

REVEALING DIVISION: THE PHILADELPHIA
SHIRTWAIST STRIKE, THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY, AND REPUBLICAN MACHINE
POLITICS, 1909–1910

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I personally will fight in this strike until after the last morsel of bread that I can buy will pass my lips. I will fight to a finish!

This declaration, made by fifteen-year-old shirtwaist worker Alice Sabowitz in December 1909, embodied the spirit of the shirtwaist workers' strike that took place in Philadelphia during the harsh winter of 1909–10.¹ The strikers, approximately 85 percent of whom were Jewish women and girls from Russia, refused to return to work until their demands for better working conditions and union recognition were met.²

The strike was, among other things, a contest between young immigrant workers who sought to build power and a municipal government that sought to expand its own.³ These opposing goals met with resistance beyond the immediate space of the strike. The actions of young sweatshop workers revealed generational, political, and economic fissures within Philadelphia's Jewish community. Further, the violent response of Mayor John E. Reyburn's administration helped galvanize support for the strike among Philadelphia's club women, suffragists, and female college students. Taking place in distinct spheres of Philadelphia life, the reactions of Reyburn's administration,

society women, and members of the Jewish elite to the strike revealed rifts that had already existed in the city.

Unlike the New York shirtwaist strike, which also began in 1909, its Philadelphia counterpart has received only brief attention by scholars.⁴ Though related works have illuminated components of the strike, none have explored the dynamics at play in Philadelphia beyond the lives and communities of workers and their bosses. This article is an attempt to situate the Philadelphia shirtwaist strike within the immediate history of municipal reform efforts and, conversely, municipal corruption, as well as the traditions of labor radicalism and elite conservatism within Philadelphia's Jewish community.

The Shirtwaist Industry

The central conflict of the strike—the standoff between workers and manufacturers—evolved in part out of Philadelphia's history of sweatshop work. Philadelphia, unlike other northern American cities, had a small immigrant population. The city's economy was mature, dominated by small shops with skilled and semi-skilled employees, and the city's labor market was segmented by gender, ethnic, racial, and national groupings.⁵ The vast majority of African American women were relegated to domestic service, as other industries routinely shut them out.⁶ Irish women also tended to work in domestic service, while both Jewish and Italian women tended to work in the garment industry—with Jewish women working primarily in sweatshops and Italian women working from their homes. In contrast, native-born white women had a much wider range of job options, due in large part to employers' preferences.⁷

Garment sweatshops had been operating in Philadelphia since the 1880s, and complaints about them dated back just as far. In 1894, after receiving negative feedback, the state legislature appointed a commission to investigate Pennsylvania's garment industry.⁸ From a survey of the state's sweatshops, factory inspectors found:

victims striving with pitiable energy to perform their tasks as they labor, it may well be said unceasingly, in stifling rooms, with every principle of proper hygiene and health set at defiance, with ill-fed and poorly clad bodies, unclean in person and degraded in mind. . . . Their animal disregard of the ordinary decencies of life is of itself a sermon

upon the appalling demoralization prevailing among these white slaves of the cities, and this alone should incite a general demand for a government policy which will relieve the body politic of a blot upon its fame as a progressive and intelligent nation.⁹

Despite this report, Philadelphia's garment manufacturers—who were predominantly first- and second-generation Jews from Germany—vehemently opposed regulations, which they argued “would necessitate espionage, and might be prejudicial to coreligionists who are largely employed in this industry.” To the benefit of shop owners, the garment industry remained largely unregulated through the time of the shirtwaist strike.¹⁰

In 1909 Philadelphia's shirtwaist industry was relatively new, though it followed patterns established in other segments of the garment trades. Overall, work in Philadelphia was perpetually fluctuating, with patterns of unemployment and underemployment key features of the city's labor market. In the garment trades specifically, adherence to fashion trends created a pattern of seasonal work. An investigation conducted by the Philadelphia Department of Public Works in 1915 found that the garment industry was “characterized by sudden spurts followed by unemployment—in an order so irregular that it is impossible to be predicted.”¹¹

With the mechanization of the garment trades after the advent of sewing machines in the 1840s and 1850s, the potential for labor organizing increased as the industry's workforce became horizontal—manufacturers now required workers to perform similar tasks—and its labor force moved into the close proximity of large shop rooms.¹² The demands shirtwaist workers made in the winter of 1909–10 were in direct response to the harsh working conditions that evolved from these trends: long hours of fast-paced labor for little money left workers exhausted, fluctuating employment rates eliminated any feeling of job security, and humiliating treatment affronted workers' personal dignity and self-respect.

At the time of the strike, the bulk of Philadelphia's shirtwaists were produced under a subcontracting system, whereby manufacturers would distribute work to contractors who would then hire operators to make the garments. Not only did contractors keep wages low, but they also charged operators for materials including light, heat, power, and thread. Further, contractors were known to harass workers and fire them without just cause. Workers viewed contractors—also called foremen and forewomen—as unnecessary middlemen who compounded workers' exploitation and depressed their earnings.¹³

During the strike, an anonymous editorial published in the Philadelphia weekly paper *The Jewish Exponent* elaborated the grievances that striking workers had with the subcontracting system. From the start of the strike, the industry's top manufacturers declared that they paid their employees as much as \$20 per week, but according to the editorial:

The employer knows nothing of the operators to whom the sub-contracts are given. . . . If they are hurt by machinery, he has no liability to pay; if they are ill he takes no interest in their welfare. The operator in his employ and on his salary list gets paid for the work they do, and she pays those who do it. Her salary is of course higher than the regular operator, but she receives only a portion of the money paid her.¹⁴

Moreover, the average salary of shirtwaist operators was further reduced when the seasonality of the industry and the piece-work system were taken into account:

The average salary of the most skilled operator is not more than \$6.00 a week when it is considered that sometimes for three months at a time there is no work to be had. Nor do the manufacturers say anything of the piece work system now prevailing, by which the piece work operator comes to the shop every morning—is fined if late—and waits there for work. Sometimes she waits all day for it and sometimes two or three hours over-time. If she wants to leave the shop for a time she is refused permission. She makes a dollar perhaps after waiting all day; or fifty cents. The price paid these girls is pitiful. . . . They have hardly enough to keep them from starvation while they are working and when the work gives out there is nothing left.¹⁵

In opposition to these working conditions, over 7,000 out of the city's 12,000 shirtwaist workers walked out on their jobs on December 20, 1909. They presented their employers with a list of demands to alleviate these abuses—the industry's seasonality, its contracting system, and the inadequate prices paid for piece-work. The strikers demanded:

that employers increase wages 10 per cent on all piecework and on contract work; that these wages be paid to the workers personally and

in cash at regular intervals; that employees be not discharged for other reasons than unbecoming conduct or inefficiency; that 50 hours shall constitute one week's work; that all shops be put and kept in sanitary condition; that employers recognize the union representatives; that machines, needles and cotton and all other appliances be furnished free of charge by the employer.¹⁶

In addition, an unofficial demand was put forth to address on-the-job harassment. The preliminary list of grievances that strikers presented to Philadelphia's Central Labor Union included the demand for "freedom from abusive and insulting language by those in authority in the shops"—a direct reference to the mistreatment exacted by contractors.¹⁷

Taken together, these demands reflected the grievances that motivated the mass walkout. Further encouraging the decision to strike was the history of labor organizing in Philadelphia's Jewish community, as well as the experiences that the immigrant strikers had brought with them when they emigrated from Russia and Eastern Europe.

Philadelphia's Jewish Community and its History of Labor Radicalism

In Philadelphia, members of the Jewish community made up 40 percent of the workforce in the garment trades. Men dominated the better-paid jobs—holding the positions of manufacturers, contractors, and tailors—while women and girls dominated the lowest-paid positions. Many of these workers were in their teens or early twenties; in Philadelphia, young Jewish immigrants from Russia had high rates of employment, with 64 percent of fifteen-year-old girls working in 1900.¹⁸

The insular configuration of Philadelphia's Jewish community fostered the preponderance of Jewish workers in the garment trades. Because of the nature of Jewish neighborhoods, bosses and workers sometimes lived next door to one another. Further, Philadelphia's Jewish community had a well-developed niche economy—containing Jewish retail stores, factories, and an informal labor market—as well as cultural institutions such as synagogues, political associations, and labor unions. In Philadelphia and other major cities, Jewish employers, who often paid low wages, provided the majority of the jobs held by Jewish workers.¹⁹

Many of the Jewish immigrants who worked in the garment sweatshops came from parts of the Russian empire where Jews had been facing marginalization, poverty, and violent anti-Semitism for decades. Extensive research has been conducted on life in Russia's Pale of Settlement, where many of Philadelphia's Jews emigrated from. Jewish communities in the Pale, called *shtetls*, were organized around religious institutions. For work, men and women—who, as Jews, were prohibited from owning land—participated in trade and artisanal craftsmanship.²⁰ Laws enacted in the 1880s and 1890s prohibited Jews from settling in rural areas and the largest cities, and informal discrimination and violence further prohibited Jews from holding certain types of jobs.²¹

A large proportion of Jewish women living in Russia were wage earners; it is estimated that in 1897 over 28 percent of Jewish women in Russia were “economically active.” Many of these women worked in the garment trades; in 1898 more than 70 percent of the registered female artisans in the Pale worked in the sewing industry. Thus, many of the young women who worked in Philadelphia's shirtwaist sweatshops immigrated with related skills. In 1900, of the Russian immigrant girls between twelve and seventeen years old who were working in the city, 79 percent were classified as either “skilled” or “white collar.”²²

Over one million Jews immigrated to the United States between 1880 and 1910, with a peak following the failed 1905 revolution in Russia. Most Jewish immigrants, fleeing persecution, left in family groups for the United States and other countries with the intent to settle permanently. As a result, the male-to-female ratio of Jewish migration was almost 1 to 1.²³ Historian Susan Glenn has argued that Eastern European Jews immigrated in order to take advantage of better educational and economic opportunities and to escape discrimination and persecution. The majority went to New York, though significant numbers also settled in Philadelphia and other major cities in the United States and elsewhere.²⁴

Many scholars have written about the unique features of urban Jewish communities at the turn of the twentieth century. Historian Ira Katznelson has described Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe as an “act of emancipation” that was accompanied by “pauperization and proletarianization” in urban cities. Jewish communities in urban America were marked by several distinct qualities: while other ethnic groups were geographically segregating by class and occupation, Jewish communities remained largely cohesive. Further, Jews settled in cities at higher rates than other immigrants, had

generally left-leaning politics, had more concentrated communities, and became leaders in radical political and labor movements.²⁵

The transition from a more traditional—though modernizing—shtetl lifestyle to an urban industrial one created unique problems for immigrant women who, according to historian Alice Kessler-Harris, “wanted to take advantage of the possibilities offered by life in the new world.” As historian Donna Gabbacia has noted, Jewish women from Eastern Europe “defined themselves in economic as well as familial terms” and in the United States, though women’s sweatshops were somewhat more pleasant than the conditions in male dominated industries such as mining and steel, “few satisfied American notions of female gentility.”²⁶

The perspectives of Jewish immigrant men and women were influenced by Jewish political thought and its radical undercurrents. Though only a small proportion of Jews in New York, Philadelphia, and other cities were card-carrying socialists, there was a strong socialist tenor within their communities.²⁷ As historian Tony Michels has argued, Jewish socialism emerged within 1880s New York City, and it was New York that “served as a laboratory of political and innovation that influenced eastern Europe.”²⁸ By the 1900s, there was a strong Jewish labor tradition in both New York and Philadelphia, propelled by a popular Yiddish press, socialist organizations, and immigrants who came with organizing experience.²⁹ Political divisions existed between religious Jews, Zionists, anarchists, and socialists, and further divisions existed within each of these overlapping subgroups.

