FERNAND PELLOUTIER AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE
FRENCH SYNDICALIST MOVEMENT
1880-1906

DISSERTATION

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the French labor movement is intimately connected with the development of political socialism. Hardly had the French syndicats or trade unions begun to emerge in the last half of the nineteenth century when they were captured by the socialist parties which sought to utilize them for their own political purposes. In many ways, their links with the French socialists proved to be beneficial for the syndicats. Since they needed the support of the organized working class, the socialists fostered the growth of trade unions throughout the nation. Consequently, a large number of syndicats were created in regions where the working class had been hitherto weak and unorganized. Moreover, the socialists' control over the trade unions provided the latter with at least some political support in a period when the syndicats were in the twilight zone of toleration. Finally, the syndicats received an ideology from the socialists whose collectivist principles were stamped upon their trade adherents. By the 1880's, the majority of French trade unions were imbued with the socialist credo.

On the other hand, the impact of socialism upon the syndicats had many harmful results for the labor movement. The purely corporate or trade union functions of the labor organizations were neglected by the socialists who were concerned primarily with political matters. Furthermore, the frequent quarrels and schisms in the socialists' ranks left the trade unions divided among themselves.
at a time when working class unity was essential to a strong labor movement. As a result, there developed among the syndicalists a movement to neutralize the trade unions against political influences. Although few workers wanted to break their ties with the socialists, most were determined to eliminate political issues in the syndicats and to create a unified labor movement.

The creation of the Bourses du Travail in France during the 1880's was a large step toward the realization of these working class goals. Not only did the Bourses provide the workers with new weapons in the purely economic struggle against capital but created also a new syndicalist mentality among the workers. From the Bourses emerged a new type of militant who was interested in the creation of an independent labor movement based on trade unions needs and aspirations instead of a political ideology. The leader of the Bourses du Travail was Fernand Pelloutier in whom the working class found a leader of exceptional ability and energy. In the 1890's, the workers' campaign against the socialists was led and directed by Pelloutier.

The socialists' refusal to concur in the workers' demands for a neutral and unified labor movement led to their ouster from the syndicats in the 1890's. Inspired by the concept of the General Strike, a purely trade union weapon first fully articulated by Pelloutier, the workers declared the trade unions neutral ground. What followed was the creation of the Confédération Général du Travail, which was organized in 1895 for the purpose of unifying the labor
movement in France. Although weak and ineffective at first, the CGT was strengthened by its subsequent merger with the Bourses du Travail in 1902. Before his death in 1901, Pelloutier had managed to build the Bourses into the powerful organizations in the labor world.

In spite of their efforts to protect their movement against political disruptions, the majority of syndicalists did not wish to break completely with the socialists. Most of them realized that the support of the socialists was necessary if any effective reforms were to be obtained from the state. In addition, the political socialists still had a strong hold on the workers. Not only did many syndicalists retain their political loyalties but they allowed their behavior in the trade unions to be influenced by political considerations as well. For this reason, the ties between the socialists and the syndicats from 1895 to 1906 were closer than is generally recognized. Every major development in the socialist world had its repercussions on the trade unions. In fact, the emergence of the radical labor movement known as revolutionary syndicalism was a direct result of the Millerand Affair which divided the French socialists between 1899 and 1905.

Although their links with the socialists were strong, the syndicalists were unwilling to make a formal alliance with even a unified socialist party. To have wedded the trade unions to a political doctrine would have meant the defection of those workers who were opposed to socialism. Consequently, the syndicalists, despite the socialists' overtures in this direction, refused to formalize their ties with the Socialist Party. In 1906, their desire for absolute neutrality was embodied in the famous Charter of Amiens in which they expressed a willingness to work with the socialists but rejected any permanent alliance with them. It was clear that a distinctive syndicalist mentality had emerged among the workers. Although many syndicalists were committed to socialism, they refused to jeopardize their organizations for the sake of political partisanship.
CHAPTER ONE

THE FRENCH LABOR MOVEMENT AND THE RISE OF SOCIALISM

I

In the last decade of the Second Empire, the labor movement in France underwent a revival. Destroyed or forced underground by the repression following the Revolution of 1848, syndicats¹ began to organize freely in the 1860's. Stimulated by the expansion of French industry in this period, co-operatives, syndicats, and resistance societies (Sociétés de Résistance) grew in strength and number until the government was forced to recognize them in fact if not in law. Consequently, the government, heeding the workers' demands for legal recognition of the trade unions, decided to modify the law of working class coalitions. In 1864, employee associations were authorized but interference in the freedom of trade by violence, threats, or fraudulent means were punished by the law. To be sure, violence, threats, and fraudulent means were generally interpreted to the advantage of the propertied interests; but, encouraged by it and the subsequent law of 1868 that legalized working class meetings and assemblies, the workers continued their organizing activities. Organizations founded in secrecy came out into the open, and new

¹ A syndicat is the French equivalent of an English or American trade union. See Louis Levine, Syndicalism in France (New York: 1912), pp. 33-34.
syndicats sprang up among the printers, the bronze workers, the mechanics, and other trades.  

As might have been expected, the emerging labor organizations were extremely moderate in their demands. What they sought primarily was the right to organize and combine, for upon it depended the realization of their other claims. Among the latter were the limitation of the working day, the fixing of a wage scale, the regulation of apprenticeship in the trades, the development of a system of professional training, and the creation of mutual aid funds. None of these aims included the slightest trace of radicalism, and the leaders of the labor movement were extremely cautious in asserting even this modest program.

In fact, it was in co-operation that the workers placed their main hope to solve the growing social problem. Finding a source of inspiration in the writings of Proudhon, the labor leaders viewed the formation of producer and consumer co-operatives as the panacea for labor's ills. According to Proudhon's doctrine of "mutualism," it was only necessary to create free credit and exchange in order to overcome the abuses of capitalism. He felt that the major function of the syndicats was to form credit societies which would serve as a base for producer co-operatives. A functioning system of co-

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operatives would eliminate profit and interest from the economy, and the workers would receive the full value of what they produced. The end result would be a wider and more equal distribution of property and the organization of society upon a decentralized, federative basis. According to Proudhon, all class distinction would then disappear and local units of workers engaged in the production of goods and services, would take the place of the centralized state. The simplicity of Proudhon's solution exercised a great hold over such labor leaders as Tolain, Murat, Limousin, and Fribourg. During the 1860's, these men guided the naissant labor movement along the peaceful channels of "mutualism."

In view of the precarious status of the early labor organizations, it was not surprising that they hesitated to become involved in politics. The straitjacket placed upon the workers by the Second Empire led them to regard political abstention as the wisest policy. Furthermore, a rationale for political abstention was present in the doctrines of Proudhon, so influential among the workers in the 1860's. This self-educated philosopher, whose hostility to politics was derived from his fundamental antipathy to the state, felt that the workers were not ready for political pursuits. In his opinion, the working class should ignore political activity until they were

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sufficiently powerful, morally and materially, to make their power felt. 6 For the present, however, he felt that "all we can do is protest by the absence of our ballots." 7

Most of the working class leaders were ready to accept Proudhon's analysis of their situation, for they identified political preoccupations with radical demagoguery. For this reason, a belief in the superiority of legitimate trade union action over political activity became a basic part of their outlook. In 1866 the French syndicat leaders opposed a resolution asking for an eight-hour day law from the state because it would violate the "freedom of contract" between capital and labor. 8 Moreover, they sought to limit trade union membership to manual laborers. From the debate on this latter issue, it was clear that they feared intensely the intellectuals who "will inevitably drag the working class into the political arena." 9

However, not all the trade union leaders in the 1860's were opposed to working class political action. Many felt that the only


7 Quoted in ibid., I, 281.


9 Ibid., pp. 42-43.
way labor could achieve the right to organize and bargain collectively was to enforce its will on the public powers. Usually, these militants were no more radical than the abstentionists. In fact, so fearful were they of subversive influences that they insisted that the task of representing the working class in parliament should be entrusted only to bonafide workers. In accordance with their views, a few working class candidates ran for the Corps Légalisat in the 1860's, but they received little support even from the working class districts.

What few political activities the French syndicats undertook in the 1860's stemmed not from a strong desire to engage in politics, but from the necessity of securing legislation vital to their very existence. Although the majority of trade unions were opposed to political action in principle, they were not strong enough to ignore it completely. For whenever they sought a solution to a particular problem or demanded a specific reform, they were almost always forced to call upon the state. Insofar as they were able to agitate from within their syndicats, however, they stuck very close to "mutualist" doctrines. Socialist or radical ideas were mostly lively topics for student discussion at crowded, left bank cafes.

10 Dolléans, I, 278-80.
12 Bernstein, p. 4.
13 Weill, p. 206.
The French working class first came into contact with modern socialist ideas through their membership in the International Association of Working Men, founded at London in 1864. Controlling the inner Council of this Organization were the followers of Karl Marx who developed a body of doctrine known as "scientific socialism." Marx insisted that the emancipation of the proletariat required strenuous political activity on the part of the workers. In his view, the working class had to organize a separate and distinct political party for the purpose of seizing the state and utilizing it to transform the system of private property into the collective ownership of the means of production. Not that Marx ever contended that this transformation would ever be accomplished by peaceful and democratic methods. According to him, socialism could only be achieved by a revolutionary onslaught on the state. Nevertheless, he did feel that working class electoral and parliamentary action would be useful for disseminating propaganda and creating class consciousness among the workers.\footnote{For the development of Marxism in the International, see G. M. Stekloff, \textit{History of the First International} (New York: 1926).}

Marxism made little impact on the French section of the International. Not only did the French working class leaders deplore the political elements in Marxism but they never gave up their Proudhonist belief in "individual property as being the only solid
basis of the family and the independence of the citizen.\textsuperscript{15} For this reason, the mutualists members of the International stubbornly resisted the Marxists' efforts to dominate this Organization.

In 1866 the rivalry between the mutualists and the Marxists culminated in the famous dispute over the statutes of the International. The Marxists' version of the International's principles emphasized that the proletariat would be expected to engage in full scale political activity. On their part, the French interpreted the statutes to mean that "all political movements must be subordinated to the...economic emancipation of the workers."\textsuperscript{16} Herein was stated their reluctance to enter the political arena as well as their preference for such direct trade union tactics as collective bargaining, co-operation, and mutual aid. The encounter between these two opposing conceptions of the labor movement ended in a stalemate, with neither the Marxists nor the mutualists able to make many converts among the other.

Toward the end of the 1860's, however, a new doctrine crystallized within the International. Later known as anarchism, this new credo was then called anti-authoritarian collectivism, inasmuch as it was a reaction against the dogmatism of Karl Marx. Interestingly enough,

\textsuperscript{15} Quoted in James Guillaume, L'\textsc{International}, Documents et Souvenirs (4 vols.; Paris: 1907-1910), I, 197.

the anarchists, like the mutualists, claimed the paternity of Proudhon. From him, these libertarians, as they were sometimes called, inherited a hatred of all authority, be it the state, the capitalist system, or the church. In their opinion, all three of these institutions deprived men of their liberty. Of the three, they directed their main attack on the state. It was the latter which upheld the iniquitous system of private property codified in the capitalist order. According to the anarchists, the state should be destroyed and replaced by worker groups, freely organized from the simple to the complex, to carry on the economic functions of society. In their opinion, no government was needed for education, national defense, or for any other human activity. To perform these vital functions, free associations of individuals would spring up to take the place of the modern state.

Although the anarchists were at one with the Marxists in their collectivism, they, unlike the Marxists, refused to assign even a temporary value to the state. The libertarians opposed the Marxists' notion that the state was necessary to carry out the social transformation, for they felt that a working class state would be as tyrannical as the old. For this reason, they denied the efficacy of working class political action aimed at conquering the public powers. In their view, the workers should refuse all contact with

18 Proudhon's ideas as succinctly summarized in Maitron, pp. 34-43. Also see Bernstein, pp. 17-28.
the state and should abstain from all political activities. As to
how they hoped to bring about the revolution, the libertarians were
never very specific. Since most of them felt the revolution was
inevitable, they insisted only that the proletariat should take
certain steps to prepare itself for the coming upheaval. Other
anarchists fell back upon a revolutionary trade unionism which was
never very clearly elaborated. 19

As might have been expected, a clash between the Marxists and
the anarchists immediately took place within the International.
However, the issues separating the two brands of collectivism were
most dramatically revealed at a regional Congress of this Associa-
tion in 1870. In fact, a difference over the question of working
class political participation led to a formal split between the
anarchist-controlled sections of the International and those loyal
to the Marxists. Following the scission, the anarchists, assembled
in caucus, passed a resolution stating that the participation of the
working class in politics would lead to "the consolidation of the
existing situation." 20 Therefore,

The Congress recommends to all sections of the
International to renounce all action seeking to achieve
the social transformation by political reforms, and for
them to concentrate all their activity on the...professional
associations of syndicats which is the method to assure the
success of the...revolution. 21

20 Quoted in Maitron, p. 57.
21 Ibid.
Meeting separately also, the Marxists pushed through a resolution demanding full scale working class political action and even recommending the participation of working class candidates in parliament.\(^22\)

The growth of anarchism within the International had important consequences for the French labor movement. Unlike Marxism, this new doctrine was quickly embraced by many of the French delegates to the International, and it was not long before anarchism was finding its way into France. The great wave of strikes and subsequent period of repression in France after 1866 paved the way for the entry of a more radical doctrine. Nevertheless, labor's new militancy would not have led to the growth of anarchism had it not been for the proselytizing zeal of a few French libertarians who soon won control over the French section of the International. Despite the opposition of the mutualists, it only took the libertarians three years to plant their doctrine firmly in French soil.

The leader of the French anarchists was Eugene Varlin, a former mutualist, who became Secretary of the French section in 1867.\(^23\) Varlin's great achievement, in the late 1860's, was to increase the prestige and strength of the International in France. Unlike his mutualist predecessors, he took the International directly to the workers. His grassroot contacts with the proletariat, his spirited

\(^22\) Ibid., pp. 57-58.

\(^23\) For the militant career of Varlin, see Maurice Foulon, *Eugene Varlin, Relieur* (Clermont-Ferrand: 1934) and Dolleens, I, 296-311.
defense of working class aims, and his Herculean efforts in organizing aid to strikers enabled him to identify anarchism with trade union goals. So indefatigable were his efforts in this direction that he was able to bring the influence of the International in France to its highest point in the pre-Commune years. By 1870 the network of the International extended, in varying degrees of strength, over almost all of France.

Although there is no way to measure the strength of anarchism in France during these years, it is certain that an extension of this doctrine accompanied the growth of the International. That the French section of this Association did grow at a rapid pace cannot be disputed. Nevertheless, the groups adhering to the International were by no means all imbued with anarchism. In the late 1860's, mutualist and moderate ideas still retained a strong hold over the French workers.

Besides the fact that one was revolutionary and the other was moderate in nature, there were certain similarities between mutualism and anarchism. First of all, both doctrines insisted that education was the first step in the moral, intellectual, and professional advancement of the working class. For the mutualists, education was necessary for the workers to improve their status in the present society. To a Varlin, it was the method by which the proletariat would bring "an element of regeneration" to the post revolutionary

\[24\] Zevaes, pp. 61-78.
Finally, the two doctrines both rested on a belief in the supremacy of economic activity over political action. In this respect, each was a product of the historical period in which it was conceived. Either from fear of or lack of faith in politics, hardly any labor leader was eager to engage in political activities in the 1860's. Nevertheless, both the mutualists and the anarchists were forced into politics whenever they sought an effective means to obtain reform.

In 1870 France was caught in the cataclysm of the Commune. This event and the savage repression which followed it dealt the French labor movement the most crippling blow in its history. Its leaders executed, imprisoned or exiled, its organizations destroyed or disbanded, its propaganda silenced, the French syndicat movement was terrorized into submission. Hardest hit were those organizations belonging to the International, considered by the government to be the hotbed of revolutionary ideas. The Dufaure law of 1872 outlawed this Association and enabled the government to persecute its members. As spies, informers, and henchmen of the government filled labor circles, the syndicat movement underwent its darkest period.

In the years after the Commune, the regrouping syndicats were characterized by an intense desire for social peace and a strong loyalty to the Republic. 26 Harassed by the heavy hand of government

25 Quoted in Montreuil, p. 117.
26 Bernstein, pp. 56-67.
repression, labor circles were careful not to exhibit the slightest trace of radicalism. In expressing the good will of the workers, labor spokesmen took great pains to emphasize the modesty of their aims. "We seek above all else," insisted Joseph Barbaret, a radical journalist turned labor leader, "to achieve some useful work of appeasement and conciliation. We want to make it clear that the proletariat is motivated by loyal intentions." By proving themselves docile and loyal subjects, the workers hoped to win toleration for their movement.

The timid trade unions concentrated on such innocuous activities as co-operation and education to widen their stake in society. Whenever syndicats succeeded in organizing, they immediately took steps to set up a co-operative of one kind or another. At the same time, they tried to establish some system of professional training for their members. In Barbaret's opinion, working class education would "crown our work by replacing the bullet with the book." Hoping to improve their lot with such peaceful methods, the workers were reluctant even to engage in strikes. In fact, militants vied with one another in denouncing this method of action which depleted trade union treasures and alienated public sympathies.

28 Ibid., p. 116.
29 Benoit Malon, "Le Mouvement Syndicale de 1872 à 1878," La Revue Socialiste No. 22 (October, 1886), pp. 869-73.
In spite of the timidity of the post-Commune labor movement, the
government eyed its growth with suspicion. The Third Republic refused
all legal rights to the syndicats other than the basic right to exist.
Even the latter was hemmed in with so many limitations that the trade
unions were always in danger of repression. As long as they limited
themselves to purely professional matters, individual syndicats were
usually tolerated, but supra-syndicat organizations were prohibited.
In 1872, for instance, the government ordered the dispersion of a
federation of syndicats organized at Paris by Barbaret and Pauliat.
According to official circles, the government's action was warranted
by the possibility that "under the name of this syndicat union, the
International would continue...its work in France."30

The government's fear were completely unfounded. Its harsh
repression by the police and the persecution of its members broke
the organization and spirit of the International in France. Although
they carried on their revolutionary propaganda from the old Jura
Federation of the International in Switzerland, the anarchists found
themselves reduced to small, pocket sized conspiratorial bands in
France. The docile and reform-conscious workers had no desire to
associate with the illegal and discredited groups of anarchists.

Gustave Jeannerot, writing from Paris to the official journal of the
Jura Federation, pointed to the workers' timidity. "In that which
concerns the masses," he wrote in May, 1872, "I have noticed an

30 Quoted in Weill, p. 189.
extreme prudence, an excessive care to avoid all contact with this despised organization."

What few anarchist groups operated in France were forced underground into the natural breeding places of terror and violence. It was not long before they began to place more and more emphasis on illegality, violence, and propaganda by the deed (propagande par le fait) as the methods to carry out the revolution. Meeting in Switzerland in 1877, twelve French sections of the International codified this new direction. Emphasizing the need to turn all strikes and demonstrations into revolutionary outbreaks, the anarchists proclaimed their opposition to all legal and political methods of agitation. They voted seven resolutions which dismissed as futile all efforts at reform and announced their intent to accelerate the revolution by committing acts of terror against the regime. Even such serious militants as Kropotkin and Reculus concurred in this nihilistic program.

As for the syndicats, so important to the anarchists in the 1860's, these organizations were denounced by the libertarians as being too reformist. "We are enemies of the associations of métier," reported L'Avant Garde, the unofficial journal of the French anarchists, "which only want to be palliatives, pretending to improve the workers' present

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31 Quoted in Guillaume, II, 286.
32 Maitron, p. 92.
33 Ibid., p. 80.
conditions but merely delaying their real emancipation." When they broke their ties with the syndicats, the anarchists, staunch opponents of political action, forfeited the only practical method of combat left to them. For this reason, anarchism soon degenerated into a purely intellectual movement, adopted and amplified by the littérature but lacking real contact with the workers. From 1882 to 1894, the anarchists' organizations and influence were on the verge of disappearing in France. 35

In the post-Commune period, the workers appeared to be completely disillusioned with all radical doctrines and the men who formulated them. Evidence of this can be found in the reports of worker delegations to several international exhibits and also in the published accounts of working class meetings. The public and private utterances of the labor leaders were full of hostile references to the politicians whom they identified with radicalism. "Far from exalting the excellence of such and such a socialist school over another," wrote Barbaret in 1873, "we have braced ourselves to march under the banner of no doctrine." 36 Struggling in the twilight zone of toleration, the labor organizations had no desire to bring upon themselves the wrath of the state by departing from the purely economic terrain.

34 L'Avant Garde No. 5, July 28, 1877. Quoted in Maitron, p. 93.

35 Maitron, p. 116.

36 Quoted in Weill, pp. 189-90.
Such was the pure corporate spirit guiding the French syndicats in the post-Commune years. It was this corporate principle which characterized the first two labor congresses of 1876 and 1878, held respectively at Paris and Lyon. The idea to convoke these general syndicat meetings came from a radical journal, La Tribune, and it was immediately endorsed by the trade unions. To be sure, it was assured from the outset that the tone of these meetings would fall within the pattern of reformist syndicalism. The Organizational Committees for these two congresses limited the delegations to bonafide members of the working class and forbade any discussion of a political nature. According to the circular announcing the Paris Conclave, exclusively working class representatives would prevent the proletarian from being traduced by any "utopian ideas that certain bourgeois...would try to present to him." At Lyon, one of the working class leaders insisted that the Congress would have nothing to do with "mixed up utopians professing hatred for all that exists."

In such an atmosphere, it was not surprising that the keynote of the two Congresses was moderation and social peace. In fact, labor's modest and peaceful intentions were expressed in almost every resolution voted by the working class conclaves. What the workers wanted primarily was the right to organize and assemble. In addition to this, both Congresses passed resolutions calling for the eight-hour day, working class pensions, and free professional training for all


39 Quoted in Alexander Zévaès, De la Semaine Sanglante au Congrès de Marseille (Paris: 1911), p. 64.
qualified workers. So moderate and conciliatory were the delegates that they competed with each other in praising the harmonious relations between capital and labor.\(^{10}\)

Interestingly enough, the Congress of Paris and Lyon pointed up an ambivalence in labor's attitude toward politics. Many of the workers preferred to remain on corporate grounds and refused to entertain political aspirations. Fear of the state had been burned so deeply into the workers by the Empire that not even the republican mystique could convince them that the state could be a friend as well as foe. For this reason, there was a strong desire among the workers for working class autonomy and independence. According to one report of the Committee of Organization, "the workers, free of the tutelage of the state, intend to manage their own affairs. All they claim is the freedom of union and association."\(^{11}\) Two years later at Lyon, a number of the delegates insisted that "we must only demand liberty and we will find the realizations of our dreams when we have decided to handle our own affairs."\(^{12}\)

In spite of this corporatist sentiment, the majority of delegates at these congresses seemed willing to take advantage of republican government, although they still retained their ingrained fear of

\(^{10}\) Bernstein, pp. 82-87.

\(^{11}\) Quoted in Montreuil, p. 130.

\(^{12}\) Quoted in Pelloutier, p. 87.
authority. According to the Congress of Lyon, it was necessary to "direct the state, not to interfere in our affairs, but to surpress the obstacles in our path. It must give us the political liberties necessary to the amelioration of our lot."

Some of the workers were more cautious, although they too distinguished between different types of states. "When the state becomes what it ought to be," argued the latter, "we will ask it to enact working class reforms." For the present, however, they were reluctant to call upon the state for assistance.

The workers' overwhelming desire to win legal recognition for their trade unions won out over their reluctance to call upon the government. In 1876 the labor Congress of Paris voted for the "direct participation of the proletariat in parliament." Despite some claims to the contrary, such a decision did not signify any radical or subversive direction among the syndicats. In fact, at this Congress there were few delegates who felt even the slightest stirrings of class consciousness. The reason for their willingness to enter the political arena was the necessity of defending their legitimate interests by all possible means. Curiously enough, their decision placed them in the paradoxical position of demanding independence from a state which they were now committed to capture.


Ibid., p. 441.
Generalizing on the Proudhonist side of the trade union revival in the 1870's, the French anarchists pointed out that "this movement is anti-government and anti-state. The workers show as much repugnance for the Republic as for the Empire." What the anarchists neglected to mention was that a large part of this anti-statism was the work of their own agents. For it was the libertarians who fought the hardest for political abstention at the Congresses of Paris and Lyon. They believed that "a party constituted for electoral action will only have electoral machinery. Its soldiers will be ballots, its chiefs the lawyers. It will force from its ranks the heroes, the martyrs...who know how to die for justice." But the anarchists' admonitions found few listeners in the 1870's. The main lines of the syndicat movement were advancing in another direction. The workers had decided on political participation. Soon, they would find a ready made program and self chosen leaders in the Marxist socialists.

II

The penetration of Marxism into France was due primarily to the efforts of a small group of propagandists around Égalité, a socialist newspaper directed by Jules Guesde. Like many of his future cohorts,
Guesde first came into contact with modern socialist ideas during his exile after the Commune. At first, he was influenced by anarchism, a doctrine widely discussed and accepted in the radical circles of Switzerland, his place of refuge. When he returned to Paris in 1876, Guesde's socialism was still in the formative stage. It was not long, however, before he managed to attract a small following among the students in the Latin Quarter who were impressed by the force of his writings and the clarity of his thought. In 1876, the doctrines of Karl Marx were beginning to infiltrate into France, and soon Guesde was studying them in earnest. By the time that he succeeded, in collaboration with Gabriel Deville, E. Massard, and several others, in founding the first purely socialist journal, Égalité, in 1877, he was well on his way to becoming a convinced Marxist. Although hammered by the authorities, Guesde and his followers became the link between Marxist socialism and the organized proletariat in France.

The primary aim of Guesde and his supporters was the creation of a modern socialist party, capable of seizing the state and of ushering in the collectivist society. Like the Marxists in England and Germany, Guesde had little faith in the possibility of winning reform by political methods, but he felt that political activity was useful for propagandistic purposes. In his opinion, the state, whether it was republican or monarchial, was always the property of the

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Bernstein, pp. 99-105.
bourgeoisie which used it to subjugate the workers. For this reason, it was impossible to expel any real reform from the participation of the working class in politics. Nevertheless, the Marxists felt that universal suffrage was vital to the development of a class conscious proletariat. It was their belief that working class action at the polls and in the parliament was an excellent method of propaganda. Although the workers could never hope to capture the state by sending their own men into the assembly, they could use the political forum to prepare and accelerate the coming social revolution.

Guesde and his followers knew that the strength of their movement depended upon a strong working class enrollment. "I absolutely refused to constitute a socialist movement outside the working class movement, no matter what the latter was," Guesde testified later on in 1907. Toward this end, they set out to convert the resurging syndicat organizations to the Marxist doctrine. That they faced a difficult task was obvious. Not only did the workers show little sympathy with collectivist ideas but they were also suspicious of bourgeois politicians and politician action. But the Egalité group refused to lose heart. From 1877 to 1879, Guesde and his comrades showered the workers with a constant barrage of Marxist teachings.

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48 Ibid., pp. 121-22.

In the end, the Egalité group's indefatigable efforts were rewarded. Marxism triumphed over mutualism at the Third Congress of French syndicats, convoked at Marseilles in 1879. Briefly, the labor Congress rejected co-operation as the method to emancipate the proletariat and insisted that "the goal of the workers must be the nationalization of the banks, mines, and railroads...placed in the hands of the workers themselves." Later in the Congress, the collectivists managed to push through another resolution on the property issue much more radical in its implications. According to it, the aim of the working class was "the collectivization of the soil, subsoil, and the means of production." Finally, the syndicats agreed to set up a working class political party which would represent the workers in parliament. It seemed that the Marxists had imposed their entire program on the French labor movement. From now on, the destiny of the syndicats would be intimately linked to socialism in France.

But the triumph of socialism at Marseilles was not so complete as it first appeared. The truth is that the Congress was not composed exclusively of working class delegates. In preparation for the event, Guesde and his followers had created small, sometimes nonexistent study groups which inundated the Congress with their

51 Ibid., I, 47.
Moreover, the Congress was conducted with a great deal of fanfare in an artificially constructed revolutionary atmosphere. In such a situation, "the moderates were beaten in advance in a socialist assembly, fascinated by this group of young men who were active, intelligent, and resolute." Finally, the Marxists were forced to strike a common front with the anarchists in order to assure the triumph of collectivism. Meeting jointly each morning in a café on the Place du Change, the anarchists and the Marxists planned their strategy which ultimately gave them the victory. However, it proved to be a costly triumph for the Marxists. So thick was the tension between the two allies that the Marxists were forced to make several compromises on doctrinal matters which they would later regret. In the end, their irreconcilable differences over political action would split the collectivists' majority wide open.

The working class party, created by the Marseilles Congress, was divided into six federative districts. In only two of these six did the Marxists have a majority. Either the anarchists or the moderates controlled the other districts. Immediately, dissention broke out among these groups. The moderates wanted the Party to be composed exclusively of syndicat organizations, but the socialists demanded the inclusion of study groups on an integrated basis with the syndicats.

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53 Bernstein, pp. 142-43.
55 Ibid., pp. 1078-79.
With the moderates insisting that the Party should be limited to manual laborers, the collectivists argued that there were also what they called "intellectual workers." In the end, the socialists managed to get their way on all the outstanding issues.  

Aware of the growing dissension, Guesde, the acknowledged leader of the Marxists, was faced with a dilemma. Either he could cement his alliance with the anarchists or he could try to win the moderates by giving them the electoral and reformist program which they wanted. Moving cautiously, Guesde tried to reconcile all the diverse elements. He went to London in the Spring of 1880, and, with the collaboration of Marx, drew up an electoral program designed to rally all the divergent groups in the new working class Party.

The Programme Minimum, as this document was called, was preceded by a long preamble emphasizing the revolutionary nature of the Party. Included in the preamble were references to the fact that political action would never be able to achieve either reform or revolution. This was a verbal concession to the anarchists. In deference to the moderate labor groups, the Programme Minimum listed, as part of the Party's aims, all the economic demands that the workers had been asking for years. Returning to France, Guesde, working closely with Benoit Malon and other notables in the labor world, opened a vigorous campaign to persuade the Party to accept the Programme Minimum.  

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57 Bernstein, pp. 155-62.
Despite the Marxists' Programme Minimum, Guesde was unable to keep the new Party in tact. In November, 1880 the first split occurred in the Party. The extreme moderate elements in its ranks, avowing their hostility to socialist principles, sought to oust the collectivists from the working class movement. They made their move at the first National Congress of the Party, held at Le Havre. The Organizational Committee of this Congress, composed primarily of mutualists, refused to admit the Marxist study groups to the Conclave. In protest, the anarchists and the Marxists left the meeting hall and held their own Congress. It was the first split in labor's ranks due to the presence of a disputed political doctrine.

Upon the departure of the collectivists, the moderates held a meeting of their own. In a series of resolutions, they denounced socialism and listed a number of purely trade union demands. Interestingly enough, the moderates, led by Finance and August Keufer, sought to lead the syndicats once again to the corporate terrain. Not only did they reject political action by the working class but insisted that the state had no right to meddle in trade union affairs. With most of the syndicats under the socialists' yoke, it was the mutualists who carried on the tradition of trade union independence in the 1880's.

58 Ibid., p. 182.
59 Seilhac, pp. 67-70. Also see Bernstein, pp. 178-81.
Meanwhile, Guesde was having trouble with the anarchists. What caused the tension between the Marxists and the libertarians was the latter's refusal to accept the Programme Minimum. According to the anarchists, the revolutionary preamble of this document "was only the jam to make the electoral pill taste better."\(^\text{60}\) In an effort to keep their support, Guesde tried to reconcile his differences with the anarchists over political action. Nevertheless, the stresses and strains in the collectivist camp began to increase. The split between the two finally came the following year at the regional Congress of Fédération du Centre, one of the administrative districts of the Party. It was a minor incident which provided the pretext for the anarchists to leave the Congress.\(^\text{51}\) With their breakoff from the Marxists, the libertarians severed their last tie with the mainstream of the labor movement.

By 1880 the intransigent Guesde was alienating all those "who could not understand that there was no room in the Republic for effective social reform."\(^\text{62}\) Following his split with the moderates at Le Havre, he, in fact, became more insistent than ever on all out revolutionary action. From that time on, Guesde displayed repeatedly his contempt for the reformist elements in the Party. Such an uncompromising attitude soon provoked a reaction from those who


\(^{51}\) Bernstein, pp. 175-78.

complained that the "Party is grouped for the battle and not for the purposes of the syndicats." During the next year, opposition to the Egalité group grew steadily in the new Party.

Led by Paul Brousse and Benoit Malon, the reformists scored heavily against the Marxist intransigents at the National Congress of the Party, convoked at Reims in 1881. According to the reformist elements, the Programme Minimum "did not express the needs and sentiments of the proletariat." Pointing to the recent elections in which the Party had made such a poor showing, they insisted that the Party should change its approach. What they wanted was for the Party to concentrate on obtaining all possible reforms, instead of preparing for eventual revolution. Although collectivists in principle, the reformists, grouped around Brousse's journal, Prolétaire, wanted to achieve socialism by a gradual transformation of social body. In their view, the final goal could be best assured by the slow but steady introduction of socialist measures into the fabric of society. Insisting as they did on all "possible" reforms, this group came to be known as "Possibilists." Later, the reformists were also called Broussists, after their acknowledged leader, Paul Brousse.

The differences between the Possibilists and the Marxists proved irreconcilable. In 1882 the National Congress of St. Etienne was

the occasion for another scission in the working class movement. Tenders had been raised to the breaking point by a war of the press between the two groups. For this reason, the Marxists seized upon a minor dispute as a pretext for them to leave the hostile assembly. Together with their trade union followers, they held a separate Congress in the neighboring town of Roanne. The reformist majority remained at St. Etienne and organized a new socialist Party, entitled the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire, but more commonly known by its subtitle, Fédération des Travailleurs Socialistes de France.

Interestingly enough, the Broussists, as members of this new Party came to be known, were inspired by libertarian principles. In fact, they even paid homage to their mutualist and anarchist predecessors, so totally did they believe themselves to be the guardians of French working class traditions. For example, the Broussists condemned the departed Marxists who "for the profit of the same Marxist domination which disorganized the International ..., have tried to impose...the particular program...of a coterie." Moreover, the Possibilists felt that the "emancipation of the proletariat must be the work of the working class itself," an old anarchist battlecry. Like the mutualists, they insisted that "the economic emancipation of the workers is the great goal to which all political action must be subordinated." Finally, the Possibilists

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67 Humbert, p. 11.
68 Ibid. 69 Ibid.
displayed their ingrained fear of the state when they asserted that "the efforts of the workers to achieve their emancipation must not lead to the creation of new privileges." With these words, the Possibilists entered the contest for the French workers.

Between 1879 and 1882, modern socialism managed to infiltrate the French labor movement. The corporate aims of the workers now gave way to a belief in the principles of collectivism. From the impact of a political doctrine on the trade unions came dissension and division. The working class movement appeared hopelessly divided, and syndicat aims were subordinated to the necessities of political life. During the next decade, the socialists would tighten their hold on the trade unions. As a result, the labor movement of the 1880's was intimately connected with the development of the various socialist parties.

III

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Gathered at Roanne after their departure from Saint Etienne, Guesde and his followers proceeded to organize another socialist group. The Parti Ouvrier Français, as this new political organization was called, was similar to the Fédération des Travailleurs Socialistes de France except that it was more centralized in administration and control.

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Ibid.
Composed of six regional federations like its rival, the Parti Ouvrier Français was under the close supervision of its national committee. The latter, led and inspired by Guesde, Lafargue, Deville, and others, rigorously enforced the Programme Minimum on all the sections of the Party. 71

As soon as their organization was intact, the Marxists launched a strenuous campaign to build up the membership and power of the Party. It was obvious to the Party's leaders that their strength had been badly crippled by the Broussists' triumph at Saint Etienne. At Paris, the size of the Party had been reduced to a mere fifteen groups, hardly enough to keep Egalité alive. 72 Aware of the petit bourgeois mentality of the Parisian workers, the Marxists decided to aim their propaganda missiles on the more industrial regions of France. It was not long before Guesde and his associates managed to attract worker after worker to the Marxist banner. At Lille, Roubaix, Montluçon, and Calais, in such cities as Lyon in the East and Marseilles in the South, the Parti Ouvrier Français emerged as the political voice of the workers. 73

However, the Marxists' electoral appeal never equalled their crusading and organizing zeal. In fact, the Guesdists never obtained more than 1 per cent of the total vote in local and national elections

71. Zévaès, Guesdists..., p. 32.


73. Ibid., pp. 47-50.
during these years.\footnote{Ibid., p. 48.} What was most injurious to the Marxists' cause was the competition of less austere doctrines and a perpetual lack of funds. With only a few scattered journals, the Parti Ouvrier Français was unable to combat the reformist tendencies in labor's ranks.

