

# THE IDEOLOGY OF STEPHEN SIMPSON, UPPERCLASS CHAMPION OF THE EARLY PHILADELPHIA WORKINGMEN'S MOVEMENT

BY EDWARD PESSEN

WHEN we speak of the labor movement today we mean by it trade unions composed of men who work for wages, led by men who for the most part have risen from the ranks after fairly long careers as wage earners. Political parties, no matter how sympathetic, middle-class reformers, no matter how friendly to labor, are not considered part of that movement. It has not always been so. In what has come to be called the Age of Jackson, or, more precisely, the decade ending in the Panic of 1837, such diverse organizations as Working Men's parties, associations of farmers, factory operatives and city mechanics, trades' unions consisting of skilled artisans organized in their respective craft societies, emerged to form America's first labor movement.<sup>1</sup> These varied organizations were often led by men who had not themselves been workers.<sup>2</sup> One of the most unusual and interesting of this highly unusual group of early labor leaders was Stephen Simpson, recently described as the leading spokesman of the Philadelphia Working Men's party.<sup>3</sup>

Simpson, the son of a Philadelphia banking official, was the Congressional candidate of the Working Men's party of Philadel-

\*Dr. Edward Pessen, formerly Instructor in History at the City College of New York, is now Professor of History at Fisk University. His Ph.D. dissertation (Columbia University), *The Social Philosophies of Early American Leaders of Labor*, is soon to be published.

<sup>1</sup> John R. Commons and Associates, *History of Labour in the United States* (New York, 1918), I, 25, 169, 185; Selig Perlman, *A History of Trade Unionism in the United States* (New York, 1922), 9; Mary Beard, *A Short History of the American Labor Movement* (New York, 1920), chapter 3; Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (New York, 1947), 122, 127; George R. Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution* (New York, 1951), 252.

<sup>2</sup> See Edward Pessen, "The Social Philosophies of Early American Leaders of Labor" (Columbia University Doctoral Dissertation, 1954), 14-16, 75.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston, 1945), 201.

phia in the 1830 elections.<sup>4</sup> His acceptance of that party's support, together with a volume he wrote the following year purporting to analyze the ills of society from the workingman's viewpoint,<sup>5</sup> comprised the substance of his identification with the labor movement. The unusual nature of the early American labor movement is nowhere better illustrated than in the fact that so tenuous a connection gained for Simpson the reputation as a major labor leader.<sup>6</sup> In fact his admirers, impressed by the radicalism of his views, called him the "American Cobbett," after the fiery English reformer and anticapitalist.<sup>7</sup>

Though he has attracted the notice of a number of scholars, both Simpson's place in the early labor movement and the significance of his ideas, remain to be determined.<sup>8</sup> It is the aim of this paper briefly to examine his ties with the workingmen and to evaluate his ideology, in the hope that in so doing further light may be thrown on the nature of the early labor movement.

Simpson was born in Philadelphia in 1789 of well-to-do parents. His father was an important official first in the Bank of the United States and later the Philadelphia bank of Stephen Girard.<sup>9</sup> Simpson himself in his early manhood worked a short time in Girard's bank, but was far more interested in literary pursuits. He edited

<sup>4</sup> The Philadelphia *Mechanics' Free Press*, October 2, 1830.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Simpson, *The Working Man's Manual, A New Theory of Political Economy on the Principle of Production the Source of Wealth, Including an Enquiry into the Principles of Public Credit, Currency, the Wages of Labour, the Production of Wealth, the Distribution of Wealth, Consumption of Wealth, Popular Education, and the Elements of Social Government in General, as they appear open to the scrutiny of common sense and the Philosophy of the Age* (Philadelphia, 1831).

<sup>6</sup> New York *Working Man's Advocate*, September 3, October 8, 1931.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Brothers, *The United States of North America as They Really Are* (London, 1840), 119; Joseph Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization* (New York, 1946), II, 645. On Cobbett, see G. D. H. Cole, *The Life of William Cobbett* (New York, 1926).