By the time of the shirtwaist strike, the city’s Jewish community was accustomed to bouts of labor militancy. From the 1880s through 1909, a number of strikes took place in Philadelphia’s textile and clothing industry that revealed intragroup divisions. During moments of labor militancy, rifts were exposed primarily because, as with the shirtwaist strike, both the employers and workers were Jewish—and the employers were members of the Jewish elite. In general, Philadelphia’s Jewish elite took a paternalistic stance toward the new immigrants.

In 1886 approximately 1,000 clothing cutters went on strike to demand a shortened workday. Though it only lasted a week—after which the workers won their demands—the strike alarmed members of Philadelphia’s Jewish upper class. The manufacturers who belonged to the Clothier’s Exchange, in collaboration with the Hebrew Education Society, set out to establish a trade school that would “render [workers] somewhat independent of the whims of the trade unions.” Further, Jewish philanthropists who were attempting

to improve “the condition of the Russian Jews” in Philadelphia lamented that the “the tendency to create a sort of voluntary Ghetto shows no signs of disappearing.”³⁰

Some elites blamed the conditions of the Jewish poor on their living spaces and sought to alleviate social ills through charity work. Philadelphia’s United Hebrew Charities aimed to create productive members of society out of the masses of new immigrants. In addition to the Hebrew Education Society, the agencies that operated under the United Hebrew Charities offered assistance to new immigrants in the form of material aid, employment services, daycare, and shelter. The elites believed that this work offered “ample reassurance for the future,” noting in a report on the conditions of Russian Jews that charity work is “generating a stable and progressive community out of the disorganized and harried victims of Slavic ignorance and brutality,” though added, “much yet remains to be done . . . to further their progress toward stability and order.”³¹

Lacking such “order,” the Jewish community continued to face worker militancy. In 1890 approximately 350 cloak makers went on strike and held out for several months, returning to work only when members of the Jewish elite brokered a settlement. In an address to the cloak tailors prior to the strike, George Randorf—a prominent religious figure who would help negotiate the settlement—was “warning [workers] against rash strikes, and urging them to stand by their brethren in need, and striving for their best interests, to bear in mind the common humanitarian interests of all classes of society.”³² Overall, the upper-class Jewish leadership sought to forge a united Jewish front and often blamed outside agitators for labor militancy. As the contemporary Jewish historian Henry Samuel Morais noted in his 1894 volume on Philadelphia’s Jewish history:

The cause of the unfortunate workmen has, invariably, been injured by the domination of labor agitators, some of whom are rabid Anarchists, and would instill poisonous views into the minds of the untutored. . . . The sentiment of the Jewish people always has been directly opposed to the establishment of Trades’ Unions, or political clubs, of a sectarian character. . . . The unity and harmony necessary to the separateness of the Hebrews are advocated solely with respect to religious belief and religious organization.³³

Here Morais revealed a key divide within the Jewish community. To the chagrin of elites, there were myriad conceptions of what constituted “the

sentiment of the Jewish people.” Despite the conservative revulsion toward political radicalism, socialism and anarchism found adherents among an array of Philadelphia’s Jews—not simply “labor agitators.”

While Jewish elites took a generally positive stance toward new immigration—and the economic benefits it provided for the community—they wished to prevent those “who are low in the scale of moral worth and of physical and intellectual capacity” from coming to Philadelphia.³⁴ By the turn of the twentieth century, Philadelphia’s Jewish philanthropists were complaining that the new immigrants had “created a corresponding increase of new and greater burdens on the older Jewish population of this city,” which was exacerbated by the fact that “these immigrants do not speak our language, are unfamiliar with our manners and customs, and were born and reared in a country surrounded by an ignorant and unenlightened population.”³⁵

In order to “[absorb] this incongruous mass into the body politic” Philadelphia Jews relied on both traditional philanthropy and new tactics.³⁶ By 1901 members of the Philadelphia Jewish community had adopted a scheme it hoped would alleviate intragroup tensions. Between 1901 and 1909, the Philadelphia branch of the Industrial Removal Office—a national Jewish organization—resettled 2,459 immigrants to various parts “rural” America.³⁷ In defense of “removal,” William B. Hackenburg, president of the Jewish Hospital of Philadelphia, emphasized the “importance of agriculture as a means for promoting the welfare of the newly arrived Jewish immigrants.”³⁸ Dr. David Eiesman added:

There must be less overcrowding . . . and rational recreation. The Jewish poor must be taught that the new climactic conditions require the adoption of another sort of food. They should cultivate a love for manly sports, and a spirit of self-respecting, fearless manhood. The Jew, especially the Eastern Jew, is physically and psychically extremely plastic, and only requires a reasonably favorable environment to develop into a noble specimen of man.³⁹

Thus, by the time of the shirtwaist strike there were already considerable divisions within Philadelphia’s Jewish community, as well as divisions among the elite on how to alleviate both “sanitary and hygienic” issues as well as labor militancy. During the 1900s, a number of strikes in the garment industry further exposed these rifts. In the summer of 1905, waist- and

dressmakers went on strike, demanding the recognition of their right to organize and the elimination of fees for work materials. The strikers won these demands, though following their victory there was a decline in union membership and the Jewish employers fired the union's leaders.⁴⁰

Then, in 1906, shirtmakers went on strike and were met by anti-Semitism from both employers and the city. This was the only instance in which the Jewish community rallied against attacks on workers, though members of the Jewish elite did little to secure the demands of the strike. Again in 1908, after the decline in wages that accompanied the Panic of 1907, shirtmakers made appeals to manufacturers, asking them to withhold further wage cuts. The manufacturers refused and began to hire strike-breakers to work for lower wages. The manufacturers accused the strikers of being influenced by anarchism, and stated that they preferred to hire native-born workers anyway. After nearly four months of being locked out of work, the strikers were ultimately defeated.⁴¹

At this time, radical left-leaning thought was becoming increasingly prominent in the community. In the early 1900s, the Jewish Labor Bund of Eastern Europe had grown, and because it was involved in leading the failed 1905 revolution both members and nonmembers alike were targeted for persecution. Many Russian Jews decided to emigrate, with large numbers leaving from the northwest provinces of Lithuania and White Russia, southern and southwestern Russia, Galicia, and Romania. Some came to the United States, including Bund members who brought experience, self-confidence, and ideological sophistication. Prior to this, Jewish labor organizing in Philadelphia had been marred by partial victories and disillusionment. Bund members brought a new energy and focus, providing leadership and support to local unions.⁴²

The Beginning of the Strike

The Philadelphia shirtwaist strike began on December 20, 1909, one month after the "uprising of 20,000" commenced in New York City, and lasted until a settlement was reached between strikers and shirtwaist manufacturers on February 6, 1910.⁴³ From its inception, the Philadelphia strike was linked to its New York counterpart. Because New York manufacturers had been sending work to Philadelphia in order to counteract the strike, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) believed that success in New York required the organization

of Philadelphia workers. Representatives from New York visited Philadelphia on December 5, 1909, to encourage a vote on the issue. Rose Pastor Stokes—a veteran unionist and the wife of a prominent socialist—spoke to a crowd of predominantly male Shirtwaist Makers' Union members:

You know that the price of everything, bread, sugar, meat and what not, has gone soaring high, but have your wages increased with the increase in the price of the food you must have? . . . Would it not be far better for us to go hungry for awhile, if needs be, of our own choice and to better the conditions under which we labor?⁴⁴

Stokes was speaking to workers' key grievances by referencing the recent wage cuts in the garment industry and the increased cost of living that followed the Panic of 1907.⁴⁵ At the meeting, the male unionists expressed near-unanimous support for the strike, but were not confident that the young women and girls working in the shops would be able to carry it out. Just a few weeks later, their fears would be proven unfounded.

Once the strike began, high-ranking leadership of both the ILGWU and WTUL came down from New York to establish an infrastructure in Philadelphia. The ILGWU, based in New York City and affiliated with the craft-oriented American Federation of Labor, was the union under which the workers were organizing.⁴⁶

The ILGWU's leadership believed that women did not make good organizers or leaders, and thus sent its male president, Abraham Rosenberg, to lead the Philadelphia strike. But while Rosenberg was the official leader, the workers did not feel compelled to follow his orders. In mid-January 1910, when employers agreed to arbitrate most of the strikers' demands but refused union recognition, Rosenberg urged the strikers to settle. In defiance, the workers turned down the offer and returned to the picket lines. In general, the strikers rallied behind prominent speakers, such as Mother Jones and the local socialist leader Mary Charsky, and behind rank-and-file chairwomen from each shop.⁴⁷

The WTUL, conversely, was a women-run organization. Most of the members were middle- and upper-class women who sought to improve the working conditions of women by lobbying wealthy women and politicians. From the start of the strike, WTUL president Margaret Dreier Robins spoke at meetings, joined pickets, and promised to gain the support of local society women. The WTUL set up a local headquarters on January 6, 1910, in order to provide a meeting space, food, and other material aid to the strikers.⁴⁸

As a stated goal, the WTUL supported “the organization of women workers into trade unions” as a way to “secure conditions necessary for healthful and efficient work and to obtain a just return for [women’s] work.”⁴⁹ But the reform women who comprised the WTUL’s membership endorsed only peaceful tactics and ultimately sought to compromise with employers. Regarding both the ILGWU and WTUL, tactical divisions between workers and leaders revealed the inadequacy of the two organizing models in building and accommodating the strike’s power. Despite this, and the powerful coalition that opposed them, the workers were able to exert their will during the strike.