But it was their failure to trim their doctrinal sails to the winds of popular sympathies that explains the Guesdists' lack of appeal in elections. The Programme Minimum, an inflexible and often violent document, was imposed on every candidate of the Parti Ouvrier Français. Upheld in all its rigidity by the National Committee, the Programme Minimum was never revised or altered to suit the local, regional, or industrial preferences of the proletariat.\footnote{Zévaès, Guesdists..., p. 32. Also see Eugene Fournière, La Crise Socialiste (Paris: 1908), pp. 50-51.} Such obstinacy often had unfortunate consequences. In areas or industries where new machinery forced the workers to work shorter hours at less pay, few voters were attracted by the Marxists' demand for the eight-hour day. Doctrines of class hatred and revolution baffled peasants and craftsmen in those regions were, by the Marxists' own admission, bitter social antagonisms did not exist.\footnote{Letter from Paul Lafargue to Friedrich Engels, October 7, 1885 in Emile Bottigelli, Correspondence: Friedrich Engels et Paul et Laura Lafargue (2 vols.; Paris: 1956), I, 308.}

The Guesdists' intransigeance was rooted to their belief in the principles of Marxism. It was their opinion that the laws of history, so brilliantly unravelled by Marx, were working in their favor. As
soon as the workers saw that they could expect nothing from capitalism except more and more misery, they would give up all hope of reform. At that point, the proletariat, disillusioned but not discouraged, would rally to the Parti Ouvrier Français eager to play its part in the revolution. For this reason, the Marxists saw little reason to win votes by intricate political manoeuvres. In the final analysis, it mattered little whether the socialists were able to send a large bloc of representatives to parliament. For "to expect real liberties from the bourgeois state," Guesde once said, "would be a miracle, compared to which the Immaculate Conception would be a scientific fact." 77

In March, 1884, the Guesdists gathered at Roubaix for their National Congress, where they proceeded to codify their doctrine. According to its principal tenets, the revolution, not to be decreed or willed in advance, would occur spontaneously as the contradictions in the capitalist system brought on its downfall. Open class warfare would result from the class hatred generated under capitalism. At that point, angry legions of workers would seize control of the state. In their hands, it would be used to destroy the old order and lay the foundation for the new. 78 Any deviation from Party doctrine was open heresy in such a prearranged scheme of things. To compromise or to

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77 *Cri du Peuple*, February 4, 1884.

collaborate with the bourgeoisie was to delay the final hour of capitalism. The Parti Ouvrier Français had only one function—the pursuit of its revolutionary work.

The chief task of the Party was to prepare and group the workers for the revolution. This was to be done primarily by organizing the proletariat for political action. It was the Guesdists' opinion that electoral campaigns and parliamentary debates were invaluable methods to stimulate the revolutionary élan of the workers. However, they did not pursue electoral action as an end in itself. Never were they so enthralled with the value of political success that they would water down their doctrine to achieve it.

Instead, they centered their attention on organizing the workers for the struggle. It was natural for them to look to the trade unions for allies in this task. Not only would the syndicats provide ready made units to fill the cadres of the Party but they also included the most likely candidates for conversion to socialism. As Guesde once said in the middle of a debate, "I never wanted to separate myself from the syndiques, even when they were still in the stuttering stage." However, the Parti Ouvrier Français offered few attraction to the expanding syndicats. Not only did it promise them nothing but sacrifices until the final victory but it demanded vigorous political

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79 Guesde's doctrinal position was elaborated in his articles written for the Cri du Peuple during the early 1880's. These articles are collected in J. Guesde, Etat Politique et Morale de Classe (Paris: 1901), pp. 1-163.

80 Bernstein, Science and Society, No. 4, p. 53.

81 LeCongrès...de la Parti Socialiste..., tenu à Nancy..., 1907 ..., p. 485.
activity from the trade unions. As might have been expected, the Marxists sought to overcome the syndicats' natural aversion to Marxism by offering them enough inducements to break down their resistance.

Guesde first began to construct a trade union program for Marxism as early as 1878. Over the next several years, he devoted a great deal of time to reconciling his revolutionary principles with trade union aspirations. He was prudent enough to make allowances for the syndicats' reformist inclinations, but he refused to admit that piecemeal reforms would solve the workers' plight. Nevertheless, the Programme Minimum, written by Guesde and Marx, was seasoned for trade union consumption. Included in this document were such things as accident insurance, wage and hour laws, old age pension plans—all of which had been sought by the syndicats since the Second Empire. Moreover, the Marxists by no means neglected legitimate trade union action. In fact, they sought to "encourage...trade union activity in all its manifestations: congresses, strikes, agitation, etc." By 1884 they had incorporated into their Party's platform almost every measure capable of attracting the syndicats to their cause.

Armed with this attractive program, the Marxists, in the early 1880's, set out to lure the trade unions to their fold. The Party's orators and agitators moved into the Nord and Allier, where the other socialists had not penetrated, and proclaimed the virtues of their

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Most susceptible to their propaganda were provincial syndicat leaders who hoped to use the Parti Ouvrier Français to buttress their own position in the trade unions. Often, socialist propaganda was spread by regular Party members who infiltrated the working class organizations. Moreover, if these methods failed to convert the existing organizations, the Marxists often created rival syndicats of their own. These methods soon brought the Guesdistes success. By 1886 the Parti Ouvrier Français controlled a large number of syndicats throughout the nation.

Despite their success in this direction, the Guesdistes were always somewhat contemptuous of the syndiques. What irritated them most about the trade unions were the reformist sentiments which the latter displayed. Frequently, the Marxists decried their revolutionary value. "Whether one likes it or not," Guesde once said, "the syndicats are concerned only with defending their immediate interests." In addition, the Guesdistes had little regard for the economic and professional preoccupations of the syndiques. In the Marxists' opinion, such activities as strikes, collective bargaining, and

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84 Gustave Delory, Aperçu Historique sur la Fédération du Nord (Lille: 1921), pp. 70-75.
86 Zévaës, Guesdistes..., p. 95.
87 Delory, pp. 80-83.
88 Le Congrès... de la Parti Socialiste..., tenu à Nancy..., 1907, pp. 171-72.
manifestations had little revolutionary or political value. "Let the workers enclose themselves in their corporate cells," Guesde once argued. "They will have with them all the bourgeois who know that... the workers are beaten in advance when they struggle only on the professional terrain." The Guesdists never wavered in their belief that "the syndicat struggle is nothing unless it is accompanied by the struggle for the conquest of public power."90

As a result of their rigid adhesion to Marxist principles, the Guesdists imposed their own revolutionary and political stamp on their syndicat following. In fact, the trade unions under their control became merely the "foyers of revolutionary ideas."91 During the 1880's, the Marxists converted syndicat meetings into political forums where Party doctrine and electoral strategy took precedence over trade union business.92 For the support of the Party's propaganda and electoral campaigns, the Guesdists extracted money from the unions.93 Such fundamental syndicat activities as collective bargaining, professional education, and public demonstra-

89 Jules Guesde, Le Socialisme le Jour au Jour (Paris: 1899), p. 277. This is a collection of Guesde's principle writings in the 1880's.

90 Zevaes, Apercu Historique..., p. 96.

91 Quoted in Seilhac, p. 33.

92 Delory, p. 67.

tions were neglected for the more important political aims of the Parti Ouvrier Français. So preoccupied was the Party with the political struggle that it had neither the time or energy to concern itself with syndicat affairs. In effect, the Guesdist, throughout the entire decade, sought to impose a narrow Marxist pattern on the syndicats without troubling themselves to give a trade union basis to their Party.

How the Guesdist turned syndicat action to their own political advantage is well illustrated by their attitude toward the strike. In their opinion, the strike was "one of the forms of the struggle that takes place within the limits of capitalism which even victorious strikes cannot change." Yet, the Marxists felt that the grève could be utilized for their own purposes. Since it heightened the workers' awareness of the class struggle, the outbreak of a strike provided an excellent opportunity for propagating Marxist propaganda. For this reason, Guesde could admit that the strike "plays a considerable role in the preparation of the revolution." According to him, the Parti Ouvrier Français, "far from discouraging the


96 Cri du Peuple, April 18, 1884.
strikers who are beaten in advance, should aid and support them by all the means at its command."

During the 1880's, the Marxists supported the striking workers at Vierzon, Roanne, and Anzin. However, their greatest efforts in this direction came during the miners' strike at Decazeville in 1886. From his forum in the Cri du Peuple, Guesde undertook a prodigious campaign in support of the miners. Party funds were sent to Decazeville and fund raising drives were launched among the syndicats under the Guesdists' control. Nevertheless, the Marxists sought to make political capital out of the strike. Such an event provided the Parti Ouvrier Français with an ideal occasion to point out the need for working class political action. During the strike of Decazeville, the popularity of the Parti Ouvrier Français rose in working class circles, and the Municipal elections of 1886 saw a tremendous rise in the Guesdist vote.

In spite of their support of strikes, the Marxists had many misgivings about this mode of combat. For this reason, the great strike wave of the 1880's created consternation in Guesdist circles. Not only did they fear the drain which the grève placed on working

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97 Ibid. According to one authority, the Marxists' intervention in strikes was always that of an "exterior force... foreign to its... preparation and evolution." René Garmy, Historie du Mouvement Syndicale en France (Paris: 1933), pp. 254-55.

98 Compère-Morel, pp. 295-300.

99 Guesde, Le Socialisme..., pp. 81-256.
class strength but the Guesdist were too hard pressed for money to support hastily-conceived strikes. In fact, the Marxists placed rigid controls on strike action by their own syndicats. Each of the six federations of the Party maintained a control commission which "prevented risky strikes declared without sufficient knowledge of the syndicats' resources and market conditions." 100

The Fédération des Travailleurs Socialistes de France, like the Parti Ouvrier Français, had emerged from the scission at Saint Etienne, but the former developed along very different lines in the 1880's. While the Guesdist were building a Party national in scope, the Possibilists concentrated their action in Paris and the West, where the bourgeois mentality of the workers was more compatible with their reformist program. In addition, the Possibilists, unlike their rivals, did not believe in centralized Party control. Abandoning the Programme Minimum, the Possibilists offered complete autonomy to their affiliates in all matters not specifically regulated by the national congresses. Each federation was free to select an electoral program of its own, even to the point where it could drop the word "revolutionary" from its program at any time. 101

100 Maxime Leroy, La Coutume Ouvrière (2 vols.; Paris: 1913), II, 646.

That the Party was losing its revolutionary character and becoming essentially reformist was clearly indicated at its National Congress of 1883. At this meeting, the Possibilists passed a series of resolutions which watered down their doctrine to the point where even non-collectivists could enter their ranks. Fundamental to their brand of socialism was the belief that there was no need to prepare the workers for revolution. In their opinion, the transformation of society would come about naturally, without socialist provocation. For this reason, they felt that there was no real necessity to involve their Party in what they considered "useless insurrections and popular uprisings which enable the bourgeois to destroy the proletariat." Instead, the Party should concentrate on sending its members to parliament. For only in this way could the Possibilists give the workers the reforms which the latter sought. In fact, so thoroughly did the Party disavow the revolutionary solution that it refused to participate in a public demonstration where the red flag would be carried.

In the years after Saint Etienne, the Possibilists, especially at Paris, managed to win a large working class following. Even their arch-enemy, Paul Lafargue, admitted that "the Possibilists have

102 Humbert, pp. 18-19.
103 Ibid.
104 Seilhac, p. 123.
105 Blum, I, 90.
considerable strength, especially in Paris, thanks to the mixed character of the Parisian working class." More important, the Possibilists' popularity was registered at the polls. As early as 1882, they managed, in alliance with the bourgeois Radical Party, to elect Joffrin, to the Municipal Council of Paris. In 1884, Chabert, former leader of the moderate syndiqués, took his seat on the Municipal Council as the Party doubled its voting strength. The Municipal elections of 1886 brought the Possibilists even greater success, and by 1887 the Party had nine men on the Paris Municipal Council. During the 1880's, the Possibilists were clearly "the political expression of the Parisian proletariat." 107

Much of the Possibilists' political success was due to their ties with the Paris syndicats. Using the same methods of indoctrination and infiltration as the Guesdist, the Broussist, in the years after Saint Etienne, managed to create a vast network of syndicat satellites. 108 However, the Possibilists never maintained a tight discipline over their trade unions as did the Marxists. Instead, the Paris syndicats moved loosely within the orbit of the Fédération du Centre, the region of the Party which contained most of its active elements. 109 Nevertheless, it was their ability to

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106 Lafargue to Engels, November 13, 1882 in Bottigelli, I, 92.
107 Humbert, p. 32.
draw upon the syndicat vote that enabled the Possibilists to dominate the socialist scene during the 1880's.

To be sure, the reformist nature of the *Fédération des Travailleurs Socialistes de France* had attracted the syndiques from the very beginning. The workers sought to create the Party in their own image, and it soon developed a genuine trade union spirit. In 1883 the Possibilists emphasized that the "members of the Party will be obligated to enroll in their syndicats... and to help create them... where they do not exist..." And it was not blind political partisanship that led the Possibilists to announce that their Party should

unite the great army of labor in a single and powerful framework. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to group, not a party containing only workers who profess a particular doctrine or tactic, but a party of class which contains all the workers without distinction of schools.

During the 1880's, the Possibilists tried to foster and promote every major interest of their syndicat affiliates. Although the Party chiefs were primarily interested in political matters, they never attempted to impose a political straitjacket on the trade union members of their Party.

Unlike the Marxists, the Possibilists were never rigid on doctrinal matters. In fact, the socialism preached by them was

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110 Quoted in Leroy, *La Coutume...*, I, 49.
111 Quoted in Leroy, *Syndicats et...*, p. 91.
112 Ibid., p. 92.
broad and eclectic enough to attract working class organizations of the most diverse sentiments. Even the moderate trade unions, those opposed to collectivism, could adhere to the Party and support its candidates at the polls. To the conferences and meetings organized by the Possibilists came delegates hostile to the principles of socialism. For those committed to socialism but interested in immediate reform, the Possibilists, promising both without undue sacrifice, were a natural ally. Nor did the radical revolutionaries boycott the Fédération du Centre. Many of them entered the Party and added a real revolutionary element to Possibilisme. Finally, even a few Guesdist were present at a regional congress in 1887, delegated there by trade unions dedicated to violent insurrection. In the 1880's the Fédération des Travailleurs Socialistes was a loosely organized structure which included virtually every shade of opinion in the labor world.

Interestingly enough, many of its syndicat adherents exhibited the traditional preoccupation with corporate matters that had always characterized the labor organizations. What these trade union elements

113 Seilhac, p. 135.

114 The extremely revolutionary Fédération des Mécaniciens de la Seine, for example, affiliated with the Fédération du Centre as early as 1882. See P. Coupat, "La Fédération des Mécaniciens de la Seine," Le Mouvement Socialiste No. 48 (December 15, 1900), pp. 737-51.

115 Seilhac, p. 135.
sought by political action were just enough political influence to allow them to pursue their trade union activities more effectively.

In the France of the 1880's occupational interests had not given way to a notion of working class solidarity. For this reason, unions in the highly specialized trades often refused to support blanket laws applicable to the unskilled as well as the skilled. In fact, many of the stronger syndicat organizations felt that they were powerful enough to achieve certain reforms by direct negotiation with the employers. In their opinion, state aid often came in the form of a fustian glove over a steal fist. In addition, there was a growing realization among the workers that little could be expected from even a republican government. So infrequently did reforms emanate from parliament in the 1880's that many syndiques continued to look upon the state as an enemy to be shunned.

Since its formation, the corporate elements sought to orient the Party around trade union affairs. Consequently, they viewed with concern the growing amount of attention their Party leaders devoted to political matters. Such things as elections, parliamentary tactics, or political propaganda appeared rather insignificant to them in comparison with purely economic action. The corporatists

116 The Possibilists' attitude toward state sponsored benefits was revealed during their appearance before a parliamentary board of inquiry on the industrial and agricultural conditions in France. See Procès-Verbaux de la Commission sur la Situation des Ouvriers de L'Industrie et de L'Agriculture en France (Paris: 1884), pp. 131-51.

were especially suspicious of their comrades who held public office. In their opinion, these men were so occupied with Municipal affairs that they often forgot the revolutionary aim of the Party.\footnote{May, p. 58.} Sharing the corporatists' concern, A. Lavy could write in 1887 that "we never left these officeholders so free that they could believe they were our directors, our masters, and not our comrades and servants."\footnote{Quoted in Weill, p. 267.}

In addition, the growing reformism of the Party was often criticized by the revolutionary elements in its ranks. In 1887 during the National Congress of the Party, Faillet, a radical revolutionary, sought to reaffirm the revolutionary nature of Possibilism. With a vehemence out of place at a Broussist meeting, Faillet lashed out at the bourgeois who "have sold France to the Empire, to the Royalty, and will sell it again if the people don't act."\footnote{Seilhac, p. 139.} He then proceeded to admonish his comrades that it "is blasphemy and hypocrisy to deny the class struggle."\footnote{Ibid., p. 140.}

During the 1880's, the divergences among the constituent elements of the Party created a constant tension in its ranks.

Another socialist organization was formed alongside the Guesdist and the Possibilists during the 1880's. The Comité Révolutionnaire
Central, as this organization was named, was composed of the pre-
Commune followers of August Blanqui who died in 1881. From their
master, these men derived the name, Blanquists, and were especially
strong in the Parisian working class district of Pere LaChaise.
During the 1880's, they managed to attract a considerable following
in the radical circles of Paris. It was not long, however, before
the Comité Révolutionnaire Central, led by the capable Edouard
Vaillant, expanded into the provinces and became a contender for the
leadership of the working class.

The Blanquists were certainly not new to the French workers.
During the last years of the Second Empire, Blanqui and his revolu-
tionary band undertook one plot after another against the government.
For their part in the Commune, the Blanquists were punished by various
terms of prison and exile. With the amnesty of 1881, they
returned to France, but found the situation had changed. The labor
movement was now roughly divided between the Marxist revolutionaries
and the reformists, and the Blanquists sympathized with the former.
Soon, the Comité Révolutionnaire Central was working so closely with
the Parti Ouvrier Français that Lefargue could remark that

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122 The life of August Blanqui, professional revolutionary, is a
colorful and stimulating story. His career is best depicted in G.
Geffroy, 'Enferme (2 vols.; Paris: 1897) and M. Dommanget, Blanqui
(Paris: 1921).

123 On the Comité Révolutionnaire Central, see M. Dommanget,
"Vaillant's conduct is not at all Blanquist. According to Lafargue, "Vaillant has broken with this tradition" and was "very close" to Marxism. 

Lafargue was close to the truth. Like the Marxists, the Comité Révolutionnaire Central believed in the existence of a class struggle which would only be resolved with the advent of a new society. Moreover, the Blanquists scoffed at all efforts to introduce peace-meal measures into the social fabric. According to them, such palliatives delayed the revolution by obfuscating the class conflict and by mollifying the revolutionary candor of the workers. Finally, their attitude toward political action was similar to that held by the Marxists. Like the Parti Ouvrier Français, the Blanquists felt that political action was valuable only insofar as it prepared the workers for revolution. It was an effective way to familiarize the proletariat with the class struggle, a knowledge of which was essential to the revolution, but it was useless and sterile as a means to achieve reform. From their journal, Ni Dieu ni Maitre, and later, the Cri du Peuple, the Blanquists placed their particular credo before the workers. Joining in the race for public office, the Comité Révolutionnaire Central formulated plans for a revolutionary overthrow of the government.

124 Lafargue to Engels, June 24, 1884 in Bottigelli, I, 208-10. 
126 Dommanget, Vaillant..., pp. 70-72.
Although the Blanquists were at first characterized by a secret and clandestine organization, they gradually began to act like any other legal political party in the 1880's. Most of them knew that conspiratorial and illegal activities had little place under the Republic, and the romantic and undisciplined insurrectionists soon left the Party’s ranks. At that point, membership in the Party became accessible to all interested workers and intellectuals, and the Blanquists embarked upon the "conquest of legality." In 1884, Vaillant was elected to the Municipal Council of Paris, and, some time later, he was joined there by Chauvière. With the Cri du Peuple in their control, the Blanquists were well on their way to becoming a serious contender for the working class vote.

Interestingly enough, the Blanquists differed from the Marxists and the Possibilists in their attitude toward the syndicats. Unlike its rivals, the Comité Révolutionnaire Central felt that the trade unions should be left to themselves and not branded with a particular political stamp. Never did the Blanquists try to draw the syndicats under their influence, even in those Parisian districts where their strength was predominant. To be sure, many syndiqués joined the Party, and many Blanquists entered into the trade unions. But the Comité Révolutionnaire Central never attempted to orient its syndicat following toward its own politics in any conspicuous manner. That

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the Blanquists had some influence on the trade unions within their orbit there can be no doubt. Nevertheless, the Blanquists did not seek to use them for the prestige and purposes of their Party. 129

In fact, the Comité Révolutionnaire Central demanded the complete separation of the political and trade union movements. In their opinion, both the socialists and the syndicats had an important role in the struggle, but the one should never encroach on the other. "By enrolling the syndicats in a political group," Vaillant wrote, "the workers strike a double blow at...political action and trade union activities. For a political syndicat excludes...all those of a different opinion...whereas the same professional interests should unite the workers." 130 Faithful to these ideas, the Blanquists urged all the socialists to leave the trade unions to their own resources." In 1907 Vaillant recalled that "our doctrine at this epoch was that the separation of the political organizations from the syndicats constituted the necessary condition of their development and unity." 131

Although they asked the separation of the two modes of combat, the Blanquists always regarded politics as the highest form of the struggle. According to Vaillant, "the political function is the highest level of the struggle. It engages itself...under all conditions where it becomes and remains...the liberating activity par

129 Dommanget, Vaillant..., pp. 156-59.

130 Cri du Peuple, September 27, 1888.

131 4e Congrès... de la Parti Socialiste..., tenu à Nancy..., 1907, pp. 501-502.
excellence of the proletariat...." However, his view of the superiority of political action over syndicat methods never made him disdainful of the latter. On the contrary, Vaillant felt that economic and political action complemented one another. "It is on the ground of class interests, directly opposed to the interests of the possessing classes, that the proletarian should create... an economic organization," wrote the Blanquist chief. "The latter will enable him to carry on corporate and working class action, while providing a basis of support ... to his political action."  

D

In 1885 three rather well-defined socialist groups struggled over the control of the working class world. It was not long before they were joined by another socialist group, the Independents, who formed a loose circle of militants belonging to no regular party or organization. Nevertheless, the Independents shared certain common principles. Unlike the Guesdists or the Blanquists, they were dedicated to a broad reformist socialism that was similar to the Possibilists' doctrine. Neither rigid adherents to the class struggle nor radical revolutionaries, the Independent Socialists were interested in the gradual transformation of society into

132 Le Petit Sou, September 14, 1900.
133 Cri du Peuple, September 27, 1888.
collectivism through the introduction of reforms into the social body. In addition, they were opposed to rigid ideologies and wanted to find a doctrine which was based on the older traditions of French socialist thought. Either deputies or journalists, the Independents developed a broad type of eclectic socialism which they hoped would rally the other socialist schools to their side. 134

During the 1880's, the most important of these Independents was Benoît Malon. Siding with the Possibilists against the Guesdistes at Saint Étienne, he soon passed through the former movement and became an independent militant. In 1885 Malon founded La Revue Socialiste which became the outlet for Malon's integral socialism, an eclectic credo based on French tradition and moral absolutes. To his side came a number of young intellectuals, including Gustave Rouanet and Eugène Fourniere, who were destined to play an important role in the socialist movement.

During the 1880's, the Independents grew up within and outside of the Chambre. In general, these militants worked with the other socialists on the vital issues of the period. 135 Furthermore, they played a pivotal role in every attempt to bring the socialists together in the 1880's. For this reason, many of the most important figures in the socialist movement gathered to their ranks. Identified with the Independents were militants like Alexander Millerand and

134 The activities of the Independents during the 1880's are summarized in Albert Orry, Les Socialists Indépendants (Paris: 1911), pp. 3-17.
135 However, the Independents did not always act as one group. During the Boulanger crisis, for example, they split among themselves. See Orry, pp. 15-16.
Jean Jaures, later to become the undisputed leaders of the socialists in parliament. Although they adhered to no regular party and controlled few syndicats, the Independents made a great contribution to the intellectual and political development of socialism in the period before the first world war.

Throughout the 1880's, the various socialist groups locked horns in a day-to-day battle that kept the labor world in constant turmoil. As might have been expected, the main encounter was between the Guesdists and the Possibilists. The Parti Ouvrier Français was considerably weaker at Paris than its rival, and the Possibilists managed to score heavily against the Guesdists on almost all occasions. From their journal, Le Prolétaire, the Possibilists kept up a constant attack on the Marxists whom they considered too doctrinaire and intransigent. Not a polished doctor of scientific socialism but "the most doctrinaire scholar of utopian communism" was their description of Marx, whom they thought to be the real leader of the Guesdists.136 "They are the ultra-montagnards of socialism," cried the Possibilists. "They cannot obey the decisions of congresses because their chief is at London."137

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From the Guesdist's strongholds poured volley after volley of counterfire. Lacking an organ at Paris, the Guesdist spoke through the *Cri du Peuple*, founded in 1883 by Jules Valles, former communard and second-rate littérateur. The Marxists branded the Possibilists as coarse anarchists who had disrupted the International, while their doctrine was the "principles of the International watered down and falsified." Charging them with having deserted the class struggle, the Marxists devoted as much time to attacking the Brousseists as the bourgeois.

At the same time, the Marxists waged a rear-guard action against the surviving bands of anarchists. Lacking real ties with the workers, the libertarians had become the living counterparts of the bomb-throwing and knife-carrying caricatures portrayed by the conservative press. During the 1880's, they managed to incite a few street riots and violent demonstrations in working class quarters. It was Guesde who spearheaded the attack against these fierce terrorists, many of whom had infiltrated the syndicats. He was joined in his campaign by the Blanquists whose meetings were being invaded and disrupted by the anarchist bands. "We do not preach the war of peoples but the war of classes," Guesde wrote in 1882. "The first results only in punishment, while the second aims at the transformation of society." According to him, the anarchists' beliefs were

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138 Lafargue to Engels, November 13, 1882 in Bottigelli, I, 92.
139 Frolo, pp. 22-28.
140 Mermeix, pp. 207-209.
141 *Egalité*, April 1, 1882 in Maitron, p. 148.
not shared by a large number of the trade unions. Although "the syndicats...will not hinder propaganda by the deed as used by... the groups in favor of it," he wrote, "they will never accept their collaboration in organizing the working class forces."\(^{142}\) As was inevitable, the socialists' quarrels had repercussions among the syndicats. The trade union organizations were torn by the rivalries among their political masters. Political differences divided syndicat against syndicat and worker against worker. In the 1880's differences over political matters often led to internal division within the same syndicat, and embittered minorities would sometimes set up rival organizations of their own. It was clear that working class unity was impossible as long as the politicians kept their hold on the trade unions. In 1884 one militant remarked despairingly that "we are only one big mob without direction. There are anarchists, Possibilists, and Guesdists who refuse to come together. We are beaten..., not by our direct adversaries, but, alas, by our own comrades."\(^{143}\)

IV

The growth of the syndicat movement in France had been slow and unsteady since the Commune. Hindered by a suspicious government, the trade unions saw the light of the working class world only after

\(^{142}\) Cri du Peuple, December 11, 1884.

\(^{143}\) Reforme Social VII, 1884 in Weill, p. 268.
great difficulty. The absence of official statistics makes it impossible to estimate with accuracy the number of syndicats existing in the 1880's. However, one figure often cited is that given by the deputy, Alain-Targe, in his report to the Chambre on March 15, 1881. According to Alain-Targe, there were five hundred syndicats existing at that time in France, of which 150 were located in Paris. These syndicats had a total membership of 60,000 workers, a very small percentage of the nation's labor force.\footnote{144} Although there is no way to tell how Alain-Targe computed these figures, it is certain that his seat on the Commission charged in 1878 to investigate the syndicats gave him an opportunity to observe them at close range.

The slow growth of the syndicats was due to the twilight zone of toleration in which they existed. Although organizations springing up within the same trades were usually left alone, their activities were limited to the discussion of purely professional matters. However, the wavering, ill-defined line between legality and illegality, between tolerance and persecution was enough to prevent the more cautious workers from organizing syndicats. Only the bold were sufficiently courageous to endanger their jobs by joining these semi-legal organizations. Unless the syndicats were given a clean bill of health by the government, the majority of workers would be left outside the trade union movement.

\footnote{144} Among other places, these figures are cited in Dolléans, II, 24.
The idea had been growing in government circles to give the syndicats a legal foundation since 1876. Led in the Chambre by the Radicals, the campaign for a law to this effect was inspired by their conviction that such a measure would go a long way toward improving working class conditions. After five years of procrastination, the Chambre began to consider the project seriously in 1881. The Chambre, in May of that year, voted a liberal text which authorized professional syndicats and unions of syndicats, and modified the penal code to permit effective strike action. In the Senate, the bill was given a less favorable reception, and it was returned to the Chambre in 1883 with some important modifications. At this point, the government, under the Ministry of Jules Ferry, threw its weight behind the bill and again sent a liberal version to the Upper House. It was defended before the Senate by the Minister of the Interior, Waldeck-Rousseau. Under his inspiration, the Senate returned the bill to the Chambre with very few changes. Finally, the bill became law on March 21, 1884, when it was formally adopted by the Chambre.

In many respects, the law of 1884 offered many advantages to the syndicats. It legalized organizations among workers of the same or

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145 The Radicals were a political group representing the middle and lower middle class interests in the Third Republic. Since its formation, this Party had developed a strong reformist character. See Francois Coguel, La Politique des Partis sous la 3e Republique (Paris: 1946), pp. 51-68. Also see Georges Bourgin, Manuel des Partis Politiques (Paris: 1928), pp. 135-54.

146 Weill, pp. 253-55.
similar professions, once the names and addresses of the syndicat officials were deposited with the Prefect of Police. Although it only gave the trade unions the right to study and defend their economic interests, it did not provide for rigid supervision over their affairs. Now that the law permitted it, syndicats could be formed freely among the workers and secret organizations could now come out into the open. In addition, the law of 1884 legalized strikes and made it unlawful for the patrons to interfere with the formation of syndicats among their employees.\textsuperscript{147}

In other respects, the law was less favorable to the workers. It provided no machinery to enforce the law on the employers. Aided by courts friendly to their point of view, the patrons found ingenious ways to prevent the workers from organizing. Among the more obvious devices used by the employers were lockouts, blacklists, and agents provocateurs.\textsuperscript{148} Furthermore, even if the syndicats managed to survive, it was extremely difficult for them to undertake vigorous trade union action. On the matter of strikes, for example, the law imposed so many restrictions that it was impossible to use this type of action with complete legal asylum. Moreover, the workers had the right not to join the unions or to disaffiliate at any time. It was easy for the employers to turn this stipulation to their own advantage. Finally, the employers had the right to refuse to recognize

\textsuperscript{147} The text of the law is reproduced, among other places, in Montreuil, p. 133.

the unions. In spite of these shortcomings, however, the law of 1884 did give the syndicats a formal legal foundation, and served as an impetus to their growth throughout the nation.\footnote{149}

By offering the workers the legal right to organize, the government hoped to lead them into peaceful, corporate channels.\footnote{150} In effect, the spread of socialism had caused consternation in official circles. Although the government believed that it was as yet a minor current, it sought to choke off the movement at its roots. In order to do this, the government felt it was necessary to give the workers the right to organize and bargain collectively. For as soon as the proletariat had the means to carry on effective trade union action, it would shed its political and revolutionary views for the more harmless pursuits of syndicat activity. Consequently, the law of 1884 was an ingenious manoeuvre to bring the labor movement under the control of the state.

The law brought immediate criticism from the socialist press. Guesde, realizing that the government sought to drive a wedge between the revolutionaries and the syndicats, subjected the bill to a scathing attack. "Political action is the indispensable condition of... economic emancipation," cried the Marxist chief. "The law has only one aim—to prevent working class political..."

\footnote{149} Hubert Lagardelle, L'Evolution des Syndicats Ouvriers en France (Paris: 1901), pp. 271-87.

\footnote{150} That the sponsors of the law wanted to oust the politicos from the syndicats was clearly evident in the lengthy debates over the law. See especially France, Annales de la Chambre des Deputes, Debates Parlementaires (May 18, 1881), pp. 919-21; France, Annales du Senat, Debates Parlementaires (July 7, 1882), pp. 730-39; (January 29, 1884), pp. 188-91, 235.
organization."\textsuperscript{151} The Quesdist attacks were echoed by the Possibilists who labelled it a "work of police and reaction."\textsuperscript{152} In fact, all the socialist schools were opposed to the law of 1884.

Only in \textit{Le Moniteur des Syndicats Ouvriers}, a journal expressing the views of the moderate wing of the working class, did the law of 1884 receive a cordial reception. Ever since they had broken with the socialists in 1880, the moderates had been well received in government circles. In fact, it was they who had led the campaign for the law of 1884, hoping in this way to undermine the socialists' influence in labor's ranks.\textsuperscript{153} From the pages of \textit{Le Moniteur}, they had assured the government that the majority of workers shared their own corporative and reformist sentiments. When the bill was passed, they greeted the new law with enthusiasm. But a closer examination of the law led some of them into skepticism. Many of them objected to the clause requiring the names and addresses of the syndicat officials to be registered with the police. According to Delehaye, leader of the moderates, "a reactionary government would be able to prevent the growth of our syndicats."\textsuperscript{154}

After the passage of the law, the moderates agitated for the convocation of a national trade union congress where syndicat aims

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\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Cri du Peuple}, February 26, 1884.
\textsuperscript{152} Quoted in Montreuil, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{153} Weill, p. 253.
\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Procès-Verbaux de la Commission...}, p. 211.
\end{flushright}
and problems could be discussed and clarified. What they hoped to accomplish by this conclave was the formation of a national association of syndicats which would give a central direction to the trade union movement. In their opinion, a large syndicat federation would enable the unions to do without the support of the socialists, for the trade unions would then be strong enough to wrest reforms on their own. In 1885 *Le Moniteur* launched a campaign to generate enthusiasm for this event.

The idea had been in the air for a long time. In 1882 a moderate syndicat organization in the Fifth Arrondissement of Paris pressed for the convocation of a national syndicat congress. According to this organization, "the idea which dominates the workers is that they must above all else manage their own affairs." The following year, the syndicats of Bordeaux took up the cry. In 1883 they purposed the formation of a giant syndicat federation so that the labor movement could strengthen its economic and corporate position. However, it was not until early 1886 that the Chambre Syndicale des Tisseurs of Lyon took the initiative, announcing the convocation of a national congress at Lyon in October, 1886.

Despite the precautions taken by the Committee of Organization, the majority of delegates were socialists. In fact, such widely known socialists as Dumoy, Heppenheimer, Blondeau, Sol, Farjat,

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155 Weill, p. 264.
156 Quoted in May, p. 62.
Rondel, and Lavaud were there, each bearing the mandate of his respective syndicat.\textsuperscript{158} As early as the initial session, it was obvious that the collectivists would dominate the congress. Consequently, the moderates could only hope to carry on a stalling, defensive-type action against the onslaught of the socialists.

The first item on the order of the day was the project for a national federation of syndicats. Although the moderates felt that "with this federation, labor will become a power equal to capital," they insisted that "it is unrealizable at the present."\textsuperscript{159} According to them, the major obstacle to trade union unity was the socialists. Unless the workers were in agreement on the goals of the federation, unity "would only rest on fiction and sentiment."\textsuperscript{160} Since the moderates feared that this federation would fall under the control of the socialists, they did their utmost to prevent its creation.

But their efforts were in vain. Most of the delegates favored a national syndicat federation. In fact, even many of the moderates rallied to the Possibilist majority who fought the hardest for the creation of a national federation of trade unions. Led by Heppenheimer, the Possibilists managed to get their way. In the end, the Congress adopted the project by a vote of ninety to fifteen.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{158} Seilhac, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{159} Congrès National des Syndicats Ouvriers, tenu à Lyon en Octobre, 1886 (Lyon: 1887), pp. 38-42.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 42. \textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p. 51.
At this point, the moderates unleashed an attack against the socialists. Accusing the collectivists of causing division in the trade unions, one moderate argued that "it is necessary to separate politics from all ideas of federative groupings." According to him, the "workers must keep political divisions... outside the working class movement struggle on which we are united...." His words were echoed by Nonflaux, a moderate from Lyon, who insisted that it was vitally important to achieve "the emancipation of the workers by the workers themselves. The day when education illuminates our intelligence, there will no longer be anarchists, Blanquists, Collectivists, or Radicals. There will only be workers, marching side by side with one glorious motto—all for one, and one for all."

The Congress then turned to a discussion of the law of 1884. As might have been expected, the socialists were bitterly opposed to this measure. "In this law, everything is a trap," shouted one Possibilist. Some want to modify it. But why change something which is fundamentally bad?" However, it was the Guesdist Farjat who showed himself the most intransigent. "One argument... would suffice for asking the Congress to rise up against this law," he charged. "Formulated at the Palais Bourbon by our enemies, it must be unmercifully rejected by our representatives."
Although the moderates favored the law, few of them accepted it unconditionally. Delehaye and Veyssier, heading the moderate faction, were aware of this fact and played up the need to modify the law. According to Delehaye, the workers should indicate what changes they wanted so that "our legislators can know our opinions, needs, and aspirations... and prepare peacefully the ... reorganization of labor...". As for Veyssier, he was convinced that the law was "the greatest progress that has been made... in political economy." He contended that the "government expects us to indicate... the defects of this law... If you go on record for its abrogation pure and simple, it will be no more enlightened... than before... and the law will remain incomplete."

