CATHOLIC LABOR AND THE
GERMAN CENTER PARTY, 1907-1914
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INTRAPARTY DISPUTES OVER
SOCIAL, FINANCIAL AND PRUSSIAN ELECTORAL REFORM

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis describes the emergence of Catholic labor organizations in Germany and analyzes their relationship with the Center Party from 1907 to 1914. Through study of the major issues which influenced this relationship it attempts to shed more light on the most important internal problems which burdened the Second Empire during this period. For this relationship reflected the conflicting political, socioeconomic and ethnic interests which upset the Empire's domestic tranquility and weakened its political cohesiveness until the very end of the pre-World War I era. One of the greatest problems facing William I and his grandson, William II, was the rise of an organized and politically motivated working class which was not wholly dedicated to the maintenance of Germany's political and social order. The confrontation between labor and the ruling classes grew increasingly worse as industrialization and urbanization progressed during the reign of William II. William and a few of his ministers--Hans Berlepsch and later Count von Posadowsky--realized the danger of alienating the urban working masses and attempted to reconcile them to the ruling order. The social insurance programs initiated from 1890 to 1911 drained much of the revolutionary ardor from the German labor movement. But half-way measures which denied trade unions actual representation of the working class and so-called freedoms of association which enabled police to intervene in meetings and assemblies preserved the tension between the state and the German workingman. The inequitable burden of indirect
imperial taxation, and the unequal system of parliamentary representation, especially the "three-class" franchise which existed in Prussia, were conditions which further alienated the working class and favored the growth of revolutionary socialism. The conservative ruling class, in fact, had no intention of providing the lower classes with social and political rights which could possibly advance democratic trends and eliminate the existing social structure.\footnote{Kari Erich Born, \textit{Staat und Sozialpolitik seit Bismarck's Sturz}, (Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1957), 251.} Thus, the imperial edifice which Bismarck created in 1866 and 1871 showed signs of cracking long before it finally collapsed.

These tensions and conflicts came to full expression in the popular assembly of the empire--the \textit{Reichstag}. This body was composed of numerous political parties which together represented most of the diverse interests within the empire. Each party, for the most part, spoke for one occupational group and represented a narrow social and political philosophy. The parties of the right--the Conservatives and the Free Conservatives--were the representatives of agrarianism and pressured the state for strong protection of agriculture, mainly in the form of protective tariffs. They stood firmly behind the existing constitutional structure and were opposed to political reforms of any kind. The parties of the right were unenthusiastic about the industrialization of the empire and attempted to bolster the sagging fortunes of the artisans who had been harmed most of all by this process. These
parties opposed financial reform and were reluctant to support progressive social legislation. The National Liberal Party represented mainly big industry. They supported protection but were opposed to excessively high tariffs which might provoke retaliation from abroad and harm the competitiveness of German industry. The National Liberals normally supported the interests of the employer over those of the worker and were not in favor of comprehensive political or electoral reform. But they did illustrate progressive behavior at times especially with regard to financial reform. The Progressive Party spoke largely for the commercial middle class and advocated low tariffs, supported progressive social reform, and favored parliamentarism, along with electoral and financial reform. The Social Democratic Party claimed spokesmanship for the German working class. Generally the socialists agitated against high protective tariffs, high indirect taxation, the electoral system of the empire and of Prussia, the incompleteness of social legislation, and the repressive behavior of the employer class. All too often, however, strict adherence to socialist party doctrine hampered rather than furthered the cause of the workingman. Also, many splinter parties representing specific economic, political, or nationalist interests sat in the Reichstag, such as Agrarian League candidates, Guelphs, Danes, and Poles. This wide range of opinion often provoked heated debate and made legislative compromise very difficult.
The only party in the Reichstag which attempted to represent the interests of more than one economic group or political philosophy was the Catholic Center Party. The party came into existence in 1871 to protect the interests of German Catholics during Bismarck's persecution of the German Catholic Church. The social composition of the Center's electorate was therefore very diverse. All the occupational groups which existed in the German Empire were also present within the Center Party. The attacks against the Church by the German State supplied all Catholics with a common bond of unity during the 1870's and 1880's. With the waning of the Kulturkampf in the late 1880's, the Catholic religion no longer sufficed as the only prerequisite for party unity. The external threat gone, differences within the Center came to the fore. After 1890, the party leadership, which consisted primarily of the church hierarchy, the Catholic nobility, and in later years, the professional bourgeoisie, had to reconcile such conflicting economic and socio-political interests as those of Silesian noblemen, Bavarian peasants, Swabian artisans, and, after 1894, Rhenish trade unionists. One of the party leaders, Karl Trimborn, rightfully pointed out that all one-sided interest representation was "blasting powder for the Center."\(^2\) Thus, the art of compromise became a necessity for the Center

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If party unity was to be maintained.

The changing social structure of the German Empire had serious implications for the Catholic Center Party, just as it did for William and his agrarian-oriented ministers. The influx of laborers into the Rhineland, a predominantly Catholic area, created an imbalance in the occupational composition of the party's electorate during the 1890's and early 1900's. The same phenomenon occurred in Silesia, an industrial province of eastern Prussia with a large Polish Catholic population. The numerical increase in the Catholic working class and the formation of Catholic labor organizations presented a problem to the party leadership. The grievances of organized Catholic workingmen could not be ignored. To neglect such a growing section of the electorate would have been political suicide for a heterogeneous party such as the Center. The fear of losing votes to the Social Democrats merely added to the necessity of appeasing Catholic labor. This fear, in fact, was not unwarranted. Catholic worker organizations, although fierce rivals of the socialists for labor's influence, sympathized with many socialists demands. The party leadership often looked askance at the socio-political views

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Friederich Naumann, leader of the Progressive Party, noted the following expression from an unidentified Center deputy: "All the difficulties which the German Reich has on a large scale, we already have on a small scale within our own party." Cited in Ibid., 44.
of Catholic labor, but political expediency dictated that a community of interest be found. Moreover, the leadership had to adapt to the changes in society so that the party could defend itself against the socialist threat.

One of the most vital areas in need of change was the organization of the party itself. The Center did not possess an actual party organization in the first decades of its existence. The agitation for the party during elections was conducted by the Church and by church-related organizations. Candidates to the Reichstag and the state assemblies were nominated by small, self-formed, local committees. Usually, the committees in the cities were composed of members of Catholic social gatherings or other dignitaries while the rural committees were led by Catholic noblemen or clergymen. This structure was not permanent and dissolved in most cases after the election work was completed. A permanent party organization was not necessary in the 1870's and 1880's because internal differences within the party were silenced by the unifying spirit of the Kulturkampf. Also, the socialist movement was suppressed in the 1890's by the Anti-Socialist Laws and was therefore less of a challenge. Thus, the system of temporary election committees sufficed and their authority was rarely

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4 This paragraph is based mainly on the findings in Thomas Nipperdey's chapter on the Center Party: Thomas Nipperdey, Die Organisation der Parteien vor 1918, (Duesseldorf, Droste Verlag, 1966), 265-298.
challenged. The end of the state's persecution of Catholics and the lifting of the Anti-Socialist Laws, however, greatly altered the situation. The necessity of integrating the various interests within the party and warding off socialist attacks created the need for a permanent and well-organized party machine. The leaders did not desire a democratization of the party because they feared the possibility of one group attaining a majority and forcing other minority groups to secede. The alternative was a partial reorganization which would give occupational estates a nominal representation in local committees while keeping the previous power structure intact. This assumed that a good portion of the committees would consist of so-called "born" members such as priests, former deputies, representatives of the press, and members of common Catholic organizations from which could be expected an advocacy of the leadership's point of view. This change was instituted first in the Rhineland to satisfy the pressing demands for working class representation in the local committees. The culmination of this development was the founding of the Rhenish Center Party by Karl Trimborn in 1905. Trimborn established a widespread organization which employed ten party secretaries and assured the Catholic working class of local, state, and national representation.\(^5\) The Rhenish Party, however, was the only

\(^5\)Hermann Cardauns, Karl Trimborn, (Munchen-Gladbach, Volksverein-Verlag, 1922), 95.
party organization which strove to satisfy the needs of a mass party in a modern, industrial society. The party organization in Bavaria, for instance, never advanced much beyond nominal estate representation and pursued a conservative agrarian course, excluding the Catholic proletariat from meaningful participation in the nomination of candidates. The official party organization of the Center Party remained largely in this insufficient state until 1918.

The function of a mass party organization before 1914 was mainly performed by a private organization, The People's Association for Catholic Germany or the Volksverein.\(^6\) The Volksverein was the successor to a smaller organization, Arbeiterwohl, which had been formed in 1879 by Catholic industrialists to counteract socialist agitation among Catholic laborers.\(^7\) Arbeiterwohl distributed information to the workers on such matters as social welfare, class education, Catholic worker organizations, and, after 1884, social politics. The organization also created an advisory council which instructed the Center Fraktion on social legislation. The continued growth of the socialist trade unions throughout the 1880's and the lifting of the ban on socialist organizations in 1890, soon convinced many Catholic

\(^6\)This paragraph is based mainly on Emil Ritter's excellent study, Die Katholisch-soziale Bewegung und der Volksverein, (Koeln, Verlag J. P. Bachem, 1954).

leaders that a strong popular organization was necessary to
protect the Catholic laborer from socialist propaganda.
The Volksverein was formed in October, 1890, and from the
beginning had close ties with the Center Party. Its founders
were Ludwig Windhorst, the Center leader, Franze Hitze, a
priest and Center member, and Franze Brandis, a factory
owner and also a member of the Fraktion. The Volksverein
at first performed the same tasks as Arbeiterwohl, except
on a much larger scale. The organization had developed a
style of its own, however, by 1895. Its publications began
to deviate from the dry and boring topics characteristic
of the 1880's and early 1890's. The pamphlets were written
by men familiar with the plight of the lower classes and
discussed the solutions to many specific problems. The
Volksverein supported further social legislation in the
late 1890's and defended the young Christian trade unions
despite the objections of many of the less progressive
followers of Arbeiterwohl. The association also encouraged
the education of the working class and promoted the idea that
the laborer was capable of performing a responsible role
in society. A ten-week "practical-social course" was
conducted in the 1890's and was expanded after 1900 into
a ten-week "popular economics course." The Volksverein
fostered the leadership of the working classes through
these courses and through its "leadership school." A huge
publishing house was begun in 1901 which soon supplied
thousands of pamphlets to the increasing membership of the
association. These later publications included topics such as family and education, civic education, social reform, economics, and the Center Party. The Volksverein always worked closely with the Center; in fact, many of the party leaders were Volksverein officials. The party organization, especially the Rhenish Center Party, made great use of the publishing house during elections and times of party crisis. Through its multifarious activities, the Volksverein prevented the exit of Catholic workingmen in great numbers from the Center Party and lessened the growing tensions within the party before 1914.⁸ This is not to say, on the other hand, that the tensions were eliminated.

The relations between Catholic labor and the Center party worsened in the last decade before World War One. The tenuousness of this relationship was evident most openly in the years after 1907. The threatening competition of the Socialists and the growing dissatisfaction of Catholic labor groups compelled the party to nominate twelve trade unionists as Center candidates in the general elections of January, 1907.⁹ The increasing numerical strength, political awareness, and political assertiveness of Catholic labor forced the Center to yield ground in other areas.

⁸ Nipperdey, op. cit., 282.

⁹ Ludwig Frey, Die Stellung der Christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands zu den politischen Parteien, (Berlin, Christlicher Gewerkschaftsverlag, 1931), 79.
during the remaining pre-war years. By 1914, the situation arising from the dissatisfaction of the masses within the party was much worse. As Fraktion leader Peter Spahn observed on the eve of World War One, "everything is as brittle as if it were made of glass." 10

The most acute differences arose over the issues of social, financial, and Prussian electoral reform. Catholic laborers were in favor of a harmonious relationship between employer and employee, they were willing to pay taxes in support of military increases, and they were quite loyal to the emperor and the fatherland; but, the lack of basic freedoms of association and other social securities, the heavy and inequitable burden of indirect imperial taxation, and the highly reactionary "three-class" voting system in Prussia were abuses that could not be tolerated. Conservative Centrists, on the other hand, were in favor of only limited social reform, mainly to combat the socialists, they dogmatically adhered to the somewhat backward system of imperial finance, and they opposed electoral reform in Prussia to avoid giving the socialists any additional powers in that state. A clash between the two factions of the party was inevitable. The results of this confrontation,

however, were by no means one-sided. The Center's social legislative proposals illustrated a new progressiveness after 1907, but party action in other areas was less gratifying. Catholic labor was opposed to the imposition of increased indirect levies in 1909, a measure the Center made possible. Also, the obstructionist behavior of the Center during the legislation of the Prussian government's proposed electoral reform bill in 1910 widened the cleavage between the Center and its working class electorate. The rift became quite evident when the Center lost labor votes in the Reichstag elections of 1912. These results were a warning that the Center needed to stay abreast of the leftist currents in German politics if it was to remain powerful. The party's politics after 1912 seem to indicate that the warning was heeded. The Fraktions united with the National Liberals and Social Democrats to pass a more equitable tax bill in 1913 and Christian trade unionists in these years established a strong voice within the Center in the area of social legislation. But there is sufficient evidence to maintain that the larger conservative section of the Center was reluctant about this course. Many of the Fraktions leaders were convinced that the worker was not ready to assume a responsible position in society. After 1912, the party leadership dodged the issue of Prussian suffrage reform despite Catholic labor's obvious position to the contrary. Even the dismal returns in the Prussian elections of 1913 failed to motivate the party, shielded as it was by the workings of the franchise.
Catholic labor had only attained moderate gains by 1914.

The absence of strong influence on local and national party committees and the unifying, conciliating effect of the Volksverein partially explain the limited successes. There was also a shortage of competent and educated Catholic labor leaders. Important personalities such as Adam Stegerwald, an influential figure in the early growth of the Christian trade unions and General Secretary of the organization from 1902 to 1929, and Heinrich Brauns, Volksverein official, labor journalist, and arbitrator for the Christian trade unions, did not become actively engaged in politics until after the war. Moreover, conflicts within the Catholic labor movement itself were a great inhibiting factor. Supported by Kardinal Kopp, the Bishop of Breslau and Michael Korum, the Bishop of Trier, a counter-movement, the Union of Catholic Workers Associations of Berlin, was formed in 1900. The Berlin organization was opposed to the interconfessional Christian trade unions of the west and their advocacy of the strike. From the early protests of the Prussian Bishops and the formation of "Catholic" trade unions, as they were often termed, the so-called trade union controversy developed into a highly publicized and hotly debated polemical feud. The debate finally reached all the way to Rome. Pope Pius X attempted to settle the quarrel in 1912 in his encyclical, *Singuliari quadam*, but a certain number of passages in the document were capable of being interpreted against the Christian trade unions.
Hence the internecine disputes within the movement continued unabated. Over 100,000 Catholic laborers joined the Prussian movement. Many others hesitated to join the Christian unions without the consent of the Church. By hampering the numerical strength of the Christian trade unions, the movement was seriously weakened. After the German defeat in 1918, a much stronger and more unified Catholic labor movement was able to obtain the support of the party for social, financial, and by this time, constitutional reform. The conflicts between the Center Party and Catholic labor from 1907 to 1914 were the prelude to the eventual modernization of the party in the post-war period.

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CHAPTER I
THE RISE OF CATHOLIC LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

Early Religious Organizations and
The Emergence of the Christian Trade Unions

Various forms of Catholic worker organizations existed in Germany long before the growth of Christian trade unions and Catholic worker's associations in the 1890's. The origins of the Catholic labor movement, in fact, go far back into the nineteenth century. The German Catholic Church played the primary role in this early development.\(^1^2\) The first Catholic worker organization, the so-called Journeymen's Club (Katholische Gesellenverein) was founded in 1846 by Father Adolf Kolping, the "social priest." His club provided shelter throughout Germany for traveling craftsmen and young apprentices in search of work and instructed them in the teachings of the Church.\(^1^3\) Kolping's program was in

\(^{1^2}\) For a study of Protestant response to social problems in the nineteenth century see: William Oswald Shanahan, German Protestants Face the Social Question, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1954).

\(^{1^3}\) August Bebel, leader of the Social Democrats until his death in 1913, describes in his autobiography how he came across these clubs while tramping through the Palatinate as a journeyman in the late 1850's: "As long as I lived in South Germany and Austria I was a member of these Catholic Unions, and I never had cause to regret it. There was no intolerance in respect of members of a different religious persuasion. The presidents were everywhere priests, and the members elected a senior member as their own representative. Lectures were given and classes held in various subjects—French, for instance—so that these Unions were to a certain extent educational institutions. In the reading-room a
harmony with the prevailing idea in church circles that social problems could be solved by Christian charity and moral instruction alone. The attempt made in the 1850's to operate "Christian factories" where the work was performed in church and interrupted by frequent prayer sessions is highly characteristic of this opinion. The Journeymen's Club movement achieved much popularity and by the time of Kolping's death in 1865, more than three hundred clubs existed with a membership of nearly twenty thousand.

The organization of Catholic laborers and factory workers was started in the late 1860's by William Emmanuel von Ketteler, the Bishop of Mainz. Ketteler was familiar with a number of papers and journals were available; although these were exclusively Catholic, I was glad to read them, for I was greatly interested in politics. The need of the society of decent young people was equally satisfied. These clubs derived a characteristic tone from the presence of the chaplains, who, being young and full of animal spirits, were on their side glad to mix with men of their own age. I have spent many a merry evening in the company of these young curates. To this day I have preserved my book of membership, having on its first page a picture of St. Joseph, the patron saint of the Union." August Bebel, My Life, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1912), 37.


15 Dockhorn, op. cit., 29.
Kolping's artisan organizations and desired to extend church social action to the rising new group of industrial workers. Highly critical of the social consequences of industrialization, the Bishop believed the workers should also be protected by state social legislation or by cooperative associations of their own. He felt that these associations could perform useful tasks such as home building and also eliminate the laborer's dependence on wages.\textsuperscript{16} Twenty-five such organizations existed by 1869 despite many problems which arose from the inadequacies of church and private funding.\textsuperscript{17} The Franco-Prussian War and the numerous pressures from the Kulturkampf seriously hampered the growth of the cooperative movement and, after the passing of the Anti-Socialist Laws in 1878, most were disbanded or transformed into purely religious groups.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, the Catholic labor movement took on a new form. The Catholic worker associations (\textit{Katholische Arbeitervereine}) of the 1880's were more ecclesiastical in nature and concentrated primarily on providing basic education for the workers. As M. P. Fogarty explains:

> When the movement began, around 1880, it was concerned simply with plugging the most obvious gaps in the culture of the apathetic and ignorant proletariat with whom it then had to deal. Its objects

\textsuperscript{16}W. E. Hogan, \textit{The Development of Bishop Emmanuel von Ketteler's Interpretation of the Social Problem}, (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1941), 176.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, 143.

were drawn widely enough, but the actual activities of local groups were, says their historian Hans Zeck, 'primitive enough to make you think.' What the members and even many chaplains and local lay leaders, wanted was sing-songs and beer-hall politics. They had little class consciousness or pride in their standards of work and family life. Still less had they any idea of effective political and economic action. Nor did they want to learn. Lectures were a penance. The movement accordingly at first kept out of the political and trade union field, and did only a limited amount of religious education, largely apologetic, to refute the arguments of the rising Socialist movement.\textsuperscript{19}

The associations expanded their program in the mid-1880's to give advice on legal aid and the problems arising from the state's social insurance legislation. By 1889, there were 168 Catholic worker associations and sixty thousand members.\textsuperscript{20}

Pope Leo XIII's great encyclical, Rerum Novarum, added new dimensions to the Catholic labor movement in the early 1890's. Circulated in May 1891, the document expressed the idea that the Catholic Church should play a major role in the spiritual and economic betterment of the working class.\textsuperscript{21}

The encyclical also stressed the value of state aid through social legislation and encouraged the growth of Catholic labor organizations. The Pope's statement stimulated great


\textsuperscript{20}New Catholic Encyclopedia, op. cit., 326.

