CHAPTER II

Period of Organization

I.—THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING-MEN'S ASSOCIATION

The history of the socialist movement in the United States during the period immediately following the end of the civil war is closely linked with the career of the European International Working-Men's Association, and some acquaintance with the nature and history of that association will prove a valuable aid for the proper understanding of that period of the movement.

The International Working-Men's Association, popularly known as the International, was formally organized at St. Martin's Hall, in London, on the twenty-eighth day of September, 1864. Neither time nor place could have been chosen better for the launching of a movement which stands unparalleled in the eventful history of the nineteenth century for the boldness of its conceptions, the loftiness of its ideals, and the grandeur of its proportions.

The beginning of the sixties witnessed a most remarkable industrial, social, and political upheaval in all civilized countries of both hemispheres.

The advent of steam power and railroads had rapidly revolutionized the former slow methods of production and transportation in Europe as well as in America. Home industries and small manufacture were supplanted by gigantic factories and a system of mass production. New machines were invented, new industries created, new markets discovered, and new relations established. A fresh breeze wafted through the old countries and imbued them with new energy and vigor.

The industrial progress was followed by a general political awakening and a renewal of the working-class movement.

In Germany the political indifference and reaction following the defeat of the revolution of 1848 gave way to a lively agitation for a unified fatherland, and the working men, inspired by their fearless and eloquent champion, Ferdinand Lassalle, opened a spirited campaign for universal suffrage and the rights of labor. In Italy, the population, under the leadership of Garibaldi and Mazzini, was engaged in desperate struggle against Austrian, French, and papal subjugation, and the cry of "united republic" often drowned the demand of an "independent kingdom."

In the United States the antislavery agitation had reached its climax in the outbreak of the war; and the unfortunate Poles were winning the sympathies and admiration of Europe by gallant feats in their courageous but hopeless struggle against the autocrat of all Russias.

In England and France the trade-union movement was rapidly developing, and had gained some substantial victories in numerous skirmishes with capital.

The whole continent of Europe was in a state of political and social unrest, and London teemed with political refugees of all nations. Almost every revolutionary movement of that time was represented in the capital of England by a more or less numerous group of men, and these refugees had frequent and friendly intercourse with each other.

On the occasion of the world's exhibition of 1862, several French working men, elected by their fellow workers with the special permission of Napoleon III., were sent to London at the expense of their Government. They were cordially received by their English brethren, and a "Festival of International Brotherhood" was arranged, at which the working men of various nationalities exchanged views and expressed the desire of seeing a lasting union established between the laborers of Europe. About one year later, on July 22, 1863, the London working men arranged a public demonstration in favor of the Polish revolutionists, and several delegates of

the organized French working men attended the meeting. The idea of an international union of working men was again broached.

This time the subject elicited more interest, and the organizers of the meeting decided to undertake immediate steps for the practical inauguration of the movement.

An address to the French working men was accordingly prepared by a committee, of which the shoemaker Odger was the leading spirit. The address was couched in strong and eloquent language, and laid special stress on the evil of international competition in the labor market. "Whenever working men of one country are sufficiently well organized to demand higher wages or shorter hours, they are met by the threat of the employer to hire cheaper foreign labor," argued the authors, "and this evil can only be removed by the international organization of the working class."

The address had a decidedly strong effect, and the French working men immediately elected a deputation to convey their answer to London.

It was for the purpose of receiving that deputation that the meeting at St. Martin's Hall, already alluded to, was called.

Professor Beesly, who took a very active part in the early phases of the activity of the International, presided, and Henri L. Tolain, who headed the French deputation, read his countrymen's answer to the London address. The answer was in effect an unqualified indorsement of the stand taken by the Englishmen.

After some lively discussions, the meeting elected a committee with instructions to prepare a platform and constitution of an international working-men's association, to be in force provisionally until the next convention of the association.

The committee, subsequently reinforced, consisted of fifty members, and was composed of the following nationalities: twenty-one were Englishmen, ten were Germans, France

was represented by nine members, Italy by six, Poland by two, and Switzerland by two.

The subcommittee appointed to present a constitution and declaration of principles submitted two drafts: one prepared by the famous Italian patriot Mazzini, and the other by the father of modern socialism, Karl Marx. The latter was unanimously accepted.

This provided for the continuation of the various national labor organizations affiliated with the International in their original form, and created a General Council for the administration of the international affairs of the association. The council was to be composed of delegates from the various nationalities represented in the International, and its functions were: to serve as a medium between the working men of different countries, to arbitrate all international disputes between labor organizations, to keep the members informed on the progress of the labor movement in all countries, to compile and publish international labor statistics and other useful information, etc.

The International, in the forceful language of Frederick Engels, was to be "an association of working men embracing the most progressive countries of Europe and America, and concretely demonstrating the international character of the socialist movement to the working men themselves as well as to the capitalists and governments—to the solace and encouragement of the working class, and to the fear of its enemies."

The platform or declaration of principles is a brief exposition of the fundamental thesis of modern socialism; it was never modified by the International, and has been adopted by several socialist parties as their national platform.

We reproduce it here verbatim:

"In consideration that the emancipation of the working class must be accomplished by the working class itself, that the struggle for the emancipation of the working class does not signify a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of class rule;

"That the economic dependence of the working man upon the owner of the tools of production, the sources of life, forms the basis of every kind of servitude, of social misery, of spiritual degradation, and political dependence;

"That, therefore, the economic emancipation of the working class is the great end to which every political movement must be subordinated as a simple auxiliary;

"That all exertions which, up to this time, have been directed toward the attainment of this end have failed on account of the want of solidarity between the various branches of labor in every land, and by reason of the absence of a brotherly bond of unity between the working classes of different countries;

"That the emancipation of labor is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, which embraces all countries in which modern society exists, and whose solution depends upon the practical and theoretical cooperation of the most advanced countries;

"That the present awakening of the working class in the industrial countries of Europe gives occasion for a new hope, but at the same time contains a solemn warning not to fall back into old errors, and demands an immediate union of the movements not yet united;

"The First International Labor Congress declares that the International Working-Men's Association, and all societies and individuals belonging to it, recognize truth, right, and morality as the basis of their conduct toward one another and their fellow men, without respect to color, creed, or nationality. This Congress regards it as the duty of man to demand the rights of a man and citizen, not only for himself, but for every one who does his duty. No rights without duties; no duties without rights."