<sup>8</sup> Schlesinger, Jr., in effect dismisses him because he opposed Jackson; *op. cit.*, 202; Dorfman concentrates on the purely economic implications of his thought, while also exposing certain sordid aspects of his later political and financial activities; *op. cit.*, 645-648; Philip R. V. Curroe discusses pedagogical aspects of Simpson's educational theories, in *Educational Attitudes and Policies of Organized Labor in the United States* (New York, 1926), 45-47; Broadus Mitchell misinterprets Simpson's ideas on labor and value to the point where he describes Simpson as an important "anticipator" of Marx, in his brief article, "Stephen Simpson," in the *Dictionary of American Biography*; Joseph L. Blau simply includes a brief excerpt from Simpson's writings in his anthology of the era, *Social Theories of Jacksonian Democracy* (New York, 1947).

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Simpson, *Stephen Girard* (Philadelphia, 1832), 110-115.

a number of short-lived newspapers and journals, wrote poetry and newspaper articles, and belonged to an esoteric society which discussed contemporary literary trends.<sup>10</sup>

He was also interested in politics. An early admiration for Jackson, first formed when Simpson, who had volunteered to fight in the War of 1812, served under the General at New Orleans, turned sour after the election of 1828 when Simpson's hopes for a position in the new Administration were disappointed. Thereafter Simpson became an ardent anti-Jacksonian, though his antipathy towards Old Hickory did not prevent him in 1830 from cooperating with the youthful Working Men's party, nor did it prevent him from embracing a radical social program. Evidently one did not have to be pro-Jackson to be pro-labor or radical.<sup>11</sup>

In view of the questions raised recently about the authenticity of some of the alleged labor organizations of the Jackson era,<sup>12</sup> it is worthwhile to examine briefly this Working Men's party which nominated Simpson to Congress. Certainly it was not a labor organization similar to any which flourish today. It devoted itself to politics, championed varied humanitarian reforms, such as the abolition of imprisonment for debt or legislation on religion, which were far removed from bread and butter issues, and in fact supported mainly wealthy men as its candidates for office.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Simpson, "Literary Clubs," in *The Author's Jewel* (Philadelphia, 1823), 79; Mitchell, *loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Of course those who hold as does the author of the *Age of Jackson*, that Jackson was labor's champion and that everywhere labor groups and their spokesmen supported him, will find it difficult to reconcile their views to this hard fact. For refutations of Schlesinger, Jr.'s theory [actually stated earlier by Arthur M. Schlesinger, *New Viewpoints in American History* (New York, 1922), 209, and Selig Perlman, *A Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York, 1928), 9, among others], see William A. Sullivan, "Did Labor Support Andrew Jackson?" *Political Science Quarterly*, LXII (December, 1947), 569-580; Joseph Dorfman, "The Jackson Wage-Earner Thesis," *American Historical Review*, LIV (January, 1949), 296-306; Edward Pessen, "Did Labor Support Jackson?: the Boston Story," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXIV (June, 1949), 262-274; Richard B. Morris, "Andrew Jackson Strikebreaker," *American Historical Review*, LV (October, 1949), 54-68.

<sup>12</sup> See Dorfman, *loc. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> William A. Sullivan in analyzing the backgrounds of its one hundred candidates found that ten were "working men," twenty-three "professional men," fifty-three "merchants and manufacturers," eleven "gentlemen," and three had no recorded occupation; "A Study of the Industrial Worker in Pennsylvania 1800-1840" (Columbia University Doctoral Dissertation, 1951), 245.

