labor Party or simply a Labor Party of Chicago, to a more reserved support of the idea of independent political action from labor. This political transition evolved through sometimes bitter debates of which none, however, caused the local to split.

Still, Local No. 637 was not primarily a political organization but a trade union with the purpose of organizing all painters regardless of political creed. The political development and the different tensions which it caused were of course reflected in the local’s minutes but in order to evaluate to what extent the local also became part of an ethnic haven for social mobilization it is necessary to analyze how the local took part in the business of its trade union. What or whom did it support or establish alliances with, and what or whom did it oppose?

As already indicated (in the section on the pre-history and early history of Local No. 637), there was a more or less natural linkage between the Scandinavian local No. 194 and Local No. 637, basically since the members of these locals had a common history to fall back upon. But, as I will try to show, the bonds between these two locals as well as with local No. 275 also included a great deal of similarities in both political and trade union perspectives. This siblingship between local No. 194 and No. 637 put them within the realm of the

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43 Ibid. April 20, 1938.

44 Minutes, on support and defence of Sovjet see e.g. Jan. 28, 1942, Sept. 3, 1943, April 26, 1944 or Mar. 28, 1945. On invitation to Morris Child, Secretary of the Illinois Communist Party, see Jan. 26, 1944.

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haven which was constituted by the radical Scandinavian ethnic community and its organizations. At the same time their political and trade union perspectives created alliances with other locals organizing other ethnic groups. This duality created bridges across which not only ethnic conflicts evolved but also ethnic cooperation.

Local No. 637 as Part of a Multiethnic Trade Union

As mentioned, Local No. 637 was part of the victorious revolt against the old District Council No. 3 which put the local within the group of recognized "victors".\(^45\) The experience from the fight against the old PDC thus contributed to establishing both confidence within the local and positive bonds with various locals, but also a certain amount of distrust of other locals, alongside the PDC itself. Hence, from this time the local featured a more explicit and self-conscious policy. Thus, when the members felt discriminated by other BAs they complained and the local did not hesitate to take action in the PDC both against discrimination as well as against how some of the PDC delegates from other locals failed to live up to the union's constitution.\(^46\)

Another expression of this new explicitness was demonstrated during the election of PDC delegates in 1912. When the PDC candidates from various locals came to seek the endorsement of the local they were always asked whether they would be satisfied with only one term. Anyone indicating that he had ambitions of securing a more permanent position in the Council failed to secure the endorsement of the local. The reason for this action was of course the fact that some of the old District Council delegates had tried to make the Council their own personal playground. To avoid this happening again it was essential to elect delegates who understood that they were elected on behalf of the membership and not only on behalf of themselves.\(^47\) To further safeguard the local from becoming a playground for private and personal gains it was noted that the rule in the by-law stating that all members had to attend at least one union meeting per month, would be strictly enforced. The by-laws were also changed so that

\(^{45}\) A recognition of the local's status was that August Olson was engaged to speak at a mass meeting organized by the new PDC No. 14, see minutes April 21, 1911.

\(^{46}\) The local adopted a resolution against some PDC proceedings as well as supporting similar complaints from other locals (L.U.180), see minutes Jan. 19, Feb. 8, 16, 1912.

\(^{47}\) Minutes, e.g. May 24, 31 and June 7, 1912.
any member who failed to take part in union elections without a valid excuse would be fined, all with the purpose of keeping the local democratic.\textsuperscript{48}

During the time period 1911-1912 a growing number of experienced union painters came to the local directly from Sweden. Their number even caused the local to translate the local’s rituals into Swedish.\textsuperscript{49} The strong reaction against what were felt to be undemocratic methods could possibly have been reinforced as these newcomers were confronted with "the American way". This "culture chock" might also be the reason why the local during these years voted not to take part in the Labor Day parade in September instead of the traditional May 1st festivities as in Europe.

When the number of newcomers from Sweden grew, the local appears to have turned its attention inward for a period, toward the group itself. There was thus a growing interest in social events such as musical entertainments or dances that were organized by the local. It was considered acceptable to send delegates off to external arrangements when and where necessary, but the members also needed to collectively manifest themselves as a group and thereby become more cemented. This was a social pattern which coincides with the behavior of the Lake View Scandinavian Socialist Club No.9 and probably most other ethnic organizations. Soon enough their internal solidarity was to be put to the test.

After 1910 the development of housing construction, measured by the distribution of land values, shifted from large and more strongly organized contractors building in the center of the city to residential and apartment buildings constructed by smaller and less powerful contractors in the outlying areas of Chicago. This put the union in a stronger bargaining position which also favored the growth of the unions within the building trade.\textsuperscript{50} However, between 1911 and 1913 the level of new construction fell by more than 30\% in the Chicago area, while at the same time a sense of general unrest among labor arose.\textsuperscript{51} Many strikes and disputes broke out around the country with labor crying out for higher wages and better working conditions, while at the same time the drop in new construction increased the competition for work. The

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid. June 19, 1912.

\textsuperscript{49} Among those who came during this time were Ivar E. Nordström, Ragnar Johansson, Fred Spolander and Carl-Gunnar Sundquist, all names that I will have reason return to due to their activities and where at least Sundquist came with the experience of being part of the national leadership of the Swedish Painters' Union. Chas Nelson, a member of the local translated the rituals into Swedish; see minutes, Jan. 6, 1912.

\textsuperscript{50} Schneirov/ Shurbur p.90.

\textsuperscript{51} Hoyt (1933). See fig 99 p.411.
Painters’ Union in Chicago thus called a strike for higher wages in April of 1913 (65¢ per hour).

The controversies caused by the strike proved to be bitter and for the president of Local 637 even fatal. In an argument with a couple of scab painters working in the Lake View area President Edward Paul was shot dead near the corner of Belmont and Pine on April 11, 1913.52 This tragedy shocked the entire local and a motion was made to discontinue the strike. The motion, however, was voted down and at that point all the members of the strike committee (of which Paul had been a member) resigned. A new committee was elected but the majority of the new committee also resigned shortly thereafter and a third committee had to be elected. Within a month the strike was settled but the turmoil within the local continued.53 After the summer, rumors that internal reports from the local were being circulated outside the local had to be investigated. Further pressure on union solidarity was also exerted by the fact that there was a growing number of non-union painters in the Lake View area. Since the problem of non-union painters caused the local to bring the matter up before the PDC No. 14, it appears as if it saw the matter as being beyond the local’s powers. A general feeling of unease spread and it is perhaps not surprising that the degree of turnover among the officers also became a problem. It came to the point where the members taking office were explicitly urged to stay in office the whole term.54

After the turmoil of 1913, however, the local slowly stabilized. The activities of the local often reflected issues of the day, such as a general upsurge for the cooperative movement, or the Socialist Party campaign against the Hearst papers for their anti-labor writings. Frequently these activities also included some form of cooperation with other locals and preferably Local No. 194.

Even if the internal situation became more stable, the situation for labor in general was anything but stable. Both in Europe and America the conflict between labor and capital created a growing number of martyrs and this affected Local No. 637. In Sweden the defence of the three convicted youngsters who bombed the vessel Amalthea became a symbol for workers' organizational rights. This symbolism was evident to the members of Local 637 as well. With August Olson as their representative the local thus became involved in the

52 On the shooting of Paul see minutes, April 11, 18, 25, 1913; Svenska Socialisten, April 17, 1913; and Svenska Amerikanaren, April 17, 1913.

53 Minutes April, 11, 18, 25, 1913.

Amalthea Defence Committee which at this time had been reactivated. The local donated money in support of the committee's work as well as adopting a resolution which was sent to Karl Staaff, Prime Minister of Sweden.\textsuperscript{55}

There were Swedish labor organizers to be defended in America too. The arrest and conviction of Joe Hill was of course an event which was bound to be brought up in the local. But the local was just as repelled by the injustice done to other labor organizers such as Tom Mooney, Billings, MacNamara, Sacco and Vanzetti, Moyer, Pettyboone and Haywood.\textsuperscript{56}

The list of names of various labor organizers which the local supported might indicate that the local, in the name of international working class solidarity, gave its support to organized labor wherever it was attacked. But this was not always the case, which might best be illustrated by the time when James Larkin from the Irish Trade Unions came to talk about the situation for labor unions in Ireland. The local granted him the floor and listened to what he had to say. Larkin concluded by extending an invitation to the local to take part in a mass meeting to be held in support of Irish labor unions. This invitation was dealt with at the following meeting and it was made quite clear that the local had no intention of attending a mass meeting together with the Irish.\textsuperscript{57} The position taken by the local jibes with the reserved, if not to say antagonistic relation to the Irish which the Swedes often displayed.

Instead of giving its support to the Irishmen, the local continued to consolidate itself through cooperation with other locals, as well as making connections with both the network around the Socialist Party and the Swedish ethnic community in the Lake View area.

Continuing its educational efforts, the local arranged its own lecture series.\textsuperscript{58} In order to extend information and initiate debates August Olson also took the initiative of starting a bulletin for all the painters under the jurisdiction of PDC No. 14.\textsuperscript{59} However, many of the local's activities were focused inward toward the strengthening of its own coherence. Both the lecture series and the organizing of dances and other social events was a part of this effort. The local also created bonds to the Swedish ethnic community by purchasing tickets or

\textsuperscript{55} Minutes Jan. 30, 1914.

\textsuperscript{56} See the local's 50th anniversary pamphlet p. 10; or Minutes Nov. 12, 1914, Mar. 16, 1917 or spring of 1927 passim.

\textsuperscript{57} Minutes Feb. 25 and Mar. 3 1916.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid. Jan. 17, 1916

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid. Feb. 16, 1917.
accepting invitations offered by various Swedish-American fraternal organizations. By doing this, they confirmed themselves as being part of that same ethnic community. Ties to the ethnic community were further strengthened by the fact that several of the members of the local held leading positions in other Swedish-American organizations. The respect shown these organizations was indicated by the fact that absence from union meetings was considered acceptable for the members who had to attend their duties as officers in these organizations.

All through the latter half of the 1910s the local continued to operate according to a kind of in-group perspective. Its perception and definition of "its" group varied according to the issue at hand, but as mentioned earlier, preference was given first to other Scandinavians and secondly to the Germans and Local No. 275. It also appears as if the local continued to be somewhat reluctant to manifest itself outside of the haven constituted by these locals. One example comes from 1916 when the local, for the first time as a local, joined a Labor Day parade. The decision to attend did not come as a result of a demand raised by anyone within the local but after a written request from the Chicago Federation of Labor.

Once the local had decided to join the Labor Day parade it was also decided to make a banner bearing the local's name, to be carried in the parade. The task was not left to a member of Local No. 637 but instead turned over to a member of Local No. 194.

This was basically what also happened to the "Bulletin Project" that August Olson launched in the early 1917. After the local had endorsed his idea of starting a bulletin he went on to implant the idea in the District Council. The PDC No. 14 endorsed a publicity committee and invited all locals under its jurisdiction to elect three delegates each to this committee. This was done and August Olson, together with William Olander and Axel O. Sandine, was appointed from Local No. 637. It soon turned out, however, that opinions on

60 On the support of other events see minutes, April 28, 1916: on members acting as officers in other organizations, May 4, 1917 where we learn that e.g. Gustav Carlson and Arvid Benson were Chief and V. Grand Chief of the Independent Order of Vikings.

