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Politics is Conflict: The Union Labor Party, Progressives, and Political and Industrial Conflict in San Francisco, 1901-1911

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

Grant Shryock

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Joan Malczewski, Chair
Professor David Igler
Associate Professor Andrew Highsmith

2025

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DEDICATION

To my parents and the Center Street group.

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VITA

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2016 B.A. in History, University of California, Santa Cruz

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Politics is Conflict: The Union Labor Party, Progressives, and Political and Industrial Conflict in San Francisco, 1901-1911

By

Grant Shryock

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Irvine, 2025

Associate Professor Joan Malczewski, Chair

This project endeavors to retain conflict as a central category in political history. It offers a history of labor and politics in San Francisco from 1901 to 1911 to demonstrate that conflict was the determinative dynamic in city politics and industrial relations as parties, unions, employers, and reformers fought to control the mechanisms of public authority and workplace conditions. The advent of the Union Labor Party (ULP) in 1901 turned the city's industrial strife into an explicitly political contest with varied and far-reaching results. The purpose of this project, therefore, is to consider the ways in which the presence of a viable labor party affected political conditions in a period of labor and employer militancy and progressive ascendency.

The ULP functioned as organized labor's political intervention to contest the growing synergy between militant, consolidated corporations and progressive politicians. The waterfront strike of 1901 demonstrated that city hall, through its control of the police, irregular security services, and other mechanisms of public authority, had the power to affect the outcome of industrial disputes and that the reformist administration then in office would yield to employer demands in the name of reestablishing law and order. When in power, the ULP acted as a genuine, if imperfect, counterweight for labor which created a safer strike environment for

unions during a period of aggressive open shop agitation from organized employers. Yet because it was in essence a defensive action to maintain the viability of unionism in San Francisco, the party lacked the political economic vision necessary to transcend its core base in organized labor, causing the party to imitate progressive rhetoric about nonpartisanship and social harmony rather than offer an alternative model of social and economic relations.

The adversarial relationship between progressives and organized labor is a core feature of this narrative. The point at issue was not whether organized labor could influence progressive policymaking, but whether progressives could tolerate an independent labor party in control of the executive and legislative arms of the one of the state's leading cities. Progressive efforts to undermine the ULP indicate that they could not, an insight that cuts through later scholarly emphasis on the shared racial outlook of the white majority, the big tent view of progressive ideology, and the working relationship between organized labor and progressive legislators. Progressives in San Francisco drew the line at labor in politics and the conflict between these two camps played out for control of the mechanisms of public authority.

Introduction

The election of Donald Trump in 2016 left the field of political history divided in its response. Gerstle interpreted Trump's election as further evidence of the collapse of the neoliberal order which had structured American politics since Reagan.[1] Cebul, Geismer, and Williams offered a more cautious analysis, calling into question the very frameworks historians have used to understand modern American political history.[2] These differences illustrate one of the principal fault lines in contemporary approaches to political history. In the late 1980s Gerstle, Fraser, and others developed a framework that conceived of American political history as a series of "political orders" that possessed a clear ideological orientation underpinned by a set of relationships between policymakers, interest groups, and electoral constituencies.[3] In the 2010s, Cebul, Geismer, Williams, and others challenged historians to see deeper continuities that transcend partisan binaries and conventional periodizations.[4] Despite their differences, these approaches are both, in their way, models for identifying consensus.

This project endeavors to retain conflict as a central category in political history. It offers a history of labor and politics in San Francisco from 1901 to 1911 to demonstrate that conflict was the determinative dynamic in city politics and industrial relations as parties, unions, employers, and reformers fought to control the mechanisms of public authority and workplace conditions. The advent of the Union Labor Party (ULP) in 1901 turned the city's industrial strife into an explicitly political contest with varied and far-reaching results. The purpose of this

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[1] Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (Oxford UP, 2022), 1.
[2] *Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason B. Williams, (Chicago UP, 2019), 3-6.
[3] *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order 1930-1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989), ix-xxiv.
[4] *Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason B. Williams, 11-17, 371.

project, therefore, is to consider the ways in which the presence of a viable labor party affected political conditions in a period of labor and employer militancy and progressive ascendency. The guiding question for this study is how does this history of political conflict in a turn-of-the-century American city challenge contemporary approaches to political history?

The ULP functioned as organized labor's political intervention to contest the growing synergy between militant, consolidated corporations and progressive politicians. The waterfront strike of 1901 demonstrated that city hall, through its control of the police, irregular security services, and other mechanisms of public authority, had the power to affect the outcome of industrial disputes and that the reformist administration then in office would yield to employer demands in the name of reestablishing law and order. When in power, the ULP acted as a genuine, if imperfect, counterweight for labor which created a safer strike environment for unions during a period of aggressive open shop agitation from organized employers. Yet because it was in essence a defensive action to maintain the viability of unionism in San Francisco, the party lacked the political economic vision necessary to transcend its core base in organized labor, causing the party to imitate progressive rhetoric about nonpartisanship and social harmony rather than offer an alternative model of social and economic relations.

This project identifies three major consequences of the ULP period. First, the ULP denied progressive reformers full control of city government, provoking a multi-layered progressive response that undermined labor's foothold in government and paved the way for progressive dominance in the following decade. The adversarial relationship between the ULP and progressives was the central political dynamic in the first decade of the twentieth century. Second, despite the ULP's capitulation to a progressive discourse that substituted class conflict for class harmony, the presence of a labor party in city hall elicited an aggressive response from

organized employers which fell hardest on newer, weaker unions. Third, the decision to launch a political party—as well as the party's record once in office—produced internal tensions among the key factions of San Francisco labor, but external opposition to the ULP caused these factions to rally in defense of the party at key junctures.

Historiography

The field of political history finds itself at a crossroads. A brief review of the literature will establish how this has come to pass and why in the view of this project it is a false choice. By the 1980s and 1990s, the interpretations of the mid-century consensus historians had given way to a framework that conceived of American political history as a series of "political orders" that possessed a clear ideological orientation underpinned by a set of political relationships between policymakers, interest groups, and electoral constituencies.[5] A central historiographical question for late century historians was how to account for the rise and fall of New Deal liberalism and the period of conservative dominance that followed. Three strengths of the political orders framework, therefore, lay in its ability to explain decisive historical change, that it took conservatism seriously, and that it presented American history as a contest between multiple traditions.

In recent years, historians of American politics have charted a different course.[6] The principle historiographical problem is no longer to explain moments of crisis-driven realignment, but rather to identify continuities that cut across the paradigmatic junctures of modern political

[5] *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order 1930-1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989); For examples of the consensus school, see Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1948; reis., New York: Vintage Books, 1989) and Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (1955; reis., New York: Harvest Books, 1991).
[6] *Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason B. Williams, (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2019).

history. This requires a methodological orientation that avoids, as Matthew Lassiter puts it, the "imposition of an artificial red-blue binary drawn from the discourses of the two-party system that predesignates policy outcomes as liberal or conservative rather than hybrid political processes shaped by broad and diverse groups of actors and forces across the spectrum."[7] The key insight from this new political history is that when all is not reduced to partisan conflict, normative assumptions about the state, markets, and hierarchies of race and gender become easier to see.

Several historiographical traditions have influenced the present direction of political history. Metropolitan historians have helped to reframe and re-periodize modern American history by demonstrating that spatial context and the constant interplay between local communities and government are key drivers of political development.[8] Historians of American capitalism have probed the entanglements between markets and government in the construction of the American political economy.[9] Others have combined the insights of these latter two subfields to explore evolving patterns of race and gender discrimination.[10] The bibliographies of these subfields are long and contain their internal debates. What they all have in common is a shared sense that the roots of American politics are much deeper and more complex than what a framework of partisan conflict can reveal.

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[7] Matthew Lassiter, "Ten Propositions for the New Political History," in *Shaped by the State*, ed. Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason B. Williams, 364.

[8] Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003); Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006); The metropolitan turn brought two previously separate topic areas together, namely, urban and suburban history. For representative examples of both, see Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) and Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996).

[9] Sven Beckert, "History of American Capitalism," in *American History Now*, ed. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2011).

[10] Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2019).

Historians taking an institutional approach have also made significant contributions to political history in recent decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, historians associated with the "organizational synthesis" demonstrated that progressive historiography—which stressed cycles of reform carried out by presidents and the masses against conservative interests—failed to account for the degree to which professionals, bureaucrats, and business interests found common cause in many early twentieth century state building initiatives.[11] By the 1990s, the historian Brian Balogh was calling for a reorganization of the organizational synthesis in an attempt to retain what was valuable from the earlier scholarship while correcting some of its oversights.[12] If the previous generation focused primarily on experts and bureaucrats, future scholarship needed to account for groups and individuals who did not work in the professions or in administrative agencies. A reorganized organizational synthesis would look past the rhetoric of experts and bureaucrats to uncover the ways in which power and resources were distributed in a polity with no obvious lines between state and civil society.

The research agenda Balogh laid out in his 1991 article provided the basis for his recent work that has helped to shape the present direction of political history outlined above. Against the longstanding idea that the federal government in the nineteenth century lacked the capacity to act effectively across a vast national territory, Balogh argued that the state operated "out of sight," pursuing its objectives through public-private partnerships, subsidies and tax incentives, and other mechanisms that enabled the state to act without upsetting American skepticism of a

[11] For a concise summary of the organizational synthesis, see Louis Galambos, "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History," *The Business History Review* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 1970); For a representative work that offers a society-wide analysis of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).
[12] Brian Balogh, "Reorganizing the Organizational Synthesis: Federal-Professional Relations in Modern America," *Studies in American Political Development* 5 (Spring 1991).

strong central state.[13] In a subsequent work, he argued that this mode of governance carried on into the twentieth century.[14] This "associational state" was less a qualitative and more of a quantitative shift relative to the nineteenth century in the sense that the number of agents making claims on the state and the resources they sought to control multiplied by several orders of magnitude, but the blurred lines between state and civil society remained the same.

The choice now before the field of political history, it would seem, is either to follow the new continuity school or retain the theory of political orders. The recent publication of Gerstle's *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order* should remind us that this is still a live question and not a matter of one generational perspective giving way to another.[15] Both approaches can yield powerful insights into the period studied here. For the orders framework, it is plausible to argue that a moderate, interventionist liberalism took root in both major parties following the economic instability of the late nineteenth century and the perceived crisis of capitalist development. This tendency compelled both parties to have an answer for corporate consolidation and urbanization, among other things, but WWI and retrenchment in the 1920s rendered early twentieth century progressivism a transitional phenomenon rather than a lasting political order. From the continuity perspective, longstanding features of American politics like white supremacy and commitments to territorial expansion and consolidation in furtherance of an imperial project run right through this period, connecting it to a larger timeline which causes the debates between Wilsonian and Rooseveltian political economy to appear smaller and less significant in comparison.

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[13] Balogh notes an important caveat to this mode of governance via public-private partnerships, namely, in policy areas where no intermediary institutions exist through which the government can act effectively such as national security, territorial expansion, and trade, an otherwise skeptical American public demands strong central government action. Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2009).

[14] Brian Balogh, *The Associational State: American Governance in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: UPenn Press, 2015).

[15] Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*, 1-15.

This is a false choice. Our professional obligation to challenge or revise historiography should not lead us to needlessly dispense with valid approaches to history, particularly, as in this case, when two general frameworks are not in open contradiction. The orders framework is a powerful tool for identifying near to medium-term political conditions and historical change. The new continuity school reminds us that ideologies, social conditions, and state strategies often transcend partisan affiliation and operate on much longer timescales than the usual breakpoints in political history will allow. Both are valid perspectives and the existence of one does not require that the other be overthrown. Perhaps we would do well to first question the professional imperative to overturn all preceding generations before we pass judgement on which approaches to keep and which to discard.

What this project asks the field to remember is that politics is conflict. Granted that the two approaches outlined above have their nuances which defy easy summary, they both foreground consensus and hegemony. Of course, this is a necessary lens with which to view the past because even in the most fractured of periods there typically exist social and ideological assumptions that shape the historical conditions we study. This project contends that the salient feature of the period studied here, and of all periods past and present, is conflict—not the narrow partisanship which the new continuity school rightly critiques—but conflict within and between classes for state power and control of the workplace.

San Francisco's industrial and political conflict played out against a backdrop of ongoing development and dislocation resulting from industrialization and commercial expansion in California. By the 1870s, mineral rushes for gold, silver, and oil had transformed the state and laid the foundation for industrialization through increased population, technological innovation,

and corporate organization.[16] The latter decades of the nineteenth century saw the consolidation of corporate control of mining, agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation and the parallel growth of the banking sector that managed the corporations.[17] By the turn of the century, the relative decline of San Francisco was evident as rising cities like Oakland and Los Angeles challenged its position as the state's leading city in terms of population, industrial output, and the volume of commercial shipping routed through its port.[18] California's population jumped from 1,485,053 to 2,377,549 in the first decade of the twentieth century and most of this growth occurred in Southern California and the Central Valley.[19] The rapid pace of change coupled with economic and demographic instability caused corporate leaders, particularly in San Francisco, to seek ways to insulate themselves from market forces and ensure greater control over production through control of the work force.

Labor's bid for political power can therefore be seen as part of a larger contest—which includes political interventions from Populists, Progressives, and corporations—to control the course and direction of industrialization. Corporate consolidation and expansion were key features of this period, with some scholars emphasizing how the evolution of liberalism reflected corporate prerogatives for a mild regulatory state and others noting the imperial dimension of market penetration and its effect on Indigenous and other marginalized populations.[20] Opinions differ on the extent and character of corporate power in late nineteenth and early twentieth century California, particularly as it relates to the state's preeminent company, the Southern

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[16] Spencer Olin, *California Politics 1846-1920: The Emerging Corporate State* (Boyd and Fraser Publishing, San Francisco, 1981), 1.
[17] Olin, *California Politics 1846-1920*, 28-29.
[18] Mansel Blackford, *The Politics of Business in California, 1890-1920* (Ohio State UP, 1977), 9-12.
[19] Blackford, *The Politics of Business in California*, 12.
[20] Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism 1890-1916* (Cambridge UP, 1988), 34-39; Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (UC Press, 2019), xi-xv.

Pacific Railroad. Blackford sees a systemwide restructuring based on stability, efficiency, and professional expertise as the main feature of business development in this period while Deverell cautions against an overly simplistic progressive interpretation of one-dimensional corporate power.[21] What unites these works is the corporate desire for control, a point made plain in Olin's work on corporate efforts to manage political parties and the legislative process.[22]

Populism refers to the agrarian challenge to the political economy of American industrialization in the late nineteenth century through grassroots organizing, intellectual and policy innovation, and formal institutions like the Farmers' Alliance and the Peoples' Party. Populism's basic critique was that industrialization had created high degrees of economic concentration which allowed the few to abuse the many.[23] Historians have debated the nature and meaning of the populist movement. Goodwyn saw in populism a movement presenting a radical alternative to liberal capitalism.[24] Postel's work, notable for its emphasis on populism's "modernity," differs from Goodwyn with its contention that populism offered a challenge to the corporate view of progress, but not necessarily a radical alternative to the capitalist system.[25] Recent state level studies have shown how populist personnel and institutions merged with the progressive state and therefore cast the populist movement as a progenitor of twentieth century liberalism.[26] Some of the more insightful analysis of the Populist movement in California proposes reasons for its ultimate failure, ranging from varying levels of rural discontent due to a

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[21] Blackford, *The Politics of Business in California*, 161; William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (UC Press, 1994), 172-177; Deverell, "The Varieties of Progressive Experience," in *California Progressivism Revisited*, 6-7.
[22] Olin, *California Politics 1846-1920*, 1.
[23] Randall Holcombe, "Populism: Promises and Problems," *The Independent Review* 26, no. 1 (2021), 29.
[24] Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (Abr. Ed., Oxford UP, 1978), vii-xix.
[25] Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford UP, 2007), vii-viii, 4-5.
[26] Connie Lester, *Up from the Mudsills of Hell: The Farmers' Alliance, Populism, and Progressive Agriculture in Tennessee, 1870-1915* (University of Georgia Press, 2006), 3-4; Gregg Cantrell, *The People's Revolt: Texas Populists and the Roots of American Liberalism* (Yale UP, 2020), 12-22.

community's relative dependence on railroad transportation to explicitly political factors like Populist factionalism, fusion with the Democrats, and the inability of the People's Party to establish a base in the state assembly.[27] The election of a populist mayor in the early 1890s notwithstanding, labor politics, not agrarian, defined political conflict in San Francisco at the turn of the century.

Progressive opposition to ULP rule is a core feature of this narrative. During the first decade of the twentieth century, progressive reformers in California sought to end corruption stemming from corporate control of politics. Progressives targeted the relationship between local machines and public service corporations in the cities and the Southern Pacific's influence over the state legislature, especially through its relationship with the GOP which had dominated state-level politics since the 1890s.[28] Progressive factions within the major parties sustained these reform efforts until the formation of the Progressive Party in 1913 which significantly reshaped California politics with its program of political reform designed to weaken party control over state politics.[29] Mowry referred to Los Angeles as the "critical factor" because it was in LA that the Southern Pacific-aligned GOP received majorities large enough for it to steer the state party in Sacramento.[30] However it was in San Francisco that the progressives faced an entrenched, left-wing party with a base capable of delivering several consecutive election victories. The ULP

[27] Magliari, "Populism, Steamboats, and the Octopus: Transportation Rates and Monopoly in California's Wheat Regions, 1890-1896, 449-450; Griffiths, "Anti-Monopoly Movement in California 1873-1898," 111-112.
[28] George Mowry, *The California Progressives* (1951; reis. Quadrangle Books, 1963), 55; Joan Malczewski and Nancy Beadie, "Education as a Missing Link," (SAPD forthcoming, 2025), 19.
[29] For a general overview of the development of the progressive movement in California, see Spencer Olin, *California Politics 1846-1920: The Emerging Corporate State* (Boyd and Fraser Publishing, San Francisco, 1981), 54-71; For a general overview of California politics once Hiram Johnson became governor, see Thomas Laichas, "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul: Public Finance and Political Change in California 1850-1930" (PhD. Diss., UCLA, 1999), 30-35.
[30] Mowry, *The California Progressives*, 56.

denied the progressives control of San Francisco so its defeat was an important precursor to the success of the progressives' broader strategy for statewide reform.

Scholars have long debated the nature of progressivism and the extent to which the progressive movement presented an alternative vision for the United States or if it safeguarded the status quo by ameliorating the worst abuses of industrialization. Consensus and New Left historians were skeptical, and sometimes, hostile to progressivism like Hofstadter's observation that progressivism's moral absolutism led many progressives to conservatism and reaction later in their careers and Martin Sklar's analysis of "corporate liberalism" as a bipartisan consensus to oversee the transition from proprietary to corporate capitalism and affirm administered markets and the regulatory state over statist control of the economy.[31] By the 1980s, Daniel Rogers observed that historians had moved away from identifying the essence of progressive ideology toward understanding context, structures, and institutional settings which led to the general conclusion that what distinguished the era was not reform as such, but the expansion of political activity via pressure groups stepping into the gap left by the decline of party affiliation.[32] Recent decades have seen a return to general assessments about the nature of progressivism where some emphasize the broadening of democracy and a healthy moral imperative and others stress its reactionary character—seen most clearly in the deepening of racial segregation—as a Victorian response to late nineteenth and early twentieth century developments.[33] Within the frame of labor

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[31] Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (Vintage Books, 1955), 16-22; Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism 1890-1916* (Cambridge UP, 1988), 34-39.
[32] Daniel T. Rogers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History*, 10, no. 2, (1982), 114-117. This attention to context and new forms of political activism continued into the 1990s and led to now classic works by Glenda Gilmore and Elisabeth Clemens. Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (UNC Press, 1996); Elisabeth Clemens, *The People's Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1920*.
[33] Robert D. Johnston, "Re-Democratizing the Progressive Era: The Politics of Progressive Era Political Historiography," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1, no. 1 (2002), 91; Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (Oxford UP, 2005), xiv.

and political power in San Francisco, the evidence presented here tends to affirm Sklar's view of progressivism as a bipartisan reformist tendency that was amenable to capital and opposed to organized labor's ambitions to control city government for itself.

The historiography of California progressivism has changed considerably since the mid-twentieth century. Mowry's *The California Progressives* remains a foundational text for its coherence and sharp insights into the worldview of the white, middle class, protestant professionals who Mowry viewed as the movement's key constituency.[34] Mowry was particularly incisive when discussing the contradictions of the progressive outlook as with these observations concerning remarks made by reformer and politician Chester Rowell after Johnson's election in 1910, "His stress on individualism in a maturing industrial society was perhaps basically archaic. His refusal or inability to see the connection between economic institutions and the rising class consciousness indicated a severe case of social myopia. His hope to avert class strife by political and moral reform alone were scarcely realistic. And paradoxical in the extreme was the coexistence of his own intense group loyalties with his strong antipathy to the class consciousness of organized capital and organized labor."[35] Yet the group biography methodology that permitted these insights became the basis for later revisions as historians looked beyond the demographic type studied by Mowry and uncovered a more diverse movement in terms of ideology, race, and gender.[36] These revisions called attention to, among other things, the impact of progressivism on the political development of Black and Latino communities via the complicated and ambivalent relationships between community leaders and their white counterparts as well as the paternalism of progressive social policy as seen in

[34] Mowry, *The California Progressives*, v, 22, 55-56.
[35] Mowry, *The California Progressives*, 103.
[36] William Deverell, "The Varieties of Progressive Experience," in *California Progressivism Revisited*, ed. William Deverell and Tom Sitton (UC Press, 1994), 6-10.

attempts to regulate perceived female sexual delinquency.[37] More recent work has emphasized how the era's notions of progress were tied to transnational imperial concerns and notions of racial exclusion.[38]

Assessments of the relationship between progressives and organized labor tend to fall between the two poles of antagonism and cooperation. For the national picture, some historians have argued that the progressive vision of social harmony limited the movement's ability to confront structures of class power while others have traced a broad left-liberal tradition to counter the historiographical tendency that stresses left-liberal acrimony.[39] In California, Mowry argued that the progressives' bias against labor was always greater than its bias against capital.[40] Rogin and Shover used voting statistics showing consistent support for progressive candidates in the state's urban centers to counter the idea that labor viewed progressive politicians as adversaries.[41] Kazin later revived the view that the relationship was antagonistic and emphasized organized labor's inability to effectively respond to progressive appeals to a transcendent common good beyond class interest.[42] Mary Ann Mason focused on labor's lobbying efforts in the state legislature where negotiations with progressives led to the passage of pro-labor

[37] Douglas Flamming "African-Americans and the Politics of Race in Progressive-Era Los Angeles" in *California Progressivism Revisited*, 203-223; George Sanchez "The 'New Nationalism,' Mexican Style" in *California Progressivism Revisited*, 229-241; Mary Odem "City Mothers and Delinquent Daughters: Female Juvenile Justice Reform in Early Twentieth Century Los Angeles" in *California Progressivism Revisited*, 175-193.
[38] Maxwell Johnson, "Borderlands Fortress: Newspaper Magnates, Preparedness, and the Rhetoric of Progress in World War I-Era Los Angeles," *Pacific Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (2017), 258.
[39] Shelton Stromquist, *Re-Inventing "The People": The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), vii-x; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 1-11.
[40] Mowry, *The California Progressives*, 92.
[41] Michael Rogin and John Shover, *Political Change in California: Critical Elections and Social Movements 1890-1966* (Greenwood Publishing, 1970), 84-85.
[42] Michael Kazin, *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (University of Illinois UP, 1987), 286-287.

legislation leading Mason to characterize labor's view of progressives as "neither friends nor foes."[43]

The events in San Francisco studied here suggest an adversarial relationship. The point at issue was not whether organized labor could influence progressive policymaking, but whether progressives could tolerate an independent labor party in control of the executive and legislative arms of the one of the state's leading cities. Progressive efforts to undermine the ULP indicate that they could not, an insight that cuts through later scholarly emphasis on the shared racial outlook of the white majority, the big tent view of progressive ideology, and the working relationship between organized labor and progressive legislators. Progressives in San Francisco drew the line at labor in politics and the conflict between these two camps played out for control of the mechanisms of public authority.

These political interventions to direct the course of industrialization used electoral politics to battle for control of the state. Where past generations regarded political parties as features of the nineteenth century state, superseded by experts, bureaucrats, and administrative agencies to occupy a somewhat peripheral role in the modern American state, contemporary state studies have returned to parties and electoral politics for fresh insights into state power in democratic societies.[44] In Balogh's associational analysis of the American state, parties, like churches and universities, can function as intermediary institutions that link citizens to the state.[45] The phenomenon of a successful third party, like the Union Labor Party in San Francisco,

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[43] Mary Ann Mason, "Neither Friends nor Foes: Organized Labor and the California Progressives," in *California Progressivism Revisited*, 70.
[44] Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New Administrative State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities 1877-1920* (Cambridge UP, 1982), 285-292; Kimberly Morgan and Ann Orloff, "Introduction," in *The Many Hands of the State: Theorizing Political Authority and Social Control* edited by Kimberly Morgan and Ann Orloff (Cambridge UP, 2017), 14.
[45] Brian Balogh, *The Associational State: American Governance in the Twentieth Century* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 5.

leads one to suspect whether a party's function can extend beyond that of a passive intermediary to become a new limb of the state. Given that no third party has succeeded in taking control of the executive and legislative functions of the national government in the modern era, third parties at the local level are a useful starting point to explore this question. Since the Union Labor Party controlled the mechanisms of public authority, the analysis can move beyond the standard conclusions of third-party literature that focuses on rhetoric, persuasive ability, and the capacity to bring new policies and issue sets to the national agenda.[46]

Much of the scholarship on the ULP has emerged from studies focused on the nature of power and governance in American cities. Walton Bean's *Boss Ruef's San Francisco* remains a significant contribution both for its richly detailed narrative and its demonstration of the value of progressive historiography. In Bean's account, the key institutional development that emerged in response to turn-of-the-century industrialization and urbanization was the "boss," "an extra-legal figure who could furnish a bridge between the lagging institutions of politics and the overwhelming demands of expanding economic organizations."[47] Focusing on the boss highlights an important institutional development in American city governance and provides a clear and legible point of reference to make sense of politics in the early twentieth century. This approach errs, however, when it conflates the institutional function of the party with the personal ambitions of the boss, lending a teleological quality to historical events whereby all things flow from the person of the boss.[48] The Citizen's Alliance did not pursue an aggressive open shop

[46] Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Cornell UP, 1995), 1-7; Thomas Goebel, "The Political Economy of American Populism from Jackson to the New Deal," *Studies in American Political Development* 11 (1997), 109-113; "Introduction" in *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure Second Edition* edited by Steven Rosenstone, Roy Behr, and Edward Lazarus (1984; reis., Princeton UP, 1996), 9.
[47] Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, vii.
[48] Ibid., viii.

campaign because Abe Ruef was the boss of the ULP, but rather because a labor party had shown over the course of two election cycles that it had the support of a majority of the city's electorate. It is the purpose of this dissertation, then, to deemphasize the person of the boss to show the impact of the ULP with greater clarity.