\textsuperscript{21}The German Evangelical Church never accepted the idea of participating in the economic advancement of the working class. The Evangelical-Social Congress at Braunschweig on 29 May, 1901, for instance, formulated these resolutions:

1. The community of Evangelical Churches is
organizational activity among German Catholics and contributed to the increased economic content of the Catholic worker associations. Franze Hitze laid the groundwork for new "craft sections" (Fachabteilungen) in 1894. Hitze was probably the most talented follower of Bishop Ketteler and by 1894 was the most influential figure in the Catholic social movement. After returning from a prolonged period of study and writing in Rome in 1881, Hitze had become actively involved in the attempts of German Catholics to aid the worker. He joined Arbeiterwohl and later, the Volksverein as well as advising the Center Party on social legislation. Speaking before an annual convention of German Catholics, the Katholikentag, Hitze elaborated his idea.  

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2. Aside from being the duty of the state, this struggle is the affair of the civic community, ad hoc created organizations, and warm-hearted, charitable private activity.
3. The Church is primarily the communion of the word and the sacrament.
4. Earlier, the Church's blessed leadership was responsible for all aspects of popular life. But this area, by an act of providence, has bowed to another area of Church leadership.
5. Even the care of the poor and the sick is and must be separated from the Church.
6. The Church has more than enough to do in the spiritual area.
7. The Church should not develop independently of the civic order and the material world but rather seek unselfishly with all the strength at its command to advance these orders by imbuing them the spirit of Christ.


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22 Ibid., 29.
The craft sections would be formed within the framework of the existing associations and instruct the workers in professional matters, legal rights, labor arbitration, and the evils of socialism. Hitze did not feel that the workers were ready for independent action and believed his craft sections could provide them with instruction for eventual trade union activity. Hitze's plan, however, was not in pace with the latest developments among the Catholic working class. Certain Catholic labor leaders disagreed with the Church's conviction that the worker was incapable of responsible leadership. As one leader pointed out, the church hierarchy was "unable to divest itself of the view that workers had to be guided and led by members of other estates." These men were also convinced that the worker association, although important for spiritual needs, was not capable of improving the economic situation of the laborer, especially with regard to the strong position of the German employer. The trade union was the only form of labor organization which could win concessions from employers who frequently regard as proper only the harshest attitude toward working class demands. The anti-religious character of the socialist or "free" trade unions alienated many Catholic workers and


25Stegmann, op. cit., 428.
created the need for a separate trade union movement. Moreover, Catholic labor leaders were well aware that a separate movement would fail unless it could win support among the Protestant workers. This increased the need for an independent organization. Evangelical workers could not be expected to submit to the commands of the Catholic hierarchy. Thus, the craft sections were never accepted enthusiastically by the Catholic workers. Hitze soon reconciled himself to the worker's demand for independence from church authority; but the doubts of most of the German Catholic hierarchy concerning the independence and interconfessionality of the young movement were only slowly erased.

The first interconfessional "Christian" trade union was founded by August Brust, a Catholic miner from the Ruhr, in late October, 1894. The executive council of the union was divided equally between Catholics and Protestants, although the membership was predominantly Catholic. Brust, acting on the advice of Hitze, included a priest as an honorary adviser. The union pledged to support Christian principles, seek a community of interest between employee and employer, and only to strike as last means. The founding of the Christian Miners Union of Dortmund, as it was called, was

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26Ritter, op. cit., 294.
27Frey, op. cit., 12.
29Gornik, op. cit., 34-35.
the stimulus for similar action in other areas of the Empire. The Bavarian Textile Worker’s Association was organized in 1896 along with the Union of Masons in the Principality of Lippe. The Catholic worker association and Catholic Weaver Association of Aachen combined in the same year to form the Christian-Social Textile Workers Association. In 1897, the Mine, Iron and Metal Workers Union of Bonn came into existence. Many other Christian unions were founded in these first years, mostly in the West among the miners and textile workers.\textsuperscript{30}

At first, the movement was extremely regional in character. The various unions rarely cooperated or corresponded with one another. Some unions emphasized religious and moral goals and maintained close ties to the Catholic Church while other unions stressed economic matters and adopted a very independent course. The Christian union from Piesberg, for instance, expelled its two honorary church advisers after a dispute over involvement in a strike in 1898.\textsuperscript{31} But many Catholic labor leaders realized the need for greater cohesion and discipline. The unions could not assure favorable wage contracts in good times as well as bad unless a centralized organization existed which was financially powerful enough to sustain strikes when they occurred. This necessity was discussed by the leaders of the young movement in 1897 at an international

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{31}Frey, op. cit., 13.
conference on social legislation in Zurich. The Christian trade unions were represented by August Brust and Johann Giesberts from the west and Matthias Erzberger and Adam Stegerwald from the south of Germany. These men were all destined to play important roles within the Christian trade unions and the Center Party. They were greatly impressed by the organization of the socialist trade unions present at Zurich and resolved to develop a nation-wide Christian trade union movement that could compete with them on equal terms.\(^{32}\)

The first attempt to act upon this decision occurred at the anniversary celebration of the Aachen Textile Workers Association in January, 1898, and immediately provoked a heated controversy.\(^{33}\) One group, led by Hubert Immelen, the church advisor of the union, desired the formation of unions on a purely local and completely confessional Catholic basis. Immelen also wanted to establish a definite connection to the Center Party. The other group, led by Erzberger, an influential leader of the Catholic worker associations in Wuerttemberg, and Giesberts, a former stoker and editor of the "Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung," along with Brust from Essen, favored the


\(^{33}\) Good accounts of the effort to centralize the Christian Trade Union Movement are found in *ibid.*, 401-405; Gornik, *op. cit.*, 41-57; and Joseph Deutz, *Adam Stegerwald*. (Koeln: Bünd-Verlag GMBH, 1952).
nationally organized, interconfessional trade unions. The second group considered close connections to one single political party as detrimental to the independence of the movement. The committee entrusted with the decision soon deadlocked and the matter remained unresolved. The question arose again during the Katholikentag held at Krefeld in August. A private meeting of Catholic Labor leaders including Erzberger, Brust, and Dr. August Pieper, General Secretary of the Volksverein, decided to hold two regional meetings where the problem could be debated. Immelen preferred a national conference, but the majority of the leaders present overruled this plan to avoid public exposure. The two conferences convened in December, 1898, and overwhelmingly accepted a resolution drafted by Giesberts and Erzberger which provided for interconfessional, neutral trade unions. The representatives decided to reconvene in the spring to further define the goals and nature of the movement.

The first Christian Trade Union Congress assembled at Mainz in May, 1899. Forty-eight delegates from western, southern, and eastern Germany representing both Christian trade unions and Catholic workers' associations were present.34 The most important result of the Mainz Congress was an enumeration of basic principles, the so-called Mainzer

34Otto Mueller, Die christliche Gewerkschaftsbewegung Deutschlands, (Karlsruhe, Druck und Verlag der G. Braunschen Hofbuchdruckerei, 1905), 103.
Leitsaetze, which established the guidelines for the movement. The first article of the statement largely confirmed the decision of the two regional conferences which had met in December. The unions would be interconfessional, that is, comprising both Catholic and Protestant laborers, and would not adhere to one specific political party. This stipulation pertained in actuality to the Center Party because it was believed that Protestant trade unionists would never subordinate themselves to a predominantly Catholic Party. The first article of the Mainzer Leitsaetze accordingly forbade discussion of party matters and allowed only "the discussion of reforms to be achieved by constitutional means within the existing framework of society." The second article stressed the necessity of founding new trade unions and outlined the structure for a national organization which closely resembled that of the socialist unions. Each member union selected one representative to sit in the General Assembly. This body, which consisted of all the local representatives, then chose a twelve-man Executive Board. The tasks and means of the trade union were defined in the next two articles. Generally, the union was to improve the material and spiritual condition of the worker by supporting the unemployed and the disabled, providing legal protection,

35 The text of the Mainzer Leitsaetze occurs frequently in the literature of the movement, such as Deutz, op. cit., 29-31, and Mueller, op. cit., 103-104.

and offering moral instruction. The last article explained the tactics that Christian trade unions would employ in the economic field. The attainment of a true community of interest between workers and employer was the ultimate solution to all problems; but the unions would strike if this was the only way that the interest of the worker could be defended.

In June, 1900, the second Congress was held in Frankfurt. Whereas the Mainz Congress had only expressed basic goals, the second started the actual work of centralization. The Frankfurt Congress created a Central Trade Union Committee which was to be chosen by the General Assembly. The committee was instructed to distribute information, conduct agitation for the founding of new unions, settle disputes arising over questions of tactics and organization, and hinder the splintering of the movement.\textsuperscript{37} The Congress, alarmed by attempts to form oppositional unions, passed a resolution which expressly forbade the founding of a Christian union in an industry or area where one already existed. This action was taken on the urging of Brust who was greatly angered at the attempts of the Center and National Liberals to form splinter unions in the Ruhr.\textsuperscript{38} Also, a central fund was established to support workers who were unemployed, out on strike, or traveling to another job.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37}Mueller, op. cit., 111-112.
\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 112.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 122-123.
The Krefeld Congress of 1901 completed the national organization. The separate duties of the General Assembly, the Central Committee, and the Executive Board were more closely defined and a new position, the General Secretariat, was created. The General Secretary was largely the public representative of the Christian trade unions. He edited the newspaper of the organization, the "Zentralblatt der Christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands," communicated the views of the General Assembly to government bureaucrats and party leaders, and co-ordinated the business of the local unions through a network of undersecretaries. The General Secretary also co-operated with the Central Committee in the promotion of new unions and the expansion of older ones. Adam Stegerwald, who succeeded August Brust as General Secretary in 1902, was instrumental in the early growth of the movement. The founding of the trade unions' press and the strengthening of the financial power of the movement were mainly Stegerwald's accomplishments. Committee members Giesberts and Erzberger also played important roles through their journalistic support of the Christian trade unions. By the time of the Munich Congress of 1902, these men had constructed a highly centralized organization, The General Association of Christian Trade Unions of Germany, which could claim nearly one hundred thousand members. New trade unions had been founded in the tobacco, wood, and leather

40 ibid., 138-139.
industries, and even women workers had joined the movement. The Christian trade unions had achieved considerable success in a very brief period of time.

The Rise of Political Consciousness

The Christian trade unions did not play a great political role during these early years. The great work of constructing the central organization was given top priority. The Mainz Congress of 1899 emphasized mainly the, "self-help" nature of the young organization. The Congress expected trade union activity to eliminate labor injustices and did not place great importance initially in state or parliamentary action. The majority of Catholic labor leaders present at Mainz did not ignore the question of political participation, but felt that influence in this area would come by itself as the numerical strength of the organization grew. Moreover, these leaders did not desire attachment to any single political party. Thus, the early congresses limited themselves to simple declarations concerning parliamentary legislation. 41 The Mainz Congress passed a resolution against the Prison Proposal, a bill which sought to protect workers who did not participate in strikes. The Congress also

41 The early congresses are discussed in Ibid., 102-136.
supported Hitze's idea of worker chambers.\footnote{Worker chambers had been promised in the Kaisers new social-political program of 1890. These chambers were to provide labor organizations with an opportunity to air grievances before an Imperial committee, hence recognizing the organizations right to legally represent the worker. They were never instituted.} The next year at Frankfurt, the Christian trade unions expressed approval of a maximum ten-hour day for all firms and an eight-hour day for especially strenuous jobs. The German Civil Code of 1900, which established the legal basis for work contracts, stimulated increased political discussion during the Krefeld Congress of 1901. The organization demanded full private and public rights for trade unions, clarification of the freedom of assembly, and reform of the industrial tribunal law and the sickness insurance law. A minority of the trade unionists even favored an imperial program of unemployment insurance. But the first article of the \textit{Mainzer Leitsaetze}, was vague and confusing and did not adequately define the limits to the political activity of the Christian trade unions. Did the "discussion of reforms to be achieved by constitutional means within the existing framework of society," for example, exclude trade unionists from conducting widespread agitation against undesirable social and economic legislation? The ambiguity of the first article gave rise to different interpretations and soon created troubles for the organization.

The political neutrality of the Christian trade unions
was first seriously challenged during the tariff debate of
1901 and 1902. The federal government introduced its pro-
posal to elevate grain tariffs in the fall of 1901. The
measure was not welcomed by big industry and was even less
popular among the working class. The Social Democrats were
especially opposed to higher tariffs and initiated a campaign
against them soon after the government's announcement. The
socialists were convinced that the new tariff would raise
food prices and adversely affect the economic condition of
the worker. The issue was discussed by the Christian trade
unions at the Krefeld Congress where the majority of
Christian trade unionists, unlike the socialists, expressed
approval of the measure. The tariff might harm the worker,
but the prosperity of agriculture would improve the internal
market for German industrial goods and restrict the influx
of unemployed agricultural laborers into the overcrowded
cities. 43 A minority of trade unionists present at Krefeld,
however, were dissatisfied with this explanation. This
group was led by Franz Wieber, leader of the Christian
Metal Workers' Union, who agreed with the socialists that the
tariff would worsen the worker's situation. Wieber believed
that the poorest classes should have priority over the
eastern landowners and began to publicize his views in the
newspaper of the Metal Workers' Union, "Der Deutschen
Metallarbeiter." 44 Based on his interpretation of the

43 Mueller, op. cit., 140.
44 Deutz, op. cit., 40, Mueller, op. cit., 140.
Mainzer Leitaetze, Wieber wanted the Christian trade unions to support any political party opposed to the tariffs and even participate directly in the political system by running trade unionists for the Reichstag. He also directed attacks against Brust, Stegerwald, and Giesberts who he felt were not representing the true interests of the working class. Most of the Catholic worker press disagreed with Wieber and supported the Center Party and Christian trade unions in favoring the tariff proposal. Moreover, the trade unionist press and the press of the Catholic workers' associations throughout Germany, objected to Wieber's plan for an increased political party role for the Christian unions. The conflict was ended at the Munich Congress of 1902 when Wieber and the Christian Metal Workers' Union were expelled from the General Association. The Metal Workers' Union eventually rejoined the General Association in 1903 after socialist attacks made the divided condition of the unions too embarrassing. Wieber's opposition strengthened the political neutrality of the Christian Unions, but it did illustrate a new awareness in the importance of parliamentary influence.

One of the first indications of an upsurge in the political consciousness of Catholic labor organizations was

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45 Mueller, op. cit., 141.
46 Ibid., 140.
47 The "Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung" in Cologne, "Der Arbeiter" in Munich, and "Der Arbeiter" in Berlin.
the creation of the German Workers' Congress in late 1903. The immediate stimulus to the formation of the Congress was the tremendous increase in socialist votes during the general elections of June, 1903. Many Catholic labor leaders, especially General Secretary Stegerwald, feared that the socialist success would motivate the Kaiser and his ministers to abolish common, equal, direct, and secret suffrage in the empire and to put a halt to social legislation.\textsuperscript{48}

Thus, Stegerwald and his colleagues resolved to assemble all non-socialist workers together in order to minimize the effects of socialist strength. Stegerwald hoped to allay the fears of the conservatives at court and thereby to promote social reform. The preliminary negotiations were completed during the summer and the first German Workers' Congress met at Frankfurt on 25 October, 1903. The meeting included representatives from the Christian trade unions, Catholic workers' associations, Evangelical workers' associations, and the German National Commercial Employees Association. The Hirsh-Duncker trade unions, which maintained close relations with the National Liberal Party, were not present. The Congress addressed a telegram to Kaiser William on the first day expressing the patriotism of the 600,000 workers represented there and the desire to see a continuation of social legislation.\textsuperscript{49} Speeches by Stegerwald, Giesberts,

\textsuperscript{48}Deutz, \textit{op. cit.}, 42.

\textsuperscript{49}Gornik, \textit{op. cit.}, 118.
and Karl Schiffer, the leader of the Christian Textile Workers' Union, demanded the expansion of coalition rights, the creation of a uniform freedom of assembly, the granting of legal rights to trade unions, and the creation of worker chambers.\textsuperscript{50} Furthermore, the Congress encouraged the worker to follow the proceedings in the Reichstag and state parliaments and to obtain the support of candidates for the demands of the working class.\textsuperscript{51} The first German Workers' Congress illustrated the growing sensitivity of non-socialist workers to the lack of certain basic rights. For this reason, it was observed attentively by party and government leaders. The Congress was an indication that the Catholic proletariat was becoming a stronger force in German political life.

Catholic labor organizations also began to exhibit more interest in parliamentary representation in 1903. Although Wieber had failed to impose all his ideas on the Christian trade unions, he could note with some pleasure that his efforts had not been completely in vain.\textsuperscript{52} The "Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung" began publication of a series of articles in 1903 which echoed the old metal workers' plea for political influence.\textsuperscript{53} Ironically enough, the newspaper was edited by Wieber's former antagonist,

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 117.\textsuperscript{51} Frey, op. cit., 68-69.\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 69.\textsuperscript{53} Frey quotes from these articles in Ibid., 69-70.
Johann Giesberts. The paper complained that the worker was not given enough consideration in the councils of the bourgeoisie parties. Led by complacent and oftentimes reactionary members of the upper class, the local committees totally ignored the demands of the laborer. The paper pointed out that labor leaders alone were capable of protecting the social and economic interests of the worker.

The Catholic workingman was led by well-informed, intelligent men; yet, none had a seat in the Reichstag. Thus, the "Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung" strongly urged the worker to seek parliamentary representation for the members of his own class. The opinions of the paper soon found acceptance among the Catholic workers who began to make similar demands upon their leaders. These demands materialized in June, 1903, when Matthias Erzberger entered the Reichstag. Erzberger resigned his position as central committee member to become a full-time Center Party politician, but continued to represent the interests of Catholic labor organizations. In November, August Brust was elected to the Prussian House of Deputies and joined the Prussian Center Party. The trend was continued about a year later when Johann Giesberts ran successfully for the Reichstag as Center candidate from Essen. Catholic labor leaders realized, however, that these were only minor successes. Thus, more attention was directed to the task of securing parliamentary influence for Catholic workers after 1905. The Catholic labor movement, as one
leader remarked, had "come of age on political matters."  

