

*Change and Continuity:
Steel Workers in
Homestead, Pennsylvania,
1889-1895*

PART OF THE STORY OF HOMESTEAD in the 1890s has received considerable attention from historians, particularly with regard to the dramatic events surrounding the Homestead lockout of 1892. A few scholars have probed the inner workings of the steel mills to determine the extent to which skilled workers exercised control over their working days in the 1880s and early 1890s. But published research has continued to neglect political developments in the town itself. This neglect is understandable. Before the lockout, criticism of the Carnegie Steel Company took the form of union activity and focused more on the shopfloor than on political protest. The "contested terrain," as historians of the working class have described it, was more the workplace than the community. But in the wake of organized labor's defeat in the Homestead lockout, a telling shift in the contested terrain occurred as workers' control eroded and the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers lost power. After the lockout, worker discontent had few workplace outlets. Local politics also offered few opportunities for working-class expression as supporters of Carnegie Steel dominated the borough council. New and promising avenues for discontented Homestead residents appeared with the rise of the national protest movements that accompanied the Depression of 1893. Homestead became a center of support for both Coxey's Army and the Populist Party in 1894. Although this outburst proved ephemeral and the Republican Party and the Carnegie Steel Company soon reestablished almost complete control of the town, political protest flared periodically thereafter, reflecting ongoing dissatisfaction. In the presidential election of 1912, for example, Eugene Debs received strong support from the Homestead electorate.

Protest politics failed to alter company control. It was not until the 1930s that the rise of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and the Democratic Party undermined unilateral company dominance

and Republican Party hegemony. Nonetheless, political protest emerged periodically in the form of criticism of company policies and an alternative vision of a good society. Indeed, republicanism provided a major rallying point for critics of the status quo in the late nineteenth century. As defined and practiced in Homestead, republicanism was a modern adaptation of the equal rights doctrine of the American Revolution. Its proponents condemned political leaders and big businessmen who exploited the public. They advocated a society in which producers—workers and farmers—would receive the wealth and status to which their contributions to society entitled them. The industrial armies and the Populist Party shared this approach in 1894, and Homestead residents expressed their approval in the hospitality they extended to Coxey's Army and the votes they cast for Populist candidates.¹

The character of Homestead began to take shape in 1883 when Andrew Carnegie purchased the steel works of Pittsburgh Bessemer Steel Company, which had lost a strike to the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers the previous year. Carnegie undertook a huge expansion program, installing modern open hearth furnaces, hydraulic cranes, and electric lighting. While Carnegie made these major investment decisions, his skilled workers continued to exercise considerable autonomy in the conduct of their work. Skilled workers maintained an egalitarian moral code and worked together through the Amalgamated to impose work rules on their employers.

Though the Amalgamated excluded unskilled laborers, extraordinary circumstances produced examples of solidarity which transcended organizational, skill, religious, and ethnic lines. For example, all workers aided the unskilled Hungarian victims of an explosion in August 1889. When news of the disaster reached town, residents rushed to the factory, pushing past a gatekeeper who tried to bar them. Out of respect for the one dead and two injured workers (who eventually died as a result of their injuries), the mill closed for part of the day on August 31.² Members and officers of the Amalgamated

¹ Most helpful in defining, explaining and applying republicanism to working-class movements of the late nineteenth century is Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana, 1983) and Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana, 1982).

² *National Labor Tribune*, September 7, 1889.

attended the funeral and afterward discussed the dangers of work at the open hearth furnace. They considered petitioning Andrew Carnegie for a hospital to treat injured workers.³ The bond forged in facing the common dangers of injury and death led Acme Lodge No. 73 of the Amalgamated to raise funds to benefit the widows and orphans of the workers who died. An article in the *Local News*, Homestead's newspaper, publicized the event scheduled for April 18, 1890.