The active career of the International embraced a period of about eight years, from 1864 to 1872, and the zenith of its power and influence was reached toward the end of the sixties.

The organization of the International was rather loose, and it is barely possible to estimate the number of its adherents at any time with any degree of accuracy. But it was certainly the most extensive and influential labor organization of its time. It had numerous branches in France, England, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, as well as in Australia and in the United States of America.

The European press, which had started by treating the existence of the International as a joke, soon took alarm at the growth of the organization, and inaugurated a crusade against this "great European menace to organized society." In the eyes of the frightened *bourgeoisie* the International became a widely ramified secret society, with boundless resources at its command, busily engaged in a conspiracy to inaugurate an immediate political revolution in all countries of Europe. The most adventurous and fantastic accounts of the powers and doings of the International were published and circulated, and almost every great labor struggle and every political and social event of the time were laid at its door.

But the International never was a conspiratory society, and its influence on European politics and on the international labor movement was purely moral. Its main significance consisted in establishing closer and more harmonious relations between the working men of different countries and in the deliberations of its conventions. These conventions, in which the labor organizations of the principal European countries were often represented by their ablest thinkers and most influential leaders, were six in number, and they were held at the following places and dates:

Geneva, . . .	September 3 to 9, 1866.
Lausanne, . . .	" 2 " 8, 1867.
Brussels, . . .	" 6 " 13, 1868.
Basle, ...	" 5 " 11, 1869.
Hague, . . .	" 2 " 7, 1872.
Geneva, . . .	" 8 " 13, 1873.

The number of delegates at the conventions of the International ranged from sixty to one hundred, and the subjects which occupied their attention included: Strikes, Reduction of Hours of Labor, Minimum Rate of Wages, Woman and Child Labor, Cooperative Industries, Trade-Unions, Direct Taxation, Standing Armies, Freedom of the Press, the Unemployed, Machines and their Effect, Division of Labor, the Functions of the State, Public Service, Means of Transportation and Communication, the Right to Punish, Attitude of the Working Class toward War, Ownership in Land, Grievances of Working Men, Right of Inheritance, Mutual Aid and Credit of Working Men, Political Action of the Working Class, and many other questions of interest to the labor movement. The discussions at the conventions were, as a rule, thorough and instructive, and the resolutions on the subjects passed by the International are a most valuable contribution to the history of the development of modern socialist thought.

Karl Marx was the leading spirit of the International from the start, and his policy and views maintained undisputed sway in the organization until about the Basle convention of 1869, when an opposition to Marx and Marxism was manifested for the first time, the opposition being led by the famous apostle of revolutionary anarchism—Michael Bakounin.

Bakounin was one of the most peculiar characters produced by the stormy political atmosphere of the middle of the nineteenth century; he seems to have been as energetic, eloquent, and daring as he was ambitious, inconsistent, and changeable; and even now, more than a quarter of a century after his death, the most conflicting accounts of his character and motives are current. The scion of a highly aristocratic Russian house, he devoted himself to the study of German philosophy early in life. He was identified with every revolutionary movement in France, Germany, Austria, and Russia before 1848, and was placed in charge of the defense of

Dresden upon the occasion of the Saxon revolt in 1849. Captured and condemned to death, he was saved by the successive demands of Austria and Russia for his extradition on the ground of their prior rights of execution. He was extradited to Russia and banished to Siberia, whence he made his escape, arriving in London in 1860. His restless activity was from now on divided between the agitation of Panslavism and a peculiar brand of revolutionary anarchistic communism. In 1868 he founded the "*Alliance Internationale de la Democratic Socialiste,*" a society partly open, partly secret, with a highly centralized organization, having for its aim the destruction of all present forms of government and industry, and the introduction of a social system founded on autonomous cooperative agricultural and industrial associations. In 1868 the Alliance made application for admission into the International as a body, but the application was rejected by the General Council on the ground that the views of the Alliance were not in harmony with those of the International. An intense and bitter feud between the two organizations was now waged until the Hague convention of the International in 1872, when Bakounin was expelled from the latter organization, as a result of which the Spanish, Belgian, and Jurassian federations seceded from the International and joined the Alliance. At the same time the Hague convention decided to transfer the seat of the General Council from London to New York.

The removal of the chief executive organ of the International far away from the center of the labor movement practically amounted to a suspension of the existence of the association, and such keen tacticians as Marx and the other advocates of the measure could certainly not have failed to perceive it. The step was taken deliberately.

At this stage of its career the International had practically outlived the period of its usefulness; its principal aim had been to educate the working class of different nationalities to a uniformity of thought and action, and that object was

substantially accomplished. To continue the formal organization of the International had become impracticable in view of the growing dimensions of the national labor movements, and dangerous in view of the designs on it on the part of Bakounin and his adherents.

II.—THE INTERNATIONAL AND THE "NATIONAL LABOR-UNION"

THE influence of the International on the labor movement in the United States was exercised through two distinct channels: the outspoken socialists, principally of foreign birth, affiliated with the association directly by means of branch organizations established in various places of the country, and the indigenous American labor movement was reached by its agitation principally through the medium of the National Labor-Union.

We shall describe the latter first.

Immediately upon the close of the civil war a strong trade-union movement developed in the United States. New local and national organizations sprang up in almost every trade, but there was as yet no common bond between these organizations.

The subject of consolidating the forces of organized labor in the United States was frequently discussed among the leaders of the movement, and the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' Union at its annual convention of 1863 finally took the initiative by appointing a committee "to request the appointment of similar committees from other national and international trade-unions, to meet them fully empowered to form a national tradcs' assembly." The matter was, however, not acted upon by the other trade-unions until March, 1866, when a preliminary conference of a number of men prominent in the movement was held in New York for the purpose of considering the proposition anew. The conference issued a call for a convention to be held in Baltimore in

August of the same year, and the convention met accordingly. It was an earnest and enthusiastic gathering of working men, over sixty organizations being represented by delegates. Committees were appointed to submit resolutions on the various topics discussed at the convention, and the debates on the proposed resolutions were at times very stormy.