Yet it is also clear that this party grew out of the discontent of the Philadelphia workingmen with the long working day which required them to work from sunup to sundown. A hard-fought strike by the carpenters for the ten-hour day in the summer of 1827, was followed later that year by the organization of the Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations, consisting of workers in many trades, and the following summer in the organization of the political movement.<sup>14</sup> According to a story which appeared in the *Mechanics' Free Press*, the voice of the Philadelphia labor movement, "at a very large and respectable meeting of Journey-men House Carpenters held on Tuesday evening, July 1st (1828), at the District Court Room, . . . the Mechanics' Union of Trades Associations (entered) . . . into measures for procuring a nomination of candidates for legislative and other public offices, who will support the interest of the working classes."<sup>15</sup> Thus was the Philadelphia Working Men's party born, in the promise to support politically any and all men who backed workingmen's measures. That the party did later nominate wealthy candidates was no violation or contradiction of its labor character, but, instead, adherence to its original promise that a man's views rather than his social status were to determine his candidacy.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, the broad humanitarian program supported by the party is suggestive not of the party's non-labor character but rather of the fact that workingmen were concerned not only with job conditions but with status. In urging "universal education, abolition of chartered monopolies, equal taxation, revision or abolition of the militia system, a less expensive law system, all officers to be elected directly by the people, a lien law for labourers, no legislation on religion,"<sup>17</sup> the Philadelphia Working Men's party expressed the truth that men live not by bread alone. All of the evidence indicates not that the Working Men's party was a misnomer, but rather that workingmen of that era were ready

<sup>14</sup> *Mechanics' Free Press*, May to October, 1828; Commons, *History of Labour*, I, Part II, Chapter 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Mechanics' Free Press*, July 5, 1828.

<sup>16</sup> On some occasions, however, employers were denied positions as officers in the party; *ibid.*, August 30, 1828.

<sup>17</sup> This was the Philadelphia program; *Mechanics' Free Press*, April 16, 1831; for the New York program, see the *Working Man's Advocate*, October 29, 1831; for the Boston program, see the *Boston Courier*, August 28, 1830.

to utilize diverse stratagems in order to achieve equal status as citizens and better conditions as workers.<sup>18</sup>

Supported primarily because he favored a system of equal education, Simpson accepted a place on the Working Men's ticket despite the fact that he was also the candidate of the Federal party. His race was unsuccessful, and within a year the Working Men's party itself went under, after its infiltration by scheming professional politicians.<sup>19</sup> By August of 1831 Simpson had founded a new paper, the *Pennsylvania Whig*, an organ devoted to the political interests of the Whigs, abuse of the Administration, and subscribed to by the second Bank of the United States, whose policies it defended.<sup>20</sup> His support of the Bank brought on him the scorn of former admirers in the eastern labor movement, who accused him of having discarded his earlier sympathy for labor.<sup>21</sup>

Actually, these criticisms of Simpson were not quite accurate and did not do him justice, for it is not true that "all of his previous opinions were forsaken." In September of 1831 he published his *Working Man's Manual*. Described by Simpson as "a plain elucidation of some of the leading principles of the working men," this volume affords us the best evidence of his social thought, while demonstrating that its author continued to believe in 1831 as he had in 1830 that idle capitalists profited at the expense of industrious labor.<sup>22</sup> It is true that even in this book, Simpson's strange positions with respect to certain concrete issues, fore-

<sup>18</sup> See Louis H. Arky, "The Mechanics Union of Trade Associations and the Formation of the Philadelphia Working Men's Movement," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXVI (April, 1952), 142-176, for evidence on the authenticity and radicalism of the Philadelphia workingmen's political movement. This writer's own researches into the New York and Boston workingmen's parties has convinced him that the tendency of these movements to support upper-class candidates, reflects the middle-class aspirations of labor of that era, rather than the spuriousness of these parties; see E. Pessen, "Did Labor Support Jackson?: the Boston Story," 267, and E. Pessen, "Thomas Skidmore, Agrarian Reformer in the Early American Labor Movement," *New York History*, XXXV (July, 1954), 280-296.

