

Socialism in Our Times Wholesale Instead of Retail Methods --- A MILLION IS NEEDED.

CIRCULATION QUARTER OF A MILLION A WEEK.

Appeal to Reason.

Girard, Kansas, U. S. A., January 5, 1903.

OWNERSHIP of the EARTH By All the People, and Not by the Few.

Comrades

For months I have been making plans, perfecting the equipment of the office, and gathering to the staff of the Appeal a corps of editorial writers in order to put the paper on the basis of a Million Circulation...

Why prolong the struggle with Capitalism? Why make Socialism a question of coming generations? Why not begin to carry cities and states - not in the future, but in the present?

Give us an average of 50 subscribers at each office and the deed is done. Don't you see it is possible? Why hesitate, then? I want to see Socialism inaugurated before I die and I am going to make you a proposition that will test your strength, your manhood and your patriotism to the core.

Subscription form with fields for Name, Residence, Street and No., and Date.

Great Success are the Authors of success. The leaders in the modern world have succeeded only because they have...

"Identity of Interests"

Behind the Scenes! Machine, Read the Following Color. Unionists, Close Your Rank! Attention!

While the Comprolators have been busy in making laws by the name of National Most Trade Association has been at the...

Knows of Labor.

It is not a secret that the National Most Trade Association has been at the...

Taxed Without Representation.

It is not a secret that the National Most Trade Association has been at the...

FUNDS.

The Appeal Must Have Money to Circulate. The Popular Edition. The Appeal has required a great deal of money...

THE MEET OF ALL.

It is not a secret that the National Most Trade Association has been at the...

A Starting Point.

This association of work hours and wages has been at the...

THE MEET OF ALL.

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Published in Girard, the Appeal to Reason was the most popular socialist newspaper of its day. One reason for its wide circulation was its continual self-promotion including many campaigns encouraging "comrades" to sell more subscriptions.

THE APPEAL TO REASON AND AMERICAN SOCIALISM, 1901-1920

DAVID PAUL NORD

THEODORE ROOSEVELT called it a "viperative organ of pornography, anarchy and bloodshed." Other, more witty detractors called it the "Squeal for Treason." But the editors of the *Appeal to Reason* were content to call it simply "the greatest Socialist newspaper in the world." For a time, during the heyday of American socialism before World War I, they may well have been right. In 1912-1913 some 323 Socialist newspapers were published in America, and the absolute champion of circulation was the *Appeal to Reason*, published in tiny Girard, Kan. These 323 papers shared a circulation of about two million in 1913. Of this two million, the *Appeal* accounted for about 760,000—distributed all over the country.¹ Nearly everyone, left and right, agreed that the *Appeal* was the most influential and the most popular voice of the Socialist Party of America during the party's most successful years, 1901-1920.²

This essay reports on a study of the *Appeal to Reason* and its relation to American socialism during these years. The study relies on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the *Appeal's* content³ in an attempt to answer three questions:

- What sort of socialism did the *Appeal to Reason* advocate through its news and commentary, and how did this content change over time?
- What sort of journalistic techniques did the *Appeal* use to achieve such success in circulation?
- How did the content of the *Appeal* relate to the changing fortunes of American socialism during this period? Specifically, I will offer a

test of the hypothesis that, as a movement begins to decline, the press will become increasingly introverted and concerned with internal party and movement matters.

Such a study of the popular Socialist press, particularly of the *Appeal to Reason*, should provide some insight into what socialism really meant to Americans who called themselves Socialists in the progressive era. This has been something of a mystery underlying much of the historical debate over the question of why socialism failed in America. The traditional "consensus" view from the 1950's has been that socialism never had any wide appeal because it stood completely outside the American liberal tradition.⁴ This view, however, came to seem at odds with the fact that the Socialist Party of America did achieve something like a mass following in the years before 1920. For example, in 1912, the high point of Socialist electoral strength, Eugene V. Debs polled six percent of the total vote for President. Meanwhile, some 1,200 local Socialist officials were serving or were elected in 1912 in 340 municipalities, including 79 mayors in 24 states.⁵ A variation of the consensus view was offered to explain this apparent anomaly: When Socialists were successful, they were not acting as Socialists but merely as social reformers within the standard political system.⁶ In the 1960's, several "New Left" historians began to attack the whole consensus approach. They argued that there did exist a genuine, mass, anticapitalist movement in America, which persisted into the 1920's and which failed largely because of internal factional conflict and external governmental repression, not because of struc-

1. James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New York, Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 84-85.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 85; Paul M. Buhle, "The Appeal to Reason," in *The American Radical Press, 1880-1960*, ed. by Joseph R. Conlin (Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1974), p. 50; Howard H. Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism* (Columbia, University of South Carolina, 1953), ch. 6; Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 248; and David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (New York, Macmillan, 1955), pp. 28-34.

3. For a note on method, see the Appendix.

4. Daniel Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States," in *Socialism and American Life*, v. 1, ed. by Donald Drew Egbert and Stow Persons (Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 214. See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955); and Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1953).

5. Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism*, pp. 93, 103.

6. Shannon, *Socialist Party*, pp. 262-268. See, also, Bryan Strong, "Historians and American Socialism, 1900-1920," *Science and Society*, New York, v. 34 (Winter, 1970), p. 387.

tural peculiarities of American society.⁷ This is where the debate still stands. In a recent (1974) collection of articles and comments on the failure of socialism in American, nothing new is added and the disputants are still poles apart.⁸

Part of the reason for such polar disagreement in this mystery of who the Socialists were and what they believed in and fought for. Historical studies have naturally centered on the major personalities and leaders. And the personal and philosophical differences among leaders have become the bases for differing interpretations of the movement. What is needed, though impossible to get at directly, is an understanding of the views of the hundreds of thousands of party sympathizers and ordinary voters who put 1,200 Socialists into public office. One way of getting at this problem indirectly is through studies of the popular Socialist newspapers, which, unlike many commercial dailies, clearly had to compete with each other and with non-Socialist papers for reader attention. The *Appeal to Reason* was not really typical of the prewar Socialist newspapers. The Socialist press was very diverse, and the *Appeal* was at best typical of one brand of popular Socialist journalism. But the *Appeal* is of immense importance in its own right. It was "typical" of what most Socialists were reading in the sense that most Socialists read it.

The *Appeal to Reason* has been largely ignored by journalism historians.⁹ Labor historians have studied it, though somewhat haphazardly. Most accounts seem to rely on two early journalistic studies by W. J. Ghent and George Milburn and on the late 1940's scholarly work of Howard Quint.¹⁰ Ghent set the style for articles about the *Appeal*. He described the paper as an aggressive, undogmatic, sensational, sometimes reckless propagator of pop-

ular socialism. "It talks the gospel of socialism in short and pithy sentences," he said, "the kind that one can pass along to one's shopmate or neighbor."¹¹ He attributed the success of the *Appeal* to J. A. Wayland, the paper's founder and moving spirit until his suicide in 1912. Wayland, who liked to call himself the "One Hoss Editor," "left dogma to the closet philosophers and the theologians of the movement and spoke to common men in their own language."¹² George Milburn saw the *Appeal* more as a muckraking scandal sheet, and he gave more of the credit for its success to Fred Warren, editor from 1901 until 1914, who once said he "didn't know how to run a paper except to biff every head that appeared."¹³ But Milburn's assessment is much the same as Ghent's. It was a mixture of muckraking, scandal, circulation hustle, and epigrammatic socialism that made the *Appeal* such a rip-roaring success.