In later decades, political histories of American cities reflected deeper engagement with related scholarship in American political science. Robert Dahl's classic study of New Haven, in which he argued that power flows from multiple sets of leaders with ever-changing political resources in a "pluralist" system, illustrates the kind of political science work that served as a model and point of departure for historians.[49] It was in response to Dahl and others that William Issel and Robert Cherny published *San Francisco, 1865-1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development*, a significant contribution to political history broadly as well as to the historiography of the ULP. They identified class polarization, rather than pluralism, as the key marker of San Francisco politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and argued that ULP dominance in the first decade of the twentieth century created conditions of "partisan instability and political turmoil."[50] This dissertation accepts the class polarization framework, but suggests that the ULP-induced instability of the first decade of the twentieth century can be read as a moment of realignment before the consolidation of progressive power in the 1910s.

How are we to assess the significance of a short-lived labor party that did not radically alter political and economic conditions when it had the opportunity to do so? One option would be to scrutinize the party's shortcomings, another to praise its record as a genuine, if flawed

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[49] Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?: Democracy and Power in an American City*, (1974; reis., New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), 86. "Within a century a political system dominated by one cohesive set of leaders had given way to a system dominated by many different sets of leaders, each having access to a different combination of political resources. It was, in short, a pluralist system."

[50] Robert Cherny and William Issel, *San Francisco, 1865-1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1986), 203, 155.

attempt to realize a government by and for the working class.[51] The trouble with histories of this kind is that they are often not very historical, meaning that careful attention to a single subject in a single context—whether geographical, temporal, or both—can lead to overzealous praise or condemnation which strikes the reader as ill-considered, if not immature. In fairness, the archival standards of modern history and the resources available to most graduate students make ambitious and well-executed projects a rarity. This project does not pretend to be so.

What we can do is treat our subjects relationally—or in other words, assess what a subject represents in relation to alternatives in its immediate context as well as in the longer sweep of time. The chapters that follow do not abandon policy for theory—in fact the opposite charge might be levelled at them. Policy and concrete action affecting political and economic conditions are paramount in this account, but perhaps their primacy throughout permits a cautious step or two into a less material line of argument. Beyond the substance of its policies, the ULP's momentary control of city hall constitutes what Leon Fink has called a "social relocation of power," or a disjuncture where political power passes from an established governing class to another.[52] For all its flaws, a party by and for the working class took executive and legislative power from the traditional governing elites of a major American city and held it for a time. There are few, if any, precedents for this in the long tradition of labor struggle in California.[53] It is beyond the scope of this project to comment on contemporary affairs, but there are surely lessons in this for our current moment of political confusion and despair.

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[51] For the former, see Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*. For the latter, see Jules Tygiel, "Where Unionism Holds Undisputed Sway: A Reappraisal of San Francisco's Union Labor Party," *California History*, Vol. 62, no. 3 (1983), 196-215. Kazin's treatment of the ULP in his work on the Building Trades Council falls somewhere between these two, Kazin, *Barons of Labor*.

[52] Leon Fink, "Politics as Social History: A Case Study of Class Conflict and Political Development in Nineteenth-Century New England," in *In Search of the Working Class: Essays in American Labor History and Political Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 1994), 47.

[53] Fred Glass, *From Mission to Microchip: A History of the California Labor Movement* (UC Press, 2016), 131-369.

A word must now be said about racism in the labor movement. In recent decades historians have analyzed the racial dimensions of the labor movement's support for Asian exclusion as a transnational phenomenon where racism reinforces white solidarity and advances settler colonial expansion around the Pacific Rim.[54] California experienced decades of acute anti-Asian agitation and the ULP was no exception to this trend.[55] The progressive opponents of the ULP, however, shared their racism and support for Asian exclusion.[56] Consensus between these two camps on the issue of Asian exclusion lends credence to Rogers Smith's view of racial ideology as a long-term, institutional feature of American politics, but since the present study focuses on the conflict between progressives and labor for control of the state, the explanatory power of ULP racism is somewhat limited.[57]

Race has been a central, if not, the central category in California-focused histories in recent years yielding work that uncovers the multiple points of origin of the state's contemporary racial politics.[58] Much of it considers the operations of white supremacy as well as multiracial

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[54] Kornel Chang, "Circulating Race and Empire: Transnational Labor Activism and the Politics of Anti-Asian Agitation in the Anglo-American Pacific World, 1880-1910," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 96, no. 3 (2009), 678-679; Kornel Chang, "Enforcing Transnational White Solidarity: Asian Migration and the Formation of the U.S.-Canadian Boundary," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 60, no. 3 (2008), 672-673; Kristofer Allerfeldt, "Race and Restriction: Anti-Asian Immigration Pressures in the Pacific North-west of America during the Progressive Era, 1885-1924," *History*, Vol. 88, no. 1 (2003), 53.

[55] The first ULP platform calls for the maintenance of Asian exclusion. *Call*, September 7, 1901, 13; During the second ULP administration under P. H. McCarthy—discussed in chapter 3—the BTC's official paper, *Organized Labor*, backed the ULP. It's editor, Olaf Tveitmoe, was president of the "Asiatic Exclusion League" and the meetings of this organization regularly appeared in the pages of *Organized Labor*. For an example, see *Organized Labor*, October 10, 1908, 7.

[56] In 1901, mayor Phelan convened a convention to rally support for the reenactment of the Exclusion Law. *For the Reenactment of the Chinese Exclusion Law: California's Memorial to the President and the Congress of the United States* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1902; Hathitrust); Also see, James Phelan, "Why the Chinese should be Excluded," originally published in *The North American Review*, 173 (1901), accessed through *The American Yawp*.

[57] Rogers Smith, "Which Comes First, the Ideas or the Institutions?" chapter published in *Rethinking Political Institutions: The Art of the State* edited by Ian Shapiro, Stephen Skowronek, and Daniel Galvin (NYU Press, 2006), 92-93.

[58] Daniel Martinez-Hosang, *Racial Popositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California* (UC Press, 2010), 2-11; Kenneth Marcus, "The Central Avenue Borderscape: Racial and Musical Borders in Los Angeles in the Era of Jim Crow," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 91, no. 4, 2022, 492-524; Yu Tokunaga, "Japanese Farmers, Mexican Workers, and the Making of Transpacific Borderlands," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 89, no. 2, 2020,

resistance to its social, cultural, and political hegemony. Transcending race and achieving broad-based, multiracial solidarity is indeed one of the great challenges of our time, but as a matter of history, race need not be, in every case, the central category of analysis for the field to view a work as having something legitimate to say about the past. Of course, race affects conditions in modern societies, but it is probably incorrect for the field to implicitly or explicitly hold it up as the prime mover in history. Things like labor, gender relations, and state structure predate modern Western notions of race and will almost certainly outlive them.

Sources, Methods, and Chapter Overview:

This project analyzes political and industrial conflict in a Progressive Era American city. It is an institutional history that follows the collisions of unions, companies, and political parties, viewing them as instruments in a more general contest between capital, labor, and reformist liberals to control the social, political, and economic direction of a key industrial and commercial city. The rise and fall of the Union Labor Party anchors the narrative. Archival materials used for this project include the Ira Cross papers and the San Francisco Labor Council collection at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, the Hichborn papers at UCLA, and the Winfield Davis papers at the Huntington Library. The bulk of the digitized materials are newspapers provided by the California Newspapers Project at UC Riverside and San Francisco Municipal Records located at the San Francisco Public Library and available on InternetArchive.

Chapter one details the advent of the ULP as labor's political response to acute industrial conflict in 1901. After the economic crisis of the 1870s, union density and organizational

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165-197; George Sanchez, "Why Are Multiracial Communities So Dangerous?: A Comparative Look at Hawai'i; Cape Town, South Africa; and Boyle Heights, California," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 86, no. 1, 2017, 153-170; Kathryn Olmsted, "The 1930s Origins of California's Farmworker-Church Alliance," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 88, no. 2, 2019, 240-261.

capacity steadily increased, particularly among the crafts, but also with newer unions like the teamsters and coordinating bodies like the recently formed City Front Federation representing waterfront unions. Corporations experienced a parallel organizational development with the formation of coordinating bodies like the Employers' Association, whose attempt to institute the open shop in drayage firms recently unionized by the teamsters precipitated an industrial crisis that enabled the ULP to seize control of the municipal government in the fall elections of 1901. The ULP's key campaign issue was the Phelan administration's use of police and private security forces to protect strikebreakers and contain the growing unrest throughout the city. The perception that the Democratic administration used its police powers to aid employers pushed a critical mass of unions and fellow travelers to abandon the mainstream American labor movement's aversion to independent political action and throw in behind the newly formed Union Labor Party. The fall of the reformist Phelan administration marked the first instance of what became a multi-year struggle for power between the ULP and San Francisco progressives.

Chapter two covers the first ULP administration's approach to industrial relations and the progressive legal strategy to undermine the Schmitz government. Despite its ideological conservatism, the Schmitz administration largely fulfilled its campaign pledge to serve as a counterweight for labor in industrial conflict. Schmitz denied employer requests for police protection of strikebreakers, limited the use of private security services, and pressured companies to accede to union demands in public and private negotiations. City Hall's tilt to labor helped unions weather attacks from the Citizens' Alliance, an open shop organization from Colorado which had recently expanded to California. After failing to defeat the ULP over three election cycles, an anti-ULP coalition led by progressive journalists, politicians, and financial backers, empaneled a grand jury to investigate alleged corruption involving top ULP officials. The

ensuing graft trials uncovered genuine evidence of bribery and extortion in which ULP supervisors and the party's key strategist, Abe Ruef, received payments from companies in exchange for favors and privileges. The trials toppled the Schmitz administration and brought to power a prosecution-backed emergency government.

Chapter three examines the ULP's return to power under the auspices of the Building Trades Council and its president, P. H. McCarthy, and considers how decades of regressive fiscal policy affected political conditions during the ULP era. Under McCarthy, the mainstream labor movement staffed and supported the ULP to an extent not seen in the Schmitz years making it difficult for contemporaries and historians to claim that the ULP was not a genuine labor party. The McCarthy administration's moderation therefore poses problems for readers ideologically disposed to favor independent political action by organized labor. The party supported the unionization of public sector workers, provided aid to unions on strike, and initiated major public infrastructure projects like the Municipal Rail, but it did not radically alter political and economic conditions in San Francisco. Decades of regressive fiscal policy and a political climate more amenable to liberal progressive notions of social harmony and nonpartisanship than to class politics would have constrained a more radical set of historical agents, but it would be a mistake to conclude that the ULP's conservatism was primarily the result of adverse external conditions. This project suggests that it was also a feature of this brand of labor politics whose priority is the defense of organized labor rather than seeking political solutions to the conditions that oppress all those who work.

Chapter 1: The Waterfront Strike of 1901 and the Coming of the Union Labor Party

The Union Labor Party (ULP) breakthrough in the municipal elections of 1901 marked an important development for labor and politics in San Francisco.[59] Though its election gains were partial—winning the mayor's office, but a minority of the Board of Supervisors—in time the ULP would become the city's most lasting independent labor party if measured by its capacity to contest and hold power across several election cycles.[60] The timing of this independent labor party effort is significant to the extent that it challenged the progressive reform coalition seemingly at the moment of its consolidation following the election of James Phelan in 1896 and the charter reform campaign of 1898. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the labor movement's decision to launch an independent party at this moment and why it was successful.

The most immediate cause for the ULP success lies in the series of strikes that took place in 1901 culminating in the waterfront strike in the summer and fall. Political sociologist Robin Archer has shown that state and employer repression hindered the formation of a national labor party in the US at the turn of the twentieth century.[61] If this is true at the national level, it does not hold for San Francisco, where state-backed employer repression of organized labor during the waterfront strike helped facilitate the rise of the ULP. The use of regular and special police to protect strikebreakers had two effects. First, it convinced some in the labor movement leadership that the defense of unionism would require labor's control of the police, and by extension, city government. Second, it convinced a critical mass of the city's working-class electorate to back an independent labor party to achieve this end.

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[59] *Call*, November 6, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[60] Terrence McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy: Socioeconomic Change and Political Culture in San Francisco, 1860-1906* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1986), 166.
[61] Robin Archer, *Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States?* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007), 142.

If the waterfront strike was the precipitating event, key structural developments made the political situation more amenable to an independent labor party effort in the fall of 1901. In his work on Upton Sinclair's EPIC movement in the 1930s, historian Jim Gregory looks to the ways in which social and institutional context create political opportunities that shape the terrain upon which movements operate.[62] According to this view, movements arise not just when there are "grievances but also opportunities in the form of breakdowns or gaps in political institutions and when resources…are available to help the movement grow."[63] This chapter will consider the events of 1901 and the emergence of the ULP in relation to opportunities flowing from the organizational resources available to labor and the institutional breakdown of the progressive reform coalition. Despite internal divisions and external pressures from employers and economic downturns like the depression of the early 1890s, San Francisco labor in 1901 had considerable organizational resources following two decades of union growth and consolidation. Consequently, the Phelan administration's decision to allow regular and special police officers to intervene in the strike by protecting strikebreakers cracked the political consensus surrounding

[62] Author and activist Upton Sinclair unsuccessfully ran for governor in California in 1934 using the slogan "End Poverty in California." For more on Sinclair and the EPIC campaign, see Charles E. Larson, "The EPIC Campaign of 1934," *Pacific Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (May 1958): 127-147; Donald L. Singer, "Upton Sinclair and the California Gubernatorial Campaign of 1934," *Southern California Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1974): 375-406; Judson Grenier, "Upton Sinclair: The Road to California," *Southern California Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1974): 325-336; George G. Rising, "An EPIC Endeavor: Upton Sinclair's 1934 California Gubernatorial Campaign," *Southern California Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 101-124; James N. Gregory, "Upton Sinclair's 1934 EPIC Campaign: Anatomy of a Political Movement," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 12, no. 4 (2015). Gregory's study of EPIC's voting base revised earlier interpretations which mistook the middle-class origins of many of the movement's leaders and organizers as evidence that EPIC was principally a product of middle-class reaction. Gregory's analysis of election data revealed that the EPIC vote came largely from the working-class neighborhoods of California's metropolitan areas; Greg Mitchell, *The Campaign of the Century* (New York: Random House, 1992); Clarence Fredric McIntosh, "Upton Sinclair and the EPIC Movement, 1933-1936" (PhD Diss., Stanford University, 1955). To this day, McIntosh's dissertation is one of the most comprehensive treatments of EPIC. It is essential reading for anyone seeking information about the movement.

[63] James Gregory, "Upton Sinclair's 1934 EPIC Campaign: Anatomy of a Political Movement," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 12, no. 4 (2015): 69.

the progressive reform coalition's legitimacy as a neutral arbiter between capital and labor and caused labor to rethink its role in city politics.

Union Growth and Consolidation in the Late Nineteenth Century

On the eve of the waterfront strike in 1901, San Francisco labor had reached a new level of organization following nearly two decades of union growth and consolidation. The Biennial Report of the California Bureau of Labor Statistics for the years 1901 and 1902 identified 495 unions in the state.[64] This represented a 75 percent increase over the previous two years.[65] Of these 495 unions, the report identified 162 in San Francisco, 68 in Los Angeles, 45 in Sacramento, and 36 in Oakland; the rest located in smaller districts throughout the state.[66] The high union density in San Francisco compared with the rest of the state as well as the year over year increase within San Francisco can also be seen in membership numbers. The report placed the total number of union members for the entire state at an estimated 67,500.[67] Of this number, 45,000 were affiliated with San Francisco unions, up from 20,000 identified in the previous report.[68]

One way to account for the growth of organized labor is to trace a development identified in the Bureau of Labor Statistics Report, the increase in number and staying power of central labor bodies.[69] The report estimated there were forty such bodies throughout the state, up from ten in 1900.[70] Perhaps more important than the total number of central labor bodies is the fact

[64] Office of the State Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Biennial Report of the Department of Industrial Relations of the State of California*, (Sacramento, 1901-2), 77.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, 78.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

that practically all of the unions identified in the report were affiliated with a central labor body in their respective locality.[71] The report lists ten central labor bodies operating in San Francisco: the San Francisco Labor Council, the Building Trades Council, the District Council of Carpenters, the Allied Printing Trades Council, the District Council of Painters, the District Council of Sheet Metal Workers, the Iron Trades Council, the Retail Trades Council, the City Front Federation, and the California State Federation of Labor.[72] The three most important bodies for the events of 1901 and the emergence of the ULP were the San Francisco Labor Council, the Building Trades Council, and the City Front Federation so their histories should be told before proceeding.

The San Francisco Labor Council and the Building Trades Council both developed out of the Federated Trades Council. Established in 1886, the Federated Trades Council was envisioned as a central labor body for the entire Pacific Coast, though in practice San Francisco was the focus of its operations and Bay Area unions its most represented contingent.[73] The Federated Trades Council initially sought to concentrate on continued opposition to Chinese labor, one of the central issues of the late 1870s and early 1880s.[74] However, better economic conditions in the 80s as well as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 caused the Trades Council to focus on other matters like coordinating strikes and boycotts for better wages and hours and recognition of the union label.[75] Historian Robert Cherny suggests the crack up of the Trades Council began when

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Robert Cherny and William Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1986), 82.
[74] Frank Roney, *Frank Roney: Irish Rebel and California Labor Leader*, edited by Ira Cross (1931; reis., NYC: AMS Pess, 1977), 265-272; Henry Marsden and W. H. Eastmen, *Call for an Anti-Chinese Convention by the Representative Assembly of Trade and Labor Unions of the Pacific Coast, 1882*, Bancroft Library, *Ira B. Cross Collection*, BANC MSS C-R 12, Carton 4.
[75] Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 82.

Alfred Fuhrman—of the brewery workers—assumed the presidency.[76] Dissatisfaction with Fuhrman's leadership and a series of lost strikes caused construction unions to leave the Trades Council in 1891 and affiliate with the new Building Trades Council (BTC).[77] The official death of the Trades Council came in 1892-3 when union representatives created a new central body, the San Francisco Labor Council (SFLC).[78] Under Fuhrman's leadership the Trades Council adhered to a strict voluntarist position.[79] The question of independent labor politics would be a topic of debate within and between the centers of labor power for the next two decades.

The SFLC embodied the strengths and weaknesses of central labor councils of this kind, attempting the necessary task of coordinating activities among different unions in various sectors of the economy, but without the coercive authority to compel its members to comply with its directives. The SFLC represented approximately 130 organizations by 1903 such as the Teamsters, the Machinists, the Sailor's Union of the Pacific, and the largely female Glove Workers and Bottle Caners.[80] The heterogeneity of its member unions and the careful guarding of union prerogatives by individual locals caused the SFLC to function more as an advisory body than a centralized executive—for example, SFLC rules required the consent of three-quarters of member unions to initiate a boycott.[81] The SFLC's heterogeneity and hands off approach could also be an asset. Organizational and political strategy were debated openly, perspectives ranging from strict economism to independent labor politics all received a hearing.[82] The SFLC also provided institutional legitimacy and support for newer unions, unions the Bureau of Labor

[76] Ibid.
[77] Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 82.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Alfred Fuhrman, *Alfred Fuhrman to Ira Cross, September 26, 1931*, Bancroft Library, *Ira B. Cross Collection*, BANC MSS C-R 12, Box 2.
[80] Michael Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 29.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

Statistics identified as growth areas for organized labor at the turn of the century.[83] Several of these newer unions played a key role in the events of 1901 and will be discussed later in the chapter.

If the SFLC functioned more as an advisory body for its member unions, the BTC exercised considerable authority over the building trades. Economist and labor historian Selig Perlman called the BTC a "labor barony on the Pacific Coast" and historian Michael Kazin found in the BTC an example of AFL dynamism at the local level that cuts against the conventional interpretation of a conservative organization bound by strict adherence to voluntarism and business unionism.[84] After several failed attempts to organize a central body for San Francisco building trades in the 1880s and early 1890s, the Carpenters led an effort in 1896 that would establish the BTC on a lasting basis.[85] By contrast to the SFLC, BTC leadership wielded significant executive authority. The BTC's roughly fifty locals needed authorization to strike or bargain for changes to wages, hours, and working conditions.[86] To a degree, this concentration of power produced the desired end—a BTC card became a requirement for regular employment in the San Francisco building trades.[87]

Finally, the City Front Federation (CFF)—a federation of waterfront unions—was the last to form and the most central to the events of 1901. San Francisco's position as the premier commercial hub on the Pacific Coast depended on the sailors and waterfront workers who facilitated the movement of goods and labor through a vast network connecting the American

[83] State Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1901-2, 78.
[84] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 3; Ibid., 4.
[85] Ibid., 37.
[86] Ibid., 30.
[87] Ibid.

interior to international ports.[88] The City Front Federation was established in February 1901, bringing together the powerful Sailors' Union of the Pacific, several longshoremen's unions, and the recently formed Teamsters' Local Union 85.[89] As an industrywide council, the CFF was similar to the BTC in organizational terms. Given the BTC's effectiveness in the construction industry, the prospect of a similarly effective coordinating body with the power to shut down the waterfront represented a serious challenge to employer interests. The employer response came two months after the formation of the CFF with the creation of the Employers' Association, a group guided by the principle that labor organizations should not interfere in any meaningful way between employer and employee.[90]

A survey of San Francisco's union growth and consolidation in the late nineteenth century would be incomplete without a discussion of causal factors. Kazin proposes several reasons for San Francisco labor's relative strength in this period. San Francisco's position as one of the few major urban centers in the Far West put a premium on labor, particularly the skilled trades.[91] Partial geographic isolation slowed the flow of new workers and limited employers' ability to import strikebreakers.[92] Divisions among the elite—whether of an economic character like shipping vs. small manufacturing interests or ideological like progressive reformers vs. traditional liberals—sometimes hindered their ability to pursue a unified policy towards labor and created openings in city politics.[93] Lastly, the relative ethnic homogeneity of the white

[88] For a sense of scope and scale of the daily commercial activities along the waterfront on the eve of the strike, see *Call*, July 31, 1901, 1, 2, 4, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[89] Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 86.
[90] *Call*, July 27, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.; *Call*, July 30, 1901, 7, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[91] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 14.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

population and the absence of ethnic enclaves—with the exception of Chinatown—made class more salient than ethnicity.[94]

The present study accepts these explanations with a few qualifications.[95] While the unique position of San Francisco as an urban hub far from the population centers of the United States and other potential sources of migration did advantage labor to a degree, this was never sufficient to end employer resistance to organized labor, whether skilled or unskilled. Awareness of divisions among city elites is essential for understanding factors inhibiting class cohesion at key junctures, but the power of the elite to resist the labor movement—whether in industrial conflict or electoral politics—should not be underestimated. Along with ethnic homogeneity within the white population, racial exclusion should be seen as a necessary condition for class solidarity among white workers. Scholars have long acknowledged the significance, if not centrality, of anti-Asian racism to the California labor movement and the American West more broadly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[96] With a view to establishing why an independent labor party captured power at this moment, anti-Asian racism should be seen as a factor, albeit not a decisive one.[97]

The Reform Coalition: The Phelan Administration and the Charter Campaign of 1898

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[94] Ibid.

[95] These qualifications should not be taken as critiques of Kazin. Rather, they should be read as additional comments to make the positions of the present study more explicit.

[96] Carey McWilliams, *California: The Great Exception* (1949; reis., Berkeley: UC Press, 1998), 140; Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1971), 1-2.

[97] This is in part a result of population size. In 1900, the population of San Francisco was approximately 94.9 percent white—this number includes both US and foreign born—, 4.6 percent Asian, and 0.5 percent Black. Keeping in mind that a proportion of the Asian population was barred from voting because of citizenship status or other legal proscriptions, it stands to reason that the remainder—whether mobilized in a coalition for or against the Union Labor Party—could not have been the most central demographic group to the fortunes of the ULP. Census Data found in Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 56.

At the national level, the 1890s witnessed two linked developments in state-labor relations. First, the federal government intervened forcefully against labor to end strikes using novel legal arguments to justify the use of injunctions and federal security services to enforce court orders. Whereas in previous decades state intervention in industrial conflict was often based on the common law doctrine of conspiracy, the Cleveland administration increasingly argued that strikes—and the unions that led them—were unlawful restraints of trade under the Sherman Act and the ICC.[98] This strategy was especially effective against railroad unions, the defeat of the ARU during the Pullman strike being a ready example.[99] Forceful state intervention in select strikes conveyed a clear message, labor actions that threatened interstate commerce would not be tolerated.

Second, once the most critical strike threats had been neutralized, the state attempted to stabilize industrial relations by passing legislation intended to signal state support for labor. Congress took the lead in this effort, passing the Erdman Act and the Industrial Commission Bill in 1898.[100] The Erdman Act recognized the legitimacy of unions on interstate railroads, banned "yellow-dog" contracts (or contracts in which an employee agrees to not join a union as a condition of being hired), and established a voluntary arbitration board meant to function as an alternative to strikes and other labor actions.[101] The Industrial Commission Bill established a commission—whose members would be appointed by Congress and the president—to investigate labor-capital relations and signal to the labor movement that the federal government

[98] Melvyn Dubofsky, *The State and Labor in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1994), 29.
[99] Ibid., 29-30; For more on the Pullman Strike, see Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (1982 reis., University of Illinois Press, 2007), 127-146; For labor activity in California in the 1880s and 1890s, see Ira Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1935), 166-216.
[100] Dubofsky, *The State and Labor in Modern America*, 32-33.
[101] Ibid.

was not singularly opposed to its interests.[102] This set of facts—repression followed by conditional recognition—illustrates the ways in which labor was subordinate to and dependent on the state, a situation that was to some extent accepted by key elements of the labor movement because it was at this very moment that the AFL voted down a proposed "Political Programme" which among other things would have authorized the formation of an independent labor party.[103]

A similar stabilization of industrial relations predicated on labor accepting a secondary position in the political sphere occurred in San Francisco during the second half of the 1890s. After the fall of Boss Buckley's machine (1883-1892) and the brief, but inconsequential mayoralty of Adolph Sutro (1894-1896), a new political consensus formed around the reform Democrats headed by their mayoral candidate James Phelan. In an interview following his election in 1896, Phelan discussed the basic posture of his administration "…I will see that the municipal offices are conducted without extravagance, waste, favoritism or corruption; that the revenue of the City be expended for the economical maintenance of the municipal establishments and for the general progress and welfare of our great City."[104] Though consistent with the politics of previous decades in his call for economy and good government, Phelan and the coalition around him represented a new direction for city politics.