<sup>19</sup> Commons, *History of Labour*, I, 215-216; Sullivan, "Did Labor Support Jackson?" (Columbia Master's Essay, 1947), 33-34.

<sup>20</sup> *Pennsylvania Whig*, August 24, 1831; Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization*, II, 647.

<sup>21</sup> See the *Mechanics' Free Press*, the *Working Man's Advocate*, September 3, October 8, 1831.

<sup>22</sup> See remarks made by Simpson in his letter of acceptance to the Working Man's party; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 25, 1830, cited in Commons, *op. cit.*, 192.

shadow the opportunism of his later years, marked as they were by specious financial enterprises and dubious attempts to curry favor with the Democratic party.<sup>23</sup> But its inconsistencies notwithstanding, the *Working Man's Manual* remains a trenchant commentary on the society of its day.

What were Simpson's views with respect to the pressing social problems of this era?

In common with other leading figures in the labor movement, he professèd to see American society torn by inequality and dominated by a few wealthy capitalists.<sup>24</sup> Everywhere, according to Simpson, workingmen were degraded, forced to work long hours for low wages, denied the privileges and the opportunities which distinguished a civilized from a barbarian society, and held in undisguised contempt.<sup>25</sup> Despite the fact that labor, now as always, constituted the great majority of the population, whose interests were identical with society's as a whole, it remained the most oppressed of all classes, identified with servility and slavery. In his language, the workers "produce all the wealth of society without sharing a thousandth part of it: . . . they do all the work—elect all the public functionaries—fight all our battles—gain all our victories—cause all our enjoyments to flow upon us—generation after generation and age after age, and still remain destitute of the frugal store of competence, which ought to be the reward of industry."<sup>26</sup>

Simpson believed that labor's claims to more and better things were dictated not by benevolence but by the fact that labor created all wealth.<sup>27</sup> For he shared the view prevalent among labor reformers in this country and England that value was created by labor and that it was natural law that those responsible for the production of wealth should reap its benefits.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See Dorfman, *op. cit.*, 647-648.

<sup>24</sup> On the prevalence of this view see Pessen, "The Social Philosophies of Early American Leaders of Labor," 87-88.

<sup>25</sup> Simpson, *Working Man's Manual*, 14, 16-17, 29, 70, 86.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 51, 53-55, 64, 217.

<sup>28</sup> See the *New York Free Enquirer*, January 16, February 13, 1830; Thomas Skidmore, *The Rights of Man to Property!* (New York, 1829), 154, 226-227, 239; the *New York Daily Sentinel*, April 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 1830; George Henry Evans, in the *Working Man's Advocate*, October 31, 1829, April 3, 1830, and in *The Man*, February 18, June 28, 1834, 1, 145; Seth Luther, *An Address on the Origin and Progress of Avarice* (Boston, 1834), 3, 6, 10, 12, 40, and *An Address to the Working Men of New*

It is Simpson's discussion of labor and the distribution of the wealth it creates that leads a recent biographer to describe him as an important anticipator of Marx.<sup>29</sup> Now it is true that Simpson was critical of the prevalent mode of distribution and the traditional political economy in which it was justified. He favored a new scheme of analysis according to which the distribution of things was to be determined almost completely by their manner of production.<sup>30</sup>

Yet his writings seem more radical than they actually are. Mitchell misinterprets his thought when he describes it as an important anticipation of Marx because of Simpson's alleged "contention that labor should . . . receive the whole of its production."<sup>31</sup> Simpson never goes that far. What he asks for is not the total product. "As labour is the only basis of wealth," he writes, "a just proportion of it must be given to the industrious, to enable them to rear their offspring." He thus favors a *larger* share, rather than the whole of the product for labor. This is more a simple call for higher wages than a revolutionary assault on surplus value.