61 As often in times of elections there were campaigns for various candidates and through the minutes of local No. 637 the support for these candidates often came from a specific groupings of locals. In regard to these groupings, local No. 637 continued to cooperate with preferably Local No. 275 and No. 194. In the case of the joint campaign of local Nos. 637, 275 and 194 for Victor Buhr for General President of the Painters Union, see Minutes, Nov. 19, Dec. 3, 1915, Nov. 3, 1917.

the status of the *Bulletin* differed among the delegates. August Olson reported that some delegates were in favor of accepting advertisements in the *Bulletin*, something which local No. 637 instructed him to strenuously oppose.\(^\text{63}\)

Eventually, the publicity committee managed to get a board of officers appointed. Edward Hammon (Local No. 147) became chairman and H.A. Sommer (Local No. 180) secretary-treasurer for the *Bulletin*. The Editorial Committee consisted of the chairman plus John A. Runnberg (Local No. 194) and August Olson (Local No. 637). This formation, however, appears never to have gotten off the ground since less than a year later it was reported that PDC No. 14 was negotiating with Local No. 194 about printing the new agreement in the *Bulletin*. Shortly thereafter Runnberg approached Local No. 637 with an offer for the local to come in as a publishing partner. This offer was also taken *ad notam* by Local No. 637 and a committee of four was appointed to engage in talks with Runnberg and Local No. 194. Apparently these talks came to nothing since a couple of years later the publication was referred to as being the *Bulletin* of Local No. 194.\(^\text{64}\)

One can only speculate as to the reason why the joint bulletin committee collapsed and why Local No. 637 apparently never cooperated with Local No. 194 in publishing the *Bulletin*. Judging from the continuous cooperation on other issues, which included interaction between roughly the same people, it is most likely that it was practical reasons rather than conflicting perspectives which prevented Local No. 637 from participating in the *Bulletin*.

Regarding cooperation with the delegates from Locals No. 147 and No. 180 there might, however, have been conflicts of interests. As there are no sources which directly can verify anything concerning what happened within the committee, my assumption is instead based on the notion that there was a constant tension between on one hand, Local No. 147 and a number of smaller downtown locals and, on the other hand, various constellations of locals where Locals No. 194, No. 275 and No. 637 were involved. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact issues or reasons why this tension existed but it is likely that the delegates from locals like No. 194, No. 275 and No. 637 were wary of a repetition of what had happened prior to the reorganization of the District Council in 1910. It appears that there was still a sense of distrust expressed toward the District Council, which might also explain why the local, during a

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\(^{63}\)Minutes: April 13, 1917.

\(^{64}\)On the *Bulletin* see Minutes: May 25, July 13, Sept. 28, 1917, May 17, 24, 1918, Feb. 24, 1921.
major strike in 1915, refused to abolish its own strike committee in favor of the committee controlled by the PDC No. 14. Apparently this was done not because it disagreed with the policy of the PDC, but because it felt a need to remain in control of its assets.\textsuperscript{65} Another indication of the local's feeling that the District Council was being used in ways that did not meet the demands of the constitution was a request that the PDC should include a roll call in its minutes. This measure was probably an attempt to prevent the seating of delegates without proper credentials, thus improving the chance that the voting would actually reflect the will of the membership rather than a group of selected supporters of personal interests.\textsuperscript{66} The tension between Local No. 147 and the powerful Northside locals mentioned above was probably also fueled by the fact that Local No. 147 organized many Irish who stood to benefit from jobs received through the political spoils system, and through City Hall, where the Irish dominated.\textsuperscript{67}

Still, the District Council was not perceived as an alien or resented body. The tensions between the locals described above were certainly reflected in the Council but it did not totally paralyze it. On the contrary, through three major strikes between 1912 and 1919, the Painters' Union managed, together with the Carpenters', to maintain a strong union. In some respects the Painters' Union even managed somewhat better than the Carpenters', as the former succeeded in getting a contract without the limitations of the "uniform agreement" of 1918. One of the clauses that the painters thus avoided was the restriction against the right for union painters to refuse to work with non-union material, a right that has often been regarded as a cardinal principle within the American Labor Movement.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{65}Minutes, May 21, 1915.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid. July 13, 1917.

\textsuperscript{67} Interview with Manuel Carlsen, Chicago, done by Steven Sapolsky Oct. 19, 1982.

\textsuperscript{68}On the battles around the Uniform Agreement see Schneiroy/Shurbur, pp. 83f. and also Minutes, Jan. 29, 1915, Mar. 22, 1918, April 19, 1918.
The Landis Award and the Open Shop Movement

The strength of the Union during the war years was at least partly a result of war time prosperity. But the war ended and organized labor wanted to extend its struggle for democracy to the home front. The employers, however, saw no reason to hand over their power and control to organized labor. With the experience of a growing number of strikes and an intensified polarization in the political arena the conflict between labor and capital was escalated into a major battle in 1919. The employers exploited the strong nationalist sentiments caused by the war and launched the "Red Scare", where numerous labor and political leaders on the left were arrested and in many cases deported. Wrapping itself in claims of freedom, human rights, democracy and Americanism, American industry adopted what has been called "the American Plan". The key element in achieving this was the imposition of the open shop system which ultimately aimed at decreasing the strength of the unions.  

The post-war economic slump forced the Chicago building trades to fight to maintain what they had gained during the war. In 1921 this clashed with the interests of the major contractors in the Chicago building industry. Judge K. Landis was accepted as an "impartial umpire" in an attempt to arbitrate the deadlock. On September 7, 1921 he presented what has been called the Landis Award. The consequence of the Landis Award was basically that the unions were deprived of everything they had managed to obtain since 1914. Wages were cut to a level 25% below that of 1914 and employers gained the right to hire whomever they saw fit and to put the men to work with the material the employer chose.  

The response to this was a massive and spontaneous walkout from their jobs by carpenters and painters. The fight against the Landis Award contractors was fierce and continued over several years. One of the highlights of this struggle was a major demonstration organized by the majority of the building trade unions. On April 29, 1922, between fifty and one hundred thousand workers marched down Michigan Avenue with signs, banners and brass bands.  

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69 On the Open Shop movement and the American Plan see Taft (1964) pp. 364f. or Weinsten (1972) pp.73f.  
71 Ibid. p. 108; also Lindskog (1956) p.11.  

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The advent of the biggest building boom yet in Chicago in combination with the militancy and unity of the building trade unions finally broke the edge of the open shop movement. The big contractors, one after the other, went back to union hiring practices, thus returning to the closed shop policy, and in May 1926 a new uniform agreement was signed which restored the closed shop in all trades.\textsuperscript{72} Local No. 637 itself took part in the struggle against the Landis Award more as loyal union members than as flamboyant agitators.\textsuperscript{73}

According to the minutes of Local No. 637, it appears as if its efforts from 1917 were focused on defending its members against attacks caused by their political views or their status as immigrants. Another issue which appears more frequently in the minutes after 1917 is the defence of Soviet Russia.

As mentioned above, the local had previously been active in the defence of Joe Hill and other labor martyrs. In October of 1917 the local was faced with the fact that one of its own members, Ragnar Johansson, had been arrested for his political activities. This situation arose in the midst of the mobilization for the defence of another labor organizer, Tom Mooney, which might have highlighted the symbolic value of defending the local's own "victim". In any case, as soon as the arrest of Ragnar Johansson became known, the local donated $25 toward his bail and a committee of ten was elected to work for his release.\textsuperscript{74}

In a couple of weeks, Johansson's defence committee managed to raised more than $300 among the painters' locals. At that point Local 637 decided to advance the remaining $200 needed for his release.\textsuperscript{75} From the reports on this collection it is once again possible to get an indication of the bonds of loyalty between various locals at the time. Even if the relative size of the contributing locals is taken into consideration, Locals No. 194 and No. 275 still top the list, while the Irish Local No. 147 does not even appear on the list of contributors. With the reservation that the reports might be inaccurate this example also supports my assumption of how ethnic clustering forged loyalties that both affected and was reflected in the locals' activities.\textsuperscript{76}

Johansson was eventually released on bail, but only for a short period of time. The court sessions lingered on and Johansson was sent to prison again. Once again free on bail Johansson left Chicago to find work in Seattle, Washington,

\textsuperscript{72}\textit{Taft (1964)} pp.369-71.
\textsuperscript{73} Minutes, e.g. Feb. 17, Mars, 3, 17, 24, 31, May 12, July 14, 1922.
\textsuperscript{74} Minutes, Oct. 19, 1917.
\textsuperscript{75} Minutes, Nov. 9, 1917.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. Nov. 2 1917.
only to be arrested again. He was finally sentenced to ten years in prison. In 1922 Johansson was offered his freedom on the condition that he agreed to be deported. The offer was accepted and together with two other Swedes he was deported in January 1923.77

Ragnar Johansson was a well known labor organizer with his political roots in the Young Socialists (Ungsocialisterna) and syndicalist movements in Sweden. He had for instance belonged to the same club in Stockholm as Gustav Karlsson and Wallentin Wald, both later members of Local No. 637. He had further been active in the Amalthea Defence Committee in Chicago, together with both Wald and August Olson.78 Needless to say, Ragnar Johansson was an important figure within the haven of the radical Scandinavians of Chicago. It comes as no surprise that when the Scandinavian Bond and Bail Committee was organized in August of 1919 for the defence of the Scandinavians who had been arrested during the Red Scare, Local No.637 was noted as being the most generous of the donors.79 Johansson’s status as an activist within the haven of the radical Scandinavians can be illustrated by the following comparison. Johansson was not the only one from Local No.637 who was arrested for his connection with IWW and its activities. In 1918 Jos.R. Cordes, a member of Local No. 637, was arrested and sentenced to a little more than one year in prison. In his case there were no other actions taken than a promise to keep him in good standing until his release. The local also had the courtesy to include Cordes when Christmas gifts were sent to Johansson.

The only difference between Johansson and Cordes was their relation to the haven. Not being a Scandinavian, Cordes was thus left without the support that the Scandinavian community gave Johansson.80

78 On Johansson and the Amalthea Defence Committee see, S.S. Nov. 20, 27 1913; on Johansson in action together with Wald, S.S. Nov. 21 1912; IWW and SSF, Jan. 22, Dec. 3 1914.
79 On the organizing of the Scandinavian Bond and Bail Committee see, S.S. Sept. 25, 1919 and on donations Feb. 10, 1922.
80 On Cordes see Minutes, Sept. 6, Dec. 6 1918.
The End of an Era

The years around 1919 were, as mentioned earlier, ones of turbulence and change, and this also had an impact on the constitution of the haven of which Local No. 637 and a number of other organizations were a part. The Scandinavian Language Federation of the Socialist Party broke away to become an independent propaganda organization, which in turn enabled it to merge with the Scandinavian branch of the IWW. There was also an increase in the number of people both leaving and coming to the country which further challenged the relations and stability within the haven. In other words the constitution of the haven was very much up for grabs. In this situation new organizational constellations and forms were tried out and it is also in this context that many of the projects that Local No. 637 engaged in can be understood.

If the Scandinavian Bond and Bail Committee is understood as a defensive measure, there were also attempts of a more offensive character. An example of this was the involvement in cooperative projects.