Howard Quint added details to these early impressionistic studies of the *Appeal*, particularly stressing the personality of J. A. Wayland.¹⁴ Quint attributed the success of the paper to Wayland's undogmatic, Populistic brand of socialism, and to his skill as a popular journalist. Wayland preferred Bellamy to Marx, and almost anyone to Daniel DeLeon. As Quint put it: "Wayland hankered for the destruction of the capitalistic system and was never overly concerned as to the method of accomplishment."¹⁵ Wayland's style made the *Appeal* unique. He often wrote in short epigrams, each containing a complete story and a simple moral. As a "paragrapher" Wayland had few peers.¹⁶

Several of the more general histories of American socialism follow the story of the *Appeal*, briefly, through to its demise in 1922, but they add little to what Quint said 25 years ago or even to what Ghent said in 1911.¹⁷ The most recent article on the *Appeal to Reason* ap-

7. Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism*, pp. viii-ix.

8. John H. M. Laslett and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Failure of a Dream? Essays in the History of American Socialism* (Garden City, N. Y., Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974).

9. Mott appears to be the only popular journalism historian who mentions the *Appeal*. See Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1885-1905* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 204-206.

10. W. J. Ghent, "The Appeal and Its Influence," *Survey*, New York and Chicago, v. 26, no. 1 (April 1, 1911), pp. 24-28; George Milburn, "The Appeal to Reason," *American Mercury*, New York, v. 23 (July, 1931), pp. 359-371; Quint, *Forging of American Socialism*, ch. 6; and Quint, "Julius Augustus Wayland, Pioneer Socialist Propagandist," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, v. 35 (1949), pp. 585-606. See, also, George H. Shoaf, "The Biggest Little Paper This Country Ever Knew," *Monthly Review*, an Independent Socialist Magazine, New York, v. 3, no. 3 (July, 1951), pp. 88-98.

11. Ghent, "The Appeal," p. 27.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

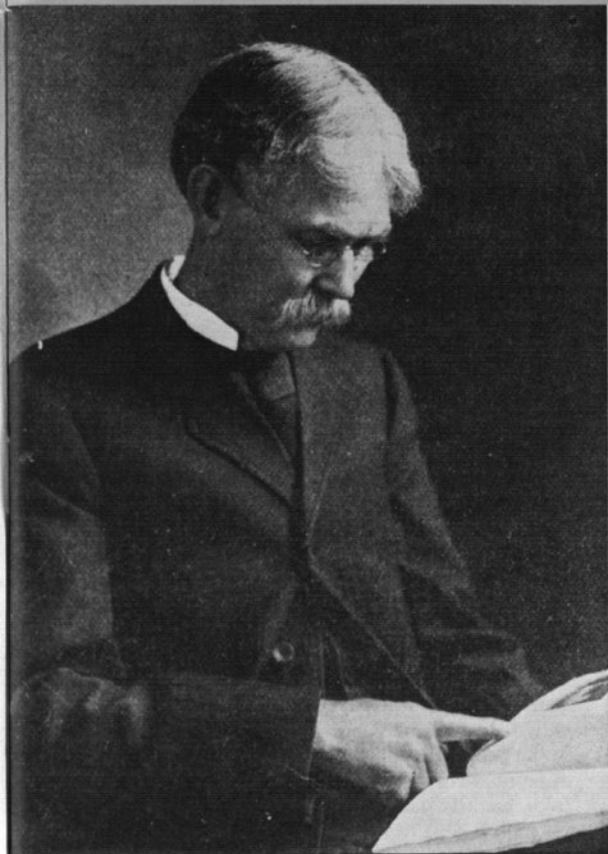
13. Milburn, "The Appeal to Reason," p. 370. For more on Warren, see George D. Brewer, *The Fighting Editor: Warren and the Appeal* (Girard, Appeal to Reason, 1910).

14. For more on the life of Wayland, see J. A. Wayland, *Leaves of Life* (Girard, Appeal to Reason, 1912); and George A. England, "The Story of the Appeal," *Appeal to Reason*, September 6, 1913.

15. Quint, *Forging of American Socialism*, p. 176.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

17. Bell, "Marxian Socialism," p. 259; Kipnis, *American Socialist Movement*, pp. 248-250; Shannon, *Socialist Party*, pp. 4, 28-32; Weinstein, *Decline of Socialism*, pp. 84-86, 92-93.



J.A. Wayland (1854-1912) was the founder and moving spirit of the *Appeal to Reason* until his suicide in 1912. Dedicated to a Populist brand of socialism, he spoke the language of the common man and developed a unique writing style characterized by epigrams and short paragraphs. Photograph reproduced from *Metropolitan*, New York, January, 1913.

peared several years ago as a brief preface to a reprint edition of the paper. Paul M. Buhle, following the accounts of his predecessors, concludes that "the *Appeal* was the most important evangelistic propaganda organ of the Left and the clearest expression of indigenous American socialism."¹⁸ The present essay will attempt to explore more systematically what these past studies have only suggested about the *Appeal* and its peculiar brand of indigenous American socialism.

THE FIRST question I have posed is, what sort of socialism did the *Appeal to Reason* advocate through its news and commentary, and how did this content change over time? To answer this question, I set up categories of common story themes found in the *Appeal* over the years 1901-1920. For the sake of continuity of narrative, a detailed discussion of the method used, including specific category definitions, has been relegated to the appendix. In

18. Buhle, "The Appeal to Reason," p. 50.

much of the following discussion, I will be interested in changes in content between two broad periods: 1901-1912 and 1913-1920. This division derives from the fact that 1912 has for several reasons traditionally been considered the high point of American socialism, with support rising up to 1912 and declining thereafter. This division also corresponds roughly with the death of J. A. Wayland in 1912 and the retirement of Fred Warren in 1914, the two leaders of the *Appeal* in its early years. Louis Kopelin, a young New York socialist journalist, took over the editorship from Warren in 1914. Emmanuel Haldeman-Julius edited the paper from 1918 until its suspension in 1922.

In general, my analysis of the content of the *Appeal* agrees with much of what Quint and others have said. I found, for example, that throughout the period much of the content of the paper was devoted to muckraking, in both business and government, and to self-congratulations and circulation promotion (which will be discussed in the next section). But there are

a few surprises. Despite its Populist flavor, the *Appeal* actually carried very few stories devoted to agriculture and farm problems and very few on public ownership and popular democracy (*i. e.*, initiative, referendum, and recall). And despite its reputation for lack of dogma, the paper always carried a healthy portion of pretty orthodox socialist and economic theory.

Five broad themes seemed to be most important in the *Appeal* throughout this period. These were: (1) attacks on business, (2) attacks on government, (3) descriptions of social problems, (4) explanations of socialist and economic theory, and (5) stories about socialist activities. These will be discussed in turn.

TABLE I
MAIN STORY THEMES, 1901-1920
(percentages are proportions of total stories in each time period)

Story Theme	1901-1912	1913-1920	1901-1920
Business	14.4%	7.6%	12.4%
Government	16.4	17.3	16.7
Social Problems	5.6	6.6	5.9
Socialist Theory	6.1	10.5	7.4
Socialist Activities	11.9	14.2	12.6
Total Stories	2,003	832	2,835

Stories attacking business, business leaders, and business practices in America accounted for over 12 percent of the *Appeal's* stories over the period 1901-1920. The earlier period, 1901-1912, carried a greater proportion of business stories than the later period, 1913-1920. The difference in the sample between 14.4 percent for the earlier period and 7.6 percent for the later period is statistically significant.