Of great interest in connection with these debates is the appearance on the floor of the convention of a German socialist of the Lassallean school, Edward Schlegel by name. Schlegel represented the German Working Men's Association of Chicago, and was the first to broach the subject of the formation of an independent political labor party. His address on the subject was eloquent and persuasive. "A new party of the people must be in the minority when it first comes into action," he said among other things, "but what of that? Time and perseverance will give us victory; and if we are not willing to sacrifice time and employ perseverance, we are not deserving of victory. A new party must be formed, composed of the element of American labor. We are shy of fighting the old political parties, but should not be. If we are right, let us go ahead. The Free-Soil Party originated with a few thousand votes; but if it had not been formed, Lincoln would never have been President of the United States. . . . A political question is one that is decided at the ballot-box, and *here* must this question be met." Altho no immediate steps looking toward the formation of a political labor party were taken by the convention, the impassioned appeals of Schlegel made a deep impression on the delegates, who elected him vice-president at large in attestation of their "appreciation of his views and abilities."

The first convention of the International at Geneva took place within less than two weeks from the convention of the National Labor-Union above described, and the topics discussed and results arrived at by the two conventions are so similar in many respects as to give rise to the belief that both were acting upon a common and preconcerted plan.

Both conventions discussed the subjects of trade-unions, strikes, woman and child labor, and cooperative industries, and the stand of the National Labor-Union on the questions, altho less analytical and scientific than that of the International, was substantially in accord with it. Still more striking is the resemblance between the attitude of both bodies on the question of the reduction of the hours of labor. The resolution adopted by the National Labor-Union on that subject read as follows:

"*Resolved*, That the first and grand desideratum of the hour, in order to deliver the labor of the country from the thraldom of capital, is the enactment of a law whereby eight hours shall be made to constitute a legal day's work in every State of the American Union. We are firmly determined to use every power at our command for the achievement of this glorious aim."

The resolution of the International on the same subject was:

"The legal reduction of the hours of labor is a prerequisite without which all attempts to improve the condition of the working class and to ultimately emancipate it will fail. It is just as necessary to restore the health, physical strength, and energy of the working class—the great majority of every nation—as it is to secure to it the possibility to develop intellectually and to act socially and politically. The convention, therefore, proposes that eight hours be made to constitute a legal day's work. The shortening of the work-day is now being generally demanded by the working men of America; we demand it for the working men of the entire world."

But the similarity of the proceedings of the two conventions is only to be accounted for by the similarity of the conditions of the working men on both sides of the Atlantic; otherwise there was at that time no connection between the two bodies.

The first allusion to the existence of the International

was made at the second convention of the National Labor Union held in Chicago in August, 1867. The convention was much better attended than the first, the number of delegates exceeding 200, and the interest in its proceedings was heightened by the presence of the man who was for a time destined to play the most important part in the councils of the organization—William H. Sylvis.

Sylvis's influence on the labor movement of the period under discussion was so great that a brief biographical sketch of him will not be out of place here.

William H. Sylvis was born in the village of Armagh, Pennsylvania, on the 26th day of November, 1828, as the second son of a journeyman wagon-maker. His parents were too poor to give him any education, and at the age of eleven years he was hired out as some sort of domestic and general farm-hand to a certain Mr. Pawling, who first taught him the alphabet. At the age of eighteen he learned the trade of iron molding, and in 1857 he joined the Iron Molders' Union of Philadelphia, which had then been recently organized. From that time on and until the day of his death, Sylvis was ever active in the trade-union movement. Wherever an enterprise or struggle of any magnitude was undertaken by working men of his trade, Sylvis was sure to be found in the front ranks of the movement, and his name is identified with almost every important phase of the trade-union history of that period.

In 1859 a national convention of iron molders was called on the suggestion of Sylvis, who was also the author of the address issued by the convention to the iron molders of the United States.

The address was a brief and pithy document, and a remarkable attestation of the keenness of intellect and eloquence of style of this humble working man with no educational advantages worth mentioning.

"In all countries," is one of the remarks of the address, "and at all times, capital has been used by those possessing

it to monopolize particular branches of business, until the vast and various industrial pursuits of the world have been brought under the immediate control of a comparatively small portion of mankind."

And again:

"What position are we, the mechanics of America, to hold in society? Are we to receive an equivalent for our labor sufficient to maintain us in comparative independence and respectability, to procure the means with which to educate our children, and qualify them to play their part in the world's drama; or must we be forced to bow the suppliant knee to wealth, and earn by unprofitable toil a life too void of solace to confirm the very claims that bind us to our doom?"

Sylvis was elected successively treasurer and president of the national union, and, after the organization had been considerably demoralized by the war excitement, the arduous task of reorganizing it also fell to his lot. "During this period," relates his brother,* "Sylvis wore clothes until they became quite threadbare, and he could wear them no longer; the shawl he wore to the day of his death was filled with little holes, burned there by the splashing of the molten iron from the ladles of molders in strange cities, whom he was beseeching to organize, and more than once he was compelled to beg a ride from place to place on an engine, because he had no money sufficient to pay his fare."

The extraordinary efforts of Sylvis were crowned by success, and within a short time the Iron Molders' National Union was one of the strongest and most prosperous labor organizations in the country.

Sylvis took an active and prominent part in the formation of the National Labor-Union, but sickness prevented him from attending the first convention of that body.

In the Chicago convention of 1867 he played a leading

* "The Life, Speeches, Labors, and Essays, of William H. Sylvis," by his Brother, James C. Sylvis, Philadelphia, 1872.

part. The question of the formation of an independent labor party was again broached by Sylvis, who advocated the measure with his customary logic and vigor, but the majority of the delegates were as yet not ready for so radical a step, and the proposition was voted down on a pretty close vote.

The subject of establishing official connections with the European International was also discussed, and strongly advocated by the president of the union, Jessup, and by Sylvis, who had already, on a previous occasion, expressed himself on the subject in the following language: "At this hour a struggle is going on in the Old World, the result of which will be the social and political emancipation of enslaved millions. . . . Need I tell you that the interests of labor are identical throughout the world? . . . It is a matter of vital importance that an equilibrium of wages should be established throughout the world. Hence both our sympathies and interests are enlisted in favor of the great reform movement abroad. A victory to them will be a victory to us; and the news of their triumph shall be heard across the Atlantic; the working men of America will ring out shouts of triumph from Maine to California."