He seeks higher status as well as better working conditions for labor, in this respect perfectly mirroring the aspirations of the organized workingmen's movement of his day. "There is, there can be," in his opinion, "but one rule for estimating the value of labour—on principles of equity—benevolence, and social harmony—that rule is, human happiness; general competence and as nearly as possible, an equality of the enjoyments of life. The end of labour being happiness—it is self-evident that happiness must

*England* (Philadelphia, 1836), 25; Charles Douglas, "Trades Unions," in the *New England Artisan*, May 31, 1834, June 21, 1834; Thomas Brothers, in the *Radical Reformer and Working Man's Advocate*, July 4, 11, 1835, 50-51, 68; Theophilus Fisk, "Capital Against Labor," the *Working Man's Advocate*, July 25, 1835; John Ferral, quoted in *The Man*, August 29, 1834; William English, "Oration Delivered at the Trades' Union Celebration of the 4th of July, 1835," in the *Radical Reformer*, August 1, 1835, 125; Ely Moore, *Address Delivered Before the General Trades' Union of the City of New York* (New York, 1833); John Commerford, "Address Delivered Before the General Trades' Union of New York and Vicinity," *Working Man's Advocate*, September 19, 1835; *The Union*, April 21, 1836. On English advocacy of this view see M. Beer, *A History of British Socialism* (London, 1948), I, 102; Mark Hovell, *The Chartist Movement* (London, 1925), *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> Mitchell, *loc. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Simpson, *Working Man's Manual*, 82.

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, *loc. cit.*

regulate the just value of labour." Evidently the precise ratio of this revised formula for rewarding labor was to be determined by an arrangement not altogether unlike that governing the establishment of the Just Price in former days, i.e., the intervention of a rational authority guided by its own understanding of the common good.

Simpson himself attempts to forewarn those who might misread his analysis. "It is a fallacy to imagine, that we are aiming to controvert the established legitimate doctrines of political economy," he explicitly states. "Our object reaches higher—is more rational—and more laudable. It strikes at a fundamental principle in the distribution of wealth—that Labour shall share with Capital, in the profits of trade, in a more equitable ratio." Simpson is urging not confiscation of one class by another but more equitable sharing by the two.<sup>32</sup>

At a time when opponents of labor tarred it with the brush of "agrarianism," or the alleged desire to confiscate all private wealth and redivide it equally,<sup>33</sup> Simpson made clear his hostility to such a sweeping program. Neither he nor labor desired equality of wealth or a community of property, he assured the public. And though he believed that large amounts of property were often held unfairly by men who had contributed little or nothing to its value, neither did he favor immediate modification of such holdings.<sup>34</sup>

But if his theories were neither socialistic nor revolutionist, they were nevertheless radical. He sharply criticized private property and the system by which it is passed on, hereditarily, in violation of the natural law that it should properly belong to those whose labor gives it value.<sup>35</sup> According to him society is marked by bitter class conflict, with a vast gulf and mutual hatred separating these two classes, capital and labor.<sup>36</sup> He was bitter with reference to charity and humanitarianism, interpreted by him as sheer hypocrisy: the "pseudo-benevolence" of the wealthy leads them "to go

<sup>32</sup> Simpson, *Working Man's Manual*, 87-88, 89, 229.

<sup>33</sup> The fact that Thomas Skidmore, who had written a book in favor of redistribution of property, had for a brief period been a leader of the New York Working Men's party, was never allowed to be forgotten by men interested in embarrassing the labor movement; Pessen, "Thomas Skidmore," *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> Simpson, *Working Man's Manual*, 27-28, 89, 137-138, 230.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-55, 135.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

among the wretched, who are famishing for want, and exhort them to economy and temperance; or, alarmed by their cries of anguish, and maledictions of suffering, she gathers the poor into an alms-house, and eases her philanthropy, by feeding them on offals, and giving their dead bodies to the dissecting room, to defray a portion of the expense."<sup>37</sup>