Phelan articulated his vision for a new politics in an address titled "The New San Francisco" which he delivered at the opening of the Mechanics' Institute Fair shortly before his election in 1896. Industrialization and the expansion of trans-Pacific commerce required a new politics that substituted the individualistic fortune-seeking of the past with common purpose and

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[102] Ibid.
[103] For the text of the Political Programme as introduced at the AFL convention of 1894, see American Federation of Labor, *Report of Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 36, HathiTrust; for a summary of the debate and the programme's defeat, see Archer *Why Is There No Labor Party in the US?,* 14-15.
[104] *Call*, November 7, 1896, 9, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

activist government. Cities had superseded the countryside as centers of economic activity and their increasing populations presented sanitation, engineering, and employment challenges, the remedies to which required intentional, rational, and future-focused governance. Phelan denounced monopoly practices in commercial shipping and identified railways connecting San Francisco to the interior as a means to advance the city's position as the indispensable link between the United States and the Pacific.[105] He did not say anything about the role that union labor would play, but his hopes that land transport would facilitate the city's economic development presaged the bitter industrial conflicts between labor and rail and drayage firms that would test his administration and shape the industrial and political landscape of San Francisco over the next decade.

By the late 1890s, the reflexive orientation towards retrenchment had given way to state supported growth. The administration's approach to bonded indebtedness serves as an example. The city's total indebtedness was $186,000 in 1897. By 1901, that number had risen to $11,025,000.[106] Increases to the public debt funded a number of improvement projects including a sewer system, a hospital, and seventeen schools.[107] Phelan also expressed a willingness to tax and regulate San Francisco businesses, particularly utility providers whose position in the city economy rendered them "quasi-public corporations."[108] All told, the administration oversaw an across-the-board increase in city expenditures compared to the previous decade.[109]

However, the administration was not always successful in pushing through reforms when the business community objected. Business community support for the Phelan administration

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[105] James D. Phelan, "The New San Francisco," 1896, accessed via HathiTrust, 5-6, 8-9, 6-7.
[106] Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 153.
[107] Ibid.
[108] *Call*, November 7, 1896, 9, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[109] Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 153.

came most visibly from the Merchants' Association. Founded in 1894, the Merchants' Association sought to leverage its members influence and resources to apply business principles to city government.[110] In 1898, in an effort to raise more revenue for the city, the administration proposed a new licensing tax on firms and individuals using public property for private ends such as sidewalks outside businesses and basement bars and restaurants. The Merchants' Association sent a communication to the Board of Supervisors objecting to the proposed measure largely on the grounds that property owners constructed and leased these spaces with the understanding that they would not be subject to such a tax and thus it was unfair for the city to impose one after the fact. Shortly thereafter, the Board voted to indefinitely postpone the licensing tax, citing opposition from the Merchants' Association as the reason for the decision.[111]

The administration's efforts to pursue a reform agenda while balancing the business and labor elements of its coalition can be seen in the charter campaign of 1898. The Merchants' Association led an unsuccessful campaign to revise the charter in 1896. The key structural changes in the proposed charter would have centralized authority in city hall by reducing the number of elected officials, limiting the power of ward-based politicians in favor of citywide officials, and bolstering the civil service.[112] Labor largely opposed this charter, in part because centralization posed a threat to working-class voter power and labor leadership felt it had been sidelined in the charter debate.[113] Phelan came into office intending to restart the charter debate and ensure greater labor support. Speaking to a reporter, he stressed that the new charter should appeal to as many constituencies as possible, "I regard the adoption of a new charter of

[110] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 41.
[111] *Municipal Report of the City and County of San Francisco 1898-1899,* accessed via HathiTrust, 77-91.
[112] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 41.
[113] Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 145-146.

paramount importance, and with the lesson taught by Tuesday's election an instrument ought to be framed, I think, that would be acceptable to the majority of the people."[114]

The administration's strategy to gain labor support had three elements. First, Phelan appointed labor delegates, most notably P. H. McCarthy of the BTC, to the committees tasked with drafting the new charter.[115] Second, in addition to the centralization measures of the previous charter, the administration assented to provisions backed by labor including a minimum wage and maximum hours for city employees and a green light for the city to establish publicly owned utilities.[116] Third, Phelan took a hands-off approach to labor disputes in San Francisco and expressed sympathy for labor's position in industrial conflicts around the country.[117] Whereas the previous charter campaign produced near unanimous opposition from labor leadership and the working-class electorate, the policies mentioned here gained enough labor support that, combined with strong backing from middle class and wealthy districts, the city voted to accept the new charter.

The charter instituted political and fiscal reforms consistent with Phelan's views of modern, progressive government. The new law enhanced the executive power of the mayor at the expense of the legislative function of the Board of Supervisors by replacing patronage positions appointed by the Board with a professional civil service and by removing the Board's ability to spend city money in favor of administrators and commissioners appointed by the mayor. The charter changed the process for electing supervisors from a ward-based to an at-large system, something that labor leaders opposed in the previous charter debate for fear this would undermine their influence in working-class neighborhoods. Finally, the charter mandated a

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[114] *Call*, November 7, 1896, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[115] *Municipal Report of the City and County of San Francisco 1898*-1899, accessed via HathiTrust, 301-304.
[116] Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 152.
[117] Ibid., 153.

ceiling of 1$ for every $100 of assessed valuation for city taxes with a view to increasing efficiency and reigning in waste.[118] This so-called Dollar Limit effectively institutionalized a bipartisan, San Francisco fiscal orthodoxy dating back to the 1870s which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three. The charter of 1898 represents a significant achievement for San Francisco's nascent progressive movement as it changed the organic law of the city and altered the fiscal and political landscape in ways that would shape political conflict in the decade to come.

By the turn of the century, the Phelan administration had established a strong political consensus centered on growth and reform. Organized labor received representation and legitimacy in this consensus, but as a junior partner called upon to advise and ratify, not to set policy. For its part, organized labor largely accepted this role. When calls to form an independent labor party came in the summer of 1901, an editorial objecting to this move appeared in the BTC's *Organized Labor*, "…the careful and thinking majority constituting organized labor has decried such innovation and sternly opposes the participation in politics by the organizations, as an exclusive political labor party."[119] "This course," it continued, "has been pursued by all legitimate unions and has proven to be the only safe method, and the only method by which labor has been able to support those in whom it reposed complete confidence regardless of partisanship, thereby preserving and protecting the union against political division and bringing to the public service the persons in whose hands the municipal government has been safe and secure and labor's interests have been protected."[120] For a large segment of the labor movement,

[118] *Municipal Report of the City and County of San Francisco 1901*-1902, accessed via HathiTrust, 758-760.
[119] *Organized Labor*, June 15, 1901, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[120] Ibid.

the waterfront strike in the summer and fall of 1901 would test and ultimately undermine this position.

The Waterfront Strike of 1901

The stakes of the waterfront strike are better understood when set in the context of the unsettled labor relations beginning in the spring of 1901. On May 1, members of the Cooks and Waiters' Alliance struck for higher wages, a six-day week, and a closed shop.[121] In total, the strike impacted around 2,000 workers.[122] Organized trades in the carriage manufacturing industry including the Blacksmith's, Carriage and Wagon Makers, and Carriage Painters, struck for similar reasons a few days later and they were subsequently joined by organized helpers and finishers.[123] At the same time, several unions were negotiating with the United Iron Works as part of a national AFL campaign for the nine hour day in the iron trades.[124] This strike ultimately lasted ten months.[125] These earlier strikes, therefore, contributed to the unsettling of labor relations and heightened tensions between employers and the labor movement before the waterfront strike occurred.

The spring strike wave produced different responses from the SFLC and the BTC. Constrained in its ability to materially affect the course of the strikes, the SFLC attempted to pressure organized employers to take a "hands off" approach to disputes between individual employers and specific unions.[126] In a public statement signed by AFL organizer J. D. Pierce and SFLC Secretary Edward Rosenberg, the SFLC alleged that organized employers were preventing

[121] *Organized Labor*, May 11, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[122] Ira Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1935), 239.
[123] *Organized Labor*, May 11, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California*, 240.
[126] *Organized Labor*, May 11, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

resolutions favorable to labor by threatening individual employers to take a hard line.[127] For example, according to the statement the carriage workers were nearing an agreement with their employer that would have recognized their right to organize, "but Front street threatened," and the employer chose to lockout their employees.[128] Perhaps partly to gain leverage and partly out of fear of losing control of events, the SFLC said it was working to prevent a general strike, but that if it came, employer intransigence would be the cause.[129]

The BTC was quick to distance itself from the strikes. The executive committee adopted a set of resolutions outlining the BTC's position. First, the BTC wanted it known that it "at no time has had anything to do with the conditions which have led up to the said controversy, either in an official or unofficial manner." To preempt those who may have wished to involve the BTC in the strikes, the second resolution stated that the BTC "lends its support, moral and financial, to matters only with which it has had to do with the inauguration and arrangement of details in their entirety." To maintain its image as a responsible organization that business need not fear, the third resolution denounced the idea that "the employers of labor as a class are opposed to the best interests of organized labor and its legitimate requests, when presented properly and in a spirit of fairness." The final lines of the statement containing the above resolutions illustrates the BTC's thinly veiled ambivalence about the present labor situation, "Therefore, in considering the present labor situation, the Building Trades Council desires the public to understand that it approves of legitimate unionism with a just and consistent regard for the rights of all."[130]

If the official communication from the BTC executive committee signaled that it would not be drawn into the conflict, the BTC's newspaper—*Organized Labor*—editorialized about

[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] *Organized Labor*, May 11, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[130] Ibid.

how it should end. “The Labor situation,” the paper told its readers, “is serious. A gigantic conflict between capital and labor is at present threatening the progress and prosperity of San Francisco. Both parties seem determined to make a stubborn fight to the finish. This means destruction to our industries and ruin and suffering to the entire community.” Given the stakes, the paper concluded, “In the interest of all—the best interests of California—“Organized Labor” requests both parties to immediately come together and confer upon terms of arbitration.”[131]

Though the BTC’s caution should not be overstated—the previous year it won a dramatic strike against the planing mill owners which essentially instituted the closed shop in the construction industry—the BTC line reflected misgivings about recent developments in the labor movement of San Francisco.[132] The growth areas for San Francisco unionism at the turn of the century lay not in the established crafts, but in formerly unorganized trades such as butchers, cooks and waiters, laundry-workers, railway employees, retail clerks, stablemen, street railway employees, tanners, teamsters, barbers, hodcarriers, and laborers.[133] From the BTC’s perspective, these new unions were suspect because they organized unskilled workers, they had the potential to unsettle industrial relations by launching into campaigns they did not yet have the institutional capacity to sustain, and importantly, they did not answer to the BTC. The facts partly substantiate this perspective because the union situation provoked an aggressive employer response led by the newly formed Employers’ Association which defeated several of the new unions, including the butchers.[134] A more complete analysis would suggest that the organization of the new unions infused new energy into the labor movement and made real the prospect of a broad-based movement that encompassed the majority of San Francisco workers. Combined with

[131] *Organized Labor*, May 11, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[132] For a narration of the planing mill incident, see Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 45-51.
[133] State Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1901-2, 78.
[134] Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California*, 240-241.

the growing power of the craft unions and increasing employer hostility to organized labor, this additional element pushed the labor situation into a more tense and volatile dynamic.

The waterfront strike developed out of a dispute between the teamsters and the Draymen's Association. Cross describes the events in his history of the California labor movement.[135] In July 1901, an organization called the Epworth League held its national convention in San Francisco and contracted with the Morton Special Delivery Company, a non-union firm, to handle the baggage of attendees More workers were eventually needed so event organizers added another drayage firm, the Morton Draying Company, owned by the brother of the manager of the Morton Special Delivery Company. The Morton Draying Company was a member of the Draymen's Association which had earlier granted the closed shop to the teamsters and agreed that only union teamsters would work for members of the Draymen's Association. When the union teamsters refused to work with non-union men, they were locked out by the Morton Draying Company. In what appears as a coordinated effort to break the power of unionized teamsters, other firms affiliated with the Draymen's Association locked out their workers—some 6,400 in total—and began hiring non-union workers.[136] By July 26, police were escorting non-union teamsters and there were reports of violence between police and striking teamsters and their sympathizers.

After midnight on July 30, the CFF voted to call out all of its members in a bid to halt the employer assault on member unions by shutting down the waterfront.[137] The text of the resolution authorizing the strike included not only San Francisco, but other Bay Area ports as well, "Resolved, That the full membership of the City Front Federation refuses to work on the

[135] Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California*, 242.
[136] Ibid.
[137] *Call*, July 30, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

docks of San Francisco, Oakland, Port Costa and Mission Rock and in the city of San Francisco."[138] By preventing the loading and unloading of vessels and withholding the labor necessary to move ships in and out of the bay, the CFF intended to effectively close the ports and bring the wholesale and manufacturing sectors to a standstill. This was no idle threat in view of the fact that the total number of teamsters, sailors, longshoremen, and others represented by the CFF exceeded 16,000, with estimates about the actual number of workers currently employed and thus affected by the strike hovering around 15,000.[139]

Following the strike authorization, the CFF issued a lengthy public statement to explain its decision. The statement points to what the CFF saw as a national trend of employer antagonism rooted in a policy "to disrupt labor organizations on the ground that they are interfering with and dictating to them how they should run their business." The CFF, consequently, claimed the "right for its members to organize for their mutual benefit and improvement" and "the right to say how much our labor is worth and the conditions under which we will work."[140] In these core principals lay the contradiction underpinning much of the industrial conflict between capital and the non-revolutionary labor movement of San Francisco.

The statement then detailed efforts to seek a resolution to avert a strike through consultations with the mayor's office and the Chamber of Commerce, efforts that ultimately proved unsuccessful. When the Draymen's Association said that the Employer's Association had assumed control of the situation with the teamsters, the CFF approached the president of the Steamship Managers' Association, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, and Mayor Phelan and asked them to intervene. The Employer's Association appears to have rebuffed these

[138] Ibid.
[139] *Call*, July 30, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[140] Ibid.

calls to negotiate, at which point the CFF presented Mayor Phelan with terms it would accept to end the teamsters' strike and prevent a general strike on the waterfront. The peace terms are worth listing in full because their basic contours remained in place for the duration of the strike: 1. Employers must concede the right of employees to organize, 2. Employers must not discriminate against an employee or potential hire on the basis of that individual's membership in a union, 3. Employers must establish the status quo ante, 4. Employees will not engage in a sympathetic strike until a conciliation committee composed of members of both sides has met and failed to come to terms, 5. Employers will not order a lockout under the same conditions, 6. That reasonable time will be given to the conciliation committee to adjust differences.[141]

The Employer's Association rejected these terms. The association's lawyer, M. F. Michael, notified Mayor Phelan that the executive committee had instructed him to say that the above terms did not present a satisfactory solution.[142] The association agreed in principle to the CFF's proposal, including the right of labor to organize, but confidence in its strength or fear of labor's growing power led the employers to take a hard line against unionism. In their talks with Mayor Phelan, the association made it clear that while it respected the right of workers to organize, employers expected workers to obey their commands without interference from unions.[143] The association also rejected the closed shop and decried "unjust demands" and the "abuse of unionism."[144] George Renner, manager of the Draymen's Association put it more bluntly, "We shall come to no terms with the teamsters unless on the basis that the draymen shall transact their affairs without interference from any union…We deny the right of the union to

[141] *Call*, July 30, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[142] Ibid.
[143] *Call*, July 30, 1901, 7, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[144] Ibid.

dictate to us how we shall conduct our affairs. That's the thing in a nutshell."[145] These positions show the considerable distance between the two sides on key aspects of industrial relations and help to explain the difficulty in reaching an agreement satisfactory to both camps.

In addition to the basic principles at issue, the opening moves of the strike established the important, but as yet, ambivalent position of the mayor's office and city hall. Although the CFF entered the conflict without the support of San Francisco's strongest central labor organization, the BTC, and also faced the perennial challenges of sustaining solidarity and the material needs of striking workers, the strike leaders were confident that they could tie up the waterfront and bring the employers to terms.[146] For its part, the Employer's Association felt confident that it would ultimately prevail through the use of strikebreakers.[147] True to the reform ethos of the administration which attempted to position city government as a neutral arbiter between capital and labor, the mayor's office seems to have worked in good faith to find a resolution satisfactory to both sides. However, once the strike was underway, the mayor's decisions about where and how to deploy the police proved highly consequential to subsequent developments.

At the start, the CFF's efforts to bring all economic activity on the waterfront to a standstill proved effective. In the strike's first few days reports described ships and freight sitting idle at the docks without crews to handle them.[148] The strike slowed regional commercial activity with Stockton and Seattle firms reporting a sharp decline in shipping along the coast and inland river systems.[149] International shipping was also affected with British, Italian, and Australian ships, among others, either stuck or rerouted.[150] In mid-August, San Francisco wholesale and

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[145] *Call*, August 3, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[146] *Call*, July 30, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[147] Ibid.
[148] *Call*, July 31, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[149] *Call*, July 31, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[150] Ibid.

retail merchants gathered to discuss the strike situation and the retail grocers said business was down as much as twenty-five to forty percent of pre-strike levels.[151] Still, many employers felt they could get through the trouble with reduced work crews and non-union hires. F. H. Carroll of the Cudahy Packing Company conveyed a common sentiment among managers affected by the strike, saying "as far as our men are concerned, we will not take them back. They promised to stand by us, and their first act was to leave us in the lurch. We will manage to struggle along with our new force for a while."[152]

Non-union workers were not long in coming. Some firms used their own white-collar employees as an emergency measure in the earliest days of the strike.[153] UC Berkeley allowed a team of undergraduates to unload ships in Oakland.[154] The presence of white-collar employees and students notwithstanding, most strikebreakers were recruited from the working class. Though the strike saw repeated clashes between strikers and white strikebreakers, the animus shown towards Black and Asian strikebreakers reveals an added layer of irony and tragedy to the labor conflict. Whether by law or custom, most Black and Asian workers were barred from San Francisco unions putting many in an impossible position between workers that rejected them and employers that would opportunistically use them. On July 30, Roscoe Horn and William Ferguson, two Black drivers working for G. W. Emmons & Co., were arrested for firing into a crowd of strikers. Horn and Ferguson alleged they were acting in self-defense after the strikers threw rocks and other objects and threatened to rush the cart they were driving. One striker suffered non-life-threatening injuries after being struck in the hip by a bullet fired by either Horn

[151] *Call*, August 16, 1901, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[152] *Call*, July 31, 1901, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[153] *Call*, July 31, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[154] *Call*, August 21, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

or Ferguson. Horn and Ferguson were later released on cash bail provided by an attorney representing the Employer's Association.[155]

Yet instances of interracial solidarity were not entirely absent. The *Stockton Record* reported on the activities of E. G. Rhodes, a representative of the CFF who travelled through the countryside to explain the strike situation to farmers and laborers. Along the way Rhodes spoke to H. Soyejima, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Japanese Association of America, who communicated that the position of the Association was to recommend to all Japanese workers in the country to remain neutral during the strike and not travel to San Francisco to take the jobs of people on strike. In his capacity as Chairman of the Executive Committee, Soyejima issued a letter to Japanese organizations and the community at large which read in part, "if our countrymen will take the strikers' positions, the action is against moral *(sic)* of laborers…One must sacrifice his own interests for the public welfare. The association accordingly orders you that if you have taken the positions of strikers you have to quit work, and let them know that our workmen stand neutral."[156]

Though Horn and Ferguson claimed they purchased the gun used in the above incident, the presence of guns on the drays speaks to the contentious issue of security measures taken by employers and the city to protect non-union strikebreakers.[157] In addition to regular police officers assigned to patrol the waterfront and escort non-union drivers, the police commissioners began issuing conceal carry permits to employers and private security groups. On August 7, the police commissioners granted 137 such permits, 44 of which were given to John Curtin whose

[155] *Call*, July 31, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.; For an incident involving crews of Chinese nationals used to unload ships which provoked an outcry from strikers and subsequently a federal response on the basis of the Exclusion Act, see *Call*, August 3, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[156] *Stockton Record*, August 26, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[157] *Call*, July 31, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

private detective agency was hired to protect non-union workers in the wholesale district.[158] Mayor Phelan and the Board of Supervisors then granted a request from the Employers' Association to deputize its own security forces to work in tandem with the regular police.[159] Responding to protests from the CFF and the SFLC, Phelan justified the move by pointing to the deteriorating security situation on the waterfront and the idea that it was better to deputize the "specials" and bring them under the control of the city police rather than allow the employers to build wholly private security services.[160]

Mayor Phelan's decisions regarding the police were conditioned by pressure from the business elite to tighten security. On August 10, the Chamber of Commerce issued a letter signed by Secretary E. Scott and President George Newhall requesting an official proclamation from Phelan "that no man has the right to interfere with another in his pursuit of any lawful occupation, that acts of intimidation and violence must cease, and that as chief executive of the city you will preserve the peace and properly protect one and all."[161] On August 30, the assistant marine superintendent of the Army Transport Service in San Francisco applied for police protection on the transport dock, intimating that if Phelan could not control the situation, US troops would be brought in to protect government property and personnel. Phelan ultimately granted this request for more police around this section of the waterfront.[162] By September 18, George Renner of the Draymen's Association reported that business leaders were reaching a consensus that a vigilance committee modeled on the vigilance committee of the 1850s was needed to restore law and order[163]

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[158] *Call*, August 7, 1901, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[159] *Call*, August 14, 1901, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[160] *Call*, August 14, 1901, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[161] *Call*, August 10, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[162] *Call*, August 31, 1901, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[163] *Call*, September 18, 1901, 7, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

On August 12, a delegation of labor leaders headed by W. H. Goff and Ed Rosenberg of the SFLC and Michael Casey and Andrew Furuseth of the CFF met with Phelan to request the removal of George Newhall as president of the Board of Police Commissioners due to a conflict of interest since he was also the president of the Chamber of Commerce.[164] Acting in his capacity as president of the chamber, Newhall had signed the letter to Phelan requesting a stronger police response to the strike situation.[165] The labor delegation also protested the Board of Police Commissioner's appointment of 200 special police officers at the request of the Employer's Association.[166] Phelan's reply appeared in the papers on August 14 in which he defended Newhall's integrity and refused to replace him as well as his justification for deputizing the "specials" on grounds that it was better to bring them under city control than to allow employers to build large private security forces.[167]

The apparent cooperation between city government and employers on the police question eroded the Phelan administration's credibility with organized labor. At a mass meeting to discuss the strike situation, Peter Yorke, a respected Catholic priest and labor advocate known to most as Father Yorke, called attention to the "attitude of the civil power" in his keynote address. "It is you who pay the taxes; it is you who pay the Mayor; it is you who pay the police," he told the crowd, and yet "who are protected in this town tonight?" He went on to lament that the police had turned into the "guardian angels of draymen."[168] Although Yorke would later oppose the ULP's bid to launch an independent labor party, the sentiments presented here show how the

[164] *Call*, August 13, 1901, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[165] *Call*, August 10, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[166] *Call*, August 13, 1901, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[167] *Call*, August 14, 1901, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[168] *Call*, August 9, 1901, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

police question damaged the mayor's reputation for neutrality and caused labor to think seriously about the power of city government to influence industrial relations.

On October 2, nine weeks into the strike, the two sides reached an agreement to bring the conflict to an end.[169] The resolution was reached following two sets of closed-door meetings involving Phelan and California Governor Henry T. Gage. First, outstanding disagreements were tentatively settled in a meeting involving Phelan and two unnamed representatives of each side.[170] Second, R. P. Schwerin, representing Governor Gage, presented terms to the Employer's Association on behalf of the CFF and the teamsters.[171] The Employer's Association then instructed the Draymen's Association to meet Governor Gage and formally accept the terms. Per the agreement, the Draymen's Association guaranteed that the wages, hours, and overtime schedule existing before the strike would remain in place for one year, that it would not discriminate against union members, and that it would rehire as many workers as possible, but reserved the right to retain non-union workers hired during the strike.[172] The CFF and teamsters agreed to end the teamsters strike and the sympathetic strikes and agreed that union teamsters would work with non-union employees.[173]

The waterfront strike produced a complicated set of results for organized labor and politics in San Francisco at the start of the twentieth century. For the teamsters, the agreement with the Draymen's Association effectively established the status quo ante with the teamsters winning a guarantee on wages and hours, but losing the closed shop since the draymen refused to fire all non-union drivers hired during the strike. Less than total victory elicited a bitter response

[169] *Call*, October 3, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[170] *Call*, October 3, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[171] Ibid.
[172] *Call*, October 3, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[173] Ibid.

from the BTC's *Organized Labor* which charged that "to organize on misrepresentation, fraud, treachery, and slander, and then lead honest, sincere, law-abiding and hard-working men and women into a conflict of the most serious and trying kind…is a crime of such atrocious nature, that no penal code can prescribe adequate punishment for it."[174] This reading appears unduly harsh if one takes the view that the lockout of the teamsters was a coordinated effort led by the Employer's Association to check the growth of unionism in the city. From this vantage point, the CFF's ability to fight the better financed Employer's Association to a draw marks a win of sorts for labor. And yet, perhaps the most consequential result of the strike was that it created the conditions for the ULP to capture the mayor's office in November 1901.

The ULP

The ULP emerged in tandem with the spring and summer strikes of 1901. On July 13, a small group met in the Emma Spreckels building to officially launch the Union Labor Party.[175] The thirteen members of the original executive committee came from newer unions like the barbers, cooks and waiters, hackmen, machine hands, bakers, beer bottlers, pattern makers, and tailors.[176] The executive committee appointed Isadore Less of the barbers to serve as acting president and agreed to issue a call to every union in the city to send delegates to a nominating convention to select a municipal ticket for the fall election.[177] As the draymen and teamsters made their last attempts to come to terms and avoid a strike, the ULP issued a public statement highlighting the political dimension of the present labor situation. The time had come for

[174] *Organized Labor*, October 5, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[175] *Call*, July 14, 1901, 21, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[176] Walton Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco: The Story of the Union Labor Party, Big Business, and the Graft Prosecution* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1952), 18.
[177] *Call*, July 14, 1901, 21, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; *Call*, July 15, 1901, 7, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

organized labor to seek political power through electoral politics because although labor had "rendered valuable assistance to the two great parties," the parties had not governed in labor's interest.[178] The ULP therefore believed it "the duty of every man whether skilled or unskilled who are members of any labor union, or any workingmen who are not affiliated with any union" to join the movement and vote the labor ticket.[179] Given the divisions in the labor movement between the skilled and unskilled, the organized and the unorganized, the potential for a political party to transcend these divisions and function as a vehicle for all working people is evident.