Most of the stories in this category were attacks on the trusts, the monopolies, the railroads, Wall Street, and big business in general. Though Populistic in tone and often muckraking in style, the *Appeal* never favored abolishing the trusts. Wayland and his successors praised monopoly as part of a new age of "wonderful invention, progress, evolution—a marvelous age. . . . The only question is whether the people shall control the trusts, or the trusts control the people."¹⁹ In 1905 a special "trust edition" of more than two million copies was published, and the theme was the same: The trust is here to stay; it cannot be abolished or regulated; it must be owned by

19. *Appeal to Reason*, Girard, January 26, 1901.

the people.²⁰ In his usual informal manner Wayland summed up what is really an orthodox Socialist party position on big business: "The trusts are just as much an improvement over the old individualistic and small business methods as the reaper is over the sickle. The hurt is not because of the great aggregations of capital—but of the private ownership of it."²¹

Nearly 17 percent of the stories in the *Appeal*, 1901-1920, were attacks on government in one form or another. This proportion did not change much over time, but the composition of it did. Included in this category are stories about the military and war. Naturally, the *Appeal's* content reflected the onslaught of World War I. Less than half of one percent of the stories before 1913 dealt with the military or war. This jumped to 11.8 percent for the period after 1913.

Most of the stories in this category were attacks on the federal courts, the Presidents, and the military and war. The *Appeal* was particularly hostile to the courts. Wayland called the supreme court the "greatest enemy of the people," and he liked to say that "a judge appointed for life in a republic is a standing joke on the jackassical character of the voters."²² The *Appeal* took the usual radical stand against court injunctions against labor unions and court interference with free speech and free press.²³ But an approach more uniquely in the *Appeal* style was to expose the sordid pasts of individual federal judges; a favorite target was Peter Grosscup of Chicago.²⁴ In commenting on a series on the federal judiciary, Fred Warren wrote:

The filth and slime in which the representatives of capitalism grovel is not of our making. The *Appeal's* only interest in bringing to the broad light of day the Grosscup skeleton is to show you what kind of men are elevated to the bench where they wield a power despotic and autocratic and fraught with the gravest danger to the liberties of the American people.²⁵

The *Appeal* was also hostile to all the Presidents during these years—Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson—until after 1918 when the editors briefly came out in favor of Wilson and his war

20. *Ibid.*, December 9, 1905.

21. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1911.

22. *Ibid.*, March 9, 1907; April 8, 1911.

23. For a good example, see *ibid.*, January 7, 1911.

24. See series of five special issues on corruption in federal judiciary, beginning in *Appeal*, October 30, 1909.

25. *Ibid.*, January 1, 1910.

The *Appeal* was hostile to Presidents Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson, but the favorite target was Roosevelt. The newspaper called his trust-busting a bluff and criticized him on a personal level, accusing him of overindulging his drinking and hobbies.



"Speak softly and carry a Big Stick"—T. R.

policies.²⁶ The favorite target was always Roosevelt, "his strenuousness," whose name they often Russianized as "Ruzvlt." The *Appeal* criticized his so-called trust-busting as a bluff. Taking up a typical Socialist party argument echoed in the 1960's by Gabriel Kolko, the *Appeal* declared that the trusts welcomed regulation by a capitalist government as a way to co-opt the opposition. And Roosevelt was their puppet.²⁷ The *Appeal* also attacked Roosevelt on a more personal level, accusing him of drinking too much and of indulging his hobbies to the point that he had all but turned the White House into a bull-fighting arena and prize-fighting ring.²⁸ Never one to turn the other cheek, Roosevelt attacked the *Appeal* as "a paper which not only practices every form of malignant and brutal slander, but condones and encourages every form of brutal wrongdoing."²⁹

26. See, for example, on Roosevelt, *ibid.*, September 5, 1908; on Taft, January 22, 1910; on Wilson (con), February 3, 1912; on Wilson (pro), April 6, 1918.

27. *Ibid.*, June 24, 1905; October 9, 1909. See, also, Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism* (New York, Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), pp. 1-10.

28. *Appeal*, January 18, 1908; March 6, 1909.

29. Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in Milburn, "The 'Appeal to Reason,'" p. 369.

War was perhaps the most crucial single issue confronted by the *Appeal* (or by any Socialist paper in these years). Before World War I, the editors professed a standard Socialist position on war. All wars are caused by private greed and the capitalist system. The workers have no reason to fight in any war save the proletarian war of the social revolution.³⁰ With the outbreak of war in Europe, the *Appeal* declared in a banner headline: "War? If the masters want blood, let them cut their own throats."³¹ Throughout the early stages of the war, the *Appeal* denounced the war abroad along with preparedness, profiteering, and conscription at home, often through the articles of Allan Benson, a staff writer who became such a popular antiwar spokesman that he was nominated by the Socialist party for President in 1916.³²

Even after the United States entered the war in April, 1917, the *Appeal* continued its support for the Socialist party's antiwar St. Louis

30. *Appeal*, May 25, 1901; November 29, 1902; July 25, 1908; November 15, 1913; September 11, 1915.

31. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1914.

32. For good examples of Benson's work, see *Appeal*, September 26, 1914, and following issues.

proclamation.³³ Throughout the summer and fall of 1917, the *Appeal* fought for an end to the war on the basis of no annexations and no indemnities.³⁴ When President Wilson formally endorsed these principles as official war aims, the *Appeal* abandoned the antiwar stand of the Socialist party and supported the war—and Wilson. A giant banner declared: “President Wilson Has Heard the ‘Voices of Humanity That Are in the Air’ and Declares in Favor of Democratic Settlement of War.”³⁵ The paper even changed its name to *The New Appeal*, to emphasize its new direction apart from the Socialist party. But the *Appeal’s* support for Wilson began to evaporate as the post-war attacks on radicals began and disappeared entirely when Wilson signed the “reactionary” and “imperialistic” Treaty of Versailles.³⁶ Thus ended the *Appeal’s* brief flirtation with “liberalism.” By March, 1919, the *Appeal to Reason* had its old name back and was trumpeting for President and Vice-President, Eugene Debs and Kate Richards O’Hare, who were both then serving time in federal prisons for their outspoken opposition to the war.³⁷

About six percent of the stories in the *Appeal* throughout 1901-1920 concerned what I have called social problems. These were stories about what the *Appeal* believed were the fruits of capitalism: poverty, crime, child labor, prostitution, suicide, unhealthy working conditions, alcoholism, and the like. Stories in this category are usually wonderful examples of what people in those days called sensational yellow journalism. For instance, on poverty: “A mother at Coldbrook, Mass., moved by the awful haunting fear of poverty, killed six children and then attempted suicide.”³⁸ On crime: An old woman in Cleveland was sent to jail for vagrancy. “Read this you profit-mongering mammon-worshippers.”³⁹ A headline on child labor: “Low, Brutal Greed Wrings Dividends From the Bodies of Tiny Children, and Squanders Wealth Upon Cats and Dogs.”⁴⁰ On working conditions: Coal mines are “underground slaughter pens.”⁴¹ On alcohol: “So-

cialists need clear heads and should avoid strong drink as their enemy and an ally of the capitalist system.”⁴² And on suicide—when Wayland himself became the news: “J. A. Wayland, founder of the *Appeal to Reason* and the *Coming Nation*, shot himself at his home in Girard Sunday night, hounded to his death by the relentless dogs of capitalism.”⁴³ The moral to the *Appeal’s* stories on social problems was always the same: Reform is futile; charity is a hoax; only an end to private greed and to private property can bring salvation.

White slavery was the social problem the *Appeal* loved to hate the most, and the paper has been credited with starting a white slavery vogue among the muckraking monthlies of New York.⁴⁴ “No language can describe the horrors of the white slave traffic,” effused the *Appeal* in 1909. “It is so beastly, so repulsive, so shocking that it staggers the senses. It seems like a hideous nightmare of hell and yet it is a fact of our every-day life under capitalism.”⁴⁵ Fred Warren even wrote fiction to make the point:

“Is there no place where a girl can earn bread?” she moans.

“Sure, my little darling!”

It is the first kindly voice she has heard in this city of brick and whirring iron.