The cooperative movement was by no means something that the Scandinavians came up with themselves. It was instead a method which was picked up on at the time because it appeared to serve their needs. Local No. 637 had thus supported the idea of cooperative paint shops for the purpose of underbidding non-union shops in 1915. The local had also both by itself and together with Local No. 194 acted as a cooperative when it bought truckloads of food to be sold to its members at cost. But it was not until 1919 that the cooperative movement became a dominating issue at the meetings of Local No. 637, at a time when it was also being promoted by the Chicago Federation of Labor. The local decided to endorse the drive for the cooperative movement and went on to place the local’s financial surplus, amounting to $500, with the National Cooperation Association.

Between 1919 and 1921 numerous meetings were devoted to the co-op movement. The local further engaged in neighborhood projects like the plan to erect a People’s Hall together with a number of other Scandinavian organizations in the Lake View area. The project was initiated in 1919 by the

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82 Minutes, Jan. 29, 1915, Nov. 2, 30 1917.
Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott. Among other delegates from the Café were August Olson and Wallentin Wald and "Brother" Karlquist from Local No. 637. A Swedish People’s Hall Association was organized representing some 13 different Swedish organizations on the Chicago North Side. After a couple of years, however, the committee was dissolved due to the lack of interest from other organizations in the Lake View area. Given the unstable situation among the radical groups it seems plausible that the committee had a hard time finding enough organizations to sustain the Hall project.

The local achieved roughly the same result with its investment in the National Cooperation Association. In April of 1921 the Association went bankrupt and the local had to file suit for its claims. Eventually they received a check for $5 from the lawyers Steadmen, Soelke and Johnson with a statement saying that the check was the first and final dividend in the settlement of the claims against the National Cooperation Association. With a strain of irony the local decided to keep the check as a souvenir.

During this time there was also another project that started off with good intentions and which circumstances put a stop to. Early in 1922 Wallentin Wald motioned that the local should have its own library. The local saw the potential in his suggestion and a committee of five was appointed, including Wald and August Olson. In its report the committee recommended that the local should establish a library for its members and that the sum of $200 would be appropriated for the purpose. The report was accepted and its recommendations referred to the next meeting.

As mentioned above this was the time when the local was involved in the struggle against the Landis Award and at the next union meeting this fight was the key issue. At that meeting Emil Arnold from Local No. 275 was granted the floor. He spoke of the struggle against the Landis Award and urged the local to assist in the arranging of a mass meeting in the near future. The local decided to hold an open meeting as soon as possible and met Arnold’s request by appointing a committee of three to this end. A couple of weeks later the open


84 Minutes, Apr. 30 1920 and S.S. Feb. 25 1921. Local No.637 motivated its declining to take part in the project with the high cost of building material.

85 Minutes, Apr. 15, Mar. 31, 1922.

meeting was held with speakers from the CFL as well as Arnold from Local No. 275 and Arne Swabeck from Local No. 194. The painters decided to go on strike against the Landis Award on April 1st, and as a result of this the recommendations of the library committee were tabled. As far as the minutes show, neither the committee nor the library was ever brought up again.87

The People’s Hall, the cooperative movement and the effort to establish a library can be seen as attempts to break new ground for the haven. Even though none of these projects were successful over any length of time they still indicate that there was an effort to make new connections and to build new alliances.

In one instance a project both succeeded and at the same time broke new ground. This was thanks to the support of the burgeoning "workers´ state" - Soviet Russia. The defence of the workers in Soviet Russia was brought up through the CFL and was subsequently brought before the local in 1920.88

On a national level a communist-influenced organization named the Friends of Soviet Russia (F.o.S.R.) was organized.89 In 1921 a Lake View branch was organized by a number of Swedish organizations in the area, including Local No. 637.90

The initiative to organize a local branch of F.o.S.R. was taken by the Program Committee of the Lake View Scandinavian Socialist Club. At the founding meeting representatives from the IOGT lodges Idrott, Jupiter, Svenskarna i Illinois and Förgät mig ej were invited. Representatives from the Scandinavian Socialist Club of Austin, Illinois, the male chorus Kamraterna and Svenska Atletklubben were also present. Since the CFL had endorsed the organization this organizational set-up gives us a picture of the dual network that Local No. 637 was plugged into. On the local level the ethnic component was evident but with the CFL endorsement the Swedes were drawn into the main stream American labor movement.91

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87 Ibid. Mar. 3, 10, 17, 24, 1922.
89 Draper p.337.
90 Minutes, Sept. 2, 1921.
The Search for a New Identity and Unity

The mid-1920s appears to have been a period of a continuous search for a new identity and unity for the radical Scandinavians of Lake View. Solidarity with the starving laborers in the Soviet Union and the defence of the integrity of their country created a common base for action and mobilization among not only American labor in general but also among ethnic organizations. It should also be kept in mind that during these years the Scandinavian socialists/communists went into a process of fractioning and reorganization. There were also attempts to create new organizations wherein ethnicity was articulated in a different way, as when regional descent became a widespread criterion for social mobilization among the Swedes. In this context some of the decisions and actions taken by the local thus appear to be somewhat contradictory.

An example of this contradictory policy was when the local in late 1923 voted against a resolution submitted from Local No. 10 in Portland which demanded restrictions on immigration to the US. The local then did an abrupt about-face and a few months later voted in favor of a resolution from the AFL which demanded an immigration restriction law. It should be noted that this was done at a time when there was a great influx of new members to the local, of which many were initiated on the evidence of their union cards from Sweden.

Another example of the struggle to find a new identity came in 1922 when a "Pleasure Club" was organized among the members of Local No. 637. Apparently the club was perceived as an alien body since it was denied use of the name of the local. A couple of years later, by the time the local had enrolled 1,000 members, a baseball club was organized among the local's members. This club was granted some financial support from the local despite the fact that it was loudly resented by the president of the local. The resistance from the president can thus be understood as an expression of the problems of finding legitimacy in a baseball club within the context of the haven. A soccer club might have fitted the context better.

However, this period of regrouping and reorganization also created new opportunities for mobilization of a less noble kind. In the early 1910s Lawrence P. Lindelof, a Swede out of Local No. 180, was elected Secretary Treasurer for Painters' District Council No. 14 in Chicago and as such he became respected...

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92 On the Pleasure Club see Minutes: Aug. 8 1922, and on Baseball club; June 6, 27, July 18, 1924.
and well liked. In 1925, however, he was chased out of his office at gunpoint by his own bodyguard, Arthur W. Wallace, who then took over himself.

It is still a mystery why this takeover was not resented given the fact that in the two last elections, 1924 and 1925, Lindelof received between 80% and 90% of the votes cast in Local No. 637. Lindelof also received a donation of $500 as a token of appreciation for his work in PDC No. 14. Lindelof moved down to Hammond, Indiana, and became affiliated with Local No. 460. As a member of that local he was then nominated for General Secretary Treasurer. Local No. 637 endorsed his nomination and in the election he received 966 out of 1,012 votes cast in Local No. 637. All of this indicates that there were no hard feelings against Lindelof. The story of L.P. Lindelof himself lies beyond the scope of the present study but let it be remembered that he went on to become General President of the whole International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades.  

A plausible explanation as to how it was possible to force Lindelof out of office might thus be the general disorientation within most painters´ locals due to the dynamics of the reorganization within not only the Scandinavian group but the labor movement in general.

Once established in office, Arthur W. Wallace did devote himself to the fight against the open shop movement together with the BTC. This might have given the Painters´ Union a sense of positive momentum, which in turn defused whatever resentments were held against him. In June, 1926, when it was time for union elections, this argument was also referred to in the Local´s endorsement of Wallace´s candidacy as Secretary Treasurer.

Through Radicalization and the Great Depression

After the edge of the open-shop movement had been broken the Chicago painters enjoyed a few years of prosperity. The initiation fee for the Painters´ Union was doubled and went from $100 to $200 as a result of the growing strength of the Union. But the building boom of the 1920s came to an end and unemployment

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94 Minutes, June 2, 1926.
among painters started to rise again with an increasing competition for jobs, siring tensions within the union as a consequence.

Once again the various painters' locals started to coagulate as in 1928 when locals No. 194, 275 and 637 initiated a drive for the five-day work week. This drive was successful and a new contract securing the five-day week was signed. Although the effect of the five-day work week was that the jobs were spread among a greater number of painters, the unemployment rate still went up.

The protective network of ethnic organizations chipped in to support its allies, such as when Café Idrott invited the unemployed members of Local No. 637 to spend their time at the cafe free of charge. The local also made plans to establish an Aid and Relief Society with funds separated from the funds of the local and incorporated under the laws of Illinois. Demands were raised within the local for stricter enforcement of the agreement as well as the need to prevent competition from non-union painters through an organizational drive to recruit them for the union.

For the first time the demand for general unemployment insurance was also raised within the local. This perspective on the state as the guardian of social welfare was also being raised by other unions which thus connected the local to the general discourse within the Chicago labor movement.

As shown by Cohen the shift in focus from ethnic organizations to the state indicated that common ground for inter-ethnic mobilization had been established. Nevertheless, in the case of the Painters' Union in Chicago, it is evident that ethnicity had not become obsolete as a base for mobilization. As the Depression was approaching, the hard times created tensions within the union and this in turn implemented a more pronounced ethnic voting pattern in the Business Agent elections.

Hard times and PDC members complaining about the great influx of old and infirm painters who threatened to drain the Sick and Death Benefit funds spurred the locals to become more protective. Hence, to protect its benefit funds the local revised the rules in 1930. This measure could be understood as an act of exclusion toward "newcomers"; however, it should be noted that simultaneously

96 Ibid. Jan. 4, 1928.
97 Ibid. Jan. 1, May 5, 8, July 31. On organized labors shift of focus toward the state, see Cohen, pp. 267 f.
98 The protection of the Sick and Death Benefit Funds was first brought up on Oct. 19, 1927 (see minutes) and the rules finally revised Nov. 12, 1930.
there was a debate on shortening the working week to three days with the explicit motivation of being able to distribute the work among the members more equally.99

Still, Local No. 637 lost only about one third of its members due to the depression while many other unions and locals averaged a loss of about half of their membership.100 It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for this but it is likely that it was due to a combination of several factors. First of all the local adopted a conscious policy of supporting its members and making it possible for them to remain in good standing. The three-day work week is an expression of this and the local even went as far as to divide committee assignments among unemployed members in order for them to earn some money. Assessments to "rescue" members up for suspension were also equally distributed among members.101 Secondly, the fact that the Scandinavian painters had a reputation of being good and hardworking craftsmen might have been a factor working to their advantage when painters were needed. Thirdly, the relatively high family-income among the Swedes indicates that the ability to pay dues was better than average.

It is also possible that these factors might have played some role when Local No. 637, first in 1930 and then in 1931, voted against a $1 assessment to the PDC intended for unemployed members. It was one thing to divide the jobs that were available equally among fellow workers, but another thing to hand over money to a PDC which was run by someone in whom it did not have complete trust. Furthermore, there had been a committee working on a proposition on how to take care of the unemployed painters in Chicago. Since the committee was unable to come up with any plan for this purpose, it was recommended that each local should take care of its own members. Handing over $1 per member to the PDC was thus irrelevant given the committee's recommendations.102

Although the return on the ballot showed a majority (3,045-1,691) in favor of the $1 assessment the decision taken by PDC No.14 was loudly resented by members from both local No. 637 and No. 275. The man who was most

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99 Ibid. Oct. 8, 1930.