The unions, however, were slow to appoint delegates to the party convention scheduled for September 5. One report claimed that by late August only 30 of approximately 126 unions in the city had chosen delegates.[180] Several reasons may account for this. First, the two largest labor councils, the SFLC and the BTC, both adhered to the AFL line against labor's involvement in independent politics, though local conditions would test this policy. Second, the CFF unions were one month into the waterfront strike, so they were either preoccupied or insufficiently radicalized by the strike situation to consider a bid for political power. The latter proposition seems likely because many of the unions identified in the report as having already sent delegates—the machinists, cooks and waiters, bakers, brewers, teamsters, and so on—were involved in strikes during the spring and early summer.[181] Thus, the early initiative for the ULP came from the SFLC-affiliated unions that had participated in the strikes preceding the waterfront strike. As the waterfront strike intensified, the CFF unions led by the teamsters would take a more active role in the party.

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[178] *Call*, July 21, 1901, 25, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[179] *Call*, July 21, 1901, 25, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[180] *Call*, August 27, 1901, 12, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[181] Ibid.

An early organizational question was whether the party would require its nominees and officials to hold or have once held a union card. This requirement was not universally endorsed, and it appears that at least some Democratic party officials hoped to move into the ULP should it prove successful at the polls.[182] On August 26, the executive committee voted to restrict official positions to union members in good standing.[183] A report from the sub-committee on constitution presented the reasoning, "the desire is to prevent the bosses from capturing our organization and running it on the old lines."[184] Keeping the party free of opportunists and transcending old line politics would prove both challenging and elusive, but the potential for a closed shop labor party to unsettle the balance of power was clear to political observers. Citing the precedent of the Workingmen's Party in the late 1870s, one editorial noted that the Democratic party was "practically erased from the political map" and something similar could happen again.[185]

On September 5, the ULP held its first large convention at Metropolitan Temple. There were 280 delegates representing 68 unions gathered on the main floor as workers and observers looked on from the gallery. One report noted the presence of a few perennial candidates and party functionaries, but it seems they did not have much of an impact on the proceedings. A skeptical reporter conceded, "the delegates are in earnest. They purpose making radical nominations and get (sic) behind the ticket with the resolute purpose of making a strong fight at the ballot box." Although close to half of the city's unions failed to send delegates, the same reporter commented, "in the broad sense it is not a popular convention, but it is a class

[182] *Call*, August 25, 1901, 21, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[183] *Call*, August 26, 1901, 7, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[184] Ibid.
[185] *Call*, August 21, 1901, 7, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

assemblage of character and vigor representative of laboring men who have faith in the virtue of the ballot."[186]

The convention highlighted how the unions associated with the waterfront strike had seized the initiative from the unions that started the party building process. The teamsters sent the largest delegation followed by the longshoremen and Packers', Porters', and Warehousemen's local 8885.[187] Numbers translated to power during the appointment process. When delegates were asked to vote on a chairman for the convention, Isadore Less of the barbers' union and member of the ULP executive committee credited with helping organize the party earlier in the summer, was the first person nominated. Delegates from the CFF unions then nominated Timothy Ryan of the teamsters. Less conceded when the first 81 ballots revealed 75 votes for Ryan and six for himself.[188] This episode indicates that the waterfront strike influenced the makeup of the party's personnel as it organized for the November election. The waterfront strike would also influence the party's messaging about why seizing political power was essential for labor's survival. Still, the CFF's power to control the direction of the party should not be overstated. As the party gained momentum and the potential for electoral success increased, other interests would compete for position and influence within the party.

As the convention continued, a reporter made a prescient prediction, "it is quite likely to happen that the deliberate judgement of the body will not prevail in the making of the ticket or the framing of the platform."[189] On these two points—the platform and the ticket—Abe Ruef, a lawyer and political broker from the city's Jewish mercantile elite, would make his first significant contributions to the development of the party. Ruef first tried to take over the city's

[186] *Call*, September 6, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[187] Ibid.
[188] *Call*, September 6, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[189] Ibid.

GOP machine by unseating regular Republicans with a slate backed by his Republican Primary League.[190] When this effort failed and the GOP nominated Asa Wells for mayor in the August primary, Ruef turned his attention to the nascent ULP organization, encouraging associates from the Republican Primary League with union affiliations to register as delegates and seek committee appointments.[191] For example, Ruef ally John S. Perry of the piledrivers and bridgebuilders became chair of the committee on credentials, chair of the committee on platform, and eventually permanent chair of the convention.[192] By the time convention delegates had been admitted and party officials selected, Ruef and his associates were well positioned to influence the proceedings out of proportion to their numbers in the labor bloc.

Ruef promoted another associate from the Republican Primary League to become the party's mayoral candidate. Eugene Schmitz was president of the Musicians' Union and leader of the Columbia Theater orchestra.[193] At thirty-seven, he was the same age as Ruef and the two men had known each other for fifteen years.[194] Along with political activities related to the Republican Primary League, the two had been involved in a steamship company and Ruef worked as an attorney for the Musicians' Union and privately for Schmitz.[195] Doubtless Schmitz entered the mayoral race not solely at Ruef's urging, but it seems Ruef communicated to Schmitz that his connections to labor, his Catholicism, and his German and Irish background recommended him to some of the city's largest constituencies.[196] Importantly for Ruef's vision, Schmitz was a moderate who could appeal to conservative elements and the business elite.[197]

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[190] Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 154.
[191] Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, 19-21.
[192] Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, 22.
[193] *Call*, September 18, 1901, 9, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[194] Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, 20.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, 21.

Schmitz won the nomination on September 17 after receiving 144 votes to his nearest rival's 95, indicating Schmitz had solid support at the ULP convention.[198]

Through his friend John S. Perry on the platform committee, Ruef wrote and introduced the platform adopted by the convention. Some of its provisions did represent basic positions of organized labor like municipal ownership of public utilities, an eight-hour law for municipal jobs, and the union label for supplies furnishing public institutions.[199] Others contemplated an expansion of state fiscal and oversight capacities through a tax-supported improvement fund and an amendment to the city charter relating to the review of municipal franchises.[200] There were measures on democratic expansion like the abolition of the poll tax and the establishment of initiative, referendum, and recall, but also on school segregation and Asian exclusion.[201] From the perspective of organized labor, plank eight appears even more confused, "we demand the establishing of a free market, where the producer can bring his products direct to the consumer, and we further demand that the Police and Fire departments shall be administered and conducted strictly in accordance with the law, ensuring the same protections to all citizens and strangers alike."[202] The police clause is a clear reference to labor's indictment of law enforcement conduct during the waterfront strike, but the free market clause seems at odds with the closed shop for which the teamsters were still on strike to defend. The result reflected Ruef's intention to draft a moderate platform agreeable to a cross-class coalition, a strategy that may have become more persuasive to the convention due to the patriotic outpouring following the assassination of President McKinley.[203]

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[198] *Call*, September 18, 1901, 9, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[199] *Call*, September 7, 1901, 13, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[200] *Call*, September 7, 1901, 13, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] *Call*, September 7, 1901, 1-8, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

The campaign began as a three-way race between the major parties and the ULP. The Republicans put up the sitting city auditor, Asa Wells. Wells' performance on the stump did not inspire confidence. One report had this to say about his first speech, "while his hearers were awaiting with anxiety for his views upon these weighty subjects now occupying the attention of all citizens Mr. Wells delivered himself of platitudes." Some Republicans feared that Wells could hurt the entire GOP ticket. With perhaps a touch of exaggeration, one GOP candidate for the Board of Supervisors said that if Wells were permitted to make another speech every down-ballot race would be "hopelessly lost."[204] The alarmists in the GOP camp were ultimately correct. As election day neared, the mayoral race was effectively a contest between the Democrats and the ULP.

The Democratic candidate, Joseph Tobin, was more formidable. The son of a prominent Irish family, Tobin sat on the Board of Directors of one of the city's leading banks, the Hibernia Savings and Loan Society.[205] The competent discharge of his duties as a member of the Board of Supervisors and his calls for clean government and low taxation won him the support of the business community and property owners irrespective of party affiliation.[206] Two key features of Tobin's messaging were nonpartisanship and economic growth. He often made his appeal to the "citizen" rather than the "partisan" and claimed that in his conversations with San Franciscans of all classes he found that the prevailing sentiment favored independence from both corporate control and bossism. Speaking at a rally for Tobin, former CA Governor James Budd said the city's prosperity and global position hinged on the outcome of the election. "Today we are looking across the waters of the Pacific to the Russian railroad that is about to turn loose into the

[204] *Call*, October 21, 1901, 10, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[205] *Report of the Board of Bank Commissioners of the State of California, 1899* (HathiTrust), 19.
[206] *Call*, October 25, 1901, 14, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; *Call*, October 26, 1901, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

vessels that will meet it there the commerce of Europe," he said, "we are looking to the Orient, we are looking to the islands of the sea an immense volume of trade." Whether San Francisco would be "a side place in the commerce of the world or the Queen of the Great West," depended on the election.[207]

To organized labor, the Tobin camp offered recognition and a warning. Again, former Governor Budd delivered the campaign's basic posture. "Unions are the conservators of labor and they are the protectors of capital," he said, "but they never can in this world fulfill their purposes by going into politics as an independent, separate party." "I say the unions make a mistake," he continued, "neither capital on the one side, nor labor on the other, as organizations, have any right in politics."[208] It was not an unreasonable strategy for the Democrats to position themselves as neutral arbiters between capital and labor. Appeals to class-neutral governance had worked in the past and but for the set of conditions outlined in this chapter, they might have worked again.

In the month between the conclusion of the waterfront strike and election day, the ULP emphasized labor solidarity and the police issue. At a ULP rally composed of the "old strike crowd," Andrew Furuseth of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific observed that the fight against "political absolutism" in the present campaign was a continuation of the struggle against "economic absolutism" during the strike. "The platform of the Union Labor Party is written in the blood of workingmen drawn by the policemen's clubs during the strike…" he said, "The Employers' Association controlled the city during the strike. They dominated the Mayor and police, and broke heads wherever it was possible to do so." He then highlighted labor's inability to influence the mayor's office and the perceived inaction of the mayor and the executive arm of

[207] *Call*, October 26, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[208] *Call*, October 26, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

city government, "we went to Commissioner Newhall with the request that he bring the strike to an end. He referred us to the Mayor, who could do nothing save advise the strikers to go to work. I do not say Mayor Phelan did not do anything, but I do say he accomplished nothing." Furuseth concluded with an appeal to transform present conditions through political action, "it is for you as citizens of the commonwealth to change existing conditions, and by a new form of government correct degrading abuses."[209]

Michael Casey of the teamsters spoke next, again connecting the strike and the police issue to the ULP's bid for political power. Some of his words were not recorded, but a report indicates he spoke about the employers, the police, and the strike, referring to Tobin as the heir of Phelan, to Captain Wittman as "Judas," and to the chief of police as "Shoot Low Sullivan."[210] The SUP's *Coast Seamen's Journal*, one of the few newspapers to openly support the ULP, presented similar ideas in the final days of the campaign, "Who can forget the policy pursued by the police department under the Commissioners and Chief Sullivan, all appointees directly or indirectly of Mayor Phelan? Who can forget the shooting and clubbing of strikers, the wholesale arrests of hundreds of inoffensive men, the surrender of the entire police force to the Employers' Association, the employment of special policemen, and the call of Police Commissioner Newhall for the National Guard?"[211]

Schmitz echoed these sentiments and outlined how a ULP administration would approach the police issue in his last speech before election day. Speaking on the theme that the major parties had not represented labor's interests and therefore the time had come for labor to take charge of municipal affairs, Schmitz said of the police, "I believe in fair treatment to all and

[209] *Call*, October 30, 1901, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[210] *Call*, October 30, 1901, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[211] Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California*, 245.

special privileges to none. I never was in favor of using the Police Department to protect one class as against another. If I am elected Mayor the spectacle of policemen riding on trucks and guarding men who ought to be in the State Prison will never be witnessed in San Francisco."[212] Typical for Schmitz's public statements, this combination of appealing to class-neutral fairness with words meant to agitate the labor base appears as an effort to satisfy the Ruef conservatives and the more radical labor elements. Still, repeated references from multiple channels to city and police conduct during the strike indicates the centrality of this issue to the campaign and to the labor electorate.

For his part, Phelan justified his administration's actions during the strike several months later in an address to the Board of Supervisors. Characterizing the conditions during the strike as a "state of war," he believed that the administration's chief responsibility absent a negotiated settlement was to maintain law and order. Since the police did not have the numbers to clear the streets, he argued that stationing officers on non-union cars was the only feasible way to ensure the safety of the drivers which he maintained did not mean that the administration favored one side over the other, but that it was committed to upholding the law.[213]

The 1901 election marked the beginning of a period when city politics would reorient around the presence of an independent labor party that could contest and win elections. The ULP coup in 1901 was partial at best, however, with Schmitz winning the mayoral race, but the party only securing three of eighteen seats on the Board of Supervisors.[214] The ULP vote was particularly strong in the working-class neighborhoods South of Market, the waterfront districts, and the residential areas populated by skilled artisans and their families.[215] Two analysts who

[212] *Call*, October 5, 1901, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[213] *Municipal Report of the City and County of San Francisco 1901-1902* (HathiTrust), 763.
[214] Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California* 246.
[215] Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 155.

have studied the election returns concluded that the correlation between ULP voters and work-class residence by ward was an unusually high .84.[216] The vote distribution signaled a new level of class polarization that would deepen with time and produce new alignments among the interests that traditionally backed the two major parties. The ULP seizure of power dislodged the progressive reform coalition at the moment of its consolidation, setting the stage for political conflict with lasting implications for the city and the state.

[216] Erie and Tygiel quoted in Cherny and Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 155.

Chapter 2: The Schmitz-Ruef Era and the Progressive Response, 1901-1907

This chapter considers the first iteration of the ULP in power. From 1901 to 1907, the ULP controlled the mayor's office and secured a majority on the Board of Supervisors in 1905. This era came to an end in 1907 when a series of bribery and extortion cases brought by the DA of San Francisco forced top ULP officials to resign and established an emergency government in its place. As a result, the ULP found itself momentarily out of power with its party apparatus badly shaken.

To contemporaries and historians, the partnership of ULP mayor Eugene Schmitz and his adviser and strategist Abe Ruef epitomized the first ULP regime.[217] Three reasons make this a plausible conclusion: these men influenced the direction of ULP policy, they survived intra-party challenges to their authority, and they were the primary ULP targets of the graft trials. Understanding their personal biographies is indeed essential for a total history of the party. The aim of this chapter is more modest, but hopefully no less valuable to the study of labor and politics in California. It attempts to answer the question of the impact of a labor party on the politics of San Francisco by analyzing the party as an institution in relation to two core dimensions: industrial relations and party politics. Focusing on these two dimensions enables an assessment of the ULP's impact in organizational and ideological terms. While no set of criteria can capture the full complexity of a historical phenomenon, this chapter submits these as a useful contribution to understanding how a third party can function as a new limb of the state by capturing the mechanisms of public authority and directing them to its own ends.

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[217] Walton Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco: The Story of the Union Labor Party, Big Business, and the Graft Prosecution*, (Berkeley: UC Press, 1952), 28; *Report on the Causes of Municipal Corruption in San Francisco, as Disclosed by the Investigations of the Oliver Grand Jury, and the Prosecution of Certain Persons for Bribery and Other Offences Against the State*, William Denman (Chairman), Published by the Board of Supervisors of San Francisco, 1910, San Francisco Public Library (Contributor), InternetArchive.org (hereafter referred to as *Denman Report*), 10-11; Ruef himself had grand designs for their partnership. Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, 27.

The first ULP regime took an instrumentalist approach to industrial relations, lending its record the appearance of a mixed bag. The party created a safer strike environment for unions by ensuring the neutrality of the police, most notably during the Carmen's strike in 1902. The party also openly resisted the open shop campaign engineered by the Citizens' Alliance, a reactionary open shop organization. The party's efforts to calm business concerns with messaging emphasizing class harmony and moderation did not win over elements determined to establish the open shop in the Bay, but the party's top officials reached a modus vivendi with some elements of capital through favors, franchises, and other dealings exposed during the graft trials. Organizationally, then, the party functioned as a genuine, though imperfect, counterweight for labor in industrial relations. The Building Trades Council's decision to back the party in 1905 confirms this because despite its earlier rejection of the party, the BTC had come to recognize that the party, if not the Schmitz-Ruef regime, was key to labor's survival.

The conflict between progressives and the ULP played out in electoral politics and the courts. The national progressive movement took the labor question seriously and sought to prevent industrial conflict through such means as investigatory and oversight commissions, settlement work to service working-class neighborhoods, and offering an ideological framework that stressed cooperation over class war.[218] The San Francisco case demonstrates the degree to which progressives opposed organized labor entering politics to take control of state power. Progressive strategy before and after the municipal elections of 1905 supports the contention made in chapter one that the relationship between progressives and the ULP was adversarial. To dislodge the ULP from city hall, progressives made common cause with the Citizens' Alliance and the SP-backed, non-reformist wing of the Republican party, in their support of a bipartisan

[218] Shelton Stromquist, *Re-Inventing "The People": The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), 21-32.

fusion ticket. When this effort failed and the ULP won the mayor's office and secured a majority on the Board of Supervisors for the first time, progressives turned to the courts, launching a series of investigations into ULP corruption. The graft trials sharpened the progressive critique of class government and created a favorable environment for exponents of efficiency, good government, and nonpartisanship.[219] From this vantage point, the emergency government installed in the wake of the trials set the stage for the more lasting and formidable progressive synthesis seen in the Rolph administration of the 1910s.

The Carmen's Strike

The first ULP regime created a safer strike environment for labor by ensuring the neutrality of the police and intervening on behalf of labor in public and private negotiations with companies. A ready example is the role of the mayor's office during the strike launched by Division No. 205 of the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees against the streetcar lines recently consolidated by the United Railroads. The strike began the evening of April 19, 1902, when Richard Cornelius, president of the local, and a dozen members left union headquarters at the Turk-street Temple and walked to Powell and Market Streets where they gave the order to cease operations on the lines.[220] Later that night, Cornelius presided over a meeting where the actions of the day were endorsed and those present committed to expanding

[219] A central feature of progressive thought was that a politics based on class interest—of both employers and workers—produced unnecessary social, industrial, and political conflict, the solution to which involved state intervention as a neutral arbiter and a vision of social harmony that transcended class interest. Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (Oxford UP, 2005), 120-146; Stromquist, *Re-Inventing "The People,"* vii-x; Daniel T. Rogers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History*, 10, no. 2, (1982), 126-127; For a discussion of divisions within the progressive movement on the labor question—that is, whether to support labor with a moderate reform agenda or take an explicitly class conscious approach, particularly in the years just before WWI, see Stromquist, *Re-Inventing "the People*," 165-190; For a brief account of the good government impulse that took shape in the decades following the Civil War, see Stromquist, *Re-Inventing "the People*," 36-38.

[220] *Call,* April 20, 1902, 18, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

the strike in the coming days. In attendance were approximately 100 union members, two top Labor Council officials, and Michael Casey, president of the City Front Federation and recently appointed ULP Commissioner of Public Works.[221]

The union listed its objectives in a public statement issued the same day. First, the union demanded recognition of the right of all workers to join the union without reprisal from the company. The statement complained that the company operated a spy ring to surveil and disrupt union activities. Ending this practice would be part of a later settlement, but it was not listed as an explicit demand at this stage. Second, the union demanded the reinstatement of all employees discharged for union activities. Demands three and four were the ten-hour day and 25 cents per hour. From labor's perspective, there were important similarities between this strike and the waterfront strike of 1901. Again, though on a smaller scale, labor challenged transport and logistics operations in the city in response to what union officials represented as the unfair and arbitrary use of power by employers. The carmen were also a new organization, representing a continuation of the "new unionism" that drove the waterfront strike and at this stage formed a key part of the ULP's grassroots support.[222]

There were also important differences that affected the course of the strike, the first being divisions among the controlling interests of the streetcar lines. The bulk of the streetcar system had recently been purchased by United Railroads, an eastern company controlled by a group known as the Baltimore Syndicate.[223] The selling company, represented by President Arthur

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[221] *Call*, April 20, 1902, 18, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

[222] The statement issued by the executive committee of the carmen's union on the first day of the strike refers to the union as a "secret and new" organization and explicitly cites the growth of unionism in the city as an inspiration for the union's actions. *Call*, April 20, 1902, 17, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

[223] *Call*, April 20, 1902, 17, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; The shift from a locally run operation to one controlled by an out-of-state corporation resembles Sklar's observation that this period marked a transformative moment in the development of American capitalism where the competitive-proprietary phase transitioned into the corporate phase. For Sklar, this was not an organic evolution based on technological necessity, but a contested

Holland and General Manager Vining, still operated the lines when the carmen went on strike. Divisions between the two were muted at first, but the hardline open shop position of the local managers ultimately strained relations with the more accommodationist eastern group. The first public act of the United Railroads was to issue a warning to Schmitz that the city and county of San Francisco would be held responsible for any loss of property resulting from unlawful acts connected to the strike.[224]

The second difference was the ULP administration's willingness to act as a bulwark for labor in negotiations with the company. This was primarily done through the mayor's office, which tried to position itself as both a champion of labor and the guarantor of law, order, and impartiality. In response to the United Railroads statement, the mayor's office said the "personal and property rights of every citizen and resident of San Francisco, on either side of the controversy, will be equally, fairly, and adequately protected." Yet Mayor Schmitz struck a different tone speaking before the Council of Federated Trades in Sacramento when he described the ULP administration as "men known to be in sympathy with the organized wage-earners of San Francisco." He also said that the failure of the three-way negotiations between the mayor's office, the company, and the union to avert the strike was the fault of the company. "For the last two months," he said, "I have tried by every means in my power to avert this strike, and I will

process that entailed economic change and changes social relations. Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism 1890-1916* (Cambridge UP, 1988), 3.

[224] *Call*, April 20, 1902, 17, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; The Department of Labor and Commerce attached to the Bureau of the Census argues that while streetcar lines in urban centers tend to be more profitable that interurban lines or small town lines as measured against total capitalization, maintenance costs were much higher for urban lines given the higher amount of traffic and new ventures would not see total expected profits during the first years of operation. This may partially explain the United Railroads' motivation to keep labor costs as low as possible in its initial years after assuming control of the San Francisco streetcar system—the Department of Labor and Commerce states that the United Railroads of San Francisco declared a net profit of 2.25 percent in 1902, a figure that appears lower than peer companies for that same year. W. M. Steuart, *Special Reports: Street and Electric Railways 1902*, Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1905), accessed via HathiTrust, 79-81.

say for the union men that they did everything in their power to bring about a peaceful settlement." "I know, too," he continued, "that it was owing to the stubbornness of the railroad people that a peaceful settlement was not had."[225]

On the second day, the local managers doubled down on their hostility to the union as virtually all rail activity ground to a halt. One report suggests that the speed and completeness of the tie up surprised both the company and the public.[226] For its part, the public responded by filling the streets with private vehicles repurposed for public transport.[227] Owing to the company's policy toward union membership, most rail workers were not in the union and were not fully briefed on the strike before it happened, but an organizing drive at the labor Temple added hundreds to the roll, leading one report to claim that the union had become one of the strongest in the city.[228] Manager Vining, representing the local owners, took a car down the line and collected fares in a show of defiance. Later in the day he addressed a group of employees at the Mission-street car-house where he showed no signs of seeking an accommodation. He defended the company's spy system and said he would not recognize workers affiliated with the union who were effectively discharged upon joining the union.[229]

The mayor's office strengthened labor's position by pressuring the company through mediation efforts and forbidding the use of police on non-union cars. The mayor's first attempt at mediation came to naught when manager Vining and President Holland could not be reached for a conference. Tirey Ford, a legal representative of the eastern group, communicated to the mayor's office that he wished to meet with the mayor, but would not do so without President

[225] *Call*, April 20, 1902, 17, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[226] *Call*, April 21, 1902, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[227] Ibid., 2
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.

Holland who claimed he could not travel to City Hall that evening due to illness, a reply the mayor met with "great annoyance."[230] That same day, however, President Holland contacted the chief of police and requested that he place four police officers on each non-union car sent out by the company, a tactic used to great effect during the waterfront strike.[231] The mayor's office denied this request and then Mayor Schmitz issued a public statement saying "I will never consent to place policemen on the street cars of the company. The company will be given ample police protection should it be required, but until the necessity for it exists no police will escort the cars about the city."[232]

The mayor's office then directed the board of police commissioners to halt the issuance of weapons permits for the duration of the strike and forbid private detective agencies from arming special detectives. The directive came after a union delegation informed the mayor's office that the United Railroads had retained Curtin's Detective Agency to protect its property and that the agency was arming men for this purpose.[233] The mayor's office then issued the following directive to the board of police commissioners, "It is well known that the employment of armed men to represent either side of the present difficulty will naturally result in producing conditions of violence and disorder. I therefore request and direct that during the continuance of this strike no permits to carry deadly weapons be issued by your board, and that no private detective agency be granted the right to employ and arm special private detectives for the purposes indicated."[234] Like the refusal to allow regular police officers to ride non-union cars, this represents another break from the precedent set by the Phelan administration during the

[230] *Call*, April 21, 1902, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[231] Ibid., 2.
[232] Ibid., 1.
[233] *Call*, April 22, 1902, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[234] Ibid.

waterfront strike the previous year. Though the formal communications from the mayor's office framed these directives in neutral terms as a means of preventing a cycle of escalation, precedent and the resources available to either side make plain that these directives assisted labor by denying capital the use of proven tactics to limit the efficacy of a strike. Such directives could not end the strike in the union's favor, but they do represent significant state intervention to level the playing field between capital and labor in an industrial dispute.