The question of parliamentary representation came to full expression in 1906 at the Breslau Congress of the Christian trade unions. The sudden shift to a greater interest in politics necessitated another review of the political neutrality of the organization. The stumbling block was once again the ambiguous first article of the 

Mainzer Leitsätze. A few speakers maintained that trade unionist parliamentarians would have to submit to the voting discipline of whatever party they joined. This meant submitting the organization to the dictates of one political party. Giesberts countered the assertion by pointing out that trade unionists in the Reichstag would never concur in unfavorable legislation or participate in the practical work of party organization and agitation. Giesberts then proceeded to analyze the political situation of the Christian unions. He was pleased that the working class participated more and more in political affairs and demanded more consideration in the nomination of local, state, and Reichstag candidates. He harshly criticized, on the other hand, the poor response from the bourgeoisie parties. The National Liberals, the Conservatives and many Center members did not really understand the new rising political maturity of the 

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workers and were only promoting socialism by excluding them from meaningful participation. Giesberts also urged more trade unionists to follow his own example and seek representation in the Reichstag. Rather than adhering to one party, the Christian unionists should attempt to enter as many parties as possible.\textsuperscript{57} He saw this as the best method of protecting the economic interests of the worker and assuring the execution of social legislation. Giesberts concluded that the Christian trade unions would not be satisfied until the bourgeois parties became more amenable to labor demands. The majority of the trade unionists at Breslau supported Giesberts and voted to pursue the course he had outlined.

Specific political plans and goals soon appeared in the official organ of the General Association, the "Zentralblatt der christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands." The paper reemphasized the political maturity of the movement and stressed the right of the worker to represent his own interests.\textsuperscript{58} The path through the non-Marxist parties was the only possible method to attain this representation. It was doubtful whether large numbers of worker deputies would succeed in entering all the various parties, but there


\textsuperscript{58}Frey also quotes extensively from the "Zentralblatt" in Frey, \textit{op. cit.}, 74-76.
would still be a need for some type of "interfractional"
committee which would adopt a common course on all questions.
The committee would help to clarify the opinion of the
Christian trade unions and avoid differences of opinion on
controversial issues. The "Zentralblatt" also announced the
formation of workers' electoral unions. It would be their
task to pressure the local party committees and obtain represen-
tation for Christian workers in parliament. The paper
hoped that the workers' electoral unions would provide the
Christian trade unions with a greater influence within the
bourgeoisie Fractionen of the Reichstag during the general
elections scheduled for 1908. These articles were followed
in October, 1906 by a proclamation of the General Association
which reiterated the demands for representation within the
non-Marxist parties. The dissolution of the Reichstag in
December, 1906 provided the Christian trade unions and the
Catholic working class in general with an opportunity to
attain these demands.

The Christian trade unions were only partially successful
in attaining political influence during the general elections
of January, 1907. The Center, Conservatives, National
Liberals, Progressives, and others were encouraged to run
Christian unionists as candidates in the remaining weeks
before the election. The results were not encouraging. A
small splinter party, the Economic Union, ran Franz Behrens,
the leader of the Protestant wing of the Christian unions\textsuperscript{59} but the Conservatives, National Liberals, and Progressives ignored the pressure. Much more vulnerable to labor unrest, the Center responded by nominating ten trade union functionaries in December.\textsuperscript{60} Christian trade unionists were later substituted in two more constituencies in the Rhineland. This development was viewed unfavorably by many Centrists, even though the leadership made every effort to appear magnanimous.\textsuperscript{61} Baron Leo von Savigny, supporter of the so-called "Catholic trade unions" of Berlin, viewed the advancing democratization of his party as a "cowardly concession and crass surrender" to Catholic labor.\textsuperscript{62} Even the "Koelnische Volkszeitung," a paper which had supported the Christian trade unions in the past, was admonitory about the presence of labor deputies in the Center.\textsuperscript{63} The master plan of infiltrating the non-socialist parties had failed and all that remained in practice was a tenuous relationship with one party—the Catholic Center.

The Catholic proletariat had developed a high degree of interest in the political sphere by 1907. The movement had grown aware of the importance of strong parliamentary

\textsuperscript{59}Richard Seidel, Gewerkschaften und politische Parteien in Deutschland, (Berlin, 1928), 48.

\textsuperscript{60}Frey, op. cit., 77.

\textsuperscript{61}ibid., 77.


\textsuperscript{63}Frey, op. cit., 79-80.
influence and no longer placed complete emphasis on trade union activity. The Christian trade unions had secured parliamentary representation\(^64\) and the Catholic workers' associations had expanded their programs to include education in political affairs. The Catholic labor movement had also increased in numerical strength. By 1907, the Christian trade unions had swelled to a membership of about 200,000 and the Catholic workers' associations in western and southern Germany had gathered around 250,000 Catholic workers within their ranks.\(^65\) These numbers increased after 1907. The growth of the Christian trade unions was seriously hampered by the counter-movement in Berlin, but still attained a membership of 350,000 by 1914.\(^66\) The formation of the Cartel Union of Catholic Workers' Associations in 1911, which included many workers from eastern Germany, doubled the association membership to 502,000 by

\(^{64}\) Five trade union functionaries were elected to the Reichstag in 1907. They were: Johann Giesberts, editor of the "Zentralblatt" and member of the Executive Committee of the Christian trade unions, Karl Schiffer, leader of the Christian Textile Workers Unions and member of the Executive Committee, Johannes Becker, Secretary of the Christian Metal Workers Union, Josef Wiedeberg, leader of the Christian Construction Workers Union, and Karl Schirmer, another Secretary of the Christian Metal Workers Union, Peter Molt, Der Reichstag vor der improvisierten Revolution, (Koeln, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1963), 246.

\(^{65}\) The Program and Organization of the Christian Trade Unions of Germany, International Labor Office, Studies and Reports, Series A, No. 21, (Geneva, 1921), 21 and Dockhorn, op. cit., 110.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 21.
1914. These figures gave the Christian trade unions, supported by the Cartel Union, great potential for political influence. Catholic workers were greatly outnumbered by the 2.5 million laborers in socialist trade unions in 1914; nevertheless politicians, especially Center Party politicians, could not turn a deaf ear to the demands of nearly a million Catholic voters.

Moreover, the Catholic labor movement had radicalized considerably since the early years of the century. The change was illustrated by the tense mood of the Second German Workers Congress which met at Berlin in October, 1907. Adam Stegerwald, the driving force behind the Congress, lamented that the political demands expressed at Frankfurt had still not been satisfied. He accused the bourgeois parties and the government of alienating laborers who had once been quite loyal to the existing political system. The continuance of social reform was thus a matter of prime importance to the Catholic labor movement. But by 1907, there were signs of interest in other areas of political life. The rising level of indirect taxes was becoming increasingly unbearable and the curious three-class voting system in Prussia was seen more and more as the obstruction to political equality that it was. The "Zentralblatt" noted in late 1907 that both tax reform and Prussian electoral reform were

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67 Dockhorn, op. cit., 110.
68 Deutz, op. cit., 42-43.
essential to the interests of the working class. In 1908, six Christian trade unionists ran successfully for the Prussian House of Deputies, significantly, as Center candidates. Aside from its vulnerability to labor pressure, the Catholic Center was a natural outlet for the demands of Catholic labor. The high percentage of Catholics on both sides drew the two together. It can be argued, however, that besides the bond of Catholicism, little existed in common between the conservative, aristocratic Centrists and the new, progressive labor deputies. The two factions seldom saw eye to eye on the major domestic issues of the day. Clashes within the party, especially over social, financial and Prussian electoral reform, were a constant source of worry to Center leaders trying to maintain party unity and uphold their own conservative principles at the same time. With the outbreak of war, all three disputed issues remained unresolved in the empire and in the Center Party; but by this time, both the empire and the Center had begun to yield ground to the more progressive, "leftist" forces at work within them.

69 Frey, op. cit., 67.

70 Ibid., 110. Giesberts and Brust were the most prominent Christian trade unionists in the Prussian Landtag.
CHAPTER II

SOCIAL REFORM

The attainment of economic security was perhaps the most immediate goal of Catholic labor as well as of German labor in general. Insurance against illness, old age, unemployment, protection against the hazards of factory labor, and improvement in factory conditions, wage levels, work time, and housing were all matters of direct concern to the worker. For the most part, he looked to the state for help. Germany, in fact, did more for the workers along these lines than any other nation in western Europe before World War One. In the years from 1883 to 1911, a complex series of bills was enacted which provided protection for the worker and his family. In 1883 the sick insurance act was passed, in 1884 the accident insurance act and in 1888 the old age and invalidity insurance act. The workers' protection act of 1891 initiated another wave of social legislation. Special consideration was given to the work time of women and young persons and child labor was forbidden under the age of thirteen. A fund was created in 1902 to support widows and orphans. This was followed in 1903 by the children's protection act. The social insurance programs of the 1880's were expanded in 1899 and 1903 and improved again in 1911 by the imperial insurance act which regulated all existing insurance programs. The bill also extended the "helping hand of the
state" to domestic servants, agricultural laborers, part-
time workers, and salaried employees. By 1911 there were
13.6 million German workers insured against invalidity and
sickness—an impressive figure.\textsuperscript{71} Moreover, these reforms
were initiated in a period of unprecedented economic growth
and prosperity. The thriving steel and iron industries
along the Rhine and Ruhr Rivers had made the phrase "made
in Germany" well-known throughout the world, especially in
England where German encroachments into the world market
were keenly felt. The value (in marks) of German exports
had jumped from 3.4 billion in 1890 to 10.1 billion in 1913.\textsuperscript{72}
The empire was also experiencing the transition which one
historian has described as "the evolution from an era of
steam and steel to one of electricity, chemistry and motors."\textsuperscript{73}
National income increased from 23.5 billion marks in 1896
to 43.5 billion in 1913.\textsuperscript{74} Significantly, this tremendous
industrial expansion had kept pace with population growth.
From 1890 to 1914 population increased from 49.7 to 67.8
million,\textsuperscript{75} the number of workers doubled, and yet unemployment

\textsuperscript{71}John Harold Clapham, The Economic Development of France
and Germany 1815–1914, (Cambridge at the University Press, 1946), 333.

\textsuperscript{72}Koppel S. Pinson, Modern Germany, (New York: The

\textsuperscript{73}Herman Lebovics, "Agrarians Versus Industrializers,"

\textsuperscript{74}Pinson, op. cit., 220.

\textsuperscript{75}Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer das Deutsche Reich, 1915.
Hereafter cited as Statistical Yearbook.
averaged only two percent. Real wages had increased by fifteen percent. In these respects the German worker had little to complain about.

But in other respects the laborer had good cause for complaint. Much of the tension centered on the unequal position of the workers regarding legal rights. The demands of Christian and socialist workers for reforms such as unrestricted coalition rights and complete freedom of assembly, for instance, were largely ignored by the government. The imperial association act of 1908, the only pre-war reform of the laws governing association, was sadly disappointing. The measure uniformly regulated the right to form associations in Germany and introduced many alleviations. But "political" associations were required to submit membership lists to local police authorities and police were enabled to send representatives to all public affairs. Women, apprentices, students, and foreign workers were excluded from membership in such associations. The workers strenuously objected to the law because these regulations were frequently extended in administrative practice to trade unions as well. Lujo Brentano, a renowned German economist before World War One, observed that "the


77 Ibid., 63.

German workers enjoy the right of combination, but if they make use of it, they are punished."^79

There were other causes for discontent among the working class. The lack of a uniform program of unemployment insurance, for example, was keenly felt. The economy prospered on the whole in the decade before the outbreak of war but during periods of recession, as in 1900-1901 and 1907-1908, unemployment was a serious problem. Accurate statistics are not available for the earlier years but in 1907 and 1908 the level of unemployment averaged 3 percent and was as high as 18 or even 25 percent in some industries.^80 Trade unions and municipalities supported some of the idle workers but most received no relief.^81 Workers also objected to the length of the work day, especially in the strenuous mining and steel industries, where a twelve-hour day was not unusual. One Catholic mine official described the hardships

^79 Cited in: Ibid., 64.

^80 In September of each year, the level of unemployment was 1 percent in 1906, 1.4 percent in 1907, 2.7 percent in 1908. The figure climbed above 3 percent in the winter of 1908 and did not decline until the summer and fall of 1909. The increase in tariffs in July, 1909 caused the higher levels, mainly in the tobacco industry. Statistical Yearbook, 1910, 1915.

^81 The socialist unions, financially more secure, usually supported about 80 or 90 percent of their unemployed workers. The Christian trade unions supported about 50 or 60 percent and the Hirsch-Duncker even less. Ibid., 1910.
of the coke workers of a Ruhr firm in a letter to Giesberts in March, 1912:

The coke workers and their foremen are required to work rotating day and night shifts. On Sunday, when the shift changes from day to night, the management makes them stick to their jobs for 24 hours of difficult and uncomfortable labor. Even on the most important holidays of the year—Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost—the grueling work continues twenty-four hours straight. On Sundays and important holidays the workers are thus unable to fulfill their religious duties. They are often so exhausted and weak on Monday morning that many are unable to go home. I often hear the complaint that the workers are too tired to eat anything when they do get home and are content merely with getting some sleep. The overexhaustion of the workers is quite obvious when they return to work again on Monday night. They then work the night shift all week until the next Sunday. It takes little to figure out that the workers, coming off the night shift exhausted to the limit as they are, will not be able to attend church. The day shift begins on Monday and lasts all week ending with the twenty-four hour shift again on Sunday. This is not a matter of working six days and resting the seventh but rather of working six days and all day on the seventh. Obviously many stay home from this harsh, inhuman Sunday shift. At first they were punished for this. Then the management decided to pay the workers for a triple shift instead of the normal pay for the double. But this had even less success as many turned down the tempting wages and took the punishment instead. The over-exertion of this twenty-four hour shift is most noticeable on hot summer days when the high temperature of the day and the heat of the ovens combine to create near impossible conditions for the workers, many of whom are not accustomed to such strain and have to retire before the shift is over. They thereby lose the extra pay given for working the shift in the first place.82

Nor did the family life of the average German worker offer much of an escape. As Helga Grebing writes:

If we wish to gain a sober and realistic understanding of the economic and social position of the

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82 Cited in: Reichstag Debates, 6 March, 1912, Vol. 283, 520.
German worker before 1914, we must remember that, under prevailing food prices and rents, the average annual income of 800-900 marks would only just allow him—if his family was not too numerous—to live without pressing worries as to whether he could feed them. His family was seldom in a position where its members could at the same time afford to eat their fill, live in salubrious conditions, and be adequately clothed. Harsh economic necessity drove his wife to work either in a factory or at home, particularly if his family was large. Housing conditions provide a particularly dark chapter in this era: in 1895 Berlin still had some 25,000 one-room apartments, each housing six or more persons; these apartments were mostly in houses which stood at the back of the main buildings, away from the street, sunless and dark in the shadow of overhanging walls. At the same time there were in Berlin some 80,000 "sleeping lodgers", i.e. mostly young, single, male and female workers, who slept in a bed or part of a bed in someone else's household, and had no right of access during the day. Family life—in the sense in which this word is understood among the bourgeoisie and in the country—was out of the question; in North Berlin, as in other large cities, every third house boasted an inn, where in the evening and on Sundays the "sleeping lodgers", with nowhere to go during the day, and the fathers of noisy, overcrowded families, went to drown their sorrows in drink.83

The dissatisfaction of the German working class with this lowly, seemingly unalterable socio-economic position was voiced most vociferously in the years immediately preceding the war. The pace of social legislation to 1911 had not been rapid but it had been gradual and steady. If some of the longly awaited reforms—coalition rights, unemployment insurance, the eight-hour work day and improved living conditions—had not been attained, it was felt that they soon would be. These hopes proved in vain. After the passage of the imperial insurance act of 1911, social

83 Cited in: Grebing, op. cit., 64-65.
legislation stagnated. Many conservative governmental leaders at court including the Kaiser had finally lost faith in the ability of Germany's social insurance program's to halt the success of the continually rising socialist movement. To the ruling classes, in fact, continuance of social reform meant submission to the left-wing forces of the nation represented in the Reichstag—the Social Democrats, the Progressives, and by this time, the Center. The social question was thus very much intertwined with the constitutional question. 84 After 1911 the lines were sharply drawn: The conservatives, unwilling to yield further ground, the representatives of the working class demanding that they do so. These tensions and cleavages were only temporarily erased with the nationalistic excitement accompanying the declaration of war in August, 1914.

The Catholic Center Party played perhaps the most important role in furthering the cause of social reform in Wilhelminian Germany. 85 Much of the pre-1911 legislation which marked Germany as the most advanced welfare state in western Europe was the direct result of Center parliamentary

84 For a detailed discussion of this problem see Born, op. cit.

85 The best accounts of the Center's social politics are found in Ibid.; Franziska Vincke, Die Arbeitnehmer-sozialepolitik des Zentrums, (Munster: Wirtschafts-und Sozialwissenschaftlicher-Verlag, 1933); Hans Kraneburg, Hitze's sozialpolitische Forderungen und ihre Verwirklichung in der Gesetzgebung, (Muenchen-Gladbach, 1922); and Bachem, Karl, Vorgeschichte, Geschichte und Politik der Deutschen Zenstrums Partei, (Cologne: Verlag J. P. Bachem GMBH, 1932), 9 vols.
initiative. The party's social insurance program provides one good example. The party opposed the government's first insurance proposals in the early 1880's, but only for budgetary reasons. By 1889, the Center had overcome these hesitations and voted in favor of old age insurance. The party worked for improvements in the sickness, invalid, and accident insurance programs in the 1890's and was successful in its proposal for an orphans' and widows' fund in 1902.\footnote{The fund was not actually started until 1911.} The regulation of all imperial insurance programs was the subject of a Center proposal in 1903. The proposal was not acted upon until 1910 when Bethmann-Hollweg submitted a regulatory bill to the Reichstag. The resultant imperial insurance act of May, 1911, reorganized all existing insurance programs, increased payments in many cases, and extended insurance to more workers than ever before.\footnote{Vinceke, op. cit., 83-87.} The party was also active in the attempt to shorten the work day—a reform which the government staunchly opposed. In 1893, the party submitted a proposal to limit the work day of women to ten hours and in 1894 an effort was made to shorten the hours of men to ten and a half. The party demanded a ten-hour day for male workers in 1903 and a nine-hour day for women in 1904. The women's bill alone passed the Reichstag but was voted down in the Bundesrat. Both demands were repeated by the Center in 1905, 1906, and 1907. Finally,
in December, 1907, a bill which limited the work day of women to ten hours was accepted by the Bundesrat. The limitation of male work time was again unsuccessful. Moreover the party pressured the government to introduce complete rights of coalition and assembly. These rights were the subject of a Center proposal as early as 1891. The bill was rejected by the Bundesrat. Repeated attempts to pass the bill in the 1890's and early 1900's produced no results. In 1905, the Imperial Minister of the Interior, Count Posadowsky, submitted a bill to the Bundesrat to regulate professional organizations. But the proposal was not acted upon during the legislative period before 1907. The Center entered the proposal twice in 1907 and once again in 1908 before the new Minister of the Interior, Bethmann-Hollweg, submitted an imperial law of association to the Reichstag in April, 1908. Due to the inadequacies of the bill, the Center did not vote for it. The bill was passed by the government majority, the "Buelow Block," which was named after the Imperial Chancellor--Bernhard von Buelow. The Center continued to press for a more progressive measure with another proposal in 1910, but this attempt was also thwarted by the Bundesrat.