100 Ibid. Sept. 10 1930. The local went from a peak in 1929 when it enrolled 1,552 members to 1933 when only 975 members were in good standing. The members then returned and by 1937 the local organized a little more than 1,800 members (see quarterly reports in minutes).


102 Ibid. July, 16 1930.
articulate, or perhaps most vehement was William Flodin from Local No. 637. Due to Flodin’s outspoken opposition against the assessment, the District Council requested him to appear before a board of Business Agents for questioning. Flodin resented this request and stated his case before the local, which decided to appoint a committee of five to accompany Flodin to the PDC. However, Flodin was never heard in the District Council and the accusations made against him were thus never resolved. The matter was discussed both at the local and at Council meetings but the accusations against Flodin and the refusal to hear him in the Council were either referred to a coming meeting or left with "no action taken". It was also made evident that the practice of refusing to hear opponents was also being used against members from Local No. 275. This practice was of course resented by the local but no other action was taken and the whole matter eventually died out.

The depression became a watershed for local No. 637 in the sense that some voices faded while new, and in many cases more militant voices were heard. One of those that faded was August Olson’s, who passed away on February 27, 1932 after a short illness. Many prominent labor organizers were present at his funeral and he was honored by a resolution adopted by the Chicago Federation of Labor.104

Among those who started to raise their voices were Bill Flodin, a well known wrestling champion, also known as "Cyclone Bill". Flodin was not totally new to organized labor. Before his name first appears in the minutes of Local No. 637 in 1913, he had been a member of the Socialist Party. In 1929 he became Secretary Treasurer for the Lake View Workers’ Athletic Club which met at Café Idrott. The club was not affiliated with the Scandinavian Workers’ Club in Lake View (Communist Party) but kept close relations with it. In 1931 the personal interests of Flodin came in conflict with the current party edict which resulted in somewhat chilly relations between the two organizations. Flodin still declared himself sympathetic toward the ideas of communism, though he renounced his role as politician. He nevertheless became a leading figure among a group of progressive painters which was organized among the members of Local No. 637.105

103 On the opposition against the $1 assessment, see Minutes: Aug. 12, 26, Sept. 2, 16, 23, 30, 1931, Jan. 20, 27, Mar. 23, Apr. 13, 1932.

104 Ibid. Mar. 16, 1932; also minutes of CFL from its meeting Mar. 6, 1932.

Although no records are left from this "club" in which Flodin became influential it is reasonable to assume that many of the names that start to appear in the minutes in one way or another belonged to this group of radical painters. The names recurring with the greatest frequency included Ivar E. Nordström, Thor Wendell, Fred Spolander, Elmer Johnson, Harry Cohen, Martin Sundström, Thor Lundblad, Gunnar Williams, Robert Palm and Felix Ölander.

These names appear in connection with unemployment and relief issues which constituted many of the discussions during the depression.\textsuperscript{106} When these issues were discussed it was also revealed that Local No. 637 often had a slightly different perspective on how unemployment among the painters ought to be fought. It also appears as if the local often had a hard time getting across in the PDC. Since the PDC minutes are lost it is difficult to analyze why this was, but a fair guess would point at various forms of bureaucratic manoeuvering from those who controlled the Council.\textsuperscript{107}

This became evident when PDC submitted a proposition for a split wage scale, one for new jobs and one for maintenance jobs. The proposition was rejected and instead the local advocated a six-hour workday and a plan for dividing the jobs available among the unemployed. The split wage scale was also rejected by the majority of the painters in Chicago. The alternative plan submitted by Local No.637 was for some reason not even voted on.

The handling of this matter was criticized by the local's members but before it became clear to the members that their resolutions had been unfairly dumped, S.T. Wallace came to the local and gave a speech.\textsuperscript{108} Wallace spoke about the difficult situation in the trade caused by the depression and the strenuous efforts to enforce the wage scale. On the basis of this fiery speech Wallace managed to receive the local's endorsement for his reelection as Secretary Treasurer of PDC No. 14.

\textsuperscript{106} These men were also heard in connection with speeches on the current world situation, the threat of war and fascism or new directions for the union.

\textsuperscript{107} In an interview Manuel Carlsen, Chicago, long-time member of Local No.194 told Steven Sapolsky that the District Council was dominated by the Irish through Locals No. 147 and No. 180 (Interview by Steven Sapolsky, Oct. 19, 1982). Rudolph Bergman, Portland, Ore. analyzed the democracy of the Chicago District Council in the 1930s in an interview done in 1986. Bergman who lived in Chicago during a period in the 1930s saw how some of the big locals bought the smaller locals from the "Allied Trades" through a system of favoritism. See also Nordahl (1987) pp.105-106.

\textsuperscript{108} On the split wage scale proposition and referendum, see Minutes: April 6, May 11,18, 1932.
A couple of weeks later Wallace came back to inform the local that there would be no election, since the only candidate who had challenged him for his seat, Br. Walters from Local No. 275, had "resigned". It is doubtful that the credibility of Mr. Wallace increased when it became known a few weeks later that Wallace's opponent had been forced to resign due to his card being revoked by the PDC.

From this time on the progressive elements of Local No. 637 started to cash in on some of the connections they had established through their engagement in various political and trade union committees. It appears that the Chicago Federation of Labor provided many of these connections through its committees and activities dealing with unemployment and relief. This meant that the local started to act with increased self-confidence as well as more independence vis-à-vis PDC No. 14.

Local No. 637 relinked with Local No. 194 in the efforts for the six-hour day and eventually managed to get the PDC to vote on this proposition. The vote in the Council proved overwhelmingly in favor of a six-hour day contract.

Brother Harry Cohen from the local's Relief Committee further reported that a joint unemployment and relief committee had turned to the secretary of the Illinois State Federation of Labor for the endorsement of said committee. It should be noted that the secretary was Victor Olander, but whether his Swedish descent played any role in this instance is not mentioned in the minutes. The action taken by the committee still indicates that it had started to operate independently of the District Council.

There were also ethnic institutions that were used for mobilization. Martin Sundström called attention to the literary meetings that were presented by the Swedish Educational League at Café Idrott, stating that they would be of great interest to all unemployed.

Furthermore, delegates from the local took part in organizing CFL hunger marches as well as the Committee for the Protection of the Foreign-Born, which later became the International Labor Defence. Fred Spolander and Harry Cohen were the two most frequently delegated from the local, but as of December 1932 Ivar Nordström stepped forward as the spearhead of the progressive group.

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109 Minutes, June 8, 22, 1932.
Nordström was at that time elected delegate to the PDC as well as onto a committee to make recommendations on the new agreement.\textsuperscript{113}

The report from the committee on a new agreement resulted in a resolution which was adopted by the local and further to be submitted to the PDC. Briefly, the resolution called for: the six-hour day - one shift only; stricter enforcement of the agreement and the working rules; initiation of a system of shop stewards; and a sliding scale of wages related to inflation.\textsuperscript{114}

In the minutes we read that a committee was appointed to "further the interests of Local Union 637 in regards to Resolution adopted by Local Union 637. Motion Carried appointed were H. Cohen, Ivar Nordstrom, Einar Dahlman, Thor Lundblad, Thor Wendell, Wm Flodin and Gust Nelborg".\textsuperscript{115}

At the same union meeting another document was adopted by the local. This was the resolution submitted by the Relief Conference of Locals Nos. 147, 194, 275, 637 and 1211, adopted by the conference the day before at Belmont Hall. This resolution dealt with the way in which the relief stations run by the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission and the Cook County Bureau of Public Welfare, functioned. The resolution called upon all other locals under the jurisdiction of the District Council to organize relief committees for the protection of the rights of their unemployed members and for PDC No. 14 to recognize the relief committees by issuing them credentials.\textsuperscript{116}

Someone apparently felt threatened by this increasing activity outside the District Council, because the following week the local received a communication from the PDC warning that a rival Painters Organization was about to be organized by the Trade Union Unity League. At this time the Illinois State Federation of Labor also felt the growing tension within the labor movement but chose to phrase its communication as a warning against the gangster menace.\textsuperscript{117}

In one sense there was a bit of truth to both these warnings. On one hand, during this time the economic depression played into the hands of the Communist Party, which managed to recruit and expand its rank and file.\textsuperscript{118} The

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid. Dec. 28 1932.

\textsuperscript{114} See resolution dated Jan. 4, 1932, enclosed with minutes of Local No.637 same date.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid. Jan. 4 1933.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. Document enclosed in the minute book dated Jan. 3 1933.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. Jan. 18, 25 1933.

\textsuperscript{118} On the recruitment of new members for the Communist Party see also above on (continued...)}
warning against a dual painters' organization thus derived from a growing number of activists loyal to the Communist Party rather than to the union boss. On the other hand, facing the threat of declining power it is known that some chose to defend their positions using means that were not sanctioned by law, means with which Local No. 637 was soon to be confronted.

However, before things started to get rough the local made contact with another communist-influenced body, the United Front Conference. Representing the local were Harry Cohen and Thor Wendell. A couple of weeks later, Cohen was reported to have been beaten by an unknown party. At that same union meeting the local decided to send Fred Spolander and Bill Flodin to a Tom Mooney conference, and a couple of weeks later Spolander was reported having been robbed after a union meeting.\(^{119}\)

Whether these crimes were the result of someone expressing displeasure at the engagement of Cohen and Spolander is impossible to discern. Considering the incidents that the local was about to face, however, the treatment of Cohen and Spolander did mark the beginning of an era of increased tensions within the Painters' Union.

Meanwhile, the local continued to rally support both for its resolution on the six-hour day, the division of jobs and enforcement of the scale and the agreement, as well as for the defence of Tom Mooney. It was decided to send delegates from the local to visit the other locals in regard to the Tom Mooney case. Delegated were Elmer Jonson, Fred Spolander, Harald Höglund, Thor Wendell, Harry Cohen, Gust. Knapp, Ivar Nordström, Bill Flodin and John Björk.\(^{120}\)

Given the fact that this was decided in early May, and that in late May the local announced its nomination of Ivar Nordström as candidate for Secretary Treasurer of the District Council, it is not unlikely that the rally for Tom Mooney became just as much a rally for Nordström.

The next member to be attacked was Bill Flodin. He was beaten on a job where members from Local No. 637 were pulled off the job to be replaced by members from Local No. 147. This indicates that the brutal methods used by ordinary

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\(^{118}\) (...continued)

the growth of the Scandinavian Workers Club in Lake View, p.xx

\(^{119}\) Minutes, Feb. 8,15, Mar. 22, April 26, 1933.

\(^{120}\) Ibid. May, 3 1933.
criminals had made its way into the union ranks, a fact that Ivar Nordström also was about to experience.\textsuperscript{121}

During the summer of 1933 the CFL initiated an organizational drive and the unemployed managed to establish some support from organized labor, a situation which must have been in favor of Nordström’s campaign in support of his opinions on how to increase union strength.\textsuperscript{122} At the election, Nordström’s official observers were deprived of their right to act as such. It can thus only be noted that Wallace won the election.

A few weeks after the election, Wallace went after Nordström at a District Council meeting. Wallace staged a "lynch talk", in which it has been claimed that he had suggested that the contents of Nordström’s skull should decorate the walls of the council headquarters and his body be pitched out the window.