In the end, the Congress voted a compromise between the socialists' and the moderates' points of view. Prefaced by a preamble which set down the workers' objections to the law, the final resolution declared that the Congress "does not accept the law of March 21, 1884. In the case where, after its abrogation, the government will formulate another one, the Congress asks that the project be... submitted to the examination of the syndicats."

The key decision taken at Lyon was to create what was known as the Fédération National des Chambres Syndicales. Following the Congress, a bureau was established to set up the machinery for this

organization. Including Guesdists, Possibilists, and moderates, the bureau was composed mostly of provincial workers who were determined to keep the new Federation away from Paris. Consequently, the bureau decided to hold the next syndicat congress at Montluçon in 1887. Then the bureau sent out circulars to all the trade unions, asking them to adhere to the newly created Fédération National des Chambres Syndicales. According to the project voted by the Congress of Lyon, the organisation would be administered by a National Council, with local and regional councils acting as counterweights to this body. The bureau completed its work by issuing propaganda bulletins in preparation for the next congress at Montluçon.

The new organization was not taken seriously by the French trade unions. Although a few syndicats adhered to the Fédération National des Syndicats, as it was generally called, hardly any paid their dues or took an active part in it. The major weakness of the organization was its inability to reconcile the different elements and viewpoints within its ranks. Moreover, its purpose was never clearly defined nor were its vague statutes capable of consistent interpretation. Controlled as it was by the socialists, it soon came to have a definite political orientation which many of the syndicats found objectionable. For these reasons, the Federation's influence never extended into the local domain of the syndicats.

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171 Eight of the nine members named by the bureau were Chavrier, Blondeau, Sol, Carret, Farjat, Gorsse, Sartarin, and Labouret. Ibid., p. 341.


As it turned out, the syndicats of Montluçon were controlled by the Parti Ouvrier Français. As soon as the syndicats of this town were notified of the site of the next congress, they set themselves to work. A campaign was launched to attract the trade unions to the Guesdists' cause. Syndicats which did not have funds to send representatives of their own were urged to choose delegates from a list of Guesdists. Many syndicats perfunctorily complied. Of the fifty delegates present at the Congress in 1887, the majority were stalwarts of the Parti Ouvrier Français.

Nevertheless, the Congress of Montluçon was far from being a rubber stamp for the Marxist program. Emerging at the meeting was a Guesdist minority which aligned itself clearly with the syndicats when the interests of the latter conflicted with the program of the Parti Ouvrier Français. The leader of the dissidents was Jean Dormoy, syndicat leader of Montluçon and member of the Guesdist party. Throughout the meeting, he opposed his political comrades by speaking out for an autonomous trade union Organization, based on the occupational instead of the political interests of the working class.

The dissidents insisted upon the need for the Fédération National des Syndicats to operate outside the control of the socialists. In a clear break with the political preoccupations of his Party, Dormoy

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174 May, p. 69.
175 Seilhac, p. 204.
demanded that the Federation be composed of syndicat associations practicing the same or similar trades. In his view, these associations would be invaluable for carrying out such vital activities as the compilation of labor statistics, the effective distribution of labor to reduce unemployment, and the supervision of strike action.  

Dormoy argued that the socialists should build the Fédération National des Syndicats into a strong trade union organization instead of orienting it around political lines. However, he did feel that the workers should assist the Party in its assault on the electoral machinery of the state.

Despite the opposition from within their own ranks, the Marxists managed to impose their views on the Congress. The revision of the Federation's statutes, the only important work done by the delegates, was done according to the Guesdist's plan. From then on, a strong National Council was to rotate from town to town depending on the site of the annual congress. To insure Guesdist domination over the Fédération National des Syndicats, the regional councils were suppressed, allowing the Marxist-controlled National Council almost complete control. Instead of organizing the Federation around the syndicat associations, the Guesdist decided to base it upon geographical units. In this way, it could be more effectively utilized for the political purposes of the Parti Ouvrier Français.

176 2e Congrès National des Syndicats..., tenu à Montluçon..., 1887, pp. 16-17.
177 Ibid., p. 17. 178 Ibid., pp. 82-84.
179 According to one authority, the ties between the Federation and the Marxists were so close that the Federation borrowed from the Guesdist "their most active elements and energetic militants." Blum, I, 106.
In October, 1887, as the Congress of Montlugon ended, the socialists' power over the syndicats was at its zenith. With the exception of a handful of independents, all the trade unions were at the mercy of the politicians. As a result, the workers' professional interests were almost everywhere subordinated to the socialists' political ambitions. It was not long before the workers would rebel against the socialist politicians in their ranks. In the late 1880's, the workers' drive to regain control over their organizations would find a source of strength and inspiration in the Bourses du Travail.
CHAPTER TWO

THE BOURSES du TRAVAIL AND THE SYNDICALIST CONSCIOUSNESS

1887-1892

No one present at the inauguration of the first Bourse du Travail in France on February 3, 1887, realized the importance that this institution was destined to assume in the labor movement. Representing the Municipal Council of Paris, Monsieur Measurer presided over the opening ceremonies held at 77, rue Jean Jacques Rousseau, the site of the Paris Bourse. "The Bourse du Travail," he said, "will place the offers and requests for work, the documents relative to labor statistics at the disposition of everyone." He then emphasized the role the Bourse would play in stabilizing the labor market, and closed his speech by asserting that the administration of the Bourse would be left to the workers themselves. With these words, the Bourse was officially opened. Few of the workers who hurried to their homes realized that a new chapter in the history of French labor had begun.

The idea of a Bourse du Travail or "labor exchange" was certainly not a novelty in 1887. As early as 1795, the notion of creating an institution which would co-ordinate the supply and demand of workers


2 Ibid.
in a given area was placed before the Paris Council. Although this original project came to nothing, the idea continued to find supporters in both labor and official circles during the early nineteenth century. In 1845 the editor of the *Journal des Economists*, Molinari, devoted a series of articles to the study of this notion. In fact, he was so impressed by the prospective merits of these institutions that he founded a journal, *La Bourse du Travail*, which was dedicated to the promotion of these organizations in France. But his campaign for the establishment of Bourses du Travail met with little success.

In 1876 when Monsieur Delotte asked the Municipal Council of Paris to construct a shelter for the workers who assembled every morning to seek work for the day, the project which he submitted to the Council had little resemblance to the Bourse du Travail championed by Molinari.

While the project was under consideration, official circles were becoming increasingly aware of the need to pacify and control the working class. Consequently, in order to broaden the range of syndicat activity, the government decided to create a Bourse du Travail similar to that outlined by Molinari. Such an institution would allow the workers to carry on syndicat action more effectively and would weaken the hold of subversive doctrines on the working class.

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5 Seilhac, p. 221.

6 Franck, p. 22.
class. To prove its sincerity, the Municipal Council decided that the operating expenses of the Bourse would be paid by Municipal funds, although the administration of this institution would be entrusted largely to adhering syndicats.

The project of a Bourse du Travail became law on November 5, 1886. Himself the sponsor of the bill, Monsieur Measurer clarified the purpose of the new institution. According to him, the Bourse would give the workers "the means to struggle against capital with an equal and legal arm." That it was to be a stimulus to purely corporative action was also clear. For he insisted that the "free and permanent disposition" of the facilities of the Bourse would give the workers the opportunity to discuss "the multiple questions which interest their professions and influence their salaries." With the installation of a Bourse du Travail, the proletariat would have available to it "all the means of information and correspondence, all the figures on the labor world that can be furnished by statistics, an economic, industrial, and commercial library, and details on the movement of population in each industry... for the entire world."

Measurer's words were hailed enthusiastically by members of both the business community and the working class. Attributing little danger to their vested interests in such an obviously harmless

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
project, the employers viewed the new institution as an excellent method of reconciling the growing antagonism between capital and labor. In working class quarters, few predicted any more radical results from the creation of a Bourse du Travail. To the vast majority of workers, it was simply a step down the road to reform.¹⁰

As far as the socialists were concerned, the opening of the Bourse provoked a variety of reactions. Most favorable to the Bourse were the Possibilists. Gathered at their regional congress in 1886, they gave their approval to the plan.¹¹ However, many of them feared the influence that the Bourse would allow the state to wield in working class affairs. As a consequence, the trade union elements in the Possibilists' ranks insisted that the Party affirm that "the administration of the Bourse must be exclusively placed in the hands of the syndicat chambres."¹²

Less enthusiastic and more critical was the Blanquists' reaction to the Bourse. Although they approved of it in principle, the Blanquists feared that the Municipal Council would use it to control the workers.¹³ Nevertheless, they admitted that the Bourse would give the proletariat an added advantage in the economic struggle. For this reason, Edouard Vaillant could write that "we socialists, who

¹² Ibid., p. 135.
only value reforms insofar as they favor... the defense and organization of the working class, believe that the latter can expect a great deal from this creation.\textsuperscript{14}

The Parti Ouvrier Français took a firm stand against the institution. Certain that this latest move of the government was an effort to ensnare and pacify the workers, Guesde showed his usual hostility to all conciliatory gestures by the bourgeois. In fact, Molinari's brainchild was strongly ridiculed by the Marxist chief who compared it to a medieval institution. "The societies of marchandeurs... will produce on the industrial terrain the condottieri... of the middle ages who turned their men over to... a prince for a price...," he wrote in 1887.\textsuperscript{15} He then proceeded to deny all value to this institution and asked the workers if they were going "to add to the numerous parasites and thieves in society... more parasites and thieves?"\textsuperscript{16}

No sooner was the Bourse officially opened when the Paris Municipal Council made clear its intention to retain control over institution.\textsuperscript{17} A Commission of Labor, appointed by the Municipal Council...  

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 390.

\textsuperscript{17} Franck, pp. 25-27. Moreover, the Municipal Council insisted that "the Bourse must be used only for corporate matters and not for political reunions." M. Kritsky, \textit{L'Evolution du Syndicalisme en France} (Paris: 1908), p. 194.
Council, had been studying different schemes for the Bourse's future administration since December, 1886. To enlist syndicat support for the Bourse, the Commission decided to hear any ideas the trade unions might have on the matter. Throughout 1887, worker groups met with the Commission to work out a plan which would be acceptable to all concerned. As it turned out, the divided workers were no match for the resolute Commission of Labor which found an ally in the Possibilists at the Bourse. What emerged from these stormy sessions was a plan of administration which left the final say in the Bourse's management to the Municipal Council. The Commission of Labor's plan was formally accepted by the Council in December, 1887.

According to this plan, the Council had the right to control the financial resources of the Bourse. The annual subsidy was voted on a year to year basis and not guaranteed over a long period of time. It could be refused at any point and punishments or rewards for good or bad behavior could be administered by a slight tug on the purse strings. In addition, the Municipal Council had the right to check the figures and statistics compiled by the Bourse, and, if it so desired, the Council could use this power to interfere in the Bourse's internal affairs. Finally, the selection of officials

20 Franck, pp. 25-30.
for the new institution was partially controlled by the Council. To administer the Bourse, an Executive Committee was chosen by the adhering syndicats, but these officials had to be approved by the Municipal Council. In this way, the latter was able to prevent radical elements from infiltrating the key positions at the Bourse.22

Despite these controls, the Bourse du Travail was a great stimulus to syndicat activity in the Paris area. Not only did it carry out its major task of allocating the labor force more effectively but it provided many other economic services to the proletariat. The immeuble at 77, rue Jean Jacques Rousseau provided professional training courses to the workers, and maintained a library for them to study on their own. Moreover, the Bourse soon became a recreation center for the workers who found a friendly haven there when they merely wanted a place to rest or relax.23 Furthermore, the Bourse du Travail was an important syndicat ally in the time of strikes. As the nerve center of the labor market, compiling the crucial data concerning areas of over- and under-employment, it was able to succor the workers in their all too frequent clashes with capital. By discouraging an influx of the jobless into striking industries or areas, the Bourse protected the strikers against competition from the unemployed.24 Often, the Bourse aided the strikers in a more concrete

23 Seilhac, Syndicats Ouvriers, Federations..., pp. 206-207.
concrete fashion. In 1888 the member syndicats organized a central strike fund and used it to aid the families of striking workers. In fact, the Paris Bourse was so famous for its generosity in time of strikes that workers from such distant regions as the Nord successfully appealed to it for aid.25

The success of the Paris Bourse was soon discussed in other sections of the nation, and it was not long before provincial workers agitated for Bourses du Travail of their own. Consequently, a Bourse was created at Nimes in 1887, at Marseilles in 1888, followed quickly by those at Montpellier, Saint Etienne, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Toulon, and Lyon.26 By 1890 it was clear that the Bourse du Travail was a permanent and vital fixture in the world of labor.

The rapid growth of the Bourses in France was due to the belief prevailing in official circles that these institutions would go a long way in promoting social peace between capital and labor. Like the authorities at Paris, many of the Municipal Councils in France looked upon the Bourses as stabilizing agencies where the workers could engross themselves in peaceful economic activity.27 For this reason, a large number of municipal councils were willing to provide municipal funds and facilities for the establishment of a Bourse.28


26 Montreuil, p. 33.


28 In the Marxist dominated regions of the Nord, the Guesdist leaders on the Municipal Councils refused to agitate for Bourses du Travail.
Although the local officials usually retained the final control over these institutions, most of the town councils left the management of the Bourses to the workers.

Wherever the Bourses took roots, they almost always stimulated trade union activity in the area. Unlike the political parties, the Bourses du Travail were oriented around the economic interests of the workers. The Bourses helped the workers to find jobs and provided them with the opportunity to learn occupational skills. Such practical matters as higher wages and bigger pension plans were lively topics for discussion in nightly conferences at the Bourse. In time of strikes or industrial unemployment, the workers received relief and assistance from their local Bourse. Consequently, the trade unions flocked into these institutions growing up all over the nation. In fact, it was not long before the syndicats were breaking their ties with the local political organizations, none of which could match the benefits provided by the Bourses. At election time, the workers' political preferences were registered at the polls. Meanwhile, it was to the local Bourse which they sought an answer to the pressing problems of their daily grind at the factory or the shop.

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29 Pelloutier, pp. 111-231. For a more critical appraisal of the Bourses, see Franck, pp. 106-61.

30 Fernand Pelloutier, "La Fédération des Bourses du Travail," Le Mouvement Socialiste No. 144 (October 15, 1900), p. 482.

31 Seilhac, Syndicats Ouvriers, Fédérations..., p. 207.
Life at the local Bourse demonstrated clearly to the workers the practical advantages of working class unity. First of all, a syndicat which adhered to a Bourse was able to profit from the ideas and experiences of other syndicats. If one trade union was confronted with the same problem that another syndicat was trying to solve, ideas were exchanged and information was pooled in the interest of a common solution. Furthermore, syndicat unity proved to be more efficient for the working class. For it soon became obvious that a group of syndicats could afford to establish certain services together that would have been financially impossible for an individual syndicat to set up by itself. In fact, almost all the trade unions found additional strength and vitality in joint projects and campaigns with other syndicats at the Bourse. As a result, a strong desire for trade union unity accompanied the growth of the Bourses du Travail in France.

In addition, the Bourses generated a real psychological influence on the French workers. Life at the local Bourse had a tendency to blur the occupational and professional lines within the working class. For it happened that the activities sponsored by the Bourse brought together workers from diverse industries and trades. There,

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they met simply as workers, not as mechanics, printers, or masons. When they attended conferences or held discussions, they spoke of their common grievances, of problems applicable to all their métiers. In such a milieu, occupational differences merged into working class similarities, and the perplexing problem of professional egotism gave way to the notion of working class solidarity.34

As might have been expected, the growth of the Bourses du Travail strengthened the corporate elements in the French labor movement. Not only did these institutions give the workers a new weapon in the economic struggle but they soon provoked a reaction against the political influences in the syndicats. Uniting as they did trade unions of the most diverse sentiments and political temperaments, they were forced to eliminate highly controversial political issues from their agendas. It was not long before the Bourses learned to avoid political matters and concentrate on purely syndicat affairs.35 In this way, they safeguarded themselves against internal division, for there was little disagreement among the workers on their economic goals. In the 1880's the campaign for political neutrality in the labor movement was spearheaded by the Bourses du Travail.

34 Among other writers, Andre May and Paul Louis have argued that the Bourses contributed to the growth of a revolutionary mentality among the workers. According to them, the Bourses, uniting workers from every occupation and profession, had to construct a program applicable to all the workers. For this reason, they gravitated into the revolutionary path, for the lowest common denominator among the workers was an animosity to the existing situation. See May, pp. 75-76.

Although there is some truth to this allegation, it should not be overemphasized. During the 1890's, the majority of workers at the Bourses showed little more revolutionary sentiment than the militants in the other working class organizations.

35 Louis, I, 169-71.
The Bourses' struggle to free themselves from political influences was often a long and bitter one, for the socialists were firmly entrenched in a large number of these institutions. In those areas where socialism was not strong or where one school was predominant, it was a fairly easy matter to eliminate controversial issues from the Bourses. However, the battle was usually a difficult one in those Bourses where political rivalries and intrigues ran rampant. In this event, political neutrality was more a practical necessity than a calculated policy, for the Bourses were racked by so much internal dissension that political neutrality appeared to be the only solution to their troubles. Nevertheless, the socialists' quarrels were often so violent and impassioned that many Bourses never succeeded in eliminating them completely.

Interestingly enough, the local governments encouraged the growth of political neutrality at the Bourse. The municipal councils felt that the Bourses' purpose was to stimulate syndicat activity and not to engage in political matters. Consequently, the local authorities

36 The Bourses du Travail of Grenoble, Bordeaux, Narbonne, and Toulon, for example, were infested to the Parti Ouvrier Français from the time of their creation. Pelloutier, Mouvement Socialiste No. 43, p. 481.


used their influence to discourage discussions and activities of a political nature at these institutions. Although the councils did not often intervene directly in the Bourses' internal affairs, they usually exerted enough external pressure to get their way. As a result, the purely corporate forces at the Bourse were strengthened in their efforts to neutralize the labor movement. The majority of workers did not reject political activities, but they felt that there was no room for such matters on the syndicat terrain.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{III}

The Bourse du Travail of Paris provides an excellent case study of how these institutions fostered the growth of political neutrality in the labor movement. As was often the case, the Paris Bourse was disrupted by so many political rivalries that the elimination of political issues at this institution was the only way it could survive. In addition, the workers' campaign to neutralize the Paris Bourse led to profound changes in the entire syndicat movement. As it turned out, the very mechanics of the struggle against the politicians created such a metaphorsis in the workers' mentality that the Paris Bourse gradually assumed the leadership of the entire labor movement.

\textsuperscript{39} Weill, p. 347.
The Possibilists' influence on the Municipal Council of Paris enabled them to entrench themselves at the Paris Bourse from the moment of its founding. From this time on, the Bourse became the satellite of the Fédération du Centre which used it to enhance the prestige of the Possibilists. Since the majority of Paris syndicats were sympathetic to the Possibilists, there was little dissension at the immeuble. The Possibilists guided the Bourse along the reformist path, and the Municipal Council co-operated closely with this institution.

The calm was broken by the Guesdists who lashed out at their rivals. "The Possibilists believe the Bourse has been created to serve their ambitions and not for serving the working class organizations," charged Le Socialist, a Marxist weekly founded in 1887. "We believe... that the only way for the syndicats to attain their goals... is to remain independent, not to infeudate themselves." Aware that the Possibilists were using their influence on the Municipal Council to control the Bourse, the Marxists subjected this tactic to a scathing attack. According to them, "this provisional committee to which 20,000 francs have been voted has no other aim than to entrench a number of Possibilists at the Bourse." 

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40 LeTheuff, pp. 45-47.
41 Le Socialist, August 20, 1887.
42 Ibid., November 10, 1887.
As might have been expected, the dispute was carried into the interior of the Bourse. The Marxist syndiques were aroused by the Possibilists' efforts to control the administration of this institution. During the hearings held by the Commission of Labor to devise a plan of administration, the Possibilists sponsored a scheme which allowed the Municipal Council to have a large voice in the selection of the Bourse's officers.\(^4\) In this way, the Possibilists hoped to use their power on the Municipal Council to install their own men in the key administrative positions. But opposition to this plan came from the Guesdists who spoke out vigorously for the free and unfettered nomination and election of officers by the adhering syndicates.\(^5\) Such a method would give the Guesdists the opportunity to oust the Possibilists from the Bourse at the first general election.

However, the outcome of the dispute was never really in doubt. In November, 1887 Champoudy, Chairman of the Commission of Labor, submitted to the Municipal Council a plan of administration which contained the principal features of the Possibilists' scheme. "We thought it was legitimate and necessary," reported Champoudy, "to confide the administration of the Bourse to the workers while reserving the right of control to the Municipal Council."

The Commission of Labor's recommendation were immediately accepted by the Council, and the election of the Bourse's officials was set for January, 1888.

\(^4\) LeTheuff, p. 37. Also see André-Gély's article in Bulletin Officiel de la Bourse du Travail No. 16 (January 4, 1888).

\(^5\) Le Socialiste, December 31, 1887; Bulletin Officiel de la..., No.16.

\(^6\) Quoted in Bulletin Officiel de la..., No. 6 (December 1, 1887).
In early December the Guesdists made a final effort to halt their rivals. A member of the Parti Ouvrier Français, A. Bonhomme, led a concerted campaign inside the Bourse to limit the voting syndicats to those which accepted the fundamental principals of socialism. Such a method of voting would greatly reduce the Possibilists' strength, for they drew a great deal of their support from the moderate trade unions. As it turned out, however, the syndicats rejected Bonhomme's purposal, and the ensuing election gave the Possibilists an overwhelming majority on the Bourse's Executive Committee.

The Guesdists reacted by accusing the Provisional Committee which had arranged the election of playing politics. But the independents and corporate elements went even further. Immediately after the election, they addressed a protest to the Municipal Council against the political prejudices of the Provisional Committee. "All the syndicats want is autonomy and the liberty to develop and work for their best corporate interests...," they wrote, "but they refuse to place their work in the hands of a Committee which is the agent of a political party."

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47 See his articles in Bulletin Officiel..., No. 8 (December 8, 1887); No. 11 (December 18, 1887).

48 Le Socialiste, January 11, 1888. The Provisional Committee was appointed by the Municipal Council to administer the Bourse until a regular Executive Committee could be elected.

49 LeTheuff, pp. 48-49.
The Municipal Council turned a deaf ear to this complaint, and the Possibilists saluted its wisdom. Replying to the critics of the Provisional Committee, André-Gely, active Possibilist and leader at the Bourse, denied that politics had been introduced by this body. In fact, he accused the Marxists of resorting to what he called "anarchist methods" during the election. However, it was not long before this particular dispute came to an end, and an even more vehement one arose to take its place. In 1888 the socialists' quarrels were caught up in the widespread agitation that engulfed France during the Boulanger Affair. The Affair aroused such heated animosities among the socialists that the Bourse du Travail was threatened with total extinction.

By a combination of republicanism and nationalism, George Boulanger, former Minister of War and General of the Army, had built up a great deal of popularity in the nation. As the Republic rocked under the public scandals of its leaders, the setbacks of the Army in Indo-China, and the persistent lack of social reform, the General's prestige soared to new heights. To many of the discontented elements in the nation, Boulanger and the vague ideals he represented were what was needed to cure the growing malaise of France. His supporters included Monarchists, Bonapartists, sincere republicans, clerics, and even a large section of the working class—all of whom had their own reasons for backing Boulanger. Urged on by his followers, the General began to appear in the bi-elections held in 1888, and, in

50 Bulletin Officiel de la..., No. 19 (January 15, 1888).
one election after another, was acclaimed by overwhelming majorities. By 1888 it was clear that the Boulangist movement was a dominant force in French politics.

The Republic’s safety was imperilled. Behind the grand figure of the man stood the menace of the anti-republican forces in the nation. Directing the campaign from their headquarters on the Rue de Seze, the Monarchists and the Bonapartists spared neither time nor money to surround the General with myth and luster. His program was a hazy one, centered primarily around a purposed revision of the Constitution. But as to what direction the changes were to be made, or as to what measure, no one was sure. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1888, the threat of boulangisme was great enough to frighten all the republicans into joining together to prevent Boulanger’s assumption of power.

Even the socialists at first seemed willing to place their rivalries aside in the interest of the Republic. In fact, the usually obstinate Guesde made an open plea for socialist unity in the face of boulangisme. "The Republic is the necessary political form of the emancipation of the working class," he wrote in 1889, "and it must be salvaged at all costs." In spite of Guesde’s plea, the socialists broke ranks. In 1888 a few Blanquists rallied to Henri de Rochefort, a left wing journalist and chief supporter of Boulanger in the radical haunts of Paris.

The Possibilists opposed the General from the start. When on
May 25, the republicans of all nuances formed the Société des Droits
de l'Homme et du Citoyen to ward off the danger of boulangisme,
Brousse pledged the support of his Party. "We are ready to forget
the last ten years, during which the bourgeois have betrayed the
people," proclaimed the manifesto issued by the Party. "We are
prepared to defend and to save... our republican institutions against
any sabres which menace it." Following this decision, the Possibilists
launched a propaganda attack against the General. In the face of this threat,
all hope of reform disappeared, as the key groups in France squared
off for a political fiasco which was to monopolize the socialists'
energy for over a year.

"Ni Ferry, ni Boulanger," shouted the Guesdists who suddenly
abandoned the republican forces and retreated into a gloomy orthodoxy.
Opposing themselves to the Boulangists and the Opportunist Republicans,
the Marxists passed both these groups off as two factions of the
capitalist class. In fact, the Marxists joined hands with the
Blanquists and offered their own candidate in the Paris election of
January 27, 1889 which threatened to be a popular plebiscite for
boulangisme. A combination of Radicals, Opportunists, and Possibilists
ran Jacques, a radical-socialist against Boulanger in this crucial
election, while the Guesdists and Blanquists presented their own
candidate in Boule, former stone mason and active socialist.54

53 Quoted in Zevaès, Histoire du..., p. 166.

54 The Guesdists' activities during the Boulang time are
When the results of the election were known, it was clear that the man who had made Bismarck tremble had won a lopsided victory. The candidate of the republican coalition had lost to Boulanger by almost a 100,000 votes, while Boulé had only mustered 16,000 supporters in Paris. According to Lafargue, "the Boulangist movement is the expression of malaise and discontent. To a great number of workers, Boulanger is the revolution." With these words, the Marxist leader explained away the fact that a great number of workers had voted for Boulanger. So well had the clique at the Rue de Seze done its work that Boulanger was the man of the hour not only to the Monarchists but to the workers as well.

As far as his supporters were concerned, the General's ambition should have been made of sterner stuff. On the morrow of his convincing victory at Paris, Boulanger refused to follow the advise of his closest supporters to march on the Elysee. Preferring to wait for a better moment, the General lost his best opportunity, for the great popular enthusiasm generated during the election rapidly subsided. Meanwhile, the republicans set themselves to work. A number of measures were voted by the government to prevent the popular hero from carrying out a coup d'etat. As to the General, he

55 Throughout the nation, it was generally believed that Boulanger had forced Bismarck to back down during a war scare between France and Germany.


fled to Belgium to a safer spot in the arms of his mistress. In the months that followed, Boulanger, despite efforts to recall him, refused to part for Paris. His advisers managed to keep his forces in tact for several months, but without the General, it proved an impossible task. The Boulanger Affair came to an end when the General took his own life on September 30, 1891, two months after the death of his mistress on whose grave he died. A fitting epitaph was phrased by Madame Severine who noted that Boulanger had "begun as Cesar, continued as Catiline, and ended as Romeo."

As far as the socialists were concerned, the real victim of the Affair was the Bourse du Travail of Paris in which the socialists' quarrels over boulangisme were re-enacted. In fact, the struggle among the socialist factions at the Bourse was so bitter that the very existence of this institution was endangered. As was inevitable, such a chaotic state of affairs strengthened the elements which were hostile to political issues and personalities in the syndicats. Consequently, the corporatists intensified their campaign to neutralize the Bourse against political disruptions.

It was not only the corporate elements which sought to end political tension in the working class organizations. Interestingly enough, many of the socialists rushed to the side of the neutralists who were finding unexpected strength in all parts of the labor world. In January 1888 Dulucq, a Marxist member of the Bourse, clearly displayed

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58 Quoted in Dennis W. Brogan, France Under the Republic (London: 1940), p. 211.

59 Boivin, p. 105. Even the Municipal Council was concerned over the internecine quarrels at the Bourse. The Councillor Chabert bemoaned the fact that at the Bourse was "found the echoes of the intestinal struggles of the socialist party." LeTheuff, p. 14.
this new viewpoint among the socialists. In his opinion, the socialist parties should withdraw from the syndicats, for working class unity was possible only if political issues and topics were eliminated from trade union affairs. "The workers chambres are constituted only for obtaining professional rights and not for electing such and such a candidate," argued this socialist of neutralist sentiments. In the months that followed, it was clear that Dulucq's viewpoint was shared by many socialists at the Bourse. From its official bulletin poured article after article, many written by convinced socialists, demanding the neutrality and independence of the syndicats in respect to the political groups. 61

The campaign to free the syndicats of political influences spread quickly into the provinces. In November 1888 the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats held its third National Congress at Bordeaux. Controlled by the Marxists since the previous year, the Federation was used by the Guesdistes to increase the prestige of the Parti Ouvrier Français. For this reason, few expected the Bordeaux meeting to be anything more than a Marxist propaganda forum. However, the working class delegates rose up against their Guesdist chiefs and proclaimed their dissatisfaction with the socialist politicians in their organizations.

60 Bulletin Officiel de la..., No. 22 (January 26, 1888).

61 See especially Bulletin Officiel de la..., No. 64 (June 21, 1888); No. 110 (November 29, 1888); No. 150 (September 29, 1889); No. 186 (November 10, 1889); No. 193 (December 29, 1889).
The Marxists did not have to wait long to discover the true sentiments of the Congress. Of vital importance to the workers was the discussion on the Bourses du Travail which took place on the first day of the conclave. According to the final resolution on this crucial issue, the workers insisted that "the administration of the Bourses du Travail must only be given to the syndicats composed exclusively of workers...." It was their wish that "political groups must never be allowed to govern the Bourses du Travail." Later in the Congress, the neutralists managed to pass a motion which asked "the syndicats... to infeudate themselves to no one political party, since this is the only way to rally all the workers of a given trade." However, the general spirit of the delegates found its most obvious expression when they "urged the workers to separate themselves from the politicians who mislead them and to organize... syndicats which... will obtain for them all that... belongs to them."

That a strong resentment of the politicians should be voiced by a Guesdist-controlled syndicat Congress was certainly an anomaly in the late 1880's. Although there had been signs of dissension in the Guesdist's rank before, nowhere had such incidents taken on the major

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63 Ibid., p. 3.
64 Ibid., p. 5.
proportions as they did at Bordeaux. By the close of the Congress, it was clear that the working class reaction against the socialists was gaining strength and momentum. What was also apparent was that the movement to oust political issues and personalities from the trade unions was led by many of the socialists themselves.

In the late 1880's, a curious phenomenon was occurring in the French labor movement. Working class political loyalties were giving way to a belief in the capacity of the syndicats to solve the social problem. In many ways, it was a process that bordered on the inevitable. As the socialists struggled and agitated in the syndicats and the Bourses du Travail, they became a part of the milieu in which they lived. No longer were they so preoccupied with political propaganda or in parliamentary superiority; but they were now found at the head of strikes, at demonstrations for the eight-hour day, or at the local Bourse conducting a course in political economy. What emerged from the syndicat milieu was a new breed of militant who sympathized, not with the political ambitions of his Party, but with the immediate needs of his comrades in the trade unions. When conflicts arose between his political values and the realities of working class life, he reacted first as a worker, only secondly as a socialist. By no means did he give up his political beliefs, but he was quick to place them aside in the interest of his profession and his class.

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65 See above, pp. 69-70.
For the workers who had only perfunctorily embraced socialism, it was merely a matter of following their natural inclinations. These men had no trouble in subordinating politics to trade union matters, for they had never outgrown their syndicat mentality. As for those militants who had come to the trade unions via a political party, their transition from politician to syndiqué was one of the most important events in French labor history. It was a metamorphosis created entirely by the atmosphere and milieu of the syndicat world which, in the 1880's, showed signs of developing a strength and dynamism of its own.

It was this process occurring in the labor world that explains the volte-face of many socialists in the 1880's. Fundamental to their way of thinking was a belief in the necessity of a strong and unified syndicat movement. When it was obvious that politics were disrupting the trade unions, these dissident socialists were quick to demand the abolition of political issues from the syndicats. That the major problems confronting the workers were economic in nature they realized instinctively. As long as these problems remained unsolved, they were willing to subordinate political loyalties to trade union necessities.

Under the impact of socialism on the syndicats, the corporate or trade union tradition of the labor movement had been entrusted primarily to the moderates. Their hostility toward political affairs was a long standing one, more because of the radical nature of
of socialism than on account of its destructive effects on the syndicate. Led by August Keufer, Secretary of the powerful Fédération du Livre, the moderates hoped to solve the workers' plight by creating a united and autonomous trade union movement. What they wanted was the strength to bargain directly with capital and to obtain peacemeal reforms for the workers. Hostile to collectivism in principle, the moderates purposed to work completely within the capitalist system, and to keep a safe distance from the state while doing it. During the 1880's, they agitated for a neutral and independent labor movement which would ask from the state only those reforms which it could not secure itself.

Into the ranks of these corporatists now flocked the dissident socialists, driven there by their reaction against the politicians. As might have been expected, they carried their collectivist beliefs with them. Unlike the moderates, these new corporatists advocated an abrupt and violent transformation of society. However, the majority of them were not so blindly dedicated to revolution as to sacrifice immediate reforms to achieve it. In many respects, they combined a wistful revolutionary outlook with a practical turn of


67 Goetz-Girey, pp. 31-36.
mind. That revolution and reform could be mutually exclusive never occurred to them. In the final analysis, they wanted to obtain both and they saw no contradiction between the two goals.

In the late 1880's the moderates and the dissident socialists were joining forces in the campaign to neutralize the labor movement. Far from a calculated entente, it was a mariage de convenance, brought about by a common danger. Their hostility toward the politicians pushed the dissident socialists into a syndicalism or trade unionism every bit as genuine as that long endorsed by the moderates. Although the two were opposed in principle, they came together through their faith in syndicalism as the best instrument of social change. From the most revolutionary to the most moderate, they were in a word—syndicalists—a new category of militants differing in political belief but at one on the method of action. It was not long before the syndicalists would cause another rupture in the socialists' ranks.

III

For a long time, tension had been present in the Possibilists' camp. The corporatists in the Party objected to their leaders' preoccupations with political matters. Like all the workers, the corporatists wanted to orient the Party around syndicat affairs, and the emphasis which the Party's chiefs placed on electoral success aroused their suspicions. To the corporatists, it seemed as if
politics were the breeding ground of opportunism, for many of the Possibilists, once installed in public office, soon forget their duties and obligations to the workers. In effect, the charges made against their political leaders by the trade union elements of the Party were similar to those made by almost all the workers against the socialists in the late 1880's.  

Interestingly enough, the Bourse du Travail of Paris was the stronghold of the dissident Possibilists. Nearly all members of syndicats, the corporatists in the Party had long been in control of this institution. As a result, many of them turned from politics to the building of a strong Bourse du Travail. What followed was their conversion from Possibilists to syndicalists, outside the Party's rule if retaining many of their socialist beliefs. It was the dynamism generated by the Bourse du Travail that allowed this metamorphosis to occur.

In the late 1880's, the fires raging in the Possibilists' camp were carefully watched by the Marxists who put their finger on the cause of the tension. "The Bourse du Travail is a stumbling block in the path of the Possibilists," reported Lafargue in 1887. So

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Annuaire de la..., p. 231; Bulletin Officiel de la..., No. 180 (September 29, 1889), No. 193 (December 27, 1889).
far, they have managed to monopolize all the posts... and money placed by the Municipal Council at the workers' disposal. By throwing his men a sop from time to time, Brousse has... bribed them into loyalty. As the rift between the political and corporate wings of the Party widened, the Marxists were overjoyed. It was not long before the Guesdists were predicting the demise of their foes. In September, 1890, Lafargue wrote Engels that there was "war in the Possibilists' camp. It will soon break out in public..., and we will have little to fear from the Possibilists."72

As Lafargue predicted, the quarrel hardened into open warfare. From the pages of Le Parti Ouvrier, a journal founded in 1888 to express the views of the trade union elements, Jean Allemane, the leader of the corporatists, stepped up the attack on the Party's leaders.73 What infuriated the trade unionists was their Party's collaboration with the Radicals during the election of 1889. Moreover, the Allemanists, as the trade union elements were called, accused the National Council of the Party of becoming a comité directrice, which was impinging on the powers of the autonomous federations in the Party. Finally, the Allemanists wanted to impose stringent limitations on the élus,74 even to the point of placing

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71 Lafargue to Engels, April 24, 1887 in Bottigelli, II, 30.
72 Lafargue to Engels, September 10, 1890 in ibid., II, 412.
73 Le Parti Ouvrier, August 1, 1889; October 6, 12, 1890.
74 There is no equivalent to this word in English. It is best translated as "office holders."
them under the supervision of the groups which they represented. To solve these internal problems, the Allemanists, in 1890, called for the convocation of a national congress at which they hoped to impose their views on the Party.  