But the look on the man’s face! Her woman’s instinct tells her what is in his mind, as with critical eye he surveys the cringing form of the girl before him. Ill-fitting as are the country-made garments, they cannot hide the graceful lines of her body.⁴⁶

In this fictional case, unlike real life, she gets away in the end.

A somewhat related category, which I have called life-style of the rich, included about two percent of *Appeal’s* stories. These stories changed little over time. They usually juxtaposed the gaudy and extravagant life-styles of the rich with the poverty and squalor of the working class. For example: “Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, 10 Rochester street, South End, Boston, found starving. And at Mrs. Astor’s ball there were twenty million dollars’ worth of gems displayed on the more or less nude

33. *Ibid.*, April 28, 1917.

34. *Ibid.*, May 12, June 2, 1917.

35. *Ibid.*, December 15, 1917.

36. *Ibid.*, July 5, 1919.

37. *Ibid.*, May 24, 1919.

38. *Ibid.*, April 6, 1901.

39. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1901.

40. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1902.

41. *Ibid.*, January 18, 1908.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 1. The *Appeal* also claims to have been the first Socialist newspaper to declare in favor of prohibition.—See *Appeal*, January 25, 1919.

43. *Ibid.*, November 16, 1912. For a full account of Wayland’s death, see the issue of November 23, 1912.

44. Milburn, “The ‘Appeal to Reason,’” p. 365.

45. *Appeal*, January 2, 1909. See, also, January 28, 1905; July 23, 1910; July 3, 1915; March 6, 1916.

46. *Appeal*, January 21, 1905.

For President, EUGENE V. DEBS

Appeal to Reason

For Vice-President, KATE R. O'HARE

We Nominate Debs for President! From Prison Cell to White House!

Nearly five months have passed and Eugene V. Debs, the veteran leader of American Socialism, is still incarcerated in a Federal prison in West Virginia. In spite of the earnest plea of tens of thousands of Americans for a general amnesty for Debs...

The power that he at Washington apparently wields these champions of labor and liberty to render their protest of Debs, like as they may their various petitions and advertised request for justice the authorities at Washington—yesterday nothing but Democratic party politicians from Palace doors—cannot control their hatred and prejudice for the specific of the law order. We know them too well. The same authorities who were content to let post-german of German lords get off with one and two year sentences for the serious crime of plotting up soldiers and destroying munition factories tell us that it is fair and just that neither American nor any other nation...

Mr. Mr. Agent of the Postoffice Department, on Mr. Agent of the Department of Justice—the Appeal is not going to advocate what you suspect or what you might like to have as advocate. The power we advocate is not the power of brute force. It is the legal and orderly power of American freedom. Political power. That is what we advocate—free and unimpeded use of our rights as American citizens. It is political power that got Woodrow Wilson, a college professor, in the White House. It is political power that got A. Mitchell Palmer, a Pennsylvania Democratic politician, in the powerful office of Attorney General where he can determine the lives and liberties of his fellow citizens. Political power put these men in office and political power will take them out of office. It is to break the people during the days of the Chair and even during the days of Kennedy had no means to determine who should be their rulers. Rightly they should have. In the United States the people have the means by which to determine who shall rule over them or who shall be their public servants. So far they

Debs Thanks Sinclair For Article in Special Debs Edition of the Appeal

Editor of the Appeal, Dear Sir: I have just received your issue which contains the article by you in the Appeal's Special Debs edition of the Appeal...

My dear friend Sinclair, I have had a most interesting article in your issue and it is full of political information and I want to thank you with a deep sense of the value of the article to the workers and the people. I am sure that the article will be read with interest and admiration by all who are interested in the rights of the people...

I have about 700 followers in the Appeal and I am sure that they will be most interested in the article. I am sure that they will be most interested in the article...

Debs in the White House will be the perpetuation of the new economic order dedicated to industrial slavery. So long as Debs is in prison the ideas that he is so ably advanced in the past will spread and inspire the workers of America even more than when they were preached to him in prison. Capitalist reaction has jailed Debs but has failed to jail his ideas.

In a prison in Missouri, Kate Richards O'Hare, a member of several children, and well-known figure in the Socialist movement of America, is today working the ground of a letter. She also has been made a victim of the espionage law which Federal Judge Amidon in his recent decision stated should never have been invoked unless actual intent to obstruct the trial should have been proven. Kate O'Hare, like Debs and the other political prisoners, were attempted to stop the war or to interfere with its prosecution. Prejudiced and ignorant Federal attorneys and anti-socialist juries believed them. That is why Kate O'Hare is in a cell. Because the United States Constitution forbids Congress from passing any law that would interfere with the rights of free speech and free press, and because an enlightened just like Federal Judge Amidon has said that the espionage law should not have been used to interfere with innocent expressions of belief, the Appeal to Reason com-

plains Kate Richards O'Hare as a martyr in the cause of liberty and democracy whose her cause for the maintenance of the vice presidency of the United States is to be voted on in the general election of 1920. Debs and O'Hare are the choice of the people of the United States who believe that the rights of man are greater than the rights of property. We respectfully submit their names through the columns of the Appeal to the people of America.

By placing at this time before the electorate the names of Debs and O'Hare as the candidates of the American Socialist and working people we are entering in the best of power that will open the prison doors to them and open the road for them to the White House. The Appeal has devised this idea of an early nomination and a plea for active campaigning in order that the political power of the working class of America, which will doubtless be displayed in a striking manner in 1920 may be demonstrated at once for the purpose of reaching to neutralize the class and have that important Debs, O'Hare and other victims of capitalist reaction. We need not wait until election day, 1920, to test our strength. With energy and intelligence we can demonstrate to the politicians men in control of the government that it is the part of political wisdom for them to declare a general amnesty for our comrades and co-workers. Let us give us the Socialist and labor vote now. Let it mount until Washington takes notice. Let us show by figures that are indisputable whether the people of this country want the Constitution amended by reaction and prejudice.

An election can be held now just as well as in 1920 for our immediate purposes are concerned. The Appeal to Reason will hold such an election and in spite of that all of America, and especially Washington, will see it as plain as day and learn its election lesson.

On this page we are printing a self-written blank which will serve as a fragment of American opinion on the question of the candidacy of Debs and O'Hare. Each person who writes the Appeal's Socialist and labor will have an opportunity to make his voice heard by taking advantage of an extraordinary offer we are making—and offer that only one man ever as a support of Debs for President and O'Hare for Vice President. By stating the names of American citizens on the Appeal mailing list you will be in the important work of raising up a tremendous Socialist vote that will put Debs in the White House.

There never was a situation like this and that is why we are proposing something unprecedented in the history of the Appeal to Reason. By getting new readers for the Appeal you are making it possible for us to educate American citizens in good time for definite action at the polls. The whole campaign rests in your hands—if Debs means nothing to you, then you will not fill a finger to help in this glorious battle. But we know that Debs means a great deal to all of us so that we shall not let his language be proven. The Appeal to Reason has already begun its campaign for Debs by opening a Washington BUREAU.

The Appeal advocated change and reform through political channels. As in this front page article the editors urged their readers to support socialist candidates, advocating the use of political not "brute" power. The newspaper covered all elections in great detail, particularly Eugene V. Debs's campaigns for President in 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1920. In this 1919 issue the Appeal nominated Debs who was then serving a term in prison for his opposition to the war.

bodies of the females." 47 The Appeal also carried a column from time to time called "Society Doings," with short items about lavish parties, dinners for dogs, divorce, murder and suicide, and assorted scandals.48

Though practically all stories in the Appeal carried a socialist moral or economic lesson, over seven percent of the stories over the two decades were overtly theoretical, at least in an informal sense. In this category falls material ranging from reprints of socialist classics to columns of simple questions and answers about what life will be like under socialism. Wayland and Warren always insisted that "the first step toward the emancipation of the

working classes and all other classes, is education in the principles of political economy." 49 Their successors continued and even increased this emphasis on economic instruction. In the years 1901-1912, slightly over six percent of the stories fell into this category. After 1912 the proportion jumped to 10.5 percent—a statistically significant increase. Though the Appeal's socialist and economic positions were fairly orthodox, its style was all its own. The paper might carry a chapter from Das Kapital or it might carry a column of simple epigrams on "What Socialism Will Do." 50 Subject matter ranged widely, but the favorite theme was the Marxist theory of surplus value—though this

47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., November 10, 1906. See, also, September, 3, 1904; February 24, 1906; January 18, 1908.