He poured scorn on Malthusianism, widely respected here and abroad at that time for its conservative social dicta, as a spurious attempt to justify social disharmony and inequality. The main significance of the doctrine, according to Simpson, was the unwitting testimony to the degeneracy of the times furnished by its general acceptance.<sup>38</sup> Only class bias prevented its adherents from noting its fallacy: "it is a singular infatuation prevailing among all modern writers on economy, that the scarcity of food among the labouring people is attributable to excess of population, whilst the palpable fact was staring them in the face, that the excess of bloated accumulation in the rich, demonstrated the falsity of the hypothesis."<sup>39</sup>

Pauperism, charged Simpson, was not the product of an iron law of nature, but of an inequitable social system. In contrast to *nature*, which proclaimed the possibility of plenty for all, *society*, inevitably dominated by a selfish few, misused and misappropriated nature's abundance: "the perversions and vices of man, and not the order of nature, have generated the excrescence of pauperism, upon the face of the earth."<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, Simpson's rejection of Malthusianism is based not only on the doctrine's conservatism, but on its negativism: instead of its dismal counsel to the poor that they had best restrain their sexual urge, "because they may not be able to support themselves, we are bound by every consideration of sound policy, religion, morality and benevolence, to devise means to diminish their poverty, by seeking out and removing the causes of so unequal a distribution of labour, and encourage both marriage and population, as the means of national wealth, as well as individual happiness."<sup>41</sup> He is unwilling to acquiesce

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 225, 229.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

in the notion, so contrary to his idea of natural law, that man must resign himself to insufficiency.

His radicalism is further revealed in his discussion of education. Now it is true that many reformers of that and other eras centered their attention on education as the panacea largely because they feared the harsh consequences of a more frontal attack on social institutions. A policy of securing fundamental reform in society through the education of the working people, was actually conservative insofar as it taught that asocial institutions could not be improved by the laying on of hands. For it follows that, if Frances Wright's dictum is true that "until equality be planted in the mind, in the habits, in the manners, in the feelings, think not it can ever be in the condition," reform of society is superficial and ephemeral, and must wait on the inner reform or education of individuals. Yet Simpson managed to combine enthusiastic support of education as the means to reform, with avoidance of the conservative implications of that position.

Workers, all men, had a natural right to education. And especially in a democratic society, "where every man is an elector," was the fulfillment of this right a matter of vital concern. Yet public education was not in force, primarily because the rich opposed it. They feared that an educated working class would know how to secure its own interests; the surest way to keep labor down was to keep it ignorant—this was the way Simpson read their motives. "It is the attitude of capital," he writes, "to intimidate, repress, silence!" The rich "were fearful of losing their exclusive privileges, by imparting knowledge to the mass of the people." Their fear was justified, because once workers did become educated they would put an end to their oppression through their use of the ballot. Simpson anticipated other benefits deriving from education, including sobriety, virtue, greater self-respect and social status for workers. Essentially, however, he regarded it as an instrument control of which would enable workingmen more effectively to promote their interests as a class.<sup>42</sup> No one of the edu-

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, 40-41, 42, 50, 205, 212, 215. Curoe is especially struck by Simpson's early insistence on a compulsory attendance law and better methods for the training of teachers, and refers to him as an "outstanding educational philosopher"; *Educational Attitudes and Policies of Organized Labor in the United States*, 45-47.

cational reformers, in the labor movement or out, based his support of education so fully on its alleged effects in stimulating labor's class consciousness.<sup>43</sup>

Simpson advised workingmen to expect nothing from the major parties. Adding his voice to those of other labor leaders,<sup>44</sup> he warned that "nothing of a public nature, at the present era, is so worthy of the attention of the people as the fallacious structure and pernicious tendency of the parties now in vogue, whose foundations are as futile, as their results are nugatory to the great body of the people."<sup>45</sup> It was not the parties alone which were the source of the problem but the political system within which they operated. For Simpson like other social critics held that in the absence of an equitable economic structure, "true, legitimate, and rational freedom" was not to be secured by the right to vote for political candidates dedicated to the status quo.<sup>46</sup>