A large order of tickets was printed at the *Local News* office this week for this event, and they will be placed on sale at once for fifty cents each. Two thousand tickets should be sold and in that respect, it should be the greatest success of all. Be sure and buy a ticket. Remember the object for which they are being sold. The terrible accident left these three families without support and this appeal should meet with prompt and generous response.⁴

The fund raiser fulfilled the expectations of its organizers. The *Local News* described the event as "enjoyable" and "well-attended" and noted that a "handsome sum was realized."⁵

Skilled workers also played prominent roles in the community. They organized social affairs such as picnics, parades and singing societies. Homestead was, after all, a working class community. The town had grown rapidly in the 1880s as the steel works had prospered. It was a relatively new community, lacking the entrenched elite of bankers, landowners, and professionals who often controlled politics and public life in older, more established towns.

Iron and steel workers and their sympathizers also took active roles in local politics; some held major elective offices. David R. Jones, former president of a local miners' union, served as burgess of Homestead. So too did Thomas Taylor and John McLuckie. Taylor, who succeeded Jones in 1888, had spent more than thirty years working in English and American textile mills. Having come to public attention in the 1870s because of his Beeswax letters to *The Irish World*, he began a long and distinguished career as a workers' advocate. He

³ Ibid., September 14, 1889.

⁴ *Local News*, March 22, 1890.

⁵ Ibid., April 26, 1890.

declared in his correspondence that the rich robbed the poor, that working did not lead to wealth, and that a society based on the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God should be inaugurated. He ran for numerous local and state offices in the 1880s as a candidate of the Greenback Labor Party and other political organizations. Election as burgess climaxed his political career. The *Local News*, noting that Taylor was a good citizen who had labored in behalf of the people, commented that he deserved the honor. John McLuckie, a steel worker and union activist who had a reputation as an able speaker, served as burgess during the lockout. His political experience included a race for the state legislature on a labor ticket and two years on the borough council in Bellaire, Ohio.⁶ The voters of Homestead were more conventional in their state and national political choices, however. Republican Benjamin Harrison polled 65 percent of the local vote in the presidential election of 1888, while the Democratic candidate for governor carried the town by a narrow margin in 1890.

When Andrew Carnegie sought to change the conditions under which his employees at the Homestead Works labored, skilled workers had two power bases—the town and the mill—from which they were able to respond to management. Carnegie took the initiative as his profit margins narrowed, and he found only limited opportunities to increase productivity through technological innovation. Seeking flexibility to cut costs and increase production, Carnegie claimed his managers were stymied by work rules embedded in union contracts with craft workers. To break the union at Homestead—as he had beaten unions at his other steel plants—Carnegie demanded a 25 percent wage reduction and separate contracts with individual workers in 1889. The workers struck. Their solidarity, the threat of sympathy strikes, and the support of the local sheriff for the union cause led to a three-year contract favorable to the union and a period of uneasy truce.⁷

Dissatisfied with the agreement, the company prepared for the next battle. In this conflict, plant superintendent Henry C. Frick, known

⁶ Ibid., January 28, February 25, March 3, 1888; March 1, 1890.

⁷ David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America* (Cambridge, 1979), 11-15; David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers* (Cambridge, 1982), 94-99.

both for his executive abilities and his ruthless anti-unionism, played a central role. The company notified employees at Homestead in October, 1891 that a lower wage scale would take effect on January 1, 1892. Further, the company asked for a contract expiration date of December 31, 1893, when cold weather would make a strike more difficult. For its part, the Amalgamated recruited new members, and it grew to nearly twenty-five thousand Homestead workers in seven lodges. Proposing a three-year renewal of the 1889 contract, the union was fairly optimistic both because the company had to fill a government contract and because workers expected that the national Republican administration would not want labor troubles to mar a presidential election year. But Frick prepared for a confrontation, stockpiling steel to fill orders. He had a fence—topped by barbed wire and with holes for guns—constructed around the works. And he arranged to have the Pinkertons furnish 300 guards.⁸

Contract negotiations reached an impasse when management announced that it would deal only with individual workers unless the Amalgamated agreed to the concessions demanded by the company. Union leaders and workers increasingly perceived the preservation of the union as the underlying issue. When the workers hanged Frick in effigy, the company responded by shutting down the works. By June 30, 1892, the entire work force had been locked out and the battle began in earnest. Unskilled laborers—not, for the most part, members of Amalgamated—supported the union because they recalled its defense of wage rates and its resistance to attempted speed-ups.