The convention, however, decided not to join the International, and disposed of the subject by the adoption of the following resolution:

"*Whereas,* The efforts of the working classes in Europe to acquire political power, to improve their social conditions, and to emancipate themselves from the bondage under which they were and still are, are gratifying proof of the progress of justice, enlightenment, and civilization;

"*Resolved,* That the National Labor Convention hereby declares its sympathies, and promises its cooperation to the organized working men of Europe in their struggle against political and social injustice."

The third convention of the National Labor-Union was held in New York in August, 1868. By this time the organization had largely grown in numbers, influence, and

power, and a number of professional politicians had succeeded in gaining access to its councils.

But the leading spirit of the convention was Sylvis, and his pet idea—the establishment of an independent labor party—was at last realized; the National Reform Party was organized amid deafening cheers of the numerous delegates of the convention.

Sylvis was elected president of the organization, and it was he also who drafted its platform. The document was patterned after the Declaration of Independence; it dwelt at some length upon the rights of labor, and devoted much space to the discussion of monetary reforms in the sense of Kellog and the Greenback Party, under whose influence Sylvis had fallen.

A new and fruitful field of activity was now opened to Sylvis, who set himself to the task of building up the new party with his customary earnestness and vigor. Hardly a labor meeting of any significance was held anywhere in the country without a letter or circular being received from the indefatigable agitator and organizer.

"The organization of a new party—a working man's party—for the purpose of getting control of Congress and the several State legislatures, is a huge work, but it can and must be done." He proclaimed in one of his circulars, "We have been the tools of professional politicians of all parties long enough; let us now cut loose from all party ties, and organize a working man's party founded upon honesty, economy, and equal rights and privileges of all men."

And in another circular:

"Our people are being divided into two classes—the rich and the poor, the producers and the non-producers.

"The working people of our nation, white and black, male and female, are sinking to a condition of serfdom. Even now a slavery exists in our land worse than ever existed under the old slave system."

Since the organization of the Labor Reform Party, Sylvis

had been in correspondence with leading members of the European International, and had strongly developed in the direction of modern socialism. In a letter to the General Council at about that time he wrote:

"Our aim is a common one—it is the war between poverty and riches. Our last war has resulted in the development of an infamous moneyed aristocracy. This money power is rapidly consuming the power of the people. We are combating it, and hope to be victorious." And the General Council of the International was not slow in responding to these advances. In May, 1869, it addressed an open letter to the National Labor-Union, of which we quote the following portion:

"In our address of felicitation to Mr. Lincoln on the occasion of his reelection to the presidency of the United States, we expressed our conviction that the civil war will prove as important to the progress of the working class as the War of the Rebellion had been for the progress of the bourgeoisie.

"And actually the victorious termination of the antislavery war has inaugurated a new epoch in the annals of the working class. In the United States an independent labor movement has since sprung into life, which is not being viewed with much favor by the old parties and the professional politicians."

The address was followed by a formal request to the National Labor-Union to send delegates to the next convention of the International, to be held at Basle in 1869.

Another connecting link between the National Labor-Union and the European Socialist movement were the German labor organizations of the United States.

Already, in 1866, a number of German trade-unions in the city of New York had organized a central body under the name "Arbeiter Union" (Working-Men's Union), and two years later the organization commenced the publication of a paper under the same title, *Arbeiter Union*, which gradually acquired much influence in the German labor movement.

When the Labor Reform Party was organized, the *Arbeiter Union* supported it, but at the same time it published reports of the proceedings of the International, and by degrees fell under the influence of socialism. Especially was that the case when the editorial charge of the paper was assumed by Dr. Adolph Douai.

Douai had a very eventful career behind him. Born in Altenburg, Germany, in 1819, he received an excellent education, and devoted himself to his chosen vocation, that of teaching. He took an active part in the revolution of 1848, was captured, tried, and imprisoned, and in 1852 he emigrated to Texas. He founded a small paper in San Antonio, which was written, set, printed, and distributed by him without any outside help, so that he was often compelled to work 100 hours a week. The paper was devoted to the cause of abolition, and its editor was, on that account, often subjected to persecutions and ill treatment by the mob After three years of struggle, Douai was compelled to leave San Antonio, but the negro population of Texas always bore him a grateful memory for his devotion to their cause, and in 1868 he received a newspaper with the following announcement printed in bold type at the head of the first column:

"This paper, edited and set by negroes, is being printed on the same press from which Dr. Douai for the first time advocated the emancipation of the negroes in Texas. Let this serve him as a token of gratitude of the colored race that they preserve the memory of his efforts for their freedom."

During the following ten years Douai again took up his interrupted pedagogic labors in Boston, Hoboken, and New York, until he was elected to the editorship of the *Arbeiter Union* in 1868. Later on, Douai became one of the leading exponents of Marxian socialism in the United States, and was one of the most valued members of the editorial staff of the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* from 1878 to 1888. The *Arbeiter Union*, however, was only his *début* in the practical

labor movement, and his views were not yet quite clear on all points.

His support of the platform of the National Labor Party and advocacy of the principles of the International at one and the same time were frequently criticized as inconsistent; but be that as it may, his paper contributed materially to the establishment of friendly relations between the two movements, and these relations were strengthened still further when the General German Working-Men's Association joined the National Labor-Union in February, 1869.

The fourth convention of the National Labor-Union and Labor Reform Party thus approached with every prospect of a definite union being established between that body and the International, but the progress of the tendency in that direction was suddenly checked by an unexpected event—on the 27th day of July, 1869, Sylvis died after a brief illness.

Ordinarily the life or death of a single individual matters little in a great social or political movement, but at a time when a young movement has arrived at the critical point of the parting of the ways, and the masses are uneducated and inexperienced, and easily led into any direction, the loss of a clear-minded, energetic, and honest leader is a great blow. And such was undoubtedly the effect of Sylvis's death on the further career of the American Labor-Union. That the International fully appreciated the loss is evidenced by the memorial of the General Council, which concluded with these words:

"That the American labor movement does not depend on the life of a single individual is certain, but not less certain is the fact that the loss sustained by the present labor convention through the death of Sylvis can not be compensated. The eyes of all were turned on Sylvis, who, as a general of the proletarian army, had an experience of ten years outside of his great abilities—and Sylvis is dead."

The premature death of its leader proved fatal to the progress of the National Labor-Union.