These conditions appear to have exacerbated tensions between the local managers and the Baltimore syndicate. Some in the San Francisco business community felt that responsibility for the strike lay with manager Vining whose apathy in resolving the dispute resulted from his disinterested position given the imminent takeover of the road by the eastern group.[235] For their part, the representatives of the Baltimore syndicate on the ground in San Francisco kept Vining at arm's length. From their headquarters in the Wells-Fargo building they remained in constant touch with the directors in Baltimore and communicated to the press that they would not act without express approval from the eastern group.[236] Tirey Ford, a legal representative for the eastern group, tried to portray the Baltimore syndicate as innocent and willing to compromise, saying "the new owners of the road are willing to do everything that is fair. They are just from the East and are not familiar with the situation of affairs in San Francisco," comments intended to distance the new owners from the local managers.[237] When asked about Vining, he declined to comment.[238]

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[235] *Call*, April 22, 1902, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[236] Ibid.
[237] *Call*, April 23, 1902, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; Though the company's claims of ignorance of local conditions appear like political sleight of hand in this instance, there was probably some degree of truth to it because in 1902-1903 the company appeared in a lawsuit to determine what proportion of the tax revenue collected on its "inter-urban" services were owed to local and state assessors respectively. *Biennial Report of the Attorney-General of the State of California, 1902-1903* (Sacramento, State Printing Office, 1902), accessed via HathiTrust, 8-9, 31-32.
[238] *Call*, April 23, 1902, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

As the railroad people deliberated behind closed doors, the mayor's office applied pressure to bring about a conference. On April 22, mayor Schmitz sent a letter to the executive committee of the board of directors of the United Railroads requesting that the company meet the union and settle the strike, "there is almost certain ground for believing that a conference between representatives of your company and of the striking street car employes *(sic)* will result at once in an adjustment and cessation of the strike. I therefore hereby again request you to arrange for an immediate conference with the striking employes *(sic)* with a view toward settling your differences on fair and friendly terms." The letter's closing lines leave little doubt that the mayor's office intended to strongarm the company to accept its proposal, "I have already more than once informally suggested to certain of your officers the desirability—and, indeed, necessity—of such a conference. The street car men have readily assented to the proposition, but apparently you have thus far avoided it. The people of the city are disposed to be friendly to you, and there is certainly no disposition on the part of our public officials to interfere with you in any manner, but if this deplorable situation is permitted to continue through an obstinate refusal on your part to confer, you alone will be responsible for the results."[239] For this and similar actions, the San Francisco Labor Council voted to indorse the mayor's conduct during the strike.

The company agreed to a meeting and within a few days the strike was over with the company granting most of the union's demands. A union delegation met with President Arthur Holland, Tirey Ford, and a few others at the Wells-Fargo building on Wednesday, April 23.[240] The meeting adjourned without a decision, but both sides reported that it was productive and expressed hopes for a speedy resolution.[241] After a few days of deliberation the company

[239] *Call*, April 23, 1902, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[240] *Call*, April 24, 1902, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[241] Ibid.

submitted its offer and the union accepted it on Saturday, April 26, marking one week since the start of the strike.[242] The new contract granted nearly every union demand, notably the union position on wages and hours, an end to the company spy system to monitor workers off the clock, and the reinstatement of workers previously fired for union activities.[243] The company held the line on full union recognition, however, adding this language to the first plank of the contract, "it will not, however, deal in matters involving the management of its own affairs with other than its own employes (*sic)* or committees thereof. This company recognizes the right of every person to belong, or to refuse to belong, to a labor union, and it will discharge no employe because of his connection with such a union."[244] A union brought a major employer to favorable terms, but the company's red line on the closed shop foreshadowed future fights in the years ahead.

The Building Trades Council, still skeptical of the ULP and generally aloof from union organizing under the auspices of the SFLC, gave a positive assessment of the strike. Through its newspaper *Organized Labor* the BTC heralded the strike as an "unparalleled success," and "a civilized strike, a twentieth century strike." The lesson for labor was clear—organization, discipline, and intelligent leadership were essential. The car men were successful because of their "military precision," their "excellent management," and their "thorough, perfect, and modern organization." The BTC also praised the employers for their conduct during the strike. The employers approached the strike with a spirit of "conciliation and fairness" and wisely sought to prevent a protracted struggle even though they had the means to do so.[245]

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[242] *Call*, April 27, 1902, 17, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid.; The business press reported that the United Railroads recognized the union "in a measure." *The Commercial and Financial Chronicle* Vol 74, no. 1919, (April 1902), accessed via HathiTrust, 938.
[245] *Organized Labor*, May 3, 1902, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

The BTC paired its praise for the union and the company with what is likely a veiled slight towards the ULP administration. *Organized Labor* denounced "pretenders and usurpers" and "scheming politicians" who claimed credit for the outcome and whose motivations were chiefly cynical and self-interested.[246] There is a temptation to read these comments as hyperbole driven by the BTC's antipathy to the political project of the ULP as well as the valid claim that the union and not the party was the primary actor in these events. It may also be that these sentiments reflect an uneasy recognition of the positive impact of the party's intervention. While it is true that the union played the determinative role on labor's side of the strike, it is difficult and unnecessary to discount the role of the mayor's office in strengthening the union's position. One need only look to the waterfront strike of the previous year to understand how a city administration—moderate but allied with capital in the last instance—can shape the terrain in ways detrimental to labor. Given the hard open shop position of the local managers of the United Railroads, the ULP administration's interventions regarding police, private security firms, and the public messaging aspect of the strike may be seen as necessary conditions for the union's success.

If the United Railroads strike shows the ULP administration's positive impact for labor in industrial relations, the macro view offers a more ambivalent picture. The rise of the ULP occurred alongside a wave of organizing in both the established trades and as yet unorganized areas like restaurant workers in the service sector.[247] By and large, the established unions did well in these years. The BTC, for example, engaged in eleven brief strikes from 1901 to 1905 and won all but one.[248] Newer unions affiliated with the SFLC, by contrast, did less well. These

[246] *Organized Labor*, May 3, 1902, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[247] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 114.
[248] Ibid.

unions engaged in an estimated 300 strikes between 1901 and 1905 and lost approximately two-thirds of them.[249] The difficult conditions facing the newly organized and less established unions provides context for the 1902-1903 intraparty contest for control of the ULP.

The Union Labor Central Club

In 1902 dissident members of the ULP formed a caucus known as the Union Labor Central Club (ULCC) to promote union principles within the party and challenge the leadership for control. The group was headed by Michael Casey, a teamster, president of the City Front Federation, and a sitting member of the ULP administration as chair of the Board of Public Works. A review of a list of delegates to a convention held in July 1902 shows that the group drew support from virtually all corners of the labor movement.[250] The presence of newer unions like the cooks and waiters and the amalgamated street railway employees is particularly noteworthy in that the unions representing the most precarious segments of the workforce presumably had the most to gain from a labor administration in city hall and inversely the most to lose from opposing the party leadership.

Resolutions adopted by the ULCC indicate that its primary concern was the corruption of the party by the Schmitz-Ruef group. Of six resolutions adopted at a meeting in the summer of 1902, three related to the dangers posed by politicians, "Resolved, That it shall be the imperative duty of every member of the Union Labor Central Club to see that no man shall be elected to public office or appointed, only those who are by their acts true to unionism and just to capital," "Resolved, That it shall be the most earnest wish and untiring zeal of the members of the club

[249] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 114.
[250] Examples from the established trades and unions include the machinists, carpenters, and the skilled maritime unions. Examples from newer unions include the teamsters, cooks and waiters, and the amalgamated street railway employees. *Call*, July 31, 1902, 9, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

never to have any affiliation with identified political bosses or their parasites," and finally "Resolved, That the Union Labor party and its nominees be free from the hands of political bosses and ward politicians; also that we protect our nominees from the attacks of the political job chasers."[251] These critiques had their effect and for the remainder of 1902 the Schmitz-Ruef group found itself on the back foot.

The end of the ULCC opposition came when it failed to prevent Schmitz's reelection as mayor in the election of 1903. Unable to stop Schmitz in the ULP primaries, the ULCC attempted to persuade voters not to back him in the November general election. One of its main messages was that Schmitz and Ruef were in fact agents of the GOP. Ruef was "a would-be Republican boss, who was responsible for the existence of an organization known as the Republican Primary League," who "foisted upon the Union Labor Party, as its candidate for Mayor, a member of that league, who was technically, but not really, a union labor man."[252] Since the ULCC had no candidates in the field, the group could only implore the ULP base to "vigorously oppose in this election the ticket which unfortunately bears their name, but which was not born of their spirit and does not bear their likeness."[253]

Schmitz countered these attacks by pointing to his administration's accomplishments and blamed opposition from the Board of Supervisors for his inability to do more. Speaking to a crowd of supporters during a campaign event, Schmitz stressed the police issue. "We have had many labor troubles during my administration," he said, "but the police were never necessary to ensure peace and order." Referencing the street car strike, he said, "when the officials of the street car companies came to me and asked for policemen to act as motormen and conductors on

[251] *Call*, June 20, 1902, 9, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[252] *Call*, October 4, 1902, 36, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[253] Ibid.

their cars I refused them." By way of comparison, he reminded the audience how the police were used during the waterfront strike under "Phelan-McNab rule." Schmitz then argued that his administration would have accomplished more, but could not given opposition from the Board of Supervisors which had a non-ULP majority.[254] The Schmitz regime's impact on policy areas other than industrial relations will be addressed in a later section, but suffice it to say that while there is some validity to this argument—as there is validity to the arguments of the administration's critics—the Schmitz ticket was in a strong enough position heading into the 1903 election that the finer details would likely not have mattered.

In the end, Schmitz was reelected. This achievement is all the more interesting given how little support his ticket received from the institutionalized labor movement. The BTC withheld its endorsement and the ULCC ultimately backed his Democratic rival, city attorney Franklin Lane.[255] Still, Schmitz's solid majorities with the working-class electorate South of Market and in the Mission secured his election.[256] Like 1901, however, Schmitz's popularity did not produce a ULP majority on the Board of Supervisors. Only two ULP candidates were elected to the Board, Louis Rea, a pro-union painting contractor, and Thomas Finn, head of the Stablemen's Union.[257] Historian Michael Kazin described the disconnect between union leader's rejection of Schmitz and his enduring popularity among the rank and file as a "paradox."[258] Why did the working-class electorate support the ULP if it seemed it had become the "rather transparent vehicle of a few individuals" with police neutrality being its primary achievement for labor?[259] The answer is likely more prosaic than not. Despite its growing strength, the labor movement

[254] *Call*, October 23, 1902, 11, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[255] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 115.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid., 114.
[259] Ibid., 115.

was not secure in the face of serious opposition from organized employers. Common sense would suggest that having a labor-friendly administration in city hall to serve as a countervailing force would be an asset. Although its record was not perfect, the Schmitz administration had proven that it could serve this function, and that was better than nothing.

The Citizens' Alliance

The threat to labor and the ULP became acute in 1904-1905 with the advent of the Citizens' Alliance. An open shop organization with roots in the industrial conflicts of Colorado, the Citizens' Alliance sought to expand its operations to California and the Far West. Its primary target in 1904-1905 was San Francisco, where it established itself in concert with sympathetic local employers. In January 1904, the executive committee of the newly formed San Francisco branch issued a declaration denouncing union overreach and positioning itself as the representative of an aggrieved public. "So the Citizens' Alliance has risen," the declaration read, "an organization of the community, of the third party, heretofore not considered in these industrial wars, but the party that endures their cost and loss and stands impartially between the parties to the conflict."[260] Rather than a representative of the public, the Citizens' Alliance was really an instrument of employers who were more interested in maintaining the open shop than equal application of the law and fair play. Still, conditions in San Francisco required the Alliance to at first shroud its open shop policy in conciliatory language, "we will not tolerate restrictions on the employer to prevent his employment of union labor, but his right to employ non-union labor is of equal dignity and must not be restrained."[261]

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[260] *Call*, January 10, 1904, 35, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

[261] Ibid.; George was also quoted in a public policy journal saying "There are storekeepers in San Francisco that would make their clerks work eighteen hours a day and pay them five cents an hour for their time if there were no combinations to prevent *(sic)*. There are corporations that would not let their help enjoy the most meager rights if

The architect of the Citizens' Alliance was the Colorado-based owner of the Union Mining and Fluxing Company of Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah, Herbert George. In late January 1904, George was in San Francisco overseeing the establishment of the Alliance branch in the city when he sat for an interview to discuss his vision for the organization in California. He said the Alliance already counted 14,000 members in San Francisco and that in a few months' time, the organization would be in every large town in the state.[262] The Alliance would be organized along union lines to function as an institutional counterweight to a labor movement that he felt had become too powerful. George's comments reflect the dissonance of the employer who claimed to support union principles, but objected to the assertion of union power through standard tactics in industrial conflict. Hoping that a "better class" of unionists could be found, he lamented the position of the employer beset by unreasonable unions, "many a man can recall the injustice of labor unionists and realize that it is a mistake to think of risking brains and money in a maelstrom of commercialism, with no higher guarantee of returns than strikes, boycotts, pickets and all those phases of violence that spring from a mistaken understanding of civilization."[263]

The ULP and the unions understood that the Citizens' Alliance posed a threat. In the "Mayor's Message" submitted with the Municipal Report for the year 1903-1904, Schmitz warned of the destabilizing effect of such a movement, "when the employing of capitalistic agencies of a community band themselves together in a secret alliance for the express purpose of opposing and subjugating the employed or wage-earning factors of the same community, and

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not forced by unions to do so." Herbert George quoted in "Loyalty and Fairness: Labor Propositions Numbers Two and Three," *Public Policy: Dedicated to the Discussion of Public Questions as Moral and Economic Propositions* 12, no. 2 1905 (HathiTrust), 21.

[262] *Call*, February 1, 1904, 3, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

[263] Ibid.

pledge themselves to contribute large sums of money to a common fund for these purposes…they are building up ideas which will eventually not only react upon themselves…but will also bring about discontent, and industrial strife among our people, arraying class against class, and producing conditions the end of which no one can foresee."[264] Schmitz's characterization of the Citizens' Alliance as a class movement funded by employers for the express purpose of subjugating labor stands in stark contrast to the Alliance's own messaging that it was a nonpartisan consumer advocacy organization. The BTC, typically at odds with the ULP administration, agreed with its assessment of the Citizens' Alliance. In an article titled "The Duty of the Hour," the BTC warned of the Alliance's network of paid informants seeking to undermine unions from within, counselling every union member to be vigilant.[265]

The Citizens' Alliance operations in San Francisco garnered national attention from both the National Association of Manufacturers and the American Federation of Labor. At the annual convention of the National Association of Manufacturers held in Atlanta, Georgia in 1905, a representative from California gave a positive assessment of the Alliances' work. He spoke of the necessity of "counter organization" and referenced a new association of waterfront employers created with the help of the Alliance to counter the CFF which had successfully defeated two strike efforts and maintained non-union labor on the docks.[266] The American Federation of Labor held its 1904 annual convention in San Francisco where P. H. McCarthy of the BTC and mayor Schmitz spoke about the Alliance. McCarthy denounced the Alliance as a "scoundrel institution"

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[264] *San Francisco Municipal Report for Fiscal Year 1903-1904* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 473-474.
[265] *Organized Labor*, February 20, 1904, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[266] *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Convention of the National Association of Manufacturers 1905* (HathiTrust), 212.

and both declared organized labor must defend itself against an organization that would seek to destroy it.[267]

The Alliance's campaign against the San Francisco labor movement began in the spring of 1904. Its strategy encompassed two fields of action: electoral politics and industrial relations. In the political field, the Alliance aimed to dislodge the ULP administration by creating an anti-ULP coalition that transcended traditional party affiliations. In April 1904, the Alliance's executive committee issued a public statement outlining its strategy. "The time is here," the statement read, "for every good American citizen, regardless of race, color, creed, political or social affiliation, to see that his name is on the registration books and that his vote is cast and counted at the proper time and place." The reason for doing so was to "stand by men and principles that promise our city relief from the tyranny and oppression of lawless labor leaders."[268] The Alliance's vision of an anti-ULP coalition transcending all other affiliations gestures to an important point about the ULP's impact on San Francisco politics, namely, that it provoked a realignment in city politics centered on class, industrial relations, and the status of labor in the political field.

The Alliance's industrial strategy can be observed in its support of the Stable and Carriage Owners' Association's assault on the Stablemen's Union. In May 1904, five companies affiliated with the Stable and Carriage Owners' Association provoked a walkout of their union employees when they posted "open shop" cards outside their businesses.[269] The union hackmen were subsequently locked out and the Alliance sought to maintain employer solidarity by collecting $2,000 deposits from each company to be forfeited in the event that any individual

[267] *Twenty-Fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor 1904* (HathiTrust), 3-4.
[268] *Call*, April 22, 1904, 16, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[269] *Call*, May 8, 1904, 35, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

employer made a separate agreement with the union and accept their employees back without the consent of the Stable and Carriage Owners' Association.[270] The Owners' Association then brought in non-union workers to replace the men they had locked out. The ULP Police Commissioners temporarily halted this process when they denied licenses to the proposed replacements after finding that just two of twenty-five were competent to drive hacks on city streets.[271] The Police Commissioners later granted more permits when the Owners' Association produced more men—with representatives of the Citizens' Alliance present at the hearings.[272]

As it supported the Owners' Association on the shop floor, the Alliance worked through the courts to undermine basic legal protections guaranteeing a union's right to strike. In late June, E.G. Pierce, owner of the Nevada Stables, secured a temporary injunction against the Stablemen's Union using a legal team led by an Alliance-provided lawyer. The temporary injunction required the union to remove its pickets and cease all activities on or near the property of the Nevada Stables pending a trial scheduled to begin the following month.[273] The trial centered on the legality of the boycott—which the court defined as "an organized attempt to coerce or intimidate one into compliance with a demand by combining to abstain and compelling others to abstain from any business or social relations with him"—and the constitutionality of a 1903 California law that protected unions from criminal liability as conspiracies and prohibited employers from seeking injunctions against striking unions on the basis that they are in restraint of trade.[274] The judge overseeing the case ruled against the Stablemen's Union and struck down the 1903 law, citing the California Constitution's provisions on the protection of private

[270] Ibid.
[271] *Call*, June 24, 1904, 14, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[272] *Call*, July 27, 1904, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[273] *Call*, June 21, 1904, 6, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[274] *Call*, August 7, 1904, 33, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

property, arguing that the pro-labor law amounted to special or class legislation, and stating that the law deprived the courts of its constitutionally designated jurisdiction over equity cases.[275]

With the injunction upheld, the strike collapsed, and the resulting agreement established the open shop in all businesses affiliated with the Stable and Carriage Owners' Association. The text of the agreement gives a sense of the scope of the union's defeat. The ninth article of the document presents its position on the open shop, "it is understood that this guarantee is made with the full recognition of the open shop principle, which we propose to maintain, and it is understood we will recognize no union or walking delegate." The Owners' Association and their Alliance backers felt themselves in a strong enough position to use this victory to pressure the ULP administration. In a message to Schmitz, the Owners' Association said, "should any differences arise…we shall hold you personally responsible for such differences and will look to you to adjust them."[276]

By 1905, the Alliance's record in San Francisco was mixed. The defeat of the Stablemen's Union showed that its threat to labor was credible, but the Alliance did not follow this victory with a direct assault on the real strongholds of San Francisco unionism—the BTC and the CFF.[277] The reasons why are a matter of speculation, but a combination of timing and tactics seems a likely explanation. The Alliance was still a new presence in San Francisco and likely would have needed more time to move the ideological and organizational conditions of the city toward its brand of open shop politics. As with the stablemen's case, the Alliance functioned as an auxiliary to the employer, providing financial and organizational support as needed. Since it was not itself an employer, the Alliance could not directly challenge a union until a strike or

[275] Ibid.
[276] *Call*, August 31, 1904, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[277] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 117.

lockout had been declared. Kazin suspects the Alliance was unable to convince employers to precipitate strikes to replicate what it had done to the stablemen in more heavily unionized sectors.[278] Given the poor showing at the first convention of the proposed statewide federation of the Alliance, employer ambivalence seems a plausible explanation for the organization's position in 1905.

The Municipal Elections of 1905

Despite its challenges, the Alliance's transparent designs to weaken the labor movement lent a sense of urgency to the city elections of 1905—the outcome of which is notable for two reasons. First, the elections clarified where the major factions and interests stood on the question of labor's role in electoral politics and second, the elections united the disparate factions of the labor movement behind the ULP, beginning the process that would ultimately see the once reticent BTC take control of the party.

The anti-ULP coalition transcended traditional party affiliations, so the leading factions of the Democratic Party and the GOP agreed to a fusion ticket in an effort to overwhelm the labor electorate. Alliance president Herbert George expressed a common sentiment among the ULP's opponents, if in a less politic manner, "Isn't it about time for all the decent people of San Francisco to get together in one great big non-partisan movement to clean out the rotten city administration that at present disgraces us all?"[279] The fusion effort was in the main a coalition representing the Southern Pacific-backed GOP and the reform Democrats of the Phelan variety, now led by attorney Gavin McNab. These groups provided the financing and organizational capacity and they received support from the Alliance and progressive reformers centered on

[278] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 117.
[279] *Organized Labor*, November 4, 1905, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

Fremont Older and his paper, *The Bulletin*.[280] This seemingly unlikely coalition reveals at once the formidable array of forces standing in opposition to the ULP, and also highlights with great clarity the degree to which the ULP reoriented city politics around the labor question and labor's role in government.

The themes of the fusionist's campaign were stagnation, graft, and capital flight. An article in the *Reader*, an Alliance paper based in Denver, lamented the decline of San Francisco due to the labor administration's incompetence and corruption, as well as the unfriendly business environment it fostered in the city.[281] The article paints a picture of civilizational collapse, where uncollected refuse, a proliferation of bars, and high labor costs have hurt rich and poor alike, yet its concern for the working class is undermined with such reflections as this, "while the 'down-trodden' have been rejoicing that they can get on top as well as the next one, no one has paid much attention to the city."[282] The Alliance also issued a leaflet saying that a fusionist victory would mean a mayor and a police commission in favor of "law and order."[283] If Alliance-affiliated materials represented the elements most hostile to the ULP, the *Chronicle* and the Merchants' Association conveyed similar sentiments.[284]

The fusionists may not have anticipated the degree to which their campaign would unite the labor movement behind the ULP. Michael Casey of the CFF and Walter MacArthur of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific counselled their members to vote for the ULP, despite their misgivings about Ruef.[285] The most consequential development for the long-term development

[280] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 118.
[281] Frances Benson, "A Question of Organization," quoted in *Organized Labor,* November 11, 1905, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[282] Ibid.
[283] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 119.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid., 118.

of the party was the BTC's decision to back the ULP. The BTC was at once the strongest labor organization in the city and historically the least amenable to the idea of independent labor politics. However, the prospect of a fusion administration backed by the Alliance caused the BTC leadership to move beyond their traditional voluntarism and openly back the ULP. BTC messaging on the eve of the election shows that the leadership had come to regard the fusionist campaign as a continuation of the elite-driven effort to undermine organized labor. They alleged that the politicians would open the door to migrant workers from Asia and the Alliance or Alliance methods would oversee industrial relations.[286] True or not, this proved a winning message in an environment of marked employer hostility to organized labor and the labor movement broadly.

Despite facing a consolidated opposition, the November 7 election returns gave the ULP its most commanding win of the three elections it had contested since 1901. Schmitz comfortably secured reelection over the fusion candidate, Republican John S. Partridge, and, unlike all previous elections since 1901, the ULP won every seat on the Board of Supervisors.[287] The overwhelming nature of this victory combined with the good feeling fostered by labor's united front against fusionism likely tempered union leader's reaction to the fact that several of these ULP board members had no connection to unions or the labor movement. Some were Republican incumbents who accepted ULP nominations and others were last minute additions from the Schmitz and Ruef group, additions that might have confirmed the suspicions of some union leaders about the Schmitz and Ruef group's fidelity to labor.[288] Still, the BTC's *Organized Labor* called the result a "vindication for Eugene E. Schmitz and his administration," and said that

[286] *Organized Labor*, November 4, 1905, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[287] Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, 65.
[288] Ibid., 62-63.

working people had learned "that the most effective strike is the strike with the ballot," indicating a recognition of the convergence of electoral politics and industrial conflict.[289]

Yet the potential of this ULP administration was undermined by two crises: the earthquake and fire of 1906 and the graft trails. At around 5am on April 18, 1906, a powerful earthquake shook the city, leaving damaged buildings and broken water, gas, and electrical lines in its wake. Damage to the city's water system prevented fire crews from effectively combatting a fire that ultimately consumed some of the most densely populated business and residential areas in the city from the Waterfront to the Mission. Initial estimates placed the death toll at 500-1,000, with many thousands more displaced, while figures for property damage reached five hundred million dollars.[290] The ULP administration's response to this crisis will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter as part of a larger review of the ULP's fiscal policy. It is briefly mentioned here because the discussion of the graft trials that follows would be deficient without the context of crisis and human suffering brought on by this event.

The Graft Trials

Historian Walton Bean has written the definitive account of the San Francisco graft trials. What follows is less a rejection of his empirical findings than suggestions for where to place interpretive emphasis as well as a more skeptical view of the progressives who led the prosecution. Bean published his work in the early 1950s, a moment that predated sustained historiographical critique of progressives and progressive reform. Allowing for the subtlety and

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[289] *Organized Labor*, November 11, 1905, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[290] *Journal of Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco 1906-1907* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 1; J. D. Givens and A. M. Allison, *San Francisco in Ruins: A Pictorial History of Eight-Score Photo Views of the Earthquake Effects, Flames' Havoc, Ruins Everywhere, and Relief Camps* (Smith-Brooks Company, 1906; HathiTrust), 3-4.

nuance found in most good works of history, Bean's view of the progressives who led the prosecution of the graft trials was largely laudatory, calling them "prophets without honor in their own city."[291] The graft trials are raised here not to relitigate the case, but to show why the ULP was temporarily dislodged, the interests behind it, and the political-ideological developments that the trials produced.