Opposition to the Strike

From the start of the strike, the Reyburn administration, Philadelphia’s mainstream press, and the shirtwaist bosses worked in tandem to delegitimize the strikers and their demands. The large shirtwaist manufacturers declared that the strikers’ grievances were “farcical.” Although four firms submitted to the strike within two days, the factories where the majority of strikers worked were determined to hold out.⁵⁰ The largest shop, M. Haber and Company, which employed 900 workers, promised to “abandon their local factory rather than accede to the demands of the strikers.”⁵¹

Leo Becker, head of M. Haber and Company, rallied the large manufacturers together to form the Ladies Shirtwaist Manufacturers’ Association in order “to reform abuses and promote common interests.” (One anonymous commentator noted the hypocrisy, observing that “the right of their employees to form an organization for similar purposes they deny.”)⁵² After the first week of the strike, the Manufacturers’ Association issued a statement that appeared reasonable:

The manufacturers are perfectly willing to arbitrate any grievance that the strikers may have. No arbitration will be entertained however, until the girls return to work. Within 10 minutes after the strikers return, their employers will gladly meet them, or their committee and compromise or arbitrate anything except recognition of the union.

But the strikers knew that without recognition of the union, nothing would prevent the manufacturers from arbitrating strikers’ grievances to their

own advantage. The strikers had no basis upon which to trust their bosses. It was rumored that the manufacturers were hiring girls from the Hebrew Orphan's home, threatening expulsion if they did not work in the shirtwaist factories. There was also an allegation that the manufacturers were bribing police officers with free shirtwaists. At this point, the police were working as de facto security guards for the shops, offering "protection" to any worker who requested it and rounding up strikers arbitrarily. Further, the manufacturers had threatened strikers by telling them "if you do not work you do not live."⁵³

By the strike's fourth week, M. Haber and Company petitioned police director Henry Clay to shut down the WTUL's headquarters, alleging that it was a nuisance for the community. Unable to secure its removal, the company later brought an equity suit against the Ladies' Shirtwaist Makers' Union, as an injunction against their interference with the shirtwaist shops. Leo Becker stated that his intention was to "protect" his workers from the strikers, and this, with the complicity of the municipal government, he successfully enacted.⁵⁴

In their efforts to demonize the strikers, the manufacturers colluded with Philadelphia's mainstream press, which printed stories that highlighted the hundreds of union defections that the manufacturers alleged were taking place.⁵⁵ When the Philadelphia press discussed the material well-being of the women and girls who were working and striking in the shirtwaist industry, it only reported on those who refused to strike and those already striking who did not want to be. On December 26, 1909, the *Public Ledger* reported that 100 unions had pledged support (but not financial assistance) for the strike. The report then quoted a striker who declared "what good are these resolutions? What do we give the landlord on New Year's—a resolution?" The *Public Ledger* went on to assert that the girls who use their incomes to support their families wanted to return to work, and that three had just resigned from the union to be married.⁵⁶

While only a fraction of the articles published in the *Public Ledger*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, or the *Evening Bulletin* referenced the plight of workers, none listed the conditions within the shirtwaist industry as a causal factor. Instead, the union was the only villain, accused of using violence and bullying to force those still working to walk out and to keep striking women and girls from returning to the jobs they desperately need. Using the testimony of police officers and strikebreakers, the press publicized the narrative pushed by both the manufacturers and the Reyburn administration.

Mayor Reyburn and his business-friendly government immediately sided with the manufacturers. Even before the strike began, the administration had attempted to shut it down; Director Clay of the Department of Public Safety unsuccessfully tried to prevent a meeting of workers after alleging the presence of radical influences, which his administration had determined to fight.⁵⁷ This reaction was not out of character for an administration already known for its antipathy toward organized labor.

The Reyburn Administration

Encompassing the span of the shirtwaist strike, John E. Reyburn's term as mayor of Philadelphia lasted from his electoral victory in February 1907 through the winter of 1911. Born in 1845, Mayor Reyburn was sixty-two years old when sworn into office and already a veteran politician. Previously, he had served two terms in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, four terms in the Pennsylvania State Senate, and three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. Reyburn ended his third congressional term early in order to become Philadelphia's mayor, a position he viewed as his last; after the election Reyburn declared, "I am an old man and have no further political ambitions." Despite his age, admirers described the new mayor as a "strong and virile ruler." Opponents, as expected, were not pleased with the Reyburn administration, observing that it had "made Philadelphia notorious as a flagrant example of misgovernment."⁵⁸

Mayor Reyburn came to power at a time when municipal and progressive reformers were struggling to dislodge Philadelphia's entrenched system of political corruption. Since the 1885 passing of the Bullitt Bill by the Pennsylvania state legislature, there existed a mayor-centered power structure in Philadelphia that enabled the establishment of Philadelphia's "Republican machine"—a system of corporate patronage and other forms of municipal corruption.⁵⁹ In response, reformers pursued legislation that would purge corruption and instill municipal accountability.

Before Reyburn took office, a scandal involving a proposed utility contract galvanized Philadelphians in opposition to machine politics. Historian and sociologist Peter McCaffery has demonstrated that the 1906 "gas steal"—the failed plot of politicians and a powerful gas company to secure an immensely profitable seventy-five-year contract—revealed the aligned interests of

Philadelphia's Republican machine and the city's utility companies. Historians have credited this event with spurring a decade of local reform efforts.⁶⁰

In 1906 the city of Philadelphia passed the Shern Act in response to widespread calls for municipal reform. The new law sought to address the fact that "many a policeman or fireman feels it incumbent upon him to set aside a percentage of his salary for political purposes," and was intended to "do away with the canvassing from door to door, 'bell-pulling,' electioneering and political assessments."⁶¹

Mayor Reyburn did not care for these reforms, and he made no effort hide his political biases. Following his 1907 election, Reyburn stated outright: "I don't pretend and I don't want you to think I am going to be non-partisan. I was born and raised a Republican." Reyburn referred to reform-minded city commissioners as people with "regard for the law," an attribute that, Reyburn chided, "makes them hesitate a bit to satisfy their consciences." The mayor remarked that reading the Shern Act "made me very sleepy when I was less than halfway through it."⁶²

As the political magazine *Harper's Weekly* editorialized, Mayor Reyburn rebuked the 1906 legislation by "[restoring] the reign of vice and lawlessness and corporate plundering" in Philadelphia. Reyburn's mayoral campaign had been endorsed by the infamous state senator James P. McNichol, who had been "charged with robbing the citizens of Philadelphia of more than \$5,000,000."⁶³ In addition, Reyburn associated with several other defamed politicians, and selected like-minded men to run the city's municipal departments. For the Department of Public Safety, Reyburn appointed Henry Clay, a man who critics described as "a tool of public service corporations . . . the man who championed the very gas-lease ordinance which . . . developed into the tornado of reform."⁶⁴

Reyburn held memberships in a number of exclusive clubs, was on the board of the American Protective Tariff League, and served as director of the Union National Bank. The mayor's statement to the press that he longed for "the days when the good and pure and virtuous were running things—when the white wings were in power" alluded to the allegiances he had cultivated during his career.⁶⁵

As mayor, Reyburn openly alienated municipal reformers, conservative Christian groups, and even members of Pennsylvania's Republican establishment.⁶⁶ In a 1907 break from the state's Republican leadership, Mayor Reyburn openly denounced President Theodore Roosevelt's corporate regulatory policies.⁶⁷ The utility contracting that the Philadelphia

Republican machine was known for continued under Reyburn, attracting the ire of state legislators; suspicious contracts prompted a state-run investigation into the dealings of his administration.⁶⁸

Mayor Reyburn and Director Clay had wielded the city's police force against immigrant workers prior to the shirtwaist strike. During Reyburn's mayoral campaign, politicians promised that unemployed immigrant men would be offered municipal jobs if they helped the Republican candidates, including Mayor Reyburn. Following the election, the Panic of 1907 commenced and left thousands of Philadelphia workers unemployed; out of 28,000 textile workers in the city, 18,000 were out of work just one year after Mayor Reyburn took office.⁶⁹

In February 1908 1,000 unemployed immigrants—mostly Jews, Poles, and Italians—marched on city hall to demand jobs in an event that would later be named the “Broad Street Riot.”⁷⁰ According to police and news reports, the crowd immediately turned violent, allegedly injuring Irish bystanders and shooting at police officers. In response, the entire motorbike, mounted, and “big reserve” police squads were dispatched to the scene, as well as the reserve police officers from six Philadelphia-area districts. According to the press, six police officers were injured and “fourteen participants in the demonstration were so severely clubbed by the police that they had to be sent to the hospital.” Following the “riot” the city declared that “the last anarchist meeting has been held in this city.”⁷¹

Given the administration's track record, it is no surprise that Mayor Reyburn and Director Clay would meet the shirtwaist strikers and their allies with violence. Reyburn had consistently aligned his administration with business interests and had proven to be an enemy of organized labor. At the time of the shirtwaist strike, labor disputes were publicized in the mainstream press almost daily.⁷² In particular, discord between Philadelphia Rapid Transit (PRT), its employees, and its customers arose repeatedly during Reyburn's term in office.

Issues with PRT stemmed from a corrupt contract it brokered with the city in 1907 that effectively removed all previous regulatory statutes.⁷³ As a result, poor service and high fares caused customer satisfaction to decline, and a city council member observed that “the police department has been swung over to the aid of the company in preventing suits for personal injuries.”⁷⁴ In 1909 PRT employees went on strike to demand better working conditions. PRT agreed to settle, but in 1910 the PRT employees threatened to strike again after the company refused to enforce

the contract. Reyburn argued that the threats were being stirred up by his political opponents in anticipation of the coming municipal elections, an argument that alluded to the public's disdain for the corrupt relationship between his administration and PRT.⁷⁵

Though the mayor declared himself "neutral" in the present dispute, Reyburn pledged that the police would "provide sufficient protection for the company," adding that the state police would be called in if necessary. Before the strike began the mayor portrayed the yet-to-exist strikers as violent, declaring that the city would "prevent citizens being injured by violence" and "aid the company to run its cars." Adding further evidence of collusion, Reyburn announced that he had sat in on all of PRT's board meetings, adding: "I have seen no action taken that could possibly afford an excuse for the men to strike." Reyburn felt it politically expedient to equivocate publically while PRT stalled the strike, as he needed to secure the coming election for the Republicans. What the shirtwaist strike revealed, as the coming carmen's strike later would, was the overt collusion between Mayor Reyburn's administration, the police department, and Philadelphia's business community.⁷⁶

Having tried and failed to prevent the shirtwaist strike, the Philadelphia police came to the aid of the manufacturers, becoming akin to private security guards—but ones with judicial impunity. On the second day of the strike, officers visited the sweatshops to ask if they needed police protection. During the course of the strike, hundreds of workers and their allies were beaten by police officers and arrested—and manufacturers sometimes pointed out strikers for cops to round up. At court hearings, judges overwhelmingly sided against arrested strikers and their allies, exhibiting the judicial bias that had been institutionalized under Reyburn's administration.⁷⁷

During the strike, young women were arrested for crimes ranging from "intimidating," "interfering with," "annoying," and "insulting" workers who were not on strike, assault and battery of police officers and workers, inciting to riot, disorderly conduct, and conspiracy.⁷⁸ Based on the available documents it cannot be known for certain whether any strikers or their allies used violence against their opponents or if any of the convictions for assault and battery were based on fabricated testimony. The press predominantly reported the perspectives of police officers and the alleged victims of strikers' violence, and not those of the defendants. When wealthy allies were present at the time of the arrest or were themselves arrested the press sometimes

published their comments, but no other arrestees were given space in the papers to share their experiences.