Wallace’s speech resulted in the unseating of Elmer Johnson and Ivar Nordström. Furthermore, Nordström was so badly beaten that he had to spend eight days at the Swedish Covenant Hospital and, needless to say, for the time being out of the race.\textsuperscript{123} The treatment given Johnson and Nordström at the PDC was of course resented by Local No. 637 as well as by Local No. 194. They demanded that the General Executive Board should come to Chicago to pursue an investigation of the matter. However, nothing came out of this and the whole issue faded out.\textsuperscript{124} It took Nordström more than six months to recover and get back to work. In March 1934 Nordström returned to his union activities when he was appointed to a committee to study the Wagner Act.

With the beating of Nordström, Wallace eliminated a threat and provided himself with more room to manoeuver, but the incident also brought the tensions within Local No. 637 to the surface. The momentum that Wallace had regained was used to impede not only Local No. 637 but any local that tried to challenge his position. Wallace’s power was displayed whenever the local became engaged in activities where there was a chance to influence and build alliances with other locals. An example of this is when the local wanted to take part in job marches organized by the Cook County Unemployment Councils or the CFL. Probably to further strengthen Wallace’s control, the PDC sent out a communication in

\textsuperscript{121}On Flodin’s beating see Minutes: May 10, 1933.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid. Jul. 5, 19, Aug. 16, 1933.

\textsuperscript{123}Minutes: Aug. 23, 1933, enclosed hospital bill from Swedish Covenant Hospital, Chicago, dated Jan. 27 1945, for treatment received Aug. 18-26, 1933, by Ivar E. Nordström. See also Chicago Union Painter: Jan. and May 1936.

\textsuperscript{124}Minutes: Aug. 23, 30, Sept. 13, Nov. 1 1933.
October 1934, in which the locals were instructed not to let anybody speak before them without credentials from the District Council.125

Nevertheless, Local No. 637 continued to rally for the six-hour day as well other means to improve conditions for the union painters. The committee appointed to deal with this matter was instructed by the local to visit the PDC in order to present its report. However, the committee was prevented from doing this when the Council refused to grant the floor to the committee. After this humiliating treatment the District Council left the local´s protest without notice along with its protest against the hike in pay granted the Business Agents and the Secretary Treasurer.126

The tensions within the local were primarily expressed through the objections made against the support of Nordström. After the beating of Nordström, the majority of the local wanted to support him by taking care of his hospital bill. This was however resented by some members who even turned to the General Secretary Treasurer, Swick, who sustained their protest. Nordström´s supporters thus had to stage an evening of entertainment to raise the money for his bills. Even though this turned out to be a successful evening with some 350 people attending, it still indicates the tension within the local.127

The struggle between the "progressives" and the more "conservative" fraction was also revealed in the local´s elections. Nordström´s position as one of the local´s trustees was challenged and he managed to win by a margin of only 12 votes.128 The same slim margin was also in favor of Bill Flodin when first elected president of the local and then a few months later its Business Agent.129

As Wallace had regained control over the DC, Local No. 637 had to find means and ways to promote its interests elsewhere and once again it was primarily the CFL and various ad hoc committees that provided a stage. The local´s delegate to the CFL, Elmer Johnson, appears to have been a successful

126 Minutes, April 18, 25, 1934.
127 On tensions within Local No. 637 and the support for Nordström, and cooperation with the Lake View Scandinavian Workers Club No. 9, see N.T. Sept. 9, 28, Dec. 28 1933. Minutes, Sept. 6, 27, Oct. 18, 25, Nov. 8, 22, Dec. 6, 1933, Feb. 7, 1934.
128 Minutes, Dec. 27, 1933. Nordström received 130 votes while his opponent received 118 votes. There were also opponents challenging the "progressives" on other positions as well. However all lost by a slim margin.
129 Ibid. Jan. 3, June 6, 1934. Flodin beat Kline for president by 292 to 206 and H. Landhal 460 to 398 for BA.
mediator since his engagement in the CFL in September 1934 rendered him a nomination for Vice President of the CFL.\textsuperscript{130}

The local increased its number of delegates to the CFL from one to six and among the newly elected were Harry Cohen and Ivar Nordström. From that time, when members of the local were unfairly treated at the relief stations they did not go to the PDC for help but instead to their own local, which then turned to the CFL.\textsuperscript{131}

\section*{1935: A Year of Turning Tides}

In 1935 the local was once again drawn into a fight against S.T. Wallace. This time, however, would prove to be the time when the tide turned for the "progressives" of Local No. 637.

It started in January when the District Council submitted a proposition for some changes in the constitution of PDC No. 14. A few weeks later it was brought to the locals' attention that the votes casted in the PDC were based on inadequate figures pertaining to the number of members represented from specific locals. Consequently, the ballot would be invalid and unconstitutional. A member of Local No. 147 was granted the floor to testify as to how members of certain locals had been intimidated into voting in favor of the amendments offered in the last referendum. Other members testified to fraudulent vote counts in other locals. This matter spurred local No. 637 to appoint a committee to work together with other locals to compile facts on the presumed vote fraud.\textsuperscript{132}

After a couple of months a joint committee of Locals Nos. 273, 275 and 637 reported that they had compiled evidence to prove that the amendments adopted were unconstitutional and that a fraudulent vote had been registered in a number of locals, and that this evidence was to be presented before the General Executive Board. It was also reported that Wallace did not like the work done

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid. Sept. 5, 1934.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid. Jan. 9, 30 1935.
\end{flushright}
by the joint committee. Wallace had stated that the committee was only "out to make trouble" and that it did harm to the organization.\textsuperscript{133}

In the midst of a situation where the credibility of the PDC was at stake, the local itself was challenged by the minority fraction of its members. Business Agent Flodin reported that a movement to organize a new local on Local No.637’s home turf had been launched. An anonymous letter signed "One of the Dissatisfied" was mailed to the local. Bill Flodin, Martin Sundström, Ivar Nordström and a couple of others were appointed to inform all members about a meeting to discuss this matter. At the next meeting the writer of the letter failed to take the floor to explain the opinions expressed in the letter. In the discussion that followed, however, two of the members who had challenged the progressives in the elections, Landahl and Kline, stated that they would favor a split of the local and that they were opposed to the United Front and the policies pursued by the local. But, as this antagonism was brought out into the open the dissident movement lost its momentum.\textsuperscript{134}

Fraud and dissent were not the only topics that occupied the time and minds of the painters of Local No. 637. The ILD reminded the members of their duty to combat both old and new anti-labor and anti-union legislation, including the laws on Criminal Syndicalism.

Locals No. 275 and No. 637 had managed to find a mutual basis both in dealing with practical problems of the day-to-day work of the painter and in their perspectives on how a union should function. For this purpose Local No. 637 engaged in a joint committee with Local No. 275 to find means and ways to improve union conditions.

In the first report from the joint committee it was stated that the committee had plans to organize a protest march on May 1st against anti-labor legislation in Springfield and Washington, D.C, and in favor of the six-hour day and the Lundeen Unemployment Insurance Bill. The committee, which had received support from one Carpenters’ local (No. 181) and one Bakers’ local (No. 62) took its plan to the CFL and urged that body to call for a conference. This conference gathered almost 500 delegates representing 471 organizations, and staged a mighty manifestation and parade on May 1st against fascism and for the

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid. Feb. 6, Mar. 6 1935.

\textsuperscript{134}Minutes: Feb. 13, 20 1935.
six-hour day and unemployment insurance. Local No.637 went on record as being in favor of the said manifestation.\textsuperscript{135}

Apparently Wallace started to feel the heat, because two of the leading figures behind all of this work, Elmer Johnson and Harry Cohen, were called by him to appear before the PDC on April 18, 1935, to answer to charges made against them. However, the local refused to send Cohen and Johnson to any trial due to the unconstitutional procedure.\textsuperscript{136}

On May 1st Brother Starkeson, a delegate to the May 1st conference, was reported having been "slugged" by two thugs at his home and on May 8th it was announced at the local's meeting that Elmer Johnson and Harry Cohen had been expelled from the Painters' Union by PDC No. 14.

The first reaction from Local No. 637 was a motion stating that the section in the PDC minutes regarding the expulsion of Johnson/Cohen should be rejected. The Chairman, however, refused to sustain that motion along with an appeal to his refusal. He was further seconded by Flodin, Sundström and Nelborg who all referred to the risk of getting the local's charter revoked if they did not comply with the ruling of the District Council.\textsuperscript{137}

The reaction from the first meeting after the expulsion of Johnson/Cohen set the tone for the debate that followed. There were critical voices raised against Johnson's and Cohen's unwillingness to compromise on what was referred to as their "progressive principles". Nevertheless, many members also stressed the need to defend Johnson and Cohen and demanded a retrial and the reinstatement of the two. This finally became the official policy of the local.\textsuperscript{138}

The "progressives" of Local No. 637 once again nominated Ivar Nordström as their candidate to challenge Wallace for his position as Secretary Treasurer of the DC. An election committee was appointed and Thor Wendell suggested that a mass meeting in support of Nordström should be called.\textsuperscript{139}

As indicated by the response to the expulsion of Johnson/Cohen there was from this time on a certain ambivalence regarding the support of the "progressives", including Nordström. His eligibility to run, on account of having been unseated in the PDC a couple of years earlier, was also challenged. Flodin stated that he did not believe that Nordström should "sacrifice" himself for the job. Regarding

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid. Mar. 13, 20, 27, Apr. 3, 10, 1935.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid. Apr. 17, 24, 1935.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid. May 8, 1935.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid. May, 1935 \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid. June 5, 1935.
the mass meeting in favor of Nordström, Flodin also expressed serious doubts as to whether the local should, or even could, call such a meeting. Martin Sundström declared that he was in favor of a mass meeting but against the proposal, due to his lack of confidence in the leaders for the proposed mass meeting. The "progressives" thus failed to get the local to endorse their mass meeting.140

Still, Nordström appears to have remained a respected man and he received substantial support for his campaign. The local donated $250 and "Brother" Vanderberg from Local No.194 became his campaign manager. Thor Wendell also reported on how Nordström had been well received at other locals during his campaign, but when Wallace came to Local No.637 he was booed.141

After the election Nordström felt confident that he had been elected the new Secretary Treasurer. However, the official returns from the election stated that 6,745 votes had been cast for Wallace and only 2,351 for Nordström.142 Wendell suspected another vote fraud, while Flodin stated that this was just another election.

Apparently Flodin made some slanderous statements about Nordström and Wendell, because at the following meeting Wendell declared that he had brought charges against Flodin before the courts. In a way this marked a definite split between the Nordström fraction of the local and the more moderate fraction which now represented the majority. Martin Sundström probably captured what most members felt best when he stated that "the only thing L.U. 637 could do, was to stay put and take care of its own affairs until such times comes, that Chicago as a whole can unite and clean house".143

140 Ibid. June 12, 1935.
143 Minutes, July 10, 1935. On the controversy between Flodin and Wendell see also: "Flodin Drops His Mask" in Chicago Union Painter, July 1936, p.3.
The Aftermath

After the election in 1935, Nordström and Olander went to the general office in Lafayette, Indiana, to take part in a hearing regarding the charges of voting fraud in Chicago. Nordström returned convinced that the election would be declared null and void. Nevertheless it turned out that he was wrong, since no reelection was ever staged on account of the charges made.