The legal effort against the ULP was slow to materialize. The first two Schmitz administrations, elected in 1901 and 1903 respectively, do not appear to have engaged in sustained and transparent graft, likely because both administrations were in fact divided governments with incumbent Democrats and Republicans controlling the Board of Supervisors and the ULP controlling the mayor's office.[292] The fusionists still raised the issue of corruption in the election of 1905, but this was largely limited to as yet unproven allegations of corruption at the highest levels of the Schmitz-Ruef group as well as suspicious activity at some of the Schmitz-appointed administrative boards. Specifically, Fremont Older's *Bulletin* ran stories about large sums of tax-payer dollars spent by the Board of Public Works with little to show for it and allegations that the Police Department accepted bribes in exchange for turning a blind eye to the city's vice industries.[293]

The legal effort began in earnest only after the ULP took control of both the mayor's office and the Board of Supervisors in 1905. In December 1905, journalists Fremont Older and Lincoln Steffens met with attorney Francis Heney in Washington D.C. to discuss the situation in

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[291] Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, 306.
[292] *Denman Report* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 10.
[293] Ibid., 17; Born in Wisconsin in 1856, Older came to California in 1873 and later became the managing editor of the *Evening Bulletin*. *Men of the Pacific Coast: Containing Portraits and Biographies of the Professional, Financial, and Business Men of California, Oregon, and Washington 1902-1903* (The Pacific Art Company, 1902-1903; HathiTrust), 174; For a full, sympathetic account of Older's opposition to Schmitz and Ruef, see Mrs. Fremont Older, "The Story of a Reformer's Wife: An Account of the Kidnapping of Fremont Older, the Shooting of Francis J. Heney, and the San Francisco dynamite Plots," *McClure's Magazine* Volume 33 (S. S. McClure Company, 1909; HathiTrust), 277-293

San Francisco.[294] All three had made careers opposing corruption in business and politics so the prospect of exposing the illegal activity of a labor government in a major American city appealed to self-interest as much as idealistic notions of the public good. Lincoln Stephens would later write a laudatory account of Heney's life and career where he characterized him as an archetypal westerner who was courageous, loyal to his view of justice over partisanship, and welcomed a fight.[295] The three agreed that if Rudolph Spreckels, former mayor James Phelan, and other like-minded San Francisco elites could be persuaded to finance the effort, Heney and a handpicked team of attorneys would come to the city to lead the prosecution.[296] The next month Heney, Older, Spreckels, and Phelan met in San Francisco to discuss the matter further.[297]

In October 1906, a grand jury was formed to investigate alleged criminality emanating from the nexus of the mayor's office, the Board of Supervisors, and local businesses. The grand jury, later known as the Oliver grand jury after the name of its foreman B. P. Oliver, was overseen by District Attorney Langdon and Mr. Heney, who Langdon appointed as assistant district attorney, with financial backing from Spreckels. Mayor Schmitz was travelling when the news broke so James Gallagher, ULP elected official and president of the Board of Supervisors, responded in his capacity as acting mayor. Gallagher fired DA Langdon and appointed Ruef to fill the vacancy. A Superior Court judge subsequently ruled that the mayor did not have the authority to remove the DA so Langdon was reinstated and the prosecution continued. This blatant and perhaps desperate attempt to forestall the work of the grand jury was a public

[294] *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 17.
[295] Lincoln Steffens, "The Making of a Fighter: How Frank Heney Prepared in Arizona for the Work He is Now Doing in San Francisco," *The American Magazine* 64, no. 4 (1907), 339-354, available at The Bancroft Library, BANC MSS C-R 12, Box 2, Ira Cross, California Labor Notes.
[296] *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 17.
[297] Ibid., 17.

relations victory for the prosecution as it seemed to confirm the charge that the actions of the ULP administration were not always above board.[298]

The prosecution uncovered multiple instances of corrupt dealings between the ULP administration and the San Francisco business community. The crimes fall under three general categories: the protection of illegal trades or enterprises, the corrupt handling of franchises or special privileges, and corruption related to rate setting by utility companies.[299] The prosecution secured twenty-one indictments including Mayor Schmitz, Abraham Ruef, and three ULP officials on the Board of Supervisors.[300] The remaining indictments were handed down to parties connected with the companies and interests involved in the several schemes uncovered by the prosecution, including the United Railroads, the Parkside Company, the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, and the Pacific Gas and Electric Company.[301]

The scheme to fix the gas rate in 1906 involving Abraham Ruef, the Board of Supervisors, and representatives of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company is illustrative. The Board of Supervisors had legal authority to set the gas rate and the ULP had run on a platform to keep it low.[302] Ruef, not a member of the Board himself but an individual with access and influence at the highest levels of the ULP, was also on the payroll of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company as a legal representative. His testimony before the Oliver Grand Jury details the circumstances of the scheme:

> The matter was brought up at one of the Sunday evening caucuses and some of the members of the board of supervisors insisted that the board had been pledged by its platform to a rate of 75 cents per thousand feet; they thought that was even too much and made some strong speeches and others maintained the 75 cents rate and they contemplated fixing the 75 cents rate that evenine *(sic)*, that is to say,

[298] *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 34.
[299] *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 18.
[300] Ibid., 28.
[301] Ibid., 28, 18-26.
[302] Ibid., 25.

> agreeing to do it at the proper time which I suppose was a week thereafter…I told Mr. Drumm that it would be necessary for me in order to protect the interests of the company and the interests which he represented, to have an additional attorney's fee and I told him that I thought it would require $20,000. He considered the matter and one day, a day or two afterword, he agreed to pay me the additional attorney's fee of $20,000 which I thereafter received.[303]

Ruef acted as a liaison between corporate interests and the ULP under the pretense of serving as a company's legal representative. Supervisor Gallagher, in turn, acted as the link between Ruef and the rest of the Supervisors. Gallagher's testimony for the gas rate scheme is characteristic of how money changed hands:

> Q. Now, then, the next matter I want to call your attention to is the gas, the fixing of the gas rates in 1906 along in February probably?
> A. It was fixed in the month of February, 1906.
> Q. These different supervisors testify as to having received $750 apiece from you in that matter?
> A. Yes, sir, that's true…
> Q. Who first told you there was to be money in that?
> A. Mr. Ruef.
> Q. And that was before the vote was taken and the rate fixed at 83 cents?
> A. Yes, sir.[304]

The circumstances of the gas rate scheme raise three points about Ruef, the ULP, and the party's relations with the business community. First, contemporaries tended to view Ruef as the central figure driving the ULP's corruption, a unique hostility that many in the San Francisco Jewish community regarded as antisemitic.[305] Ruef was indeed important, and the trial transcripts indicate he pursued self-interest over that of the party so the point is not to rescue Ruef's reputation or downplay the Jewish community's fear of reprisal, but rather to show that Ruef was

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[303] Ruef before the Oliver Grand Jury, UCLA Department of Special Collections, Collection 1242, Hichborn Papers, Box 6, Folder "San Francisco Graft Prosecution: Schmitz Case – Ruef's Testimony."
[304] The rest of the exchange reveals that Gallagher paid the other Supervisors in cash and typically delivered the money in person either in city hall or on the street—but always when he could do so without being observed. Gallagher before the Oliver Grand Jury, UCLA Department of Special Collections, Collection 1242, Hichborn Papers, Box 6, Folder "San Francisco Graft Prosecution: Schmitz Case – Ruef's Testimony."
[305] One contemporary report called Ruef the "organizing brain of the corruption of the Schmitz regime," *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 30. For charges of antisemitism, see Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, 289, 309.

a single link in a larger chain of corruption and questionable conduct.[306] Second, Ruef's testimony indicates that disagreements existed within the ULP administration when schemes for personal enrichment conflicted with the party's campaign promises. Third, despite general employer hostility to the labor movement and the ULP, the trials reveal how major employers reached a modus vivendi with the labor government through graft.

The trials ultimately brought down the first ULP regime. The prosecution and its backers reasoned that they had to dislodge the ULP before the 1907 elections otherwise the party would use the mayor's office, the Election Commission, and the Police Commission to improperly influence the outcome.[307] Schmitz was convicted on June 13, 1907, and the Supervisors, under serious pressure from the DA, declared the mayor's office vacant and appointed Edward R. Taylor—Dean of the Hastings College of the Law, a member of the Board of Freeholders established by mayor Phelan to draft the charter of 1898, and supporter of the prosecution—to fill the position.[308] The ULP Supervisors were then compelled to resign and their seats were taken by Taylor appointees.[309] This unelected emergency government subsequently won the fall 1907 elections, securing democratic legitimacy for itself and cementing the destruction of the first ULP regime.

For all their complexity, the trials should be seen as the progressive response to labor in politics. The nascent progressive movement that would dominate the city and the state in the next decade asserted itself through the prosecution and the Taylor government established in its wake.

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[306] The transcripts reveal that Ruef, ostensibly the "boss" of the ULP, accepted upwards of $14,000 from the Republican Party to assist the GOP's operation in San Francisco during the gubernatorial primary in 1906. Ruef before the Oliver Grand Jury, UCLA Department of Special Collections, Collection 1242, Hichborn Papers, Box 7, Folder "San Francisco Graft Prosecution: Ruef Before Grand Jury."
[307] *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 29.
[308] Ibid., 31; *Municipal Report of the City and County of San Francisco 1898-1899* (HathiTrust), 301.
[309] *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 31.

In terms of personnel, it need only be mentioned that Hiram Johnson, future Governor, Senator, and leader of the CA progressives, first raised his political profile as a member of the prosecution. For rhetoric and policy recommendations, the Taylor government issued a report on the findings of the Oliver grand jury. The report viewed municipal corruption as symptomatic of a "disease" in the body politic, the root of which could be found in class antagonism inaugurated by the waterfront strike of 1901 and the emergence of the ULP.[310] Alongside solid policy recommendations like increased corporate liability for bribery and cancellation of franchises procured by fraud, the report recommended nonpartisan municipal elections to make it more difficult for a party representing the interests of a single class to take control of government through a straight ticket.[311]

It is of course true that ideological tendencies gather together a wide range of adherents from the utterly cynical to the admirably sincere. With this nuance granted, it is difficult to fully accept the Taylor government's analysis of the political situation during the first ULP regime. The report emphasizes the negative social and political consequences of class politics during the first ULP regime, but what of every preceding government, whether Republican or Democrat, where labor featured as a junior partner if at all? The Taylor government and the prosecution's sympathizers, like many reformist liberals before and after, argued that the antidote to partisanship was more democracy, but it is difficult to square this sentiment with the fact that they removed a democratically elected government and then proposed changes to election law designed to undermine their opponents. To their credit, the prosecution and its sympathizers

[310] *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 5, 10.
[311] Ibid., 46-47; San Francisco progressives' analysis of the trials as evidence of the necessity of nonpartisanship over class politics lends credence to Stromquists interpretation of the wider movement's vision of social harmony being unable to fully account for or address structures of class power. Shelton Stromquist, *Re-Inventing "The People": The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), vii-x.

maintained that the companies bribing ULP officials were equally culpable and thus the ULP confessions were a necessary first step in going after corporate corruption.[312] Yet it is fair to question the sincerity of this position given that when all was said and done, a democratically elected labor government was replaced by a prosecution-backed emergency government, and not a single public utility corporation executive went to prison.[313]

The trials destroyed the Schmitz-Ruef regime and showed the progressive opposition to be even more formidable than the uncompromising open-shop politics of the Citizens' Alliance. The next chapter will consider the BTC's takeover of the ULP and the party's return to power.

[312] *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 28.
[313] Bean, *Boss Ruef's San Francisco*, 305.

Chapter 3: The McCarthy Years and the Party's Defeat, 1909-1911

The preceding chapter examined the Schmitz-Ruef era of ULP governance from the party's seizure of power in 1901 to its collapse in 1907 when the San Francisco DA secured convictions of high level ULP officials for corruption. The chapter considered the party's impact on industrial relations, showing that the Schmitz-Ruef regime functioned as a real, if imperfect, counterweight for labor in a period of heightened industrial conflict. The chapter also noted the party's impact on party politics, showing that by putting the labor question at the center of municipal politics, the party provoked a reaction from open-shop radicals as well as reformist progressives, leading to several fusion campaigns that culminated in the Taylor government established by fiat in the wake of the graft trials.

This chapter focuses on the second ULP administration (1909-1911) led by P. H. McCarthy and the Building Trades Council. Michael Kazin described this period as "tortured" and illustrative of "the problems that union politicians both faced and created in an environment where appeals to class solidarity alone seldom brought success."[314] Kazin observed that the need to deliver for working-class constituents without provoking a sharp response from the business community combined with the mounting progressive critique of partisanship and class politics imposed highly unfavorable conditions for the ULP.[315] This chapter accepts Kazin's assessment and seeks to expand upon it in two key ways. First, Kazin's work focused on the Building Trades Council, not the ULP, and therefore his argument about the McCarthy administration lacks the requisite comparative dimension one would need to properly assess the BTC-led government in a history of the ULP. Second, this chapter submits that the development of fiscal policy in the late

[314] Michael Kazin, *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades Council and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 178.
[315] Ibid., 177-178.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constitutes an additional, and highly significant, factor shaping the opportunities and constraints with which both ULP administrations had to contend.

The BTC-led ULP government distinguished itself from the Schmitz-Ruef regime in two important ways. Organizationally, the BTC-led government was staffed by and had the explicit support of the mainstream labor movement to an extent not seen in the Schmitz-Ruef years. The key institutions of the mainstream labor movement—the BTC, the SFLC, and the unions they represented—never gave the Schmitz-Ruef government their unconditional support. When the graft trials toppled the Schmitz-Ruef group in 1907, the BTC took control of the party, lending its resources, organizational capacity, and media arm to the ULP. On the policy side, the BTC-led government distinguished itself from its predecessor for its willingness to initiate large public infrastructure projects and seek novel forms of public financing when met with banking sector intransigence. The Municipal Rail serves as the primary example, and given that the transportation sector was a key site of industrial conflict in this decade, the move toward public ownership marks a significant long range development even if the transition was slow and uneven.

To understand the ULP's impact on the political economy of San Francisco, it is necessary to situate the ULP era (1901-1911) in the development of fiscal policy in California at the state and local levels. State-level studies of fiscal policy in California in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries show a gradual expansion of state capacity in response to economic growth, diversification, and the activity of organized interest groups.[316] Historians have traced this gradual expansion through a number of agents. Higgens-Evenson sees in the relationship

[316] Thomas Laichas, "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul: Public Finance and Political Change in California 1850-1930" (PhD. Diss., UCLA, 1999), 841; R. Higgens-Evenson, *The Price of Progress: Public Services, Taxation, and the American Corporate State 1877 to 1929* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2003), 108-111.

between corporations and state and local governments a "corporate state," where the business community's assent to increased corporate taxes to fund government services gave companies considerable influence over the methods and priorities of the state.[317] Malczewski and Beadie demonstrate the centrality of education and organized educators to fiscal policy reform and state development in the early twentieth century when education accounted for one of the largest shares of the state budget.[318] Laichas shows how economic diversification and the rise of the Progressive Republicans under Hiram Johnson altered the late nineteenth century system dominated by the Southern Pacific Railroad and its Republican allies in the state legislature and ushered in a more lasting dynamic marked by weaker parties, a wider array of interest groups, and the increased importance of the governor in managing relations between interest groups and the legislature.[319]

The range of historical agents involved in the development of the state's fiscal environment lends credence to Terrance McDonald's argument that functionalist interpretations of fiscal policy and state development are insufficient to the extent that they do not account for the role of political culture.[320] McDonald's 1986 *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy: Socioeconomic Change and Political Culture in San Francisco, 1860-1906* remains the standard work on San Francisco fiscal policy. Consensus, as much as conflict, dominates this period in McDonald's account. Though the resources available to successive San Francisco city governments continued to rise in the late nineteenth century, adherence by both major parties to the "Dollar Limit"—a tax law established in San Francisco the late 1870s that set a ceiling of $1

[317] Higgens-Evenson, *The Price of Progress*, 1-2.
[318] Joan Malczewski and Nancy Beadie, "Education as a Missing Link," (April, 2025), 2-9.
[319] Laichas, "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul," 841-851.
[320] Terrence J. McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy: Socioeconomic Change and Political Culture in San Francisco, 1860-1906* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1986), xi, 3, 17-18.

for every $100 of assessed valuation—turned the retrenchment ethos of the late 1870s into a generational fiscal orthodoxy.[321] Even as the Dollar Limit consensus began to erode in late 1890s as various interest groups demanded more services, its legacy cast an ideological and structural-material shadow over the decade of ULP rule. The party's largely incrementalist and at times indifferent approach to fiscal policy speaks to the challenges of finding immediate political solutions in an environment shaped by generations of regressive tax policy.

Attention to fiscal policy also provides another dimension of comparison between the ULP and their progressive opponents. Martin, Mehrotra, and Prasad offer a theory of taxation that sees taxation as a social contract between state and society.[322] A party or government's willingness to radically alter this contract can therefore be used as a metric of its capacity for structural social and economic change. Chapter one agreed with Sklar's assessment of the progressive movement as a reformist tendency that did not contemplate a radical restructuring of the emerging corporate capitalist system.[323] In San Francisco, the Phelan government's decision to include the Dollar Limit in the organic law of the city during the revision of the city charter serves as an example of its fiscal moderation.[324] This chapter will demonstrate that the ULP's fiscal policy was just as moderate so on this point there is little difference between the party and their progressive adversaries.

1907, the Taylor Government, and the Election of 1909

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[321] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 167-183.
[322] These scholars and others outline a "new fiscal sociology," a multi-disciplinary endeavor that places taxation at the center of analysis of social, political, and economic relations where tax policy functions as both cause and symptom of broad historical developments. Isaac William Martin, Ajay K. Mehrotra, Monica Prasad, editors, *The New Fiscal Sociology: Taxation in Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 1-2; For the theory of taxation as a social contract that multiplies society's infrastructural power, see Martin, Mehrotra, Prasad, *The New Fiscal Sociology*, 14.
[323] Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism 1890-1916* (Cambridge UP, 1988), 34-39.
[324] *Municipal Report of the City and County of San Francisco 1901-1902* (HathiTrust), 758-760.

The preceding chapter ended in 1907 with the fall of the Schmitz-Ruef regime and the advent of the Taylor administration, an emergency government backed by the DA and good government progressives. It is necessary to return to these events to explain how the BTC and its president, Joseph McCarthy, took over the ULP in the fall of 1907 and returned to power in 1909.

The political developments involving the Schmitz regime, the Taylor government, and the BTC played out against the backdrop of yet another conflict between the United Railroads and the carmen's union. When contract negotiations broke down in May 1907, the union went on strike and the company announced that it had officially severed ties with the union.[325] Mayor Schmitz declared that city police would not assist strikebreakers by riding cars that crossed the picket line, a policy that enabled the carmen to win their first strike a few years before.[326] However, conditions were less favorable to the union at this juncture. The Schmitz-Ruef regime was collapsing because of the graft prosecutions, so Schmitz and his government were seen as lame duck at this stage. Conversely, the United Railroads, which had taken a conciliatory line with the union when the company was taken over by an eastern syndicate, was more militant and interested in establishing a long-term status quo on its terms.[327]

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[325] *Call*, May 7, 1907, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; For a narrative account of the 1907 strike, see Fred Glass, *From Mission to Microchip: A History of the California Labor Movement* (UC Press, 2016), 155-160.
[326] *Call*, May 7, 1907, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[327] By this time United Railroads was deeply entwined in California's financial system. The company received investments from—and otherwise maintained financial relationships with—small, medium, and large banks throughout the state. A more secure financial position may have given the company the confidence to roll back concessions it had granted to the union in 1902—and the company may have wished to increase investor confidence by showing that it could impose its will on the union rather than the other way around as was the case in 1902. For a sampling of the types of financial relationships maintained by United Railroads with California banks, see W. W. Shannon, Superintendent of State Printing, *Report of the Board of Bank Commissioners of the State of California, 1907: Showing the Financial Condition of the Banks of California at the Close of Business July 31, 1907* (Sacramento, 1907), accessed via HathiTrust, 70, 120, 178; The United Railways Investment Company of San Francisco held the majority of the United Railroads' capital stock. The company's net earnings increased in the years prior to the 1907 conflict. For more on the company's financial condition, see *The Commercial and Financial Chronicle: Street Railway Section* (William B. Dana Publishing Company, 1906), accessed via HathiTrust, 87.

The situation soon devolved into violence. On May 7, the United Railroads attempted to run cars operated by armed strikebreakers. Union men and their sympathizers threw stones and other projectiles at the cars causing the strikebreakers to fire live rounds into the crowd. This led to an exchange of fire from both sides leaving at least one person dead and approximately twenty others seriously wounded.[328]

The weakened ULP government was in no position to take control of the situation and the communications coming from the mayor's office indicated how much the climate had shifted against the labor administration. After the shootings, Mayor Schmitz issued a proclamation calling for calm as well as a pointed message to the union, "I especially ask those out on strike to maintain the dignity of labor by discountenancing any act of violence on the part of their sympathizers." No matter the facts of the situation, it is difficult to imagine the Schmitz-Ruef government at the height of its power in 1902-6 issuing a proclamation that put the onus squarely on labor and made no mention of employer violence. In perhaps an even greater departure from precedents set by the ULP during previous industrial conflicts, Schmitz sent a private communication to the United Railroads promising to deputize additional policemen to bolster the current force and prevent violence from strike sympathizers.[329]

Labor leaders, at pains to positively affect the course of the strike, became uncomfortable with the volatility of the situation. The Mission District became the center of organized and unorganized resistance to the United Railroads. Here cars were harassed and there were regular clashes between strikebreakers and union men and their supporters.[330] In response to the violence, key labor leaders including P. H. McCarthy of the BTC and Michael Casey of the CFF

[328] *Call*, May 8, 1907, 1-2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[329] Ibid., 1, 5.
[330] *Call*, May 15, 1907, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

signed a letter engineered by the Chamber of Commerce, Merchants' Association, and other trade organizations, calling for the maintenance of law and order.[331] Whether the two labor leaders agreed with the sentiments of the letter or desired a change of tactics, the strategic purpose of signing such a letter was to distance their organizations from the unrest. For McCarthy, the possibility that the BTC might take over the ULP as the Schmitz-Ruef administration collapsed provided a set of incentives that counselled caution and patience.

The Schmitz-Ruef era of ULP governance ended in July 1907 when the prosecution forced the ULP-majority Board of Supervisors—many of whom were under indictment themselves—to replace Schmitz with its handpicked candidate, Edward Taylor. District Attorney Langdon, lead prosecutor Francis Heney, and Rudolph Spreckels offered the position to Taylor, who was then serving as the Dean of the Hastings Law College, and then forwarded his name to the Board of Supervisors with instructions to hold an emergency vote to oust Schmitz. DA Langdon said Taylor was chosen because he was not openly partial to either capital or labor. When asked about his views on labor, Taylor said he opposed class legislation and vowed to treat all individuals and interests equally. When asked how he would handle violence and unrest connected to industrial conflict he said, "In riot or trouble I would use every arm of the law to restore order. Order is the most important thing."[332]

The new mayor ultimately chose nonintervention for the ongoing carmen's strike, opting to allow the situation to reach a conclusion without the armed intervention of the state. Taylor's most visible public contribution was to convene a conference on industrial peace in cooperation with the civic league. Reports estimate that 1,000 people gathered to witness the proceedings conducted by 200 accredited delegates representing women's, civic, commercial, and labor

[331] *Call*, May 15, 1907, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[332] *Call*, July 17, 1907, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

organizations. Taylor's keynote address called for industrial peace, a rejection of partisan politics, and civic harmony. While the speech primarily offered idealism as a necessary complement to materialism, Taylor used the occasion to say that one of his administration's key aims was to restore the charter of 1898. Taylor, who himself advised the committee that drafted the charter, pledged to govern with strict adherence to the letter of the charter, saying that if an action was not explicitly granted in the text, he would not take it.[333] Beyond the general charge of corruption, he did not specify how exactly the ULP had violated charter, creating the impression that restoring the charter with a literalist interpretation of the text actually meant a desire to restore the political coalition that produced it. In that coalition, labor occupied a secondary position relative to reformist, nonpartisan progressives. The ULP halted this coalition in 1901 and the Taylor government represented the first successful step of its return to power.

The strike continued into the fall and ended with the carmen's defeat, leaving the union, according to Kazin, "utterly destroyed."[334] The outcome is indicative of the importance of city hall and the party that controls it. In 1902, the same union faced the same company and achieved a different result. A key difference between the two episodes was the orientation of city hall towards the conflict. In 1902, the ULP had just come to power and openly backed the carmen, using its control of the police department and the mayor's bully pulpit to serious effect in favor of the union. In 1907, the Schmitz administration was ineffectual because of the graft trials and was then replaced by a Taylor government intent on taking a hands-off approach to demonstrate its seriousness about state nonpartisanship in industrial conflict. To say that a labor government is a sufficient condition to explain a union's success is to say too much, but it is reasonable to

[333] *Call*, July 24, 1907, 1, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[334] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 136.

conclude that the status of city hall is a key variable. The carmen's rise was a symbol of a new era of labor government, their destruction a premonition of what was to come.

The fall of 1907 also saw the Taylor government achieve a decisive win over the ULP in the municipal elections, enhancing its legitimacy as a democratically elected government and delivering the ULP its worst defeat since 1901. The election occurred when support for the graft trials was at its height and while it was ostensibly a three-way race, Taylor consolidated the pro-prosecution vote under the auspices of the Spreckels'-backed Good Government League.[335] When the votes were tallied, Taylor outperformed the ULP in all but the most solidly working-class districts. One of the main papers representing centrist opinion hailed the result, "San Francisco has had her season of madness and returned safely to sanity." Taylor framed the election as a restoration of democracy and a vindication of the good government cause. Speaking to a crowd of good government leaguers, Taylor described the result as "a glorious victory of honesty over graft; right over wrong; civic purity over graft."[336]

For the ULP, the election marked the point at which P. H. McCarthy and the Building Trades Council formally took control of the party.[337] Into the vacuum left by the fall of the Schmitz-Ruef inner circle, McCarthy assembled a coalition of unindicted Schmitz holdovers and BTC loyalists that enabled him to control the party central committee. He took control of the party apparatus by the same method, allowing some ULP functionaries to remain in place and filling the gaps with BTC operatives.[338] McCarthy and the BTC took an anti-prosecution position

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[335] The Good Government League, like similar civic organizations around the country, was an organization committed to promoting reform and nonpartisanship in city government. *The California Weekly*, San Francisco, May 77, 1909 (HathiTrust), 377; Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 136-137

[336] *Call*, November 6, 1907, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

[337] As head of the Building Trades Council and member of the General Executive Board of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, McCarthy was by this time a central figure in the San Francisco labor movement. *The Carpenter*, Volume 27, No. 2, February 1907 (HathiTrust), 71; *First Annual Convention of the Building Trades Department: American Federation of Labor 1908* (HathiTrust), 1-84.