From the quoted testimony of allied society women and strikers it is evident that both denied that there was any legitimate basis for the arrests of tens of young women and men per day. Strikers insisted that though they commonly followed strikebreakers home and “[gave] them finger talk,” they “wouldn’t lay [their] hands on them . . . they’re scared to death of us as it is.”⁷⁹ Society women, whose support will be discussed in detail below, sat at arraignment hearings and provided bail for the strikers they deemed “worthy” of assistance, including those accused of assault and battery. These women sometimes went from jail to jail to bail strikers out, claiming that the police were unjustly arresting strikers and their allies.⁸⁰

Prominent figure Fannie Cochran inquired into the validity of the police’s statement “that none but violent or disorderly sympathizers were placed under arrest.” While conducting her investigation at the Kauffman and Harris shirtwaist factory she was arrested by a plainclothes police officer. Her high-profile arrest was publicized on the front pages of Philadelphia’s newspapers, including Cochran’s testimony that “the statement made by the police that the girls are not arrested unless disorderly is not true. The whole attitude of the police is unjust and brutal.”⁸¹

Yet the city did not stop making such arrests. Rather, it made them easier to make by creating a new crime that only applied to the shirtwaist strikers and their allies. Under the headline “Police Plan War on Strike Pickets,” Philadelphia’s *Evening Bulletin* reported on the new law that made “loitering” in front of shirtwaist factories a “breach of the peace.” Further, the city often arrested allegedly violent strikers post facto, arrested strikers when they were “about” to commit a crime (such as a hat-pin stabbing or the seizure of an operator), and convicted strikers of violence with minimal evidence, such as a beaten hat that was used to give evidence of a beating simply because it fit the plaintiff.⁸²

John R. K. Scott, a Republican and well-known socialite attorney in Philadelphia, served as the lawyer for both the Manufacturer’s Association and the workers who were allegedly harassed and assaulted by strikers. In an attempt to secure the arrest of society women who provided strikers’ bail money, Scott declared that the “foolish interference on the part of [society] women constitutes contempt of the law. . . . They either must keep within the bounds of the law, and respect the courts, or submit to arrest.” Scott’s move

signified the desperation of the Manufacturer's Association, as well as Scott's blatant conflict of interest. Yet the press continued to print strikebreakers,' manufacturers,' and police officers' testimony as fact.⁸³

It is possible that any of the dozens of assault and battery charges were founded, as even the leaders of the strike deemed it prudent to distance the union from the allegedly violent shirtwaist cutters who were picketing in sympathy. However, the testimony of society women and strikers, the efforts of the city to create new crimes to arrest strikers for, the city's overt sympathy with the manufacturers, and the fact that the lawyer for the alleged victims was being paid by the manufacturers all cast doubt on the dominant narrative presented in Philadelphia's mainstream press. And in its battle to defeat the strike, the city of Philadelphia did not only target picketers and those providing them with material support, but it also targeted the labor organizer William D. Haywood, who spoke at a benefit for the strike. The city issued an arrest warrant for Haywood for speaking "in scathing terms of the police of this city and of the Mayor" and declared that he is never to speak in the city again." The Reyburn administration deemed Haywood enough of a threat that it revoked his First Amendment rights.⁸⁴

Despite the mass arrests, the strikers were able to hold out until early February with the help of allies who provided bail and other material support. There were up to 2,000 pickets on the streets each day, including 70 workers between the ages of eleven and fourteen who were members of the Markers' and Cleaners' Union. Workers braved harsh storms in order "to take a monster canvass of all the non-union employees" and to execute other actions. Strikers assembled at meetings and social gatherings—including dances, shows, and speaking events. The workers were involved in all aspects of the strike, and stuck to their demand for union recognition despite the dissent of allies and union leadership.⁸⁵

Manufacturers hired strikebreakers, opened a school to train them, and made efforts to pit Jewish strikers against Italians, African American, and native-born white workers. (Leo Becker claimed that American-born girls were "the most satisfactory.")⁸⁶ But because of the strikers' perseverance and the support of society women—whose aid fed the strikers and kept them out of jail and on the picket lines—these fissures did not weaken the strike.⁸⁷ On February 6, 1910, workers and manufacturers reached a settlement that granted some of the strikers' demands: it provided a system for negotiating piece-work prices, the reduction of work hours, and the elimination of charges for materials.⁸⁸

The Strike's Allies: Club Women, Suffragists, and College Students

In response to Mayor Reyburn's relationship with the shirtwaist manufacturers, the Philadelphia shirtwaist strikers built alliances with unions, society women, and reformers based in Philadelphia and elsewhere. Many local unions offered verbal and material support.⁸⁹ For example, on the sixth day of the strike, approximately 100 unions had expressed sympathy with the strikers, including the Workmen's Circle, the Carmen's Union, the Building Trades Council, the Silk Shirtwaist Makers Union, the Cloak Makers Union, the American Glove Workers Union, the Central Labor Union, and the Cigar Makers' Union.⁹⁰

During the strike, society women and reformers provided crucial financial, material, and moral support to the strikers, often posting bail for arrested strikers and funding other services. The first organization of society women to take an interest in the strike was the College Settlement, a group comprised of young college students and graduates who provided food during the strike's first week.⁹¹

On December 30, 1909, a week and a half after the strike began, the Consumers League—an organization concerned with working conditions in local industries—offered to conduct “a mere inspection tour of a committee” that would put forth its suggestions in the event of the strike's arbitration.⁹² Unlike ILGWU and WTUL, the league did not support labor organizing, and it often ignored issues related to wages and working hours. Instead, the league saw “co-operating with employers” as its “chief mission.”⁹³ Later, many organizations came to pledge their support, including the Pennsylvania Women's Suffrage Association, the College Equal Franchise League, the New Century Club, the Women's Branch of the Ethical Culture Society, the Women's Club in Harrisburg, and the Lighthouse Settlement.⁹⁴

From the early stages of the strike, WTUL's president Margaret Dreier Robins worked to enlist the support of clubwomen. By December 31, 1909, Robins had recruited the “well known social workers” Martha C. Bary, Mabel Stewart, and Fannie Cochran to teach singing lessons and English to the strikers—many of whom spoke only Russian, Yiddish, German, or Polish.⁹⁵ Donations began coming in by January 4, 1910, when Robins spoke before Philadelphia's elite College Club. According to a news report in Philadelphia's *Public Ledger*, Robins was only able to garner support when she declared that the “surely growing wave of woman suffrage was quite as sure to bring with it better working conditions for working women.”⁹⁶

Some scholars have argued that the society women and elite reformers supported the strike exclusively because of these sentiments. In his article on the Philadelphia shirtwaist strike, Daniel Sidorick echoed this sentiment, calling the alliance an "attempt at sisterhood across the great divide of class."⁹⁷

But for elite women in Philadelphia, their support was not exclusively motivated by ideology but also by the abuses of Reyburn's administration. Robins's efforts to solicit the aid of society women became enormously successful only after the high-profile arrest of Fannie Cochran. The fact that thousands of young women were on strike for better conditions had not provided sufficient motivation for the majority of Philadelphia's wealthy women who came to support the strike. Rather, their support was forthcoming only after a prominent young society woman was arrested while picketing.⁹⁸

After Cochran's arrest the *Public Ledger* reported that there was now "widespread interest among a large and influential class who heretofore have not shown concerns in the labor movement." Convinced of its merits by Robins, many of these women began to see the shirtwaist strike as "an excellent opportunity for promulgating their ideas," particularly its "possibilities as suffrage propaganda."⁹⁹ At speaking events, prominent figures from New York and Chicago "made it evident that they consider the matter of woman suffrage and the question of the women in labor to be the same." Robins's lectures now resonated with a wider audience:

You women who want stylist shirtwaists and desire to see a new style or design every month . . . do not figure how it affects the girl shirtwaist maker. For all the extra frills and furbelows which she is compelled to add to the waist for the delight of the wearer she receives no extra compensation. She is forced to put in more time and therefore makes less money.¹⁰⁰

These new supporters of the strike perceived gender discrimination on the part of shirtwaist manufacturers to be the root cause of the strike, arguing that if it were thousands of men on strike they would have been treated different "because of the vote" and that "the workers received the treatment they do because they are nonentities politically."¹⁰¹

The clubwomen, suffragists, and college students who supported the strike invoked ideas of what Sidorick refers to as "sisterhood," but it was the arrests and harassment of fellow reformers that galvanized the majority

of these women into action. In response to Cochran's treatment and testimony, society women were galvanized in opposition to the injustices they perceived were taking place. Prominent figures, such as Miss Marguretta Hutchinson, began providing thousands of dollars in bail money to arrested strikers. Four days after Cochran's arrest, a delegation of clubwomen lodged a protest with Director Clay, declaring that "strikers should not be arrested unless there was some real charge against them, and that the police should treat the girls with more consideration." On that day it was also reported that the Consumers League, the organization under which Cochran was conducting her investigation, was preparing to bring a lawsuit against the city.¹⁰²

But this new coalition did not decrease the frequency of strikers' arrests. On the day that clubwomen protested the police department, the number of arrests diminished, though they picked up again the next day. Philadelphia clubwomen, suffragists, and college students who joined the picket lines often faced harassment from Philadelphia police officers. When they were aware of society women's identities, police treated them preferentially, though this was insufficient to stem abuses. On January 18, 1910, one week after Cochran's arrest, the police raided a picket line and made several arrests for unlawful assembly. The list of arrestees included Inez Millholland, a graduate of Vassar College, and First Lieutenant Henry W. Torney of the U.S. Coast Artillery. By this point, the press stopped publishing the testimony of high-profile sympathizers, and returned to publishing the numbers of and reasons for the arrests that were being made. On January 29, 1910, when Martha Gruening, a Bryn Mawr postgraduate student, was arrested for loitering, the *Evening Bulletin* only published the lecture she received from the magistrate at her trial who remarked that "it is women of your class, not the actual strikers . . . who have stirred up all this strife."¹⁰³