Sylvis did not leave a single successor in the ranks of the organization of sufficient intelligence and power to inoculate in the young movement the substance and spirit of the International—the distinctness of labor interests, and the German socialists of the United States had too little influence on the American labor movement to guide its political course.

At the fourth convention of the National Labor-Union, held at Philadelphia in August, 1869, it was decided to send an official representative to the Basle convention of the International.

A. C. Cameron was elected delegate, and attended the convention of the International, where he gave grossly exaggerated accounts of the strength of the organization represented by him, but did not otherwise participate in the deliberations of the convention.

The only prominent member of the National Labor-Union who remained in active correspondence with the International after Sylvis's death was Jessup, and it was he who, at the fifth convention of the organization, held at Cincinnati in August, 1870, procured the passage of the following resolution: "The National Labor-Union declares its adherence to the principles of the International Working-Men's Association, and expects to join the said association in a short time."

But the National Labor-Union never joined the International, and never developed into a genuine class-conscious working men's party.

The further fate of the National Labor Party, and with it the Labor Reform Party, was the common fate of all independent political parties formed by trade-unions before and after it. As soon as it acquired any appreciable strength, it was invaded by professional politicians, who entangled it in alliances with other political parties; its platform was gradually watered, its class character obliterated, its identity obscured, and finally it merged into one of the dominant political parties.

The dissolution of the National Labor-Union was, besides, accelerated by a series of ill-fated strikes, which weakened the labor movement in the United States. In January, 1871, the leaders of the movement met at Washington to discuss a plan of campaign. In view of the decreasing interest in the movement on the part of the industrial working men, it was decided to enlist the sympathies of the farmers by adopting some farmers' planks in the platform. The result of the change was, that the strongest trade-unions withdrew from the National Labor-Union, and when its regular annual session convened at St. Louis in August of the same year, it was attended by only twenty-one delegates. Like crows at the scent of a cadaver, the professional reformers gathered around the political corpse. In this case it was Wendell Phillips and Benjamin Butler who officiated at the funeral services of the erstwhile strong and promising labor organization. The platform adopted by the convention under their influence was the usual stock-in-trade of the middle-class reformer. Two more attempts were made to revive the movement, conventions for that purpose being called in 1873 at Columbus and in 1874 at Rochester, but the conventions evoked no interest or enthusiasm in the working class, and the National Labor-Union passed out of existence.

III.—THE INTERNATIONAL IN THE UNITED STATES

THE first organizations directly affiliated with the International appeared in the United States around the year 1868. They were small societies in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, composed almost exclusively of German socialists, and styled "sections" of the International.

In New York the movement was inaugurated by a call issued in December, 1867, for a mass meeting to be held in the Germania Assembly Rooms, on the Bowery, in January, 1868. The call was signed by C. Carl, E. Eilenberg, A.

Kamp, F. Krahlinger, and C. A. Petersen, all of whom were men of influence in German labor circles, and the meeting was well attended.

After a thorough discussion of the political situation, it was decided to organize an independent political labor party, and THE SOCIAL PARTY OF NEW YORK AND VICINITY was accordingly formed.

The party adopted a platform which was a sort of a compromise between the declaration of principles of the International and the platform of the National Labor-Union, and appointed two executive boards—one an English-speaking, and the other a German-speaking—who together formed the political campaign committee of the party. The Social Party nominated an independent ticket at the elections of 1868, but its vote seems to have been very insignificant.

Immediately after this, its first and last campaign, the party dissolved, and some of its most active and intelligent members organized the "General German Labor Association" (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein).

This was the first strictly Marxian organization of some strength and influence on American soil, and the latest phase of the socialist movement in this country may be said to date from the organization of that society.

"The members," relates Sorge,* "almost exclusively plain wage-workers of every possible trade, vied with each other in the study of the most difficult economic and political problems. Among the hundreds of members who belonged to the society from 1869 to 1874, there was hardly one who had not read his Marx ('Capital'), and more than a dozen of them had mastered the most involved passages and definitions, and were armed against any attacks of the capitalist, middle-class, radical, or reform schools."

In February, 1869, the General German Working-Men's Association was admitted to the National Labor-Union,

*"Die Arbeiterbewegung in den Vereinigten Staaten, 1867–1877," von F. A. Sorge. Neue Zeit, No. 13, 1891–92.

receiving the name "Labor-Union No. 5 of New York." It was represented by delegates in the conventions of the National Labor-Union of 1869 and 1870, but withdrew from that body immediately after the latter convention.

In the fall of 1869 the society joined the International Working-Men's Association as "Section 1 of New York," and all through the career of the International it has remained its strongest and most reliable branch in this country.

Section 1 maintained active and friendly relations with a number of trade-unions and other labor organizations in this country, and was instrumental in the formation of other sections of the International in the United States.

In 1870 a French section of the International was organized in New York, and was followed by a Bohemian section in the fall of the same year.

In 1868 a German section was formed in San Francisco, and one year later the German socialists of Chicago formed their first section.

In December, 1870, the three New York sections of the International, by the direction of the General Council, formed a provisional Central Committee for the United States, and the movement commenced to make substantial progress. The warm reception accorded by the International to the Fenian leader, O'Donovan Rossa, upon his arrival at New York in 1871, had won for the organization the sympathies of many Irishmen; the fall of the Paris Commune in the same year drove numerous radical Frenchmen to the shores of this country, where they were cordially welcomed by the International; and finally the organization succeeded in reaching the ranks of American labor by its active support in the numerous strikes of that year.

The most significant of these strikes was that of the anthracite coal miners in Pennsylvania, which lasted over six months and involved over 30,000 men.

Under these favorable circumstances the International spread rapidly. The number of sections grew within about

one year from six to thirty or more, and the territory covered by them embraced the cities of New York, Chicago, San Francisco, New Orleans, Newark, Springfield, Washington, and Williamsburg. The total number of enrolled members was about 5,000, and they were composed of Americans, Irishmen, Germans, Frenchmen, Scandinavians, and Bohemians. "The International," says Sorge in his article already quoted, "had at that time become the fashion." The press devoted much space to its proceedings, its views and methods were discussed at public meetings, and even the United States Congress paid considerable attention to its doings. So Congressman Hoar, afterward Attorney-General in the Cleveland cabinet, in the course of a debate on the question of the appointment of a commission to investigate into the conditions of labor, quoted extensively and with approval from some resolutions adopted by the General Council of the International.