As a result, the National Council agreed to hold a national congress on October 8, 1890 at Chatellerault, a date only a few days away. By selecting this early date, the Party's leaders sought to prevent the Fédération du Centre from formulating a co-ordinated plan of attack for use at the coming Congress.

But the Allemanists immediately convoked a regional Congress of the Fédération du Centre on October 2, 1890, where they codified their point of view. What emerged from this regional conclave was a program designed to limit the politicians' power in the Party. No longer would the élus have so much freedom in their conduct, for they were to be placed under the rigid control of the workers. In addition, the Allemanists decided to bar membership on the National Council of the Party to the élus. Such a manoeuvre would allow the Allemanists to take the control of the Party away from the politicians. Finally, the Allemanists decided to place a number of restrictions on the National Council in order to ensure the freedom of the Party's federations. Following the regional Congress, the Allemanists hurried off to Chatellerault to change the Possibilists into a real party of labor.

75 Charnay, pp. 5-7.
76 Ibid., p. 8.
77 Le Parti Ouvrier, October 7, 9, 1890.
But Brousse and his followers had other ideas. In order to
dominate the meeting, the politicos packed the Committee, charged
with verification of the mandates, with their own men. Consequently,
many of the dissidents were denied admittance to the Congress. When
J-B Clement, one of their leading voices, was barred, the Allemanists
left the meeting. With them went the majority of working class
organizations at the Congress. Upon their departure, the Possibilists
censured Jean Allemane, J. B. Clement, and Faillet, and expelled
them from the Party. Moreover, the Possibilists pronounced the "same
exclusion on all groups and citizens that are their accomplices." 78
Such a statement amounted to a formal declaration of war against the
Allemanists. What followed was a vehement battle of the press in
which Le Proletariat and Le Parti Ouvrier locked horns in charge and
countercharge until no reconciliation was possible between the two
groups.

In June, 1891 the rebels met at Paris and proceeded to organize
a party of their own. Although usually referred to as the Allemanists,
the official title of this new organization was the Parti Ouvrier
Socialist Révolutionnaire. The interior organization of the Party
was based on the principal of federalism, so deeply rooted in labor's
past. Not only was the former National Council abolished but the
complete autonomy of adhering groups was vigorously asserted. In
addition, the Allemanists took steps to control and direct the

78 Quoted in Charnay, p. 15. See also J. Faillet, Le Parti
Ouvrier Français (Paris: 1890).
political hopefuls of the Party. The élus were placed under the
direct supervision of the General Secretariat, a body set up to
co-ordinate the autonomous groups of the Party. 79

Unlike the other socialist groups, the new Party rested firmly
on a trade union foundation, for its basic cell was the syndicat.
Whereas the other socialist parties were composed primarily of
socialist study groups, the Allemanists recruited their members from
the corporate organizations. 80 As a result, the vast majority of
the socialist-inclined syndicats flocked into the Allemanist ranks,
where they orbited loosely around the Fédération du Centre. 81

As a result, the Parti Ouvrier Socialist Révolutionnaire was
composed almost entirely of manual laborers. 82 Such a phenomenon
represented a clear return to the notion of ouvrierisme, so pre-
dominant in the early days of the labor movement. Like the
mutualists, the Allemanists felt that working class interests could
only be entrusted to genuine workers, those who worked with their
hands. "The workers have been exploited," wrote Jean Allemane, "every
time that they have given the task of defending their interests to...
the bourgeois, that is from a class whose education, interests, and

79 Charnay, pp. 26-34.
80 Albert Richard, "Le Parti Ouvrier Socialist Révolutionnaire," Le Mouvement Socialist No. 10 (June 1, 1899), p. 618.
81 Charnay, pp. 35-36.
82 Leroy, I, 91.
propensities make it the enemy of the proletariat," By limiting their cadres to those whose calloused hands served as a carte d'entree, the Allemanists hoped to prevent the opportunists from entering their ranks. No lawyer, journalist, or bourgeois professional was to use the Party as a spring board to personal gain or success.

Interestingly enough, the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Revolutionnaire was only secondly a political organization. Created by dissident socialists and composed mainly of workers, the Party was more interested in trade union action than political success. To the Allemanists, it was necessary "to concentrate exclusively on the syndicats, for it is from these that a new socialist movement will grow." Consequently, they insisted that the Party should avoid "political preoccupations which push us from our goal..." and employ all its resources to "the construction of syndicats." According to the Allemanists, all the division and disorganization in the labor world had occurred because "the working class, instead of handling its own affairs, has confided them to men who seek public office in order to become the directors of the movement."

The syndicalist nature of the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Revolutionnaire was illustrated by its plans for the future society. Unlike

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84 Le Parti Ouvrier, September 18-19, 1891.
85 Ibid. 86 Ibid.
the other socialist parties, the Allemanists felt that the trade
unions should be the basic unit of the post-revolutionary world. In
the hands of syndicat committees would be placed the control of
production and distribution of resources, and syndicat groups would
replace the state as the governing agencies of society. 87 Furthermore, the Allemanists assigned the trade unions the important task
of preparing the workers for the future society. From the syndicats,
the proletariat would receive instruction on the economic problems of
a collective system. In addition, it would be conditioned in its
behavior, elevated in benevolence and humanity by the attitudes and
habits formed in these cells of the coming society. 88 Of all the
socialist groups, only the Allemanists assigned to the syndicats
such a high value in their revolutionary plans.

Although they placed qualification upon its use, the Allemanists
never rejected politics as a method of action. According to them,
the main value of political activity lay in the stimulation of class
consciousness among the workers. "The conquest of public powers is
a strong means of action and propaganda," affirmed the Party in 1891.
However, it added that "this conquest must never be envisioned as an
outlet for ambition or intrigue but only as a method of socialist

87 Charnay, pp. 58-59.

88 In this connection see the report on the role of the syndicats
in the future society presented by the Allemanists at the Fifth Congress
of the Bourses du Travail in 1896. 5e Congrès de Fédération des Bourses
du Travail, tenu à Tours, 9-12 Septembre, 1896 (Tours: 1896), pp. 106-
107. This problem was also studied by the Allemanists at their Congress
of Paris in 1896.
agitation made around reforms impatiently awaited by the proletariat.\textsuperscript{89}

In this respect, the Allemanists' viewpoint did not appear any different from that of the Guesdists who always insisted on the purely propagandistic value of politics. But the Allemanists differed from the Guesdists in that they never regarded politics as the highest form of combat. As far as the Allemanists were concerned, elections, campaigns, and parliamentary agitation were less effective weapons than purely trade union methods.

The Allemanists' half-hearted approach to politics stemmed from their view of the revolution. Unlike the Guesdists or the Blanquists, they felt that the workers did not have to control the state in order to carry out a successful insurrection. In fact, it was their opinion that the revolution could be accomplished by the daily struggle of the syndicats against capital. As they won concession after concession, the workers, without recourse to the state, would gradually bring about the transformation of society.\textsuperscript{90} At other times, the Allemanists insisted that the workers would have to launch a violent insurrection directly against the patrons, again bypassing the public authorities.\textsuperscript{91} Although they varied in their view of the revolution, they always felt it could be accomplished without seizing the political structure of the nation. The entry of the socialists into the Chambre

\textsuperscript{89} 10e Congres National de la Parti Ouvrier Socialiste R{\oe}volutionnaire, ten\u00e9 \textsuperscript{a} Paris, du 21 au 29 Juin, 1891. (Paris: 1892), pp. 73-74.

\textsuperscript{90} Charnay, p. 56.

\textsuperscript{91} This was to be done by a method known as the General Strike. See below, pp. 147-50.
and the Municipal Councils might hasten this process, but they insisted that the "emancipation of the workers is only able to be the work of the workers themselves." 92

As allemanisme developed in the early 1890's, it was a curious hybrid between socialism and syndicalism. Like the socialists, the Allemanists wanted to transform capitalism into collectivism; but, like the pure syndicalists, they never felt this transformation had to be obtained in one great coup. In fact, most of them were unwilling to postpone immediate advantage for the sake of future uncertainties. As a result, they concentrated on securing small concession and gains, all of which lay in the revolutionary path. 93 More syndicalist than socialist in nature, the Parti Ouvrier Socialist Révolutionnaire saw no conflict between short range reform and long range utopia. The type of action which the Allemanists best understood was neither rigid nor inflexible but a practical one that shifted according to the strategy of their opponents. In the final analysis, they were both revolutionaries and reformists, pursuing the one to achieve the other. 94

As might have been expected, the Allemanists, following their formation in 1891, became the foremost champions of the trade unions. 95

92 First appearing under the First International, this slogan was adopted by the Allemanists. It was a favorite catch phrase of the mutualists.

93 Charnay, p. 56.

94 Although the majority of Allemanists were neither extreme revolutionaries nor out and out reformists, some of them stressed the one and ignored the other of these goals. That a definite reformist and revolutionary wing existed in the Party was obvious from the proceedings of the 1re Congrès National de la Parti Ouvrier Socialist Révolutionnaire, tenu à Saint Quentin, 2-3 Octobre, 1892 (Paris:1893), pp. 12-27, 31-34, 65-67, 74.
It was they who took the lead in the campaign to oust the politicians from the syndicats and to unify the trade unions on the economic terrain. Toward this end, the Allemanists, in 1891, purposed the convocation of a national congress of syndicats to adopt a common program for the workers. "Let us organize a national congress of syndicats from all of France," suggested the Allemanists who felt that the Bourse du Travail of Paris should sponsor this conclave.95 "It is necessary to create a large federation outside of all political parties," they continued, "for a political party cannot do on the economic terrain all that a syndicat can do."96 So optimistic were they over the prospects of united trade union action that they insisted that "once this is done, our efforts will be successful in only a little while."97 Throughout the next year, the Allemanists missed few opportunities to call the workers' attention to the need for syndicat unity.

Great obstacles confronted the Allemanists in their bid to unify the syndicats. As long as the socialists maintained their grip on the trade unions, working class unity was virtually impossible. To be sure, most of the workers were favorable to a national federation of syndicats, and several of the socialist schools were sympathetic

95 Le Parti Ouvrier, September 14-15, 1891
96 Annuaire de la..., p. 231.
97 Le Parti Ouvrier, September 14-15, 1891.
to the idea. But the Guesdists were openly hostile to the project, and they practically dominated the working class movement in the provinces. Pointing to the Fédération National des Syndicats which they controlled, the Marxists argued that a national syndicat organization already existed in France. For this reason, they were bitterly opposed to the Allemanists' plans to create what they considered to be a rival organization to the Fédération National des Syndicats.

Determined to assault the Guesdists' fortress, the Allemanists began to look for allies. On June 6, 1891, they launched a campaign to bring the anarchists, long separated from the syndicat movement, into the struggle against the socialist politicians.

We are surprised to see a prolonged antagonism between the two enfants terribles, that is, the anarchists and ourselves. For this antagonism is founded on nothing serious. We say to the anarchists: comrades, you were right to remain apart from us as long as a misunderstanding gave our Party to the Lérys and the Broussists. But today, we are no longer separated from you by any question of principle. You are the lost children of the proletarian army. Yet, your action will only be useful... if you rally with us on the same plan of action.98

During the next year, the Allemanists carried on a vigorous campaign to draw the anarchists to their side.

From the pages of Le Parti Ouvrier, the Allemanists minimized their differences with the anarchists. According to the Allemanists, it was only on the future society that the two disagreed, for they

98 Ibid., June 5-6, 1891.
were at one in their opposition to the politicians. To oust these opportunists from the labor movement, the Allemanists asked the anarchists to join with them in the trade unions. "We possess the instrument in the syndicat organizations," argued Le Parti Ouvrier. "It suffices to perfect it and place it in action while practicing the plebiscite on working class laws." According to the Allemanists, the anarchists would sooner or later be forced to give up their terroristic ways. "We have more than once insisted on the impossibility of achieving the revolution as a result of propaganda by the deed," commented Le Parti Ouvrier, "a method which is more smoke and noise than anything else." \(^{101}\)

While the Allemanists were mustering their troops for the attack, they suffered an ambush for the rear. The Bourse du Travail of Paris, long their base of operations, came under the fire of the Municipal Council. A tighter regulation of the Bourse was the Councillors' answer to the growing radicalism of this "foyer of revolutionary

\(^{99}\) Le Parti Ouvrier, September 18-19, 1891.

\(^{100}\) Ibid., April 5, 1892.

\(^{101}\) Ibid.

\(^{102}\) Franck, pp. 35-36. See also Charles Desplanques, "Le Compagnie contre la Bourse du Travail de Paris," Le Mouvement Socialiste No.159 (July 15, 1905), pp. 261-77.
On January 22, 1891, a dispute between the Municipal Council and the Bourse over the **Conseil Supérieur du Travail** led to an open encounter. The Commission of Labor insisted on appointing the working class members of this body instead of allowing the syndicats to have a voice in their selection. In this way, the Municipal Council hoped to prevent any subversive influences from creeping into the administration of the **Conseil**.

This act brought an immediate attack from the Allemanists and their followers at the Bourse. "The government has tried to channelize the movement to its own profit," charged the Allemanists. "Since it could not deter it, the government has established a council and appointed to it all the men devoted to the capitalist

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103 This phrase is used by Seilhac, *Syndicats Ouvriers, Fédérations...*, p. 265.

104 This was an advisory committee established in 1890 to collect information and study methods to alleviate the social problem in France. Composed of workers, employers, and functionnaires, this body was supposed to advise the government in the initiation of labor legislation. For a full scale discussion of this Conseil, see V. Griffuelhes, "Le Conseil Supérieur du Travail," _Le Mouvement Socialiste_ No. 129 (October 15, 1903), pp. 225-44.


106 Of the seventeen members of the Executive Committee of the Bourse, Bertrand, Lagarde, Larcher, Morceaux, Rossignol, Suzan, Bourderon, Thiebault, Rigol, and Astuef were Allemanists. The rest were Blanquists or Independents of a moderate stripe. The only identifiable Guesdist on the Executive Committee was Roussel. Compare the composition of the Executive Committee in _Bulletin Officiel de la..._, No. 303 (February 7, 1892) with the list of delegates to the *Ile Congrès National de la Parti Ouvrier Socialist Révolutionnaire, tenu à Saint Quentin, 2-9 Octobre, 1892* (Paris: 1893).
class." The left wing elements at the Bourse were strengthened by the workers' indignation over this incident. When, on May 22, 1892, a new and larger Bourse was opened on the rue Chateau d'Eau, the regulations were revised to give the Municipal Council more power than ever over its internal affairs. While the Allemanists jeered and the moderates applauded, Monsieur Sauton announced to the workers that "in your hands, the Bourse du Travail will become an instrument of social peace."  

IV

On February 7, 1892 delegates from eleven Bourses du Travail gathered at Saint Etienne. What emerged from their three day meeting was a new organization called the Fédération National des Bourses du Travail. According to its statutes, the Federation was to unify and obtain the workers' demands, to extend the range of the Bourses du Travail, and to unify and co-ordinate all the statistical data compiled by the adhering Bourses for the use of all.  

To administer

107 Seilhac, Syndicats Ouvriers, Fédérations..., p. 131.
108 Franck, p. 37.
109 Le Parti Ouvrier, March 23-24, 1892.
this new organization, a Comité Fédéral was established, consisting of one delegate from each member Bourse, while a General Secretary was to handle the daily business of the Federation. On all political matters, the Comité Fédéral was to assume an impartial attitude, and no political doctrine was to be introduced into this body. According to the principals of federalism adopted by the Federation, the sovereignty and independence of each Bourse was to be zealously preserved. Under no condition was the Comité Fédéral to impose its will on the members of the Federation.

From the Allemanists came the idea to federate the Bourses du Travail. To combat the Fédération National des Syndicats, the Allemanists, in 1891, took steps to set up a rival organization capable of drawing the trade unions away from this Guesdist fief. The great popularity and magnetism of the Bourses made them excellent bait, since a federation of Bourses would attract all those syndicats which looked to the Bourses for inspiration and guidance. In addition, the Allemanists knew full well that most of the Bourses were opposed to political interference in the trade unions. Finally, like the Allemanists, most of the Bourses were hostile to the government's efforts to regulate and direct their affairs. For these

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For the purpose of clarity, the exact French title of this body will be used.

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reasons, the Allemanists decided to use the Bourses du Travail in their efforts to rebuild the French labor movement.

To explore the possibility of union, the Allemanists at the Paris Bourse sent out circulars to the other Bourses du Travail in France. The replies which they received were encouraging, and they agitated for a constituent congress. The Bourse of Saint Etienne took the initiative and offered to sponsor a conclave on February 7, 1892. This news was greeted with alacrity by the Allemanists, who felt that "with this Federation..., the working class will enter a new phase."

The constituent Congress was a triumph for the Allemanists who, led by Bertrand and Chaput, managed to have their way on all the important issues. As they had wanted, the Comité Fédéral of the new Federation was to be located in Paris. This decision, unobtrusive as it appeared, placed the control of the Federation in the hands of the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire which controlled the Paris Bourse. As the Comité Fédéral sat in Paris, the affiliated

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115 According to Zévaès, the Allemanists pressed the Bourse of Saint Etienne into calling the congress because the town was free of Guesdist elements. Alexander Zévaès, Le Syndicalisme Contemporain (Paris: 1910), p. 122.
116 Le Parti Ouvrier, January 19-20, 1892.
117 Congrès de la Fédération des Bourses..., pp. 18-20.
118 Pelloutier, Histoire des..., p. 236.
Bourses had to select their representatives to this body from a list of Parisian militants drawn up and sent to the Bourses by the General Secretary. As it turned out, it was an easy matter for the General Secretary to suggest only those representatives of a certain political temperament to the uninformed provincials. During the 1890's, a few Blanquists and Guesdists managed to infiltrate the Comité Fédéral, but the Allemanists always had a majority on this body.

Moreover, the Allemanists persuaded the Bourses to take the offensive against the Guesdists. Despite the objections of some who did not want the new Organization to "hinder the work of the Fédération National des Syndicats," the Congress announced that

... around the Federation of Bourses the proletariat will occupy the first place in the struggle for the conquest of the future, since it will give an independent force. Soon, all the great industrial centers will have their Bourses du Travail. Around them, all the working class forces will form a single bloc, unified by common interests and cemented by solidarity.¹²⁰

What this motion amounted to was a formal declaration of war against the Guesdist-controlled Fédération National des Syndicats.

On February 8, 1892, the Congress of Saint Etienne came to an end. For those interested in working class unity, it was a job well done. The creation of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail, regardless of the Allemanists' motives, was a real step in this direction.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 23-36.
¹²⁰ Congrès de la Fédération des Bourses..., p. 24.
¹²¹ Paul Delesalle finds all the germs of revolutionary syndicalism in this meeting at Saint Etienne. See P. Delesalle, Les Bourses du Travail et la CFT (Paris: 1911), pp. 6-8.
To be sure, working class unity was far from a reality, for the politicians were still strongly entrenched in the trade unions. Nevertheless, the Congress of Saint Etienne signalled a new era for the workers, and even the socialists were ready to recognize it.

Writing about the Congress, Edouard Vaillant pointed out that...

up until the formation of the first Bourse du Travail, we were wandering in the middle of uncertainties and difficulties that resulted from false political conceptions... The political groups... provoked the formation of syndicates, hoping to use them for their own growth and dominance. Thus, they were themselves obstacles to the progress of corporate organizations. The corporate organizations appeared to be condemned at birth to a lamentable abortion when the Bourses du Travail came to create a milieu where, outside of all political interference and of all struggles among groups, they would be able to grow freely, forming the cadres of the working class army.¹²²

The Federation of Bourses offered a glaring contrast to the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats. The latter, which Fernand Pelloutier was to call "a machine of war placed at the service of the Parti Ouvrier Français," was without life or vitality.¹²³

Preoccupied with political matters, its National Council had neither the will nor the desire to bring the Organization to the syndicates. The commission of propaganda and the committee of statistics never really functioned, and even the National Council met infrequently. What was most lacking in the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats was co-ordination among its member syndicates. Few regional or local

¹²² Le Parti Socialiste, February 19-25, 1893.
councils existed to minister to the needs of the local workers. Spread over too large an area and neglectful of all but political duties, those that did exist were ineffective and often superfluous. According to one observer, the Fédération National des Syndicats created the "spectacle of a weak and decrepit central power which pretended to administer a nation without the aid of intermediary assemblies."

Such a feeble organization was dwarfed by the efficient, smoothly functioning Association of Bourses which issued from the Congress of Saint Etienne. By the next year, 1893, the Fédération des Bourses du Travail had grown to include twenty-two Bourses, all grouping the syndicats of a locality in a common assault on poverty and social abuse. The Comité Fédéral of the Bourses performed a great service in compiling statistics, dispatching information, and in ministering to the economic and professional needs of its members. Unlike the National Council of the Fédération National des Syndicats, the Comité Fédéral remained outside of politics, refusing to concern itself with political problems and activities. Although its members were often of different political opinions, the Comité Fédéral was seldom disrupted by political quarrels.

The Fédération des Bourses du Travail and the Fédération National des Syndicats would soon meet in a struggle for the French labor

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125 Pelloutier, Histoire des..., p. 110.
movement. The former represented the syndicat and professional aims of the workers, while the other aspired only to lead the proletariat to political victory. In some respects, a conflict was inevitable. Between the two methods of action, there was an antagonism that had its roots deep in the history of the labor movement. According to one historian, "two organizations and two conceptions of the working class movement are face to face. There is no reconciliation possible between the two theses which confront each other." A final judgment was made by Léon de Seilhac, long a close student of French labor affairs, when he said that the disappearance of the Fédération National des Syndicats "only depended upon the birth of a new organization which, instead of trying to shape the syndicats to its own image and principles, fashioned itself to the image of the syndicats." In the Fédération des Bourses du Travail, a new organization was present. A leader was found in Fernand Pelloutier.

127 Seilhac, Syndicats Ouvriers, Fédérations..., p. 265.
In the West of France, along the winding valley of the Loire, the countryside appears today much as it did in the late nineteenth century. Passing through the numerous towns and villages that dot the narrow, twisting road from Paris to Saint Nazaire, the traveller cannot help but be impressed by the charm and beauty of this fertile valley. What impresses him most is the sense of dignity that surrounds the daily tasks of the people. Early each morning, the villagers start off for the fields or the shop, there to spend the day in the pursuit of their daily needs. Not listlessly or with faltering step, but with joy, even jocularity they walk, shouting out the morning's greeting to their neighbors. In this section of France, where the march of the machine has not yet denatured man or his environment, human labor still has the dignity which elevates instead of degrading man. It was in this proud and tradition-filled region of France that Fernand Pelloutier grew to manhood.

Born in Paris on the first of October, 1867, Pelloutier came from a bourgeois family. His father, a fonctionnaire for the state, sought to educate his two sons, Fernand and Maurice, according to the usual middle class standards, and both boys were sent to a
grammar school directed by the brothers of the Christian Doctrine. When Monsieur Pelloutier was transferred to Saint Nazaire in 1879, both Fernand and Maurice were still in their boyhood. At Saint Nazaire, this small town near the Loire valley, the formative years of Fernand's life began.¹

His family had a long and illustrious lineage, although rarely from the point of view of established authority. His earliest known ancestors had been Protestants who had had to flee France to escape persecution for their faith. While settled in Germany, one of the family, a certain Simon Pelloutier, had risen to some prominence in the Lutheran church in the eighteenth century. When Louis XV relaxed the decrees against Protestants, the Pellouters returned to their native France, settling at Nantes, then a tiny city located on the banks of the Loire. By the Napoleonic era, the Pellouters were a respectable bourgeois family, discharging their duties as petits fonctionnaires with pride and regularity.² Since they had reconverted to Catholicism, the days of their religious troubles were over. Their political troubles were to begin.

During the reign of Louis Philippe, legitimists and republicans were numerous at Nantes, and both the followers of the house of Bourbon and the harbingers of the republican mystique had supporters

² Ibid., pp. 1-10.
in the Pelloutier family. The republican member of the household was Leonce Pelloutier who took an active part in the radical agitation during the reign of Louis Philippe. In 1833 he helped to organize at Nantes a section of the Société des Droits de l'Homme, a clandestine republican group. The friend of Raspail and the legendary Blanqui, Leonce was a journalist and writer of some repute. He collaborated on many republican journals and revues, and founded himself in 1842, the Patriote Vendéen, and in 1870, Progrès des Deux-Sèvres et de la Vendée. The last of these two journals was of an extremely republican nature. Its purpose was to "defend with the energy of a profound conviction... all the political liberties, for they are rock bottom and form the only unshakable base of the one and indivisible republic." This journal, to which Jules Guesde himself contributed an article in January of 1871, did not have a long life, but the career of Leonce was not at an end. Almost seventy years old, this still enthusiastic militant played a large part in the election of A. Laissant, a professed republican, to parliament in 1875. The paternal grandfather of Fernand Pelloutier died in 1879, the victim of a stroke which overcame him while he was engaged in one of this many activities.

The young Fernand inherited the combative instincts and critical temperament of his ancestors, and his rebellious nature was not long

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3 Quoted in ibid., p. 15.
4 Ibid., p. 16.
in manifesting itself. Sent with his brother Maurice to the Seminary at Guérande, in the neighborhood of Saint Nazaire, Fernand reacted violently against the severe discipline and arduous routine imposed on the students by the austere friars. A capricious student, passing from the top to the bottom of his class with equal ease, Pelloutier was indifferent to the dry scholasticism jammed into the notebooks of the escoliers at Guérande. Instead, he preferred the wisdom of the poets, the insights found in a long line of litterateurs from the Provençal poets to Victor Hugo. A gifted writer even then, he learned his Greek and Latin not to recite but to compose. Novels and poetry he read voraciously, leaving aside the dull exercises in logic and rhetoric that were required of him. Because of these characteristics, he was often in trouble with the superior at the college.\(^5\)

The rebellious Pelloutier hated the Seminary at Guérande, just as he was always to hate tyrannical authority. The food poor, the scholastic and religious exercises, the harsh and routinized school all enflamed his resentment against restraint and regulation. Twice he tried to flee the Seminary; both times, under pressure from his family, he returned. In 1882, Pelloutier found an outlet for his literary instinct. It took the form of an anticlerical novel which he wrote in collaboration with one of his classmates. When this youthful literary venture was discovered, the Superior of the Seminary

decided to expel the troublesome Fernand. In 1882 he returned to Saint Nazaire with his brother Maurice.6

At bottom, Pelloutier had ample reason to hate the school at Guérande. The crude and austere living conditions at the Seminary did immeasurable harm to his delicate health. While enrolled at Guérande, he contracted the horrible disease which was to bring him to an early death. Surprisingly enough, however, the mature man looked with respect and admiration on the training he received at this school. Later in his life, he was to speak with compassion and nostalgia for the years which he spent in study and preparation at Guérande. For, as the boy changed into the man, his youthful intoxication and infatuation for unfettered freedom was tempered with a resolute will and personal discipline that was forged in the heat of the social struggle. No longer the impetuous and indiscriminate rebel, he realized that unrestrained liberty and individualism often ended in a sterile egotism. Only by rigorous training and discipline could man outgrow the claims of personal license and share in the mission of reconstructing society according to justice and equality. Lessons learned in the frustrations and near futilities of the labor movement led him to re-evaluate the methods employed by the harsh disciplinarians of Guérande.

Nor was the mature Pelloutier ever an anticlerical in the narrow sense of the word. If he struggled to free the schools and the state

from the influence of Catholicism, it was because he felt that the Church was a power-seeking institution, which interfered with the efforts of man to find truth and to construct a new and just society. Christianity as an institution, not as a belief or way of life, was the object of his attack. Never would he deny the right of one to think or believe according to his personal conviction. If he did not embrace the tenets of Catholicism himself, Pelloutier refused to impose his own creed on others. Those who did, he argued, were as guilty of fanaticism and intolerance as were the Catholics. He felt that the duty of all unbelievers was to "listen religiously" to all opposing views and to "protect them against all attempts at obstruction." 7

Returning to Saint Nazaire in 1882, the Pelloutier brothers enrolled in the local college of Saint Nazaire in the fall. There, the youthful Fernand, only fifteen years of age, turned to the study of the classics. But his critical nature again made him an erratic scholar. Never one to kneel before revered formulas and established interpretation, Pelloutier continued to pepper his literary essays and historical reports with personal observations and critical comments. His chief asset was his remarkable memory, a gift which was to serve him all his life in his capacity as the leader of the Bourses du Travail. In spite of his originality and critical faculty, Pelloutier was never considered one of the brighter students at the college. 8

7 Maurice Pelloutier, pp. 19-20.
8 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
It was during his years at the college of Saint Nazaire that Pelloutier made his first ventures into journalism. With a number of fellow students, he directed a small newspaper entitled *L'Echo du College*. His penchant for literature found an outlet in this petite feuille, where he spent his time writing literary essays and popular stories. While editing the college paper, he devoted himself extensively to scholarship. Though weakened by progressive tuberculosis, Pelloutier worked almost incessantly at his education. The regular curriculum of the school he ignored, as he delved ever more deeply into the literary figures and social critics of the past. What was significant about this period of Pelloutier's life was that he was acquiring a discipline of himself and a knowledge of his materials. He was learning that artistry of pen and nobility of thought demanded mastery of oneself. At the desk of *L'Echo du Collège* or in the school library, Pelloutier was developing the stature of future greatness.

Impatient to try his hand at journalism, Pelloutier left the college of Saint Nazaire in the spring of 1885. He landed a job on the *Démocratie de l'Ouest*, a tri-weekly journal founded at Saint Nazaire by Eugene Couronne, a former printer. Pelloutier had shown little interest in politics up until now. His main interest lay in the field of literature and creative writing. To be sure, the influence of his grandfather, and father had steered him in the general direction of republicanism, but the political opinions of the

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young journalist who turned out literary articles for the Démocratie de l'Ouest were far from coherent and mature. If anticlericalism was the main tenet of the republican program at Saint Nazaire, Pelloutier added his own to the growing criticism of the Church. 10

Nevertheless, a growing social awareness marked his first year on the Démocratie de l'Ouest. Himself the victim of a painful disease, Pelloutier was never immune to cruelty and injustice. In an article on June 17, 1886 he defended a condemned murdered who, according to his account, had been convicted without sufficient evidence by a local court. The incensed Fernand avowed that this "draconian decision will soon be overthrown by our legislature."11

When the socialist-republican, Oliver Pain, was assassinated by an Englishman, Pelloutier's pen burned out a bitter indictment of the incident. In a plea somewhat tainted with chauvinism, he asked the Parliament to avenge the murder. "Our duty to everyone... is to seek revenge," he wrote. "To the republicans because he [Pain] struggled for social emancipation, to all the other parties—Bonapartists, conservatives, and opportunists—because he was a Frenchman murdered by an Englishman."12 In these years, Pelloutier, like all sincere republicans, was mesmerized by the mystique. All injustice would

10 Démocratie de l'Ouest No. 69, June 10, 1885.
11 Ibid., No. 72, June 17, 1885.
12 Ibid., No. 78, July 1, 1885.
be abolished and all social problems would be solved as soon as the people, the real sovereign of the nation, expressed their will through the national assembly.

Even then he had doubts. It was 1885; the Republic had been in existence for fifteen years. So far, the only conspicuous results of the Opportunists' reign was the fading political power of the Church and a number of reforms in the education system. Where was the answer to the growing social problem which was slowly burning its ugly scar on the face of his beloved countryside? It occurred to Pelloutier that republican government was not enough. He was aware of the growing misery of the workers and small artesans, victimized by the onslaught of the machine and the patron. At times, the disillusioned Pelloutier, in a flash of insight, saw through the sham of an Opportunist-controlled democracy, and the shortcomings of the Third Republic became clear to him. The hard-hitting young journalist shook the very foundation of representative government when he bitterly denounced the political \textit{plus} for their treachery. "Those, who have appeared to be worthy of the confidence of the electorate, often cheat the people," he wrote on July 5, 1885. "To dupe his mandate by hurling the program which he has accepted to the ground is a game to the deputies."\textsuperscript{13} All this would be changed if the imperative mandate were adopted, he reasoned. But "what is there of honesty in a deputy... and which of them will accept this?"\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, No. 80, July 5, 1885.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}
By the middle of 1885, Pelloutier, weak of body but strong of mind, was wavering between republicanism and disillusionment. Socialism had scarcely penetrated the Loire valley. Only then was the industrial development of France starting to create at Nantes and Saint Nazaire the social antagonisms which would soon cross the entire social fabric of the nation. On the other hand, the republican forces were strong in the West of France. Perhaps a radical republicanism, with a strong social content, was the only practical solution to be found. At any rate, it appeared this way to Pelloutier. In the elections of 1885, the intense young journalist campaigned actively for the Republicans.

It was during this period of his career that he first made the acquaintance of Aristide Briand, chairman of the Republican electoral committee and rising young lawyer at Saint Nazaire. Between the two, a firm friendship was formed that was to last, with varying degrees of intensity, throughout the life of Pelloutier. In unflattering terms, the biographer of Briand describes Pelloutier in the fall of 1885.

Pelloutier was a thin boy with dark eyes and a yellow complexion, who had a sickly appearance. His head was enormous, monstrous, and appeared too heavy for his emaciated shoulders... All the bitterness that was in him came out in violence and hate which he quickly changed into utopian formulas and humanitarian dreams. The fervor by which he tried to overthrow everything... appeared to be the only link which he had with the world.16

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15 Maurice Pelloutier, p. 21.

In sharp contrast to this somewhat distorted picture drawn of the suffering, idealistic Fernand stood the handsome Aristide. Gay, animated, a lover of sensual pleasures, Briand had all the gifts to which Pelloutier could never even aspire. Never one to feel, as did Pelloutier, the pangs of personal loneliness or social injustice, Briand nevertheless was drawn by some unexplained attraction to the austere Fernand.  

Pelloutier exerted a great deal of influence on the gifted Briand. The vague socialist leanings of the master were shared with the pupil. Under the tutelege of Pelloutier, Briand developed a taste for radical ideas, although only insofar as they did not hinder his promising career did he accept them. Together, the two friends led a vigorous campaign in the election of 1885 for the Radical Republicans. In the pages of the *Démocratie de l'Ouest*, Briand and Pelloutier heckled the political bigwigs of their home town, heaping on monarchist and opportunist alike their ridicule and scorn.  

When the votes were counted, the reactionaries had scored a mild victory. According to Pelloutier, the Republican defeat was due to the intrigues of the local priesthood. "It is... the priests who have given the partial victory to the reactionaries," he claimed. "They have had all their flock vote en masse for the emasculated flag of legitimacy." In spite of the poor showing of the Radicals and

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17 Ibid., I, 52-53. "One cannot discern the sentiments which united these two men. But one can see how admirably they complemented each other." Suarez, I, 52.  
18 Ibid.  
19 *Démocratie de l'Ouest* No. 120, October 11, 1885.
Moderate Republicans, Pelloutier felt that real gains could be forthcoming from the new parliament. However, only an union of all the republican forces in the assembly, including the extreme left, would eliminate the power of the conservatives and produce a real reform. "The extreme leftist are already animated by a great spirit of conciliation," he wrote, "and they will make many concessions which will help in the formation of a compact mass of republicans... who will defy... the reactionaries." At the age of eighteen, Pelloutier, in the interest of social reform, was already pointing out the need for unity among all the republican politicians, including even the socialists.

At the end of the campaign, Pelloutier was exhausted. His growing flirtation with socialist ideas made him restless in the provincial town of Saint Nazaire. He needed stimulation, challenge, and a chance to debate and talk with others of like mind and inclination. If he were at Paris, he thought, life would be "free, easy, and intelligent." Eager to try his hand in the "modern Babylon," he wrote to A. Laisant, deputy from Nantes and director of La République Radicale at Paris, asking him for aid in finding a position in the capital. The reply of Laisant, friend of his grandfather, was so discouraging, however, that Pelloutier gave up the idea.