49. Ibid., June 1, 1901.
50. Ibid., January 24, 1903; December 17, 1904; March 6, 1909.

term was seldom used. Wayland simply said, "Labor wants the full result of its effort, it needs it, can use it and is entitled to it."⁵¹

The last of the five major content categories, socialist activities, accounts for 12.6 percent of the total content—a proportion which changed insignificantly between the earlier and the later periods. Most of the stories in this category were about Socialist election campaigns, Socialist party activities, and outside attacks on Socialists and radicals.

The *Appeal* always gave close coverage to elections, believing strongly in "ballots not bullets" as the way to socialism. At first, enthusiasm flowed more freely than votes. An item from a spring election issue in 1901 read: "In Braintree, Mass., the Socialists cast 128 votes for their candidate for water commissioner—Comrade Neal. Last fall the vote was 77. Keep up the lick, boys, and the world's ours."⁵² The *Appeal* covered all elections in great detail, particularly Debs's campaigns for President in 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1920, and Allan Benson's campaign in 1916.⁵³ Of lesser interest for the *Appeal*, but still covered fairly thoroughly, were the Socialist successes in a number of cities, such as Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York, Columbus, Schenectady, and Butte, Mont., and in the state of Oklahoma.⁵⁴ The *Appeal* never felt that "municipal socialism," such as in Milwaukee, amounted to much more than practice for the real thing to come. But the editors all agreed with Warren that the vote, not sabotage or "direct action," was the key. "Be wise, Mr. Workingman," Warren said, "and exercise your right at the ballot box. When this plan has failed, it will be time to discuss other methods."⁵⁵

Underlying election campaigns must be party organization. This was a constant theme.⁵⁶ Ordinarily, the *Appeal* simply stressed the need for a strong organization, while refusing to take part in party politics or factional debates. From time to time, however, the editors did enter the fray, but usually they counseled charity and patience in tactical dis-

putes.⁵⁷ After the *Appeal* became a supporter of America's involvement in the war, however, it launched a number of broadsides against the Socialist party leadership for being overly dogmatic and impractical.⁵⁸ The *Appeal's* attacks on the party, though, were relatively mild compared to the diatribes of many unhappy Socialists who had deserted the party over the war issue.

Stories about attacks on Socialists and radicals formed the bulk of the category, Socialist activities. And the proportion of these stories increased significantly after 1912. The *Appeal* followed in detail all the great, violent strikes and all the prosecutions of Socialists and radical labor leaders during this period. The names of Cripple Creek, Telluride, and Ludlow, and of Haywood, Moyer, McNamara, Mooney, and Debs were, for 15 years, splashed across page one in banner headlines. The illegal extradition—"kidnapping"—of Western Federation of Miners officials Haywood, Moyer, and Pettibone from Colorado to Idaho in 1906 to stand trial for the murder of a former governor set the style for this kind of coverage.⁵⁹ Debs, who joined the paper as a staff writer during this fight, wrote one of his most famous pieces, "Arouse, Ye Slaves," for the March 10, 1906, edition. Debs warned:

If they attempt to murder Moyer, Haywood and their brothers, a million revolutionists, at least, will meet them with guns. . . . The worm turns at last, and so does the worker. Let them dare to execute their devilish plot and every state in this union will resound with the tramp of revolution.⁶⁰

To test whether capitalists, like workingmen, could be "kidnapped" from one state to another, the *Appeal* offered a \$1,000 reward for the kidnapping of a former Kentucky governor, then in Indiana, who was wanted in his home state for questioning about the murder of a political opponent.⁶¹ The stunt won Fred Warren a conviction for sending "scurrilous, defamatory and threatening" literature through the mail, and it provided material for a four-year barrage of stories.⁶² This type of story

57. *Ibid.*, March 8, 1902. Warren attacked Victor Berger quite harshly during the Moyer, Haywood, Pettibone affair.—See May 19, 1906.

58. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1917; May 18, 25, 1918.

59. The first story appears in *ibid.*, February 24, 1906.

60. *Ibid.*, March 10, 1906. See, also, Shannon, *Socialist Party*, pp. 30-31.

61. *Appeal*, January 12, 1907.

62. *Ibid.*, June 1, 1907; May 16, 1908; May 15, 1909; May 21, December 3, 1910; February 11, 1911. See, also, Brewer, *Fighting Editor*.

51. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1901.

52. *Ibid.*, April 6, 1901.

53. *Ibid.*, May 21, November 19, 1904; May 23, 1908; November 16, 1912; March 15, 1916; May 24, 1919.

54. *Ibid.*, March 4, July 22, November 4, 1911; November 20, 1915; April 15, 1916.

55. *Ibid.*, November 8, 1913.

56. See, for example, *ibid.*, October 3, 1903; March 6, 1909; July 24, 1915.

reached a kind of saturation point in the years 1919-1921, when practically every issue for three years carried front-page articles about Gene Debs rotting away in federal prison.

Several other categories of stories provide some interesting insights into the *Appeal's* political philosophy, though these categories comprised only a small proportion of total content. These categories include stories about (1) agriculture and farm problems, (2) public utilities and public ownership, (3) popular democracy, (4) organized labor, (5) religion, and (6) foreign news.

TABLE II
SECONDARY STORY THEMES, 1901-1920
(percentages are proportions of total stories in each time period)

Story Theme	1901-1912	1913-1920	1901-1920
Agriculture and Farm	2.1%	2.2%	2.1%
Public Utilities	2.3	1.6	2.1
Popular Democracy	0.3	0.9	0.5
Organized Labor	3.9	1.4	3.2
Religion	2.8	1.4	2.4
Foreign News	6.3	4.2	5.7
Total Stories	2,003	832	2,835

Despite its reputation as a quasi-Populist sheet, the *Appeal* never devoted much space to farmers' problems—only about two percent of the content for the period 1901-1920. Quite a few of these stories did deal, in Populist fashion, with the commodity trusts, the grain exchanges, the banks, and the rise of syndicate farming and tenancy.⁶³ And several special appeals to farmers were launched.⁶⁴ The approach was standard Socialist as well as Populist dogma: the farmers and urban workers have identical interests as producers of real wealth and as common enemies of big business. From the beginning, however, the *Appeal* was never really much of a friend of the little farmer, since the editors believed that advanced machinery and large-scale combination represented progress toward the cooperative commonwealth.⁶⁵ And when the crunch came in World War I, the *Appeal* virtually abandoned a newly begun campaign to recruit farmers to socialism in order to fight the high cost of food.