[338] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 136-137.

during the election, pushing some in the labor movement to either withhold an endorsement or to openly back the Taylor campaign.[339] Views on the prosecution were one source of dissent within the labor movement, mistrust of BTC hegemony and skepticism about electoral politics given the Schmitz-Ruef debacle were surely others. When the election was over, McCarthy published an article pledging his support to Taylor "in maintaining good government and industrial peace," a concession to the rhetoric of the progressives indicating how drastically the fall out of the graft trials had shifted the political terrain.[340]

Over the next two years organized labor experienced adverse conditions, though the headwinds came from a national economic downturn and the slowing of post-earthquake reconstruction rather than the Taylor administration. By 1909 union membership in the city had declined from 65,000 in 1907—the highpoint of the decade—to 50,000.[341] This decline resulted from the slowing of reconstruction work and the economic slump of 1908 which saw the national unemployment rate reach sixteen percent.[342] The downturn fell hardest on service and manufacturing workers whose unions were less secure than the established craft unions. Stablemen, wagonmakers, and culinary workers, among others, mounted strikes to resist wage decreases and open shop backsliding, but with little success.[343] The craft unions did much better, although most were compelled to accept wage freezes from 1908 until the outbreak of WWI.[344]

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[339] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 136-137.
[340] *Call*, November 6, 1907, 2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; Although a leading figure for organized labor in San Francisco, McCarthy was not averse to working with progressives. For example, McCarthy was a member of the California Promotion Committee, a state-wide organization committed to reform which included Joseph Tobin, a member of the Spreckels family, and Chester Rowell, among others. *The Counties Committee of the California Promotion Committee*, Bulletin Number 3, June 1906, (HathiTrust), 15.
[341] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 178; 1909 saw national union density fall as well, the first year-over-year decline of the decade. Leo Troy, "Introduction," in *Trade Union Membership, 1897-1962* (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1965), 1.
[342] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 178.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid., 179.

The major labor organizations, meanwhile, coalesced around the ULP. In 1907, the City Front Federation and the SFLC either refused to endorse McCarthy or openly supported Taylor due to misgivings about BTC hegemony in the party and differences of opinion about the legitimacy of the graft trials. In 1908, Michael Casey, a former ULP official under Schmitz and current head of the Teamsters and the City Front Federation, rejoined the ULP county committee.[345] A few months later, the SFLC declared its support for the ULP.[346] This was a significant development not only because it signaled the emergence of a united front behind the ULP, but also because the party now had access to the resources and personnel of a majority of the organized labor movement in the city.

The ULP slate for the municipal elections of 1909 reflected the broad-based nature of union support and participation in the BTC-era in contrast to the Schmitz-Ruef period. With McCarthy as the mayoral candidate, the party's top position was now in the hands of the president of the most powerful labor organization in the city. Schmitz, by contrast, was a member of the Musicians' Union and a Republican, and thus he did not hold a leadership position in the labor movement prior to his election. The rest of the ticket primarily consisted of union officials from the BTC and the other key labor organizations. For the Board of Supervisors, the non-BTC officials came from the Teamsters, Cooks and Waiters, Molders, as well as the president of the SFLC.[347] The depth of union support and participation in 1909 contrasts with the Schmitz-Ruef era, particularly after 1905 when fewer top officials sought positions in the administration and Ruef filled the ticket with lesser officials and loyalists. For contemporaries and historians assessing the record of labor in San Francisco politics who may

[345] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 180.
[346] Ibid.
[347] Ibid., 181.

wish to discount the Schmitz-Ruef era as insufficiently union, the same cannot be said for the BTC period.

The ULP's election argument was predictable insofar as it framed the contest as one between working people and the "interests," but its relation to the rising tide of good government progressivism was more ambivalent. In the run up to the election, the BTC's newspaper, *Organized Labor*, published editorials casting McCarthy's Republican opponent, William Crocker, as a creature of the large public service corporations.[348] Crocker's imperfect record with respect to organized labor was known particularly among the building trades because of his involvement in the planing mill strikes of 1900.[349] Yet the ULP's messaging on good government progressivism was contradictory. On the one hand, it understood that the principle Democratic and Republican machines—the latter dubbed the Hellman-Calhoun machine and the former the McNab-Phelan machine—were by this time adhering to the same program of good government reform, which the labor movement perceived as a smokescreen for business control of government and a diminished role for labor in politics.[350] On the other hand, ULP messaging emphasized that a labor administration would operate on liberal, business principles with a desire to eliminate class conflict, indicating the extent to which the rising progressive tide was shaping the political-ideological landscape by the end of the decade.[351]

The ULP platform offers further evidence of the party's attempt to thread the needle between labor politics and progressivism. Solidarity remains the ideological and organizational

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[348] *Organized Labor*, October 2, 1909, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; *Organized Labor*, October 9, 1909, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[349] Crocker was the proprietor of the San Francisco Planing Mill which saw conflict with the BTC earlier in the decade. *Men of the Pacific Coast: Containing Portraits and Biographies of the Professional, Financial and Business Men of California, Oregon and Washington 1902-1903* (The Pacific Art Company, 1902-1903; HathiTrust), 315; *Organized Labor*, October 9, 1909, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 181.
[350] *Organized Labor*, October 9, 1909, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[351] *Organized Labor*, September 25, 1909, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; *Organized Labor*, November 6, 1909, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

starting point, but the platform extends the principle of solidarity to "all interests" and "tax paying citizens," transforming the working class from the vital element of society into a constituency. While the platform calls for state promotion of home industries, wage parity between public and private sector workers in cases where public employees earn less, and denounces the "false economy" of defunding public institutions in the name of efficiency, it limits its call for municipal ownership of utilities to the Geary Street line and offers no details about how the ULP will increase city revenue barring a critique of the Taylor administration's handling of interest payments on the city's bonded debt. Its call to maintain restrictions on migrant labor from Asia likely pleased the ULP's working-class base, but the platform seems designed to allay the fears of reformers and the business community rather than offer a radical break with the political consensus.[352]

The ULP also had to contend with the graft issue. Party messaging offered a two-fold response to critics focused on graft and the record of the Schmitz-Ruef administration. The first was the deceptively simple observation that graft existed in every major city under all administrations, labor, Democratic, and Republican. It made little difference whether a public official received cash in an envelope—as was the case in the ULP trials—or if a favored corporation received special privileges, no matter that some regarded the latter as "business." The second element of the party's messaging offered a policy solution to municipal graft. The main source of municipal graft according to this line was corporate ownership and control of public utilities. The ULP proposed municipal ownership of public utilities and contended that the Democratic and Republican parties would never do it—the implication being that they were too beholden to corporate interests.[353]

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[352] *Organized Labor*, September 25, 1909, 1, 4, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[353] *Organized Labor*, October 30, 1909, 8, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

Election day saw the ULP return to power, securing control of the mayor's office and a majority on the Board of Supervisors. McCarthy issued a statement in which he repeated campaign rhetoric about prosperity achieved through the elimination of class feeling and a liberal, business administration safeguarding the interests of both capital and labor. He also previewed some of the major public infrastructure projects that his administration would oversee, most notably the Geary and lower Market street railroads and the Hetch-Hetchy water supply. Despite McCarthy's efforts to acquiesce to the prevailing nonpartisan climate, political observers and the press viewed the incoming ULP administration as a genuine union labor government, a reality that would condition the industrial and political conflict of the next two years.[354]

The McCarthy Administration: 1909-1911

The following section examines what the McCarthy administration did in power. Emphasis is given to the conflict between the administration and the business community and banking sector over the creation of a publicly owned rail system. Elite obstructionism and the ULP's public financing strategy during this episode reveal the political and ideological fault lines between commercial elites and the ULP that rhetoric—business community and progressive toleration for the labor administration and ULP messaging about nonpartisanship and business principles in government—had tried to mask. The question of public financing of the municipal rail also raises the issue of the extent to which long range fiscal policy shaped the terrain upon which the ULP and all political actors had to operate. In short, this chapter views the retrenchment-focused fiscal consensus during the latter half of the nineteenth century as a

[354] *Organized Labor*, November 6, 1909, 1, 5, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; Kazin, *Barons of Labor,* 185.

determinative factor in San Francisco politics up to and including the ULP period. The ULP's limited and ambivalent engagement with this issue will be discussed at length below.

The McCarthy administration endeavored to unite the main factions of the labor movement under the banner of the ULP. Staffing administrative agencies thus became a site of patronage and coalition building. Top administrative posts like the chairs of the Police Commission, the Civil Service Commission, the Parks Commission, and the Department of Electricity went to BTC officials.[355] Michael Casey, head of the Teamsters, the City Front Federation, and leader of the intra-party opposition during the Schmitz-Ruef years, returned to the chair of the Board of Public Works—a post he held for a time under Schmitz—and a Casey ally headed the Fire Commission.[356] Affiliates of the San Francisco Labor Council received positions great and small, including two seats on the Board of Supervisors.[357] BTC delegates also rejoined the SFLC, at once merging the two largest labor organizations in the city and signaling the emergence of a united front under the auspices of the BTC-led ULP government.[358]

The administration then proceeded to make its mark on working conditions and industrial relations, beginning with a series of policy changes designed to benefit public sector workers. Having a union card became a requirement for city work and the Board of Supervisors studied preexisting contracts to identify firms hiring non-union labor.[359] The administration sponsored a charter amendment to raise the minimum wage for municipal workers.[360] Somewhat controversially, the administration mandated that an individual must be a U.S. citizen to receive

[355] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 186.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid., 187.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Ibid.
[360] Ibid.

employment from the city.[361] Doubtless this policy pleased the nativist elements within the labor movement for which the exclusion of Asian labor remained a key issue, but it would have also disqualified non-citizen European migrants. The administration may have judged that for political reasons, citizen-voters were a more useful and reliable constituency than non-citizens.

For private sector industrial relations, the administration proved willing to tip the scales for labor. The only major workplace dispute of McCarthy's term was triggered by McCarthy himself. At the BTC's semiannual meeting in the summer of 1910 McCarthy, acting in his role as the President of the BTC, put forward a motion calling for the organization to draw up a plan to enforce the eight-hour day for hodcarriers.[362] The hodcarriers nominally worked an eight-hour day, but in practice they worked an extra thirty minutes because they had to arrive early to prepare materials for bricklayers. When the hodcarriers moved to implement the eight-hour day plan, the employers' organization representing the building companies objected and threatened to lockout the approximately 800 hodcarriers on strike.[363] The administration then moved to assist labor and force a settlement. The ULP's Commissioner of Public Works, Michael Casey, ordered city contractors to remove materials from construction sites to further hamper builder's efforts to carry on without the striking hodcarriers.[364] Then McCarthy, in his capacity as both President of the BTC and Mayor of San Francisco, issued a directive to the hodcarriers to organize a committee to negotiate with the builder's association and in approximately one week the two sides reached a settlement in favor of the hodcarriers.[365] It is possible that McCarthy wanted to force a settlement early to avoid a costly defeat as happened to the carmen under Schmitz and

[361] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 187.
[362] *Organized Labor*, July 30, 1910, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[363] Ibid.; *Organized Labor*, August 6, 1910, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[364] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 189.
[365] *Organized Labor*, August 6, 1910, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

Taylor, but this episode is notable because it demonstrates the effectiveness of the McCarthy administration in using the levers of power it controlled to support organized labor.

The next area to consider is the municipalization of essential public services, where this study departs from Kazin's analysis in two ways. Kazin argues that the McCarthy administration did not propose a legislative agenda to aid working people, a conclusion that appears reasonable when reviewing the ULP's 1909 platform.[366] However the administration's efforts to end private ownership of key public services, notably water and rail, should be seen as state interventions in the market to benefit the working poor at the expense of private utility corporations. Of water and rail specifically, Kazin views the administration's inability to quickly implement its public ownership schemes as the result of naivete and a lack of nerve.[367] This study emphasizes the obstructionism the ULP faced from companies, banks, and the federal government to underscore the degree to which institutional constraints effect policy outcomes.

The key factor that delayed the municipalization of water services was opposition from the GOP-controlled Interior Department under Richard Ballinger.[368] For the ULP to end private ownership of water, the city needed to buy out its current provider, the Spring Valley Water Company, and develop a new and more reliable source of fresh water in the Hetch Hetchy Valley located in Yosemite National Park. Prior to McCarthy taking office, the outgoing Board of

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[366] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 189; *Organized Labor*, September 25, 1909, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

[367] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 191.

[368] Richard Ballinger served as Secretary of the Interior under Taft. His tenure is remembered in part because of conflicts with Chief Forester, Gifford Pinchot, over the administration of public-land laws with respect to waterpower sites, coal lands, and reclamation projects. *Conservation: Official Organ of the American Forestry Association Volume 15, 1909* (Washington, American Forestry Association 1909, HathiTrust), 645. For more information on the Department of the Interior during Ballinger's tenure, see *Investigation of the Department of the Interior and of the Bureau of Forestry: Hearings Held Before the Joint Committee of Congress Relative to the Investigation of the Department of the Interior and its Several Bureaus, Officers, Employees, and of the Bureau of Forestry, in the Department of Agriculture, and its Officers and Employees Volumes II-III* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1910, HathiTrust).

Supervisors scheduled a special election where city residents would vote on two bond issues, $35 million to buy out the Spring Valley Water Company and $45 million to build an aqueduct from Hetch Hetchy to San Francisco.[369] McCarthy felt that the Spring Valley Water Company bonds cost more than the company's assets were worth so he urged voters to reject the bonds on the assumption that once construction of the aqueduct was underway, the company would be forced to lower its price.[370] Voters followed his argument and approved the aqueduct bonds, but rejected the buyout bonds. Before construction of the aqueduct began, however, the Interior Department delayed and ultimately denied granting approval for the project, a decision that was only reversed by Congress in 1913 with the passage of the Raker Act which allowed McCarthy's progressive successor to claim credit.[371] Kazin represents this episode as a series of strategic errors on the part of the ULP, but it seems clear that Taft's Interior Department played the decisive role in delaying the development of Hetch Hetchy.

The construction of the municipal rail further illustrates the degree to which ideological divisions and structural impediments slowed the transition to public ownership of utilities. The municipalization of the streetcar system centered on the Geary Street line.[372] At the start of the decade advocates of municipal ownership focused on the Geary line because it had fallen into a state of disrepair and its franchise was scheduled to expire in 1903. The Geary Street Company allowed the franchise to lapse in 1903, but business and financial interests led by the United Railroads, whose recent purchase of much of the city's street car system made it an opponent of municipalization, worked throughout the decade to prevent the transition to municipal

[369] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 189.
[370] Ibid., 189-190.
[371] *Transactions of the Commonwealth Club of California*, Volume IX, (San Francisco, 1915, HathiTrust), 37-49.
[372] For a chronology of the Geary Project, see *Financial Report of the Geary Street Municipal Railway of San Francisco December 28, 1912-December 31, 1913 as Prepared and Approved by the Finance Committee of the Board of Supervisors* (1914, HathiTrust), 1.

ownership.[373] Bond elections were held in 1902, 1903, and 1908, and although in each instance a majority of voters approved the sale of bonds to allow the city to purchase the Geary line, they did not meet the required 2/3 vote to carry the measure.[374]

As mayor-elect, McCarthy urged voters to approve the bonds the next time they appeared on the ballot in December 1909. In a back and forth with reporters, McCarthy reiterated the party's and the BTC's longstanding commitments to municipal ownership, "The building trades council, the union labor party, and the present speaker are now and always have been for the Geary street railroad bonds." In addition to fulfilling past commitments, McCarthy characterized the Geary project as the beginning of a broader shift to municipal ownership of key utilities. "I believe absolutely," he said "that the Geary street road can be made a model municipally owned and municipally operated line and the basis of a splendid system in conformity with the letter of the charter." "I believe, too," he continued "in spite of the vigorous and learned opposition to the acquisition of a municipal road at this time, that it can be operated profitably."[375] These comments indicate that McCarthy viewed the Geary project as part of a broader ideological and material transition to public ownership. The successful operation of the Geary line would function as a model and counterexample to what he terms "vigorous and learned" opposition.

In tandem with McCarthy's public statements, the BTC's newspaper, *Organized Labor*, made the case for the Geary bonds. The paper railed against streetcar companies spending large sums to defeat the bonds, drawing a contrast between the working people who rely on the streetcars and the private owners that would stand in the way of better services to maintain their control of the system. To counter the United Railroads' claim that it did not have the resources to

[373] *Call*, June 15, 1911, 1-2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*; *Call*, December 18, 1909, 9-10, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[374] *Call*, June 15, 1911, 1-2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[375] *Call*, December 18, 1909, 9-10, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

improve services, the paper published the receipts the company provided to the Board of Supervisors in 1908. The paper alleged that in the year before the bond issue campaign, the United Railroads reported taking in $6,778,626. With overhead hovering around $2,000,000, it did not follow that the company did not have the resources available to improve services and increase worker pay.[376] The ideological argument in favor of public ownership was clear if only implied. Whereas private ownership wastefully funneled profits to the top, public ownership would prioritize workers and services.

With the arguments established, the ULP-controlled Board of Supervisors led the effort through a campaign committee organized to circulate pro-bond literature and coordinate between unions and civic organizations. From its headquarters in the office of the Board of Supervisors' finance committee, the campaign committee oversaw the voter outreach operation. The committee organized a list of speakers and arranged for them to appear before unions and civic organizations around the city. Another group of speakers drove around the city every night delivering short speeches in favor of municipal ownership to pedestrians. Volunteers, including men, women, and children, walked the streets selling pro-bond materials to help finance the campaign. Finally, the committee mailed circulars to tens of thousands of voters with information outlining the municipal ownership position.[377] An operation of this scale underlines the importance of the party apparatus and political power to achieving the policy goals of the labor movement.

Voters approved the bonds for the Geary project on December 30, marking a major turning point in the debate over municipal ownership of utilities. The returns showed large majorities for the measure in the working-class South of Market neighborhoods as well as solid

[376] *Organized Labor*, December 18, 1909, 7, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[377] *Call*, December 18, 1909, 10, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

support throughout the city. The greatest vote against municipal ownership came from the polling place at Buchanan and Pacific, in one of the city's wealthiest precincts. However the campaign for municipal ownership was not solely an affair of labor against all. The measure received progressive support, with outgoing mayor Taylor saying, "the people of San Francisco have taken a big step toward freedom. They have grown tired of being tied to the tail of Calhoun's chariot."[378] Taylor's remark was prescient because while the measure only enabled the city to construct and operate a municipally run line on the tracks formally owned by the Geary Street Company, the real private sector antagonist to municipal ownership was the United Railroads, the largest streetcar company in the city.

In the months following the bond vote, the United Railroads used the courts to slow the conversion of the Geary line into a publicly owned system. The company denied, among other things, the right of the municipal rail to run down Market to the Ferry because the United Railroads already operated there, and the introduction of a competitive line would violate its franchise.[379] Administration lawyers and the Board of Supervisors' Public Utilities Committee went back and forth with the United Railroads for many months, costing the city time and resources.[380] The company's legal obstructionism only came to an end when the California Supreme Court affirmed the right of the city to proceed with the project.[381] Up to this point, legal uncertainty had prevented the administration from attempting to sell the bonds for fear that an adverse ruling from the court could stop the project in its tracks.[382] With the legal pathway cleared, the ULP's campaign to sell the bonds began in earnest.

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[378] *Call*, December 31, 1909, 1-2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[379] *Organized Labor*, April 16, 1910, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[380] ibid.; Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 192.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.

ULP messaging emphasized jobs, state of the art services, and the eventual transition to full municipal ownership of the train system. The administration communicated its thinking through the BTC's *Organized Labor* which published columns celebrating the administration's efforts to turn Geary into a "modern, up-to-date transportation line" powered by union labor. The ULP's ambitions beyond San Francisco can be glimpsed in pledges to source materials from in-state manufacturers as well as the adoption of contemporary booster language that the municipal rail would make San Francisco the "Queen of the Pacific." Yet perhaps the most significant component of the ULP's messaging, and the element most alarming to its opponents, was the vision of what would follow the completion of the Geary project. The ULP envisioned a transition to full municipal ownership, calling the Geary project the "nucleus of a complete municipally owned railway system."[383] The prospect of full municipal ownership, despite broad public support beyond the ULP's working-class base, prompted the banking sector to back the United Railroads against the project.

Banking sector opposition to the project took the form of what the ULP called a "silent boycott" against the Geary bonds.[384] Once the bonds were publicly available, the major San Francisco banks refused to bid or purchase them outright. The administration responded by appealing to unions, fraternal organizations, and private individuals, urging them to withdraw their money from the banks and invest in the Geary project.[385] The Teamsters contributed $50,000, the largest contribution from a single union, and many others followed suit with more modest investments.[386] The vacuum left by the major financial institutions' boycott also

[383] *Organized Labor*, July 23, 1910, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Ibid.; *Call*, June 15, 1911, 1-2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[386] *Organized Labor*, July 23, 1910, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

prompted smaller interior banks to purchase what they could.[387] Once it became clear that this novel strategy might succeed, major banks like the Hibernia bank moved in to purchase the remaining bonds.[388] By September, 1910, a sufficient amount of the bonds had been sold for the administration to declare victory and begin making preparations to build.[389]

The contest over the Geary bonds raised tensions between the administration and the city's commercial and financial elite, making the groundbreaking ceremony one of the rare moments when the ULP leadership dropped its pretensions to class cooperation in the name of civic solidarity. An estimated two thousand people gathered on the corner of Point Lobos and Presidio avenues to hear McCarthy and other ULP officials mark the event. Speaking in front of emergency housing constructed after the fire of 1906, the ULP Commissioner of Public Works said, "the banks where you deposit your money in San Francisco have done nothing for this road." John Kelly, Supervisor and Chair of the Finance Committee, also railed against elite obstructionism, "on the day of the sale of the bonds, not one of the professional bond buyers of San Francisco, not one of the bankers of San Francisco, not one of the moneyed men of San Francisco would buy the bonds." McCarthy echoed these sentiments and reiterated his desire for a transition to full municipal ownership, "I wish to say to you, my friends, now that the courts have washed their hands of the Geary Street matter and they are tired issuing injunctions in an effort to interfere with the labor administration, that we intend to put through this work and continue along this line of endeavor until all the street railroad franchises have lapsed and become the property of the people."[390]

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[387] *Call*, June 15, 1911, 1-2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[388] Ibid.
[389] *Call*, September 2, 1910, 3, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[390] *Call*, June 15, 1911, 1-2, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.

In the end, the municipal rail became operational in 1912 during the term of McCarthy's successor, James Rolph, enabling his progressive-nonpartisan administration to claim credit for the project. When McCarthy left office, 2.1 of the total 5.6 miles of track had been installed, giving the Rolph administration the opportunity to finish the project and demonstrate the efficacy of its brand of governance. Under the ULP, the Board of Public Works directed all aspects of construction. Rolph removed the Board from this role and contracted out the rest of the work, completing the remaining 3.5 miles in less than six months at a cost roughly equal to that of the 2.1 miles installed under the ULP.[391] Rolph piloted the first car to move down the city's first municipally owned rail line, a major symbolic victory for his progressive-nonpartisan movement that favored efficiency, flexibility, and public-private partnerships over commitments to organized labor.

The streetcar system had been a key site of industrial unrest throughout the decade, where repeated conflicts between the carmen's union and the United Railroads led to the destruction of the carmen's union in the fall of 1907. The ULP's position in city hall enabled the opponents of corporate domination of key public utilities to seek a political solution where industrial conflict had failed. The streetcar owners had fought for control of the lines, so they naturally opposed any movement towards public ownership. More revealing was the wider business community and financial sector's solidarity with the streetcar owners. Their attempt to kill the project by withholding the necessary capital to purchase the bonds appears as a coordinated effort to deny the ULP a clear policy victory and to undermine the notion of public ownership. The ULP's struggle to construct the municipal rail marks one of the party's most notable achievements and invites an analysis of the deeper structural forces conditioning public policy in the ULP era.

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[391] William Issel and Robert Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1986), 173-174.

Fiscal Conditions: Antecedents and the ULP Era

The preceding sections have largely recounted the political and industrial struggles that illustrate important aspects of the ULP's decade in power. The following section will consider the subterranean sources of political conflict by examining the development of the city's tax policy from the 1850s to 1910. The fiscal consensus—commitments to a low tax rate, low expenditures, and limited public debt—inaugurated in the 1850s and codified in the 1870s set the structural-material and ideological conditions for the national parties and the ULP. The ULP's fiscal policy must therefore be weighed against decades of policy-driven austerity and the ideological limits of generational fiscal orthodoxy.