The Homestead confrontation reached beyond Pittsburgh and the steel industry, assuming a larger importance in the political, economic and social struggles of the late nineteenth century. In the realm of politics, Homestead highlighted the difficulties encountered by big business when it sought to exercise on the local scene the dominance it enjoyed nationally. In the aftermath of Reconstruction, the national Republican Party had abandoned much of its earlier reform fervor and had come to represent the interests of big business and professional politicians. But the Party's equal rights tradition stubbornly persisted

⁸ Leon Wolff, *Lockout: The Story of the Homestead Strike of 1892* (New York, 1965), 74-86; Joseph F. Wall, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York, 1970), 550-57.

in the nurturing environment of small industrial towns. In many of these communities outside business leaders were not completely able to transform their wealth into local standing and political power. It was not uncommon, in communities like Homestead, for town residents—and the local leadership—to support workers and strikers against powerful outside intruders and their alien values. The historic Republican commitment to equal rights had broad strength and appeal in Homestead; it helped account for the widespread support Homestead strikers received from workers, citizens, and reformers.⁹

The town of Homestead closed ranks behind the steel workers. Burgess John McLuckie, a steelworker himself, and other public officials supported the strikers as did the editor of the *Local News*, who criticized the company and castigated the Pinkertons. Even members of the local business community provided support. A clothier contributed one hundred dollars; other merchants forwarded tobacco and pipes to the strikers; and some landlords suspended rent collections during the strike.¹⁰ Even some clergymen defended the strikers. Reverend J.H. McIllyar preached about the dangers of centralized wealth, and he condemned the use of Pinkertons. Reverend W.T. Galloway demanded a more equitable distribution of wealth and asserted the right of labor to organize.¹¹

Sympathizers from other areas added their voices. In his Fourth of July oration, Pittsburgh attorney Thomas M. Marshall related the Homestead struggle to the nation's democratic tradition. He called on the people to reclaim their right to self-government from the corporations and trusts that stood ready to impose their despotism on the nation. Marshall recalled the American heritage of equality, which emphasized the wealth of manhood rather than the wealth of corporations. He referred specifically to Homestead as a place where steel workers created wealth and coupled the strikers with the delegates to the Omaha convention of the Populist Party as exponents of the value of manhood.¹²

⁹ *National Labor Tribune*, September 24, 1892.

¹⁰ *Local News*, July 2, 9, 23, August 23, 1892; *Pittsburgh Commercial-Gazette*, July 2, 1892; *National Labor Tribune*, August 27, 1892.

¹¹ *Local News*, July 9, 1892, *New York Times*, July 12, 1892.

¹² *Pittsburgh Commercial-Gazette*, July 5, 1892.

Terence Powderly, General Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, condemned Frick and demanded the Pinkertons be punished for their brutality toward Homestead strikers. He characterized the strikers as orderly and peaceable citizens. Powderly advised the Amalgamated to seek assistance from the Farmers Alliance. The farmers, he insisted, would understand the needs of workers and would respond positively to requests for food.¹³ For its part, the Populist Party referred to events at Homestead in reaching out to workers, condemning Pinkertonism in its Omaha Platform and in the platform of the Pennsylvania Populist Party. Populist newspapers in Kansas and Nebraska echoed these sentiments.