When farmers finally began receiving high prices, the *Appeal* showed that its real sympathy lay with the consumer of grain, not the producer.⁶⁶

Public ownership of utilities and popular democracy, two other lingering Populist issues, were also largely neglected by the *Appeal*. Only about two percent of the total content in the period concerned public utilities, and less than one percent concerned popular democracy—and the latter category even included woman's suffrage as well as initiative, referendum, and recall. The *Appeal* supported public ownership of public utilities but felt that it meant little unless Socialists also controlled the governments.⁶⁷ The only sustained interest in public ownership exhibited by the *Appeal* came during the war, as the federal government began to take over war industries, especially the railroads. For awhile, the *Appeal* editors felt that socialism was coming via the public ownership route.⁶⁸ Eight percent of the stories in 1918 dealt with these optimistic speculations. But by 1920 the proportion had fallen to practically zero. The *Appeal* also supported popular democracy, though it carried few stories about it. The initiative, referendum, and recall became a major issue for the paper only in 1917, when the editors promoted direct democracy as the only way the people could control militarists and jingoes in government.⁶⁹

Approximately three percent of the stories in the *Appeal* dealt directly with organized labor. About two thirds of these were generally favorable; about one third were critical of unionism or union leadership. In the early years, the *Appeal* freely urged support of all unions, believing that the AFL was moving into socialism.⁷⁰ Gradually, the paper became more critical of union leaders such as Samuel Gompers and John Mitchell for consorting with capitalists, particularly in the National Civic Federation.⁷¹ Finally, the *Appeal* even became critical of strikes—especially strikes without a political foundation. In 1914 Warren

66. *Ibid.*, November 25, 1916; and following issues. Of course, the *Appeal* attacked the middlemen and the profiteers, not the farmers. But its sympathy was clearly more with the urban poor and the industrial worker.

67. *Ibid.*, February 17, 1906; March 9, 1907.

68. *Ibid.*, March 24, December 8, 1917; January 5, February 23, 1918.

69. *Ibid.*, June 23, September 22, December 1, 1917.

70. *Ibid.*, June 7, November 29, 1902.

71. *Ibid.*, January 3, 1903; February 17, 1906; November 2, 1907.

63. *Appeal*, March 12, 1904; September 10, 1910 (series begins); November 21, 1914 (series begins); February 26, March 6, 1916.

64. *Ibid.*, June 28, 1902; January 29, February 5, 26, 1916.

65. *Ibid.*, January 19, 1901; November 4, 1911.



The *Appeal's* regular circulation in 1913 was about 760,000—distributed all over the country. But one favorite promotion device, the special edition, sometimes boosted circulation into millions of copies—many of them distributed free. Here mail bags loaded with a special edition are lined up on a Girard loading platform. Photograph reproduced from *Metropolitan*, New York, January, 1913.

urged that Socialist money should no longer go to support strikes, but should be used only to get people to vote for the Socialist party.⁷² After 1914 organized labor was virtually ignored by the *Appeal*, even during the post-war strike wave of 1919.

Religion was a minor, but recurrent subject in the *Appeal*, particularly in the period 1901-1912, when 2.8 percent of the stories concerned religious matters. This proportion, however, dropped by half in the years after 1913. These stories were of two kinds. One kind sought to make a bridge between socialism and Christianity. These stories focused on Jesus as a socialist archetype. A big article in 1903 on "Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth," for example, concluded: "We have proved by the foregoing that Jesus taught a new economic system based on the brotherhood of man and exemplified in communism."⁷³ The other kind of story on religion attacked the churches and the church hierarchies for supporting capitalism and opposing socialism. The *Appeal* was anti-Catholic, though it claimed to be against only the pope and "Romanism," not against the Catholic faith.⁷⁴ Wayland was vociferously anti-Catholic. He even started an anti-Catholic newspaper called the *Menace*, which Warren

72. *Ibid.*, January 17, 1914.

73. *Ibid.*, February 21, 1903. See, also, March 1, 1902; February 21, 1903; November 1, 1913; July 14, 1917.

74. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1903; November 2, 1907; September 12, 1908; October 9, 1909; June 22, 1912; May 8, 1915.

claimed to have narrowly prevented from being published by the *Appeal*. Though Warren was also concerned about the political power of the Catholic Church, he said he felt it poor propaganda to attack people's religion.⁷⁵

The *Appeal* regularly carried foreign news, particularly in the early years, devoting some 5.7 percent of its stories to this category. Most of this content was pretty routine, coming in the form of columns of "shorts" called "Foreign Notes" or "In Other Lands." Stories were typically about foreign socialist parties, about progressive governments in New Zealand, Australia, and Switzerland, and about despotic governments in Russia, Mexico, and elsewhere. The paper gave fairly thorough coverage to the Mexican Revolution, written usually by on-again-off-again staff writer John Kenneth Turner, one of the *Appeal's* most dashing reporters.⁷⁶ The paper initially supported the Russian revolution, though it carried very few stories about it. And gradually the paper came to mildly oppose the Bolsheviks.⁷⁷

THE SECOND question I have posed in this study is, what sort of journalistic techniques did the *Appeal* employ to achieve such success in circulation? A broad idea of the

75. *Ibid.*, July 5, 1913.

76. See, for example, *ibid.*, March 27, 1915, and following issues.

77. *Ibid.*, August 17, 1918.

style and the general approach of the *Appeal* should already be fairly clear from the last section. But in addition to the substantive content areas already discussed, the *Appeal* employed a variety of other techniques, approaches, and gimmicks which seemed to dazzle the reader—at least enough to sell the paper. Several of the most pervasive and most characteristic of these techniques were (1) the epigrams, (2) Americanism, (3) a variety of features and fiction, and (4) wholesale self-promotion.

The epigrams were perhaps the most unique feature of the *Appeal to Reason*. When Wayland died, other newspapers pointed to him as one of the greatest “paragraphers” who ever lived.⁷⁸ Unlike other editors who might stick in a filler paragraph here and there, Wayland literally filled columns with his three-, four-, and five-line nuggets. It was not unusual for a four-page issue to carry several full columns of epigrams. After Wayland’s death, there were somewhat fewer epigrams, but the technique was never dropped. Some of these paragraphs were simple mottoes of socialism: “Capital is the canned muscles of other men,” or “Capitalism makes markets for the bodies of women and the hands and souls of men.”⁷⁹ Sometimes, though not often, a column of epigrams would be on a particular theme, such as “What Socialism Is. Socialist Economics Stated in Paragraphs.”⁸⁰ Most typical of the *Appeal* approach, invented by Wayland, was to sarcastically, though lovingly, insult the reader: For example:

He who will not lift a hand in behalf of his own freedom, deserves the chains.

In no country in all the world is the labor vote so easily controlled as in the United States. The rattle of an empty dinner pail or the promise of a job next year or a glass of stale beer will buy nine out of every ten votes cast by the horny-handed sons of toil!

Uncle Sam prints and gives the banker money without interest or expenses. How is it, Mr. Farmer, that he doesn’t do as well by you? Let us whisper in your ear: You’re a chump.⁸¹

Another audience-building technique used by the *Appeal* was the self-conscious cultivation of Americanism. Throughout its history, the paper explicitly argued: “An American

Movement Must Use American Methods.”⁸² For the *Appeal* this meant stressing that “Socialism is merely more democracy” and emphasizing that socialism is rooted in the American tradition.⁸³ The great heroes of the *Appeal* were the abolitionists, especially John Brown, and Abraham Lincoln. The movement for abolition of chattel slavery was often likened to the movement for the abolition of wage slavery.⁸⁴ The greatest praise was reserved for Lincoln, a man “whose heart beat in unison with the pulsing throbs of an oppressed people.”⁸⁵ The *Appeal’s* attitude of Americanized socialism is well-summarized by a 1909 epigram: “‘Workers of the world, unite,’ said Marx. ‘Liberty and union, now and forever, one and inseparable,’ added Daniel Webster.”⁸⁶

The *Appeal* never carried very much fiction or poetry, but there was always some, and the amount increased significantly after 1912. In 1901-1912, the paper devoted about 2.3 percent of its stories to this category; this jumped to over six percent in the years 1913-1920. Much of this material came in the form of little poems, parables, and fables with a socialist message. From time to time, the paper would serialize an important work by an important radical writer of that era. The *Appeal* is probably most famous as the paper in which Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* first appeared.⁸⁷ In its latter years, under the editorship of Emmanuel Haldeman-Julius, the *Appeal* began to turn a little more toward fiction and literary criticism and to the promotion of its book department, which published cheap versions of the European and American literary classics as well as the classics of socialism.⁸⁸ Haldeman-Julius invoked J. A. Wayland’s vision of the mass education function of the *Appeal* to justify this gradual shift. And even after the *Appeal* died,

82. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1903, p. 4. See, also, December 21, 1918, p. 1, where the *Appeal* enthusiastically reprints a long section from James MacKaye, *Americanized Socialism: A Yankee View of Capitalism* (New York, Boni and Liveright, 1918). This book is one of the fullest expressions of the Americanism theme in American socialism in these years.