The Center continued this pressure in the period of stagnation after 1911. A bill to limit miners and iron workers to eight hours of work was entered twice in 1912 along with another bill seeking legal equality for workers. In 1913 the party urged the government to introduce
unemployment insurance. Finally, the Center repeated its demand for complete legal equality for workers in 1914. All these proposals were either completely ignored by the government or defeated in the Bundesrat.\textsuperscript{88} Karl Bachem, author of a monumental history of the Center, took great pride in his party's valiant efforts:

Social legislation depends more on its real internal value than on its immediate external success. It is important that one has wished for the good of all and striven for this goal in an honorable fashion. If the Center had participated with less zeal in this great endeavor, then perhaps it could be criticized today from a civic as well as a Christian standpoint. But after it did so much through its active legislative proposals to dam the tide waters of approaching revolution, no one can say that it was the Center's fault, if, in spite of everything, revolution raised its head and was victorious.\textsuperscript{89}

Bachem's remarks are very instructive. It is true that the Center could present the longest list of progressive legislative proposals. But Bachem and other conservative Catholics strongly emphasized the anti-socialist or anti-revolutionary effects of social legislation. Many Catholic Center deputies, in fact, were not staunch advocates of progressive social legislation. The paternalistic, reactionary outlook to social legislation, characteristic of

\textsuperscript{88}In most of these cases the Bundesrat replied: "Die Erwägungen schweben noch," or "Consideration still pending."

\textsuperscript{89}Bachem, op. cit., Vol. 9, 125.
the government was shared by many conservative Centrists, especially the leaders. They were often more interested in protective measures such as Sunday rest, abolition of child labor, and curtailment of work time for women, than they were in measures which would provide legal rights and social security. The more progressive ideas of Catholic labor stand in great contrast to such views and created many tensions within the Center. By stressing only the Center's final record, Bachem conceals the internal party cleavages which arose over the Center's social legislative proposals. He gives only a picture of "sweetness and harmony." 90 The "active legislative proposals" which Bachem commends were less the result of Christian brotherly love and more the result of Catholic labor's pressure politics. Before the conflicts within the party can be fully understood, it is necessary to look at the Center leaders in more detail. Their names will occur frequently.

The Catholic Center Party was guided in the decade before World War One by an executive committee which was headed by Count Georg Hartling, Peter Spahn, Adolf Groeber, and Karl Trimborn. 91 The position of leader was held in 1907 by


91 For works on these men see: Herman Cardauns, Adolf Groeber, (Muenchen-Gladbach: Volksverein Verlag, 1921); Herman Cardauns, Karl Trimborn, (Muenchen-Gladbach: Volksverein Verlag, 1922); and Georg von Hartling, Erinnerung aus meinem Leben. (Munich, 1920). Good sketches can be found in
Georg von Hertling, who had succeeded Ernst Lieber in 1902. The scion of an old aristocratic family, Hertling was always a deeply conservative man. He never adjusted to the social changes arising from the industrialization of the empire and was very skeptical about the legitimacy of social reform. At one time in the late 1890's Hertling was the leader of an aristocratic faction within the party seeking to eliminate the more progressive influence of Franze Hitze. Hertling did not believe that the worker was entitled to complete legal equality and only during the war did he accept the concept of a modern welfare state. Hertling resigned as Center leader to become Minister-President of Bavaria in 1912 and was succeeded by Peter Spahn. As his son relates, Peter Spahn had grown up in the tradition of the Prussian bureaucracy, serving many years as a judge in the Rhenish provinces. He was traditional, over-cautious, and complacently satisfied with the political and social status quo of pre-war Germany. Spahn was more interested in

Klaus Epstein, Matthias Erzberger and the Dilemma of German Democracy. (Princeton University Press, 1959); and Bachem, op. cit.

92 Vincke, op. cit., 58.
93 Stegmann, op. cit., 407.
95 Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, Al.
maintaining the imperial associations act of 1908, for instance, than he was in improving it. This was more evident in 1916 during the legislation of a supplement to the associations act. The bill assured trade unions that they would no longer be treated as political associations on account of their political activities. Under the threat of desertion from the party by Catholic labor, Spahn and the conservative section of the party abandoned all plans of uniting with the Conservative Party to defeat the proposal. Spahn remained leader of the Fraktion until bad health forced him to step down in 1917. He was succeeded by Adolf Groeber whose political leanings were practically the opposite of Spahn's. He illustrated many of the democratic, anti-Prussian characteristics of his native land of Wuerttemberg, especially in his attempts to obtain an effective right of parliamentary interpellation in 1913. He was also zealously devoted to the Catholic religion and concentrated on protecting the interests of the Church from anti-Catholic elements in Germany. But Groeber possessed some of the conservative, paternalistic traits common to the other leaders. His main social concern was the protection of the artisan and peasant classes. Groeber also seems to


98 Nipperdey, op. cit., 290.

have been satisfied with the associations act of 1908 even though he criticized it in the Reichstag.\textsuperscript{100} Count Lerchenfelds, a Bavarian envoy, and several Bavarian Centrists noted that Groeber was more upset by the fact that the "Buelow Block" parties had passed the bill than by anything in the bill itself.\textsuperscript{101} Karl Trimborn became Center leader after Groeber's death in 1919. Trimborn had joined the party in 1896 and for many years his views were suppressed by party leaders who considered him a "radical, big-city democrat."\textsuperscript{102} By 1904, Trimborn had obtained more freedom of expression within the party. His interpellation in January, 1904, called for the continuation of social reform, especially the granting of freedom of assembly and association.\textsuperscript{103} Trimborn continued to voice labor's grievances and by 1907 was established as a key figure in party decisions. He played an important role in the Center's energetic social legislative efforts in the remaining years before the war. Karl Trimborn was the only major party leader who was in agreement with Catholic labor on the issue of social reform.

The reactionary and "half-way" approach to social reform

\textsuperscript{100}Born, op. cit., 224.
\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., 224.
\textsuperscript{102}Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, 43.
of the leadership was viewed unfavorably by Catholic labor leaders. Trimborn, Hitze, and Pieper, men who backed labor's demands, were greatly respected by the workers and defended on more than one occasion.104 But Centrists who were not in support of progressive social reforms, and who still considered Catholic labor organizations a dam against socialism were the source of many bitter remarks from Catholic labor leaders. One Christian trade unionist attending the first German Workers' Congress in 1903 felt that he was present at a meeting of the Central Association of Industrialists, not an assembly of workers, after hearing Savigny advocate a reduction of coalition rights.105 Later, Christian union leaders spoke of Karl Bachem as a "political and ecclesiastical reactionary."106 Remarks such as these became more embarrassing for the Center after Catholic workers attained parliamentary representation. Giesberts, for instance, openly chastised the conservative wing of the Center in November 1906 for its refusal to support Catholic labor's demand for complete coalition rights.107 These criticisms occurred less frequently after 1907 due to the party's

104 For one example, see Giesberts' speech on 21 November, 1906. He countered socialist criticism by saying that Trimborn was no "Rabenvater." Ibid., Vol. 218, 3913.

105 Gornik, op. cit., 118.


increased efforts to further social legislation. Georg Schwarz, however, could still complain of the "golden middle line" of the Center in 1912.\textsuperscript{108} Giesberts also added that this middle course had "gone as a rule too far to the gentlemen of the right and not far enough to the gentlemen of the left."\textsuperscript{109} Derogatory comments from the Christian trade union press also found their way into the Reichstag through socialist trade union officials who took every opportunity to embarass the Center Party. Christian unionists normally defended the Center in these instances, but sometimes, especially when the comments came from Giesberts' "Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung," defence was impossible.\textsuperscript{110} Moreover, the Center was continuously besieged with petitions from all the various Christian unions and Catholic worker associations. It was not coincidental when, in many cases, these petitions were followed closely by Center legislative proposals including many of Catholic labor's demands.

The Center's attempts to obtain full legal rights for the workers illustrates this point.\textsuperscript{111} The party's proposals

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 20 March, 1912, Vol. 284, 872.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 7 February, 1913, Vol. 287, 3572.
\textsuperscript{110} This instance occurred during the debates over financial reform in 1909 and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter III of this work.
\textsuperscript{111} Karl Erich Born maintains that it is in this area that the Center's continued development to a democratic mass party can best be seen. Born, op. cit., 52.
for coalition rights, freedom of assembly, and worker chambers became more frequent in the decade before World War One as the Christian trade union movement grew stronger and more assertive. A closer look at the timing of these proposals reveals an interesting pattern. The demands of the Krefeld Congress of 1901 and the stronger appeal of the Frankfurt Workers' Congress of 1903 led directly to the Center's interpellation in January, 1904. Trimborn stated openly that his speech was largely in response to the demands of the German Workers' Congress and the widespread concern in the press of the Christian trade unions over the lack of coalition freedoms. 112 The agitation of the Christian-national workers for parliamentary representation after 1904, the complaints about the lack of social concern among the bourgeois parties at the Breslau Congress of 1906, and the loss of Christian trade union votes in January, 1907, 113 were followed in February, 1907 by the Center's most detailed proposal to date concerning the workers' legal rights. It included the granting of more complete rights of coalition, the regulation of public and private rights for professional organizations of all types, the establishment of worker chambers to guarantee the "peaceful expression of the wishes

113 After the Center complained of the loss of trade union votes, the "Zentralblatt" replied, in essence, that they should mind their own business. Frey, op. cit., 41.
and grievances of the worker," and the legal regulation of wage contracts between employer and employee.\footnote{114} The petitions and demands of the second German Workers' Congress of October, 1907, were followed by the reiteration of this proposal by the Center in December. The behavior of the Center Party during the debate over the imperial associations act of April, 1906, also illustrates the influence of Catholic labor. The party's objections to the act were strikingly similar to the opinions expressed earlier by Christian trade unionists in the Reichstag.\footnote{115} Spahn especially seemed to represent the wishes of the Christian unions. He noted the flaws in the act and then remarked that the "Christian trade unions have extraordinarily far-going and heavy doubts about the government's proposal."\footnote{116} Spahn's own doubts were negligible. This general pattern of Center responses was continued when the Center demanded complete freedom of assembly and association in February, 1910, after the frequent refusal of Christian trade unionists to accept the association act of 1908 as final.\footnote{117}

\footnote{114} Reichstag Debates, 19 February, 1907, Vol. 239, No. 19.
\footnote{116} Ibid., 11 December, 1907, Vol. 229, 2173.
some of this evidence is circumstantial; but if one remembers that the Christian trade unions and the Center Party main-
tained a very close correspondence and if the evidence is considered in light of the hesitations of the Center leader-
ship and the conservative wing of the party, then the influence of Catholic labor pressure can be discerned.

Labor pressure also caused disputes within the Center over social insurance legislation. As already mentioned, the Center possessed an unequaled performance sheet. It was proud and satisfied with its accomplishments. The election proclamation in January, 1912 asserted that the "great work of regulating imperial insurance programs has been completed with our help and the old demand of the Center for the introduction of a widows' and orphans' funds has been realized in the process."118 According to Spahn in December, 1913, the importance of these programs could not be emphasized enough.119 Catholic labor leaders were also pleased with these developments. Christian trade unionists, in fact, were often the most energetic defenders of Germany's social insurance legislation. Thus, the publication of an article in 1913 entitled, "The Undesirable Consequences of Germany's

6621, and Schirmer's speech on 15 December, 1909, Vol. 258, 397. It is almost certain that the Christian Trade Union Congress of 1909 complained also, but the author cannot verify this.


Social Politics," by Ludwig Bernhard, leader of the Berlin School of National Economics, prompted immediate refutations in the Reichstag from Giesberts and Becker. Giesberts also took the opportunity on this occasion, as he did so often after 1912, of calling for a continuation of social insurance. This was the point of departure between Catholic labor and the rest of the party. Giesberts and his labor associates were never content with "standing still." They continuously pressed Center leaders for more social insurance proposals. Men like Peter Spahn and Adolf Groeber, however, were quite satisfied with the existing programs. They considered the 1911 reforms as largely the culmination of the Center's efforts. Thus, although Catholic Center leaders and Catholic labor leaders agreed on the principle of social insurance, differences arose over the degree of action to be taken.

The differing attitudes within the party towards unemployment insurance illustrates this point. Basically, the Center was split into three factions over the issue. The leadership and the conservative wing of the party were against unemployment insurance. This was first evident in August, 1902, at the Katholikentag. The annual assembly was often used by the leadership as a "party day" to express Center policy. Thus, Giesberts plan to discuss unemployment

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120 See Giesberts' speech on 22 January, 1913, Ibid., Vol. 287, 3163 and Becker's speech on the same day, 3165-66.
121 Nipperdey, op. cit., 283.
insurance was curtly dismissed by the party leaders. Unemployment insurance, an objectionable idea to the majority of the party, was out of the question. Groeber offered an explanation of the party's opposition to the idea in March, 1911, while speaking about a Conservative Party proposal to study the unemployment problem:

We maintain that it is much better to create work for the unemployed that it is to dole out alms. Thereby the laborer is shown the honor of work. He is raised up again, if possible, and strengthened after he has sunk so low, which is unfortunately very often the case, so that he again is accustomed to work and once again learns to earn for himself the necessities of life and to once again become a regular member of society... The care for the unemployed... is much more a task of society, the free and loving charity of society, than it is a task for state legislation. This charity cannot be forced. The state can always dole out money, but, above all, the unemployed are in need of a warm heart. And this the state cannot provide.

Spahn, Hertling, Savigny, and other conservative Centrists were silent on the matter of unemployment insurance in the Reichstag. It would not be inaccurate, however, to assume that Groeber represented their feelings as well. Hitze, Trimborn, and Pieper, leaders of the so-called "Christian-social" wing of the party, looked more favorably upon the idea of unemployment insurance, but were very hesitant about proceeding with definite proposals. Hitze remarked in 1904 in his work, The Social Question and the Means to its Solution,

122 ibid., 284.
that the problem of unemployment was "one of the most pressing but also the most difficult tasks of today's society."\textsuperscript{124} Hitze thought the problem could only be solved by the combined efforts of local, state, and Reich authorities.\textsuperscript{125} Earlier in 1902, he had suggested that a commission be formed from members of the Reichstag, employers, and employees to suggest proposals for a compulsory unemployment insurance.\textsuperscript{126} Hitze never offered any concrete suggestions of his own.

Trimborn was no less indefinite about the issue. He expressed the hope of eventually seeing a program of unemployment insurance in April, 1907, but, like Hitze, took no further action.\textsuperscript{127} Pieper explained some of the difficulties involved with the measure in his speech in November, 1908.\textsuperscript{128} He realized that the unemployment problem was very important, but felt that the time was not ripe for discussion of a program of compulsory unemployment insurance. There were too many other items to handle beforehand such as securing pensions for state employees and establishing a sound fund for widows and orphans. Pieper saw the support of unemployment workers as a matter which could best be solved by the joint effort of

\textsuperscript{124} Kraneburg, \textit{op. cit.}, 97.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 97.
\textsuperscript{126} Yincke, \textit{op. cit.}, 82.
\textsuperscript{127} Reichstag Debates, 10 April, 1907, Vol. 227, 654.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 13 November, 1908, Vol. 233, 5475.
local authorities and trade unions. Noting the rapid increase in the number of unemployed since 1906, Pieper defined the duty of the Reich as the immediate creation of work. Christian trade unionists agreed with the "Christian-social" deputies and the leadership on this point. But the labor wing of the Center felt that the state should also provide relief for those laborers who were unable to be employed by state emergency works. This task was too immense for the trade unions alone and could only be handled by the Reich or the individual states. Moreover, the laborites wanted immediate action. Giesberts stated in the Reichstag in March, 1908, that the country stood before a trade crisis and yet nothing had been done to solve the old problem of unemployment. Becker asserted in November, 1908—only one day after Pieper spoke about the problems of an unemployment insurance program—that Germany had to initiate an imperial unemployment insurance as rapidly as possible. Behrens noted on the same day that immediate relief measures were needed in places of long deliberation and formulation of plans. The party's interpellation of November, 1908, illustrated an awareness of the problem when it asked the

129 See Giesberts' speech on 25 November, 1913, Ibid., Vol. 291, 6223.
130 Ibid., 14 November, 1908, vol. 233, 5517.
131 Ibid., 14 November, 1908, Vol. 233, 5528.
132 Ibid., 14 November 1908, Vol. 233, 5528.
Imperial Chancellor what measures he deemed necessary to combat the harmful unemployment existing in commerce and industry, but it was a timid effort. The party leadership would not go farther than inquiring about possible relief measures for Germany's unemployed. Significantly, the Center's major contribution to the problem of unemployment before 1912 was the legislation of a bill in 1910 which laid the groundwork for imperial labor exchanges. The necessity of creating work was the only point upon which the whole party could agree.