The fiery orator Mary Lease presented the Populist position on the issue in a letter to the *Advocate*, a Populist newspaper in Kansas. Lease condemned Andrew Carnegie for using Pinkertons to force American laborers to accept starvation wages. She asserted that Kansas farmers, imbued with the spirit of 1776, sympathized with toilers and oppressed humanity everywhere. Lease asked that Kansans "send . . . from this state such a train load of wheat and corn to our Homestead brothers as will make hungry mothers and their little ones laugh with glee." Within a month, the *Advocate* reported "the farmers of Kansas sending provisions to the locked out Homestead laborers." The paper declared that the fight in Homestead would be repeated "in every great plutocratic establishment employing union labor in the United States." It called on all labor forces to stand together and requested that the aid to Homestead continue.¹⁴

The Homestead battle pitted a unified work force, mobilized around the Amalgamated and supported by the town residents, local leaders, and outside sympathizers, against the wealth and power of Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick. After the workers won a celebrated victory against the Pinkertons, the tide began to turn. Frick called on the state for support and the governor responded by dispatching the militia to protect strikebreakers. Judicial intervention

¹³ Terence Powderly to Wm. M. Coleman, August 31, 1892; Powderly to Ben Frank Fries, August 31, 1892; Powderly to General Weaver, September 14, 1892; Powderly to Stephen Maden, July 9, 1892, all in Powderly Papers, microfilm edition, University of Pittsburgh Library.

¹⁴ Norman Pollock, ed., *The Populist Mind* (Indianapolis, 1967), 334-35, 438-39, 441-42, 449-51.

further compounded the strikers' problems. The arrest and trial of strike leaders for the deaths of seven Pinkertons ended when a jury found the defendants not guilty. But the legal proceedings drained the Amalgamated's limited resources. The Carnegie Steel Company ultimately prevailed because of its superior wealth and power. As winter neared and the company restored production, the Amalgamated called off its five-month strike on November 20. The defeat seriously undermined the power of the skilled workers and their union.

With its victory, the company substantially removed the problem of craft union opposition to its plans for the reorganization of the Homestead works. In the absence of an effective union, the Carnegie Company was able to deal with pockets of resistance remaining within the mills by laying off some skilled workers and blacklisting others. This further weakened the Amalgamated, as did a company policy of fragmenting the work force by promoting non-union workers.

The company followed through on its program to institute new technologies, transform the production process, and lower labor costs. It shifted the bulk of its production from iron to steel, which was less dependent on skilled labor. Greater specialization in production—an industry-wide phenomenon that accompanied technological change and the expansion of markets—also required fewer highly skilled workers. Their places were taken by less skilled machine tenders, often recent immigrants from eastern Europe. At the same time, increased mechanization led to a 25 percent decrease in the total number of steel workers from 1892 to 1897, by which date Homestead required only 2,900 men to “run full.” With skilled workers less important and workers in general less able to resist the drive for greater productivity, the pace of work intensified under the “pushing” of gang foremen. The work day lengthened to twelve hours. Through the 1890s the output of steel workers doubled while their wages increased by only 20 percent.¹⁵

Some shopfloor opposition to the Carnegie Steel Company continued, but it was generally ineffective. For example, forty workers at the 33 inch mill struck against wage reductions in 1893. Further wage reductions in 1895 heightened dissatisfaction. But when workers met

¹⁵ David Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era* (New York, 1960), 26-28, 31-33, 48.

to discuss a collective response, the company fired all those who had played a prominent role in the union meeting.¹⁶

Homestead workers turned to public protest and politics with better results. They deserted the Republicans in 1892, instead supporting the Democrats to express their strong feelings about the strike and lockout. A contingent of 600 strikers joined a massive Democratic parade in Pittsburgh early in October. In the course of their march, they paused to give three rousing cheers for Hugh O'Donnell (a prominent strike leader) and other jailed strikers, and to vent their anger against Carnegie in a chorus of groans. Homestead hosted a major parade in honor of Grover Cleveland on October 23. Cleveland carried Homestead decisively, with more than 50 percent of the vote; the Republicans carried less than 40 percent of the electorate.¹⁷

Over the next few years, the residents of Homestead participated in other and more radical forms of political protest. In the midst of the severe economic dislocation wrought by the depression of 1893, "industrial armies" emerged to protest unemployment and other hardships and to call for government intervention in the economy. The most notable protest was associated with Jacob Coxey, who called on the federal government deliberately to inflate the currency and pump money into the economy by underwriting the construction of roads and other public improvements. To arouse public interest in his program, Coxey and his followers undertook a march from Massillon, Ohio, to Washington in 1894 as a "living petition" of the unemployed. Other armies of the unemployed, many larger than Coxey's, also formed and planned to march toward Washington and to join up with Coxey. The demands of the "industrial armies" won widespread support from Populists and organized labor along the route of the march.