The local continued to defend and fight for the reinstatement of Elmer Johnson and Harry Cohen. The defence was coordinated through a joint committee with Local No. 275, but when the General Executive Board sustained the expulsion of Johnson and Cohen the committee was dissolved. Thor Wendell, however, continued to rally for their support together with the rest of the "progressive" group until he was shot on his way to a union meeting. He survived but suffered severe injuries and was taken to the Swedish Covenant Hospital for treatment.

The shooting of Wendell was discussed by the local, but like in the case of Thor Lundblad it was less than enthusiastic in its backing of Wendell. "Brother" Vanderberg from Local No. 194 was also present at the meeting and stated that there was no question as to who was responsible for this shooting, thus hinting at some of Wallace's thugs. The president still refused to appoint a committee to support Wendell, calling instead for volunteers. A resolution asking the CFL to investigate was also turned down.

A few weeks later, one of the volunteers on the Wendell committee, Felix Olander, received a threatening letter supposedly from those who shot Wendell.

The struggle between the "progressives" and the DC run by Wallace continued through the following year. The "progressives" had created something called the Painters' Protective Association. This association published a monthly paper called the *Chicago Union Painter*, through which it continuously promoted its program as well as reported on the activities of Wallace. This was apparently not to his and his supporters' liking, however, since he responded by charging Nordström and Wendell with making slanderous statements, only to retract his charges after a while.

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146 *N.T.* Nov. 21, 1935.
Anonymous threatening notes were sent to both Wendell and Felix Olander. The same month another member of the local, Manne Larson, was fatally assaulted in the alley behind the meeting hall. These events might have been merely the deeds of ordinary criminals, but the timing made coincidence seem unlikely, and certainly must have heightened the sense of threat hanging over the local.\textsuperscript{147}

Wendell once again nominated Nordström for Secretary Treasurer. This time, however, Nordström failed to receive campaign funding from the local and when the election came Nordström’s name was not even put on the ballot. Furthermore, the shop that printed the \textit{Chicago Union Painter} was bombed.\textsuperscript{148}

A few months later the local received greetings from Wendell writing from Stockholm whence he had returned to regain his health.\textsuperscript{149} With the return of Wendell to Sweden the influence of the "progressives" around Nordström faded away and Wallace was never again seriously challenged. Myron "Slim" Brundage, a painter and at the time a member of Local No. 147 recalled these events.

Our union boss for the whole city (Wallace) wasn’t even a painter. He was hired as a bodyguard for the secretary of the district council (L.P. Lindelöf). One day he put a gun in the old man’s ribs and told him he was taking over. Once he was established in the office he controlled the election machinery and had no trouble getting re-elected.

Most of the membership hated him because he wasn’t even a painter and he was a hoodlum. During the depression a group was formed to put him out of business. He had them beat up and thrown out of the union. The rest of the rank and filth [sic] saw the light and went along.\textsuperscript{150} Slim Brundage might be biased but according to the minutes of Local No. 637 his story pretty much captures the essence of what happened. However, even if the influence of progressives around Nordström declined it did not mean that the

\textsuperscript{147}Minutes, Apr. 1, 22, 1936.

\textsuperscript{148}On the bombing of Union Press see \textit{N.T}, May 28, 1936 and \textit{Chicago Union Painter}, June 1936. The head of the print shop was Juel N. Christensen, a long-time member and leading figure of the Scandinavian-American Socialist movement. He was also a member of the Karl Marx Club No.1 to which also Arne Swabeck and other members of Local No.194 belonged.

\textsuperscript{149}Minutes, May 25, June 24 Dec. 23 1936. Also \textit{Chicago Union Painter}, July, 1936.

\textsuperscript{150}Slim Brundage: "Why Unions Are Bad" (dated Mar.9 1964) in Myron "Slim" Brundage papers, Newberry Library, Chicago.
local’s radicalism had vanished entirely. It would be more correct to say that there was a shift in both the focus and the personal profile of this influential group.

The shift in focus meant that there was a trend toward political activism. This started around the same time as the local’s support of Nordström began to decline in 1935. The local then supported a conference called by 53 local unions to organize a Labor Party. The local continued to send delegates to similar conferences until it finally affiliated with the Labor Party of Chicago.151

Another factor that influenced the activities within the local was the affiliation with the Chicago Labor College. Delegated to this college was Martin Sundström who simultaneously was a leading light within the Swedish Educational League (SEL). It is perhaps no surprise that the local started to interact with these two bodies. The same lecturers appeared at both the SEL and at the local and when Sundström provided information about the Chicago Labor College he included information about the SEL programs held at Café Idrott as well. Local No.637 was on one hand a local within the American Labor Movement and on the other hand a local rooted in and linked to an ethnic community, as the relationship between these two educational organizations and the local indicates. As an American organization it supported the CLC, while as an ethnic one it supported the SEL.152

Perhaps it was symptomatic of the political profile of the local that the members were advised to take note of a meeting arranged by the Scandinavian Workers’ Club featuring Dr. Fred W. Ingvaldstad speaking on "Sweden: The Middle Way".153 As indicated above (in the chapter on Café Idrott and the SEL), the profile of the lectures that were presented during the latter part of the 1930s was geared toward a much more participatory perspective than the ones presented during the earlier years of the lecture series.

The active role of the state that Ingvaldstad underlines as one of the characteristics of the Swedish Model was in effect the same policy that the American Labor movement propagated for through its demands for universal social and unemployment insurance. The conclusion was thus to change society through reforms rather then by overthrowing the system through revolution.


152 Minutes, Oct. 9, 30, 1935 or Oct. 30, 1937. On financial support to the SEL see N.T. Nov. 14, 1935. Local No.637 was noted as being one of the few that had responded to a call from the SEL for financial help.

153 Minutes, May 26, 1937.
This reformistic perspective also characterized the activities of the local during the latter part of the 1930s. The cooperation and good relations with Locals No. 194 and No. 275 continued but their activities were increasingly limited to health and insurance issues.

References were occasionally made to the implications of being a Swede in America, such as when a painter commented on what a "Dumb Green Swede" was in May 1936.

He is so dumb that if he held a position of trust and responsibility at the head of a workers organization, he would actually serve it. Instead of seeing all there is to see at a stag party he would dumbly be engaged in tiresome conferences seeking ways to better the income and conditions of those that furnish his income.\footnote{154}

Although some conflicts between individuals from Local No. 637 and the PDC and Wallace emerged, these tended most often to be conflicts on a personal level rather than conflicts representing a clash of interests of broader groups or movements. Wallace himself was eventually shot, but not as a result of a conflict with Locals No. 194, No. 275 or No. 637.\footnote{155}

The experience of Local No. 637 was that of a continuous integration into the American labor movement. This was achieved, however, by the means of using and falling back on its ethnic heritage and through the network of ethnic organizations.

If access to leading positions within American organizations is any measure of the degree of integration, the election of officers to the Illinois State Federation of Labor in 1938 would confirm that by that time, the Swedes were successfully integrated into the American labor movement. Ruben Söderström was nominated for President of the Illinois State Federation of Labor, while Victor Olander was nominated for the office of Secretary Treasurer and Charles H. Sand for First Vice President. All three were of Swedish descent.\footnote{156}

\footnote{154} Chicago Union Painter: May 1936, p.4.

\footnote{155}In 1938 four members of Local No.637 were expelled for one year, probably due to their political activities. These members were however reinstated and continued to work on various committees for health and social legislation. See minutes, April 1938 or Dec. 1940. On the shooting of Wallace see Chicago Daily Times, July 17, 1942, p.3 as well as clippings held by Local No. 637. On conflicts of a more personal nature see Flodin´s ongoing personal battle against the PDC, Minutes, June, 1938, Aug. 1944, Feb. 1946. passim.

\footnote{156} Minutes, Dec. 21, 1938.
The preference of class or trade organizations over ethnic ones was also reflected among other ethnic groups. In the case of the Germans, Hartmut Keil has demonstrated that occupational identities tended to overshadow ethnic loyalties. As the Swedes gradually gained access (in terms of influence and recognition) to the American labor unions, their loyalties toward these organizations tended to replace their ethnic loyalties.\(^{157}\)

Perhaps the most symbolic event confirming that the need for ethnic institutions had waned was the closing of Cafe Idrott. The local considered taking it over but a motion to buy the first mortgage on Cafe Idrott was voted down.\(^{158}\)

**Conclusions**

The decision not to buy Cafe Idrott was taken late in 1940 which brings us to the end of the time period of my study. It is thus possible to conclude that between the years 1906 and 1940, Local No. 637 functioned within the context of the haven of the political radicals among the Lake View Scandinavians.

During its first years the local devoted its time to finding its pace and place, mainly drawing on its own background and its connections with the Scandinavian Local No. 194 from which the bulk of the members came.

As almost all of the leading figures of the local subscribed to an ideology which made them relate positively to both political and cultural independent action by labor, the local was on the one hand linked to the the American labor movement and on the other a part of the construction of an ethnic fraction among the Scandinavians of Lake View, Chicago.

Its connection to organized labor thus engaged its members in mobilizing in defence of labor not only in America but also in their country of origin. The combination of the defence of the integrity of their fellow workers back in Sweden as well as their own, gave them a boost in self-confidence around 1910. The momentum gained by this was also aligned with the momentum gained by labor’s politically independent action in general. The local thus supported the


\(^{158}\) Minutes, Nov. 20, 27, 1940.
Socialist Party but was also engaged in the defence of persecuted labor organizers allied with other political or labor organizations. In this struggle the local clustered with other locals and organizations with which it shared historical or ideological perspectives.

Within the painters' union this meant that it continued to cooperate with Local No. 194 but also with the German-dominated Local No. 275. If these locals in one sense were historically and ideologically natural allies, there were also locals that appear to have played the role of competitor and sometimes rival. This appears to have been the case in the relationship to Local No. 147, which was dominated by the Irish.

After the test of strength between labor and capital that was staged at the end on the 1910s the local joined with the rest of the labor movement in a period of reorganization. New forms of activities and alliances were proven, some of which failed and some which succeeded. One of the movements that managed to achieve some continuity was the Friends of Soviet Russia. This organization for the support of the new "workers' state", both utilized the network of ethnic organizations and provided it with a mutual arena in which to meet.

During the Depression the local was affected like most other organizations. However, it appears as if this local managed to retain its members to a higher degree than most other locals, as it only lost about one third of its members while the average loss was about 50%. As Lizabeth Cohen has shown, this was also the time when labor turned its attention toward the State with demands for universal social and unemployment insurance. In this respect Local No. 637 was no exception, which indicates that the local had become part of a new inter-ethnic unity which also paved the way for the CIO.

The Depression created a growing radicalization among labor, a radicalization which the Communist Party was able to cash in on. This radicalization was also noticeable in the local where a "progressive club" was organized. This "club" attempted to apply the various "Front" policies stipulated by Comintern and the Communist Party.

The "progressives" also managed to mobilize a challenge to the Secretary Treasurer of PDC No. 14, Arthur W. Wallace, who by the mid-1930s had lost most of his credibility among the membership. Wallace's ability to dodge these challenges broke the back of his opponents. Simultaneously there was a shift away from ultra-leftist "Front" policies toward popular front tactics, rendering a challenge to the PDC irrelevant.