Despite the continued arrests, the support of prominent women gave strikers hope that victory was possible.¹⁰⁴ The Pennsylvania Women's Suffrage Association continued to send letters of solicitation to prominent Philadelphians, and the mayor of Lancaster declared his sympathy for the strike. High-profile figures from outside Philadelphia added their support, such as the daughter of financier J. P. Morgan, who raised the idea of opening her own unionized shirtwaist shop, and the daughter of President William Howard Taft. After hearing a lecture on the shirtwaist pickets, Helen Taft became an ardent supporter of the cause and vowed to speak with her father on the issue. Speaking to reporters, Taft stated:

I certainly sympathize with the poor little girls. . . . I never knew they were so downtrodden. Really, I'll never put on a shirtwaist again without a shudder . . . to think that these poor creatures have to work ten and twelve hours a day, suffer agonizing headaches because they have to watch a dozen needles flash up and down a thousand times a minute, and then get but \$5 a week is too awful. . . . Why, it's just like reading Nietzsche, isn't it?¹⁰⁵

Mayor Reyburn's flagrant disregard for municipal reform efforts and the brutality of his administration pitted suffragists and other society women against him, and thus altered the course of the strike in favor of the workers. Their stand against the abuses in the shirtwaist industry was also a stand against the flagrant abuses they saw taking place in the streets. The allegiance that was forged between manufacturers and police officers made them into a single target of these elite women's activism. It was the abuse of municipal power that prompted the majority of these society women to take a stand.

The Response of Philadelphia's Jewish Community

As has been discussed, the Jewish community did not have a united stance on labor activism. While there was some unity in response to a rash of anti-Semitism in 1906, the elites of the community were never able to fully side with the workers who organized for better conditions and generally sided against them. In 1909 significant opposition to the shirtwaist strike came from Philadelphia's Jewish upper class. Unsurprisingly, the Jewish shirtwaist manufacturers were opposed to the strike, but so too were other members of the Jewish business community, middle- and upper-class Jewish institutions such as the Young Women's Union, and the conservative *Jewish Exponent* newspaper. In favor of the strike, Jewish organizations such as the United Hebrew Trades, the Milkmen's Union, the Trolleyman's Union, the Markers and Cleaners' Union, Jewish branches of the Socialist Party, the Workmen's Circle, and establishments such as the Levis and Co. movie theater offered support.¹⁰⁶ The strike did not create these fissures within Philadelphia's Jewish community, but rather exposed them in the same way that previous strikes had.

The shirtwaist strike of 1909–10 revealed divisions in the Philadelphia Jewish community that had already existed between elites and new

immigrants. In the 1880s Philadelphia's Jewish intelligentsia held debates on the merits of encouraging emigration from Russia, with prominent figures on both sides of the issue.¹⁰⁷ Revealed by the strikes during this period, those who would have held positions of authority in Eastern Europe's Jewish communities—such as religious figures and other elites—could not replicate such power structures in urban Jewish America where currents of radicalism were integrated into everyday life.¹⁰⁸ By 1909, these rifts had not lessened, as wages were steadily decreasing and periods of under- and unemployment continued to accompany work in the garment trades.

The Jewish unions and political groups that supported the strike provided financial support as well as aid on the picket lines. In opposition, elites editorialized that “no one is doing more than the Manufacturers’ Association to suppress conditions . . . which the Jewish strikers affected by the shirtwaist strike and their sympathizers are denouncing.” They continued that the strike is taking place in “good” shops because of “irresponsible agitators” and the “ill tempered utterances of demagogues.” Conservative Jewish figures supported the manufacturers’ right to deny recognition of the union, because “industry cannot be conducted under the present system, if a manufacturer is obliged to turn over the control of his business to such experts as Mother Jones and Mr. Rosenberg, of New York and their associates.”¹⁰⁹

Echoing the tenor of earlier strikes, the shirtwaist strike exposed the generational, political, economic, and other fissures that the past had seen. The condemnation of elites held no sway over the strikers, as their decisions to strike had been motivated by factors directly relevant to the strikers’ lives.

The Decision to Strike

Scholars have examined the various shirtwaist strikes of the period—predominantly the New York strike—and have drawn out the influence of politics, popular culture, religion, ethnicity, and other factors on workers’ decisions to strike.

Because there were commonalities between the strikes in New York and Philadelphia, it is useful for this discussion to engage with the extensive research that has been conducted on the New York strike. The young women working in both Philadelphia and New York had

emigrated from the same parts of the Russian empire, and the Jewish communities of both cities had socialist undercurrents and strong radical labor traditions. Furthermore, according to the National Consumers League, shirtwaist workers in Philadelphia and New York faced similar working conditions.¹¹⁰

In conceptualizing the strikers' motivations, scholars have described a "working class consciousness" that influenced the decision to strike, one that was rooted in workers' experiences both in Russia and the United States. Daniel Sidorick—whose article on the Philadelphia strike delves into this issue—has argued that the strikers were motivated by the reality and consciousness of class, both influenced by structural changes in industrial capitalism, the context of anarchist and socialist thought, and evolving constructions of gender and ethnicity.¹¹¹

It is likely that those who went on strike were dissatisfied with their working conditions, and that they believed labor militancy—a tactic familiar to Philadelphia's Jewish community—could bring them closer to the quality of life they felt they deserved. As Susan Glenn notes, poor working conditions marred the shirtwaist industry for many years; what changed in 1909 was "the ability of immigrant women and men to channel [their grievances] into a mass movement with the potential for continuity and stability."¹¹² Workers, like the other actors involved in the strike, were responding to conditions specific to their time and place, and were utilizing tools they were familiar with.

Historian Nan Enstad, whose work has focused on the role of popular culture in the formation of "working ladyhood," has argued that the New York shirtwaist strike was not a moment in which workers suddenly formed identities that were incompatible with their labor, but rather that the women had already "experienced the pains and the pleasures of consumer capitalism simultaneously" and found power in "their creative use of limited resources"—the strike and its correlated coalition building being two examples.¹¹³

There is limited archival information available from the perspective of the strikers, and so it is difficult to assess the specific factors that motivated their actions. Because the workers relied on their meager earnings to support themselves and their families, the fact that they were willing to forego wages indefinitely demonstrates both the deplorable working conditions in the shirtwaist industry, as well as the strength of the workers' support, whether newfound or established, for unionization.

Conclusion

Shortly after the shirtwaist strike was settled, Philadelphia Rapid Transit laid off 173 union organizers in anticipation of the February 15, 1910, municipal elections, and in retaliation hundreds of their employees went on strike.¹¹⁴ After PRT brought in strikebreakers, and the Reyburn administration dispatched thousands of police officers and jailed the strike's leaders, the Central Labor Union and Philadelphia Council of Allied Building Trades called a general sympathy strike.¹¹⁵ Over 140,000 people marched in the streets both in solidarity with the striking transportation workers and in opposition to the alliance between the Republican administration and the Rapid Transit Company—a partnership illustrated by the thousands of active and temporary police officers and state troopers that were dispatched to protect the cars. Mayor Reyburn was urged by the business community, labor unions, and the Republican establishment in Pennsylvania to pursue arbitration to end the strike but he refused to yield. His denial of the strikers' right to peaceably assemble, and his orders for police to shoot “missiles and bullets” at the “rioters,” which caused at least three deaths, helped the strike gain sympathy from unions and large employers across the country.¹¹⁶

Eventually the general strike ended and the PRT agreed to settle (though not until after a level of violence was reached that the *Public Ledger* declared akin to “civil war”).¹¹⁷ For the mayor and Director Clay, the strikes of 1909 and 1910 “furnished evidence of the efficiency of the police force; and, also, the necessity for a material increase.”¹¹⁸ The administration's proclivity for violence catalyzed local middle- and upper-class support for the shirtwaist strike, and was used by Reyburn to defend, and achieve, the expansion of municipal power.

Further research needs to be conducted on the factors that motivated the shirtwaist strikers, and on the unique dynamics within the Philadelphia Jewish community, which were more complex than what has been suggested here and in related scholarship. It seems clear, however, that the flagrant corruption of Philadelphia's municipal government played a key role in inducing Philadelphia's elite women to support the strike, as many of them were striving to actively participate in political life and were appalled by Mayor Reyburn's corruption and violent means of censoring dissent.

Shirtwaist manufacturers, building on trends in the industry, sought to exploit as much labor out of their workers for the smallest wages they could

get away with, and the shirtwaist strike was an act of resistance against this exploitation and the deplorable working conditions that the primarily young immigrant women and girls faced. The Jewish community's elite, not heeding their own call "to bear in mind the common humanitarian interests," predominantly sided with the manufacturers. The shirtwaist strike, like other moments of labor militancy that took place within Philadelphia's Jewish community, revealed the generational, class, and other intra-group fissures that existed at the turn of the twentieth century.

Despite the odds against them, shirtwaist strikers were able to depress the manufacturers' profits by withholding their labor and, in so doing, were able to build enough power to compel manufacturers to join them at the bargaining table. Though they were unable to win all of their demands—particularly the demand for union recognition that they most eagerly sought—the workers were able to display their strength over the seven-week span of the strike, and to gain the support of some of Philadelphia's most powerful women.

NOTES

1. "Tiny Strikers Tell Sad Tales," *Philadelphia Press*, December 27, 1909. During the winter of 1909–10, temperatures were lower and snow accumulation was higher than the historic averages for the northeastern United States. In Philadelphia the large snowstorm that spanned December 26–27, 1909, shut down trains and trolley cars and caused a number of deaths. Laura B. Edge, *We Stand as One: The International Ladies Garment Workers Strike, New York, 1909* (Minneapolis, MN: Twenty First Century Books, 2011), 53; "Blizzard Still Prostrates City" *Evening Bulletin*, December 27, 1909.
2. Eighty-five percent of the shirtwaist makers in Philadelphia were Jewish, and about the same proportion were women. Despite the fact that there were non-Jewish workers in the shirtwaist sweatshops, such as Italians, native-born white workers, and a very small number of African Americans, the strike came to be thought of as a Jewish strike. Both Barbara Klaczyńska and Daniel Sidorick go into depth about the inter-ethnic divisions that were apparent during the strike. Barbara Klaczyńska, "Working Women in Philadelphia, 1900–1930" (PhD diss., Temple University, 1975), 236–40; Daniel Sidorick "The 'Girl Army': The Philadelphia Shirtwaist Strike of 1909–1910," *Pennsylvania History* 71, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 332.
3. At its most basic level, the strike was a fight between workers and employers. It can be argued, as has been done with the New York shirtwaist strike, that the strike also represented a moment of awakening for the shirtwaist strikers. This issue is discussed in more depth below.
4. One exception is an article written by historian Daniel Sidorick that explores the Philadelphia "girl army" and the strike's key events in significantly more depth than other works on the subject. Sidorick's article on the Philadelphia shirtwaist strike relies primarily on local news articles from

the time of the strike. As Sidorick notes, Philadelphia-area press was generally only interested in speaking with union leaders and wealthy society women; there has not been much archival material found from the perspectives of the rank-and-file strikers. Sidorick uses the available information, with its inherent limitations, coupled with popular theories regarding similar strikes to construct a portrait of the Philadelphia shirtwaist strike and its participants.