The same type of problem arose over the Center's proposals to limit working time. Again, Catholic labor was unsuccessful in its attempts to influence the Center before 1912. As the Center record demonstrates, the leadership was not wholly averse to the idea of shortening the work day. By December, 1907, the party had successfully attained the ten-hour day for women. The behavior of Center leaders in the Reichstag in 1907 and after, however, illustrates that the main concern was the passage of the women's ten-hour bill. Spahn appeared very unenthusiastic, for instance, about the party's proposal to curtail the work day of men. He noted in February, 1907, that at least the women's proposal should be passed if an agreement could not be reached on the male

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133 Ibid., 13 November, 1908, Vol. 248, No. 1004.
134 Vincke, op. cit., 82.
Two weeks later, Trimborn referred to the women's bill as "highly significant materially for the working class." He felt that this was a measure which the whole house would accept. He was quick to point out that he was only speaking of the ten-hour day for women, not for men. The Center did not seek to obtain shorter hours for men, in fact, during the remainder of the legislative period. The Center's comments to the socialists' proposal for an eight-hour work day in November, 1911, explain why no action was taken. Pieper saw no reason to even consider the bill after the Bundesrat had stated categorically in 1907 that it would not accept any limitation of the male working day except for reasons of health. "Why even set the machinery of the Bundesrat in motion?" Dr. Paul Fleisscher, representative of the Catholic Workers' Association of Berlin, stated on the same day that the Center could not vote for the bill until it was assured a safe majority in the Bundesrat. Such considerations had never inhibited the Center before. The hesitation and unenthusiasm of the leadership and many Center deputies stands in contrast to the great concern expressed by Catholic labor concerning

137 Ibid., 18 November, 1911, Vol. 268, 8026.
138 Ibid., 18 November, 1911, Vol. 268, 8022.
the matter of work time. Giesberts pointed out in March, 1907, that great progress could be made if all industries introduced a ten-hour work day.¹³⁹ The trust and loyalty of the working class for the fatherland would also be preserved. A year later, Schiffer regreted the fact that the proposal for a ten-hour day had not proceeded one step.¹⁴⁰ "If foreigners in France and Switzerland have it then so must we!" Behrens complained in January, 1910, that nothing had been done to shorten work hours even though the Christian trade unions had made many appeals in the past.¹⁴¹ The unrest and dissatisfaction would grow louder and louder every year until the problem was solved. Christian trade unionists were also amenable to the idea of an eight-hour day regulated according to the requirements of each separate industry. Hitze agreed with Catholic labor on the necessity of an industry to industry regulation of hours, but opposed the concept of an eight-hour day. He felt there was an economic difference between the eight-hour and the ten or eleven-hour day:

The universal limitation of the work day to eight hours would not correspond to the different requirements of each industry and would also have dubious economic consequences for both employers

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¹³⁹Ibid., 11 March, 1907, Vol. 227, 391.
¹⁴⁰Ibid., 2 March, 1908, Vol. 231, 3542.
and workers. Either wages would sink or prices would rise. It would be inaccurate to assume that the eight-hour day is just as harmless as the ten or eleven-hour day. The increase in prices would lead to a decrease in sales, a dismissal of workers, not to mention the increase in the workers' cost of living as a consumer... The demand for an eight-hour day is in itself not socialistic, but it will probably be presented in that way. Before one step farther can be taken, we must accumulate experience about the matter. The immediate introduction of the eight-hour day would be an uncertain experiment that would be most unfortunate for our workers. 142 Catholic labor leaders were not as hesitant. Thus Giesberts spoke in favor of the eight-hour day for foundry workers in March, 1911. 143 He noted three weeks later that the International Organization for Workers' Protection supported the eight-hour day for iron and steel workers and could offer practical suggestions from its knowledge of programs existing in other countries. 144 Neither the Center nor the federal government had acted on these appeals by the dissolution of the Reichstag in December, 1911.

The Center became more responsive to the demands of Catholic labor in general after the dismal election results of January, 1912. The elections will be analyzed more thoroughly in the next chapter but it should be noted here that the Center suffered a tremendous setback, losing fourteen seats. The defeat was caused primarily by the

144 Ibid., 3 April, 1911, Vol. 266, 6180-6181.
dissatisfaction of Catholic working men with the Center's financial politics but the party's conservative response to Prussian electoral and social reform was also a factor. The loss of labor votes turned out to be the most effective form of pressure. The party simply could not afford to further alienate its labor backers. Thus, among many other legislative proposals in February 1912 the party included a bill to limit high temperature mining jobs to eight-hours and another which sought to protect the iron workers by introducing a regular ten-hour day and eight-hour shifts for men working before furnaces.\footnote{Ibid., 10 February, 1912, Vol. 298, respectively, the bills are No. 63 and No. 64.} The latter proposal also favored elimination of Sunday labor and curtailment of over-time work. Unsuccessful after their first entry, the bills were passed in the \textit{Reichstag} when the Center repeated its demands in late February.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 29 February, 1912, Vol. 298, No. 220 and 221.} In the remaining months before World War One, the Center was pressured by Christian glass workers, metal workers, and tobacco workers for curtailment of work time. In all these cases, the party pressured the government for a change. The efforts of Catholic labor and the Center Party were not enough, however, to motivate the federal government. The party's proposals were defeated in the \textit{Bundesrat} and labor's petitions were largely ignored.
The Center also increased its efforts to attain complete freedom of association after 1912. The coolness of the Christian trade unions to the Center Party during the elections of January, 1912 and the subsequent loss of Catholic labor votes were followed in February by the repetition of the Center's 1907 proposal. The party continued to yield before labor demands as tension over the inadequacy of Germany's social legislation mounted after 1912. The third German Workers' Congress convened in Berlin in late 1913 and exhibited the rising militancy among Catholic workers in its demand for the immediate continuation of social reform. These feelings were more evident during a huge rally which was held in Berlin on 10 May, 1914. The demonstration included members of the Christian trade unions, Catholic and Evangelical workers' associations, and the Society for Social Reform.147 Hitze, Trimborn, and Giesberts were also present. The main speaker, Adam Stegerwald, demanded coalition rights, worker chambers, imperial labor exchanges, legal control of wage contracts, protection for married and salaried employees, and better living conditions for all workers.148 Six days later, the Center entered its last proposal before the war for the guaranteeing of the workers' legal rights. The proposal was the same one which had been entered in February, 1907 and February, 1912.149

147 Born, op. cit., 247.
148 Ibid., 247.
The Reichstag passed the bill but it was again obstructed in the Bundesrat.

The Center illustrated the same retreating, yielding behavior with regard to unemployment insurance. Giesberts' statement of November, 1913 is the most detailed example of Catholic labor's feelings on the issue and importantly, he spoke as the official party spokesman, having recently been advanced to the executive council of the party. He pointed out that unemployment could be solved in two ways. The most direct solution was the creation of work. Imperial labor exchanges working in cooperation with local authorities could aid in this task, but strong state regulation of industry and the labor market would also be

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Catholic labor leaders had generally attained a stronger voice in the Center's social policy by 1912. The added parliamentary experience helped but there were other factors. Hitze had been very ill since 1902 and Pieper was tied down in the west with his Volksverein duties. Trimborn was beleaguered with numerous duties on commissions and had grown weary of parliamentary life. In a letter to his wife on January 17, 1914, he noted: "I have an extraordinary amount of things to do these days. I am chairman of three (!) committees and a member on a fourth. I also belong to the executive council of both Fraktion [Prussian and Imperial]. A house full of letters again lies before me. Finally, the number of trips I have to make to the various ministries has greatly increased." (Cardauns, Karl Trimborn, 109). Moreover the frequent absence of Spahn and Groebert from Berlin and the departure of Hertling for Bavaria allowed the trade union deputies and others, like Erzberger, to exert more influence. (Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, 44).
necessary. The next solution was the removal of the misery caused by unemployment. Charity was important, but the real need was for an imperial unemployment insurance. If need be, this imperial insurance could be managed by the individual states or municipalities. This would remove some of the financial problems from the overburdened Reich. Giesberts concluded, however, that the problem was one of doing "something or anything" and not a matter of asking, "how is it to be done?" But this urgent appeal failed to change things. The government never submitted a proposal for unemployment insurance before 1914.

Thus, the Center, urged on by its labor backers, pressed the government for a continuation of social reform after 1912. With the Center, the Social Democrats and the Progressives behind progressive social reform measures, only the federal government stood in the way. This was enough, however, to delay final passage of these bills until 1918 and after.

The practical results of the Center's social progressivism were not seen until after the defeat of Germany in World War One. With the last obstacle to social legislation removed, the Center could exert its influence. Many of the measures the Center had demanded before the war were finally introduced. The Weimar constitution guaranteed the right of combination, gave trade unions the legal right to represent workers, and guaranteed the eight-hour day. Other measures followed in the 1920's. A federal labor tribunal was established in 1926 and unemployment insurance was introduced
a year later. Heinrich Brauns, Center deputy and Minister of Labor from 1920 to 1928, later pointed out the significance of these social measures.

What we [the Center Party] produced in the Weimar Republic was not merely a new edition of the pre-war social policies. We surpassed the old standards. You will readily understand what I mean when I point out that the pre-war social policies were concerned primarily with protecting the workers.

The newer social policies, however, stress the workers legal rights and the security of his livelihood. This marks a difference in the essence. If we consider that the "proletarian" character consisted substantially in this absence of equal rights with the rest of the population, in the wording of the law as well as in reality, and if we also consider that to be a "proletarian" signified the insecurity of one's livelihood, then the new Labor Charter, the laws introducing labor exchanges, and unemployment insurance, will appear in their true light. We can show that in giving social reform this new direction we went far toward 'solving' the social problem.\(^{15}\)

As Brauns implies, the Center played an important role in the legislation of these bills. Centrists like Brauns were responsible for the initiation of many of them, such as the labor tribunal law and unemployment insurance. The support of the Center Fraktion, always quite strong, was also an important factor in the passage of legislation at the Weimar Constitutional Assembly and later in the Reichstag. The role of Catholic labor in this development can not be underestimated. The transition from the paternalistic, protective program characteristic of the

1890's and early 1900's to the more progressive, active social program furthered by the Center after 1907 was largely the result of Catholic labor pressure. The Center's post-war social reforms were thus the fulfillment of the demands Catholic labor had expressed in the pre-war period.

Catholic labor was quite successful in obtaining the support of the Center for social reform before 1914. But political expediency dictated that a socially heterogeneous party such as the Center would have to meet at least some of the demands of its electorate. This was especially the case in an area of such vital and direct importance to the workers as social reform. It was also important that concessions to Catholic labor be balanced with equal consideration of the other sections of the party. The party could not submit to every demand from its working class voters without alienating the more conservative deputies. Thus, Catholic labor had less influence in other areas of party policy. This is illustrated by the inter-party conflicts which arose over another controversial issue in pre-war Germany--financial reform. But even in this area Catholic labor pressure influenced party decisions.
CHAPTER III
FINANCIAL REFORM

The Catholic Center Party broke a four year alliance with the Conservatives and united with the National Liberals and Social Democrats to pass an important series of military appropriations in June, 1913. The military bill of 1913 included a periodical property increment tax (Besitzsteuer), an increase in the inheritance tax, new stamp taxes, and a non-recurring levy on property and income (Wehrbeitrag). The bill represented the first large scale attempt on the part of the federal government to levy direct taxes. The important backing of the Center for these reforms was in some measure a patriotic response to the financial needs of the empire. The proposed peace-time increase in the strength of the army necessitated an expense of over one billion marks and could not be covered with existing revenues or by the flotation of new loans. The empire had expanded its powers of indirect taxation to the limit and the beleaguered treasury was had pressed to keep abreast of the interest charge on the existing debt.\textsuperscript{152} The Center

\textsuperscript{152}Annual interest payments on the imperial debt fluctuated between 2.46 and 3.65 million marks during the period 1900-1910. The figure stood at 12.42 million in 1911 and reached 14.89 million marks by 1912. Statistical Yearbook, 1914.
reacted to this emergency, as did all the parties in the Reichstag, by supporting the non-recurring Wehrbeitrag. The party placed the defence of the fatherland over its own particular interests on this occasion. The Center's "turn to the left" in support of the property and inheritance taxes, however, was not the result of patriotism but rather the result of inner-party pressure politics. The predominant section of the party was opposed to these taxes. They were criticized for taxing the property of the wealthy classes too harshly and for restricting the inheritances of women and children. 153 Conservative Centrists also objected to the permanence of the levies. Direct imperial taxes were considered an encroachment on the direct taxing powers of the federal states. By early July, however, a strong group of left-wing Catholic labor groups led by Matthias Erzberger was able to maneuver the party into accepting the bill. The Christian trade unions, the southern and western Catholic workers' associations, and the Volksverein had been forcing the Center in this direction ever since the tax reforms of July, 1909. Catholic labor groups were not averse to military spending, but strongly objected to a financial system which placed the burden of new military expenditure

153 The new tax proposal called for a tax on the inheritances of widows and levy on the landed inheritances of children, incremented according to the age of the child receiving the land, up to thirty percent. Bachem, op. cit., Vol. 9, 252. The inclusion of these clauses had been a long-standing Center objection.
on the shoulders of the classes least able to pay. The financial system of the empire with its heavy reliance on regressive consumer taxes was another example of the workers' subordinate position in German society before World War One. This system must be explained before the conflicts within the Center over financial reform can be fully understood.

The taxing powers of the empire and the individual states were divided in 1871 so that the states retained a large measure of their financial autonomy. The states, especially Prussia, Saxony, and Bavaria, were supported mainly from taxes on property, personal income, and profits from commercial and industrial enterprises. The empire was limited to the proceeds from customs and excise duties and income from its remunerative enterprises: the Alsace-Lorraine Railroad, the Imperial Mint, the posts and telegraph, the Imperial Printing Works, and the Imperial Bank. Deficits in the imperial budget were to be compensated by a unique system of "matricular contributions" from the states. The amount of the deficit was divided among the states and paid on a per capita basis. All surpluses in imperial revenue were redistributed to the states in the same manner. Theoretically, then, the federal government was insured against both deficits

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and surpluses. This arrangement placed serious restrictions on the financial power of the empire and was not suited to the needs of a modern European power.

The imperial constitution did not intend for this arrangement to be a permanent one. Article seventy strongly implied that matricular contributions would cover deficits in the imperial budget only so long as direct imperial taxes were not introduced. Bismarck was aware of the Reich's constitutional power to levy direct taxes but never attempted to do so. His inaction was due mainly to opposition from the powerful Junker squirearchy, a class to which Bismarck himself belonged. The East-German gentry opposed direct imperial taxes for many reasons. Most Junkers were more loyal to Prussia than they were to the new empire. Thus, for particularist reasons, any centralization of the Reich's taxing power was viewed unfavorably. The Conservatives also realized that this centralization would increase the taxing power of the Reichstag—a development which was seen as a contribution to democratic trends. Moreover, the conservatives felt that the imposition of direct imperial taxes could possibly obviate the budgetary necessity of external tariffs. The gentry, especially in later years, was convinced that these tariffs were necessary to protect German agriculture. The conservative agrarians therefore used their strong position in the Bundesrat, the bureaucracy, and in court circles to thwart all measures aiming at the introduction of direct imperial taxation. Bismarck was forced to increase
the financial independence of the Reich from the states by expanding customs and excise duties. But once again he was unsuccessful. The Conservatives, the Center, and other right-wing splinter parties united in 1879 to block Bismarck's efforts. A general tariff was introduced in that year, but according to clause eight, the so-called Franckenstein clause, all proceeds from the tax over 130 million marks were to be redistributed to the individual states on a per capita basis.¹⁵⁵ Bismarck's only recourse was to increase excise taxes. These methods, in fact, were quite successful at first.¹⁵⁶ The adoption of stamp taxes in 1881 and a new tax on spirits in 1887 contributed to nearly triple imperial revenues in the 1880's. Revenues increased another 30 percent after Bismarck's departure in the 1890's. After a minor deficit of 1 million marks in 1881, the empire was able to redistribute surplus revenues to the states almost without exception until 1900. In this year the first of a long series of deficits occurred. The deterioration of imperial finances was caused by military expenditure which had risen from 317 million marks in 1890 to 828 million marks in 1900.¹⁵⁷


¹⁵⁶ The figures in this paragraph and the following paragraph are taken from the Statistical Yearbook, 1879-1915, unless otherwise noted.

The treasury strained to keep pace with these increases, but much of the cost had to be placed on lists of extraordinary expenditure and then covered by loans. The imperial debt, in fact, rose from 1.2 billion marks in 1890 to 2.4 billion marks in 1900. The recourse to heavy peace-time borrowing was the best example of the backwardness of Germany's financial system.

A closer look at imperial finances in the years just prior to 1914 provides an explanation for the mounting pressure from the working class for financial reform. The continued rise in military expenditure made the resort to government borrowing more frequent and accordingly sent matricular contributions and indirect taxes spiralling upward. By 1913, military spending had jumped to a level of 1.9 billion marks, and matricular contributions had reached an annual total of 51.9 million marks. The treasury had not relied on state contributions, however, to finance the debt and cover the cost of new army and navy outlays. In 1912, for instance, they constituted only 2 percent of the ordinary income of the empire. The necessary funds had been raised by rapidly expanding imperial customs duties and excise taxes.¹⁵⁸ A new tax on sparkling wines was

¹⁵⁸ In May, 1904, the nominal distribution of surplus customs and tobacco taxes provided for in the Franckenstein clause was discontinued. The only effect of this was to reduce both levies and allotments since no net income had been derived by the states from this source since 1898. Newcomer, op. cit., 24.
introduced in 1902, along with an increase in the brandy tax and an elevation of tariff barriers. Another new tax on cigarettes was levied in 1906 and the stamp and beer taxes were increased. This bill also taxed freight and passenger traffic, automobiles, directors' fees, and introduced an imperial inheritance tax which was managed by the states. One third of the proceeds of the inheritance tax went to the states to compensate them for the loss of a certain portion of their direct taxing powers. These taxes, however, did not eliminate further budgetary problems. The empire faced deficits again in 1907 and 1908.\textsuperscript{159} Thus, the government entered new tax proposals in 1909. Taxes on coffee, tea, beer, brandy, sparkling wines, tobacco, and stamps were increased, and a new levy on lamps and matches was introduced. Provision was made for a capital gains tax but the bill did not come into force until 1911. The empire once again expanded its indirect levies in 1912 by raising the brandy tax. Imperial revenue from indirect sources had swelled from 901 million marks in 1901 to 1.6 billion marks in 1912. In 1901 consumer taxes constituted 43 percent of the ordinary imperial income. This figure had risen to 57 percent by 1912. The burden of these tax increases, especially taxes on beer, wine, brandy, coffee, tea, and tobacco goods, fell on the masses of the population. The slightest increase in

\textsuperscript{159} The imperial deficit was 292 million marks in 1907 and 223 million marks in 1908.
taxation was a very heavy burden for the average worker earning only two or three marks a day.\textsuperscript{160} The German workers were justified in complaining that the onus of military expense had been placed on them.

The issue of military expenditure presented a two-fold problem to the Catholic Center Party. Like the Conservatives, the Center was interested in maintaining the original structure of decentralized imperial finance. This particularism was a legacy of the distrust felt by Centrists for the "prussianized" empire during the days of the Kulturkampf. The Center never overcame its aversion to direct imperial taxes, especially in Bavaria, where they were considered an indirect extension of the power of Prussia.\textsuperscript{161} By the turn of the century the advocacy of divided taxing powers had grown into a party dogma.\textsuperscript{162} The complex social composition of the party, however, made it a political necessity for the Center to seek an equitable tax distribution among the classes of the populace. The Center could not keep the amount of indirect consumer taxes at a minimum unless it imposed a policy of drastic economics upon the empire. Thus, the Center had to curtail imperial expenditure

\textsuperscript{160}This is the approximate daily wage of men working in cities with more than ten thousand inhabitants. German miners were paid more, as much as six marks a day in some areas.

\textsuperscript{161}For this line of reasoning see Hertling's speech on 10 July, 1909. Reichstag Debates, Vol. 237, 9345.

\textsuperscript{162}Bachem, op. cit., Vol. 9, 209.
if it was to maintain both principles at once.