The local instead turned its attention toward education and political action for reform. Instead of turning to the PDC, the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Labor Party of Chicago became its tools.
During the latter part of the 1930s the economy began to recover and the system was thus able to deliver again. The struggle to get by, however, had been fought much on mutual ground, which had enabled the Swedes to become integrated into the American labor movement. The need to maintain their ethnic network for social mobilization had thus changed. Nevertheless, the ethnic profile of Local No. 637 persisted. The present Business Agent, Folke Eriksson came to Chicago in 1956 and he remembered how he was encouraged to join the local with the motivation that there was a need to maintain Local No. 637 as a "Swedish local".159

WE CAN'T FORGET!

that J. C. Moenich of Local Union 265 who now holds the office of Secretary-Treasurer for Painters District Council No. 14 and is a candidate in the coming election for the same office, was the one who started the attack and slugged Ivar Nordstrom and Elmer Johnson in the Painters District Council.

A vote for J. C. Moenich is an indorsement of such a brutal attack as this. We need your help to remove such men from office. The best help you can give us is to come and vote to defeat J. C. Moenich.

AFFIDAVITS FROM PERSONS WHO SAW THE ATTACK

Plate 10. "We Can't Forget" This flyer was distributed by union activists in 1944 which indicate that the attack on Ivar Nordström in 1933 made echoes within Chicago's labor movement for more than a decade.

Chapter Eight

Concluding Remarks

In the 1930s August Lindberg, former president of the Swedish LO, the National Trade Union Association, proclaimed that "The history of the Scandinavian labor movement cannot be regarded as complete until the organizational activities of our countrymen in America has been described". An obvious purpose of the present study has thus been to contribute to this rather neglected historiographical field. But, by bringing texture to the Scando-American labor movement my intention has also been to lend nuance to the image of the Swedish-American community by including a radical element as well. Hence, this study will also contribute to the ongoing discussion on the role of class and ethnicity in the process of social mobilization.

In the extensive literature on Swedish emigration and Swedish-American life scholars have dedicated themselves to the tensions between what can be regarded as a liberal and secularized fraction and a more conservative and religiously oriented fraction of the Swedish immigrants, while labor and immigrant radicalism has been largely left aside. For a more comprehensive understanding of the Swedes' integration into American society a sample of ethnic working class organizations must be studied. Three such organizations located in the Lake View district on the Chicago North Side have been analyzed as to how they interacted between themselves and in relation to their new host society between 1890 and 1940.

To focus on the city of Chicago came quite naturally since the city hosted both one of the largest concentrations of Swedish immigrants and the nucleus of the American labor movement. The objects of my case studies were selected to reflect political, cultural and economic aspects of the workers' lives and they are: the Lake View branch No. 9 of Scandinavian Socialist Federation, the Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott and Local No. 637 of International Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America.

The organizations included in the three case studies are thus to be understood as part of a limited ethnic haven existing within the context of a larger ethnic web. The complex networks within this web were organized to sustain group interests, based on the loyalties created in a dynamic interaction between class and ethnicity.
This interaction and the influence of different organizations has been illustrated by a number of individuals who simultaneously belonged to, or had some relation to, the organizations included in the haven of the Lake View radicals.

An important perspective on ethnic culture and ethnic identity has also been the notion that they are more or less constructions or inventions accomplished over time.

Parallels to the Swedes' organizational and cultural activities are evident among other ethnic groups. The Swedes nevertheless chose to organize separately. An important factor to sustain their separation was the ethnic question and in this respect the present study supports the notion of ethnicity in relation to boundary maintenance that Fredrik Barth wrote about back in 1969. But, as Kathleen Conzen has pointed out, even if there is a certain degree of "interchangeability" of the cultural components, their meaning and significance vary between groups. Since ethnic groups affirmed meaning and legitimacy through their specific culture, it is almost self-evident that not only the boundaries but also the core of the ethnic culture needs to be studied. Even though it is problematic to speak about a core in a fragmented group I have found this perspective valid for the particular group that I have studied.

The community that met the Swedes when they came to Chicago was characterized by competition and fragmentation. Class and ethnicity became important markers in this process and the ability to act as a group therefore became decisive for the defence of group interests. Both McKay/Lewis (1978) and Wieviorka (1993) have suggested that the dynamics of group formation are quite similar for groups defined by class or ethnicity. In other words, to succeed, ethnic categories had to become ethnic groups and a class had to move from being a class in itself to a class by itself.

To make this transition, consensus on how to define the group had to be achieved. The emergence of ethnic neighborhoods such as "Little Italy", "Chinatown" or "Swede Town", did in one sense visualize this process of ethnic formation and segregation. However, the homogeneity within these ethnic neighborhoods should not be overestimated. As Bodnar and others have pointed out, even if a consensus was obtained, the ethnic groups continued to be fragmented by class, age, religion or regional origin, and leaders from various segments often competed for the leadership of the whole group.

Depending on the context, the immigrants could thus chose to act as workers, neighbors or Swedish-Americans. Hence, their multiple identities and loyalties offered alternative strategies for their integration into American society. For an understanding of this integrational process it is important to study groups both in conflict and in cooperation.
To come to terms with the problems of social mobilization in relation to class and ethnic fragmentation, Eric Hirsch has suggested the concept of haven as a useful analytical tool. In the three case studies this concept has been used as a framework within which to understand both in-group and out-group interaction, hence, to understand the dynamics of building ethnic branches within an American organizational context.

The haven concept does in this respect offer a way to conceptualize identities transcending ethnic and organizational boundaries. This has been useful since the membership of the organizations included in the case studies partly overlapped and their interaction implies a strategy designed to optimize their strength.

This was not a unique Swedish-American phenomenon but rather, as disclosed in numerous studies on other ethnic groups, a general mobilizational pattern. The specific ethnic mode of cooperation, known as "folkrörelsесamverkan" (popular movement cooperation) was thus not distinguished by the participating organizations themselves but rather by their programmatic perspectives. Hence, one of the components that contributed to distinguishing the Swedish radicals from the majority of other groups was the radical and pro-labor temperance movement tradition that the immigrants had brought with them from the old country.

However, not all Swedes were in favor of organized labor or temperance and even among those who were, disagreements on tactical or strategic perspectives often occurred. To achieve consensus on how to act on these matters individuals and organizations debated their positions and by doing this they also negotiated the constitution of their radical ethnic haven.

Common features are to be found in the development and transition of the political club, the café and the union local, their phases of formation, consolidation and integration. Although the precise motives and incentives for the founding of all of these organizations still remains to be established, their activities suggest that some form of exclusion, real or imagined, motivated their actions.

As John Higham and others have pointed out, the defense of the old country, or specific groups within it, were typical mobilizing factors among many immigrant groups. In this respect the Swedes did not deviate from normal behavior since both the Painters Union Local No. 637 and the Lake View Scandinavian Socialist Branch No. 9 drew extensively on the defense of organized labor back in the old country. By doing this the immigrant Swedes affirmed the ethnic and class loyalties needed to create a general base for class and ethnic mobilization in Chicago.
The Swedes mobilization on the political arena has been analyzed from the perspective of the Lake View Scandinavian Socialist Club No. 9. The mere fact that ethnic branches were organized in association with class organizations validated both class and ethnicity as criteria for group formation. The socialist club thus devoted much time to positioning itself both in relation to the Swedish community and to the American labor movement, including its various ethnic components.

The specific Swedish or Scandinavian class identity was, as mentioned, affirmed through supporting the workers back in Sweden but also through cultivating an organizational network similar to the one the Swedes had left behind in the old country including the temperance movement, the cooperative movement, trade unions, adult educational societies and other forms of cultural organization related to labor.

After the Socialist Party chism of 1919 the majority of the Scandinavian socialists sided with the revolutionary fraction. This caused a partial collapse of the radical Scandinavian-American haven and the Lake View Club was forced to reorganize and renegotiate or reaffirm its alliances with other Swedish-American organizations.

The lack of a common ground for action made the reconstruction of the radical haven sluggish at first. However, during the first half of the 1920s, the support of Soviet Russia and the defence of the foreign-born became the common ground on which new loyalties and relations were established. Since these matters were reflected by almost all other labor groups the Swedes found themselves in a context in which they could interact with other ethnic groups as well as with the Anglo-American labor movement.

But the socialists became communists and the affiliation to the Workers´ Party dampened their sensitivity to ethnicity as a mobilizing factor. Thus the Scandinavian radicals proclaimed class as the only relevant category and the "unity work" that the Lake View Club engaged in was also described in class terms. During the same time, however, Swedish Chicago was swamped with new clubs and societies organized along regional and local identities. The pragmatics of the club also indicate that its base was not strictly class but rather ethnic class.

During the latter part of the 1920s the "unity work" through organizations such as the International Labor Defence, literally drained the club of both its manpower and incentives to mobilize for the political club. But, to paraphrase Werner Sombart, the Great Depression reduced the amount of "roast beef and apple pie" that the trade unions could bargain for and people thus started to turn
to the political arena to redress their grievances. On the verge of disintegration this change provided the club with the new members it needed to survive.

The hardships of the Great Depression gave the club an opportunity to act on a number of local issues which further enabled it to increase its membership. But the Depression created similar problems for all groups which boosted the prospects for cooperation on a wider base. As Lizabeth Cohen has so vividly shown, both the evolution of a new mass-culture as well as the inter-ethnic cooperation that took place during the 1920s created a common experience which in the 1930s resulted in a joint struggle for universal demands. Hence, the members of the Lake View Club became included in a wider haven. It appears as if the members preferred to act in this wider context since mobilization for the club itself declined during this time.

When the Comintern in 1935 proclaimed the Popular Front it more or less confirmed the pragmatics of the club. Furthermore, to enable the members to participate in the various front organizations more whole-heartedly the Scandinavian language federation discontinued its newspaper \textit{Ny Tid} less than a year after the Popular Front tactics had been adopted.

Although a few clubs survived into the 1940s, the Scandinavian language federation of the Workers’ Party withered shortly after the newspaper closed down. By that time, however, the Swedes had found other means to promote their interests. Since the economy had started to recover they fell back on the support they received from the other organizations into which they had been integrated, namely the trade unions.

The vital importance of ethnic networks for the integration into American society has also been confirmed by the study of Local No. 637 of International Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America. As in many other unions, ethnic branches were organized within the Painters Union. In 1890 the Scandinavian painters in Chicago organized their own local, known as the Scandinavian Painters’ Union Local No.194. By 1909 this local had grown to become the largest in the American Painters’ Union. By then, however, a "Swedish" painters’ local, No.637, had been organized in the Lake View district on the Chicago North Side.

Through its ethnic profile and with its location in the midst of one of the main Swedish North Side enclaves the local was linked to the same radical ethnic haven as the Lake View Socialist Club. Like the political club the local belonged to a national American organization and in common with other ethnic organizations the defence of workers in the old country was an important mobilizing factor.
When the members of Local No. 637 took action to perpetuate the Brotherhood, spread its principles, elevate their trade and advance their interests, individually and collectively, they did so in preferably collaboration with the Scandinavian Local No. 194 and the German-dominated Local No. 275. The reasons for the cooperation between these three locals were basically the same as for the composition of the other *ad hoc* committees or joint ventures that the local got itself involved in. The relation between Locals No. 637 and No. 194 was mostly based on a shared history with concordant ideological perspectives. It is thus fair to assume that the association and siblingship with Local No. 275 was a reflection of the early German influence on the Scandinavian labor movement.