Philip S. Foner devotes three pages of *Women and the American Labor Movement* to the Philadelphia strike, and thus does not go into significant depth. Barbara Klaczynska's dissertation analyzes the vast terrain of women's work in Philadelphia, and touches on the shirtwaist strike. Though useful, Klaczynska's portrayal is incomplete and contains certain inaccuracies, particularly regarding the wrongly dated 1912 Lawrence strike and its influence. Within the compilation *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, Maxwell Whiteman's "Out of the Sweatshop" devotes considerable more space to the Philadelphia strike, but also contains several factual inaccuracies (such as his claim that "the first general strike in the Philadelphia apparel trade was an abysmal failure") that cannot be reconciled with the history of the strike. Despite this, the chapter offers a useful overview of the Jewish labor movement in Philadelphia from the 1880s through at the turn of the twentieth century. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 323–69. Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement: From Colonial Times to the Eve of World War I* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 333–35; Klaczynska, "Working Women in Philadelphia"; Maxwell Whiteman, "Out of the Sweatshop," *Jewish Life in Philadelphia: 1830–1940* (Philadelphia: Ishi Publications, 1983), 64–79.

5. For example, Italians dominated jobs in steel construction, road paving, and waste management in Philadelphia, and both German and Russian Jews dominated jobs in Philadelphia's garment industry. Whiteman, *Out of the Sweatshop*, 159–60.

In 1900 55 percent of the city's population was classified as "foreign stock"—a term that encompasses both first- and second-generation immigrants—with the vast majority, 80 percent, from northwest Europe (most significantly Ireland, Germany, and England). In 1900 Philadelphia's population was 21 percent Irish heritage, 15 percent German, and 8 percent British.

Historian Kenneth C. Meyer has argued that because of Philadelphia's large population of African Americans, new immigrants preferred to avoid the competition for unskilled work, and thus to settle elsewhere. African Americans made up a large proportion of Philadelphia's unskilled labor force at the turn of the twentieth century. The industries included road construction, building construction, railroad work, manufacturing, and domestic service. Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 19; Kenneth Charles Meyer, "Persistence and Change in Ethnic Residential Space: An Ecological Case Study of the Polish in Philadelphia" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1974), 123–34. Only a handful of the more than 8,000 shops in Philadelphia in 1915 employed more than 500 people. By the time of the shirtwaist strike, no new industries, especially heavy ones, were entering the city. The main industries in Philadelphia at the time of the strike were textile and clothing, machine shop and hardware manufacturing, printing and publishing, and leather production. Interestingly, the state of Pennsylvania attracted the largest number of certain new immigrants—particularly Poles, Slovaks, Croatians, Slovenes, and Ukrainians—but 71 percent of them settled outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, taking up work in one of the new heavy industries (such as the production of coal, iron, steel, railroads, glass, cement, and chemicals). Meyer, "Persistence and Change in Ethnic Residential Space," 211–12.

6. The 1910 census revealed that 21,235 out of 22,535 African American women workers in Philadelphia were employed in domestic service. The textile and clothing industry, the largest employer of women in Philadelphia, put up some of the highest barriers to African American women's employment, though there were a few who worked in the shirtwaist industry. Klaczynska "Working Women in Philadelphia," 15, 59.
7. In her dissertation, Barbara Klaczynska argues that in Philadelphia, a woman's ethnic group was the most relevant determinant of her occupation, due primarily to the customary age of marriage. Klaczynska further argues that employer's preferences were often a determining factor in women's job choices, as some preferred one group of workers (such as native white women) to another. *Ibid.*, 15, 47.
8. William Franklin Willoughby, *Regulation of the Sweating System* (Washington, DC: Department of Labor, 1900), 10–12.
9. *Fifth Annual Report of the Factory Inspector of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for the Year 1894* (Harrisburg: State Printer of Pennsylvania, 1895), 504–5.
10. "Clothing Manufacturers to Oppose Senator Hear's Bill" *Jewish Exponent*, April 22, 1892. In 1909 the Consumers League was still trying to pass legislation that would effectively regulate the sweatshop industry. Evelyn Bodek Rosen, *The Philadelphia Fels, 1880–1920: A Social Portrait* (London: Associated University Press, 2000), 133.
11. Walter Licht, *Getting Work: Philadelphia, 1840–1950* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 10; Joseph H. Willits, *Philadelphia Unemployment: With a Special Reference to the Textile Industry* (Philadelphia: Department of Public Works, 1915), 32–33.
12. Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 151.
13. For example, despite manufacturers' claims that workers were no longer being charged for materials, many contractors continued the practice. *Ibid.*, 150.
14. "The Strikers' Demands," *Jewish Exponent*, December 31, 1909.
15. *Ibid.*
16. "1909 Shirtwaistmakers' Strike," *Public Ledger*, December 21, 1909.
17. Minutes of the Central Labor Union, December 12, 1909, and January 6, 1910, Urban Archives, Temple University Library, Philadelphia; from Sidorick, "Girl Army," 358.
18. Most young Jewish women workers were earning money in order to support themselves or their families, as immigrant families often needed daughters to contribute financially. Despite a 1903 education law that mandated schooling through the age of fourteen, forged documents were easy to obtain and the law's enforcement was lax. Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 84–86; Licht, *Getting Work*, 23.
19. Most Jews lived in one of two neighborhoods, one located in South Philadelphia and the other in Northern Liberties. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 185–93, 323–30.
20. Gerald Sorin, *The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals, 1880–1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 11–16.
21. Russian laws enacted in the 1880s and 1890s indirectly prohibited Jews from settling in rural areas and large cities. As a result, Jewish workers were barred from traditional industries, and job discrimination elsewhere further restricted the type of work Jews were able to find. Moreover, by the 1890s the competition for work resulted in high unemployment. Violent pogroms further

- compelled Jews to migrate. Yoav Peled, *Class and Ethnicity in the Pale: The New Political Economy of Jewish Workers' Nationalism in Late Imperial Russia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 18; Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 30–34.
22. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 13–20; Licht, *Getting Work*, 33.
23. Licht, *Getting Work*, 42–46. Unlike most immigrant groups, Jews often immigrated in family groups and sometimes sent women alone to make money (nearly 43 percent of Jews who left Russia were women). Once networks were established with relatives, some families sent working-aged daughters to work. In Russia the garment trades were overcrowded; this was not the case in the United States. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 47–49.
24. Ira Katznelson, "Between Separation and Disappearance: Jews on the Margins of American Liberalism," in *Paths of Emancipation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 157–205. Susan Glenn, in *Daughters of the Shtetl*, further argues that migration was not new for Eastern European Jews, as they had been migrating within the region, from rural to urban areas and between other types of places (42).
25. Katznelson ("Between Separation and Disappearance," 157–205) notes that two-thirds of Jewish immigrants that came to the United States between 1899 and 1914 stated a preference to settle in New York City.
26. Alice Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable," in *Class, Sex, and the Woman Worker*, ed. Milton Cantor and Bruce Laurie (London: Greenwood Press, 1977), 145; Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 19, 49.
27. Tony Michels has argued, building on the work of Irving Howe, that "Jewish political culture was socialist-oriented." Michels, "Socialism and the Writing of American Jewish History: World of Our Fathers Revisited," *American Jewish History* 88, no. 4 (December 2000): 541.
28. Tony Michels demonstrates that when Eastern European Jews arrived in the United States, at the beginning of the 1880s, they did not come as radicals. Rather, it was through association with German socialists, who offered various forms of assistance to Jewish intellectuals, that a Jewish socialist tradition emerged. New York, which had the largest concentration of Jews in the world, provided an economic base and the space for Jewish radicals to build a movement. Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 4–13.
29. Tony Michels details the emergence and importance of the Yiddish press in forming a Jewish socialist consciousness. Tony Michels, "'Speaking to Moyshe': The Early Socialist Yiddish Press and Its Readers," *Jewish History* 14, no. 1 (2000): 51–82; Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts*.
30. Whiteman, "Out of the Sweatshop," 73; "Philadelphia Notes," *American Hebrew*, May 28, 1886; "Correspondence: Our Philadelphia Letter," *American Hebrew*, September 3, 1886.
31. Klaczynska, "Working Women in Philadelphia," 189; Charles Bernheimer, ed., *The Russian Jew in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Young People's Missionary Movement, 1905), 86.
32. "Jewish Tailors and Operators," *Jewish Exponent*, January 11, 1889.
33. Henry Samuel Morais, *The Jews of Philadelphia: Their History From the Earliest Settlements to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: The Levytype Company, 1894), 233.
34. Louis Edward Levy, *The Russian Jewish Refugees in America* (Philadelphia: The Levytype Company, 1895), 18.
35. *Fifty Years' Work of the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia, 1848–1898* (Philadelphia: Hebrew Education Society, 1899), 94–95.