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20 Ibid., No. 125, October 23, 1885.
21 Maurice Pelloutier, p. 22.
22 The reply of Laisant to Pelloutier is reprinted in Maurice Pelloutier, pp. 24-25.
He returned with renewed zest to his studies. His reading included virtually everything. Philosophy, sociology, political theory, were a part of his daily activities as was all the rich and varied heritage of French literature from the caustic Voltaire to the mystical Chateaubriand. What emerged from this two year period of preparation and research was a broader and more sophisticated Pelloutier and a very sick boy of twenty-one. Suffering from tuberculosis, Pelloutier poured out his sensitivity to all human grievances in a vicarious association with the social critics of his time. The lupus that had appeared by this time on his face continued to disfigure his features. In 1887 Pelloutier was ordered by his doctor to Sautron, very close to the sea, for complete rest and relaxation.23

At Sautron, Pelloutier's health slowly returned. For five months, the young radical did nothing but bath in the sun and stroll the surrounding countryside. The quiet beauty of his retreat refreshed Pelloutier, who, from his garden, looked out over a landscape teeming with the activities of the local workers. His faith in man's ability to construct a rich and meaningful life out of the chaos of his existence was reinforced by the order and serenity that he found at Sautron. Enriched in spirit and renewed in hope, he returned to Saint Nazaire with the first fall of the Autumn leaves.24

In September of 1889, Pelloutier's father, a Radical Republican by political faith, founded a journal, L'Quest Républicain, at Saint

13 Ibid., p. 25.

14 The beauty of Sautron is recaptured in the charming prose of Maurice, the poet of the family. See Maurice Pelloutier, pp. 25-28.
Nazaire. The city was in turmoil; the elections of 1889 were approaching and the local groups were preparing for the struggle. The choice of the moderate Republicans for the Chamber was Fidele Simon. An outgoing deputy who had inclined toward boulangisme, the slippery Simon found a backer in the Démocratie de l'Ouest, now in the control of the Opportunists. Monsieur Maillard, mayor of Croisic, was the candidate of the reactionaires who brought the Courrier de Saint Nazaire to his support. L'Ouest Républicain, controlled by the suspect Pelloutier family, undertook the candidacy of Aristide Briand. To the reinvigorated Fernand was given the job of directing the campaign of his friend. With his customary fervor, Pelloutier, despite the delicacy of his health, threw himself into the fray. 25

Only after a great deal of hesitation had the status-conscious Briand accepted the support of L'Ouest Républicain. Too close an association with such a journal, tainted with the increasingly radical ideas of Pelloutier, threatened to push Briand from the ranks of respectability at Saint Nazaire. 26 In 1888 he had been elected to the Municipal Council, where he had quickly shed all traces of the radicalism he had learned from Pelloutier. 27 In fact, Briand had become so responsive to the political winds by April of 1888

25 Ibid., pp. 29-32.
26 Suarez, II, 67.
27 Ibid., II, 56.
that he had endorsed Boulanger whose supporters at Saint Nazaire were among the most important men in the town. A clipping in one of the local papers in that month reported Briand as "explaining... the aspirations of the Radical party and the hopes that all sincere Republicans placed in Boulanger..." It was only with a great deal of reluctance that the calculating Briand would consider an alliance with the misfit Fernand, but ambition had triumphed over discretion. When he had discovered that the Démocratie de l'Ouest was throwing its weight behind Simon, Briand had turned to Pelloutier, whose journal was now dedicated to Briand's political success.

Running on a vague program of constitutional revision and social reform, Briand heckled his older, well established rivals. The boulangist background of the moderate Simon came in for special criticism on the part of Briand and Pelloutier. "Boulangisme is born of the distaste of the electors for the imprudent, if not criminal, acts of the moderate party," charged Pelloutier who promised the people that Briand would "undertake politics that offer more to the electors than mere promises." His caustic denunciation of Simon and Maillard as treacherous politicians stirred up all the local passions and hatreds of Saint Nazaire. Against the twosome of Briand

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28 Démocratie de l'Ouest, April 18, 1888.
29 Suarez, II, 67.
30 L'Ouest Républicain, No. 1, September 12, 1889.
and Pelloutier stood almost all the vested interests of the town. As the campaign progressed, Pelloutier sensed certain defeat, so powerful were the forces of their antagonists. "Whatever the outcome of the struggle," he was to say, "we will have the consolation of knowing that we have worked for the health of the Republic."  

Pelloutier's intuition proved correct. By a sizeable majority, Maillard was elected to the Chamber. But the hatreds aroused by the campaign did not end so quickly. An exchange of insults between Pelloutier and Gaborit, director of the Démocratie de l'Ouest, led to a personal encounter between the two at the Grand Cafe at Saint Nazaire. As the incensed Fernand knocked Gaborit into a flower bowl, brother Maurice made short work of Gaborit's friend, Maillard, with a cane. As he tried to halt the fiasco, the garçon of the Cafe was threatened by an elated Fernand. In the exchange of blows which followed, Pelloutier, struck several times by the garçon, lost his glasses. Staggering blindly, he managed to find the street where the crowd had gathered to cheer the blind Goliath. The next day, Pelloutier's father, aroused by the insults of the Démocratie de l'Ouest, challenged Gaborit to a duel. Gaborit retorted that the elder Pelloutier was too old, and Briand took up the challenge. An encounter followed. Briand wounded Gaborit, drawing the only real blood in a campaign that had stirred Saint Nazaire to its

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Ibid., No. 3, September 17, 1889.
roots, so explosive had been the political criticism of *L'Ouest Républicain.*

Some three years before the election of 1889, Pelloutier, still under the sweet smelling intoxicant of the République, had written that "the time of uprisings is over. The vote must replace the bullet and reforms must be made peacefully. Let us elect men of progress, good and sincere republicans, and the social problem will be solved." As the bitter campaign of 1889 came to a close, however, Pelloutier appeared to be completely disillusioned with democratic political procedures. The treachery and dishonesty that surrounded a political campaign were destructive to his youthful idealism. They were too much for Pelloutier, these deliberate attempts to mislead and confuse the public mind, these appeals to local prejudices and hatreds, these efforts on the part of the men with money and power to obscure and ignore the real issues and problems. As a result of the lessons learned in this campaign, Pelloutier, always the chercheur, moved a step beyond republicanism. He now turned to inspect more critically than ever the capacity of the democratic state to solve the ills of society.

By December of 1889, Pelloutier was evolving into what would be his lifetime political stance. If he was not yet a socialist, he was certainly moving in that direction. Already, however, he believed

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32 This episode is reported in *L'Ouest Républicain,* No. 96, January 5, 1890; No. 97, January 8, 1890.

33 *Démocratie de L'Ouest,* No. 50, April 28, 1886.

34 Maurice Pelloutier, p. 33.
that the answer to the social problem did not always end with an appeal to the state. No longer was he thinking as a republican when he wrote that "it is necessary... to provide for the needs of the workers who are overcome by age and fatigue. It is the working class itself... that must seek and find the way to eliminate misery.... They alone really know their needs, resources, and the method of achieving this long desired end." 35

In January of 1890, Pelloutier returned to Sautron. Broken in strength by the recent campaign, he was again seriously ill. What he heard about a certain doctor at Nantes, he left for that town. The diagnosis of that specialist confirmed Pelloutier's fears. He was confined, as a matter of life or death, to at least two years of complete rest and repose. 36

For fifteen months, the afflicted journalist remained at his home in Saint Nazaire. The only activity which he undertook during this period was the writing of an occasional article for the Figaro or the Phare de la Loire. Most of his time was spent in reading and studying. As he perused the works of Proudhon and Marx, his former leaning toward socialism evolved into outright acceptance. The first gave him penetrating insights into the moral capacities of the workers, while, from the second, he received invaluable lessons in the laws of social development. On July 15, 1891, Pelloutier left

35 L'Ouest Républicain No. 84, December 2, 1889.
36 Maurice Pelloutier, pp. 33-34.
Saint Nazaire for Forge Neuve, near Chateaubriant. In this secluded retreat, where he remained for the next six months he forged Marx and Proudhon into a personal synthesis which was to guide him throughout the rest of his life. It was also during his stay at Forge Neuve that Pelloutier first meditated upon the General Strike.

II

At certain crucial moments in human history, ideas are discovered or formulated out of human need and nothing else. For the moment, the truth or falsity of such notions are of no importance. What is important, however, is that they are accepted and acted upon by a certain number of men who find in them solutions to their particular plight. In this sense, the idea itself, apart from the truth or falsity of its premises, has a certain voice in the determination of history. A myth is the term which one writer has used to describe one notion of this type which was to play such a singular role in the history of the French labor movement. In the years after 1890, the events in the labor world were in large part determined by the myth of the General Strike.

It is impossible to discover when the idea of a General Strike, that is the simultaneous strike of all the working class of a nation

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or a continent, first appeared in European history. Some waiters in extreme flights of fancy, have even traced it as far back as the retreat of the Roman people to the mountain of Aventin. The origins of the idea are not really very important. As far as the French labor movement is concerned, the notion of the General Strike first made real headway among the libertarian circles of the First International.

The large role that the anarchists played in the pre-Commune trade union movement led them to formulate a revolutionary weapon which had no connection with the conquest of public powers. As the libertarians retreated from politics, they turned to the syndicats for a spirit and a method. So it was that the notion of the General Strike was formulated as a "logical result of the practice of partial strikes." In contrast to the political seizure of the state envisioned by the Marxists, the General strike was viewed as a purely economic method of bringing down capitalist society. A straightforward syndicat tactic, needing nothing but a strong, coordinated working class movement, the General Strike had the double advantage of being both non-political and relatively simple. To be sure, the idea was never clarified or elaborated. To those of the libertarians who did think through the idea, however, the


General strike appeared to be a sure and reliable method to usher in the new society.\textsuperscript{40}

With the breakup of the First International, the idea died away. However, in the middle 1880's the notion again spread through the working class world. Perhaps the workers' traditions, passed by pen and mouth, never lost sight of the concept. Or, perhaps it is true that "a generation elaborates new ideas. Then, under the pressure of the bourgeois persecution..., they fade from memory... and are never transmitted to the younger generation. The latter, ignorant of the work accomplished, is forced to begin again the elaboration of forgotten ideas."\textsuperscript{41} At any rate, the reviving French trade unions in the 1880's felt strong enough to resurrect or rediscover the notion of the General Strike. By 1890 few were the working class meetings in which the idea did not find a large number of supporters.

To Joseph Tortelier, an anarchist, must go the credit of actively propagating the General Strike for the first time in the 1880's. Small and of powerful stature, Tortelier spoke in a hoarse voice which had few inspirational qualities.\textsuperscript{42} Yet, the life of this man, whose crude appearance and dress gave him access to all the working class milieux, was dedicated to the realization of the General Strike.


All over the nation he travelled, speaking in public reunions or on the field of a strike on the virtues of this idea. In the archives of the Paris police, there is a revealing document on Tortelier who "had only one goal—to organize the General Strike. To spread the idea in the provinces..., he travels perpetually. There is not one strike where he does not go to propagate this idea, not one public reunion where... he does not defend it with all his energy."

His efforts, along with those of other militants, had quick results. At the Bordeaux Congress of the Guesdist-controlled Fédération Nationale des Syndicats in 1888, the question of the General Strike was placed on the order of the day of a trade union meeting for the first time. During the course of the discussion, it was clear that the workers' opinions on this issue were varied. To be sure, most of them accepted this new idea, but a large number of them did not see it as the revolutionary instrument envisioned by Tortelier. Instead, they regarded it as a method by which they could force the patrons to satisfy their immediate grievances.

"Local strikes," proclaimed Boulé, a Parisian worker, "must only be considered as skirmishes destined to accustom the workers to the General Strike. This alone can give real satisfaction to the workers." Others praised the idea, but felt that the proletariat

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43 Quoted in Maiton, p. 270.

44 For a general summary of this congress, see Leon Blum, Les Congrès Ouvriers et les Socialists Français (2 vols.; Paris: 1901), II, 109-112.

The general consensus of opinion, however, was that the notion should be studied further, since almost all of the delegates felt that the General Strike should only be called after intensive study and preparation. Only a few were openly hostile to the project, mostly from the fear that it would easily be "stifled by the government." In view of the reformist sentiment at the meeting, the final resolution was somewhat surprising. For the congressistes stated categorically that "only the General Strike, that is, the complete cessation of all work or the revolution, can entrain the workers toward their emancipation." To state that the General Strike was the only method to achieve the revolution was one of the most important decisions taken by the workers since 1879 when they had accepted the principles of socialism at the Congress of Marseilles. For what the endorsement of the General Strike amounted to was a complete reversal of the established Marxist line. Had not the Marxist group which directed the Federation always preached that the revolution would come about by a political coup d'État? Nevertheless, it is not difficult to explain this anti-Guesdist move on the part of the syndicats or, for that matter, the clearly revolutionary statement of the General Strike by a large

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16 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
17 Ibid., p. 10.
number of reformist syndiques. To the General Strike rallied all those dissident socialists who were opposed to the influence of the politicians in the syndicats. In this purely trade union weapon, they found an alternative to the socialists' mastery of the political techniques. Without the notion of the General Strike, syndicalism would have remained for a long time localized and ineffective, capable perhaps of achieving some reform but never of bringing down the state. With it, the trade unions had a tactic and method of their own, every bit as powerful, so they thought, as the methods utilized by the political minded socialists. So it was that around the General Strike rallied revolutionary and reformist alike. The former saw it as the surest means to overthrow the bourgeois state; the latter as an instrument of reform. Regardless of their interpretation of it, both branches of the working class at Bordeaux were at one in their affirmation of the General Strike. For what they were really doing was announcing the strength of an independent syndicat movement to the world.

The spirit of political neutrality displayed by the Congress of Bordeaux was at first ignored by the confident Guesdists. But the idea of the General Strike was making real headway in the ranks of the proletariat. Certainly not all of the anarchists shared

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The radically revolutionary, Martino of Marseilles, and the moderate, Jourde of Bordeaux, were both, for example, partisans of the General Strike. See Je Congres National... Report of the..., pp. 9-11.
Torteliers enthusiasm for this project, nor was much heard of the General Strike in the divided working class districts of Paris where the Possibilists were in control. Of all the socialist groups in 1888, only the blanquists were willing to consider the merits of this idea. Nevertheless, the notion of the General Strike was growing by leaps and bounds in Paris and the provinces. On a visit to London, even the doctrinaire Lafargue showed traces of its influence. "Paul spoke very well, although with a slight indication of the universal strike dream, whose nonsense Guesde has retained from his anarchist days," reported Engels to Laura Lafargue on the speech her husband made in London. With these words, Engels signalled the fact that the General Strike was contagious enough to infect even the ruling circle of the Parti Ouvrier Français.

In 1890 the Guesdists held their first national congress since 1884. To Lille, the site of the meeting, came all the top brass of the Parti Ouvrier Français, ready to tighten their discipline and to choke off all deviations from the Marxist line. Deviationists were plentiful among the Guesdists in 1890, so much so that Lafargue could write that "we are disorganized, without real ties among us."
Not only did the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats show signs of bolting Marxist orthodoxy, but local groups all over the nation were chafing under the rigidity of the Marxist dogma. To soothe the sore-spots in their organization, the Guesdists assembled at Lille in October of 1890. On the order of the day loomed the General Strike, this syndicat instrument which was fast becoming the symbol of working class independence. At Lille, the Guesdists would be forced to announce their position on the General Strike. Upon their action would depend a great deal of the future history of French syndicalism.

From the Congress emerged a statement on the General Strike that was a complete compromise in every respect. Reluctant to antagonize the syndicats, the Guesdists labelled the idea as "premature" but did not outlaw it completely. They took the position that "the General Strike, that is the concerted and simultaneous refusal to work by all the workers of the various professions... requires a state... of social organization which the proletariat has not yet achieved." But a general strike of one profession, that of the miners for example, was capable of immediate enactment. Since the miners "had become the champions of all the proletariat, claiming for all the workers the eight-hour day," their strike would arouse the sympathy and win the support of the entire working class.

53 8e Congrès National du Parti Ouvrier Français, tenu à Lille, 11 et 12 Octobre, 1890 (Lille: 1890), p. 22.
54 Ibid. 55 Ibid., p. 23.
By playing down the possibility of a real General Strike and offering the syndicats this concession, the Guesdists hoped to end the subject of the General Strike once and for all. After issuing this statement, the Marxists left for the neighboring town of Calais, where the Fourth Congress of the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats was to open several days later.

"Brousse, Malon, and company have sought to make the syndicats believe... that the congress of Calais was Marxist. Because of this, I did not go," reported Paul Lafargue in October of 1890. Nor did Guesde, Baudin, Ferroul, and Thrivier put in an appearance at this supposedly trade union congress. Nonetheless, it was obvious that the conclave at Calais was controlled by the Guesdists. The roster included the same delegates who were present at Lille and the order of the day was identical to that of the Marxist congress. In fact, so thoroughly did the Guesdists dominate this meeting that one writer has stated that it produced "a fusion and even the confusion." The Marxists had learned well the lesson of Bordeaux. From now on, they would take every measure to subordinate the syndicats to the Parti Ouvrier Français. As the syndicats showed signs of moving

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56 Lafargue to Engels, October 23, 1890 in Bottigelli, II, 424.

57 Thrivier was not a Guesdist but he worked very closely with the Parti Ouvrier Français.

58 Blum, II, 126.
away from the fold, the Guesdistists fully intended to tighten the control over the syndicat adherents of their party.

The issue of the General Strike was not included on the agenda at Calais. In fact, so firmly had the Marxists placed their hands on the Congress that it amounted to little more than a meeting of a fanclub for the leaders of the party. The sessions were taken up by long speeches extolling the work and ideas of Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue. Nevertheless, the socialists could not completely extinguish the independent spirit of many of the syndicat representatives at the meeting. One delegate, Silibot of Iyon, "protested against the intrusion of politicians in the heart of the corporate congresses and gave as an example the very prosperous syndicats of Iyon...which had the sagacity to ban politics from the labor movement." Such syndiques as Beguin and Durousset charged the Congress to organize the General Strike because it was "the only practical agent given to the proletariat to achieve its emancipation." Even the politically-minded Roussel adopted this idea. His days of the Bourse du Travail of Paris led him to believe that the revolution could really be accomplished by a general uprising of the syndicats.

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60 Ibid., p. 29. 61 Ibid., p. 48. 62 Ibid., p. 17.
But the strength of the Marxists was too great. In a final resolution, the delegates ignored the General Strike, pledging their support to a greve generalise of the miners alone. 63

By the end of 1890, the Guesdists' attitude toward the General Strike was becoming clear. They were willing to accept this weapon but only insofar as it did not conflict with established Marxist doctrine. As a method of reform or agitation, it was worthy of consideration. Viewed as a real revolutionary tactic, however, it was relegated to the status of a myth. The reasons for the Marxists' behavior are not hard to discover. To acknowledge the possibility of a revolution via the General Strike would not only be a blow to revered formulae but it would also do away with the need for political leadership of the syndicats. Never ones for innovation or shifts in tactic, the Guesdists did not foresee the possibility of building a new socialist revolutionary program around the General Strike. Instead, they reaffirmed their faith in the necessity of conquering the public authorities.

To the Allemannists must go the credit for incorporating the General Strike into a socialist program for the first time. 64 On the morrow of their break with the Possibilists, the trade union elements in the new Party adopted the General Strike as an essential part of their credo. That many of them saw in it an excellent means

63 Blum, II, 127.

to win the revolutionary workers away from the politicians was obvious. For the reformists in the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire, the project was envisioned as a weapon to pressure the state and the employers into satisfying the grievances of the workers. Both wings of the Allemanists, however, were quick to realize that once the syndicats had a tactical method of their own, they would no longer have to look to the politicians for guidance and leadership.

When the General Strike was discussed at the first congress of the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire at Paris in 1891, the two wings of the Party managed to draft a resolution on this instrument that was acceptable to both of them. To be sure, the commission designated to draw up the report of the Allemanists on the General Strike was controlled by those members of the Party who were essentially political in outlook. Emphasizing the need to continue the electoral struggle, the Commission "rallied to the General Strike which is a powerful method of action. But it has subordinated the acceptance of this principle to the decision... of the workers to group themselves solidly throughout France...." For "to succeed, the General Strike must be based on syndicat unity. It is to the constitution of syndicats to which we must direct all our immediate efforts."

67 Ibid., pp. 71-72.
This report, stressing political action and playing down the General Strike, was immediately attacked from the floor. Some of the Allemanists insisted that "if the General Strike is able to end... the struggle of classes... and to achieve the revolution, let us concentrate all our efforts on it."68 Others, also of trade unionist sympathies, reported that the workers looked to the General Strike as an instrument of reform.69 What was clear from this discussion was that the revolutionary and reformist trade unionists alike in the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire joined hands in their enthusiasm for the idea. Only the politicos in the Party were opposed to a general cessation of work by the proletariat. When the final resolution on this question was voted, it was vague and nebulous enough to satisfy the divergent viewpoints at the Congress. Prefaced by a long introduction which extolled the virtues of political methods, the resolution stated that "in order to better their conditions, the workers have only to produce a coalition and cessation of work. This General Strike must be subordinated to an accentuated syndicat movement which... will enable us to achieve the victory."70

Despite the caution displayed by a number of Allemanists toward the idea, most of the trade unionists of the Party carried home to their syndicate the notion of the General Strike. Together with some anarchists, the Allemanists by adopting and propagating the idea,

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68 Ibid., p. 73. 69 Ibid., p. 74. 70 Ibid., pp. 100-101.
popularized the General Strike in French working class circles. As the reaction against the politicos grew in intensity, the General Strike found a greater and greater following among those militants who were searching for method of action to oppose the parliamentary tactics of the socialists. But the notion of the General Strike was still only a hazy concept. Never elaborated or explicated fully, it remained somewhat vague and illusory in the minds even of its staunchest supporters. To Fernand Pelloutier must go the credit for shaping and molding it into a well-honed instrument which could be used to achieve the independence of the syndicats.

III

As he strolled along the hillside of his retreat at Forge Neuve, Pelloutier put together the chief elements of a social and moral philosophy that he would retain throughout his life. By this time, he was a socialist, a believer in the virtues of social property and the moral qualities of a socialist community. An earnest opponent of the injustices and evils invested in the system of private property, he saw, as did the other socialists of his generation, that the economic problem could only be solved by the abolition of the capitalist order. Unlike many of the other collectivists, however, he refused to regard the political conquest of the state as the key
to social change. His recent experience in the campaign of 1889 had completely disenchanted him with the virtues of even a socialist-controlled republic.\(^7\)

Gazing out over his beloved countryside, dotted with the achievement of men working in harmony with nature, Pelloutier saw the real source of the energy of France. At the grassroots of the agricultural and industrial life of the nation were the workers and the peasants. A man who could never view the vast complex of society in a purely materialistic manner, Pelloutier was enthralled by the untapped resources of man and nations. For this reason, he assigned to the peasants in the fields, the sailors upon the sea, and the workers in the factory the mission of saving and reinvigorating France. He saw the remedy for the social ills that plagued mankind in the economic structure of society. At the factory and in the field rose the obstacles that prevented man from realizing the full potentiality of his moral growth. Thus, if the ills of society were rooted in the economic layer of the nation, then the cure to these problems must also be administered at this level. For this reason, Pelloutier turned his back on the political struggle and returned to what he considered fundamental. Never again would he advocate changing society by altering the political machinery, which was merely a reflection of a deeper reality. In the laws that governed

\(^{7}\) Maurice Pelloutier, pp. 40-41.
the economic life of France he now found both the cause and the remedy of the social problem.\footnote{Edouard Dolléans, Fernand Pelloutier (Paris: 1939), pp. 1-10.}

In January of 1892 Pelloutier left Forge Neuve for Saint Nazaire. On his return, he was given the editorship of the \textit{Democratic\ de l'Ouest}. The new owner of the paper had none of the views of his predecessor, and he gave Pelloutier a free hand in the management of the journal.\footnote{Maurice Pelloutier, p. 40.} To his side came Aristide Briand who was now brought to socialism by Pelloutier. For it was a different Briand that Pelloutier found when he returned from Forge Neuve. On May 1, 1891 the amorous Aristide had been surprised in a meadow with Jeanne Giraudau, wife of a local notable. As a result, he had been punished with a fine of 200 francs and a month in jail. The scandal had been a serious blow to Briand's personal ambitions at Saint Nazaire. An outcast from respectable society, the dejected Briand was an easy mark for the convincing Fernand. Together, the two friends turned \textit{Democratic\ de l'Ouest} toward socialism. In the pages of this journal, the public was exposed to a full scale panorama of the socialist creed which was only then making headway in the West of France.

Young and idealistic, Pelloutier was merely an enthusiastic beginner beside the hardbitten old party warriors who were publicizing their brand of socialism in the provinces. Yet, Pelloutier was
mature enough to have serious doubts about the doctrinal winds that were drifting to Saint Nazaire in 1892. What was most incomprehensible to him were the divisions in the ranks of the socialists. Like many of the second generations militants, he had little patience with the ancient feuds and doctrinal quarrels of the party chiefs. For him, it was the duty of the socialists to unite the workers under one banner. To explore the possibilities of union, he opened his journal to all the socialist schools. Articles by Guesde and Brunellière appeared, explicating the views of the Parti Ouvrier Français. The Blanquists were represented on the paper by Vailland and Landrin. Expressing the views of the Possibilists, articles by Caumeau appeared regularly. The editor of the paper never took sides. What he wanted was a complete explication of all the prevailing views, for he felt that the similarity among the doctrines were certainly greater than their differences.74

By 1892, Pelloutier was an outspoken revolutionary. Piecemeal reform was important but it would not result in any real improvement in working class conditions. Only by a sudden and complete overthrow of the existing regime could a new period in human history begin.75 But Pelloutier was troubled by the revolution as outlined by the Marxists and the Blanquists. He feared, more than anything else, the bloody reprisals that would be made by the bourgeois against the

74 Dave, p. 9.

75 Démocratie de l'Ouest, July 17, 1892.
workers. Even if the insurrection succeeded, bloody would be spilled and lives would be lost, and violence and bloodshed were abhorrent to Pelloutier. What he wanted was a peaceful, non-violent method of insurrection. So it was that he pondered and studied, seeking a method that would shake the capitalist fortress without resulting in a massacre of the workers.

These were the thoughts that motivated Pelloutier during 1892, as he edited the *Démocratie de l'Ouest* and wrote for the working class of Saint Nazaire. When Paul Lafargue came to the town in January, Pelloutier persuaded the golden-tongued Briand to confront him with these ideas. After Lafargue had hauled out the party line, Briand demanded an entente among all the socialists. Unity was essential, argued Briand, "in order that the working class will not be dispersed in all different directions...as it is today." Continuing his attack, Briand challenged Lafargue to give some guarantee that the workers would not be butchered in the coup planned by the Marxists. Against the arguments of Briand, Lafargue reacted vehemently. He lashed out at the young lawyer who had "come to play the game of the bourgeoisie by spreading discouragement among the workers."

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76 See the report on this conference in *Démocratie de l'Ouest*, January 13, 1892.
77 Suarez, I, 100-101.
78 *Démocratie de l'Ouest*, January 13, 1892.
Despite their objections, Pelloutier and Briand were impressed by the views of Lafargue. Immediately after his appearance at Saint Nazaire, the two youths enrolled in the Parti Ouvrier Français. To Pelloutier, disillusioned with political methods, Marxism promised a revolutionary insurrection which would spring from the workers themselves. At this time, the Guesdists were still emphasizing the anti-electoral nature of their party. For they were still espousing the view that politics were only a method of revolutionary propaganda. As to their views on the future society, they were so vague that they scarcely offend anyone coming into the socialist party. Moreover, Marxism was the only brand of socialism that had appeared at Saint Nazaire. To a groping Pelloutier, eager to build an effective movement, Marxism appeared as a political philosophy which could be partially reconciled with his own moralistic inclinations.

So it was that Pelloutier and Briand helped to organize a Marxist study group at Saint Nazaire called L'Emancipation. When in April the Municipal Council voted to establish a Bourse du Travail, Pelloutier and Briand helped to found this new institution. So actively were the two friends entrenched in the life of the working class at Saint Nazaire that Briand was chosen to speak at the inauguration ceremonies for the Bourse in April of 1892. Their work at the Bourse du Travail and in L'Emancipation gave Pelloutier

79 Maurice Pelloutier, p. 111.

80 Ibid.
and Briand more and more contact with the problems and resources of the workers. If committed to Marxism, they were still interested in socialist unity and the discovery of a method of peaceful and legal insurrection. Nevertheless, increasing disgust with politicians and parliamentary methods can be found in Pelloutier's writings in this period. So much so in fact that he could even admonish his beloved workers "who for twenty years have preserved their confidence in these parliamentarians who flatter only to cheat them." 61

In August of 1892 Pelloutier and Briand adopted the General Strike. Writing in a student notebook, these two set forth in simple and practical terms the way the revolution would be carried out by the complete cessation of all work throughout the nation. 82 In glowing and descriptive language, they pictured the state of society in the wave of the General Strike. Workers all over the nation would simply lay down their tools. The state would be powerless to act. Society would be gripped by a complete paralysis as all industry and transportation came to a halt. The workers would take over the factories and the shops. After they had organized some loose method of government, the transformation of society would be complete. 83

What worried Briand and Pelloutier the most was how the workers would live while the capitalists were being forced to their knees.

81 Démocratie de l'Ouest, July 17, 1892.
82 This project on the General Strike is outlined in Suarez, I, III, 112.
83 C. Chambelland, L'Actualité de l'Histoire, No. 18, p. 22.
To solve this problem, they envisioned what they called caisses de résistance. "France includes around four million syndiques who are willing to accept the principle of the General Strike. To prepare... the great economic movement, it suffices that each pay only twenty francs. This will... amount to a sum of 80 million francs and will permit the workers to rest for fifteen days." In other words, Pelloutier and Briand calculated that the strike would last at the most fifteen days. By the end of this period, the bourgeoisie would have abdicated its control over the nation.

The most important thing about the General Strike, as it was outlined by Pelloutier and Briand, was that it would occur peacefully, non-violently. All that was necessary was that the workers "cross their arms" and refuse to work. There would be no bloodshed or violence, for the proletariat would be acting entirely within its rights. In other words, it was to be a legal act, carried out simply and quietly by groups of workers all over the country. "We want to evade the spilling of blood," pleaded Pelloutier, "because... the blood will be that of the insurgents themselves. It is wiser... to use... the peaceful weapons which the ruraux of parliament have unconsciously given us." To those workers who feared

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84 Quoted in ibid., p. 22.
86 Démocratie de l'Ouest, September 11, 1892.
the wrath of the government, the scheme of Pelloutier appeared ingenious. Naive and fantastic as it may have been, the General Strike was certainly appealing to the depressed workingman caught in the economic vise of industrialized France.

In the General Strike, Pelloutier had finally found a type of action that was well suited to his social and moral outlook. If the real key to the social question lay deep in the economic structure, no amount of political chicanery was capable of solving it. Instead, the mechanism of social change from capitalism to utopia was economic warfare, conducted and directed by the syndicats. The strike of the miners at Carmaux in that year gave Pelloutier a further lesson on how economic power controlled the political life of the nation.

"Let no one brag to us of the equal political rights of the different sectors of society," he shouted in the pages of the \textit{Démocratie de l'Ouest}. But the General Strike would give the workers a weapon every bit as powerful as the franc. By using this instrument, the proletariat could beat down the opposition of the bourgeois to its demand for a new order. As they built a new society with a tool hewed out of their own creative force, the workers would unleash a great flood of moral energy. For not only would the act of insurrection be a great moral achievement in itself, but the reorganization of society would guarantee the full expression of the immense moral capacities of the French workers.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Démocratie de l'Ouest}, August 28, 1892.
To embrace the General Strike was not to reject socialism. It did not even mean that the political methods utilized by the different socialist parties would have to be eschewed. Far from being hostile to the socialist schools at this point, Pelloutier only wanted to give the political socialists an additional weapon in their fight against the bourgeois. Moreover, the General Strike was a tactic around which all the socialists could unite. What better way was there to end the conflict among them than by unifying them around a common method of action? In the *Démocratie de l'Est*, Pelloutier promoted the idea of socialist unity around the General Strike. Hardly a week went by that he did not point out the advantages of a unified socialist party, based on the General Strike as well as the political conquest of the public powers.  

But Pelloutier seemed to be crying in the dark. Of all the socialist groups, only the Allemanists had embraced the General Strike unconditionally. As to the Possibilists, they had been silent on the idea so far. Not so the Guesdist whose opposition to the notion was well known. The views of the Blanquists were more subtle. Since they were unwilling to provoke the trade unions needlessly, they had accepted the General Strike; but they still felt that political methods were superior to any type of trade union action. As for the Marxist-controlled *Fédération Nationale des Syndicats*, this organization had voted the General Strike at Bordeaux in 1888 but had ignored it

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the following year at the congress of Calais. In these circumstances, Pelloutier and Briand had a difficult task ahead of them. The only socialist group on which they could really count were the Allemanists. Some help might be obtained from the Blanquists or the Possibilists, but the Marxists were definitely opposed to all contact with the General Strike.

By this time, it was September of 1892. During the course of this month, several important working class meetings were scheduled that would provide an excellent opportunity to test the appeal of the General Strike. A regional congress of the Possibilists was scheduled to be held at Tours in early September. A few days later, the Fifth Congress of the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats would convene at Marseilles. This would be followed by the national conclave of the Parti Ouvrier Français in the same town on September 24. It occurred to Pelloutier and Briand that if they could persuade these meetings to accept the General Strike, a real basis of working class unity might be achieved. So it was that the two friends carefully laid their plans.

When the regional Congress of the Possibilists opened at Tours on September 3, 1892, Fernand Pelloutier was among the assembled workers. Delegated there by L’Emancipation groups of Saint Nazaire, he had come to present the General Strike to the Possibilists. On the second day of the Congress, he read a report on this tactic to the delegates. Moderate and conciliatory in tone, it included all
the ideas which he and Briand had put together in their long conversations on the subject. More than anything else, Pelloutier stressed the legality of his project. To him, the General Strike was the best "pacific and legal method unconsciously given to the workers to achieve his legitimate aspirations." To the moderate syndiques, he insisted that the goal of the General Strike was only to achieve "the claims formulated in the proletariat's program." At no time did he make the slightest reference to revolution. After a short debate, the Congress took an equivocal stand on the issue. The delegates passed a motion which stated that "the Congress... takes into consideration the project of the universal strike introduced by citizen Pelloutier and decides that a special organization of French Workers Party should be created for furnishing to the International Congress of Zurich in 1893 a complete project of the universal strike."

The roster of delegates to the Fifth Congress of the Federation Nationale des Syndicats, opening on September 19, read like a "who's who" of the Parti Ouvrier Français. Guesde, Lafargue, Roussel, Pelloutier's report to the congress of Tours is reproduced in Fernand Pelloutier, Histoire des Bourses du Travail (Paris: 19146), pp. 116-17.

90 So moderate in tone was Pelloutier's project that one journal could report that "the Congress of Tours... has proven to be one of the most moderate of recent years." Tourraine Républicaine, September 8, 1892 in Cahiers de Pelloutier. MS deposited in the Musée Social.

Delchuze, Dormoy, all of them were present at this dress rehearsal for the meeting of the Parti Ouvrier Français that was to take place right after the trade union congress was over. The air of the assembly hall was charged with tension and uncertainty, for printed on the order of the day was the General Strike, placed there at the insistence of the syndicats. Reporting to the Congress, Jean Coulet, militant Guesdist, explained why the topics for discussion also included another vital question—the representation of the proletariat in the corps élus. Behind Coulet's explanation was the simple fact that the Guesdists hoped to use this issue to counteract the efforts of a possible defeat on the General Strike at the Congress. Fearing a setback on the latter question, they wanted to wring from the Congress a formal declaration of the validity of political action. Around these two questions, the entire Congress would revolve.

Among the delegates was Aristide Briand. Like his friend Pelloutier at Tours, he had come to Marseilles for the purpose of persuading the congressistes to accept the General Strike. He faced a far more difficult task than his comrade had faced at Tours. For the Marxists who controlled this assembly of workers were dead set against this instrument, which they thought would upset their political leadership. Thus, it was a nervous Briand who, speech in hand, took,  

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92 Ibid., p. 25.
his seat at Marseilles on September 19. A newcomer to socialism, he was attending his first major working class meeting. But he stood poised and ready, anxious to call attention to himself in this assembly where all the high priests of the Party were present.  

On the third day, the question of the General Strike was reported by Briand, thirty years old and a gifted orator. He described the General Strike as a method of peaceful insurrection. No bitter or stinging phrases did he use to admonish his older, more experienced colleagues. Instead, his speech was a plea, framed in idealism and love, for a unified working class movement. The arguments that he invoked were similar to those used by Pelloutier at Tours. But in the oratory of Briand, they made a deeper impact than when expressed by the unimpressive and rasping Pelloutier. Assuring the delegates that the General Strike would be bloodless and legal, dynamic and deadly, he, like Pelloutier, emphasized the reforms to be achieved by it. The Congress must vote this method, expand and popularize it, he argued, and prepare a complete project on the General Strike to submit to the International Congress of Zurich.

The words of Briand made a strong impact on the delegates. All the latent hostility to the politicians sprang to the surface as

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94 Suarez, I, 122-23.
95 Ibid., I, 122.
96 5e Congrès National des Syndicats..., pp. 46-47.
delegate after delegate jumped to his feet to hail the General Strike. To the side of Briand came all those militants whose syndicat loyalty triumphed over their political preference. The delegates from the Bourses du Travail took the lead in the general ralliement. Centers of anti-political activity, many of the Bourses had sent their delegates with the strict mandate to oppose the intransigence of the Marxists.  

In face of the overwhelming enthusiasm for the General Strike, the Guesdist were powerless. When they saw that their trade union adherents were breaking ranks, they decided to stall for time. What they wanted was for the Congress to pass to the order of the day and to make no final decision on the General Strike. Coulet, one of theirs, insisted that the Congress should take no action on this matter, for, he said, such a proclamation would warn the patron in advance of the workers' intentions. Along this same line was the argument of Delcluze who insisted that a national congress was not qualified to act on such tactics. Instead, the Congress should pass a motion which recommended the General Strike to the International Congress of Zurich for future study. Another angle was tried by Roussel who argued that the General Strike should be one 

97 Voting for the General Strike were Boisson representing the Bourse du Travail of Paris; Briand (Saint Nazaire); Danflous (Toulouse); Rappelin (Alger); Soldini (Carcassone); La Palme (Nantes); Mayeux (Roanne) etc. In fact, almost all the Bourses delegated to the congress voted for the General Strike. See 5e Congrès National des Syndicats ..., pp. 48-49. The pre-eminence of the Bourses du Travail in the ralliement to the General Strike was even recognized by the Guesdists. See Suarez, I, 123.