Homestead prepared to greet Coxey's Army. Defeated by Carnegie and with little power in the mills, steel workers saw Coxey's march as an opportunity to link their complaints about the company with a

¹⁶ *National Labor Tribune*, January 26, May 4, 1893; J. Bernard Hogg, "The Homestead Strike of 1892," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1943, 208; *Local News*, January 4, 12, 14, 1895.

¹⁷ Arthur Burgoyne, *The Homestead Strike of 1892* (Pittsburgh, 1979; reprint of 1893 ed.), 212-14, 222; *Smull's Legislative Handbook of Pennsylvania*, 1893, 497.

broader social movement. Coxey presented himself, after all, as a champion of labor. Elmer E. Bales, a former employee of the Carnegie Company and most likely a member of the advisory committee of the Homestead lodges of the Amalgamated at the time of the lockout, spearheaded local efforts. He recruited unemployed steel workers to join Coxey's Army and held a meeting of Coxeyites and Populists to attract others to the cause. The audience heard speeches by Bales, Eugene Sullivan, and William Foy, who had been shot by a Pinkerton detective during the lockout. They also heard a report that several local businessmen had contributed bread and meat to supply the expedition.

As the column of Coxey's Army approached Homestead, Elmer Bales led an escort from the town and the Homestead Steel Workers' Band to meet them. A banner announcing local support for Coxey's Good Roads Program also greeted the marchers. The people of Homestead turned out in force to provide a hearty welcome. The escort led the marchers through the streets to their camp, which soon became overcrowded with an influx of new recruits. Here the army attained its greatest strength, with press estimates of five to six hundred marchers. Many recent immigrants—notably Poles, Hungarians, and Slavs—joined the industrial army. A meeting at the Opera House provided a forum for Coxey's message. The town contributed three wagonloads of provisions, plus blankets, shoes, and other supplies. In an ironic twist the Coxeyites appointed Alexander Childs, a nephew of Henry Clay Frick, as their commissary officer.¹⁸

Other industrial armies also visited Homestead. William H. Sullivan brought his 2nd Chicago Division to the town, where they were greeted by Elmer Bales and other members of the Populist Club who led them to the park where they camped in Homestead. Speeches by Sullivan and Bales highlighted their visit, and John McLuckie spoke in behalf of better laws for workers. Galvin's Army also marched into Homestead. Its members received a warm welcome and food.

¹⁸ Burgoyne, *Homestead Strike*, 38, lists Elmer E. Ball as a member of the advisory committee; Sullivan was the Populist candidate for state legislator in 1894; Burgoyne, *Homestead Strike*, 61; Donald L. McMurry, *Coxey's Army: A Study of the Industrial Army Movement of 1894* (New York, 1970; reprint of 1929 ed.), 79, 92. Carlos A. Schwantes, *Coxey's Army: An American Odyssey* (Lincoln, NE, 1985), 61.

Galvin consulted with the labor leaders and Populists who had met Coxey. As industrial armies became more commonplace in Homestead, they received less attention. Nevertheless, armies like those of Randall and Thomas continued to appear as they made their way to Washington. Some public officials and citizens in the Pittsburgh area viewed Coxeyism with alarm—as a threat to property and existing institutions. Police in Pittsburgh and Allegheny feared that the presence of the Coxeyites would precipitate violence by the unemployed. In Homestead, however, the local newspaper editorialized that the town had given respectful and generous treatment to the industrial armies and they had acted in an orderly and peaceable manner.¹⁹