The task necessarily became a difficult one when the empire began its armament program in the 1890's. The Center's efforts to limit military spending called Catholic patriotism into question, especially after the party's opposition to the military bill of 1893. The bill was finally passed after the dissolution of the Reichstag, new elections, and the formation of an anti-Catholic coalition headed by the Conservatives and National Liberals. These parties had joined the government in waging a vitriolic campaign against the supposedly "treasonous" behavior of the Center. After this experience, the Center, fearing the renascence of anti-Catholic passions and desirous of proving its own loyalty for the fatherland attempted to steer a middle course between its own desire for economy and the military status of the empire. In 1896 the use of the empire's surplus revenues for the amortization of the rising debt was secured. The party supported the great naval bills of 1898 and 1900 but urged the government to increase matri-cular contributions instead of imposing new consumer taxes. Alarmed by five consecutive imperial deficits after 1900 and an uncontrollable debt which had risen to 3.6 billion

163 For detailed handling of the Center's reactions to military spending, see J. K. Zeender, The German Center Party and Growth of German National Power, 1890-1906, (Unpublished Dissertation, Yale, 1952), and Bachem, op. cit., Vol. 9, 206-264.
marks, the Center again economized in 1906 by rejecting the government's colonial budget. This is not to say that Catholic national enthusiasm had declined. On the contrary, the support of the Catholic Center had facilitated the passage of the army bill of 1905 and the navy bill of 1906. Indeed, the tensions on Europe after the Moroccan Crisis of 1905 and the growing isolation of Germany in the immediate pre-war years made it increasingly difficult for conservative Centrists to balance their particularism and patriotism with the concept of a democratic and equitable taxation of the masses. It was the opposition of the Center in 1906, for instance, that blocked the proposals of the Progressive Party for an imperial income tax and an inheritance tax inclusive of the inherited property of women and children. In the interests of national defence, however, the Center supported new indirect levies on stamps, cigarettes, and beer. The irritation of the federal government with the Center for rejecting the colonial budget and the subsequent anti-Catholic overtones of the election campaign of January, 1907, only strengthened the resolve of Center leaders to preserve the party's reputation of national reliability. After the tax increases of 1906 failed to prevent imperial deficits in 1907 and 1908, the Center, pleading the cause of defence, joined the Conservatives in July, 1909 and passed a whole series of new consumer taxes. The Center's particularism was also quite evident. The party refused to consider any increase in the inheritance
tax and thwarted the introduction of imperial property and income taxes. By July, 1909, then the party had drifted away from its earlier policy of retrenchment. Instead of reversing the trend of rising consumer taxes, the Center had helped impose new burdens on the working class.

This policy, as might be expected, brought the Center headlong into the fierce opposition of Catholic labor organizations. The party's support of new indirect levies and its continued opposition to direct imperial taxation was considered a desertion of the workers' interests. The press organ of Wiedeberg's Christian-national Miners Union, "Die Baugewerkschaft," noted with great displeasure that the Center, in rejecting the proposed inheritance tax, "was ready to speak of the plight of widows and orphans, but was in a moment ready to impose hundreds of millions of new taxes on the broad masses of the poor population without even batting an eye—people who earn under nine hundred marks a year. They were ready to do this in order to avoid any further burden on themselves."164 Similar views were expressed by the "Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung." The weekly labor organ favored the inheritance tax and mocked the idea that the propertied classes contributed an equal share to the defence of the empire by paying direct taxes to the states.165 This was an argument used frequently by Center

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leaders such as Spahn, Groeber, and Hertling. Moreover, the General Association of Christian Trade Unions protested the harmful effects of increased indirect levies through its organ, the "Zentralblatt," and both assemblies of the West and South German Catholic Workers' Association called for the imposition of direct imperial taxes on property or income. To these energetic protestations were added those of Dr. August Pieper, the General Secretary of the Volksverein, and the dissenting votes of Giesberts, Becker, Schiffer, Schirmer, and Wiedeberg in the Reichstag.

This pressure did not have a great effect on the behavior of the Center Party. The predominant section of the party, eager to dissolve the "Buelow Block" and anxious to supply the funds necessary to bolster the military establishment, went ahead and voted for the indirect levies. The majority of Center deputies—strongly federalist in outlook—were slow to realize that the principle of confining imperial finance to indirect taxes and leaving direct taxes to the individual states was increasingly obsolete in the light of Germany's modern needs. The leadership, in fact, was proud of the party's behavior. The Fraktion leader, Hertling, praised the Center's spirit of cooperation in

167 Nipperdey, op. cit., 282.
uniting with the Conservatives. This move had provided the empire with the financial means necessary for the great national tasks which lay ahead. The Social Democrats, the Progressives, and the National Liberals, on the other hand, were portrayed as intransigent, unconstructive, and were chastised for advocating tax measures that were incompatible with the federal principle of the empire. The Center leader also pointed out that the new taxes would enable the empire to retire some of its enormous debt. For these reasons, Center leaders could not comprehend the adverse reaction to the levies throughout the country. Groeber felt that it was the government's duty to halt the agitation by explaining to the masses the great necessity for new funds. Hertling was shocked by the intense criticism which he had observed in various newspapers, pamphlets, and demonstrations. Judging that the issue of discord was the inheritance tax, he pointed out that arguments in favor of the tax were "false." The Center, harassed by its own labor constituents and criticized by the leftist parties in the Reichstag, stubbornly persisted in such defences during the remainder of the legislative period. Even the election proclamation for the Center Party in January, 1912,


169 Ibid., 11 December, 1909, Vol. 258, 249.

170 Ibid., 9 December, 1909, Vol. 258, 175.
included a paragraph praising the party's patriotic action during the reforms of July, 1909. The party seemed to have turned a deaf ear to the protests of Catholic workers.

Nevertheless, there were a few signs before 1912 indicating that the balance of power within the Center was beginning to tip in favor of Catholic labor. Center leaders realized that they would have to give some concessions to the party's labor supporters regardless of the rightist leanings of the majority of the Fraktion. In July, 1909, despite the objections of the conservative section of the party to unemployment insurance, the leadership supported Giesberts and his trade union associates in providing relief for tobacco workers. The measure compensated tobacco workers for three-fourths of all wages lost through unemployment during the first year of the new tobacco tax. The unusually high unemployment figures and the continued depression of the industry prompted Center leaders in 1910 to support the extension of the insurance payments for another year. Center leaders were also sensitive to labor criticism of the so-called "Blue-Black" alliance between the Conservatives and

171 The election proclamations of the Center Party are given in Bachem, op. cit., Vol. 7, 439-463.

172 The effects of the tobacco tax of July 15, 1909 were quite devastating. Unemployment among socialist cigarette workers jumped from 4.3 to 18.2 percent from the second to third quarters of 1909. Hirsch-Duncker cigarette and tobacco workers experienced a rise from less than one percent to 25.8 percent in the same period. Statistical Yearbook, 1910. For the text of the Center's proposal see Reichstag Debates, Vol. 256, No. 1540.
the Center. It was true that most Centrists were very much at home with the parties of the right, but the leadership did not wish to further alienate the labor wing of the party by publicizing that fact. Accordingly, the idea of a "Blue-Black" alliance was belittled by Center leaders.\footnote{Hertling, for instance, noted on 10 July, 1909, that "if the Center has forces of consistency in its midst, then it also has forces and elements which press forward to progress. Therefore, it will always hold true that the Center will adopt a different position than will the Conservatives on questions which concern modern life." Whether Hertling meant it to be or not, the statement was an accurate forecast of the Center's turn to the left in June, 1913. \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. 237, 9346.}

More significantly, the leadership strove to appease Catholic labor by providing an alternative to the popular inheritance tax. The plan called for a tax on the transfer and unearned increment of land along with a tax on stock issues, and stamps on dividend coupons, cheques, and long-term bills of exchange.\footnote{Hertling noted on 24 June, 1909 that the best solution to the dilemma of imperial finances would be the introduction of an imperial wealth and income tax, but that this was impossible due to the federal principle of the empire. His party's proposal, however, offered a "firm substitute." \textit{Ibid.}, Vol 237, 8810.} Hopefully, the bill would pacify labor's demand for direct imperial taxation and avoid criticism from the rest of the party by appealing to the standing Center hostility to stock-jobbers and mere monied wealth.\footnote{Epstein, \textit{Matthias Erzberger}, 80-81.} The bill entered committee in November, 1909 and did not reappear
until a year later. It was finally passed in February, 1911. In the end, the bill failed to achieve either purpose the leadership had intended. The majority of the party followed the leadership and supported the measure, but a substantial minority of large landholders and professional bourgeois deputies opposed the bill on the grounds that it invaded the taxing power of the states. Nor did the unearned increment tax of 1911 appease Catholic labor. The dissatisfaction engendered by the tax bills of July, 1909, was not so easily removed from the memories of Catholic workers. By 1911, then, Catholic labor groups had begun to undermine the Center’s staunch advocacy of decentralized, federalist finance. But it was only a beginning. A much stronger position within the party was needed before other demands such as the property or income tax could be obtained.

The election results in January, 1912, provided Catholic labor organizations with a certain measure of the leverage that was required. Many Catholic workers, remembering the conservative behavior of the Center in 1909, cast their votes for other parties. The Center suffered the most severe electoral losses in its history and was surpassed by the Social Democrats as the largest party in the Reichstag. 177


177 The Center’s strength in the Reichstag dropped from 105 to 91, the Conservatives’ from 60 to 43, the National Liberals’ from 54 to 45, and the Progressives’ from 49 to 42. The strength of the Social Democrats rose from 43 to 110. Statistical Yearbook, 1915.
The party's heaviest losses came in Silesia, the Rhineland, and Westphalia—the most industrialized areas of the empire. This form of protest proved to be the most effective of all. Center leaders could cast aside unfavorable news clippings and compromise or even disregard petitions from the various Catholic organizations in Germany. The loss of votes, however, penetrated to the heart of parliamentary power and tended to make the leadership more aware of the presence of Catholic labor. Moreover, the election raised in full force the old spectre of Marxian conversion of the Catholic proletariat. Many urban Catholic workers voted for the socialists in 1912 and many more were members of socialist trade unions. It was in the interests of the Center Party to remedy this situation by directing more attention to the demands of the Catholic worker. Generally, the elections of 1912 enhanced the bargaining position of Catholic labor organizations by joining the Center Party into realizing the precariousness of its political position.

178 The Center's percentage of the total vote slipped from 19.7 percent in 1903 to 16.4 percent in 1912, a loss of 3.3 percent. Compared to 1903, the losses in Silesia were 10 percent, the losses in Westphalia were 6.4 percent, and the losses in the Rhineland were 5.1 percent. Juergen Bertram, Die Wahlen zum Deutschen Reichstag vom Jahre 1912, (Duesseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1964), 206-207.

179 Felix von Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne, estimated that 800,000 Catholic workers belonged to socialist trade unions in 1912. Ritter, op. cit., 333. Another analyst, writing in 1914, placed the number much lower at 300,000. Morsey, op. cit., 44.
The attitude of the leadership to financial reform underwent a measurable change after the elections. The old antipathy to direct imperial taxation was still present, but Center leaders seemed much more concerned with alleviating the tax burden of the masses. Peter Spahn, who had replaced Hertling as Fraktion leader, noted in April, 1912, that consumer taxes would not be raised to finance new military bills. He was more in favor of some form of property tax levied by the states and contributed to the empire. The inheritance tax, however, was still out of the question. Spahn asserted that he, the Center, and the Conservatives were opposed to the measure because it was a "false tax."

Spahn's advocacy of limited indirect levies and increased matricular contributions was an indication that the Center had returned to the financial principles it had established in the late 1890's. Thus, the loss of labor votes had made the leadership more amenable to the grievances of the working class.

The dismal election returns were also a significant factor in providing Catholic labor with more influence on the executive council of the Center Fraktion. The election had been waged primarily on the issue of financial reform. The parties of the left, the Social Democrats, the Progressives, and the National Liberals, formed an electoral alliance and

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180 Reichstag Debates, 22 April, 1912, Vol. 284, 1320-1321.
lashed out against the Center, the Conservatives, and the tax bills of 1909.\footnote{181} The Center and the Conservatives also cooperated despite a reluctance on the part of both parties to give credence to the "Blue-Black" alliance.\footnote{182} The Social Democrats emerged from the struggle victorious while the Center and Conservatives experienced tremendous setbacks. These leftist political currents soon convinced a group of influential Center moderates that the party should abandon its traditional opposition to direct imperial taxation and unite with the liberal parties in a program of tax reform.\footnote{183} Foremost among these Centrists was Matthias Erzberger. The ex-Christian trade unionist had advanced rapidly within the Center after 1903. Erzberger's labor background, however, had not always influenced his parliamentary behavior. In an attempt to avoid party rifts, Erzberger voted with Conservative Centrists for the tax bills of 1909. He was also anxious to unite with the Conservatives in that year in order to terminate the Center's parliamentary isolation.\footnote{184} Nevertheless, Erzberger was in

\footnote{181}{Karl Bachem pointed out that "the entire period from 1909 to 1912 was characterized by the adverse use of the general tax unrest and the grievances of all affected interests against the Center. The tax agitation against the party was the main cause of the Center's first severe setback in 1912." Bachem, op. cit., Vol. 7, 74-75.}

\footnote{182}{Bertram, op. cit., 48.}


\footnote{184}{Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, 80.}
favor of a new political alignment for the weakened party by 1912. His inexhaustible energy, his mastery of budget problems, and his political flair made him a major factor in policy decisions. 185 He was joined by Karl Trimborn, Johann Giesberts, and Julius Bachem, the editor of the "Koelnische Volkszeitung," all of whom had intimate contacts with the Volksverein and the Christian trade unions. 186 The attainment of strong parliamentary leadership was an advantageous development in Catholic labor's struggle for financial reform.

The reinforced position of Catholic labor within the Center had an immediate effect on the party's financial policy. The introduction of new military appropriations by the government in February, 1912, created the need for new imperial taxes. Spahn and the conservative section of the party, as explained, favored the levying of state property taxes which could be handed over to the empire in the form of matricular contributions. The maneuverings of Erzberger, however, soon undermined this position. The aggressive Swabian approached the National Liberals and Social Democrats behind the back of Spahn and the Center leadership to discuss the introduction of direct imperial

185 Zeender, op. cit., 446.
186 For a useful sketch of Julius Bachem, see Martin Spahn, "Julius Bachem," Hochland, (April, 1918), Vol. 15, Part 2, 17-21.
The result was a budget committee proposal formulated by Erzberger and the leader of the National Liberals, Ernst Bassermann, which called for imperial property and wealth taxes and an increase in the inheritance tax.\textsuperscript{188} The so-called "Lex Bassermann-Erzberger" provided that the taxes should not be laid before the Reichstag until April 30, 1913 and should not come into force, if passed, until October 1, 1916. Erzberger and his labor backers failed to obtain the support of the Center for the inheritance tax. The party united with the Conservatives in May, 1912 and voted against the measure.\textsuperscript{189} Labor influence was instrumental, however, in moving the party to support the proposed property and wealth taxes.\textsuperscript{190} In June, 1913, the Center shifted completely to the position of Catholic labor by abandoning its opposition to the inheritance tax. The leadership, the Bavarians, and the party moderates joined Erzberger's faction and supported the imperial property tax bill which included all the tax measures proposed in 1912.

\textsuperscript{187}UDZ, Vol. 7, Part I, 236.

\textsuperscript{188}For the text of the proposal, see Reichstag Debates, Vol. 299, No. 476.

\textsuperscript{189}See the roll call vote on 21 May, 1913, \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. 285, 2226-2228.

\textsuperscript{190}\textit{Ibid.}, 21 May, 1913, Vol. 285, 2226-2228.

\textsuperscript{191}Erzberger was especially influential in overcoming the opposition of the Bavarians to direct imperial taxation. Bachem, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. 9, 405-406.
This support had not come without causing tensions within the Center. One deputy voted against the bill, twenty-two abstained, and many others voted for the bill reluctantly.\textsuperscript{192} Spahn, for instance, supported the measure but was reported to have been indignant over the tax agreement.\textsuperscript{193} The majority of Center deputies backed the new taxes in the knowledge that further opposition would precipitate another electoral disaster or possibly even split the party. Centrists could do little else when faced with such an alternative.

The behavior of the Center during the tax debates of 1912 and 1913 indicates that Catholic labor organizations had become an important factor in the financial politics of the party. The workers were able to overcome the particularist financial tradition of the Center and force it along lines more suitable to the social and economic requirements of a modern, military establishment. The Center's support of the imperial property tax bill, however, was not as crucial as the party's action of July, 1909. It is probable that the measure would have passed the Reichstag without the votes of the Center. Also, the Center's shift to the left was not a permanent one. The party returned largely to its rightist political leanings during the remainder of the

\textsuperscript{192} See the roll call vote on 30 June, 1913, Reichstag Debates, Vol. 290, 5939-5941.

\textsuperscript{193} UDZ, Vol. 7, Part 1, 236.
legislative period. Moreover, the tax bill of 1913 did not solve the major problems of imperial finance. The empire had established the power to tax directly, but the old system, for the most part, was still intact. At the outbreak of war in August, 1914, consumer taxes still represented the major source of imperial income. The empire never completely freed itself from state contributions; much less did it make the states financially dependent upon it. The debt still hovered near five billion marks. The Center's brief turn to the left in support of a more centralized form of public finance in 1913 was more a portend of things to come. It was the same coalition of Catholic labor groups which forced the Center leftwards in support of financial reforms six years later. As the new Minister of Finance, Erzberger was once again the key figure in the Center's shift. His proposals completely altered the financial system of the old empire by placing direct taxing powers firmly in the hands of the new central government. The Center's support of Erzberger's post-war financial reforms marked the culmination of the struggle Catholic labor had initiated in the immediate pre-war period.

Thus, Catholic labor's efforts to modernize the Center

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194 Revenue from indirect taxes comprised 47.8 percent of ordinary imperial income in 1914. Statistical Yearbook, 1915.

195 For a discussion of Erzberger's post-war financial reforms, see Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, 328-349.
Party were quite successful before 1914. Labor influence had become increasingly more important in molding the Center's social and financial policies. But Catholic labor's attempts to eliminate the plutocratic voting system which existed in Prussia met with none of this success. The failure to influence Center policy in this area illustrated the basic weakness of labor's position.
CHAPTER IV
PRUSSIAN ELECTORAL REFORM

Prussia's position within the empire was by far the strongest of any state, and in some ways stronger than that of all the other states together. In fact, the imperial edifice which Bismarck constructed in 1871 was in many ways an extension of the old Junker dominated kingdom. The title of Emperor was given to the King of Prussia and was hereditary in his house. The Minister-President of Prussia in most cases assumed the role of Imperial Chancellor, and in the powerful upper chamber of the empire, the Bundesrat, the Prussian delegation had 17 of 43 seats. The imperial bureaucracy was staffed with mostly Prussian officials and the German army was under the control of Prussia. The Prussian general staff and officer corps directed it and the King of Prussia, as Emperor, commanded it. The Prussian army law was extended to the entire Reich and all the states except Bavaria, Saxony, and Wuerttemberg transferred their peacetime military powers to Prussia. 196 Moreover, Prussia was the largest state in the empire comprising 65 percent of the land mass and 62 percent of the population. 197 Silesia,

196 Pinson, op. cit., 162.

197 Statistical Yearbook, 1915.
Westphalia, and the Rhineland—key industrial areas of the empire—were all Prussian provinces. Berlin, Essen, Düsseldorf, and Cologne—some of the largest cities in the empire—were all located in Prussia. It would not be inaccurate to say that little took place in the empire that was not either directly decided or strongly influenced by Prussia. Small wonder, then, that Prussian affairs were often matters of national importance.