98 5e Congrès Nationale des Syndicats..., pp. 48, 49.
of a certain profession only. To him, the grève générale par métier
would be more effective than the grève universelle. 99

But the supporters of the General Strike were not to be denied.
Defying the party chiefs, reformists and revolutionaires alike
rallied to the general strike. On the initiative of Soldini,
representing the Bourse of Carcassone, a resolution was proposed
stating that "the congress adopts the principle of the General Strike
and asks... the International Congress of Zurich to study the ways
and means... to apply the General Strike." 100 Together with the
report of Briand, this proposal was adopted by the Congress of
Marseilles. 101

The Congress now turned to the question of the representation
of the workers in the corps élus. Upon this vital issue hinged the
prestige and power of the Guesdists. They had lost face on the
General Strike. Now almost desperately they turned to the task of
persuading the syndicats to reaffirm the necessity of political
action. One of their best militants, Jean Coulet, was chosen to
read the recommendations of the Commission charged to consider this
issue. Pointing to the recent massacre of the proletariat at

99 5e Congrès Nationale des Syndicats..., p. 47.
100 Ibid., p. 49.
101 Ibid. "The congress of Marseilles was composed... of a majority
of Guesdists, that is men who placed their hopes... in the conquest
of public power. But since they belonged to the syndicats, they could
not escape from the forces which grouped them. They remained men of
the trade unions because it was in these ranks that they lived, thought,
and struggled...." La Revue de Paris, May 15, 1905 in Cahiers de
Fourmies and the hostility to the striking miners of Carmaux, he argued that the organs of government, must be penetrated by the workers. Such attacks on the working class would not have occurred, he charged, if the proletariat had a real hand in state policy. As he closed his speech, the perpiring Coulet asked the Congress to vote a resolution stating that "the Congress affirms the principle of direct representation of the proletariat in the corps élus." If the Congress voted in the affirmative, it would amount to a formal approval of the political program of the Parti Ouvrier Français.

Coulet's reasoning made a great deal of sense to the congressistes. Apart from the anarchist-inspired unions to the South, there were few syndicats, in 1892, which rejected political and parliamentary action categorically. The reform conscious syndiques had not given up on the possibility of winning legal concessions from the state. What many of them opposed, however, was the discussion of political issues and personalities in the trade unions. So it was that the majority of the delegates were wavering, hostile to politics in the unions, yet ready to affirm their faith in politics as a method of working class action outside of the syndicats.

From several corners of the Congress came heavy opposition to Coulet. Such anarchist-inspired delegates as Dumortier of Lyon and

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102 Ibid., p. 57.
103 Ibid.
Martino of Marseilles were opposed to political action everywhere and in every form. Flaying on the fears of the militants, they managed to bring to their side many of the wavering who, with complete justification, feared the division that resulted from syndicat political action. Dumortier's intentions were clear. He wanted the congress to forego a formal commitment on the question. But his efforts to ambush the Marxists failed. By a vote of 77-13, the Congress affirmed that the value of political action was "beyond all doubt." Just before the final vote, Coulet emphasized that "it is only the principle which must be adopted. We must not force the syndicats and federations to occupy themselves directly with this representation."

When the Congress of Marseilles was over, it was clear that one era of trade union history was coming to an end. Unlike their behavior at the corporate congress of Marseilles thirteen years before, the workers were no longer overpowered by the politicians. The debates over the General Strike and political action proved beyond all doubt that syndicalism was developing a voice of its own. What stood out in bold relief at the Congress was that almost all of

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104 Ibid., pp. 57-58.
105 For example, asked only that syndicat neutrality be maintained in order to insure unity. In the end, however, they rallied to the words of Dumortier, the anarchist. Ibid., p. 59.
106 Ibid., p. 67.
107 The anarchist, Martino, insisted that Coulet's words be included in the final resolution on the question. Ibid.
the syndicalists, regardless of their political opinions, were thinking along the same lines in 1892. Although they acknowledged the need for the proletariat to be represented in parliament, few among them were willing to sacrifice syndical unity to this end. To almost all of them, the General Strike was the symbol of a strong and unified syndicalism. For this reason, the General Strike was hailed by revolutionaries and reformists alike, although both wings of the trade union movement read their own meaning into it.

At Saint Nazaire, Pelloutier greeted the news from Marseilles with delight. In the *Democratic de l'Ouest*, he eulogized the triumph of Briand. An early end to the divisions in the syndical and socialist ranks was forecast by Pelloutier, now that the General Strike had been accepted. "The socialist union is so well established in theory but so little in practice that one might have expected more rivalry than ever among the schools.... But events have shown our fears to be unfounded..., for the collectivists have made common cause with the Possibilists...." So enthusiastically had the General Strike been accepted that it seemed "destined to be the bond of union which will unite all the socialist schools in a single body." According to Pelloutier, the socialists would push aside "the leaders who show themselves recalcitrant" on this project.

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108 *Democratic de l'Ouest*, September 25, 1892.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
It was an elated Briand who left the congress of Marseilles. The success of the General Strike had been in large part due to him. As he waited for the start of the Marxist congress, the youthful orator was, nevertheless, overwhelmed by the polished statesmen of socialism who were gathering at Marseilles to attend this meeting of the Parti Ouvrier Français. In his pocket, he carried the crumpled speech on the General Strike that had impressed the syndiques some days before. So far, the plans laid by him and Pelloutier had been proceeding smoothly. The Congress of Tours had seemed favorable to the General Strike and the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats had accepted it at Marseilles. If the Guesdists could be induced to affirm it, all the elements would be present for unifying the socialist and syndicat groups in a grand synthesis of politico-economic action.

It was not to be. Briand was greeted at the tribune with the hostile glares of the Guesdists. His oratory appeared as good as ever, but this time, Briand had a skilled antagonist. To answer him, Guesde himself climbed to the tribune. The revolution would never take place bloodlessly, argued Guesde, for the bourgeoisie, if their interests were menaced, would withdraw all the legal rights of the workers. Besides, he maintained, the General Strike demanded a syndicat unity and power which the French trade unions had not even

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Suarez, I, 129.
began to approach. Under Guesde's microscopic analysis, the idea turned out to be totally impractical. Yet, the Marxists refused to vote a formal denial of this notion. Unwilling to antagonize the syndicats, they passed to the order of the day pure and simple. But when they reaffirmed the conquest of public power, it was clear that the General Strike was rejected by the Guesdists.

The refusal of the Marxists to accept the General Strike infuriated Pelloutier, who saw all hopes for working class unity destroyed. In the pages of *Democratie de l'Ouest*, he addressed an open letter to Guesde in which he again asked the Marxists to reconsider the General Strike. All his arguments were the same, and again they failed to convince the stubborn Marxist chief. Replying to Pelloutier, Guesde defended his doctrinal position which was based "on the political expropriation of the capitalist class today and the economic expropriation tomorrow." To Pelloutier's objection that the political conquest of the state was too slow, he answered that the General Strike would take even longer still. "It would take a century or two to organize and control the working class to carry out the General Strike," argued Guesde who dubbed it as a "mirage."

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112 Blum, II, 135. Also see Suarez, I, 129.
113 Chambelland, *L'Actualité de l'Histoire*, No. 18, p. 27.
114 *Democratie de l'Ouest*, October 5, 1892.
115 *Le Socialiste*, October 16, 1892.
116 Ibid.
Not that the revolution could be achieved electorally, he said, for an insurrection was necessary. But it was an insurrection which had to be prepared by the conquest of public authority. In these words, the leader of the Parti Ouvrier Français shrugged off the General Strike.

In December of 1892, Pelloutier prepared to leave Saint Nazaire. Under the pressure of some local notables, his father, long regarded with suspicion in the town, was transferred to another district in his work with the post office. But the elder Pelloutier's influence with certain officials in Paris enabled him to land a government position there. When Pelloutier heard the news, he was delighted. Immediately, he decided to give up his work at Saint Nazaire and to accompany his father to Paris. His friend Briand was already there, having secured a position as a journalist on the Lanterne the preceding November.

Despite his anticipation of life in the capital, Pelloutier was saddened by the prospect of leaving his home. His last article for the Dissétrait de l'Ouest on January 1, 1893 was full of nostalgic reminiscences of his life at Saint Nazaire. To his readers, he predicted a strengthening of the socialist forces in the Loire valley. Yet, he felt that socialism would continue to grow only if it rejected all the attempts of the bourgeoisie to deter it from its
mission. His parting counsel to the socialists at Saint Nazaire was that they should break completely with the gouvernmentaux. He meant by this that they should refuse all alliances with the quasi-bourgeois who "will use these alliances for the games of the ambitious swindlers." The knowledge that the socialists would retain their independence, he said, "diminishes my regret at leaving all those who have helped me for the last ten months." Several days later, Pelloutier was on his way to Paris, and, eventually a career in the national syndicalist movement.

118 The word gouvernmentaux is difficult to translate into English. By this word Pelloutier meant all those who were willing to compromise with the state.

119 Démocratie de l'Ouest, January 1, 1893.

120 Ibid.
By 1893 the campaign to expel the socialists from the trade unions was gathering strength and momentum. From almost every corner of the nation came demands for working class independence. During the next two years, the French workers intensified their campaign against the socialists in their midst. In spite of the socialists' efforts to retain their influence, the trade unions took the first steps toward the creation of an independent labor movement. By 1895 the workers were laying plans to unite the syndicats throughout the nation in a large federation of French trade unions.

The campaign for an independent labor movement was headed by the Allemanists who controlled the Paris Bourse. In February, 1893 they persuaded the Fédération des Bourses du Travail to sponsor a national syndicat congress to be held at Paris in July, 1893. In spite of opposition from the Marxist-controlled Bourses, the Allemanists managed to win approval for their plan to limit the congress to bona fide trade unions. Moreover, the Bourses decided to place the General Strike on the agenda of this purely corporate congress.\footnote{2e Congrès de la Fédération des Bourses du Travail, tenu à Toulouse, 12-15 Février, 1893 in Bulletin Officiel de la Bourse du Travail No. 357 (February, 19, 1893), pp. 537-38.}
This decision meant that the Allemanists would be given the opportunity to obtain a formal referendum on the General Strike, and a victory on this issue in July would enable them to drive a wedge between the workers and the Marxists. If the syndicats rallied to the General Strike, the Allemanists planned to draw them away from the Marxist-controlled Fédération National des Syndicats into an united trade union organization. Thus, when news of the July Congress reached Paris, the Allemanists were elated.  

A strong protest arose from Marxist circles. "We do not want to seek the motives which have guided the Paris Bourse in demanding this congress," cried Le Socialiste, "but it is our duty to protest strongly." The Guesdist accused the Allemanists of duplicity and called upon their trade union followers to boycott the July Congress. "Where would we be if such procedures were allowed to develop among the workers," asked the Guesdist. "If above the heads and against the wills of the existing organizations, it became easy to address the members and set them in action?" Since the Fédération National des Syndicats had not been consulted, the Marxists predicted that "instead of being a new step toward working class unity, the congress will only create new schisms."

2 Le Parti Ouvrier, February 19, 1893.
3 Le Socialiste, March 26, 1893.
4 Ibid. 5 Ibid.
News of the July Congress was greeted with delight by the Blanquists who praised the Paris Bourse for its sagacity. According to Vaillant, "the syndicat organizations have become... more autonomous, stronger, further removed from... exterior influences, and more representative of working class claims, interests, and aspirations." For this reason, he felt that a corporate congress would be a large step toward working class unity which was "the necessary condition of effective socialist action." Unlike the Marxists, the Blanquists were willing to co-operate with the workers in creating a unified labor movement.

As the Congress approached, the Allemanists intensified their agitation for the General Strike. In April and May the Paris Bourse organized a number of public reunions, meetings, and demonstrations at which the virtues of the General Strike were proclaimed. Such activities were watched closely by a hostile government, anxious to make amends for the embarrassing Panama scandal the preceding November. When it learned that the Bourse was planning a large working class demonstration for May 1, 1893, the government closed the Bourse for the day. As it turned out, the Allemanists and the

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6 Le Parti Socialiste, February 19-25, 1893.
8 Ibid.
Blanquists decided to hold the rally as scheduled. During the demonstration, the aroused workers provoked a fight with a nervous regiment of police. So bitter was the workers' animosity toward the government that violent rioting broke out around the Place de la République.\(^1^1\)

In the midst of this popular agitation was Fernand Pelloutier, rapidly becoming well known at the local Bourse. Since his arrival in Paris, he had found some work where he could utilize his literary talents. He collaborated on *L'Avenir Social* and wrote several articles for *L'Art Social*, a small literary sheet directed by Gabriel de la Salle. However, the major part of his day was spent at the Paris Bourse where he represented the Bourses du Travail of Nantes and Saint Nazaire on the Comité Federal. When not at the Bourse, debating politics with his Allemanist friends, he lingered over coffee at the Brasserie Zimmer, discussing the General Strike with Briand.\(^1^2\) Both of the young militants from Saint Nazaire still hoped that this instrument would provide the basis for socialist unity.

In May, 1893 Pelloutier and Briand, with the collaboration of several other militants, organized the *Ligne d'Action Corporative Révolutionnaire*.\(^1^3\) The aim of this Organization was "to group all the working class forces of the nation on a common tactic." In an

\(^{11}\) Suarez, I, 162.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., I, 158.

\(^{13}\) The other members of this organization were Lhermite, Guérard, Dejeante, Capjuzan, Baume, and Seigne. Ibid., I, 170.
interview with La Libre Parole, Briand explained the motives behind the Ligne: "I have thought that in France, where the socialist party would be very strong if it were not divided, it would be good to create a socialist league whose action would be purely corporate in nature. By this very fact, it would avoid the rivalries of schools. It would have the purpose to prepare the General Strike and to create socialist agitation around the resolutions voted by the workers' congresses." Such was the manner in which Briand explained the goal of the two young socialists. In the Spring of 1893 Pelloutier and Briand joined the Allemanists in their campaign to popularize the General Strike in the working class districts of Paris.

Working class agitation in Paris grew in strength and intensity during the early summer. Crowds of workers, waving placards and shouting revolutionary slogans, gathered daily outside the Bourse du Travail. When their cries for reform went unheeded, the workers talked openly of insurrection. Such antics alarmed government officials who blamed the agitation on the Allemanists and their followers at the Paris Bourse. As a result, the government decided to take action against the Bourse du Travail.

In June, 1893 the Dupuy Ministry issued a manifesto calling on those syndicates which had not adhered strictly to the law of 1884 to

11 La Libre Parole, June 9, 1893
15 Suarez, I, 162.
do so immediately. In reply, the Allemanists labelled the "ultimatum null and void" and requested the trade unions to remain solid for defending their freedom. At this point, Dupuy decided on a test of strength. A few days before the July Congress was to open, the government ordered the police to close the Bourse. The workers decided to resist, and, for the next two days, groups of workers patrolled the rue Chateau d'Eau. On July 6 when the weary militants had dispersed, the police invaded the Bourse and dragged some workers, including Pelloutier, from the immeuble. Under a heavy police guard, the Bourse du Travail was closed to the workers and the public.

A wave of indignation swept through the labor world. Even the Paris Municipal Council, under the prodding of the socialists, voiced a protest to the government. The workers' bitter reaction to the closing of the Bourse assured the success of the July Congress. Organizations which had refused to adhere now sent delegates or telegraphed their support. Even those syndicats loyal to the Federation National des Syndicats expressed their opposition to Dupuy by adhering to the Congress. As far as the Allemanists were concerned,

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16 This manifesto of the Bourse is reproduced in Leon de Seilhac, Syndicats, Ouvriers, Federations et Bourses du Travail (Paris: 1902), p. 236.


18 LeTheuff, pp. 63-64.
the government's action could not have come at a better time. When the Congress opened in July, the trade unions were all there, shouting their defiance of the government.\textsuperscript{19}

The major part of the July Congress was devoted to a discussion of the General Strike. Although the majority of the workers looked with favor on this tactic, they differed on how it could best be carried out. The reformist socialists and moderates at the meeting hailed the General Strike but wanted to subordinate it to a long period of preparation and organization.\textsuperscript{20} In addition, they objected to its revolutionary implications. As far as they were concerned, it would be an excellent method to wrest reform from the employers or the state, but, as a revolutionary instrument, it was impractical. No one put it more succinctly than one delegate, representing the Chambres Syndicales des Chapeliers, when he insisted that "there are only two ways to get what we want—the revolution or the General Strike. Let us choose the shorter method and demand... the General Strike."\textsuperscript{21} On the other hand, the revolutionaries wanted to call the General Strike immediately, for they felt it was capable of bringing down the bourgeois state.\textsuperscript{22} According to one revolutionary, "faith in the General Strike is everything.—If we are unanimous on


\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Tbid.}, p. 22.  \textsuperscript{22} \textit{Tbid.}, pp. 40-41.
this tactic, there will not be enough cannons to oppose us."\textsuperscript{23} As might have been expected, most of the Allemanists and Blanquists demanded "the immediate application of the General Strike."\textsuperscript{24}

In the end, the revolutionaries were disappointed. Although the Allemanists managed to win approval for the principle of the General Strike, the July Congress decided that this tactic should be postponed until the workers were sufficiently prepared for its use. Toward this end, the Congress authorized the Comité Federal of the Bourses to establish a Committee of the General Strike which was to undertake a campaign of organization for the new method. Finally, the delegates charged this Committee to place the General Strike before the International Socialist Congress to be held at Zurich in 1893.\textsuperscript{25}

In addition to the General Strike, the question of working class unity was discussed by the July Congress. Although most all of the syndicats were favorable to the principle of unity, they were divided on how unity might best be achieved. The Allemanists and their allies felt that the working class should be united around the Bourses du Travail. To them, it was obvious that "all the spirit is in the Bourses. The towns that have them want to keep them; those that don't have them want to establish them."\textsuperscript{26} As a result, the

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 40.  \textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}  \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 63-66.  \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 18-19.
Allemanists and the Blanquists proposed a number of projects which gave the leadership of a united labor movement to the Bourses du Travail. However, the majority of the congressistes insisted that working class unity should be based on the federations of métier. By grouping the syndicats according to trade or profession, they argued, the workers would be able to obtain concessions from the patron more effectively. According to one delegate, "the day when we have united all the syndicats of the same trade in a national federation, the workers will know their own strength and will rely only on themselves."

What finally emerged from the Congress was a compromise between these two viewpoints on working class unity. In deference to the advocates of union by métier, the Congress adopted a resolution insisting that all existing syndicats should join their federation of métier or create them if none as yet existed. On the other hand, the Congress requested all the trade unions to join the Bourses du Travail in their locality. Furthermore, the July Congress invited the Federation National des Syndicats and the Federation of Bourses to merge into one organization. According to the resolution voted by

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27 Ibid., pp. 16-17. 28 Ibid., pp. 18-20.
29 Interestingly enough, working class unity by métier was supported by the Marxists who sought to justify the Federation National des Syndicats which supposedly grouped the syndicats according to trade or profession. Ibid., p. 17.
30 Ibid., p. 16.
the congressistes, each federation of métier should send two delegates to meet with four chosen by the Comite Federal of the Bourses. The action of a united proletariat would be co-ordinated by this group of workers. Finally, the Congress requested that the merger of the Fédération National des Syndicats and the Fédération des Bourses du Travail should take place at the next corporate congress to be held at Nantes in 1891*.\footnote{i}{31}

The July Congress was an important victory for the Allemanists in their bid to unite the syndicats on purely corporate grounds. In addition to giving a convincing referendum to the General Strike, the delegates formally committed themselves to working class unity. Even more important was the fact that the July Congress actually forced the hand of the Marxists. For in selecting Nantes as the site of the next syndicat meeting, the delegates were guided by the knowledge that the Sixth Congress of the Fédération National des Syndicats would convene at this same town in 1894. The convocation of two trade union congresses in the same town on the same date would force the Guesdists either to accept working class unity or to relinquish their hold on the syndicats. By persuading the July Congress to take this decision, the Allemanists had placed the Marxists in such a dilemma.

\footnote{i}{Ibid., p. 46.}
The July Congress was greeted with mixed reactions by the socialists. While the Marxists decided to ignore it completely, the Allemanists hailed it as a gigantic step toward the unification of the proletariat. According to them, the workers' decision to support the General Strike was a prelude to the "social revolution." The Blanquists were less enthusiastic. In August, Vaillant praised the delegates who "not only have... declared the General Strike but... have shown that they... are willing to organize for it." Nevertheless, the Blanquists insisted that "the General Strike is not all... of socialist action but... only an elementary form of it." In their opinion, the General Strike should only be used in conjunction with political action.

In August, 1893 the socialists turned their attention to purely political matters. The important elections of September were approaching, and the socialists were determined to make a good showing. That the French workers were in an angry mood in 1893 was common knowledge. The government's refusal to sponsor reforms, its repressive acts against the syndicats, and its loss of face during the Panama scandal brought social discontent in France to a new high. As the election drew near, the Guesdists, abandoning their former

32 Le Parti Ouvrier, July 27, 1893.
33 Le Parti Socialiste, August 613, 1893.
34 Ibid.
intransigence, joined the other socialist schools in the Ligne d'Action Révolutionnaire whose purpose was to co-ordinate socialist action during the campaign. In September, the Ligne entered into a number of electoral alliances with the Radicals and the Radical-Socialists. The socialists' new tactics paid off. When the votes were counted, they had elected around fifty candidates to the Chamber of Deputies. According to Guesde, the socialists' success in the September elections was a "true revolution."35

The results of the election demonstrated the advantages of co-operation to the socialists, and it was not long before they moved toward unification. Even before the session of Parliament opened, the first step was taken in this direction. In November, 1893 the Blanquists called for a meeting to unite the various socialist deputies around a common program. From this meeting came the formation of a parliamentary group called the Union Socialiste in which all the schools except the Allemanists were represented. The latter refused to join the Union Socialiste on the grounds that it admitted non-socialists and did not adhere to a set of genuine socialist principles, by which the Allemanists meant the General Strike.36


Interesting enough, the very mechanics of parliamentary participation strengthened the bonds among the socialists. As they fought against the conservatism of the Dupuy, Casimer-Perier, and Ribot Ministries, the socialists were ineluctably drawn together. In 1893 the government had launched a full scale attack on the socialists. Under the pretext of combatting the anarchists, it had passed a series of laws which greatly curtailed the legal activities of the socialists. The *lois scélérates*, as these acts were called by the socialists, were aimed more at the socialists than the handful of bomb-throwing terrorists in the nation. To ward off the government's attempts to destroy their movement, the socialists joined forces during the period from 1893 to 1895. Under the leadership of Jean Jaurès, they were able to break through traditional hatreds to take the first steps toward the unification of the socialist party.\(^3^7\)

The drift toward socialist union was ignored by the Allemanists whose brand of socialism rested on a firm trade union foundation. In fact, the lines between *Allemanisme* and syndicalism were blurred in the early 1890's.\(^3^8\) The ties between the two were so close that many dissident Guesdistes, drawn from the Parti Ouvrier Français by their loyalty to the trade unions, entered the Parti Ouvrier Socialist Revolutionnaire.\(^3^9\) To be sure, the syndicalists' ranks included

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militants from all the socialist schools who had come together through their common allegiance to the trade unions. In addition, many syndicalists had no socialist background, belonging either to the moderate wing or the anarchists. Regardless of their background, almost all the syndicalists were drawn to the side of the Allemanists whose program was so much like their own. In effect, the majority of Allemanists were ardent syndicalists in faith and action.\(^{10}\)

II

By the spring of 1894 the Allemanists were busy preparing for the coming syndicat congress at Nantes at which they hoped to loosen the Marxists' hold on the trade unions. In April the Comité Fédéral of the Bourses issued a circular, addressed to all the syndicats in France, inviting them to Nantes in September for the corporate congress.\(^{11}\) Instead of addressing its circular to the Marxist-controlled National Council of the Fédération National des Syndicats, the Comité Fédéral sent its appeal directly to the trade union members of this Organization.\(^{12}\) In this way, the syndicalists on the Comité Fédéral sought to out-maneuver the Marxists who were even then urging

\(^{10}\) Lagardelle, *Le Mouvement Socialiste* No. 213, pp. 86-87.

\(^{11}\) This notice appeared in *Le Parti Ouvrier*, April 19-20, 1894.

their trade union followers to ignore the coming congress at
Nantes.

The Comité Federal's action was vehemently denounced by the
Marxists who accused the Allemanists of "wanting to destroy our
Organization." In scathing terms, the Guesdists condemned "those
elements who view the Federation with envy and jealousy and who...
try to eliminate this admirable Organization born at Lyon." The
Marxists argued that the Bourse du Travail of Nantes had already
accepted a mandate to organize the congress of the *Fédération
National des Syndicats*, and it was not in a position to sponsor another
syndicat congress. In April Raymond Lavigne, Secretary of the
*Fédération National des Syndicats*, affirmed that he "was counting on
the comrades of Nantes to observe working class discipline, the
essential basis of all serious organization."

He was soon disappointed. In May the Bourse du Travail of Nantes
officially accepted the mandate given to it by the July Congress.
According to the statement offered by the Nantes Bourse, it would
convoke a general congress of trade unions in September, 1894 to which
both the *Fédération National des Syndicats* and the Federation of Bourses
would be invited. News of the Nantes Bourse's decision brought an

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43 *Le Socialiste*, April 7, 1894.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Maurice Pelloutier, p. 56.
immediate protest from the Guesdists who accused the Bourse of breaking its mandate. In response, the Bourse du Travail of Nantes decided to conduct a poll among the French trade unions on the matter. To the Marxists' chagrin, most of the replies supported the Nantes Bourse's decision to hold only one congress in September.

The Marxists' cause was wavering. That a single congress of all the syndicats at Nantes would be a serious blow to their supremacy in the labor world was obvious. The Guesdists knew that opposition to their program would come not only from the Allemanists and the syndicalists, but also from many workers in the Fédération National des Syndicats who were hostile to their doctrinal rigidity. Consequently, the Guesdists stubbornly resisted the convocation of a single congress at Nantes. In May, 1894 they appealed to the Fédération of Bourses to boycott this meeting.

The Fédération des Bourses du Travail, meeting at Lyon in May, 1894, was far from a composite organization. Although its Comité Federal

\[\text{Ibid.} \quad \text{Ibid., pp. 56-57.}\]

Such an issue as the General Strike, for example, had both defenders and opponents in the Federation of Bourses. At Lyon, the controversy over this tactic was so great that the delegates decided to bar the question from the agenda. Despite the protest of Pelloutier, Cordelier, then Secretary of the Federation, was even censured by the Bourses for attempting to influence the vote on the General Strike. See 3e Congrès de la Fédération des Bourses du Travail, tenue à Lyon, June 23, 1894 in Bulletin Officiel de la Bourse du Travail de Lyon No. 17 (June-July, 1894), pp. 110-11.
was controlled by the Allemanists, the Federation was composed of Bourses sympathetic to a variety of political schools. In fact, a number of Guesdist-controlled Bourses were among the most vigorous members of the Federation. Nevertheless, there was little political rivalry inside the Fédération des Bourses du Travail. Led by Cordelier and Pelloutier, now assistant Secretary of the Bourses, the Comité Fédéral ignored highly controversial political matters and concentrated on the economic problems of the working class. As the Bourses gathered for their annual congress, the Marxist members of the Federation were determined to prevent the Bourses from supporting the coming trade union congress at Nantes.

The Marxists asked the Bourses to ignore the Congress of Nantes. According to them, the Comité Fédéral had been guilty of duplicity in its dealings with the Fédération National des Syndicats, for it had appealed to the syndicats over the head of the National Council of this Organization. Moreover, they charged that the Bourses had no right to support a congress which had been called illegally. In a blow aimed at the Allemanists, the Guesdists asked the Bourses to censure their Comité Fédéral for interfering in the internal affairs of the Fédération National des Syndicats.  

Again the Marxists were disappointed. The Federation of Bourses rallied to its Comité Fédéral and pronounced itself in favor of a single congress at Nantes.  

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50 Ibid., pp. 112-13.  
51 Ibid., p. 115.
Farjat, a Marxist from Lyon, asked the Bourses to vote a motion guaranteeing that "the Federation of Bourses does not want to annihilate the Fédération National des Syndicats but only reinforce it." Although the Bourses allowed Farjat this concession, it was clear that the Marxists had suffered another defeat. To the Congress of Nantes had rallied the strong Fédération des Bourses du Travail. The Marxists, with a crumbling and divided organization, would have to face the syndicalists at Nantes. To the victor would go the control of the French labor movement.

As the Congress approached, the General Strike became the leading issue between the Guesdiste and the syndicalists. From Marxist circles came attack after attack on this tactic. No longer did the Guesdiste, with equivocal clauses or conciliatory gestures, hide their hostility to this "piece of dupery." They insisted that it was "only on political grounds that the proletariat is the equal... of the capitalists, and only by engaging in parliamentary political action—that is, the conquest of public power—can the organized proletariat free itself." On their part, the Allemanists and their supporters rushed to the defense of the General Strike. "In the clash of opinion... often so diverse... of our different politico-economic parties," insisted the Allemanists, "it is absolutely essential that all the organized workers... meet on a neutral ground." For this

52 Ibid., p. 118.
54 Le Parti Ouvrier, August 23-24, 1894.
reason, they engaged the Congress of Nantes to "vote the General Strike which will prove that the working class intends to remain true to itself." In September they solemnly warned the Guesdists that they were prepared to fight if the Marxists tried "to redirect the working class toward the old electoral tactics."

By concentrating their fire on the General Strike, the Marxists hoped to divide the syndicalist forces. That the supporters of the General Strike were composed of a left and a right wing was well known to the Guesdists. Consequently, they planned to defeat the General Strike at Nantes by exploiting the fears of the moderates and reformist socialists who feared the revolutionary nature of this tactic. Moreover, a defeat of the General Strike at Nantes would give the Marxists a real advantage over their opponents. In view of the workers' desire for unity, it was clear that the Guesdists could not hope to salvage the Fédération National des Syndicats. But if the General Strike—symbol of working class independence—could be defeated, the Marxists felt that they could lead any new working class organization to the political path. As the Congress drew near, the controversy over the General Strike increased in intensity.

On September 17, 1894, 143 delegates, representing 1662 trade unions gathered at Nantes for the showdown. All the socialists

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55 Ibid., September 17-18, 1894. 56 Ibid.
were represented in the list of delegates. With Lafargue and Guesde active in the coulisses, the Marxists were represented on the floor by Coulet, Fouillant, Farjat, Roussel, Salembier, Nôel, Lavigne, Pédron, Treich, Renard, Delcluze, Mathieu, and Sauvenet. For the Allemanists, Bescombes, Bourderon, Poulain, Cordelier, Girard, and Riom were ready to support the General Strike. In addition, the Blanquists were there, ably led by Besset, Majot, Capjuzan, Pommier, and Martin. As to the anarchists, only Tessier of Lyon and Montagard of Marseilles can be directly identified as belonging to this sect. At the Congress also were the moderate syndicalists. Led by August Keufer, these militants were opposed to collectivism, but were vigorous supporters of a united trade union movement. Finally, such independent militants as Briand and Pelloutier were present. Although belonging to no particular party, they had come to defend the General Strike.  

Writing of the Congress of Nantes, Le Parti Ouvrier commented that it "deserves to attract the public's attention, for it really represents the world of labor."  

On the first day of the Congress, a violent controversy took place over the voting procedure. Since the Parti Ouvrier Français had held its Party congress directly before the syndicat meeting,  

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59 Le Parti Ouvrier, September 21-22, 1894.
it had a strong representation among the delegates. However, the number of actual trade union mandates held by the Guesdistes was considerably less than their numerical strength would indicate. For this reason, Pelloutier proposed that each delegate should have as many votes as he had mandates from the trade unions. By a close vote, Pelloutier's proposal carried over Lavigne's motion which limited each delegate to one vote. What followed was a vehement debate in which Lavigne threatened to take the Fédération National des Syndicats from the Congress if he did not get his way on procedural matters. In an effort to conciliate the Marxist minority, the defenders of the General Strike decided to limit each delegate to one vote. To insure the "union of the workers," the Congress deferred to the Marxists.

On the second day, the Allemanist Girard opened the discussion of the General Strike. His speech was a plea for all the workers to rally to it as a basis of politico-economic unity. According to him, the General Strike could be carried out peacefully and easily. In fact, he argued that it "would last only a day or two" and would give the workers a "peaceful revolution." To prepare the General Strike, he asked the Bourses du Travail to set up sub-committees

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60 C. Congrès National, p. 17.
64 Ibid., pp. 23-28. 65 Ibid., p. 27.
which would popularize and prepare this tactic. Finally, he insisted that all the socialist groups should adopt the General Strike, for only their support would enable the workers to carry out a successful insurrection.

The Allemanists' strategy was obvious. Like the Marxists, they knew that the majority of the workers were lukewarm supporters of the General Strike. By painting such a harmless and innocuous picture of this tactic, the Allemanists hoped to win the wavering and undecided delegates to their cause. What both the Allemanists and the Marxists realized clearly was that the success or defeat of the General Strike at the Congress depended entirely on this group of delegates.

As might have been expected, the Marxists left no stone unturned to bring home the horrors of the insurrection to the congressistes. To Noel, a member of the Parti Ouvrier Français, a peaceful General Strike was "utopian," for it was "impossible to prepare it adequately." He insisted that the General Strike would end in disaster because the workers had neither the means nor the resources to organize it effectively. In his opinion, the only kind of General Strike that was possible was the strike of an entire métier or the grève généralisée. But, he concluded, this was a far different thing from the awesome piece of dupery proposed by the Allemanists.

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68 6e Congrès National..., pp. 28-29.
progressed, Noël was followed to the podium by a host of other Marxists, all of whom described the horror and bloodletting that would result from the use of the General Strike.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 29, 33-34.}

To reply to the Marxists, Briand took the floor. His words were an attempt to assuage the moderates' anxiety over the General Strike. In an eloquent piece of oratory, he traced the growth of this idea among the trade unions. According to him, the General Strike was leading the workers toward unity, for it gave them a weapon of their own in the struggle against capital. No longer was the proletarian forced to accept the leadership of political demagogues who alienated him against his brothers. He was now conscious of the power which resided in his own class and organizations. Consequently, the General Strike, when it did come, was sure to be triumphant.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 29-30.}

At this point, Briand outlined a view of the General Strike which was far from the revolutionary instrument envisioned by some militants. He insisted that the workers, after a preparatory period of six years, should produce a general work stoppage in order to wrest certain reforms from the government. In an effort to appease the moderates, he watered down the General Strike to the point where it was hardly distinguishable from the grève généralisée. Even the Marxists would have no trouble in accepting Briand's version of the General Strike. For he insisted that it should be coupled to political action, and
asked the Quedists to accept it merely as an additional arm in their struggle against capital. "You have one weapon," he said to the Marxists, "but if it fails, do you have another ready...? We say to you: prepare the... General Strike, for it will be a powerful arm for you." 71

Following Briand to the tribune, Pelloutier took up the defense of the General Strike. The sickly Pelloutier stood in sharp contrast to the preceding orator. A pale little man with a monstrous head, Pelloutier looked as if he himself bore all the sufferings of the human race. He spoke almost in whispers, gesticulating with ecclesiastical gestures, as he argued that the General Strike did not involve any complex problems of organization and preparation. 72 He insisted that it could be carried out quickly and easily if the workers of certain key industries—food, building trades, mining, and transportation—would simply leave their jobs. According to Pelloutier, "the General Strike consists only of the suspension of work in the minds and the industries which depend on them." 73 For Pelloutier, there was little point in trying to compromise with the politicians who opposed the General Strike. Unlike Briand, he was perfectly willing to break with the Marxists over this issue. "The workers," he said, "are in the presence of the politicians who have done nothing for

71 Ibid., p. 30.
72 Suarez, I, 201.
73 6e Congres National..., p. 33.
them and the General Strike." He asked the Congress to ignore the political parties and embrace the General Strike.

The discussion dragged on. While the Marxists conspired in the coulisses with Guesde and Lafargue, the defenders of the General Strike tried to assuage the timid. "Believe me, comrades," pleaded one of the moderates, "to transform society from top to bottom is as impossible as the modification of the laws of gravity.... We must work, not for this transformation, but for the modification of the laws which regulate... the relations of capital and labor." Another asked the penetrating question: "What is the General Strike? Is it to augment our salaries or to seize the public powers?" To him, it was the latter, for he asked the Congress to reject the General Strike.