The precipitating events that led to the emergence of the fiscal consensus date to 1856 and the upheavals associated with the Vigilance Committee and its political arm, the People's Party. The national environment at this time largely favored retrenchment as the Democrats responded to the failure of state-sponsored banks and transportation companies in the 1840s with a series of policy solutions including ceilings on state debt, low taxes, limits on legislative discretion, and the devolution of power from state capitols to smaller local units. Though California's 1849 constitution had these elements, the state's uncertain tax base and high demands for services resulted in lobbying and fractious politics.[392] In May 1856, a member of San Francisco's ruling Democratic machine shot and killed a newspaper editor because of the critical coverage appearing in his columns.[393] In response, local notables organized a so-called Vigilance Committee to bring the assailant to justice. The committee hung the man on the same

[392] Laichas, "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul," 17-18.
[393] *True and Minute History of the Assassination of James King of William at San Francisco California* (San Francisco, Whitton, Towne, & Co., 1856; Hathitrust), 4-10.

day as the slain editor's funeral, triggering months of extra-legal activity where an estimated six to eight thousand vigilantes detained hundreds of men, murdering two and deporting dozens more.[394] These events amounted to a forcible seizure of power by the city's merchant elite who made up 60 percent of the Committee's executive leadership and filled 70 percent of the Committee's civil and military offices.[395]

The political nature of the Vigilance Committee became apparent with the emergence of the People's Party, the political arm of the vigilante movement that swept into office in San Francisco during the initial unrest and remained in power until 1866. The party's case for power rested on a critique of the ruling Democrat's incompetence, corruption, and fiscal extravagance.[396] Later analysts have questioned the veracity of this critique, saying that political conditions were relatively stable just before the vigilantes took power and that inflated Gold Rush prices for goods and services coupled with a transient tax base determined the pre-1856 fiscal situation more than Democratic policy.[397] Still, the party pursued a policy of fiscal retrenchment consistent with its political rhetoric, reducing the tax rate by 40 percent and cutting expenses from the 1855 figure of $2.6 million to $353,000 in a one year period.[398]

The significance of the People's Party insurgency lay in the fact that its fiscal policy became a political paradigm to which all parties had to adhere. McDonald understands the staying power of this insurgency by what he terms the "Legend of Vigilantism," or an accepted set of memories and interpretations about the political history of San Francisco at the beginning

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[394] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 123; For a contemporary account of the execution, see *True and Minute History of the Assassination of James King of William at San Francisco California* (San Francisco, Whitton, Towne, & Co., 1856; Hathitrust), 26.
[395] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 125.
[396] John S. Hittell, *A History of the City of San Francisco and Incidentally of the State of California* (A. L. Bancroft and Company, 1878; Hathitrust), 262-266
[397] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 125-126.
[398] Ibid., 125.

of the American period.[399] According to the legend, corrupt politicians mismanaged and plundered the city in the early 1850s until the people rose up and threw them out in 1856, inaugurating a period of elite-led, nonpartisan governance that brought fiscal salvation to the city.[400] The People's Party and independent parties claiming a common lineage with the original party effectively ruled the city until the mid-1870s.[401] When the two national parties regained control of electoral politics, they adhered to the fiscal consensus established over the previous decade and a half. The GOP moved to institutionalize the fiscal consensus in 1879 with its proposal of the so-called Dollar Limit, a law to keep the tax rate at or below $1 for every $100 dollars of assessed valuation.[402] By 1881, both national parties and the short-lived Workingmen's Party of California—an insurgent party that appealed to working-class resentment of corporate power and Chinese migration—all supported the Dollar Limit.[403]

Austerity and retrenchment continued in the 1880s and 1890s under the aegis of the major parties who competed over who could best uphold the terms of the Dollar Limit. A chart submitted in the Board of Supervisors' Municipal Report for the fiscal year 1902-1903 shows the city's tax rate for every fiscal year from 1861 to 1903. The period before the advent of the Dollar Limit—1861-1881—saw a consistently higher rate than the period that followed. In the 1860s,

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[399] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 126.
[400] Ibid.
[401] The People's Party continued until 1866 when the party changed its name to the Union party. In 1869, the Taxpayer's party replaced the Union party until it was itself absorbed by the GOP in 1873. ibid., 126-127.
[402] Ibid., 155.
[403] Ibid.; For more on the Workingmen's Party of California, especially its role during the California Constitutional Convention in the late 1870s, see Neil Larry Shumsky, *The Evolution of Political Protest and the Workingmen's Party of California* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1991); Carl Brent Swisher, *Motivation and Political Technique in the California Constitutional Convention 1878-79* (Claremont: Pomona College, 1930; Reprint. Clark: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2004); Noel Sargent, "The California Constitutional Convention of 1878-9," *California Law Review* 6, no. 1 (November 1917); R. Jeffrey Lustig, "Private Rights and Public Purposes: California's Second Constitution Reconsidered," *California History* 87, no. 3 (2010); Daniel Cornford, "To Save the Republic: The California Workingmen's Party in Humboldt County," *California History* 66, no. 2 (June 1987); Harry N. Scheiber, "Race, Radicalism, and Reform: Historical Perspective on the 1879 California Constitution," 17 *Hastings Const. L.Q.* 35 (1989); Vladimir Kogan and Michael Binder, "Parties Without Brands? Evidence from California's 1878-79 Constitutional Convention," *Studies in American Political Development* 31 (April 2017).

the tax rate averaged around $2 for every $100 of assessed valuation, the highest rate for the period under review. The rate declined in the 1870s likely due to Taxpayer Party agitation and depression conditions following the Panic of 1873, though the rate still reached as high as $1.69. Once a multi-party consensus on the Dollar Limit crystallized in the early 1880s, the rate consistently hovered around $1 for the remainder of the century so while in absolute terms the total amount of taxes levied increased as the city expanded, municipal government resources did not keep pace with urban development and public resources were limited as a result.[404]

As the Dollar Limit determined the fiscal environment of San Francisco, the Southern Pacific Railroad's influence over the state legislature shaped the fiscal environment of the state. As California emerged from the depression conditions of the 1870s, the SP faced a number of challenges including a new Railroad Commission created under the auspices of the revised Constitution of 1879, competition from rival roads, a growing labor movement, and calls for state-ownership rail lines.[405] To meet these challenges, the SP went into politics, cultivating friendly legislators in both parties, but given the acendency of the GOP in the 1880s and 1890s, the SP's relationship with the GOP became the key to its political strategy.[406] Though the SP's power over the legislature was never absolute, its political strategy bore fruit. For example, SP allies empowered the Ways and Means Committee to vet all spending bills and in 1910 amended the constitution to remove corporate taxes from the jurisdiction of local assessors so that companies could concentrate their lobbying efforts in Sacramento.[407] Before the progressive Republicans mounted a political challenge to this system, economic diversification created new

[404] *San Francisco Municipal Report 1902-1903* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 38-39; McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 156-157.
[405] Laichas, "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul," 25.
[406] Ibid., 25-26.
[407] Ibid., 26-30.

power centers in the state's economy. After 1900, a state economy once dominated by the export of grain and precious metals had shifted to, among other things, oil refining, manufacturing, financial services, and new agricultural products like citrus in Southern California. These new interests wanted the state to stabilize market conditions and protect them from competition which made legislative horse-trading more difficult to manage.[408]

In San Francisco, pressure for services and development created openings for revisions to the consensus in the 1890s. Beginning in 1891, neighborhood groups representing outlying districts started appearing at annual allocation meetings of the finance committee demanding the necessary expenditures to extend services to their communities.[409] By 1894 they had federated into a citywide organization to lobby the municipal government for this purpose. At the same time, the Merchants' Association—an organization representing the interests of the city's leading businessmen—demanded government assistance for improvements to city infrastructure.[410] James Phelan's reform wing of the Democratic party became the vehicle for these two interests in city politics. Phelan had been instrumental in establishing both the Merchants' Association and the neighborhood federation and his successful campaign for control of the mayor's office initiated the contest for a new city charter which at once institutionalized the Dollar Limit and broadened the scope of acceptable fiscal policy.[411] The charter mandated that taxes for the city and county could not exceed the Dollar Limit, but exempted select areas from the Dollar Limit like debt service and park expenses, removed limits on assessed valuation, and increased the city bureaucracy.[412] To these reforms Phelan added a positive vision for the role of the state. Where

[408] Laichas, "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul," 27.
[409] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 159.
[410] Ibid.
[411] Ibid.
[412] *Municipal Report for the City and County of San Francisco 1901-1902* (Hathitrust), 758-760; McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 212.

past generations had pursued a "negative policy" to keep taxes and expenditures low, Phelan proposed an "affirmative policy" of public improvements.[413] Chapter one described the Phelan administration's efforts to make good on this promise as well as the circumstances under which organized labor and the working class at large withdrew their support for the Phelan coalition as a result of the administration's handling of the waterfront strike of 1901. The ULP took power, therefore, in an environment favorable to incremental fiscal reform, but still conditioned by decades of austerity.

The Schmitz regime's fiscal policy continued the incrementalism of the Phelan Democrats, and in some instances may have taken a more conservative line than their Democratic predecessors. Important fiscal changes took place in these years, but as McDonald put it, "Schmitz could take little credit—or blame—for them."[414] The first was a significant increase in the city's assessed valuation of personal property engineered by a Phelan holdover, city Assessor Washington Dodge. Much of the increase came from newly constructed buildings and real estate in "favored sections" which added $74,000,000 to the assessment roll over a period of three years, amounting to a net increase of $740,000 per year for the city government.[415] Yet with increased revenues, the ULP administration did not pursue an aggressive public spending program. The party did not have a majority on the Board of Supervisors until 1905, but Schmitz's conservatism also played a part. For example, Schmitz vetoed the budgets prepared for the years 1902, 1903, and 1904, demanding cuts to wages and salaries of city workers.[416] He reasoned that less money for wages and salaries meant more for public improvements, but the fact that he targeted the Board of Public Works for cuts showed

[413] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 219.
[414] Ibid., 232.
[415] *San Francisco Municipal Report 1902-1903* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 161-162.
[416] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 230-231.

that he intended to follow the course set by the Phelan administration—and by extension, the Merchants' Association and improvement groups who favored such cuts—rather than initiate a radical break with the gradualist impulse of the late 1890s.[417]

The Schmitz government's response to the earthquake crisis offers further evidence of the ULP's fiscal conservatism and the power of the Dollar Limit consensus. The earthquake and fire of 1906 damaged or destroyed buildings and infrastructure in some of the most densely populated areas of the city.[418] Reconstruction and the need to address the revenue shortfall resulting from uncollected property taxes presented the administration with an opportunity to significantly alter the fiscal status quo, particularly given that the city charter allowed for the suspension of the Dollar Limit to deal with emergencies, a mechanism the Board of Supervisors invoked in 1902 to repair schoolhouses and construct a new county hospital.[419] Yet Schmitz and the ULP-controlled Board of Supervisors used the Dollar Limit and the property tax shortfall to justify passing a budget that slashed public services.[420] Schmitz was not averse to using the full powers of the state to meet the crisis in the realm of law and order, however, directing U.S. Army General Frederick Funston, the commander of the Presidio, to put troops on the street with orders to shoot to kill anyone engaging in looting or other criminal activity taking advantage of the situation.[421] The administration's fiscal restraint seems designed to foster goodwill with the

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[417] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 231.
[418] *Journal of Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco 1906-1907* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 1-2. For more on the earthquake and fire, including photographs of the aftermath, see J. D. Givens and A. M. Allison, *San Francisco in Ruins: A Pictorial History of Eight-Score Photo Views of the Earthquake Effects, Flames' Havoc, Ruins Everywhere, and Relief Camps* (Smith-Brooks Company, 1906; HathiTrust).
[419] Estimates by the Board's Finance Committee indicated that the damage from the earthquake and fire lowered the Assessment Roll from $525 million to roughly $325 million. *Journal of Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco, 1906-1907* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 63; McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 235.
[420] *Journal of Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco, 1906-1907* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 63-64.
[421] Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 123.

city's business elite who Schmitz tapped to assist with the reconstruction effort as well as to induce outside capital to invest in the city according to a statement from the Board of Supervisors.[422] Over and above near-term strategy, the unwillingness to consider—or inability to imagine—radical changes to the city's fiscal policy in a moment of serious crisis indicates the degree to which decades of fiscal orthodoxy conditioned the political terrain in which the ULP operated.

The McCarthy administration likewise followed an incrementalist path to fiscal reform. Like Phelan and Schmitz, McCarthy did not challenge the Dollar Limit head on, but periodically circumvented it through exemptions and bonded debt. If the cost of a public project threatened to run afoul of the Dollar Limit, the Board of Supervisors and the mayor could seek voter approval for a charter amendment granting a suspension of the limit to fund the project. For example, in 1910 the McCarthy administration promoted the adoption of a charter amendment exempting teachers' salaries and expenses associated with the maintenance of the public library from the strictures of the Dollar Limit, a move that enabled the municipal government to raise $600,000 in excess of the city budget.[423] Over the course of the decade these exemptions piled up such that the effective tax rate during McCarthy's administration was $2 for every $100 of assessed valuation rather than the charter mandated $1.[424] The administration also relied on bond sales to fund major projects like Hetch Hetchy and the Municipal Rail. Bonded debt could legally exceed city revenues collected in compliance with the Dollar Limit, providing the administration with a legal, if imperfect, mechanism to fund major projects. The limitation of this option was that even if the administration could secure a favorable vote from the electorate giving it the authority to

[422] *Journal of Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco, 1906-1907* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 64; Kazin, *Barons of Labor*, 123.
[423] *Organized Labor*, November 12, 1910, 1, *California Digital Newspaper Collection*.
[424] *San Francisco Municipal Report, 1910-1911* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 1326.

put the bonds up for sale, the administration needed the assent of the banks and financiers. The Municipal Rail example shows that this assent was not always forthcoming and despite the McCarthy administration's successful pressure campaign that relied on small contributions from unions and fraternal organizations, debt financing through bond sales does not have the appearance of a sustainable fiscal strategy. The city's bonded debt rose steadily over the course of the decade, reaching its highest-level during McCarthy's term, yet absent significant fiscal reform that would enable the city government to collect sufficient taxes to give it greater independence from the banks, bond sales would remain an imperfect solution to decades of regressive tax policy.[425]

The ULP's fiscal orthodoxy requires explanation. McDonald contends that the ULP did not have a "theory of the state" that called for a new approach to fiscal policy to achieve desired policy ends.[426] The evidence presented above suggests that this is broadly true, but an observation is not an explanation. We therefore must ask why the ULP did not develop a theory of the state that included a new approach to fiscal policy? Further research may illuminate the answer with greater clarity, but the provisional answer is that the ULP's moderation on this issue is the result of decades of ideological consensus among the major parties as well as the viable insurgent parties. Radical breaks with longstanding orthodoxy are possible, as the ULP achieved with its industrial policy, but historians should not underestimate the power of consensus and the difficulty of even imagining something beyond it. Structural barriers also incentivized piecemeal solutions over wholesale reform. Given the city charter mandated adherence to the Dollar Limit—which kept municipal resources artificially low—an administration seeking to spend

[425] The total bonded debt during McCarthy's term rose to a little over $19 million, marking a small but steady increase as compared to Phelan and Schmitz. *San Francisco Municipal Report, 1910-1911* (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 1325.
[426] McDonald, *The Parameters of Urban Fiscal Policy*, 230.

more on services and public works would either need to secure passage of an amendment overturning the Dollar Limit or pass a onetime amendment to fund a specific project. Schmitz and McCarthy funded projects through charter exemptions and bond issues, but for reasons already made clear, these workarounds left the administration exposed to the preferences of the banking sector, adding another layer of political conflict which slowed implementation and thus increased costs.

These dilemmas resemble what Suzanne Mettler has called the "submerged state," or policies embedded in the tax system beneath the surface of market institutions whose function is to subsidize or incentive activities and behaviors deemed to serve a public purpose.[427] The purpose of the Dollar Limit was to constrain public sector spending, but it effectively functioned as a private sector subsidy because the charter-approved exemptions, bonds and onetime project amendments, channeled activity to the banks that controlled the bond process and interest groups with the resources to wage a campaign to secure passage of a onetime project amendment.[428] Wholesale charter reform, therefore, may have improved the ULP's position relative to the banks and middle class interest groups. Its failure to do so appears as both a missed opportunity and a reflection of the adverse conditions facing a labor government—longstanding regressive tax policy constrains one's ability to act, making radical tax reform a pre-requisite for governance, but ideological and structural barriers render such reform politically risky if not impossible.

[427] Suzanne Mettler, *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2011), 4.
[428] For more on how the tax system can function as a public sector subsidization of the private sector, see Mettler, *The Submerged State*, 18; for more on the way such systems can undemocratically advantage privileged actors with the resources and capacity to engage the submerged state, see Mettler, *The Submerged State*, 28.

In conclusion, the McCarthy administration differed from its ULP predecessor, but institutional factors constrained both ULP governments in ways that neither could successfully overcome. The McCarthy administration had the support of the mainstream labor movement to a degree not seen in the Schmitz years and given the ignominious collapse of his predecessor, McCarthy avoided blatant corruption and personal enrichment schemes. Despite the slow and uneven transition to public ownership of key utilities, the McCarthy administration distinguished itself by initiating the water and rail projects for which later administrations would claim credit. Both administrations managed to resist challenges from the most predatory open shop interests and neither did much to alter the unfavorable fiscal conditions established by the charter-mandated Dollar Limit. Both were similarly stymied by the political challenge from good government progressives whose appeals to efficiency, nonpartisanship, and general prosperity forced the labor governments to operate on the progressives' ideological terrain, but to little avail. The next chapter will discuss the fall of the McCarthy administration and the rise of Rolph before moving on to concluding remarks.

Conclusion

The new decade saw progressives come to power in San Francisco and the state government in Sacramento. Hiram Johnson, an attorney and erstwhile member of the prosecution during the graft trials, was elected governor in 1910 on a program promising greater state regulation of the Southern Pacific and other public utilities.[429] In San Francisco James Rolph reconstituted the fusionist coalition—comprising anti-ULP progressives and business leaders working through the newly formed Municipal Conference—to defeat McCarthy in 1911. Rolph's message was one of expansive urban progressivism, amenable to capital and respectful of organized labor, but positioned to transcend both in the interest of all the people.[430] Rolph would serve an unprecedented nineteen years as mayor of San Francisco, and though the ULP continued on, its power was lost.[431]

The broad application of progressive ideas at the state and local levels led one historian of California politics to conclude that in the 1910s progressives established a political order that prevailed for half a century.[432] According to this view a central feature of the progressive order was the institutionalization of a nonpartisan ethos that stressed pragmatism, moderation, and activism in government. This meant, among other things, weakening political parties through legislation establishing the initiative, referendum, and recall, as well as mandating nonpartisan elections in local elections to limit party influence along with the organized interests that controlled them.[433] These policy changes resembled—in specific or in general tenor—the

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[429] Spencer Olin, *California's Prodigal Sons: Hiram Johnson and the Progressives 1911-1917* (UC Press, 1968), 36-42.
[430] Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco 1865-1932*, 161-164.
[431] San Francisco Labor Council Records, Bancroft Library, BANC MSS 69/139, Carton 19. This box contains correspondence, meeting minutes, and other party materials mainly from the 1920s and 1930s, indicating that the party continued its operations but to little effect compared to 1901-1911.
[432] Jackson Putnam, "The Pattern of Modern California Politics," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 61, no. 1 (1992), 23.
[433] Putnam, "The Pattern of Modern California Politics," 24.

recommendations of the Taylor government's investigatory committee following the graft trials.[434]

The notion of a progressive order is plausible, if not compelling, but the purpose of this project is to retain conflict as a central category in political history. The previous chapters have offered a history of labor and politics in San Francisco from 1901 to 1911 to demonstrate that conflict was the determinative dynamic in city politics and industrial relations as parties, unions, employers, and reformers fought for control of workplace conditions and the mechanisms of public authority. The formation of the ULP during the waterfront strike of 1901 turned the city's industrial strife into an explicitly political contest, a development that serves as the starting point for the project's two overarching questions. First, how did the presence of a viable labor party affect political conditions in a time of labor and employer militancy and progressive ascendency? Second, how does this history of political conflict in a turn-of-the-century American city challenge contemporary approaches to political history?

The ULP functioned as organized labor's political intervention to defend unionism from anti-union corporations and—from labor's perspective—unreliable progressives. The party acted as a genuine, if imperfect, counterweight for labor which helped unions weather a period of aggressive open shop agitation from organized employers. Yet since the party was in essence a defensive action to preserve unionism, the party never developed a coherent political economic vision that substantively differed from the mainstream alternatives nor offered a structural critique that seriously contemplated the position of the unorganized, women, and the non-working age population in terms other than their relation to organized male workers. Given the labor movement's general ambivalence to the notion of an independent labor party, every

[434] *Denman Report*, (San Francisco Public Library, InternetArchive.org), 46-47.

misfortune brought internal division about the advisability of continuing the party effort which undermined it in these crucial years of party formation.

This study identifies three major consequences of the ULP period. First, the ULP denied progressives full control of city hall, provoking a multi-layered progressive response which included fusion campaigns and corruption cases brought by the San Francisco DA. The adversarial relationship between the ULP and progressives was the central political dynamic of the first decade of the twentieth century and prepared the way for progressive dominance following Rolph's win in 1911. Second, despite the ULP's limited, union's-first interventions in the city's political economy and its capitulation to a progressive discourse that substituted class conflict for class harmony, the presence of a labor party in city hall elicited an aggressive response from organized employers which fell hardest on newer, weaker unions. Third, the decision to launch a political party—as well as the party's record once in office—produced internal tensions among the key factions of San Francisco labor, but external opposition to the ULP caused these factions to rally in defense of the party at key junctures presaging the broader solidarity achieved with industrial organizing in the 1930s and 1940s. Readers can make what they will of these findings, but in the view of the author they are most useful to the fields of US political history and California history.

The choice now before the field of political history, it would seem, is either to follow the new continuity school laid out in *Shaped by the State* or to retain the theory of political orders first presented in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order* and reaffirmed in Gerstle's recent work *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order*. Gerstle's framework conceives of American political history as a series of "political orders" that possessed a clear ideological orientation underpinned by a set of political relationships between policymakers, interest groups, and

electoral constituencies.[435] In *Shaped by the State*, however, the principle historiographical problem is no longer to explain moments of crisis-driven realignment, but rather to identify continuities that cut across the paradigmatic junctures of modern political history. The key insight from this new political history is that when all is not reduced to partisan conflict, normative assumptions about the state, markets, and hierarchies of race and gender become easier to see.

This project believes this is a false choice and endeavors to remind the field that politics is conflict. The orders framework is a powerful tool for identifying near to medium-term political conditions and historical change. The new continuity school reminds us that ideologies, social conditions, and state strategies often transcend partisan affiliation and operate on much longer timescales than the usual breakpoints in political history will allow. Both have merit and both should have their place in the field. The contributors to *Shaped by the State* explicitly distinguished their approach from the orders framework, but the two are similar in that their main objective is to identify consensus and normative assumptions that structure politics across time, space, and partisan affiliation. This project contends that the salient feature of the period studied here is conflict—not the narrow partisanship which the new continuity school rightly critiques—but conflict within and between classes for state power and economic control.

This study also has implications for California history. Race has been a central, if not, the central category in California-focused histories in recent years yielding work that uncovers the

[435] *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order 1930-1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989); For examples of the consensus school, see Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1948; reis., New York: Vintage Books, 1989) and Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (1955; reis., New York: Harvest Books, 1991).

multiple points of origin of the state's contemporary racial politics.[436] Much of it considers the operations of white supremacy as well as multiracial resistance to its social, cultural, and political hegemony. This project does not seek to overturn this line of thinking, but rather to caution the field that an overemphasis on the racial dimension of human life may reach a point of diminishing returns when race alone is not sufficient to explain social, economic, and politic developments. A framework that focuses on labor and conflict for control of the state might serve as a corrective because it would enable historians to contextualize race as a contingent historical process—one that has both underpinned our most tragic errors and satisfied the human desire for belonging—that should not be the primary basis for contemporary and future politics.

The present study also weighs in on the longstanding debate concerning the relationship between progressives and organized labor, arguing that an adversarial relationship existed between the two camps in San Francisco.[437] The key point of contention following the advent of

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[436] Daniel Martinez-Hosang, *Racial Popositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California* (UC Press, 2010), 2-11; Kenneth Marcus, "The Central Avenue Borderscape: Racial and Musical Borders in Los Angeles in the Era of Jim Crow," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 91, no. 4, 2022, 492-524; Yu Tokunaga, "Japanese Farmers, Mexican Workers, and the Making of Transpacific Borderlands," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 89, no. 2, 2020, 165-197; George Sanchez, "Why Are Multiracial Communities So Dangerous?: A Comparative Look at Hawai'i; Cape Town, South Africa; and Boyle Heights, California," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 86, no. 1, 2017, 153-170; Kathryn Olmsted, "The 1930s Origins of California's Farmworker-Church Alliance," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 88, no. 2, 2019, 240-261.

[437] Some historians have argued that the progressive vision of social harmony limited the movement's ability to confront structures of class power while others have traced a broad left-liberal tradition to counter the historiographical tendency that stresses left-liberal acrimony. For the national picture, see Shelton Stromquist, *Re-Inventing "The People": The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), vii-x; Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 1-11. In California, Mowry argued that the progressives' bias against labor was always greater than its bias against capital. Rogin and Shover used voting statistics showing consistent support for progressive candidates in the state's urban centers to counter the idea that labor viewed progressive politicians as adversaries. Kazin later revived the view that the relationship was antagonistic and emphasized organized labor's inability to effectively respond to progressive appeals to a transcendent common good beyond class interest. Mary Ann Mason focused on labor's lobbying efforts in the state legislature where negotiations with progressives led to the passage of pro-labor legislation leading Mason to characterize labor's view of progressives as "neither friends nor foes." Mowry, *The California Progressives*, 92; Rogin and Shover, *Political Change in California: Critical Elections and Social Movements 1890-1966* (Greenwood Publishing, 1970), 84-85; Kazin, *Barons of* Labor, 286-287; Mason, "Neither Friends nor Foes: Organized Labor and the California Progressives," in *California Progressivism Revisited*, 70.

the ULP was whether progressives could tolerate an independent labor party in control of the executive and legislative arms of the city. Progressive efforts to undermine the ULP indicate that they could not. Progressives led the effort to topple the Schmitz administration with the justification that the Schmitz inner circle engaged in graft—which they did in all fairness—but continued their opposition to the ULP during the McCarthy years which was unremarkable in this regard. Progressives in San Francisco drew the line at labor in politics, an insight that cuts through later scholarly emphasis on the shared racial outlook of the white majority, the big tent view of progressive ideology, and the working relationship between organized labor and progressive legislators.

A topic flagged in the introduction of this dissertation that the subsequent chapters did not address sufficiently or explicitly relates to state studies and party analysis. Where past generations regarded political parties as features of the nineteenth century state, superseded by experts, bureaucrats, and administrative agencies to occupy a somewhat peripheral role in the modern American state, contemporary state studies have returned to parties and electoral politics for fresh insights into state power in democratic societies.[438] In Balogh's associational analysis of the American state, for example, parties can function as intermediary institutions that link citizens to the state.[439] One line of analysis that historians might follow is whether parties are limited to the passive intermediary role outlined in Balogh's work or if they can, in their way, become new limbs of the state. Third parties seem like the logical place to focus this research because unlike long-established parties that have effectively merged with the state, third parties

[438] Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New Administrative State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities 1877-1920* (Cambridge UP, 1982), 285-292; Kimberly Morgan and Ann Orloff, "Introduction," in *The Many Hands of the State: Theorizing Political Authority and Social Control* edited by Kimberly Morgan and Ann Orloff (Cambridge UP, 2017), 14.
[439] Brian Balogh, *The Associational State: American Governance in the Twentieth Century* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 5.

appear as external interventions with the potential to significantly alter the order of things if they come to power.

Readers may note certain tonal discrepancies concerning the efficacy of unions-first politics. This dissertation was written over a period of several years with the core chapters written first and the introduction and conclusion written last. The core chapters are more ideologically sympathetic to the ULP phenomenon than the more reflective, and perhaps pessimistic, introduction and conclusion. The historiographical arguments still stand, but contemporary world events cause one to doubt whether labor action or unions-first labor parties can effectively address the crises now before us, not least among them poverty, ecological collapse, imperialism, and war. Labor action must continue and serious, working-class parties should form in democratic societies where they do not already exist, but achieving true human flourishing in all corners of the Earth will require ideological and material liberation of a kind we have not yet seen. As the generations look for the answer, let history be a guide.

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