36. Ibid., 95.
37. Founded in 1901, the Industrial Removal Office (IRO) sought to remove Jewish immigrants from crowded eastern cities and resettle them throughout the United States; the IRO relied on local assistance in cities to organize removal. *Sixth Biennial Session of the National Conference of Jewish Charities* (Baltimore: Press of Kohn and Pollock, 1910), 136; Carol Gendler, "The Industrial Removal Office and the Settlement of Jews in Nebraska, 1901-1917," *Nebraska History* 72 (1991): 127-34.
38. *Charities: A Review of Local and General Philanthropy* (New York: New York Charity Organization Society, 1903), 164.
39. Ibid., 165.
40. Ibid.; Whiteman, "Out of the Sweatshop," 70.
41. This strike was against the manufacturing company Tutelman Brothers and Fagen, which was ruthless against the strikers and told the press that the strikers were upset because they had non-Jewish coworkers. This claim provoked an anti-Semitic backlash in the Philadelphia press. Whiteman, "Out of the Sweatshop," 71-72, 74.
42. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 41-46; Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 291-96. Howe's work relates specifically to New York, but in Philadelphia as well new immigrants joined the Socialist Party, the Workmen's Circle, and other organizations. Howe further attributes the 1909 jump in labor radicalism to the fact that the Panic of 1907 had subsided, and the slightly increased wages prompted workers to demand more. Additionally, new immigrants realized that they were not going to return to eastern Europe, so they committed themselves to local struggles (296-97).
43. In New York City, between 15,000 and 40,000 shirtwaist workers went on strike beginning on November 22, 1909. Similar strikes popped up in cities across the nation. Approximately 100,000 shirtwaist workers went on strike in New York, Rochester, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Cleveland between 1900 and 1915. Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 297; Joan M. Jensen *A Needle, a Bobbin, a Strike: Women Needleworkers in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 83-93.
44. "Shirt Makers Vote to Declare Strike," *The Press*, December 5, 1909.
45. Over the previous few decades, the United States had undergone dramatic industrial changes, and it had emerged as a formidable imperial power. Workers, however, were not benefitting from the upward trend. Since the economic crisis of 1893, wages had been decreasing in relation to the cost of living. The Panic exacerbated the trend, which continued through the winter of 1909-10. Philip S. Foner, *The Policies and Practices of the American Federation of Labor, 1900-1909*, vol. 3 of *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 11-13; Whiteman, "Out of the Sweatshop," 73.
46. The ILGWU's leadership—and pre-1909 membership—was predominantly male. In 1903, despite the fact that women dominated the garment industry's workforce, the ILGWU had organized male and female workers at a ratio of 5 to 3. Prior to 1909, the ILGWU had organized the highest-skilled workers in the garment industry—the cutters—into craft locals. These workers had reasonable prospects for upward mobility within the industry, unlike the majority of workers who went on strike in 1909. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 323-26, 329; Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 277.

47. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 279. Rosenberg denounced socialism and anarchism, and praised the police overall, noting that it was a case of bad apples: "for the cases of so-called brutality. . . . The individual policemen—and some of them colored—are to blame for the great deal of the harsh treatment." Rosenberg sought a swift end to the strike, and was quick to compromise with manufacturers. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 349, 324, 356.
48. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 336; Klaczynska "Working Women in Philadelphia," 243–46.
49. Founded in 1903, the WTUL stated that its goal was "to assist in the organization of women workers into trade unions . . . and thereby to help secure conditions necessary for healthful and efficient work and to obtain a just return for such work." At its 1904 convention, the WTUL agreed to pursue an eight-hour day and fifty-eight-hour week, legislation preventing the hiring of workers under false pretenses, and jobs for displaced workers. WTUL members presented their campaigns to women's clubs. Though not a formal affiliation, the WTUL followed the direction of the AFL. Ultimately, this hindered the League's work as the AFL had entrenched gender biases. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 298–302; Ileen DeVault, *United Apart: Gender and the Rise of Craft Unionism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 216–17.
50. "Strikers Claim Partial Victory" *Public Ledger*, December 22, 1909.
51. Conditions in the Haber factory were particularly egregious. Workers had to pay for water to drink, and despite the fact that they were paid per piece, workers were kept in the shop regardless of whether there was work to do. Here, employers kept the doors locked, despite the inherent safety concerns. *Ibid.*; Sidorick, "Girl Army," 335.
52. "Seven Waismaker Strikers Arrested," *Public Ledger*, December 31, 1909; "The Strikers' Demands," *Jewish Exponent*, December 31, 1909.
53. "Girl Strikers Get Aid of Club Women" *Public Ledger*, January 7, 1910; "Society Girls to Act as Pickets," *Public Ledger*, January 10, 1910; "Strikers Held on Riot Charge," *Evening Bulletin*, January 11, 1910; "Suffragists Join in Strikers' Plea," *Public Ledger*, January 13, 1910.
54. "Plan to Arbitrate Shirtwaist Strike," *Evening Bulletin*, January 14, 1910; "Bryn Mawr Student in Shirtwaist Row," *Evening Bulletin*, January 29, 1910.
55. Both on December 30, 1909, and on January 29, 1910, it was reported that over 1,000 strikers had returned to their jobs. "1000 Girl Strikers Are Back at Work," *Public Ledger*, December 30, 1909; "Union Workers Locked Out," *Evening Bulletin*, January 29, 1910.
56. "Shirtwaist Firm Repudiated," *Public Ledger*, December 26, 1909.
57. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 334.
58. T. Everett Harry, "The Backsliding of Philadelphia," *Harper's Weekly* 51, no. 2628 (May 4, 1907): 635–58; "Mayor John E. Reyburn," *Washington Post*, February 22, 1907; Sam Hudson, *Pennsylvania and Its Public Men: Containing a History of His Life and the Men He Has Met* (Philadelphia: Hudson and Joseph, 1909), 39; "The Campaign in Philadelphia," *Outlook*, September 16, 1911.
59. Enacted in 1887, the Bullit Bill provided a new city charter that transferred municipal power from semiautonomous wards to a central committee. This committee—which was directed by the mayor—was granted control over the city's finances, patronage, and office nominations.

In Philadelphia, public utilities were often involved in corporate patronage. For example, there were a number of scandals regarding the United Gas Improvement Company (UGI). In 1897 the company acquired a thirty-year municipal gas contract, despite outcry from the general public, reform groups, and the local press. Other questionable contracts involved the city's transit system,

- road repair, electricity, and other services. Martin J. Schiesl, *The Politics of Efficiency: Municipal Administration and Reform in America, 1880–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 52–53; Peter McCaffery, *When Bosses Ruled Philadelphia: The Emergence of the Republican Machine, 1867–1933* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 157–59.
60. McCaffery, *When Bosses Ruled Philadelphia*, 158.
61. *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* (New York: National Civil Service Reform League, 1907), 81.
62. Harry, “Backsliding of Philadelphia,” 635–58; *Good Government*, 93.
63. Harry, “Backsliding of Philadelphia,” 635, 636–37; “The Philadelphia Election,” *Outlook*, March 2, 1907.
64. Reyburn associated with Machine “Boss” Durham, William S. Vare, the “Boss” of southern Philadelphia, and corrupt senator Charles L. Brown. In the Department of Health and Charities, Reyburn appointed Dr. Joseph S. Neff, “a loyal adherent of the machine,” and to the Department of Supplies, Reyburn appointed Joseph H. Klernmer, who was known as “Durham’s valet.” Harry, “Backsliding of Philadelphia,” 637–39.
65. Hudson, *Pennsylvania and Its Public Men*, 39, 53. Mayor Reyburn was a member of the Union League and the Philadelphia Yacht Club. For leisure, Reyburn was “a confirmed lover of water sports and a practical yachtsman,” and traveled between his estate in Quebec and his two “shooting and fishing [preserves],” one on Durant’s Island and the other on the Potomac River. *American Economist: Devoted to the Protection of American Labor and Industries* (New York: American Protective Tariff League, 1908).
66. Christian groups decried what they saw as “the efforts of our municipal officials to protect criminals” and condemned Mayor Reyburn “for his intolerable inaction on the side of enforcement of law” specifically regarding “speak-easies and houses of ill-fame, gambling dens and places of vice and crime.” *The Christian Work and Evangelist* 2130, no. 83 (December 14, 1907).
67. “Declares Taft Is ‘Mere Echo’: Philadelphia Mayor Heaps Scorn on Candidate,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 1907.
68. Suspicious contracts included “street-cleaning, street-paving, the building of boulevards, and the construction of a filtration plant.” The Reyburn administration was accused in several cases of graft and corruption, and the mayor was charged, though never indicted or tried, of receiving over \$400,000 from corporations, politicians, contractors, and public officers. “The Campaign in Philadelphia,” *Outlook*, September 16, 1911; Kim Long, *The Almanac of Political Corruption, Scandals and Dirty Politics* (New York: Random House, 2007).
69. Whiteman, “Out of the Sweatshop,” 72–73; “Woman Held for Riot,” *Washington Post*, February 22, 1908.
70. The march began after a meeting that featured prominent socialists, anarchists, and unionists speaking about economic conditions in Philadelphia. It is unclear who called the march, as there exists no formal record of the meeting. Following her arrest for allegedly inciting the riot, Voltairine de Cleyre insisted that she did not call the march. Instead, she had wished to march with more workers present. Whiteman, “Out of the Sweatshop,” 73. In a statement to the press de Cleyre said “it is certain that I did not advise the march, that I had no idea of such a thing occurring at such a time and that all of the speakers, when the crowd suddenly began to surge toward the door on its own initiative, found themselves amazedly in the ludicrous position of orators deserted by their audience.” “Check on the Anarchists,” *Washington Post*, February 23, 1908.

71. "Riot in Philadelphia," *New York Times*, February 21, 1908; Whiteman, "Out of the Sweatshop," 73; "Check on the Anarchists."
72. During the shirtwaist strike, the Philadelphia press printed reports on its front pages regarding organized carmen, trolleyemen, railroad workers, fur workers, and steel workers. "Trainmen Threaten Railroad Strike," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 5, 1910; "Carmen's Meeting to Decide Action," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 18, 1910; "Trolleyemen Will Appeal to Stuart for Arbitration," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 22, 1910; "Fur Men Don't Fear Strike," *Evening Bulletin*, December 23, 1909; "2,600 More Join Bethlehem Strike," *Evening Bulletin*, February 8, 1910.
73. Edwin Lewis, a lawyer and member of Philadelphia's city council, wrote in 1908 about a contract between the city and the Philadelphia Rapid Transit company that effectively removed all previous regulatory statutes (which had required, among other things, that the transit company had to maintain roads and other transit routes) in exchange for massive corporate profits and a lengthy lease. Edwin foreboded that "when the people learn the truth there will ensue a period of violent agitation"; in 1910 a massive general strike was called by transit workers, and was met with state violence. Edwin O. Lewis, "Philadelphia's Relation to Rapid Transit Company," *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 31, no. 66 (1908): 610.
74. The city and the company worked together to bring in strikebreakers and violently crush the union. Philip S. Foner, *The AFL in the Progressive Era*, vol. 5 of *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (New York: International Publishers Co., 1980), 144-47; "Reyburn Will Fight Strike Arbitration," *New York Times*, March 3, 1910.
75. In 1907 the city of Philadelphia had granted PRT a long-term contract that guaranteed PRT's monopoly over all new transportation construction and allowed PRT to self-regulate. Philip Scranton, *Figured Tapestry: Production, Markets, and Power in Philadelphia Textiles, 1885-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 267-71.
76. "Carmen's Meeting to Decide Action; Mayor Is Neutral," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 5, 1910; "Mayor Declares City Will Protect Cars," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 18, 1910; Scranton, *Figured Tapestry*, 270.
77. Workers were arrested for allegedly distributing leaflets, "annoying" and attacking strikebreakers, and walking in front of factories. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 337-38; "Girl Strikers Claim Big Gains," *Philadelphia Record*, December 22, 1909.
78. "Miss Hutchinson on Strikers' Bonds," *Evening Bulletin*, January 12, 1910; "Union Workers Locked Out," *Evening Bulletin*, January 29, 1910.
79. "Against Disorder Say Strike Leaders," *Evening Bulletin*, February 3, 1910.
80. The "social leader" and "prominent club woman" Mrs. George Biddle declared to the press that "I am interested in the matter to see that justice is done. . . . I am ready at all times to furnish bail for any girl arrested, if, after investigating the case, I find it a worthy one." "Mrs. George Biddle Aids Girl Striker," *Public Ledger*, January 8, 1910; "Mrs. Biddle Aids Girls on Strike," *Evening Bulletin*, January 7, 1910; "More Girl Strikers Arrested," *Evening Bulletin*, February 8, 1910.
81. "Fannie Cochran Arrested as Strike Picket," *Public Ledger*, January 11, 1910.
82. "Police Plan War on Strike Pickets," *Evening Bulletin*, February 2, 1910; "Miss Hutchinson on Strikers' Bonds," *Evening Bulletin*, January 12, 1910; "Mayor Takes Hand in Waist Strike," *Evening Bulletin*, January 27, 1910. According to the news report, a man was beaten on his way home; his hat was taken from him and then returned to him the next day. The magistrate in the trial against the alleged assailant, a shirtwaist striker, asked the witness to try on the hat as it was the "chief