83. *Appeal*, March 6, 1909.

84. *Ibid.*, February 16, November 2, 23, 1907; January 29, 1912.

85. *Ibid.*, April 30, 1904. See, also, September 3, October 8, 29, 1904; May 27, 1905; February 13, 1909. The Lincoln myth was similarly important to Gene Debs.—See Ray Ginger, *The Bending Cross* (New Brunswick, N. J., Rutgers University Press, 1949), pp. 372-373.

86. *Appeal*, March 6, 1909.

87. Conlin, “Introduction,” *American Radical Press*, p. 11. The serial begins in the *Appeal*, February 25, 1905. Other Sinclair books were also serialized.—See August 24, 1918; November 8, 1919.

88. *Ibid.*, November 8, 15, 1919.

78. See press clips in *Appeal*, November 30, 1912.

79. *Ibid.*, July 25, 1908; March 27, 1909.

80. *Ibid.*, January 24, 1903.

81. *Ibid.*, January 19, 1901; July 25, 1908; May 6, 1916.

he continued to issue his "Little Blue Books," which for a dime would introduce the workingman to Paine and Ibsen, George Washington and Moliere.⁸⁹

Surely the most unique, perhaps most important, feature of the *Appeal* was its continuous self-promotion and its incessant hustle for circulation. In this department, the *Appeal* made William Randolph Hearst's *Journal* and *American* seem timid. In the years 1901-1912 over 12 percent of the stories were items about the *Appeal* itself, usually pleas for more circulation, descriptions of circulation contests, promotions of special editions, and items about the "Appeal Army," a dedicated band of thousands of readers who hustled subscriptions for their "Little Old *Appeal*." After 1912 the proportion of this sort of content actually increased to 15.4 percent of the total. The *Appeal* always operated expansionistically. In other words, subscription prices were so low (25 cents a year for many years) that the paper always needed more and more new subscriptions every day just to cover current operating expenses.⁹⁰ Usually, these were rounded up by "soldiers" in the *Appeal* army, who were motivated by offers of cash gifts, free farms, gold watches engraved with the winner's name, a 25-foot yacht, books, houses, land in Florida, motorcycles, and even a free trip to Girard to visit the "Temple of the Revolution" (the *Appeal* office).⁹¹ And the army members were motivated by their love for the *Appeal* and their belief in the nearness of socialism. Always the

TABLE III
OTHER CONTENT CATEGORIES, 1901-1920
(percentages are proportions of total stories in
each time period)

Story Theme	1901-1912	1913-1920	1901-1920
<i>Appeal</i> Promotions	12.3%	15.4%	13.2%
Attacks on the <i>Appeal</i>	3.4	1.0	2.7
Fiction, Poetry, Etc.	2.3	6.1	3.4
Total Stories	2,003	832	2,835

89. Buhle, "Appeal to Reason," pp. 58-59; *Appeal*, November 15, 1919.

90. *Ibid.*, July 6, 1912; July 12, 1913.

91. For just a few examples, see *ibid.*, June 7, August 16, 1902; June 4, 1904; December 2, 1905; October 19, 1907; October 6, 1917. See, also, James R. Green, "The 'Salesmen-Soldiers' of the 'Appeal Army': A Profile of Rank-and-File Socialist Agitators," in *Socialism and the Cities*, ed. by Bruce M. Stave (Port Washington, N.Y., Kennikat Press, 1975).

army came through. A plea for more subscriptions would be followed a few weeks later by a success story and a paean to all the loyal comrades who did their part.

The *Appeal* also promoted itself through special editions, which would sometimes run into millions of copies. Many of these would be distributed free, and the *Appeal's* main trouble with the post office was almost always over sending free copies second class.⁹² There was a special trust edition, a Populist edition, a woman's edition, a coal miners' edition, a Catholic edition, a militarism edition, an amnesty edition, and so on—all promoted for weeks in advance. The biggest special edition of all was probably the "Kidnapping Edition" in the fight to save Haywood, Moyer, and Pettibone. Some three million copies were distributed.⁹³ The paper also injected itself into its news columns by fighting lawsuits for disabled workmen or bailing Socialists out of jail, and then modestly taking all the credit. For example: "Appeal Wins Frank Lane Case—\$25,000 Damages," or "Appeal Opens Penitentiary Doors and Frees Quinlan."⁹⁴ And, of course, the *Appeal* allowed the government to thrust it into the news columns whenever possible. When Warren was indicted over the "kidnapping" gimmick and later when he and Wayland and Debs were indicted for sending "obscene" material through the mails, the paper literally played the stories for years. Warren's conviction at Fort Scott was billed as "the Bull Run of the Social Revolution in the United States."⁹⁵

Wayland and the other editors justified their scramble for circulation by the argument that what's good for the *Appeal* is good for Socialism. "There is no getting around it, comrades," the paper declared in 1905, "as the *Appeal's* list grows the Socialist vote grows."⁹⁶ Warren met the periodic criticism he received head-on: "Maybe some of you comrades get tired of my everlasting prodding after circulation. . . . I honestly believe if we could put a socialist paper every week into the hands of every voter in the United States . . . we could capture the government."⁹⁷

92. *Ibid.*, April 14, 1906; February 2, 1907; January 23, 1915.

93. Brewer, *Fighting Editor*, p. 62. This book covers the Moyer, Haywood, Pettibone case in detail.

94. *Appeal*, August 12, 1911; August 2, 1913.

95. *Ibid.*, May 15, 1909.

96. *Ibid.*, January 21, 1905.

97. *Ibid.*, September 14, 1907.

Postoffice Department Backs Down on Its Ruling---Appeal Scores Big Victory

The Postoffice Department at Washington has notified the Girard postmaster that it had reversed its old ruling against the mailing of single copies of the Appeal...

THIS end of class struggles and class rule, of master and slave, of ignorance and vice, of poverty and shame, of cruelty and crime...

Published Weekly This is No. 1,005 Appeal to Reason 75th Cent a Year

OFF a world without the marching, unnumbered, uncounted, uncounted, uncounted, uncounted, uncounted, uncounted, uncounted...

“Socialism In Our Time.” Is Appeal’s Battle Cry

THE Appeal has infinite faith in the Socialist cause. We believe Socialism can be realized in our time if we only will it. We do not care five cents for the fine spun theories of alleged Socialist philosophers and scientists...

- 1. We will print a sample of the leaflets one month before, just as we are doing in this issue. This will show our readers exactly what we are offering them. In the same issue will be printed an order blank for the leaflets of the next month just as we are doing in this issue.

We have just a head over this matter. “Socialism Exposed,” to attract attention. The average non-Socialist will think it is something against Socialism. This will make him read the leaflet where he would otherwise throw it away.

Often in trouble with the U.S. Post Office department, the Appeal most frequently had problems with officials for sending free copies of special editions through the mails second class. In this 1915 issue the editors rejoiced that the post office had backed down on a ruling against the mailing of single copies to lists of names paid for by subscribers.