This was the case with the famous three-class voting system which determined the composition of the popularly elected lower chamber of Prussia. Unlike the Reichstag, the Prussian Landtag was based upon a suffrage which was neither universal, direct, secret, or equal. The franchise did not extend to those who had drawn public relief benefits or to those who had lived less than six months in one location. The voters did not elect a candidate directly, but rather chose electoral college delegates who in turn selected the members of the Landtag. Ballots were not cast privately, but publically, in full view of employers, landlords, and creditors. Each elector did not possess one

198 The most detailed source material for the history of the three-class system is Hans Dietzel, Die preussischen Wahlrechtsreformbestrebungen von der Oktroyierung des Dreiklassenwahlrechts bis zum Beginn des Weltkrieges, (Emsdetten, Verlags-Anstalt Heinr. and J. Lechte, 1934). The work is the only history covering the pre-war period. Dietzel also quotes extensively from the Prussian Landtag debates, a source not available to this writer. For these reasons, this writer has relied on Dietzel's book quite extensively.
equal vote; voting power was proportionate to a man’s tax load. The highest tax payers were grouped together until the sum of their payments equaled one third of the total revenue of the constituency. Moving from the most heavily taxed downwards, the practice was continued until the district was divided into three groups, each paying an equal total sum. Persons exempt from taxation were included in the third group. All three groups or classes had an equal voting power in the primary elections. Hence, the system was dubbed a "three-class" franchise. This aspect was perhaps the most controversial. The division of voters into three tax-paying categories afforded the wealthy and conservative classes an inordinate amount of political power. During the Landtag elections of 1903, for instance, the tax contribution of two men, one a large landholder and the other a brewery owner, was large enough to give them two-thirds of the voting power of a Berlin district numbering 573 voters. Cases such as this were not infrequent. A single person occupied the first electoral class in approximately one-tenth of the voting districts in Prussia. Accordingly, the upper classes always attained a majority in the Landtag. In 1903, the Conservatives held 143 seats, the Free Conservatives, 60, the National Liberals, 78, the Center, 97, and the Progressives, 33. The Social Democrats

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199 Ibid., 57.
200 Ibid., 20.
were not even represented. The Landtag was packed with landholders, lawyers, professors, clergymen, and businessmen of all sorts; August Brust, a Christian trade unionist, was the only working class deputy in the chamber. German laborers—Catholic and socialist—could well ask themselves how long they could tolerate a voting system which deprived them of an adequate voice in the government of the empire's most powerful and influential state. By August, 1914, the issue of Prussian electoral reform ranked equal to social and financial reform as one of the most burning issues of the day.

The protest movement against the three-class franchise became most vehement in the two decades before the outbreak of war. This was due in part to the progressive tax structure which emerged in Prussia during these years. The first large scale direct tax had been introduced in 1851 with the levying of a universal income tax. In 1861 the landowning classes were taxed for the first time. The Junkers sacrificed a centuries-old tax exemption in order

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201 The results of the imperial elections of 1903 illustrate the advantage held by many of the Landtag parties. The Conservatives captured 54 seats, the Free Conservatives, 21, the National Liberals, 51, the Center, 100, the Progressives, 30, and the Social Democrats, 81. Statistical Yearbook, 1915.

202 Other German states had plural voting rights, but none was as restrictive as Prussia's. Saxony and Saxony-Altenburg had three-class systems with secret elections. Hesse, Saxony-Weimar, Oldenburg, and Anhalt had indirect but secret elections. Bachem, op. cit., Vol. 7, 118.

203 For the history of Prussia's tax system see, Newcomer, op. cit., 34-41, and Dittrich, op. cit., 19-20.
to supply the state with the funds needed to strengthen the army. The income tax was graduated in 1873 so that persons earning less than 420 marks a year were exempt while those with higher incomes were taxed to a level of 3 percent. But the most significant tax reform in Prussia occurred in 1891. The new Minister of Finance, Johannes Miquel, introduced a tax bill which graduated the income tax more steeply and increased the burden on large industrial firms and landed estates. Significantly, all persons with annual incomes of less than 900 marks were exempted from the income tax.

Although it was in the economic interest of most workers, Miquel's reform greatly increased the plutocratic nature of the three-class system by lessening the voting power of the laboring class. This situation along with the lack of any reapportionment of seats to account for the population flow to the industrial cities in the west made the Prussian suffrage increasingly inequitable after 1891. Consequently, the demonstrations and petitions from socialist and non-socialist workers mounted in number. The protest movement, however, possessed very few allies within the parliament. Most Landtag parties, especially the Conservatives, Free Conservatives, and National Liberals who possessed a disproportionate number of deputies, refused to reform the

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204 Dietzel, op. cit., 20.
205 Ibid., 20.
system and thereby discard such an obvious political advantage. The Prussian government, anxious to retain an amenable Landtag for its legislation, was no less anxious to maintain the three-class franchise. Labor pressure for reform was largely ignored until wartime pressures and eventual defeat swept the system away in 1918.

The response of the Prussian Center Party to the three-class system was quite unique. Unlike the other parties in the Landtag, the Center was not effected by the workings of the franchise. The party's heterogeneous electorate usually returned it to the Landtag with roughly the same number of representatives it had in the Reichstag. This factor and the bulk of anti-Catholic legislation passed by conservative Landtag majorities during the Kulturkampf explain the Center's opposition to the Prussian suffrage in the first decades of the empire's existence. The party entered a proposal in 1873 seeking to replace the three class system with the Reichstag suffrage. The Center also united with the Progressives in 1883 in support of secret elections. Both proposals were defeated by right-wing majorities. Moreover, in 1892, the Center attempted to render the

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206 The following chart illustrates the point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>1893</th>
<th>1898</th>
<th>1903</th>
<th>1907-8</th>
<th>1912-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landtag Fraktion</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reichstag Fraktion</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prussian statistics were taken from Dietzel, op. cit., 36, and the imperial statistics from Statistical Yearbook, 1915.

207 Factual information in this paragraph is taken from Dietzel, op. cit., 15-31.
franchise more equitable in light of the new direct taxes levied the year before. The division of tax payers into three categories had originally been reckoned according to the municipality if it consisted of one or more electoral districts, (that is, if the municipality's population was larger than 1,749) and by the electoral district if more than one municipality existed within it. The Center's proposal, backed by the Conservatives, divided voters into categories according to the electoral district in all cases. The Center feared that if the old method was retained the National Liberals, who were supported primarily by big industry, would undermine Center influence in the populous western cities. With the division formulated according to the municipality, one or two heavily taxed industrialists could render the working class of the entire city much less powerful. The Center's proposal was not a total reform, nor did it eliminate some of the extreme examples already mentioned, but it did provide more representation for certain exclusively working class districts. The Prussian Center Party was perhaps the most influential critic of the three-class franchise during the early imperial period.

Yet the Center's opposition to the system began to disappear in the 1890's. With the waning of the Kulturkampf in the late 1880's, the Center started to cooperate more frequently with the Prussian government in the formulation and passage of legislation. The party was not desirous of placing
obstacles in the path of this cooperation by pressing for a reform of the franchise. The termination of anti-Catholic legislation also removed the Center's apprehension concerning the conservative composition of the Landtag. It was this feature, in fact, which soon became very appealing. The lifting of the anti-socialist laws in 1890 and the subsequent growth of the socialist movement presented a grave threat to most Catholic Centrists. The materialism and atheism of Marxian Socialism were completely antithetical to Catholic theology. Conservative Centrists, for the most part, were convinced that the Church and confessional schools would be imperiled if the socialists ever gained a strong voice in Prussian affairs.\(^{208}\) Thus, the three-class franchise came to be viewed as a bulwark against the "red" threat rather than as a barrier to political equality, as had previously been so.

The Center's turn to the right in favor of a limited suffrage in Prussia was quite evident by the turn of the century. The party was not only fearful that Conservative strength in Prussia would be eliminated if electoral reform were pursued, but it was also worried about its own position. The Progressives entered a proposal in 1900 which sought a reapportionment of electoral districts. Arguing evasively, the Center refused to back the proposal on the grounds that all legislative efforts should be directed towards a more

The Center rejected the proposal once again in 1901. The Progressives entered the measure for a third time in 1902, this time appealing directly to the Center for support. The Center curtly refused. The party's rationale is not difficult to explain. A report published in late 1900 stated that a new division of electoral districts was drastically needed. The last reapportionment had taken place in 1860 when an average deputy had represented fifty thousand voters. This figure had risen to seventy-five thousand by 1900. More importantly, the increase in population had taken place in the cities. The populous industrial communities along the Rhine were therefore underrepresented while the depopulated rural areas (east of the Elbe) were grossly over-represented. Progressive deputies referred to these findings and predicted that the left-wing of the Landtag would gain fifty seats if electoral districts were reapportioned. One historian has concluded that a new division in 1903 would have reduced the Conservative Fraktion from 143 to 121, the Free Conservative Fraktion from 59 to 51, and the Prussian Center Fraktion from 97 to 86. The Center was protecting the conservative parties

209 Dietzel, op. cit., 34.
210 Ibid., 35.
211 Ibid., 33.
212 Ibid., 36.
and itself by rejecting the Progressive proposals.

There were other signs that the Center was retrogressing from its earlier position concerning the Prussian franchise. In 1903, the party withdrew partially from its advocacy of secret elections. Felix Porsch, the leader of the Prussian Center, stated in the Landtag that his party would only support secret balloting in the primary elections.213 Public balloting was necessary in secondary elections in order that they could be monitored and controlled. The Fraktion also seemed to have changed its whole attitude towards universal and equal suffrage rights. Kari Bachem214 expressed these anti-democratic feelings in the Landtag in January, 1904:

My colleagues in the Center have always been opposed to the three-class system as it presently exists. It is doubtless unbearable in this form and in need of revision. For this reason my colleagues are now prepared, as they have seen in the past, to agree to all reasonable proposals. They will gladly participate in the legislation of the shortly awaited electoral reform. We will now perhaps be asked to make proposals for such a reform. Gentlemen, we are not in position to do such a thing. It is not the place of the people's representatives to make proposals concerning a question as fundamental as this. That is the government's affair. Proposals of this nature can necessarily only be made after far-going consideration has been given to the matter. A parliament, let alone a single Fraktion, can never undertake such a task. Considering existing circumstances, it is unthinkable that the Reichstag

213bid., 37.

suffrage be substituted for the Prussian suffrage at this time, for one reason, this house, with the composition of its majorities, would not accept such a measure and also the Prussian government would never be amenable, but for another, the existing Reichstag suffrage cannot be acknowledged as the pure ideal. As past experience has shown, it has certain flaws and drawbacks which we do not wish to see extended elsewhere. But between the two extremes of the Prussian three-class franchise and the Reichstag franchise exists a mean, and it is toward this mean that we should strive so that in restful times a suitable improvement can be attained.  

Bachem's remarks summarize the Center's position very well. The attempt to remain on peaceful terms with the Prussian government is evident along with the principled objection to the introduction of the Reichstag suffrage in Prussia. The Center did not intend to press for a reform and significantly, it did not expect the government to initiate one. The party was the most influential opponent of Prussian electoral reform by 1904. The strength of its Fraktton, always near one hundred seats, would be a crucial factor in any effort to reform the franchise.

The Center's conservative transformation occurred, as will be remembered, at the same time Catholic labor organizations were growing in strength and political awareness. The Center, composed as it was of landowners, bureaucrats, clergymen, and professional men, could almost be expected to place a high priority on the defence of the Church and the Monarchy. Its opposition to reform was perhaps a

natural one. Catholic laborers were no less anti-socialist or for that matter, pro-Catholic; but as laborers they saw much to oppose in a system which operated mainly against the political interests of the working class. For this reason, Catholic workers sympathized wholly with the socialist campaign against the franchise. They also demonstrated and protested on their own. As one Catholic labor journalist pointed out after the war, the "Prussian three-class system was by no means a problem for the Social Democrats alone, it was also our problem. Nor was it a party question. It was a question for the German people."

But much like the Social Democrats, Catholic laborers were denied an adequate channel through which to articulate and press their demands. The conservative orientation of the Prussian Center was a great obstacle to overcome.

The Center and its labor backers first clashed over the issue of electoral reform in April, 1902. The Christian trade unions petitioned the city council of Aachen, an industrial city on the lower Rhine, concerning reform of the city's election practices. According to a local ordnance, only those who earned at least 900 marks a year could vote. The Christian unions hoped to lower the qualification to 660 marks. The Center's council members were instrumental

217 Dietzel, op. cit., 27.
in defeating the proposal. A similar attempt in Cologne met with another Center refusal. Karl Trimborn, leader of the Rhenish Center, defended his party's action with the icy reply: "those who do not pay taxes should not be allowed to vote."218 This type of remark contributed to the deterioration of relations between Catholic labor and the Prussian Center. As the Christian trade unions directed their attention more and more towards securing political influence in 1903, 1904, and 1905, the pressure for suffrage reform in Prussia mounted. The matter was discussed fully at the Breslau Congress of 1906. It was decided there to intensify the organization's campaign against the three-class system.219 The natural outlet for this pressure, as explained, was the Center Party. Worker electoral unions were created which kept in contact with the leaders of the Center Fraktion throughout 1906, pointing out the discrepancy between the party's electoral slogan, "Truth, Justice, Freedom," and its halting, evasive parliamentary behavior.220 The party made no attempt to reform the franchise in 1906. Then in January, 1907, the Center entered a proposal for the introduction of the Reichstag suffrage in Prussia.221

218 Cited in: Ibid., 28.
219 Frey, op. cit., 72.
220 Ibid., 76-77.
221 Dietzel, op. cit., 49.
What had caused this startling turnabout? Perhaps the Center was sincere in its attempt to remove the three-class system. The action was definitely in harmony with the early traditions of the party. The behavior of the Center in later years, however, discredits this explanation. There is also the possibility that the party was no longer interested in maintaining good relations with the government after the Reichstag Fraktion had rejected the colonial budget and placed the party in disfavor.\footnote{222} This explanation too has its drawbacks. The Center's reaction to the anti-Catholic election attacks of January, 1907, as explained, was just the opposite. Party leaders were greatly offended by allegations of anti-patriotism and strove energetically after 1907 to prove their devotion and loyalty to the empire and the fatherland.\footnote{223} The best explanation for the Center's proposal is again one of labor pressure. The introduction of universal, secret, direct, and equal suffrage was against the interests of the conservative section of the party. Center leaders were still concerned with the future of the Church and state in Prussia. The constant growth of the socialist movement had undoubtedly increased their

\footnote{222}{This is Dietzel's answer for the Center's action, \textit{Ibid.}, 49.}

\footnote{223}{A good description of the defensive, patriotic mentality of many Center leaders including Spahn, Hitze, Hertling, Porsch and Herold is found in Peter Spahn's speech before the Reichstag committee which investigated the collapse of Germany in 1918. \textit{UDZ}, Vol. 7, Part 2, 232-233.}
apprehensions. The action was also in contradiction to the policy which the party had outlined only three years before. Moreover, there is evidence that the move was taken quite reluctantly by many Centrists. Twenty-three deputies refused to sign the proposal when it was submitted to the government. Thus, Catholic labor had produced a change in the official policy of the Center by 1907. The importance of this change, however, should not be overestimated. The concession was probably not a great one. Center leaders were aware that the government had no immediate intention of introducing a reform bill. The King's annual address to the Landtag in November, 1907, did not even mention the issue. When the government finally entered its reform proposal in 1910 the Center's response was once again a conservative one.

The increasing opposition of Catholic labor to the three-class franchise was clearly demonstrated in early 1908. For years miners in the Ruhr had been trying to reform the Prussian mining ordnance. They demanded the creation of arbitration boards, equal pension contributions from employer and employee, secret election of miner's association officials, and other reforms. These

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224 Dietzel, op. cit., 49.
225 Ibid., 55.
grievances led to the famous Ruhr miners' strike of 1905. Socialist, Hirsch-Duncker, Christian, and Polish trade unions participated in the strike. The government of Prussia intervened in the workers' favor and promised certain legislative reforms. The bill submitted by the government to the Landtag in December, 1905, was a definite improvement, but the Landtag deleted many of the most important grievances, notably secret elections and pension improvements. After nearly two years of dispute, protest, and labor refusal to cooperate, the Prussian government imposed a temporary ordinance on 1 January, 1908.\textsuperscript{227} Christian unionists in the Reichstag were quick to react. The disappointing reform bill and the imposed settlement were examples of what workers could expect from a government that excluded the majority of the population from meaningful participation. Giesberts noted the distrust which workers felt for the three-class parliament and stated that hereafter attempts to obtain better mining conditions would be made in the Reichstag. "At least the German Reichstag is a people's assembly where the lower classes have their own representatives."\textsuperscript{228} The most embittered response, however, came from Karl Schiffer.

\textbf{Gentlemen, we must take this opportunity to double our demand for imperial regulation after the experience}

\textsuperscript{227}Ibid., 114.

\textsuperscript{228}Reichstag Debates, 18 January, 1908, Vol. 229, 2535.
with mining legislation in Prussia. Quite frankly, we are no longer able to place our trust in the Prussian three-class parliament, a parliament which is exceeded in conservatism only by the Prussian House of Lords. We believe that the Prussian Landtag, in consequence of its reactionary majority, is no longer capable of producing useful social legislation which will also be acceptable to the workers. The few useful clauses of the government's mining proposal of 1905 as well as those of the mining ordnance of 1906 were not retained, rather in both cases the Landtag altered the bill to such an extent that the workers were justifiably embittered and disappointed. Gentlemen, the government's mining ordnance proposal of 1905 was changed so much in the Landtag that afterwards the well-known coal worker's publication, the "Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung," mockingly asked the Prussian government whether it could still recognize its plucked bird. Gentlemen, we have more faith in the German Reichstag and the federal government, although these too have often bitterly disappointed us, as with the German Civil Code. But if the federal government and the Reichstag formulated mining legislation it would always be better than when it is handled by the Prussian Landtag and the Prussian Government. It has been our long-held conviction that in these sit the father of all obstructions!

I would now like to recall the remark made by the Imperial Chancellor, who as Prussian Minister President probably did not do his entire share for the miners in social respects. When a while ago the Christian-social worker deputation saw the Imperial Chancellor, he assured them that he had answered His Majesty the Emperor... concerning his thoughts on the continuation of social reform: 'Now, by all means!' Gentlemen, may the Imperial Chancellor keep his word to the more than 700,000 miners in Germany!229

Schiffer's warning was never heeded. All attempts to legislate an imperial mining ordnance were thwarted by Prussian intervention in the Bundesrat. Wiedeberg regretted in November the lack of progress. The events of the past year had diminished the faith of German workers for the Landtag

and the Prussian government. "Again it is evident that
the Prussian delegation in the Bundesrat is always the one
which places obstacles in the path of healthy and progressive
social legislation."\textsuperscript{230} The situation was growing increas-
ingly intolerable.