Besides supporting Coxey's petition to Congress, the Populists continued their own agitation for social change. In Homestead the dramatic events of 1894 provided the impetus for an alliance of radically minded groups. The *Local News* announced that the Coxey Club had changed its name to the Homestead Populist Club. The new organization planned a mass rally for May, inviting speakers from the Populist Party, the Amalgamated, and the United Mine Workers. At the end of the month, a Populist Club meeting featured a speaker who addressed Slavic members of the audience in their language; he promised the group that Homestead's Slavs and Poles would be naturalized in time to cast their ballots for the Populist Party in the next election. Later in the year, a Slavic Independent Political Club was formed.²⁰

In June, 1894, Populists from the region held an enthusiastic convention in Pittsburgh's Lafayette Hall to nominate candidates for the forthcoming election. More than four hundred delegates heard an address by Eugene Sullivan, a strong supporter of industrial armies, who accepted a nomination to run for the state legislature. The Populist slate included other men from Homestead as well—B.W. Carpenter for district attorney, James Campbell for state legislature, and D.W. Hutchinson for the U.S. House of Representatives. The town's prominent representation on the ticket acknowledged its standing as a Populist stronghold. Homestead's Populist Club had two hundred members, which encouraged optimistic expectations for the

¹⁹ *Local News*, June 19, 20, 25, 26, 1894; McMurry, *Coxey's Army*, 141.

²⁰ *Local News*, May 2, 31, September 24, 1894.

forthcoming election. Later in the month Homestead Populists sent a large delegation and several speakers to an outdoor meeting of McKeesport Populists. In late October the members of the Homestead Populist Club began pressuring politicians who had failed to support Coxey's demands for good roads and currency reform.

As the early November election neared, the Populists held a parade and a well attended meeting at which speakers condemned protectionism and pointed out that the same laws applied differently to workers and monopolists. On the eve of the election, the editors of the local newspaper described the Populists as the most active of the three parties. Their editorial noted that Populist meetings drew the largest crowds and aroused the most enthusiasm. The newspaper characterized the Populist Party in Homestead, taking population into account, as the strongest in western Pennsylvania, if not the Commonwealth.

The election itself bore out this assessment. The Republicans carried Homestead, but the Populists outpolled the Democrats and ran well ahead of their party on the state and national level. James Weaver had polled 8.5 percent of the national vote in his race for the presidency in 1892; Jerome T. Ailman carried less than 3 percent of the vote in his Populist campaign for governor of Pennsylvania in 1894. In Homestead, Ailman won 15 percent of the vote and other Populist candidates did even better. Congressional and legislative candidates polled 28 percent of the vote. The Populist candidate for Congress won more than 25 percent of the vote in Munhall, nearby site of other Carnegie plants. This was a moral victory for the Populists; indeed Populists were not implicated in charges of vote selling that otherwise circulated around the election.²¹

The Populist Club remained active after the election, holding meetings, hosting speakers, and taking political stands. By 1895, local Populists were focusing on such local issues as the "Greater Pittsburgh Plan," which they opposed. This was a proposal for the city's annexation of neighboring towns and townships. Homestead's Populists also condemned the borough council for failing to provide sufficiently high levels of public service. The Club attacked local government

²¹ Ibid., June 11, 14, 19, 20, 25, 26. October 26, November 3, 6, 7, 8, 1894.

inefficiencies and the preferential treatment accorded the Carnegie Company and corporations which received valuable franchises. The Populist Club also demanded the democratization of local government, calling specifically for the election of the Chief Engineer of the Water Works, for a prohibition against granting franchises without a referendum, and for the right of taxpayers to submit petitions on borough affairs. The party nominated candidates for local office in the 1895 election, but the results failed to meet expectations. One of the candidates for borough council did poll more than 30 percent of the vote and finished second. By the following year the Club had disappeared, but a Citizens Borough Party had been organized. Its members criticized the borough council, saw a need to check extravagance, and advocated an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. In the 1896 election, P.J. Fagan, elected as constable on Democratic-Populist ticket in 1895, won re-election as a Democrat. However, other nominees of the Citizens Party fared less well, and the Republicans won a substantial victory.²²