The arguments of the Guesdists were summarized by Raymond Lavigne, firey orator and Secretary of the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats. He insisted that the Marxists were opposed to the General Strike because it was destructive to working class unity. According to him, if the Congress adopted the General Strike, those who feared this instrument would refuse to join the syndicats. For this reason, the trade unions should concentrate on the conquest of public power,

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74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., p. 31.
76 Ibid., p. 35.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., p. 38.
for the General Strike had aroused too much controversy among the workers. Moreover, only by concentrating on political action would the proletariat be prepared for the revolution when it did occur. Dressed in the oratory of Lavigne, the old Marxist line took on a new appeal. His arguments won new allies for the Guesdists in their struggle against the General Strike. 79

When the vote was taken, the Marxist bloc stood firm. They were joined in their opposition to the General Strike by a number of reformist socialists and moderates. It was to no avail. By a vote of 63-36 with nine abstentions, the Allemanists and their supporters carried the day. Socialists, both reformist and revolutionary, and moderates came together in a display of syndicalist faith that routed the Marxists. The dye was firmly cast. Either the Guesdists could accept the General Strike and join in the campaign for working class unity or they could dissociate themselves from the French syndicats.

What did the triumph of the General Strike at Nantes really mean? No less an observer than Pelloutier, writing immediately after the Congress, pointed out that the coalition which voted the General Strike was composed mostly of those who had many reservations about its use. According to Pelloutier, the majority of its supporters were not really concerned with utilizing the General Strike for the revolution, for "they say that it makes no difference whether the

79 Ibid., pp. 39-40.
General Strike will or will not be. It suffices that its appeal be capable of shaking off the stupor in which the slow march of progress has forced the people. It is only for this reason that they propagate it, discuss it, and create the specter of it. However, Pelloutier insisted that a few members of this coalition were "convinced revolutionaries" who felt "that if the timid workers succeed in planting the... General Strike, it will break out more quickly than they want." 81

With the triumph of the General Strike, the Marxists prepared to abandon the trade union congress. An excuse was found in a minor incident which occurred between the Marxists and the Allemanists. On September 21 Lavigne led the Guesdists out of the Congress, taking with him a number of delegates who were loyal to the Fédération National des Syndicats. 82 Retreating into their usual intransigence, the Guesdists choose to boycott what they could not control. Upon their departure, Pelloutier arose to condemn the Marxists' action. The Congress voted a motion declaring that "all the responsibility for its behavior rests with this minority which will be judged by the proletariat." 83

If the Marxists had accepted the General Strike at Nantes, the unification of the socialists might have been accomplished around

81 Ibid.
82 6e Congres National... p. 65.
83 Quoted in Leroy, I, 332.
this tactic. For the majority of the trade unions were not opposed
to political and parliamentary action. What they wanted was merely
to strengthen socialism by adding another weapon to its arsenal. A
more tolerant attitude on the part of the Marxists might have led
to the establishment of a politico-syndicalist organization,
encircling the most vigorous elements in the labor world. Blanquists,
Allemanists, Possibilists, Marxists, and moderates could have found
the basis for unification on the ground of syndicalism.

Upon the departure of the Guesdists, the Congress took up the
question of working class unity. The main obstacle in its path was
the existence of a number of organizations which had a vested interest
in retaining the status quo. Besides the federations of métier which
demanded a strong role in a united labor movement, the delegates
were confronted with the Federation of Bourses and the Federation
National des Syndicats.34 It was clear that working class unity
could only be achieved by eliminating one or more of these organiza-
tions or by incorporating them into a larger framework which
included all these organizations. In either case, opposition could
be expected from those organizations which stood to lose either
prestige or power from any change in the status quo.

Of all the projects on working class unity proposed at the Congress,
only those introduced by Pelloutier and Lhermite dealt with the real

34 For a discussion of the various types of organizations in the
labor world, see below, pp. 231-34.
problems of unification. To Pelloutier, unity depended upon the abolition of the *Fédération National des Syndicats*, a narrow political machine which was incapable of rallying the workers. His scheme of union gave a pivotal role to the *Bourses du Travail* which were to co-ordinate the various local, regional, and national federations of métier. More practical was the plan offered by Lhermite, an Allemanist. According to his proposal, all the federations of métier should join the *Fédération National des Syndicats* which would work hand in hand with the *Federation of Bourses*. To co-ordinate the two Organizations, a *National Secretariat*, composed of delegates from both, would be established. What was common to both these projects was the recognition that old organizations must be eliminated or modified extensively if real bonds among the workers were to exist.

The outcome of the discussion on working class unity was a compromise. In an effort to "preserve the vested interests and to offend no one," the Congress set up what was called a *National Labor Council*. This body was to be composed of an equal number of delegates from the *Federation of Bourses*, the *Fédération National des Syndicats*, and each of the regional and national federations of trade or industry. These organizations were to be co-ordinated by the *National Labor Council*. Nothing was said of their respective roles.

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85 *6e Congrès National...*, pp. 64-65.
86 The rather complex project proposed by Lhermite is summarized in Leroy, II, 450-51.
nor was anything done to mark off the areas in which their duties overlapped. To protect the Council for political intrigues, the Congress decided to seat it away from Paris, passing it from town to town according to where the future congresses would be held. Finally, the delegates expressed their desire to keep the National Labor Council outside of all political disputes.88

In many ways, the Congress of Nantes was the point of departure between syndicalism and political socialism, but there were still many points of contact between the two methods. At Nantes, the workers set up a permanent Committee of the General Strike which was to prepare the workers for the insurrection. Each Bourse du Travail and federation of métier was to create a sub-committee to carry on local propaganda for the General Strike and to assist the National Committee in its work.89 Highly significant was the fact that the Congress asked the sub-committees to "invite the socialist deputies and Municipal Councillors... to co-ordinate with them in spreading... the General Strike at all reunions where the socialists would be called upon to speak."90 In addition, the delegates insisted that the "sub-committees must try to obtain from all candidates... a promise to propagate the... General Strike."91 From this, it is clear that the trade unions were still seeking to convert

88 Ibid.
89 6e Congrès National..., p. 28.
90 Ibid.  91 Ibid.
the socialists to this tactic. Although the workers wanted to ban political controversy from the syndicats, they still felt that political action was vital to their interests. As one syndicalist rather paradoxically exclaimed, "we have freed ourselves from all political ties, but we must remember that the conquest of public authority is the first step toward the liberation of the proletariat."

On September 22 the Congress broke up. This meeting occupies a pivotal position in the history of the French labor movement. By affirming the General Strike at Nantes, the workers proclaimed to the world that the trade unions had a certain power of their own. Moreover, the Congress took the first real steps toward the unification of the working class. But even more important was the fact that the delegates affirmed in a highly emphatic manner the workers' desire for an independent labor movement. It was clear that the workers would no longer tolerate destructive political influences in the trade unions. In no way, however, did the Congress of Nantes represent a decisive rupture with the socialists. Although they insisted upon political neutrality in the syndicats, the workers were willing to participate in political and parliamentary action.

92 In fact, the Committee of the General Strike was linked to a similar committee established in 1891 by the Allemanists. During the 1890's, the Allemanists worked closely with the Committee of the General Strike created at Nantes. See Leroy, II, 523-24.

93 *Le Congrès National...*, pp. 92-93.
The Marxists poured out their frustrations in the press. Denying that Nantes was a defeat, Guesde argued that it was a "victory in the practical sense." In 1892 the Congress of Marseilles had adopted the General Strike at unanimity, but "only by a feeble majority has it found grace this year before a congress of syndicats...." However, the Guesdist saved their real praise for the Congress of the Parti Ouvrier Français which took place prior to the trade union meeting. According to the Marxists, the unity demonstrated by their Party was a "true miracle." They congratulated their members for "ousting the... dupery of the General Strike and assigning to the proletariat... the conquest of public power." From the Allemanists came a far different reaction to the meeting. The Allemanists hailed the Congress as having taken the first step in the unification of the proletariat. As for the General Strike, they announced that "the workers have been almost unanimous in adopting this method as the supreme arm of the proletariat." Although the "socialist Girondists" had rejected it, they were only a "weak minority" among the workers. For this reason, the Allemanists predicted that working class unity would have to be accomplished without the support of the Marxists.

94 See Guesde's letter to Les Temps, reprinted in Le Socialiste, September 29, 1894.
95 Ibid. 96 Ibid.
97 Le Parti Ouvrier, November 4, 1894.
98 Ibid., November 27-28, 1894.
Since the 1880's the anarchists had occupied a precarious position in France. Driven from the trade unions in the repression following the Commune, they had undertaken a campaign of terror and violence against the state. By 1892 when their blood letting tactics had widened into a wholesale flood of violence against established authority, the government had stepped up its drive against the terrorists. Between 1892 and 1894 the state had passed a series of laws designed to destroy the anarchists. These lois scélérates, as they were termed by the socialists, were so harsh and effective that the anarchists were threatened with extinction. In 1894 the libertarians were scattered and disorganized by the repressive measures of the government.

The anarchists had looked on quietly as the syndicats moved toward a rift with the socialists in the 1890's. Since the 1880's the libertarians had denounced trade union action, for they objected to the workers' preoccupation with reforms. What also alienated the anarchists from the syndicats was the predominant influence of the socialists within these organizations. For these reasons, the anarchists had played little part in the movement for working class

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99 According to the anarchists, "the majority of those who lead the movement are the authoritarian socialists who refuse all discussion ...." Le Revolté No. 42, July 2-9, 1893.
independence in the late 1880's. As the gulf between the politicians and workers widened in the early 1890's, however, a number of libertarians began to reconsider the value of trade union activity. It was not long before they found a leader and spokesman in Fernand Pelloutier.

In 1895 Pelloutier was very close to anarchism in spirit and doctrine. He had broken with the Parti Ouvrier Français and now treaded the thin ideological line between allemanisme and anarchism, the first being what he called the pepiniere of the other.\textsuperscript{100}

During 1895 he collaborated on Les Temps Nouveaux, an anarchist journal, and joined several anarchist-inspired organizations at Paris.\textsuperscript{101} His duties on the Comite Federal of the Bourses gave him little time for writing, but, during 1895 and 1896, he contributed several articles to L'Enclos and L'Art Social, two small literary journals devoted to socialism.

When Pelloutier had taken the General Strike to the Congress of Tours in 1892 he had been an active socialist. Now, in 1895 he had

\textsuperscript{100}\textsuperscript{}Letter of Fernand Pelloutier to Leon de Seilhac, reproduced in Leon de Seilhac, "A propos le Congres de Londres," La Revue Blanche No. 9 (August 29, 1896). The word pepiniere is difficult to render into English. It is best translated as "nursery."

\textsuperscript{101}\textsuperscript{}One of these organizations, the Chavaliers du Travail, was so vague and idealistic in program that the cynical Briand was highly amused when he too, under the prodding of Pelloutier, was induced to become a member. Suarez, II, 215.
left the socialists' camp and was veering toward anarchism. What had happened during this period to cause his break with socialism? Long conversations with the Allemanists and libertarians at the Paris Bourse had certainly contributed to Pelloutier's defection, but the decisive factor in his evolution had been the socialist's refusal to accept the General Strike. The Guesdists had carried their opposition to this tactic up to the point of rupture with the syndicalists at Nantes, but the Possibilists had tried to conceal their hostility to it. In 1892 they had accepted the General Strike, and then had pushed it aside as they continued their mad dash for public office. As to the Blanquists, their acceptance of it had never been more than perfunctory. The Comité Révolutionaire Central had never endorsed it wholeheartedly or admitted that it could be carried out without the help of the socialists.

What also alienated Pelloutier from the socialists was their steady drift from the revolutionary path. As early as 1891 the Marxists had shown the first signs of revolutionary bankruptcy. The Parti Ouvrier Français had adopted an elaborate reform program which had weakened its revolutionary fiber. What followed had been an evolution of the Party toward an out and out reformism.

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10h According to Lagardelle, "their first parliamentary victory was their first revolutionary defeat." H. Lagardelle, Le Mouvement Socialist No. 213, p. 82.
evolution of the Blanquists had not been so spectacular but just as
sure. In the 1890's the Comité Révolutionnaire Central, like the
Marxists, had gradually taken on the characteristics of just another
reform-conscious political party. The defection of the socialists
from the revolutionary camp angered Pelloutier who was convinced
that only total revolution could alleviate working class conditions.
By 1895 he was moving closer to anarchism in his search for an
effective and revolutionary ideology.

Pelloutier's critique of capitalism was a far reaching one,
following essentially the discerning analysis of Proudhon. According
to Pelloutier, the cause of the social problem was the monopolization
of wealth by the few. An equal distribution of property would eliminate
all the economic ills of society, for then the real value of a product
would be equal to its exchange value. Such a system stood in marked
contrast to the capitalist order in which the bourgeois class,
rapaciously accumulating and controlling wealth, forced the exchange
value of goods above their real value. The difference between the
two values was pocketed by the rich in the form of profit. Consequently,
the wealthy profitted from the labor of the workers who lived on the
edge of poverty. 105

Like the anarchists, Pelloutier felt that no lasting reform or
amelioration of working class conditions was possible under capitalism.

105 Fernand Pelloutier, "Qu'est-ce que la question social,"
L'Art Social No. 1 (January, 1894).
Since the state was the guardian of the capitalists' interests, any reform obtained from the public powers would eventually prove illusory. However, Pelloutier, unlike many anarchists, refused to forego all efforts to improve working class conditions. He felt that the workers should continue their efforts to obtain reform from the patron. According to Pelloutier, the workers should organize syndicats and Bourses du Travail in order to strengthen their bargaining power with their employers. The syndicats were to resist further exploitation of their members and to group the workers in the defense of their economic interests.

In view of the impotency of reform, how did Pelloutier feel the social problem could be solved? Like the anarchists and some of the socialists, he was a revolutionary, devoted to the overthrow of the system. According to him, the capitalist order had to be transformed into a collective society in which "all are called upon to enjoy what they have helped to produce. Far from being the annihilation of property, it will be... the unlimited extension of it." His ardent revolutionary beliefs tightened Pelloutier's ties with the anarchists in the summer of 1895, but he differed with the libertarians on how the revolutionary should be accomplished.

Since 1892 Pelloutier had insisted that revolution could be achieved by the General Strike, and now, in 1895 his faith in it was just as


firm as ever. In collaboration with Henri Girard, he wrote, in 1895 a pamphlet entitled "What is the General Strike?" in order to popularize this notion among the workers. This tract shows clearly that Pelloutier was convinced the General Strike would be successful. In this pamphlet, he argued that the project could not be decreed in advance but must break out spontaneously. To those who insisted that the General Strike could not be accomplished peacefully, Pelloutier conceded that the insurrection might be a violent one.¹⁰⁹

In light of this pamphlet, it is clear that Pelloutier's outlook on the General Strike had undergone certain changes since he had first submitted the idea in 1892. No longer did he picture it as a planned, well thought-out uprising; nor did he insist it could be carried out peacefully. It is interesting to speculate why Pelloutier revised his views on the General Strike, especially since his new version of it was certain to alienate the more timid members of the working class. By revising his conception of the General Strike, Pelloutier was hoping to induce the anarchists to accept this tactic. In 1894 the Congress of Nantes had voted the General Strike in order to assert their independence vis-à-vis the socialists. Now, in 1895 Pelloutier wanted to enlist the libertarians in his revolutionary cause. Consequently, he was willing to give the

¹⁰⁹ Fernand Pelloutier et Henri Girard, Qu'est-ce que la Grève Générale (Paris: 1895), pp. 7-8, 13-14.
General Strike a more radical and violent tone in order to persuade the anarchists to accept it.

Other factors linked Pelloutier to anarchism in the summer of 1895. By instinct and inclination, he hated all oppressive authority which obstructed the freedom of the individual to develop and mature as his personality dictated. The social and economic activities of mankind in the new society would be left to "free and voluntary associations of producers." According to Pelloutier, all compulsion and force would disappear and all institution would be suppressed that did "not have the development of human intelligence or economic production as a goal." He once said that his aim "was the suppression of authority in all its forms, for the workers must become accustomed to free themselves from all tutelage." Or, as he was to say on the same occasion, "we must habituate the workers to do without governors. We can advise them, instruct them, but never direct them."

Pelloutier was acutely aware that unlicensed freedom often ended in sterility and egotism, but he felt that the noble qualities of man were stronger than the ignoble ones. "There exists in the heart of

111 Ibid., p. 12.
113 Fédération des Bourses du Travail—Procès Verbaux de la Comité Fédéral, p. 15. MS deposited in the Musée Social, No. 26.165.
man, not an infantile sentiment of insubordination," he once said, "but the noble and lofty desire to affirm his strength, his intelligence, all the best in himself." Despite his belief in the goodness of man, Pelloutier realized that freedom required discipline. However, he insisted that it was the duty of man to supervise and discipline himself, just as it was his own responsibility to free himself from capitalist oppression. "The emancipation must come from the people," he claimed, "who must manage themselves now and in the future society."  

His instinctive faith in the nobility of man gave Pelloutier's hatred of oppression an emotional fiber. Under the capitalist system, the true qualities of human nature never came to the fore. The anarchy of bourgeois society forced people to become self-seeking and rapacious, separated from one another by the sterile bonds of egotism. According to Pelloutier, society was so degenerate that doctors loved sickness and soldiers glorified war because their self-interest was linked with these evils. As he reflected on the horrible joke played on humanity by bourgeois society, his pen grew bitter. A denatured mankind, tugged by a thousand frustrations and futilities, pained the sensitive idealist who had suffered so much himself. To the workers, he brought all the compassion and moral anguish that a decade of intense personal pain had given him for the grievances of others.

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115 Ibid., p. 17.
116 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
Although Pelloutier was a libertarian, he never embraced anti-authoritarian notions to the point where he would sacrifice syndicat strength and discipline on their behalf. In fact, he insisted on a tightly-organized, well-disciplined working class organization and structure. That such an arrangement could be produced only by sacrificing some degree of trade union liberty he was well aware. "Without doubt, we are federalists," he explained in 1895, "and we must never cease to demand communal autonomy, the division of power, the diminution of central authority. But must we always apply these principles to ourselves?" In answer to this question, he argued that "the proletarian must carry out the concentration of his forces in order to increase... his chances of victory... and to hasten the day of the social transformation. Once the revolution is accomplished, no longer will there be a state... or centralization."

His libertarian temperament led Pelloutier to question the doctrinal aims of the socialists. In 1895 he denounced any attempt to "replace one state with another, even be it socialist." According to Pelloutier, a vast collectivism centered around an omnipotent state would be every bit as tyrannical as the capitalist system. What he called a "free life on a free soil" could never emerge from socialism. In support of his views, he pointed to the


socialist groups throughout France. Not only did each of them seek to capture and use the state to create the new society but every group, with the exception of the Allemanists, sought to impose a final truth on its members.\textsuperscript{119} To Pelloutier, this was intolerable, for to dictate to those capable of thinking for themselves was a direct affront to the dignity of man.

What really distinguished Pelloutier from the socialists were his views on parliamentary and political action. Like the anarchists, he was a stern critic of parliamentarism, although he did admit that it had a certain propagandistic value.\textsuperscript{120} According to Pelloutier, the value of universal suffrage and parliamentary action depended upon the political and economic conditions in which they operated. They were not bad in themselves, but they were rendered superficial by the capitalist system. "The truth is," he said, "that suffrage is an illusion, theoretically excellent, but practically unworkable." He contended that its defects stemmed from the fact that the "social conditions in which it operates prevent it from being the inoffensive... instrument which it would become in a differently organized state...." Under the existing system, no beneficial result could be expected from universal suffrage and parliamentary action. For example, such reforms as salary increases always resulted in

\textsuperscript{119} Fernand Pelloutier, \textit{Les Temps Nouveaux} No. 10.

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid.}
either the immediate increase in the fortunes of the rich... or an eventual rise in the price of goods that cancels out the partial and accidental increase in the wage level." Hence, it followed that "universal suffrage is powerless to solve the social problem. There exists a law of supply and demand, by virtue of which no one can become richer without someone else becoming poorer." Since the rich had all the power and wealth, they passed on to other the "weight of disagreeable reforms."\footnote{121}

His personal views on political and parliamentary action never prevented Pelloutier from complying with the workers' desires for state assistance. As Secretary of the Bourses du Travail, he notified the deputies faithfully on all decisions taken by the working class organizations. In addition, whenever the Bourses sought the aid of the socialists, Pelloutier carried out their wishes without delay. Notable for the moderate way in which it expressed the workers' viewpoint was the letter that he wrote to the Chamber during the debate on the Marlin-Trarieux project.\footnote{122} Although he was diametrically opposed to the reformist views expressed in this letter, he would never allow his personal opinions to influence his conduct as Secretary of the Bourses.

\footnote{121} Pelloutier's views on universal suffrage are found in his article, "Les Reforms Partielles," Les Temps Nouveaux No. 20 September 14-20, 1895.

\footnote{122} This letter is reproduced in Le Radical, April 8, 1895 in Cahiers de... The Merlin-Trarieux bill, then before the Chambre, was measure revoking the right of the railroad workers to engage in strike action against the state.
The truth was that Pelloutier was a revolutionary syndicalist. Unlike the anarchists, he did not oppose all political and parliamentary action without qualification. Although he placed his faith primarily in trade union methods, he never rejected parliamentary aid if he felt it to be in the best interests of the workers. What he did oppose, however, was the introduction of political issues in the trade unions. When he asked the syndicats to abstain from politics he was really asking them to be neutral. 123

What were these political issues which Pelloutier sought to bar from the trade unions? In this definition lays the key to Pelloutier's behavior throughout this entire period. By political issue, Pelloutier meant any activity or doctrine, other than economic matters, which was controversial and capable of dividing the workers. 124 Although the General Strike was certainly capable of dividing the workers, this instrument was purely an economic matter. It could be carried out by the workers themselves, for its use required no aid or assistance for the state or the political parties. According to Pelloutier, the fact that it depended upon the proletarian and his organizations alone made the General Strike a common bond and not a cause of division among the syndicats. A political act, however,

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123 Pelloutier's campaign for political neutrality in the Comite Federal is reported in Federation des Bourses... Verbaux de la..., pp. 140.

124 Maurice Pelloutier, pp. 60-1.
required the help of the state or a political party. In Pelloutier’s definition, the workers were committing a political act when they appealed to parliament for the eight-hour day, for they were calling upon another agency other than themselves. Since the political sentiments and loyalties of the workers were so diverse, Pelloutier felt that it was dangerous to introduce explosive political issues or activities into the trade union movement.

Such was the set of convictions that guided Fernand Pelloutier as he took over the reins of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail on July 19, 1895. From his secretarial post on this body, he surveyed the situation in the labor world. To him, the most serious obstacle in the way of working class unity were the politicians. He knew that the Congress of Nantes had done little to insulate the trade unions against political disruptions. On the National Labor Council, set up at Nantes, sat politico-syndicalists who were enthusiastic

\[125\] On some issues, it was easy to apply this rule of thumb. Such questions as those pertaining to religion or patriotism, for example, had no place in the trade unions. However, Pelloutier’s definition often broke down when the line between a political or economic issue was a wavering one. The legal conquest of the eight-hour day, for example, was definitely an economic measure, although it required the assistance of the state. Because of the thin margin between the two classifications, Pelloutier was often inconsistent in his definition of a pure economic or political issue. For example, compare his remarks on the meaning of economic action on May 22, 1896 when he contrasted it with what he called “electoral and parliamentary action,” with his definition of a pure economic matter on February 23, 1900. On the latter occasion, he implied that economic action may require the entry of the syndicats in the political arena. See Fédération des Bourses du Travail-Procès-Verbaux de la Comité Fédéral, pp. 65, 116.

\[126\] Ibid., pp. 65-66.

\[127\] Fernand Pelloutier, Les Temps Nouveaux No. 27.
alumni of the various political schools. Although political neutrality had been proclaimed at Nantes, Pelloutier knew that political issues and personalities still existed in the labor organizations.

Even in the Fédération des Bourses du Travail, political passions manifested themselves from time to time. The recent Congress of the Bourses at Nîmes in June, 1895 had provided ample testimony to this fact. At this meeting, the Guesdists had led a campaign to seize the Comité Fédéral from its Allemannist members. Under the pretext of wanting to decentralize the Organization, Soulery, a Marxist, had demanded that the Comité Fédéral be moved from Paris to the Marxist-controlled provinces. Working hand in hand with Soulery had been the Guesdists from the Bourses du Travail of Grenoble, Toulon, Iyon, and several other cities.

The threat to the Federation of Bourses du Travail had been warded off, thanks to Pelloutier. In a convincing piece of oratory, the then assistant Secretary had warned the delegates against the danger of dispersing their forces over too large a territory. His argument had been that the strength of the working class movement lay

128 Fernand Pelloutier, Ibid., No. 10.
129 Maurice Pelloutier, p. 66.
130 Le Congrès de la Fédération des Bourses..., tenu à Nîmes..., Juin, 1895, pp. 52-54.
131 Ibid. 132 Ibid., pp. 56-61.
in centralization and concentration. Just as the state had con-
centrated all its machinery at one spot in the nation, so also should
the organized labor groups. "Centralization is the instrument which
protects the present economic system," he had pointed out, "and if
it is good for the ruling class, it is good for the working class." He
had then proceeded to list the advantages for the Bourses in
keeping the Comité Fédéral at Paris. According to him, Paris was the
only town which could assure the Comité Fédéral of an adequate number
of neutral delegates. Moreover, he contended that a change of the
Comité Fédéral from year to year would seriously impede its work.
His final words had been a warning to the workers about the intrigues
of the Marxists. "Chase away your false fear, comrades," he had
pleaded, "that false friends have instilled in you against your
brothers in Paris. Think only of the advantages which Paris offers
to the working class." As a result of Pelloutier's speech, several
delegates had broken their mandates and had helped defeat the Marxists' plot.

The Guesdists' designs on the Federation of Bourses seriously
disturbed Pelloutier who feared political intrigues in the labor
organizations. Even in the Comité Fédéral, political controversy
often took place. The Allemans were especially militant,

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133 Ibid., p. 57.
134 Ibid., p. 61.
135 Fédération des Bourses...—Procès-Verbaux de la..., pp. 15, 17, 69, 79-80, 89.
preaching their brand of socialism with zeal and belligerency. Their major opponents were the Marxists who often accused Pelloutier of siding with the Allemanists. The key issue between the two groups was political action. While the Allemanists denounced it, the Guesdists were quick to argue that "the workers do not have any fear of political action." The Comité Fédéral's refusal to sponsor political activities was criticized by the Marxists who argued that "political agitation should not give way completely to economic agitation." From time to time, even the neutral Blanquists were heard to speak out for a sacred party principle or two. Vis-à-vis these militants, Pelloutier steered the Bourses into a neutral course. Nevertheless, the Secretary realized that such a situation in the Bourses was potentially dangerous.

During the summer of 1895 Pelloutier looked with some concern on the growing number of moderate and reformist elements in the labor movement. What disturbed him the most was the fact that the reformists greatly outnumbered the revolutionaries. In May he pointed out that there were two groups in the working class world. Composed of Marxists, Blanquists, Possibilists and Independents, one group was reformist and political in nature. The Allemanists and anarchists formed a second group which was revolutionary to the

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136 Ibid., pp. 18-20, 118. 137 Ibid., p. 18.
138 Ibid. 139 Ibid., p. 113.
core, speaking "a virile language of revolt to the people."\footnote{140}
According to Pelloutier, this latter group had no faith in political action and wanted to overthrow the system in one way or another. However, the anarchists had little influence in the syndicats. Since the 1880's they had shunned these organizations which seemed to them hotbeds of reformism and moderation. To Pelloutier, seeking to strengthen the non-political and revolutionary elements in the trade unions, it was obvious that the support of the anarchists was necessary for his purpose.\footnote{141}

In the fall of 1895 Pelloutier began to act. In several articles written for Les Temps Nouveaux, he invited the anarchists into the syndicats. According to Pelloutier, the syndicats were no longer "the breeding grounds for socialist deputies."\footnote{142} The trade unions had evolved "from the reformist conception to the revolutionary conceptions," for the workers had gradually become disillusioned with the Republic.\footnote{143} In addition, they had become tired of the divisions created in their organizations by the socialists. For these reasons, they had decided "that all political agitation would remain foreign to them, that all discussion other than economic topics would be barred... from their program."\footnote{144} These changes in labor's mentality, Pelloutier argued, had paved the way for the

\footnote{141} Fernand Pelloutier, Les Temps Nouveaux No. 10.
\footnote{142} Fernand Pelloutier, Les Temps Nouveaux No. 27.
\footnote{143} Ibid.
\footnote{144} Ibid.
entry of the anarchists into the trade union. For the "syndicat is a revolutionary and libertarian organization which alone can counterbalance and destroy the nefarious influence of the collectivist politicians."

Why were the syndicats important to the anarchists? First of all, claimed Pelloutier, the syndicats would "teach to the masses the real significance of anarchism." No longer would the libertarians, once established in the trade unions, have to rely on such infantile methods as the attentat. In addition, Pelloutier hammered home to the libertarians the possibilities of organizing the future society around the syndicats. Would not the post-revolutionary world, he asked, be composed of "libertarian organizations limited exclusively to the need of production and distribution." In the syndicats, the cells of the future society were already available. The day after the revolution, they would be ready to "substitute for the present society... a quasi-libertarian organization which... will control... its own affairs... with the free consent of its members."

Proposals for extending anarchism to the trade unions were not new with Pelloutier. As early as 1890 La Revolte, an anarchist sheet

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145 Ibid. 146 Ibid. 147 The word attentat is impossible to translate accurately into English. It is the French term for an act of anarchist terrorism. 148 Fernand Pelloutier, Les Temps Nouveaux No. 27. 149 Ibid.
directed by Kropotkin, published a series of articles which demanded a *rapprochement* between the anarchists and the syndicalists. In 1893 a libertarian group called *L'Avant-Garde* preached the value of syndicalism to the anarchists. Several years later, Emile Pouget, writing in *Père Peinard* and *La Sociale*, two journals he founded at Paris, opened a campaign to draw the anarchists into the syndicats. Despite these early efforts, it was Pelloutier who first clearly and decisively demonstrated to the anarchists that the syndicat could be a *practical school of anarchism.*

Under the impact of the writings of Pelloutier, Pouget, and others, the anarchists began to move, slowly at first but gradually gathering speed, into the trade unions. To the syndicats came such energetic and capable militants as Paul Delesalle, August Hamon, Georges Yvetot, and Pierre Monatte. These men took the seats along side the Allemanists, Blanquists, and Guesdists on the Comité Fédéral of the Bourses and other important working class councils. Since they were opposed to all political activities, it

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150 See in particular, *La Revolte* No. 6, October 18-21, 1890; No. 17, January, 16-22, 1892; No. 21, March 4-11, 1892.


152 A definitive study of this important militant is not available. For a cursory summary of the career of Pouget, see *Emile Pouget: Ad Memoriam* (Paris: n.d.).

153 Maitron, p. 256.

154 Not all the anarchists moved into the syndicats. A large number of libertarians remained indifferent to syndicalism. From 1895 to 1899, these "pure" anarchists found a refuge around *Le libertaire*, a journal which propagated an anti-syndicalist line.

was easy for these men to remain neutral in regard to the political schools. So well in fact did they refrain from political action that it gradually dawned on the defenders of political neutrality that the anarchists were preaching a political doctrine of their own—anti-parliamentarianism.

In many respects, the syndicat organizations were well suited to the anarchist's doctrine of hostility to the state and political action. From the beginning of the labor movement, a deeply-rooted animosity to the state existed among many of the workers. A large number of syndicalists still hesitated to call upon the state except as a last resort in their struggle for reform. Instead of state aid, they placed their hopes in a strong trade union movement which could impose its will directly on the patrons. Allemanists, Blanquists, some Guesdist— all had helped to carry this idea into modern labor history. Moreover, the moderates shared in this tradition. Always strong advocates of direct syndicat action, such moderates as Keufer had often displayed a degree of anti-statism. Under these conditions, the anarchists, infiltrating the trade unions, after 1895 found a fertile ground for some of their basic doctrinal tenets.

With the influx of the libertarians into the trade unions, the revolutionary elements were strengthened and reinvigorated. The anarcho-syndicalists soon gave up their terrorists activities and adopted the General Strike as the principle weapon in their
arsenal. In the syndicats, they aligned themselves with the Allemanists against the politicians and the reformists. Unlike the other syndicalists, however, this new group was not content to demand political neutrality in the trade unions. What they preached was a doctrine that denied the value of parliamentary and electoral action entirely. Just as the other syndicalists never completely gave up their political loyalties, the anarchists never broke their ties with their particular brand of politics—anti-political action. For some years after 1895 the anarcho-syndicalists were too weak to influence the main direction of the labor movement. By the turn of the century, however, they were a strong force in French syndicalism. 157

156 Maitron, pp. 282-88.

157 Georges Sorel once pointed out that "historians will see some day, in this entry of the anarchists into the syndicats, one of the great events which our time has produced. Then the name of my poor friend, Fernand Pelloutier, will be known as it deserves to be known." Letter of Sorel to Halevy, quoted in Andre May, Les Origines du Syndicalisme Révolutionnaire (Paris: 1913), p. 105.
A great deal of anxiety swept through the labor world in the fall of 1895. Since the Congress of Nantes, most of the organized labor movement was represented in the National Labor Council, but this body rested on very shaky foundations. Because of a constant lack of funds, it had not been able to carry out the duties assigned to it. Moreover, the rivalries and disputes among its member federations and syndicats made its internal administration difficult. Probably the chief defect of this Council was the lack of precision in its statutes over the various duties and obligations of its adherents. All these flaws would have to be ironed out if a real unified labor movement was to exist. To the outspoken advocates of working class unity, the shortcomings of the National Labor Council were causing a great deal of concern.

Another worry of the protagonists of working class unity was the Federation Nationale des Syndicats. A substantial number of syndicats, especially in the provinces still remained loyal to this Marxist-dominated organization. As long as the presence of this body created
a bifurcation in the labor world, real working class union could only be a dim prospect. To be sure, the syndicalists hoped to draw the syndicats out of the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats. This might indeed be done at the coming Congress of Limoges, scheduled for September of 1895.

What caused most of the anxiety in working class circles was the Marxists' intention of sabotaging the congress. At Troyes around the same date, the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats planned a meeting of its own. The syndicalists were really concerned when they learned that the Guesdistes were urging their trade unions to boycott the congress of Limoges and to come to Troyes. In fact, so forcefully were the Guesdistes pushing this party line that they introduced it everywhere they had a foothold. Even in a conclave of the Bourses du Travail, the Marxists had been bold enough to ask the Bourses to campaign for the Congress of Troyes. An energetic intervention by Pelloutier, who had denounced all attempts to "propagandize for an organization which has combatted ours," had easily defeated the Marxists' proposal. Nevertheless, the late summer and early fall of 1895 saw the Guesdistes busily laying plans to derail the congress of Limoges.

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3 Réveil du Nord, August 31, 1895; Le Journal de Roubaix, September 22, 1895 in Cahiers de Fernand Pelloutier, MS deposited in the Musée Social.


5 Ibid., p. 49.
When the Allemanists got wind of the Marxists' plan to hold a rival congress, they were irate. *Le Parti Ouvrier* dubbed this new congress as a "travesty" where the Guesdist "would line up on a paper a group of syndicats which only exist in their imagination." What followed was a bitter denunciation of the Marxists who "try and fool the syndicats and play on the good faith of those who do not know their criminal machinations." Pointing out the political nature of the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats, the Allemanists appealed to the syndicats to adhere to the Congress of Limoges. "The evil does not come from the syndicalists belonging to the Federation," stated the Allemanists. It stemmed from "some personalities who... want to control the workers." To the syndicalists, the Allemanists pleaded that "there are personalities who separate us.... Bypass them and come to the Congress of Limoges; give us a brotherly hand and unity will be made." 

In the angry polemics which followed, the General Strike came in for a great deal of discussion. The socialists lined up on this issue according to past performances. While the Marxists maintained their usual opposition, the strike was defended ardently by the Allemanists, faintly by the Blanquists, and not at all by the Possibilists. It

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., May 11-15, 1895.
9 Ibid.
10 For the Allemanists position in regard to the General Strike, see *Le Parti Ouvrier*, July 9-10, August 1-2, 1895. The Blanquist's half-hearted support of this tactic was stated in *La Petite République*, September 20, 1895.
was the Marxists' argument that their socialist colleagues were cooling on the General Strike. Yet, explained the Guesdists, the Allemanists and the Blanquists would probably affirm the General Strike at Limoges as "citizen Pelloutier is hoping." If they admitted their socialist "heresy" and rejected the General Strike, they would ensure the hegemony of the Guesdists. Because of this, they would support this instrument at Limoges, although both groups were beginning to have serious objections to it.  

On September 23, 1895, the Seventh National Corporate Congress opened at Limoges. A quick glance at the number of militants at the Congress proved beyond a doubt that the efforts of the Marxists to scuttle the meeting had failed. Seventy-five delegates were present, representing around 1662 syndicats. Twenty-eight national and regional Federation of métier were delegated as well as 126 individual syndicats, which adhered to none of the regional or national associations of their trade. From Paris came twenty-nine delegates, while forty-six were delegated by provincial organizations. Of diverse political opinion, these men were certainly a composite group. A large number of them were followers of the Allemanists and the Blanquists. The moderates were there, working closely with the Possibilists who were

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11 *Le Journal de Roubaix, September 22, 1895 in Cahiers de...*

12 Ibid.


14 Leroy, II, 526.
led by Victor Dalle. To Limoges, all of these syndicalists had come to assert their faith in the trade unions and to pledge their support to working class unity.