Incongruously intertwined with his radical strictures are conservative notions more typical of the businessman than the labor leader. And as is clear in his anti-Malthusian argument, the business and the labor view could intermingle even in the discussion of one particular issue. Thus he denounces banks and the paper money they issue, as among the fundamental causes of the workers' alleged degradation; banking enabled the rich to "extort labor upon their own terms of bare subsistence"; banks "levied a tax directly upon every commodity produced by labour; which tax became immediately absorbed into the pocket of the capitalists"; banks and paper money actually rob the worker, since through their operations "a monied aristocracy intercepts the just wages of labour to the industrious man, and snatches it from him."<sup>47</sup> But the system brings ruin not to the worker alone, for "where the balloon of paper credit is in full expansion, an estate may cost fifty thousand dollars; and when the same balloon has collapsed, it will sell for twenty thousand dollars, and the first purchaser may be a beggar—yet the estate, the *real value*, remains

<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.*, Frank T. Carlton, *Economic Influences Upon Education Progress in the United States 1820-1850* (Madison, 1908); Pessen, "The Social Philosophies of Early American Leaders of Labor," 284-308.

<sup>44</sup> On the hostility of the labor leaders of the era towards both parties, see *ibid.*, 105-114, 310-315.

<sup>45</sup> Simpson, *Working Man's Manual*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 13, 19.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 69, 76-77.

the same, neither augmented, nor diminished in value. This is one of the evils attending the paper money system, which causes *pieces of paper* to represent commodities, and substitute the *fiction* for the reality of labour," is his dour conclusion about the terrible effects of a dynamic credit system on security of property.<sup>48</sup>

It was in the opinions he expressed on certain specific economic questions that Simpson most disappointed some of his followers, especially those to whom Jackson's war on the Second Bank of the United States had taken on the character of a crusade. Simpson praised the Bank as a public benefit, managing to reconcile his opposition to banking in general with support of the giant of them all, by the ingenuous argument that the "monster" protected the people against the paper-money depredations of the smaller banks.<sup>49</sup> He did, however, urge the Bank to reform its inner structure and certain of its practices.<sup>50</sup>

He also came out in favor of the American System, a sales tax (though not on "necessaries of life"), the continued introduction of labor-saving machinery into the economy, the beneficent effects of the frontier, and for a system of administering aid to paupers which "should be invisible to the naked eye."<sup>51</sup> As is the case with other reformers before and after, and in fact as is true of most mortals, some of his views appear contradictory.

Yet it is just this inconsistency, the juxtaposition of radical and conservative ideas in his social philosophy, which gives it special interest. Many an "instinctive socialist" challenged the employers' claim to profit, but it was something distinctly rarer for an individual of Simpson's social background to do so. His social philosophy is interesting not only in its own right but for what it tells us of the labor organizations of Simpson's time, ready to confer leadership on men holding such views. The early

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 187, 189.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>50</sup> Simpson's approval of the Second Bank of the United States was not as unqualified as some contemporary and modern comments make it appear. Thus he favored amendments in its charter which would "divest the institution of a portion of its *selfish and mercenary spirit*," place a limit upon "the grasping passion of the stock holders" for the highest possible interest, etc., specifically by limiting its dividends, preventing proxy voting and monopoly of management, and earmarking excess profits for appropriations "to the cause of Public Education"; *Pennsylvania Whig*, May 2, 1832.

<sup>51</sup> Simpson, *Working Man's Manual*, 34, 112-133, 146-150, 153, 155-156, 172-186.

labor movement, its membership, embraced seemingly paradoxical views, combining the aspiration towards employer status, with sharp denunciation of the wage system. In Simpson it had not only one of its most effective voices for expressing this dualism, but one of the most vivid actual embodiments of the dichotomy characteristic of early American labor thought.