This sudden popularity of the movement had, however, its reverses.

Reformers of all shades invaded the International, each of them trying to utilize the organization for the propaganda of his or her peculiar social doctrines. Especially troublesome in this respect was one of the American sections of New York, known as Section 12. This section was dominated by the two sisters, Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin, women of culture and wealth, but of rather singular notions on many subjects, which they promulgated in their magazine, *The Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*.

Under the leadership of these ladies, Section 12, and after it, Section 9, set up a separate "American" movement in opposition to that of the "aliens," and centered its propaganda chiefly on woman's rights, free love, etc.

"Section 12," complains the Federal Council of the International in an official document,* "finally proceeded on its own hook to issue an appeal to the English-speaking citi-

* "Appeal to the Working Men of America," New York, 1872.

zens of the United States for affiliation—an appeal famous for its ludicrous attempt to saddle the International with every imaginable visionary idea of issue, except the cause of labor, the name of which even does not seem to agree with that section's idea of euphony, since it is scarcely mentioned in that appeal of considerable length."

This conduct provoked the dissatisfaction of the older sections. Section 1 demanded the suspension of Section 12, and was supported in that demand by the majority of the German and Irish sections. The American sections, two German, and the majority of the French sections, grouped themselves around Section 12, and as a result, the organization of the International was split, Section 1 and its adherents forming an independent Federal Council.

Both sides submitted their grievances to the General Council of the International at London, which rendered its decision on the controversy in March, 1872. By this decision Section 12 was suspended, and the administrative boards of both factions were directed to unite into one provisional committee until the next national convention, which was to establish definite regulations for the administration of affairs of the American sections of the International. The feud was thus ended. Section 12 still continued an independent existence for some time, but its doings became so ridiculous that it lost all influence on its former supporters in the International. The last act in the career of Section 12 was the convocation of a convention of all "male and female beings of America," to be held at the Apollo Theater in New York on May 11th. The convention met pursuant to call, and after discussing all possible kinds of reform, including the introduction of a universal language, wound up by nominating a ticket headed by Victoria Woodhull as candidate for the presidency of the United States.

The first national convention of the International was held on the 6th day of July, 1872, at the city of New York Twenty-two sections were represented. The convention

assumed the official name of North American Federation of the International Working-Men's Association, and adopted a set of rules and regulations for the government of its affairs.

The executive functions of the organization were vested in a committee of nine, designated the Federal Council, and the council elected for the first year consisted of three Germans, two Frenchmen, two Irishmen, one Swede, and one Italian.

The rules and regulations also provided that in every section to be formed in the future, at least three-fourths of the members should be wage-workers, and enjoined upon all sections "to entertain good relations with the trade-unions and to promote their formation."

A new impetus was given to the American movement at about the same time by the transfer of the seat of the General Council of the International from London to New York. The convention at The Hague elected to the council twelve members, of whom four were Germans, three Frenchmen, two Irishmen, one an American, one a Swede, and one an Italian. The council was headed by F. A. Sorge as general secretary. Sorge was well qualified for the duties of this responsible and delicate position. A veteran of the German revolution of 1848, and a personal friend and coworker of Marx and Engels, he arrived at this country in 1852, and by dint of his tact, abilities, and intimate knowledge of the labor question, he soon conquered for himself a position in the front ranks of the early socialist movement in this country.

He was the leading spirit of the International in the United States, ever active in organizing new sections and in the direction of their activity, and his name is prominently connected with every phase of the movement of that period. In the later developments of the movement, Sorge was but little active, and he now leads a somewhat retired life at Hoboken, N. J.

During the year following the events above described, the

history of the International was devoid of any significant incidents. Some old sections disbanded, some new ones were organized, and on the whole the organization remained stationary, if not somewhat stagnant.

But toward the close of the next year the organization was again brought prominently before the public in connection with the general labor troubles of the country.

The collapse of the Northern Pacific in 1873 had caused an almost unprecedented financial and industrial panic in the United States. The destitution of the population in all industrial centers grew alarming, especially during the cold winter season, and it was estimated that in the State of New York alone over 180,000 working men were left without means of subsistence. A lively agitation for the relief of the unemployed was inaugurated, and in the city of New York the German socialists stood at the head of the movement. The *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, official organ of the International, published a plan for the relief of the unemployed which consisted of the following three points:

1. Employment of the unemployed on public works.
2. Advances of money or food for at least one week to all who stand in need of it.
3. Suspension of all laws for the dispossession of delinquent tenants.

A joint mass-meeting was subsequently held at the Cooper Union Institute by some sections of the International and some American trade-unions, and an executive committee was elected with instructions to take such further steps in the movement as it would deem expedient.

Under the management of this committee, a number of public meetings were held, and a petition for relief was addressed to the mayor.

As the culminating point of the agitation, a gigantic demonstration in the form of a procession of unemployed was arranged to be held on the 13th day of January, 1874. It was the original plan of the committee that the parade

should disband in front of the City Hall, but this was prohibited by the authorities, and Tompkins Square was chosen as the next best place for the purpose.

At the appointed time the parade was formed. Crowds of working men from all parts of the city fell in line during its progress, and by the time it reached Tompkins Square it had swelled on to an immense procession.

There was no sign of impending trouble; the procession was orderly and peaceful, and the mayor of the city was expected to address the assembled crowds and to suggest measures of relief.

But no sooner had the paraders reached Tompkins Square than a large force of policemen, without provocation or warning, charged the crowd with drawn clubs, striking right and left, and during the ensuing general melée hundreds of working men were seriously injured.

Several arrests were thereupon made, and the "offenders" were heavily punished for resistance to the police.

The Tompkins Square incident caused a great deal of bitter feeling among the working men of New York.

A demonstration of similar dimensions, but less disastrous in results, took place at almost the same time in Chicago. That city was just recovering from the horrors of the famous conflagration, when the panic of 1873 threw it anew into a state of indescribable destitution.

A movement for the relief of the unemployed, similar to that of New York, was organized by the Chicago sections of the International in conjunction with a few other labor organizations. On the 21st day of December, 1873, the leaders of the movement arranged a mass-meeting, in which over 5,000 persons are said to have participated. Speeches were made in five languages, and a committee of eight was elected to submit the demands of the meeting to the City Council. To insure greater attention on the part of the city fathers, it was decided to give the delegation a mass escort of unemployed working men.