The Prussian government first announced its intention
to reform the three-class system during a crown address in
late October, 1908. William promised a reform which would
correspond to the "economic progress, expanded education,
increased political understanding, and strengthened civic
responsibility" which had taken place in Prussia during his
reign.\textsuperscript{231} The action was mainly an attempt to appease the
Progressives who were demanding financial and Prussian
electoral reforms in turn for acceptance of the empire's mili-
tary appropriations.\textsuperscript{232} The session of 1909 passed without
another mention of the issue. The details of the proposed
reform were finally announced in January, 1910, and the
measure was entered in the Landtag in early February. The
government did not propose a total reform, but it did
announce a few improvements in the existing franchise.
Elections would be held directly and tax payments would be
figured only as high as five thousand marks during elections.

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 24 November, 1908, Vol. 233, 5675.
\textsuperscript{231} Cited in: Bachem, op. cit., 116.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid., 115.
even if the total payment exceeded that sum.\textsuperscript{233} Persons could also advance to a higher voting category if they were "cultured," that is, if they belonged to a scholarly society or had studied for three years at a university.\textsuperscript{234} After its first reading in the \textit{Landtag}, the bill was sent to committee. Significantly, the Conservatives and the Center constituted a majority there by themselves.\textsuperscript{235} It was during the committee proceedings, in fact, that the conservative orientation of the Center once again became apparent.\textsuperscript{236} The party backed the Conservatives in eliminating direct elections and in removing privileges for cultured groups. The Conservatives in turn supported the Center's resolution for secret balloting in the primary elections. Blue-Black cooperation in committee also blocked an attempt to introduce the \textit{Reichstag} suffrage in Prussia. Moreover, when the altered proposal was read for a second time in the \textit{Landtag}, the Center again joined the Conservatives in defeating an amendment calling for secret and direct elections. As Porsch noted, "the matter of secret elections is secure. But

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{233} Dietzel, \textit{op. cit.}, 66.
\item \textsuperscript{234} \textit{Ibid.}, 67.
\item \textsuperscript{235} The Conservatives obtained 9 committee members, the Center, 6, the National Liberals, 4, the Free Conservatives, 3, the Poles, 1, and the Social Democrats, who had won 7 seats in the 1908 elections, 1. \textit{Ibid.}, 69.
\item \textsuperscript{236} The Center's behavior on committee and in the \textit{Landtag} during the 1910 proposal is explained in Bachem, \textit{op. cit.}, 115-123, and Dietzel, \textit{op. cit.}, 69-74.
\end{itemize}
they cannot be obtained...in connection with the direct election. Those who do not want to endanger secret elections will not demand the direct. Those who demand direct elections cannot seriously desire the secret." The committee's proposal was passed by a right-wing majority in April, 1910. The bill was then sent to the House of Lords where it was substantially reshaped. After the Lords amendments were rejected by the Landtag, the government withdrew the proposal altogether. The Minister-President of Prussia, Bethmann-Hollweg, made these remarks in May:

Gentlemen, because of the resolution which the upper chamber has just passed, a gap in the constitution has developed; after their resolution there is no agreement over the manner in which districts should be divided. After the position which the various parties of this house have taken to the question and shown to the resolution, it is the contention of the Prussian government that an agreement over this essential clause is impossible. In consequence of this, I declare in behalf of the King that further discussion of the bill is worthless.  

Thus the only electoral reform measure initiated by the Prussian government before 1914 was a failure. The Center's role in this failure was crucial. If the Center had backed the Progressives and National Liberals, a majority would have existed in favor of universal, direct, and secret suffrage rights. The Center's performance in 1910, unlike that of 1907, reflected the real feelings of the party towards Prussian electoral reform.

238 Cited in: Dietzel, op. cit., 72.
The behavior of the Prussian Center during the remainder of the legislative period revealed no basic changes. The Progressive Party reentered its proposal for the introduction of the Reichstag suffrage and reapportionment of seats in January, 1911. When the measure came before the Landtag in June, the Center recommended splitting the proposal into two parts. The universal, direct, secret, and equal suffrage was acceptable, but reapportionment was not. The National Liberals expressed approval of everything in the bill except equal suffrage. Thus, the Progressives modified their proposal to satisfy both parties. The bill included only universal, direct, and secret suffrage when it was submitted in May, 1912. The Center's response again proved disappointing. Approximately half of the Fraktion failed to appear for the final reading, thirty-three missing without any excuse. The measure was defeated by thirty votes. Center reluctance to participate undermined the Progressive's proposal once again in June, 1913. The Progressive's attempted to reform the franchise for a last time in January, 1914, but the bill was not discussed in the Landtag before the war broke out. The Center had clearly shown that it was an opponent of electoral reform by this time.

\[239\] Ibid., 76.

\[240\] Ibid., 76.

\[241\] Ibid., 76.
The Conservative behavior of the Center Fraktion also reflected the basic political weakness of Catholic labor in Prussia. Direct pressure on Center leaders was unable to force the party into a left-wing coalition in 1910.\textsuperscript{242} The willingness of Catholic labor groups to introduce universal, direct, secret, and equal suffrage in Prussia had seemingly little effect on the Center after 1910.\textsuperscript{243} Moreover, the loss of votes, an effective form of pressure politics in the empire, had no influence on the strength of the Center in Prussia. The Prussian elections of June, 1913, exhibited the same leftist political currents as the imperial elections of the previous year. The Center lost almost fifty thousand votes and more importantly, its percentage of the total vote dropped from 19.9 to 16.5—a decline of 3.4 percent.\textsuperscript{244} The same results had a damaging effect on the Reichstag Fraktion in 1912; the party lost only one of its previous 104 seats in Prussia. Labor pressure, on the other hand, was not without some effect during these years; it did force Center leaders in the Reichstag on the defensive. Much more vulnerable to labor criticism than the Prussian Fraktion, the national party could not afford a conservative stance.

\textsuperscript{242} For one example of labor pressure, see the petition of the Berlin Workers Associations demanding a reform. Reichstag Debates, Vol. 241, 1769-1770.


\textsuperscript{244} Dietzel, \textit{op. cit.}, 77.
on the Prussian suffrage issue. Peter Spahn, who did not wish to discuss the issue in 1907, encouraged the Social Democrats to vigorously protest the franchise in 1912. "Freedoms are seldom the gift of Christ. They require the energy and will of the people. They must be attained by exertion." Erzberger, who defended the party's action in 1910, was critical of the three-class system in 1913. But even Reichstag Centrists evaded the issue by declaring it to be Prussia's concern. Generally, then, Catholic labor pressure was ineffective. Center leaders in Prussia could speak of their willingness to support electoral reforms, but events always illustrated the difference between their announced intentions and their actions. By 1914, in fact, the Center was not even speaking of electoral reform in Prussia. The party seemed to have discarded its liberal facade. The Social Democrats, always critical of the Center's conservatism, were surprised at this development. One trade union deputy had this reaction:

Deputy Herold stated the other day that the Prussian Fraktion had no intention of introducing the direct and equal suffrage in Prussia. This is the first time, to my recollection, that this has occurred. None of you [Centrists] refute this? I see you also fail to remember a similar instance. Therefore, I conclude that the Center has retrogressed with regard

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to whether the Reichstag suffrage should be executed in the individual states, especially in Prussia. 248

One does not have to search far for an explanation of the party's decision. Only the day before, the Prussian Minister of the interior had reconfirmed the government's opposition to the introduction of electoral reform in Prussia. 249

Without fear of vote loss and confident of the government's position, Centrists felt they could afford to be complacent.

This was the state of affairs in Prussia until August, 1914. Then the war suddenly introduced problems of a different nature. Workers seemingly forgot their own grievances and responded enthusiastically to the new danger of invasion—or so they saw it. Domestic disorders disappeared, as has happened so often in the course of history, with the arrival of an external threat. But as the war dragged on, the early feelings of national unity and patriotism began to ebb. The conflict was increasingly viewed as a war of aggression and not one of defence. By 1915, the internal cleavages within Germany were again present. Workers demanded reform at home for their sacrifices at the front. The Prussian three-class franchise—the only internal problem which had been totally neglected before 1914—received the most attention. It reemerged as the most bitterly protested example of inequality in German society. For Catholic laborers, just as for


249 Bachem, op. cit., 123.
others, the continued existence of the franchise became quite intolerable. Joseph Joos, an influential figure among the Catholic workers associations, expressed such feelings to a Reichstag committee after the war.

I should like to make one more remark with regard to electoral reform in Prussia. I made the following observation in this connection: The average man, who was everywhere undervalued, disdained, and slighted and yet called upon to render the same services in the field and at home, suddenly ceased to accept this and regarded electoral reform in Prussia simply as the expression of the appreciation of the plain man; and this desire for self-assertion which forced its way out was quite natural. It is always painful to me when I meet with Conservatives who have not understood that with regard to those times. If a man can no longer assert himself either in public or in his work or in social life, his wishes are forced in another direction and he takes refuge in politics, and then he wishes to be respected in that sphere. That has been overlooked. The movement was encouraged among us by the kind of opposition offered to it and I am fulfilling a historical duty when I remind you that we in western Germany came into a serious conflict with our own spiritual leaders with regard to this question, because the then Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne, von Hartmann, did not actually issue a prohibition to the great workmen's associations regarding the discussion of the suffrage, but he did not wish it and recalled the priest who was chairman of our association on account of this matter. That first really fostered the idea that everything that was Conservative did not wish to grant the people rights. This haggling about the suffrage and about progress really did a great deal of harm in the country. Among the troops at the front it was different in part, but in the country it was an acute question. What would have been necessary during the second half of the war was not the prohibition of this and that but solely a practical example of unselfishness, given by those at the head of affairs. The nameless made enough sacrifices; they suffered from hunger and privations and gave their sons for the sake of the war and the national future. But it was those with big names that the people wished to see make sacrifices, the authorities and the officials.250

250UDZ; Vol. 5, 213-214. This translation is given
The government made frequent promises of reform in Prussia during the early years of the war, but no bill was entered until June, 1918. The proposal, moreover, did not include secret or equal suffrage rights. To make matters worse, the Landtag rejected the measure. The conservatives and Free Conservatives along with twenty-five Centrists and a few National Liberals voted against the bill. The three-class system remained unchanged until the last days of the empire. The final defeat and the revolution in November made further reform attempts unnecessary.

It was during the last months of the war that Catholic labor succeeded in aligning the Center with the forces inside Germany struggling for political equality. The pressure within the party for a reform of the franchise had been steadily rising since 1915. The trade unions and the Volksverein had been most active, but the Catholic workers associations, especially the "Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung," had aided in the effort. After threatening the formation of a separate party in June, 1918, Catholic labor successfully dislodged the Center from its alliance with the Conservatives.


251 Zeender, op. cit., 457.
252 Ritter, op. cit., 365.
253 Zeender, op. cit., 467.
The majority of the party supported a government sponsored reform bill for the first time. The behavior of the party minority, however, gave rise to more tensions within the Center. A pressure group was formed in the west, the so-called Arbeiterzentrumswaehler Westdeutschlands, which was pledged to work for the defeat of the dissenting Centrists. Party leaders strove to maintain unity throughout the summer of 1918. With the military collapse along the western front in September, Center leaders were forced to consider future policies. The question became more acute in November. How would order be reestablished and what form of government did Germany need? For Catholic laborers it was no longer a question of liberalizing Prussia, it was a matter of securing parliamentary government for Germany itself. A few union leaders and Volksverein officials had raised the question of parliamentarization during the war, but for the most part, Catholic labor had been concerned with ameliorating existing abuses without eliminating the traditional ruling order. With the monarchy gone, however, Catholic labor made the somewhat natural transition to parliamentarism. As Joos remarks indicate, the lack of an honest, straightforward and unselfish policy on the party of the government, especially with regard to reform of the three-class system,

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\[254\] Grebing, op. cit., 199.

\[255\] Zeender, op. cit., 459.
had finally undermined the workers' faith in the monarchy. Strong pressure from left-wing Catholic labor groups and the fear of a socialist takeover moved the Center to declare for parliamentarism in December, 1918. The cooperation between Catholic labor and the Center Party at Weimar facilitated the final transition from monarchy to republic.
CONCLUSION

The Catholic proletariat had grown in numbers and political consciousness in the years from 1907 to 1914. During this period the Christian trade unions and the Catholic workers' associations first seriously challenged the conservative, paternalistic principles of the Catholic Center Party and began to force it along lines more suited to a modern nation. Yet Catholic labor groups were only partially successful in obtaining the support of the Center for the reforms they demanded. The party's social and financial politics became more progressive but its stance towards electoral reform in Prussia remained basically unchanged. Conflicts within the Catholic labor movement itself, the absence of strong influence on local party committees and within the Reichstag and Landtag Fraktionen, the limited participation in politics by many Catholic labor leaders, and the Center's utilization of the Volksverein organization to support its moderate positions explain the limited successes. What concessions Catholic labor did attain were either the direct or indirect result of adverse voting behavior as seen especially in the Center's advocacy of financial reform after 1912. The lack of this pressure, as in Prussia after 1910 rendered the protests of Catholic labor unsuccessful. But while men like Johann Giesberts and Karl Schiffer were struggling for reforms in
the political arena, a whole new generation of Catholic labor leaders was emerging which would soon enter political life. Other leaders, previously tied up in trade union or Volksverein duties, would also take their place alongside the older pioneers. The slow political advance of Catholic labor and the concomitant retreat of Center conservatism before 1914 were trends that would continue after the outbreak of war. The adolescent Catholic labor movement of the immediate pre-war years had grown to maturity by 1919. It now represented a strong left-wing force within the Catholic Center Party and as such was a potent force in German political life.

Many factors contributed to the success of the Catholic labor movement during and immediately after the war. As previously mentioned, more and more attention was directed towards attaining political influence. This development was illustrated by the creation of the Berlin Office of the Christian trade unions in 1916. The inconvenience of keeping the offices of the General Secretariat in Cologne, the pre-war headquarters, at a time when important wartime questions were being discussed and solved in Berlin was generally recognized. Through its Berlin office, the organization was able to exert constant pressure on government and party leaders. The proximity of Stegerwald and his staff to the Center leadership perhaps explains the pressing nature of Catholic labor demands during the war and the frequent threats of party desertion. The office participated actively in the
business of the National Assembly, especially with regard to social and industrial legislation and it later expressed the views of the organization to the Reichstag.

The tremendous rise in the membership of the Christian trade unions during this period greatly added to the political importance of the organization. With more Catholic workingmen to support them, labor leaders could impress the Center with the urgency of their demands. From a pre-war level of 350,000, the membership dropped during 1915, 1916, and 1917, mainly due to the war. By the end of 1918, however, the sum had risen to a record 538,000. A membership of over 1,000,000 was attained in 1919, and by 1920 the figure had risen to approximately 1,250,000—an increase of 900,000 over the pre-war totals.

The rise in membership is partially explained by the rapid expansion of the Central Union of Christian Agricultural Workers. The organization of rural laborers was nearly impossible before the war due to the strong influence of the Junkers. After complete freedom of association for agricultural workers was guaranteed in January, 1919, the Central Union, which had numbered only 3,000 members before the war, grew quickly to a membership of 150,000.

But the most important factor in the growth of the

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256 The statistics in this and the following paragraph are taken from: The Program, op. cit., 21.
Christian trade unions was the termination of the controversy between Berlin and Cologne. Tensions within the Catholic labor movement were eased with the death of Kardinal Kopp in March and Pope Pius X in August, 1914. The new pontiff, Benedict XV, was less suspicious of the "modernistic" tendencies of the Christian trade unions and formally accepted the greatly harassed organization in his encyclical, Ubi Arcano, in November 1914. Catholic workers who had formerly hesitated to enter trade unions without papal approval did so after returning from the war. Nevertheless a few of the older supporters of the Berlin groups such as Leo von Savigny and Cardinal von Hartmann kept up the quarrel and refused to recognize the Christian trade unions. After their deaths the way was open for a solution. In 1920 the Berlin organization was disbanded and its remaining membership joined the Christian unions.

The increase in the membership of the Christian trade unions was accompanied by an increase in political representation. Shortly after the armistice in 1918, elections for the constitutional assembly at Weimar were announced. These were the first national elections since the Reichstag elections of 1912. The Center, desirous of weakening the socialists and bending under the demands of the greatly strengthened trade union movement, nominated a long list of Christian trade unionists. Twenty-four were elected to the
assembly. Adam Stegerwald, who had recently assumed the duties of Prussian Minister of Welfare, was among them. He was joined by Joseph Jocs, editor since 1906 of the "Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung," and Heinrich Brauns, soon to become German Minister of Labor. Moreover, five Christian unionists won seats in the German National People's Party and one each in the German People's Party and the Democratic Party. The appearance of so many representatives of Catholic labor stood in great contrast to the five or six trade union functionaries who had sat in the Imperial Reichstag. This new strength was an important factor in the attainment of new social, financial, and constitutional reforms.

The Catholic labor movement did not play as significant a role in modern German history as the socialist labor movement. The numbers of workers in the Christian trade unions and Catholic workers' associations never approached the numbers of workers in socialist organizations, especially in the pre-war period. The importance of Catholic labor, on the other hand, should not be underestimated. The demands of the Christian trade unions and the German Workers' Congress made a deep impression on government leaders like Bernhard von Buelow, Theobald von Bethman-Hollweg, and Count von Posadowsky. They sincerely hoped that Germany's social insurance legislation would persuade Protestant workers

257 Frey, op. cit., 108.
to join the Christian unions.\footnote{Born, \textit{op. cit.}, 171-177.} The conciliatory, "Christian" doctrine of Catholic labor lent an atmosphere of respectability to the whole movement unlike the seemingly revolutionary, atheistic socialists who were considered outside the pale of respectable society. The impact of the Catholic labor movement on the Reichstag parties--most notably the rise of a powerful and adamant Catholic labor wing within the Center--was also an important development in Germany. The strength of its Fraktion, always near 100 seats from 1874 to 1920, the Center's parliamentary behavior often determined the outcome of crucial legislation. The gradual emergence of the Center-Social Democrat alliance, a trend seen briefly before the war, was of extreme importance in the furtherance of domestic reform in the early years of the Weimar Republic. Catholic labor's role in the leftward movement of the Center in these years was paramount. Moreover, the struggles of Catholic labor within the Center Party, historically important in their own right, provide the historian with a micro-cosmic view of some of the problems facing the Second Empire. The issues which threatened the unity of the Center Party also endangered the existence of the empire as Bismarck had created it. Just like Center leaders, government leaders were forced to choose between reform, modernization, and adherence to the status quo. The more progressive, flexible
response of the Center perhaps explains its avoidance of the final disaster that befell the empire.
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