With the Republican Party victorious locally as well as nationally, the Carnegie Company was able to add control over the town to its dominance in the plant. This dominance, which lasted for more than a decade, was virtually uncontested. Some Homestead workers did organize a lodge of the Amalgamated in 1899, and the Amalgamated did strike in 1901. In addition, some working-class residents raised objections to the paternalism of the Carnegie Library. But these events were not on the order of the assertions of working-class power of the mid-1890s. It was not until semiskilled, immigrant workers turned to the Socialist Party in the early twentieth century that a serious challenge to the company's control of local politics emerged. Then, a flourishing socialist local began to operate in Homestead, and Eugene Debs polled 22 percent of the vote in his 1912 bid for the presidency. This resurgence of protest clearly built on the foundation provided by the 1889-95 period.

The presence of Eugene Debs as the standard-bearer of the Socialist Party of America in 1912 eased the transition from the protest movement of the 1890s, based on the republican tradition of equal rights,

²² Ibid., December 20, 28, 1894; January 10, February 20, March 21, 1895; February 15, 22, 1896.

to the newer emphases of early twentieth-century class struggle.²³ Eugene Debs had roots in the republican tradition; he counterposed to corporate capitalism a prophetic call to establish a society based on political and economic equality. Debs called for a renewal of the essential meaning of the American Revolution, for a contemporary re-interpretation of that event in the form of a "workers' republic." While serving as Secretary-Treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Fireman and editor of *The Locomotive Fireman Magazine*, he condemned corporate and Pinkerton treachery. He declared in August, 1892 that Carnegie was trying to annihilate labor unions, thereby robbing the creators of wealth and leaving the company's owners alone to benefit from the introduction of new machinery. Debs compared the Homestead workers who repelled the Pinkertons to the minutemen of Lexington and Concord. He also pointed to the potential significance of Homestead. "It required Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill to arouse the colonies to resistance and the battle of Homestead should serve to arouse every working man in America to a sense of the dangers that surround him."²⁴

The Homestead Lockout of 1892 was a watershed event in labor-management relations in the workplace and in the town. But the Carnegie Company was more completely successful in securing control of the factory than it was of the town. Although Homestead did shift from a workers' town to a company town, periodic political upheavals, particularly in 1894 and 1912, furnished proof that the company's triumph was not complete. National developments in 1894—the rise of the industrial armies and the spread of the Populist Party—sparked a renewal in the political rather than the industrial arena of working-class struggle. These political clashes demonstrate the difficulties faced by the Carnegie Steel Company in transposing its dominance of the workplace into control of the town. Although the company managed

²³ Most published scholarship identifies republicanism with skilled workers of western European background. Paul Krause does not dispute the strength of republican ideology among this group, but he also documents a strong commitment to this ideology among eastern European unskilled workers. See his article "Labor Republicanism and 'Za Chlebom': Anglo-Americans and Slavic Solidarity in Homestead" in *"Struggle A Hard Battle": Essays on Working-Class Immigrants*, Dirk Hoerder, ed. (DeKalb, IL, 1986), 143-69.

²⁴ Salvatore, *Debs*, 60, 81, 229, 334; *International Socialist Review*, 15 (August, 1914), 106-08.

to transform Homestead into a company town, opposition to company rule continued and on occasion surfaced in such major movements as the campaign of the Socialist Party of America in the election of 1912. In that campaign Debs could address Homestead workers both in the republican rhetoric of the 1890s and in the class struggle terminology offered by socialism in the early twentieth century.²⁵

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²⁵ Joan Smith, "Labour Tradition in Glasgow and Liverpool," *History Workshop* (Spring, 1984): 32-39. Smith makes a somewhat similar point about early twentieth-century socialism in Glasgow. She contends that radical liberalism provided a "rock like foundation for the development of that socialism" and these continuities enabled workers to become socialists without totally rejecting all previous beliefs and the beliefs of their friends and families.