On the next day the city of Chicago witnessed a most remarkable and unexpected spectacle. Early in the evening masses of working men assembled at the appointed place and formed themselves into lines. All Chicago seemed to be on its feet, and when the procession, headed by the delegation of eight, started for its destination, there were over 20,000 persons in line. There seemed to be no commander or leader, but perfect order prevailed in the ranks, and the whole procession looked more like a well-drilled and disciplined military body than a heterogeneous crowd of working men gathered at random over night.

The demonstration had its effect on the City Council: the latter promised to do all in its power to comply with the requests of the unemployed, and invited the delegation for a conference on the subject on the following day. The promises were not kept, the demonstration led to no practical results, but out of the movement grew a new socialist party —THE LABOR PARTY OF ILLINOIS, with a membership of over 2,000.

Similar occurrences took place in other cities of the Union, notably in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Louisville, and Newark, and the members of the International took an active part in the agitation and demonstrations of the unemployed in those cities.

On the 11th day of April, 1874, the second national convention of the American sections of the International was held at Philadelphia.

The convention did not assemble under very auspicious circumstances. The recent events in the labor movement just described had given rise to sharp controversies as to the policy to be pursued in the future by the International. A large portion of the members, and among them some of the most active, advocated a greater degree of attention to the labor movement at home than abroad, and a more liberal interpretation of the Rules and Regulations of the International, so as to permit of its cooperation with elements in

the labor movement that could not be classed as socialistic in the scientific application of the term; the older and more influential members, on the other hand, insisted on the preservation of the old principles and methods of the International in all their purity.

The upshot of these controversies in Chicago was, the formation of a rival socialist party, the Labor Party of Illinois mentioned above. In New York several sections withdrew from the organization for the same cause, and a few months later organized the SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC WORKING-MEN'S PARTY OF NORTH AMERICA.

Under these circumstances, the attendance at the Philadelphia convention was, as might be expected, rather poor. Only twenty-three sections sent delegates. It was proposed to transfer the seat of the Federal Council to Philadelphia or Baltimore, but neither of the two cities proved willing to accept the proffered honor, and the convention wound up by abolishing the office altogether, and vesting its functions in the General Council of the International.

To prevent any abuse of power by the council, a Control Committee was appointed, with authority to investigate and pass upon any grievances against the official acts of that body.

The attitude of the International toward political action in the United States was defined in the following resolution:

"Considering that the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working men themselves,

"The Congress of the North American Federation has resolved:

"The North American Federation rejects all cooperation and connection with the political parties formed by the possessing classes, whether they call themselves Republicans or Democrats, or Independents or Liberals, or Patrons of Industry or Patrons of Husbandry (Grangers), or Reformers, or whatever name they may adopt. Consequently, no member of the Federation can belong any longer to such a party.

"The political action of the Federation confines itself generally to the endeavor of obtaining legislative acts in the interest of the working class proper, and always in a manner to distinguish and separate the working-men's party from all the political parties of the possessing classes.

"The Federation will not enter into a truly political campaign or election movement before being strong enough to exercise a perceptible influence, and then, in the first place, on the field of the municipality, town or city (commune), whence this political movement may be transferred to the large communities (counties, States, United States), according to circumstances, and always in conformity with the Congress Resolutions."

The convention of 1874 failed to adjust the International to the existing conditions of the American labor movement, and, despite the apparent harmony of its proceedings, it had not succeeded in quelling the dissensions within its ranks.

Shortly after the convention a controversy arose on the subject of the editorial management of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, the official organ of the International, established in 1873. Sorge and his adherents expressed dissatisfaction with the manner in which the paper was conducted, and offered some improvements. C. Carl, the editor of the paper, resented the criticism. The controversy grew heated and personal.

Section 1 of New York, heretofore the strongest organization in the International, sided with Carl, and, claiming the paper for its own, appointed a guard of ten men to protect its property against the General Council of the International.

The latter retorted promptly by suspending the section. The matter was subsequently brought before the courts, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* suspended publication, and the split in the ranks of the International became general.

But if the progress of the International in the United States was unsatisfactory, it was still more so in the countries of Europe—since the seat of the General Council was

transferred from London to New York, the existence of the association in Europe was but nominal.

In 1875 it was decided to dispense with the International convention planned to be held that year.

"The condition of our association has steadily grown worse since the Geneva convention," complains the new General Council in a circular issued on that occasion. "More or less regular communications were had only with Zurich and London, and loose connections were maintained with Germany, Austria, and Hungary. Of all former federations, the North American is the only one to survive, and the existence of even this one is greatly impaired by internal dissensions.

"In most European countries, as France, Austria, Italy, Spain, Germany, Denmark, and others, our members and adherents are being persecuted to such a degree that even the most devoted of them have grown somewhat timid, and were compelled to abandon direct connections with us."

The last convention of the International Working-Men's Association was held in Philadelphia on the 15th day of July, 1876. The convention stood in sad contrast to the reunions of the International in the period of its bloom: it was composed of ten delegates from the United States, and one, A. Otto-Walster, supposed to represent a group of members in Germany.

To continue the nominal existence of the erstwhile powerful international organization of labor under such circumstances was not to be thought of; the organization had to be formally dissolved, and the delegates at once proceeded to the performance of the sad duty.

The General Council of the International was abolished, and the archives and documents of the organization were entrusted to F. A. Sorge and C. Speyer, to be turned over by them to any new international labor-union to be formed in the future. Before adjourning, the convention adopted the following proclamation:

"*Fellow Working Men:*

"The International convention at Philadelphia has abolished the General Council of the International Working-Men's Association, and the external bond of the organization exists no more.

"'The International is dead!' the *bourgeoisie* of all countries will again exclaim, and with ridicule and joy it will point to the proceedings of this convention as documentary proof of the defeat of the labor movement of the world. Let us not be influenced by the cry of our enemies! We have abandoned the organization of the International for reasons arising from the present political situation of Europe, but as a compensation for it we see the principles of the organization recognized and defended by the progressive working men of the entire civilized world. Let us give our fellow-workers in Europe a little time to strengthen their national affairs, and they will surely soon be in a position to remove the barriers between themselves and the working men of other parts of the world.