THE THIRD major question I have posed is, how did the content of the Appeal relate to the changing fortunes of American socialism during this period? Specifically, I am interested in the general hypothesis that as a movement begins to decline, the press will become increasingly introverted and concerned with internal party and movement matters.

On the surface, the fate of the Appeal seems to parallel that of the Socialist party. The Appeal already had a circulation of over 100,000 when the party was founded in 1901. But then the circulation of the paper rose steadily along with the party’s increasing strength at the polls.

Daniel Bell and others have argued. James Weinstein clearly shows that the party maintained much of its support through World War I. Similarly, the Appeal maintained a circulation of half a million throughout its latter years. But the outlook for both the party and the paper after 1912 was not quite so brightly optimistic.

Was this life cycle reflected in the content of the Appeal? In a discussion of the radical press in general, over the long period 1880-1960, Joseph Conlin suggests that papers before the critical year of 1919 were more news-oriented, more interested in the larger society, more extroverted than papers after 1919.

98. Weinstein, Decline of Socialism, pp. ix-x. 99. Buhle, “Appeal to Reason,” p. 57.

radicalism was on the wane, the papers tended to become more concerned with party matters, more sectarian, more introverted.¹⁰⁰ Was this the case for the greatest of radical newspapers, even over its own life cycle?

To test this idea, I set up two indexes, based on content categories, to indicate "Introversion" and "Extroversion." The introversion index includes categories involving *Appeal* and party related news and sectarianism: (1) attacks on the *Appeal*, (2) *Appeal* promotion, (3) anti-organized labor, (4) Socialist activities, and (5) Socialist and economic theory. The extroversion index involves news and comment on the larger society: (1) business, (2) government, (3) social problems, (4) life-styles of the rich, (5) public utilities, (6) popular democracy, (7) agriculture and farm problems, (8) pro-organized labor. A comparison of the change in these two indexes over the two periods is reported in Table IV. The introversion index rose from 34.7 percent to 41.5 percent of the total content from the early period to the later period. Meanwhile, the extroversion index fell from 46.4 percent to 38.0 percent between the two periods. This change in proportion is statistically significant at the .01 level, and the hypothesis is supported.

TABLE IV
INDEXES OF INTROVERSION/EXTROVERSION,
1901-1920
(percentages are proportions of total stories in
each time period)

Index	1901-1912	1913-1920
Introversion	34.7%	41.5%
Extroversion	46.4	38.0
Total Stories	2,003	832

The final conclusion to be drawn from these figures, however, is less than clear. The changes in proportion shown are statistically significant. Probably the *Appeal* did become more introverted after 1912. The most important contributing factors were probably the sharp decline in the proportion of stories on business and the increases in stories on socialist and economic theory and Socialist activities, especially attacks on Socialists and radicals. (See Table I.) Yet in practical terms the changes in the introversion and extroversion indexes are not overwhelming. Due to the large sample size, a significant difference is easy to detect, even if it is relatively small. Perhaps

100. Conlin, "Introduction," pp. 8-11.

more interesting than this small change from extroversion to introversion is the fact that these indexes and the other content categories did not change any more than they did. Though the content changed in measurable ways, as I have noted throughout this essay, it might be argued that the world changed even more and that the *Appeal* of 1920 was really remarkably similar to the *Appeal* of 1901.

IN SUMMARY, the *Appeal to Reason* seems to have built a bridge for its readers between muckraking and socialism. Using all the techniques, and more, of the muckrakers and the yellow journals, the *Appeal* exposed the bowels of the capitalist system. Yet, despite its bluster and bombast and its self-serving exploitation of the evils of capitalism, the *Appeal* always came through with a genuine socialist moral. Wayland and Warren reserved some of their harshest criticism for papers such as Hearst's *Journal* and *American*, which stirred up discontent without defining remedies and solutions.¹⁰¹ The *Appeal* was not a muckraking journal, not a Populist sheet, not a reform organ; it was a socialist propaganda newspaper, first and last. But it was a paper which served up its socialism on a plain, earthenware platter, seasoned to American tastes. And many thousands thought it tasted just fine.

The *Appeal* also captured, perhaps better than any other paper, the simple faith of this first flower of American socialism. The melancholy Wayland, several times near suicide before finally giving in, often took strength from the nearness of socialism. "When I turn from the ferment of fraud and crime," he wrote in 1906, "and look at this picture of progress, made from almost nothing to a national movement inside of sixteen years—then I know we are sure of success, that the future belongs to Socialism, and I see its first faint streaks of light on the eastern horizon."¹⁰² Warren was so confident that in 1912 he sold "life subscriptions"—not for the life of the subscriber, but for the life of capitalism.¹⁰³ By 1920—or perhaps a year or two later—this kind of unbounded confidence was gone. It was a changed world, and the radical movement was changed. And a newspaper like the *Appeal to Reason* could not cross that great divide.

101. *Appeal*, January 3, 1903.

102. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1906.

103. *Ibid.*, December 21, 1912.

APPENDIX

The content proportions reported in this essay are based on a stratified random sample of 60 issues of the *Appeal to Reason*, 1901-1920. Each year was divided into thirds, and one issue was chosen at random for analysis from each of these four-month periods. Three issues per year seemed sufficient in view of past studies of weeklies and in view of the large number and variety of stories in each issue. The unit of analysis was the story. Some stories, of course, were longer than others, but length seemed to be fairly randomly distributed when many stories were considered. Epigrams (defined as stories of 10 lines or less) were not included in the study. Straight advertisements, pictures, and cartoons were also excluded. In general, the earlier years had more stories per issue than the later years. It was for this reason that proportions of content, rather than story counts, are reported. Altogether there were 2,835 stories in the sample.

The stories were coded on the basis of story theme. The categories were derived from pilot studies of the paper itself. The aim of the category construction was to determine empirically a set of thematic categories which would actually describe the content of the paper. This turned out to be possible, with fairly high reliability, because the *Appeal* tended to stick with certain consistent story themes. Stories and items which did not fit any of the categories were coded "other." The "other" category included about four percent of the stories, with little variation over time. These, of course, were included for the computation of the proportion percentages. Listed below are all theme categories along with definitions:

Business.—Includes stories about American business and business practices, business leaders, finance, panics, war profiteering, and related stories.

Government.—Includes stories about all levels of American government and government officials, governmental graft, non-Socialist elections and political parties, the mil-

itary, and governmental involvement in war and war preparations.

Social Problems.—Includes stories about poverty, crime and prisons, sickness, child labor, prostitution, peonage, alcohol, unhealthy working conditions, etc.

Life-styles of the Rich.—Stories about how rich people live in America.

Socialist and Economic Theory.—Includes all stories without news linkages which explain economics or social systems or describe aspects of socialism.

Socialist Activities.—Includes stories about Socialist party activities, activities of party leaders, Socialist elections and campaigns, and business or governmental attacks on Socialists or radicals.

Agriculture or Farm Problems.—Stories about farming or farmers or the farmer movements.

Public Utilities.—Includes stories about municipal ownership and other forms of state capitalism.

Popular Democracy.—Stories about the initiative, referendum, and recall, and woman's suffrage.

Organized Labor.—Stories about labor unions and labor leaders.

Religion.—Stories about religion and about the churches and church leaders.

Foreign News.—Stories about foreign governments, foreign labor and radical organizations, foreign business. All foreign items coded here.

Appeal Promotions.—Stories where the paper itself is the main theme, including circulation promotions, financial reports. *Appeal* lecture tour stories, histories of the paper, *Appeal* army columns, etc.

Attacks on Appeal.—News stories about the *Appeal* being attacked by government or other.

Fiction, Poems, Parables, Etc.—All fictional items, including poems, stories, fables, jokes, etc.

All statistical inferences reported in the text are based upon Pearson chi-square analysis of contingency tables, similar to Table IV.