At any rate, these three locals frequently sided with one another in order to promote their perspective on union tactics. In this mobilization the Irish-dominated Local No. 147 often played the role of nemesis. The antagonism between these locals was rarely referred to in terms of ethnicity or religion. Nevertheless, Swedish-Americans often associated the Irish with corruption, clannishness and Catholicism, qualities which they were quite eager to distance themselves from. It is thus likely that the antagonism that prevailed between the Swedes and the Irish in the political arena was also reflected in the way in which the painters' locals grouped themselves for union actions.

Furthermore, by making positive references to the image of Swedishness when battling union gangsterism, members from Local No. 637 drew on their own ethnicity to strengthen their position. However, by doing this they also affirmed that the conflict had ethnic connotations which thus provided other groups with incentives to mobilize on ethnicity as well. In this perspective, class fragmentation instead of unity was an imminent threat to organized labor.

The emergence of various fractions within the local indicates that its identity was not sealed once and for all. Instead, as it interacted with other locals and labor organizations as well as the Swedish-American community, its position and identity was constantly renegotiated. Since these negotiations were held in both a class and an ethnic context the participants and results of their negotiations generated an image of both the context and the potential boundary transgressions it embodied.

This can be illustrated by the various *ad hoc* committees in which the local was involved. The Scandinavian Bond and Bail Committee (a predecessor to the International Labor Defence) and the local branch of the Friends of Soviet Russia, both active during the early 1920s, are two examples of such organizations. These committees were usually constituted by representatives from the Scandinavian socialist clubs, a number of temperance lodges (IOGT or/and Verdandi), one or two trade unions and occasionally some regional societies,
workers' athletic clubs or male choruses. Together this weave of organizations and individuals composed the ethnic fabric which marked the boundaries of their haven. But since both these committees were linked to American and multiethnic organizations threads from this ethnic fabric became wefts in the complex quilt known as the United States of America.

However, the ethnic connotations of internal union conflicts did not prevent the Painters' Union Locals No. 194 (Scandinavian), No. 275 (German), and No. 637 (Swedish) from clustering to fight for a clean and democratic union. Even though they failed to replace their apparently corrupt union boss, they still managed to elevate their own position. When their union boss obstructed their efforts to take action against unfair and undemocratic methods they turned to the Chicago Federation of Labor. Since the CFL acted upon their initiatives they apparently not only became accepted but also respected.

The position and recognition obtained by Local No. 637 was not solely on the account of its engagement in union business. Just as important was probably the work that was put down in other labor committees and organizations. As illustrated by the Friends of Soviet Russia, these organizations were often based on local ethnic branches that were bound together on a city, state or national level. However, on the level above the local branch all these groups had to cooperate and it was in that interaction that new bonds of trust and solidarity were established, bonds that were essential for any group to become accepted and integrated.

There was also another aspect of both Local No. 637 and the Lake View Socialist Club. The activists within the club and the local all maintained that culture and knowledge were important tools for the elevation of the working class. To some extent they elaborated on these matters within their organizations but they also forged separate institutions which embodied crucial aspects of their culture. One of these was the Cooperative Temperance Café Idrott.

The initiative to establish a cooperative temperance café was taken by a group of Swedish youngsters within the IOGT. Many of these had come to the US after the 1909 General Strike in Sweden. With them they not only brought their experience of the strike but also their radicalism and militancy. Confronted with the saloons and pool halls they insisted on creating an alternative meeting place where a more refined and healthy culture could be offered. In this respect the Café and the lecture series that were presented there became the alternative free space where an ethic and moral codex of their own was articulated.

As shown by Heinz Ickstadt and Klaus Ensslen similar projects were created by the Germans trying to build a workers' subculture. Also in this respect the Swedes acted in a manner similar to what most other ethnic groups did when
they built churches, assembly halls, beer gardens, saloons or other types of familiar social meeting places of their own.

The Café expressed no explicit party preference. However, the personal involvement of prominent Swedish-American radicals as well as their organizations indicates that the Café became a strand in the Swedish-American radical fabric.

The Café can thus be understood as a joint venture striving to create a stage on which much of the "cultural stuff" could be enacted. Partly it became a place where the "everyday" ethnicity was confirmed but it was also a place where a more specific ethnic identity was constructed.

Perhaps the most vivid expression of how this was done was the lecture series that were held at the Café. Organized by the Swedish Educational League and presented at the café from 1917 until the late 1930s, these lectures reflected the needs and ambitions of participating groups and individuals. The choice of topics and lecturers thus give a good indication of the group's agenda and how it, in John Higham's words, was altered according to "the shifting multiple allegiances that characterize American life" (Higham 1980).

During the earlier years most lectures thus served the purpose of creating a common frame of reference for a specific Swedishness. This was done primarily by choosing topics related to Swedish history and literature. As its identity was affirmed and the group became more coherent its ability to act as a group was strengthened. Subsequently the need to know more about the society in which it acted increased. The lectures thus gradually shifted their focus to the American scene.

The transition from a formative to a participatory perspective was also evident in lectures dealing with politics and sociology, both in terms of focus and the increasing number of lectures. During the earlier years many of the lectures were mainly informative, touching upon the general political development in Sweden or Europe, while during the latter part they dealt much more with issues related to the practical everyday life of the Chicago Swedes.

This was indeed what the radical Swedes and other Scandinavians managed to accomplish. When the last Scandinavian socialist club folded in the early 1940s one of its long-time leaders concluded that many of its members held leading positions within the community as well as within the labor movement.

The connection between the people holding these offices and the club was confirmed since these officers publicly admitted the importance of the training and support they received within the club. A parallel to this can be found in the support and appreciation that various members of Painters' Local No. 637
received. The framework within which this solidarity was mobilized was the social and organizational network which constituted their radical haven.

As indicated in the three case studies the existence of an ethnic network among the radical Scandinavians provided an important base for their social mobilization. The solidarity and strength generated within their haven enabled them to interact with American society in ways that gave them an opportunity to maintain their pride and integrity. However, the "cultural stuff" through which they affirmed sense and meaning was subject to historical change. Not only did they leave their mark on American Society, but their new host society also left its mark on them. Thus when alliances based on class or inter-ethnic cooperation succeeded, new bonds of solidarity and trust were established, thus enabling the group to be redefined as to include or exclude other categories.

Ultimately this led to a redefinition of the identity of the particular group of Swedes in this study. These individuals continued to be Swedes but with an important addition - Swedes integrated into the American Labor movement. The incentive to organize along ethnic lines due to exclusion was thus no longer relevant.

When one of the leaders of the Swedish Educational League in 1919 paraphrased Karl Marx by saying, "Americanization has to be our own work" he defined the group to include all Swedes, not only the conservative or church-going Swedes. For a comprehensive understanding of the social mobilization of any ethnic group this perspective is vital since integration takes place on several levels simultaneously.

Furthermore, in our highly competitive modern society, people tend to identify themselves with and coagulate to formations that are perceived of as supportive of alternative social strategies. In this context, international migration constantly brings new groups into interaction with one another and socially determined structures including ethnicity are produced. Ethnicity and class continue to be decisive markers for social mobilization and should thus be included both in theoretical and empirical studies.
## Appendix 1

Table 3. SSAF Branches: Location and Membership in 1910 and 1920.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch and State</th>
<th>Total/Goodstand. 1910</th>
<th>Total/Goodstand. 1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Arlington, N.J.</td>
<td>19/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ansonia, Conn.</td>
<td>16/16</td>
<td>-/12</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Beverly, Mass.</td>
<td>29/16</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Boston, Mass.</td>
<td>44/33</td>
<td>-/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Bridgeport, Conn.</td>
<td>22/10</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Brooklyn, N.Y.</td>
<td>40/24</td>
<td>-/38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Buffalo, N.Y.</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>-/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Butte, Mont.</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Cambridge, Mass.</td>
<td>29/20</td>
<td>-/7</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Chicago, Englewood, Ill.</td>
<td>18/15</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Chicago, Hights, Ill.</td>
<td>13/13</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Chicago, Lake View, Ill.</td>
<td>36/22</td>
<td>-/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Chicago, 35th Ward, Ill.</td>
<td>15/15</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Hartford, Conn.</td>
<td>15/14</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Jamestown, N.Y.</td>
<td>37/30</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>17. Lynn, Mass.</td>
<td>27/18</td>
<td>-/7</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Malden, Mass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Minneapolis, Minn.</td>
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<td>20. New Haven, Conn.</td>
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<td>21. New York, N.Y.</td>
<td>32/23</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Portland, Ore.</td>
<td>53/45</td>
<td>-/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Providence, R.I.</td>
<td>23/20</td>
<td>-/10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Date 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Quincy, Mass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>San Francisco, Cal.</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>Waterbury, Conn.</td>
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<td>31.</td>
<td>Dorchetser, Mass.</td>
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<td>32.</td>
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<td>Philadelphia, Pa.</td>
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<td>Cleveland, Ohio</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>Moline, Ill.</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>Newark, N.J.</td>
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<td>40.</td>
<td>New Britain, Conn.</td>
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<td>41.</td>
<td>Seattle, Wash.</td>
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<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Springfield, Mass.</td>
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<td>43.</td>
<td>St.Paul, Minn.</td>
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<td>Warren, Pa.</td>
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<td>45.</td>
<td>Detroit, Mich.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Source Arbetaren, New York and SSAF’s Convention report)
Tabel 4 .

Table 4. SSF: Membership and Regional Distribution 1913-1920
1913
No.
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OH
MA
WI
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RI
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CITY

Chicago
Chicago
Duluth
Rockford
Racine
Kenosha
Waukegan
Chicago
West Concord
Iron Mountain
Munising
Manschester
Negaunee
W Chelmsford
Two Harbors
Ishpening
Brooklyn
Jamestown
Chicago
Indiana Harbor
New York
Braddock
Rockport
Zim
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Erie
Eveleth
Youngstown
Pullman
Moline
Hoboken
Chicago
Rockford
Iron River
Homestead
Kewanee
Galesburg
Sioux City
Cleveland
Worcester
Kenosha
Aberdeen
Crystal Falls
Muskegon
Marshfield
Quincy
Virginia
Washington
Chicago
Perth Amboy
Pittsburgh
Aurora
Superior
Boone
Loliet
Breen Bay
Providence
Chicago

1914

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In the 1930s August Lindberg, former president of the Swedish LO, the National Trade Union Association, proclaimed that "the history of the Scandinavian labor movement cannot be regarded as complete until the organizational activities of our countrymen in America has been described."

As a contribution toward this end, this book is concerned with ways in which a segment of the Swedish immigrant group mobilized to integrate with American society. Three Swedish-American working class organizations have been studied and questions have been asked as to how they interacted to promote their interests in Chicago during the first decades of this century. Apart from reflecting political, cultural, and economic perspectives on the lives of the Swedish immigrant workers, the case studies demonstrate that the workers formed an organizational network parallel to the one they knew in the old country. Like in Sweden this network was constructed as a haven for social mobilization, except that in the American context an ethnic aspect was added.