- exhibit." Once it was seen to fit the plaintiff the magistrate declared the defendant guilty and held him on \$400 bail. "Bryn Mawr Student in Shirtwaist Row."
83. Ken Dornstein, *Accidentally on Purpose: The Making of a Personal Injury Underworld in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 145; "Threaten Arrest of Miss Cochran," *Evening Bulletin*, February 5, 1910.
 84. "Against Disorder Say Strike Leaders," *Evening Bulletin*, February 3, 1910; "Police Plan War on Strike Pickets," *Evening Bulletin*, February 2, 1910.
 85. The ILGWU and other allies sought to resolve the strike and were not committed to the goal of union recognition. The ILGWU, as a craft-based union, was interested in securing a contract as soon as possible. From day two of the strike, ILGWU president predicted a swift victory. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 336, 338, 346–47; "Girl Strikers Claim Big Gains"; "Tiny Strikers Tell Sad Tales."
 86. "Bryn Mawr Student in Shirtwaist Row"; "Mrs. Robins Begs for Waist Strike," *Evening Bulletin*, January 19, 1910.
 87. Daniel Sidorick goes into depth on the issue of inter-ethnic divisions. Employers explicitly sought to hire non-Jews, though the majority of strikebreakers were members of the Jewish community. Sidorick calls ethnicity "a double edged sword" for the strike, as it provided unity among Jews but prevented unity with other women workers. (Italian women noted not feeling welcome in unions where Yiddish was the primary language spoken.) The press and the city tried to capitalize on these divides, by portraying the Jewish strikers as racist against Italians. Jewish women were portrayed as attacking Italian scabs. The strikers seem to have been aggressive with strikebreakers, though statements of police in the press cannot be taken at face value. From the large shops, strikebreakers petitioned the mayor to side with them as "American" workers, and against the strikers who were "of foreign nationality." Sidorick, "Girl Army," 340–45.
 88. By mid-January, the employers agreed to arbitrate some of the workers' demands but refused union recognition. In the end, the employers created a system of arbitration for the negotiation of piece-work prices, and employers also eliminated charges for materials. Further, the employers reduced the work week from 56 to 52.5 hours. But, to the disappointment of the strikers, the employers still refused to recognize the union. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 350; Klaczyńska, "Working Women in Philadelphia," 247.
 89. The Central Labor Union, the Building Trades Council, and Jewish unions (such as the trolleyman's union and the miner's union) offered solidarity and aid. The Jewish unions were more likely to give money, join pickets, and go door to door to raise money. The conservative craft unions in the city did not offer much support instead "urged caution" and sought to "end labor disturbances." From Sidorick, "Girl Army," 347.
 90. "Seven Waistmaker Strikers Arrested," *Public Ledger*, December 31, 1909; "Society Girls to Act as Pickets," *Public Ledger*, January 10, 1910; "Suffragists Join in Strikers' Plea"; "Mrs. Biddle Aids Girls on Strike."
 91. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 345–55; "Strikers Close One Shirtwaist Shop," *Public Ledger*, December 25, 1909.
 92. "1,000 Girl Strikers Are Back at Work," *Public Ledger*, December 30, 1909.
 93. The Consumers League, a national organization with a local Philadelphia chapter, pursued sanitary working conditions in Philadelphia through its investigations, reports, and lobbying campaigns. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 277.

REVEALING DIVISION

- The Consumers League took issue with the negative impact of sweatshop work on families and public health, and proposed legislation to regulate sweatshops. In 1907 the Consumers League proposed reform legislation to the Pennsylvania state legislature. The state's chief factory inspector opposed the measure because he felt that "inspectors of his department were not fit men to enforce the provisions of a measure which would give them the right of entrance to private houses." *Good Government*, 53; Rosen, *The Philadelphia Fels*, 133; Sidorick, "Girl Army," 335.
94. "Miss Biddle Acts as Strike Picket," *Public Ledger*, January 9, 1910.
 95. "1,000 Girl Strikers Are Back at Work."
 96. "Club Women Will Aid Waistmakers," *Public Ledger*, January 4, 1910.
 97. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 333. Philip S. Foner has described the sentiments of many reform women, who sought "harmonious accommodation between working-women and their employers." Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 291.
 98. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 336; Klaczynska, "Working Women in Philadelphia," 243.
 99. "Women of Social Distinction Give Aid to Strikers," *Public Ledger*, January 12, 1910; "Society Women Aid Quaker City Strike," *New York Times*, January 14, 1910; "Suffragists Join in Strikers' Plea."
 100. "Style Changes Injure Workers," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 13, 1910.
 101. Ibid.
 102. "Miss Hutchinson on Strikers' Bonds," *Evening Bulletin*, January 12, 1910; "Plan to Arbitrate Shirtwaist Strike."
 103. "Bryn Mawr Student in Shirtwaist Row." Press reported that "the police are very careful about who they take into custody, without definite cause," after they arrested, then immediately released, certain prominent society women. "Society Women Aid Quaker City Strike"; "Plan to Arbitrate Shirtwaist Strike"; "Inez Millholland in Cell," *Evening Bulletin*, January 19, 1910.
 104. "Inez Millholland in Cell."
 105. "Miss Taft to Aid the Girl Strikers," *New York Times*, January 31, 1910.
 106. Sidorick, "Girl Army," 333-39.
 107. "Hebrew Literature Society," *Jewish Exponent*, January 11, 1889.
 108. Tony Michels has demonstrated that conservative Orthodox Jewish leaders who held positions of authority in Russia, advocated "inter-class cooperation and fortification of beleaguered religious institutions against secularization" in the United States. Jewish socialists, on the other hand, were able to take advantage of connections of national and international organizations. Jewish Orthodoxy never became a political force in the United States. Michels, "Socialism and the Writing of American Jewish History," 540.
 109. "Unsanitary Shops," *Jewish Exponent*, December 24, 1909; "The Strike and Its Bearings," *Jewish Exponent*, January 14, 1910.
 110. Moreover, the two strikes made similar demands (both strikes' demands pertained to "the closed shop, wages, a contracting system, hours and overtime, small injustices and grievances, and sanitation") and both found support from the WTUL, ILGWU, society women, reformers, and Jewish radical organizations. "The Philadelphia Shirtwaist Strike," *The Survey* 23 (October 1909-March 1910): 595-96.
 111. Daniel Sidorick bases his conclusion on the statements of society women, labor leaders, and a few of the strikers, as well as on theories regarding similar strikes. There are few to no records in existence

from the Philadelphia branches of the WTUL, ILGWU, or other Jewish labor organizations that highlight workers' sentiments. Both Daniel Sidorick and Barbara Klaczynska have analyzed surveys were conducted by women's settlement groups and governmental agencies, which concern prominent workers (not all of whom participated in the strike). Sidorick primarily utilizes contemporary news sources, which generally excluded the opinions of the strikers themselves.

I do not believe that there is enough evidence to conclude that the strikers had a consciousness of class—Sidorick bases this claim on the fact that the strikers were observed reading books and attending meetings en masse—but it does seem plausible, specifically because of what Ardis Cameron has observed as the “radicalizing process” that accompanies “participation in militancy”—especially when those in power respond with violence. Sidorick, “Girl Army,” 323–69; Klaczynska, “Working Women in Philadelphia.”

112. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 176.
113. Nan Enstad elaborates the role of popular culture—specifically, dime novels, fashion, and film—in the creation of “distinctive and pleasurable social practices” and workers’ “identities as ladies.” Rather than a challenge to the popular conception of women, “working ladyhood inverted a notion of prestige in order to create a utopian practice of entitlement,” one that “did not lead inevitably to efforts for progressive social change.” Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 120–203.
114. This mass firing delayed the strike and helped Republicans sweep the municipal elections. Foner, *AFL in the Progressive Era*, 144–47; “Reyburn Will Fight Strike Arbitration.”
115. The strike’s leaders, Clarence Pratt and John Murphy, were arrested for conspiracy to incite a riot, and the general strike was called on March 4, 1910. Peter J. Albert and Grace Palladino, eds., *Progress and Reaction in the Age of Reform, 1909–13*, vol. 8 of *The Samuel Gompers Papers* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 52.
116. The violence that erupted was described by the *Public Ledger* as a “civil war.” The tens of thousands of men, women, and children were disgusted with the corruption and election rigging that allowed the Republican party to sweep the February 15, 1910, municipal elections. Scranton, *Figured Tapestry*, 267–71; “Unions March in Philadelphia,” *New York Times*, March 6, 1910.
117. The general strike lasted until March 27, 1910, and the carmen lasted until April 19, 1910. They were able to win an increase in wages, rehire striking workers within three months, and mediate the discharges of the 173 men originally laid off. Albert and Palladino, eds., *Progress and Reaction in the Age of Reform*, 52.
118. *Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Public Safety and the Chief of the Electrical Bureau* (Philadelphia: Dunlap Printing Co., 1910), 7.