"Comrades! you have embraced the principle of the International with heart and love; you will find means to extend the circle of its adherents even without an organization. You will win new champions who will work for the realization of the aims of our association. The comrades in America promise you that they will faithfully guard and cherish the acquisitions of the International in this country until more favorable conditions will again bring together the working men of all countries to common struggle, and the cry will resound again louder than ever:

"'Proletarians of all countries, unite!'"

The prediction of this last convention of the International came true. Thirteen years later the first of a series of brilliant international socialist conventions was held at Paris, attended by 395 delegates from twenty countries in Europe and America.

IV.—THE FORMATION OF THE SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

In the last chapter we had occasion to take passing notice of the formation of the Social Democratic Working-Men's Party of North America. This party was formally organized on the 4th day of July, 1874, by several sections of the International which had withdrawn from the organization earlier in the year, in conjunction with some radical labor organizations of New York, Williamsburg, Newark, and Philadelphia.

The party adopted a terse platform and declaration of principles which, as revised one year later, read as follows:

"The Social Democratic Working-Men's Party seeks to establish a free state founded upon labor. Each member of the party promises to uphold, to the best of his ability, the following principles:

"1. Abolishment of the present unjust political and social conditions.

"2. Discontinuance of all class rule and class privileges.

"3. Abolition of the working men's dependence upon the capitalist by introduction of cooperative labor in place of the wage system, so that every laborer will get the full value of his work.

"4. Obtaining possession of the political power as a prerequisite for the solution of the labor question.

"5. United struggle, united organization of all working men, and strict subordination of the individual under the laws framed for the general welfare.

"6. Sympathy with the working men of all countries who strive to attain the same object."

The administration of the party affairs was vested in an executive board of five members and a "control committee" of nine. The first secretary of the board was A. Strasser, a cigar maker of New York, a man of great tact and energy,

who played an important part in the socialist movement of this country during the period under consideration, but later devoted himself exclusively to the trade-union movement.

In a measure as the International lost ground in the United States, the Social Democratic Party gained strength and influence.

Its second convention, held at Philadelphia on July 4th, 5th, and 6th, 1875, was well attended. A number of new members had joined the party, among them some very active organizers and gifted agitators, such as P. J. McGuire, afterward for a number of years General Secretary of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters; R. A. Parsons, who subsequently turned anarchist and played a conspicuous part in the Chicago tragedy of 1886; and G. A. Schilling, an eloquent speaker and a man of considerable influence in Chicago labor circles.

The party also, at about that time, published an English weekly in New York under the title *The Socialist.*

The most important act of the second convention of the Social Democratic Working-Men's Party was the passing of a resolution instructing the executive board to use its good offices to bring about a union of all socialist organizations of the country.

In the fall of 1875 several conferences were accordingly held in the city of New York to deliberate on the proposition. These conferences were composed of J. P. McDonnell and D. Kronberg, representing the "United Workers," an independent organization of English-speaking socialists, at one time affiliated with the International; and A. Strasser, McGregor, J. G. Speyer, and Hansen, representing the Social Democratic Working-Men's Party. The German-speaking sections of the International were represented on the conference by Sorge, Bertrand, Leib, and Hesse, and the French section by the famous Icarian and Communard, A. Sauva.

No definite results were accomplished by the conferences. In the mean while the scattered remnants of the National

Labor-Union gathered themselves together in a last attempt to revive their movement. Upon the initiative of John Davis, editor of the *National Tribune*, and at one time presidential candidate of the N. L. U., a national convention was called for the purpose of forming a new political labor party. The convention was to be held at Pittsburg on the 17th day of April, 1876. The socialists of the United States saw in this proposed convention a good opportunity for the strengthening of their movement, and representatives of their various parties and organizations by agreement assembled at Pittsburg on the eve of the convention.

The convention of the National Labor-Union was composed of 106 delegates of the most heterogeneous political complexion, and was easily captured by the socialists among them, some twenty in number, who spoke and acted as a unit, had well-defined views, and knew how to express them.

The victory had no practical significance, as the convention adjourned without accomplishing anything, but it proved fruitful for the socialist movement in another direction—the various socialist groups assembled at Pittsburg agreed upon a plan of union, and arranged to hold a convention in the near future for the purpose of putting the plan into practical execution. The convention was held in Philadelphia from the 19th until the 22d day of July, 1876.

The composition and strength of the convention were as follows: The North American Federation of the International Working-Men's Association, with a membership of 635, was represented by F. A. Sorge and Otto Weydemeyer. The Social Democratic Working-Men's Party of North America, with a membership of 1,500, was represented by A. Strasser, P. J. McGuire, and A. Gabriel. The Labor Party of Illinois, with a membership of 593, sent C. Conzett; and Charles Braun, who represented the Socio-Political Labor-Union of Cincinnati, claimed for the latter a membership of 250.

Representatives from the Free German Community of

Philadelphia, the Slavonian Socio-Political Labor-Union of Cincinnati, and the Labor-Union of Milwaukee, were refused seats at the convention, on the ground that their respective organizations had not been represented on the Pittsburg conference. The work of the convention was commenced by formally consolidating the several organizations represented into one party, under the name WORKING-MEN'S PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES.

At the head of the new party was placed a national executive committee of seven. The committee was subject to the control of a "board of supervision" consisting of five members. The seat of the national committee was located at Chicago, that of the board of supervision at New Haven.

The *Socialist* and *Sozial Demokrat*, heretofore published by the Social Democratic Working-Men's Party, were declared official organs of the new party, and their names changed to *Labor Standard* and *Arbeiterstimme* (Voice of the Working Men) respectively. The *Vorbote* (Harbinger), published in Chicago by the Labor Party of Illinois, was continued under the same name and also made an official party organ.

J. P. McDonnell was elected editor of the *Labor Standard*, C. Conzett editor of the *Vorbote*, the *Arbeiterstimme* was left under its former editorial management, and A. Douai was made assistant editor of all three papers.

The platform adopted by the Working-Men's Party of the United States is a scientific and somewhat abstract exposition of the cardinal points of Marxian socialism.

In December, 1877, at the second convention of the Working-Men's Party, held at Newark, N. J., the name of the party was changed to SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY OF NORTH AMERICA.