Interestingly enough, the Comité Fédéral of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail was not officially represented at Limoges. Under the influence of Pelloutier, the recent congress of this organization had prohibited its Comité Fédéral from adhering to any political or corporate congress. What Pelloutier had succeeded in obtaining by this decision was a free hand for the Comité Fédéral vis à vis any new organization that might emerge from the Limoges Congress. Although it was perfectly clear that no lasting unity could be achieved without the support of the Bourses du Travail, Pelloutier refused to commit the Comité Fédéral to any decisions taken by the workers at Limoges. That, in view of the widespread sentiment for unity, he was able to impose this policy on the Bourses was a striking testimony to his growing influence in the labor world.

Nevertheless, a substantial number of the Bourses refused to concur in this narrow intransigence and sent delegates to Limoges. To the meeting also came Pelloutier, himself anxious to observe the proceedings and offer his advice in an unofficial capacity. For the political lineup at the congress, see Alexander Zévaès, Le Syndicalisme Contemporain (Paris: 1911), pp. 126-27.


What were the problems that plagued the congressistes as they rolled up their sleeves to hammer out a project of union? By far the most active and powerful elements in the labor world were the Bourses. In addition, there were approximately nineteen national associations of syndicats as, for example, the Fédération du Livre.\textsuperscript{18}

These federations were composed of syndicats practicing the same or similar trades. Besides the national federations, there were a number of regional and local associations of syndicats, including either all the trade unions in one métier or all the diverse syndicats in the same geographical area. At the primary level was the individual trade union or the local syndicat that adhered to no local, regional or national federation. Often extremely small in membership, these individual syndicats were, nevertheless, the most abundant of all the syndicat organizations in the nation.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} The syndicat federations in France were divided into two rather ill-defined categories. The first was the fédération de métier which included syndicats of a particular trade as, for example, the mechanics or the printers. The other type was the fédération d'industrie which united syndicats practicing the various and different trades related to the same or related industries. Examples of this type of organization are the Fédération du Batiment and the Fédération de la Métallurgie, both of which included many different classifications of skilled and unskilled workers in these respective industries.

There was never a clear line of demarcation between these two different types of federations. Since syndicats and federations grew up pragmatically in France, it often happened that a fédération de métier co-existed with a fédération d'industrie.

\textsuperscript{19} An excellent discussion of the various types of working class organizations is found in Leroy, I, 380-81, 395-411.
The main obstacle to working class unity was the rivalry between the Bourses du Travail and the federations of métier. 20 Between these two modes of organization, there was a profound difference of outlook on the nature of the labor movement. Unlike the federations of métier, the Bourses united workers of the most diverse occupations. Because of this, the activities of the Bourses were geared to the interest of the workers in general. The economic problems particular to one trade did not concern them as much as the grievances of all the working class. To the federations of métier, this manner of thinking was incomprehensible. What the latter wanted was the solution of the problems particular to their industry or profession. They were not so concerned with the general problems that plagued the entire labor world, for they felt that only by concentrating on specific grievances could any real improvement in their conditions be made.

In addition, the majority of the Bourses were politically neutral, refusing to concern themselves with political activities. 21 Many of the regional and national federations, however, were


21 Not all the Bourses were politically neutral. Several of them, for example, were infeudated to the Parti Ouvrier Français. Others were linked to the Blanquist's brand of politics. Later on, however, the Guesdist Bourses withdrew from the Fédération des Bourses du Travail. See F. Pelloutier, Histoire des Bourses du Travail (Paris: 1946), p. 236.
infeudated to or leaned in the direction of certain political schools. To be sure, some of the federations were neutral in matters political. Such a powerful group as the Fédération du Livre, for example, refused to rely on the state or the political parties. Led by August Keufer, this federation fell back upon a pure syndicalism every bit as aggressive as it was reformist and moderate in program. Nevertheless, the political attachments of many of the other federations rendered them suspect in the eyes of the Allemanists and the other neutralists at the Bourses du Travail.

The political orientation of the federations are difficult to determine. Not only did many of them try to remain neutral in regard to political issues but there were often so many political loyalties inside any one federation that it is virtually impossible to determine the dominant political tone. Generally, however, whenever a federation definitely adhered to a political school, it usually supported the political program of this party. If, as was often the case, the federation of metier or industry had no visible ties with a particular party, its political direction was usually influenced by its leaders who generally adhered to one political school or another. For these reasons, certain loose generalization can be made.

The study of a scattered collection of sources has enabled the author to determine the approximate political sympathies of a large number of syndicat federations. For example, the Federation des Ouvriers Megissiers and the Federation du Textile were definitely infeudated to the Parti Ouvrier Français. Under the loose control of the Allemanists were the Fédération du Batiment, the Fédération de la Métallurgie, the Syndicat National des Chemins de Fer, the Fédération des Mouleurs en Météaux, the Union des Ouvriers Mécaniciens de la Seine. The following sources were helpful to the author in determining the political loyalties of these syndicat organizations listed. Alexander Zévaes, Aperçu Historique sur le Parti Ouvrier Français (Paris: 1899); Le Mouvement Socialiste No. 48 (December 15, 1899), pp. 736-751; No. 200 (July 15, 1908), pp. 29-31; No. 202 (September 15, 1908); 3e Congrès de la Fédération des Ouvriers Métallurgistes de France-Saint Etienne, 12-14 Juillet, 1894 (Paris: 1894), pp. 33-35, 41-54; 5e Congrès National du Batiment de France, tenu à Tours, 11-13 Septembre, 1896 (Tours: 1896), pp. 21-24, 47, 51-55; 7e Congrès National de la Syndicat National des Travailleurs des Chemins de Fer, tenu à Paris, 4-7 Juin, 1896 (Paris: 1896), pp. 37-38, 68, 77-79, 132.
The rivalries and scarcely-veiled hostilities between the Bourses de Travail and the federations of métiers dimmed the prospects of working class unity. To be sure, both of them paid lip service to the need for union, but each insisted that its own organizations be given control of any new central body created among the syndicats.

To the congressistes, the key problem in drawing up a plan of union was the reconciliation between these two different viewpoints on the labor movement.

Things looked dark for the cause of the Bourses du Travail when the composition of the Commission charged to draw up a project on working class unity became known. Of the fifteen men who were given this important assignment, only four of them were Allemanists and only two were Blanquists. The rest of the Commission was composed of moderates, Possibilists, or Guesdistes, none of whom were particularly sympathetic to the cause of the Bourses. Under these circumstances, it would not be surprising if the scheme of union purposed by the Commission were weighed heavily against the Bourses du Travail.

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23 Riom, Allemane, Lhermite, and Bernard were the Allemanists on the Commission. The Blanquistes were Majot and Martin. 7e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Limoges, 23-28 September, 1895. Comptes Rendus Officiel (Limoges: 1895), p. 6.

24 Of the remaining members of the Commission, Treich and Deville were affiliated to the Parti Ouvrier Français. Victor Dalle was a Possibilist and Keufer headed the moderate contingent on the Commission. The classification of these men in various political groups has been done by comparing the list of syndicalists with the roster of the political parties found in congresses, newspapers, and in other recorded meetings. On this subject, also see M. J. Bordeau, "Le Mouvement Syndicale en France," Musée Social No. 2 (February, 1899), p. 3.
On the third day of the Congress, the discussion of working class unity began. To open the debate, the Commission on unity was instructed to read its report to the delegates. The report called for the establishment of a national organization with the purpose of "uniting on economic grounds and with tight bonds of solidarity all the working class in the struggle for emancipation." To this new organization would be admitted all regional and national federations of métier or industry, the Fédération des Bourses du Travail, separate syndicats and separate Bourses du Travail. According to the recommendations of the Commission, all types of organizations were to be accepted in this central body, the only stipulation being that they had to be in existence at least six months. To administer this highly irrational structure, the Commission asked that a National Council be established. As might have been expected, the control of this body was to go the federations of métier and industry. For the Council was to be composed of three delegates from every federation of métier or industry and only three delegates from the one Fédération des Bourses du Travail. Each local and regional association of syndicats was to have one delegate on the National Council just as were each of the individual syndicats. In short, what emerged was the Confédération Général du Travail.  

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7e Congrès National..., p. 43.

See the basic statutes of the Confédération Général du Travail, hereafter referred to as the CGT, in Montreuil, pp. 176-77.
Neither rhyme nor reason could be found in the bylaws of the CGT. In a broad effort to include all the working class organizations in the new structure, the Commission had asked for the admission of small and isolated syndicats along side of powerful, national federations of métier or industry. On the National Council, small syndicats, sometimes enrolling as few as twenty members, were given one delegate to only three for a national federation which sometimes included well over 10,000 workers. Moreover, by allowing individual syndicats to adhere directly to the CGT, the Commission was unconsciously weakening the national federations. For individual trade unions would not have to join their national organizations in order to have membership in the CGT.

As far as the Fédération des Bourses du Travail, the statutes of the new Organization were completely unacceptable. What is objected to most strenuously was the fact that individual Bourses could bypass the Federation of Bourses and adhere directly to the CGT. That many of them would do just that was obvious, since they could receive direct representation on the National Council and would only have to pay dues to one organization. In addition, the Bourses were opposed to the fact that only three delegates were given to the extremely powerful Federation of Bourses, the same number given to the other national federations. Such an arrangement would allow the Federation to be

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27 \textit{Je Congrès National...}, p. 51.

28 Dolleens, II, 45.
dwarfed by the other national federations of metier or industry on
the ruling council of the CGT. In other words, the Fédération des
Bourses du Travail was reduced to the status of just another national
federation by the statutes of the CGT.

A strong wave of opposition rose from the floor to greet the
Commission's report. As the meaning of the Commission's plan became
clear, the vested interests of the labor movement asserted them­
selves, and soon the hall was filled with demands for revision.
Except for the defenders of the report, it seemed as if every militant
had his own version of how the workers could best be unified.

On the question of working class unity, the ensuing debates
indicated that there were, broadly speaking, two sets of opinion
among the congressistes. All the plans on syndicat unification
proposed by the delegates either gave a primary role to the Bourses
du Travail in the central organization or to the federations of metier.
Typical of this first view was the plan offered by Bescombès, that
Allemanist at the Paris Bourse. To him, the only effective way to
unite the workers was around the Bourses du Travail. He felt that
the syndicats should join their professional federations but they
should concentrate the main part of their action at their local Bourse.

29 For a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the CGT's
statutes, see Léon Blum, Les Congrès Ouvriers et les Socialistes
See the Bourses' objection to the CGT's statutes in 5e Congres de la
Fédération des Bourses du Travail, tenu à Tours, 9-12 September, 1896
(Tours: 1896), pp. 86-98.
All the Bourses should then adhere to the *Fédération des Bourses du Travail* which would be the real link among the French workers. There was no real need for the various federations of métier to join hands, for the *Fédérations des Bourses du Travail* would provide the syndicats with all the co-ordination necessary for a harmonious, united syndicat movement.  

The case for the federations of métier was championed by Louvigny and Treich, both of Marxist leanings. What Louvigny called for was a central organization which was based on the professional interests of the workers. By conforming to the professional aims of the proletariat, the new organization would be assured of support and vitality. For these reasons, he demanded that "all syndicat action must be confined to the federations." As to the Bourses du Travail, they were only "monuments." In his opinion, the workers would never flock to the Bourses, for "at the Bourse, it is impossible to pursue particular objectives, only general ones."  

In spite of the objections of the Allemanists and the other syndicalists to the report, they could not rally enough support to overthrow the scheme offered by the Commission. So much in deadlock were the two sets of opinions that the plan of the Commission appeared as a real compromise solution to many of the delegates.  

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30 Leroy, II, 452.  
31 *Le Congrès National...*, p. 29.  
In the end, almost all the provisions of the report were accepted by the weary congressistes who felt that the statutes could be revised at a later date. As one provision after another of the original report was voted, it was clear that the Allemanists and their allies had suffered an important setback on the over-all nature of the CGT.

Little had been said in the Commission's report about the political position of the syndicats. Article II of the statutes had merely stated that the CGT was to unite the workers on "economic grounds." To some of the militants, especially the Blanquists and the Allemanists, this article was too nebulous and imprecise. What they wanted was a clear proclamation of syndicat neutrality in regard to the political parties. A motion to this effect was proposed by Majot, a close follower of the Blanquists' brand of politics. His proposal stated that "the elements constituting the Confederation General du Travail must remain outside of all political schools."33

His motion was immediately assailed by various members of the congress. In strong opposition to such a prohibition stood the politicos, led by Calvignac and Hummel.34 "Instead of creating a union, we have come to work in a totally opposite direction," complained Calvignac, who vigorously opposed the Majot resolution.35

33 Ibid., p. 44. Also see Leroy, I, 333.
34 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
35 Quoted in Leroy, I, 333.
Surprisingly enough, several Allemanists and one or two anarchist-inspired delegates supported this political group.\textsuperscript{36} Libertarians to the core, their opposition to the Majot motion, unlike that of the politicos who wanted a rapprochement between the syndicats and the socialists, was based on the fact that such a proposal interfered in the internal affairs of the syndicats. "Let the most complete autonomy be allowed the organizations which want to adhere to the CGT," demanded this group of libertarians.\textsuperscript{37} Along the same lines was the approach offered by Victor Dalle, a Possibilist, who wanted only to restrict the CGT itself, not its affiliated bodies, from enrolling in a political school.\textsuperscript{38}

To the support of the Majot proposal came militants like the Allemanist Riom, the Blanquist Martin, and the moderate Keufer. All of these men felt that "agreement in a syndicat is only possible by the elimination of all political ideas."\textsuperscript{39} To the supporters of political autonomy, they replied that all autonomy was lost by the syndicat which adhered to a political party.\textsuperscript{40} In the end, the arguments of these men proved the strongest. By a vote of 124–114,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Girard and Riom, for example, were opposed to the Majot proposal. See \textit{ibid}.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Quoted in \textit{ibid}.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} \textit{Le Congrès National...}, p. 53.
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Quoted in Leroy, I, 333.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid}.
\end{itemize}
the proposition of Majot was adopted by the congress. Written into the statutes of the CGT was the obligation of all the syndicat members to remain outside all political parties. It was a formal triumph for the idea of political neutrality in the trade unions.

No one expected the General Strike to stir up a controversy at the Congress. At Nantes, all the syndicalists, except for the Guesdist minority, had embraced it eagerly. With the departure of the Marxists from Nantes, the workers had made a resounding proclamation of this method of action. Because of this, no difficulty was foreseen by Girard, chairman of the Committee of the General Strike, when he proposed that the Committee be made an integral part of the CGT. In explanation of this proposal, Girard stated that his plan was based "on the necessity to keep awake the spirit in case of events which may occur at any instant." He said nothing of planned insurrection nor did he make any concrete suggestions on executing the General Strike. Nevertheless, from their seats rose militant after militant, all violently opposed to Girard's proposal.

The opposition was led by Treich, of Guesdist sympathies. "I do not think the majority of syndicats are partisans of the General Strike," he began. It was this which led him to insist that the

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\[42\] 7e Congres National..., p. 53.
\[43\] Ibid.  
\[44\] Ibid.
incorporation of the General Strike Committee into the CGT would divide the workers. "You want to create unity? How can you do this if, in the heart of this organization, you introduce the question which can divide the working class?" he asked.\(^\text{45}\) What he objected to, he insisted, was "making this question the fundamental base... of the corporative party." Already, the CGT had eliminated from its ranks those syndicats affiliated to political parties. "If we eliminate now those who are hostile to the General Strike, what will we have left in our CGT?" asked Treich who feared that "our end will have failed."\(^\text{46}\) He was backed by Boisson, Chabot, and Gignioux, all of whom felt that the General Strike should not become identified with the CGT.\(^\text{47}\)

Interestingly enough, that moderate leader of the Fédération du Livre, August Keufer, came to the support of Treich, a Guesdist. Keufer felt that the General Strike should remain apart from the CGT because he, like Treich, thought it capable of dividing the workers.\(^\text{48}\) Nevertheless, he argued, there was a strong need for the CGT to popularize "the general strike of the professions where all the corporations intervene for supporting the strikers."\(^\text{49}\) In a short speech, he outlined a fairly specific sketch of the grève généralisée, a concept that was growing among the reformist elements of the labor

\(^{45}\) Ibid. \(^{46}\) Ibid. \(^{47}\) Ibid., pp. 53-55. \(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 56. \(^{49}\) Quoted in Leroy, II, 525.
movement. According to this plan, any strike of a métier should be supported by the workers of all the other major professions. In this way, the reforms asked by any one group of workers would have the moral and material support of all the organized workmen. By no means an insurrectionary method, the grève généralisée would be used only to wring concessions from the employers. What it really amounted to was a broader extension of the partial strike, and Keufer spared no effort to make this point clear to the congress.

But Girard had little trouble finding support for his plan. To his defense came Riom, Braun, Carol, and other members of the congress who wanted to commit the CGT to the preparation of the General Strike. Their arguments carried the day. After a lengthy debate, the congress decided, by a vote of 86-30, to make the Committee of the General Strike a formal part of the CGT. On this issue, the Allemanists had their way.

What did this dispute over the General Strike signify? The debate indicated that the majority which had accepted the General Strike at Nantes was itself divided. Now that the Guesdists had departed, the differences among the syndicalists were beginning to appear. To be sure, they were all committed to the General Strike. It was this tactic which separated the CGT from the political parties and made

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p. 61.
52 Ibid., p. 61.
it into a real party of labor. But that there was a definite revolutionary and reformist wing to the syndicalist party was apparent at Limoges.\textsuperscript{53} The fact that the workers had accepted the Committee of the General Strike in their midst did not mean that the left wing syndicalists were in the majority. The General Strike was interpreted in so many different ways by the \textit{congressistes} that this vote could not be considered a revolutionary proclamation. In actual fact, a strong reformist coloring was given to the Committee of the General Strike by the congress. For the Committee was charged to collect and solicit funds from all the syndicats to aid any trade union on strike.\textsuperscript{54} By many, the Committee's role in the co-ordination of aid to striking workers was considered more important than its job of preparing an insurrection.

That the new organization was to be linked to political action was clear from the minimum economic program adopted by the Congress of Limoges. The delegates demanded neutrality in regard to any one political party, but they by no means were opposed to parliamentary action in general. According to the report of the Commission charged with drawing up a list of necessary reforms, the workers must appeal to the public powers if any real concessions were to be obtained.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} See the comments on this in "Quelques Mots d'histoire du Syndicalisme," \textit{La Récue Syndicaliste} No. 56-59 (March-April, 1909), pp. 358-64.

\textsuperscript{54} Leroy, II, 527.

\textsuperscript{55} This minimum program is reproduced in Adrien Veber, "Mouvement Social," \textit{La Récue Socialiste} No. 130 (October, 1895), p. 491.
Only those candidates which accepted the economic claims of the proletariat would be supported in elections. "The congress engages all the syndicats... to carry on a... war on all those candidates... who do not conform... to the decisions of the national corporative congresses," stated the Commission.\(^56\) In such an indirect manner, the congressistes cautiously affirmed their predilection for political methods. But, in the best of neutralist diplomacy, they specified no single socialist group as the vehicle of their economic demands.\(^57\)

The appeal made by the workers to the public authorities met surprisingly little opposition among the congressistes. Only the delegate of the Bourse du Travail of Paris dissented and he did not do so totally. In his report, he said that the Paris Bourse "pronounced itself against all political programs."\(^58\) Yet, he insisted that the syndicats should "indicate to their adherents to only vote for candidates who declare themselves partisans of the creation of Bourses du Travail."\(^59\) What he condemned in one context, he asked in another. Nevertheless, he was quick to point out that "there is

\(^{56}\) Quoted in Leroy, I, 334.

\(^{57}\) See the discussion on this issue in 7e Congrès National..., pp. 32-35. The attitude of most of the syndicalists on this subject was summed up by Louvigny who said "it is not a question of candidates but an economic program.... It is pure economics, not politics." \(^{Ibid.}\), p. 35.

\(^{58}\) \(^{Ibid.}\), p. 32. \(^{59}\) \(^{Ibid.}\).
a need to indicate to the proletariat that it would be better if it abstained from asking things of the public powers in order to accustom itself to self-reliance.  

On the evening of September 28, the constituent congress of the CGT came to a close. In many respects, the congressistes had done a creditable job. Working class unity had at last been realized by the creation of the CGT. Moreover a formal commitment to political neutrality among the affiliates of this body had been secured. To those syndicalists who were devoted to the General Strike, the congress had been more than successful. Not only had the delegates voted it but they had made it an integral part of their program and organization. Yet, certain militants left the meeting without enthusiasm for the decisions taken there. To the revolutionary syndicalists, the congress had proven that a strong core of their comrades were far from sharing their revolutionary beliefs. Others, those outspoken supporters of the Bourse du Travail, were disturbed by the limited role given the Bourses in the CGT. All these tensions in the ranks of the workers would soon rise to impede the establishment of real unity among the syndicats.

"The Congress of Limoges... let us say it frankly, was far from realizing all the hopes which each working class congress allows to be born," bemoaned Le Parti Ouvrier several days after the Congress was over.  

In these words, the Allemanists revealed their  

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60 Ibid.  
61 Le Parti Ouvrier, October 8-9, 1895. For the more optimistic reaction of the Blanquists to the congress, see Vaillant's article in La Petite République, October 4, 1895.
disillusionment with the decisions taken by the workers. What was most disappointing to them was the presence of a strong moderate contingent at the Congress, which had combatted the revolutionary conception of the General Strike. "It is these who encourage the politicians in their campaign against the General Strike," charged the Allemanists who condemned the manner in which the "non-socialist revolutionaries find points of contact with the leaders of the parties called revolutionary."\(^62\) Le Parti Ouvrier followed with a scathing attack on the moderates who had sought more "to prevent the action of the energetic than to work for the emancipation to their brothers."\(^63\)

Nor was Pelloutier overjoyed with the results of the Limoges Congress. To him, the most regrettable decision taken by the delegates was their plans to build the CGT around the federations of métier and industry instead of the Bourses du Travail.\(^64\) He felt, with much justification, that the Bourses du Travail were the most active and progressive organizations in the labor world. Moreover, the political orientation of the CGT disturbed him.\(^65\) He strongly approved of the imposition of political neutrality on the adhering organizations, \(^62\) Le Parti Ouvrier, October 8-9, 1895.  
\(^63\) Ibid.  
\(^64\) L'Ouvrier des deux Mondes No. 10, November 1, 1897.  
\(^65\) In the nineteen man committee set up to administer the CGT at Limoges, the "pure syndicalists" only had nine members on this body. M. J. Bordeau, Musee Social No. 2, p. 3.
but he was skeptical over the sentiments of the congressistes for parliamentary action. For Pelloutier felt that if the CGT was tied to parliamentary activities, political neutrality in the syndicats could be quickly destroyed. At bottom, his position was very close to that viewpoint expressed by the Bourse du Travail of Paris, which had asked the workers to look only to themselves and to their organizations for the source of their emancipation.

Plagued by these doubts, Pelloutier sought to prevent the Fédération des Bourses du Travail from entering the CGT. Like all the other federations of syndicats, the Comité Fédéral of the Bourse was invited by the CGT to send three delegates to the constituent meeting of the National Council scheduled for November 21, 1895.

When the Comité Fédéral met on November 8 to consider this invitation, Pelloutier urged prudence on his colleagues. His suggestion was that the Comité Fédéral should send three delegates with a provisional mandate only to the National Council of the CGT. In this way, Pelloutier meant to stall for time until the next congress of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail. At this coming congress, he hoped to persuade the Bourses du Travail to remain outside the CGT until they could enter on their own terms. A poised Pelloutier, rapidly

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66 Fédération des Bourses du Travail—Procès-verbaux de la Comité Fédéral, MS deposited in the Musée Social. No. 26,166. Session of November 8, 1895, pp. 22–23.

67 Ibid.
acquiring stature in the labor world, managed to get his way. Despite the objections of some who argued that the Comité Fédéral had already assumed a commitment to the CGT, it was decided that the Comité Fédéral would adhere only provisionally to the new organization.68

At Tours on September 9, 1896, opened the Fifth Congress of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail. Under the guidance of Pelloutier, the Comité Fédéral had taken on new life and promise. Since 1892, the number of federated Bourses had more than doubled.69 During the preceding year alone, enormous progress had been made in the creation of new Bourses and in aiding the growing number of strikes throughout the nation. Much of this progress had been due to Pelloutier. He had written a guide for the French workers entitled "Method for the Creation of a Bourses du Travail," which had stimulated the growth of Bourses throughout the country. So full of insights and information was this manual that it was studied and used by virtually every Bourse in France.70 In addition, he had conducted an inquiry into the abuses of private employment bureaux in France, the conditions of work in the prisons, and the real results of the law of 1892 on the conditions of the working class.71

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68 Ibid.
70 See the letter from Pelloutier to Paul Delesalle, February 11, 1901. MS deposited in L'Institut Français d'histoire Sociale.
71 5e Congrès de la Fédération des Bourses du Travail, tenu à Tours, 2-12 Septembre, 1896 (Tours: 1896), pp. 27-28.
Consequently, it was a proud and elated Pelloutier who read the annual report of the Comité Fédéral to the assembled delegates. He reviewed all the topics connected with the Federation, from a discussion of the co-operative societies to the role of the Bourses in the future society. At the end of his report, when the critics had the floor, he replied to them with the confidence and certainty of a man who knew every operation and detail of his job. When the Guesdists again tried to remove the seat of the Comité Fédéral from Paris, he made short work of their intrigues. To Pelloutier must also go the credit for persuading the congress to only admit one Bourse per town into the Federation. Such a decision, since it refused recognition of rival Bourses, went a long way toward discouraging political division among the Bourses du Travail.

As the discussion turned to the relationship of the Comité Fédéral with the CGT, Pelloutier was clearly the dominant figure at the congress, but his influence was going to be severely tested on this issue. So intense was the desire of the workers for unification that there was sure to be a great deal of opinion in favor of linking the Bourses du Travail to the CGT. In preparation for this debate, Pelloutier had put together a long report in which he had set out

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73 Ibid., pp. 60-66.
74 Ibid., pp. 75-78. According to Pierre Monatte, "the key principle by which we have brought the working class out of politics... is by only admitting one syndicat per town. This has politically neutralized the syndicats." See Pierre Monatte, "Anarchisme et Syndicalisme," La Vie Ouvrière No. 94 (August, 1913), p. 233.
the reasons why the Comité Fédéral should remain aloof from the organization created at Limoges. When the debate began, Pelloutier rose to present his case to the delegates.

According to Pelloutier, the major reason why the Bourses should boycott the CGT was the lack of influence that this organization gave to the Bourses du Travail. He argued that each Bourse was a federation of syndicats in the same manner as were the federations of métier or industry. Because of this, every Bourse should have a representation on the National Council equal to the other federations of syndicats. A clever piece of reasoning followed. Pelloutier maintained that if each Bourse was represented on the Council with the same number of delegates as the other federations, it was "superfluous for the Comité Fédéral to be represented there." Therefore, he asked the congress to affirm that "the Comité Fédéral must not send delegates, in its collective name to the CGT or to any other central organization." With these words, Pelloutier rejected the CGT's plan to unify the French workers.

He then proposed his own plan of union. According to his scheme, the CGT should transform itself into a vast national federation,

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5e Congrès de la Fédération..., p. 89.

Ibid., p. 90.

Ibid.
including all the federations of métier and industry in the nation. He asked that a federal committee, composed of delegates from these affiliated federations of métier, be established to administer this organization. The federal committee of the new organization would then work hand in hand with the Comité Fédéral of the Bourses du Travail in order to unify and co-ordinate the labor movement. Together, the two committees would form the national council of the CGT. He argued that both the CGT and the Fédération des Bourses du Travail should maintain their separate identity, for each had a distinct role to play in the world of labor. Nevertheless, they would meet in the same town and work closely together on all questions concerning the workers as a whole. 78

It was clear from Pelloutier's project of union that his objections to the then existing CGT were merely a veil behind which he hid his real reasons for demanding the autonomy of the Bourses du Travail. He did not really want the direct representation of the Bourses du Travail on the National Council of the CGT but a scheme of union where the Fédération des Bourses du Travail would not be overshadowed by the federations of métier. For he feared that, if the Bourses adhered directly to the CGT, even with equal representation with the other federations, the Comité Fédéral would become defunct. It was this fear which induced Pelloutier to offer a unity project of his own. His plan strengthened the Comité Fédéral of the

78 Ibid., pp. 90-91, 98.
Bourses du Travail by making it one of the two arms of the working class movement in France. 79

So persuasively did Pelloutier present his case before the Bourses that all opposition to his plan melted away. As it turned out, most of the delegates had little trust in the newly found CGT, and they refused to transfer their loyalty to a young Organization which appeared weak and feeble in comparison to the Fédération des Bourses du Travail. When Pelloutier emphasized that the Bourses would be called upon to support the CGT financially, the Bourses answered one and all. By a vote of 25-5, the militants passed a resolution giving full support to Pelloutier's plan of union which left the Fédération des Bourses du Travail outside the CGT. 80

By his personal influence, Pelloutier had contributed heavily to the frustration of working class unity. Was this not strange behavior for a man so devoted to the working class movement? If there was any issue on which there was common agreement in the working class world of the 1890's, it was that unity was the pre-condition of a strong labor movement. Yet, Pelloutier had led the Bourses du Travail away from the shouts of the workers for union. What were the reasons for Pelloutier's actions? Can he perhaps be justified in the light of his own assumptions about the needs of the labor world?

79 See Pelloutier's explanation of his plan in L'Ouvrier des deux Mondes No. 10, November 1, 1897.

80 5e Congrès de la Fédération..., p. 98.
That he was driven by a personal concern for the Bourses du Travail is beyond all doubt. He knew that the Bourses represented the most vigorous and energetic elements in the labor world, and he was afraid to allow the Bourses to be incorporated in a weak and untried CGT. Cumbersome and unsteady, the latter showed few signs in 1896 of becoming a really effective organization. To link the powerful Bourses to this new association would sap their strength and vitality in an effort to bolster an unproven, basically unstable CGT.81

An even more profound reason motivated Pelloutier. He was afraid, more than anything else, of the political groups which disputed the leadership of the CGT. To him, there was no surefire guarantee that the antagonistic syndicalist factions would not disrupt the internal structure of the nascent organization. In addition, he recognized that there existed in the CGT a strong moderate wing which combatted the General Strike in order to appease the Guesdist.

A revealing letter was written by Pelloutier to Léon de Seilhac right after the congress of Limoges. "The moderates," he wrote, "only stayed with us... in the hope of enclosing the congress in the moderate path... and of leading it to an approachment with the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats."82 But the conflicting political groups in the CGT were what worried him the most. "Consider that

the Council of the Confederation is going to be composed," he said, "not only of the men of diverse schools, but the chiefs themselves. Positivists, Broussists, Blanquists, Allemanists are all going to be in each other's presence. You can imagine what rivalries will grow, what quarrels will take place. These dissensions are going to disorganize the association very quickly. Our organization, if it consents to join, will not endure a long time."83

To Pelloutier's pride and confidence in the ability of the Bourse du Travail to lead the workers was added, then, a fear of the political involvements that might have resulted from membership in the CGT. It was for these reasons that he used all his influence to keep the Fédération des Bourses du Travail outside the CGT. What he really wanted was a working relationship with the new organization, but one which would not compromise the influence of the Bourses du Travail. Never was he really hostile to the CGT; yet he felt that the Comité Fédéral must maintain an attitude of watchful waiting in regard to this organization. Only in this way could the strength of the syndicats be guaranteed. For if the new CGT should bog down in political chaos, the Fédération des Bourses du Travail would be able to provide the workers with the guidance and leadership necessary to their emancipation.

83 Ibid.
In the early days of 1895, an important circular was received by all the working class organizations in France. This notice was sent as a reminder that the Fourth Congress of the International Socialist Workers and Trade Union Association would be held in London in July of 1896. According to this circular, all syndicats and socialist organizations were invited to send delegates to this meeting, if these organizations recognized the resolution of the late congress of Zurich in regard to political action. For the uninformed or the forgetful, the circular was quick to recall the decision of the Zurich Congress of 1893:

All the syndicat chambres will be admitted to the congress as well as the parties and socialist organizations which recognize the necessity of worker organization and political action. By political action, we mean the working class organizations which search... to use or to conquer political rights and the legislative mechanism, leading... to the conquest of public power.84

In accordance with this decision, the organizational committee of the London Congress invited all the syndicats and socialist organizations which recognized the necessity of political action to come to London in July of 1896.

That the decision of Zurich was directed against the anarchists was obvious. The antagonism between socialism and anarchism had its

84 This circular is reproduced in August Hamon, Le Socialisme et le Congres de Londres (Paris: 1897), p. 74.
roots in the pre-Commune period, and since that time, the two had
grown farther and farther apart in method and doctrine. While the
socialists were busy organizing the workers to capture the state,
the anarchists spent their time lampooning parliamentary action
which they dubbed as sterile and ineffective. To the workers,
they preached a doctrine of propaganda by deed which seemed to the
socialists to be anachronistic in a modern industrial society.
In 1893 the doctrinal cleavage between the two was deep. To the
socialists, the methods of the anarchists were crude and irrational.
As far as the anarchists were concerned, the tactics of the socialists
were worthless and self-defeating.

As the anarchists stepped up their campaign of political terrorism
in the 1890's, the reaction of the government was to enact a series
of repressive measures designed to choke off all threat to estab-
lished authority. The full brunt of these measures was felt mostly
by the socialists whose growing strength was considered a far more
serious threat to society than the handful of bomb-throwing anarchists.
When the government passed the famous *lois scélérates* in 1893 and
1894, the resentment of the socialists toward the anarchists multiplied

85 See above, pp.
86 Jean Maitron, *Histoire du Mouvement Anarchiste en France*
87 See the excellent summary of their respective positions in
Harvey Goldberg, "French Socialism and the Congress of London,"
extensively. Socialist opposition to these laws in the parliament was led by Jaures who accused the government of using the anarchist menace to discredit socialism. But the socialists' anger was directed just as much against the anarchists whose illegal tactics had placed them in such a political squeeze.

By 1896 a number of anarchists were solidly entrenched in the syndicats. Under the influence of Pouget, Kropotkin, and Pelloutier, some of them had enrolled in the trade unions and were busy propagating their doctrinal line in the halls of the syndicats. Their anti-political stance seemed particularly suited to the neutralist position assumed by the majority of the French syndicalists. Since the syndicalists demanded complete abstention from all political activities in the trade unions, the anarchists' hatred of all political action appeared completely in line with their point of view. Yet, under the cry of "no politics in the syndicats," the anarchists camouflaged their opposition to all political action in general, conducted in or out of the trade unions. Only by very close scrutiny, therefore, could the line between anarchism and neutralism be identified in the 1890's.

88 These laws struck a blow at the press and organization of the socialists. For a full scale discussion of these laws, see Francis de Pressense, Les Lois scélérates de 1893-1894 (Paris: 1899). The term "lois scélérates" was the name given to these laws by their critics. It is best translated as "horrible laws."

89 See above, pp. 223-24.

90 George Yvetot, La Vie Ouvrière No. 40, p. 590.
At the time of the Third Congress of the Second International, held at Zurich in 1893, the French Marxists were ready to join with their German comrades in ousting the anarchists from the labor movement once and for all. To prevent the libertarians from infiltrating future meetings, the congress decided that only organizations which accepted the principle of political action would be eligible for representation at the congresses. When asked to clarify the meaning of political action, August Bebel, a German Marxist, defined it as the use of the parliamentary machinery for the conquest of power. The definition of Bebel was incorporated in the famous resolution voted by the socialists. It was this definition which was sent to the French syndicats via a circular in the early part of 1895.91

The initial reaction of the French syndicats to the circulars received in 1895, notifying them of the decision of Zurich, was one of silence. In fact, nothing was heard from official syndicat circles until September 22, 1895 when Fernand Pelloutier addressed a group of workers who had gathered to honor Samuel Gompers, visiting labor leader from America. On this occasion, Pelloutier spoke out strongly against the conditions imposed upon the French syndicats by the Marxist-controlled International. The object of his criticism was the authoritarianism of the socialists who were trying to impose a "political despotism" on the labor movement. The exclusion of those who rejected political methods, he argued, was contrary to all the "traditions and programs" of French socialism. Now was the time, 

91 Léon de Seilhac, Les Congrès Ouvriers..., p. 221.
he concluded, for the French workers to prove to their American comrades that they were opposed to all tyranny in the ranks of labor.\textsuperscript{92}

Despite the opposition of Pelloutier to the measure, the members of the CGT showed no signs of combatting the Zurich resolution. To feel out the CGT on the subject, Pelloutier tried to introduce, at the Limoges Congress of 1895, a resolution which stated that "no one had the right to prescribe a particular method to socialist revolutionary action."\textsuperscript{93} For this reason, the resolution asked the organizing committee for the London Congress "to withdraw... the words: political action."\textsuperscript{94} Since Pelloutier had no official mandate at this Congress, he asked Treich, delegate from Limoges to introduce this resolution to the delegates. Instead of reading this motion in a public session, as Pelloutier had wanted, Treich decided to send it to a "competent" committee. In this committee, the resolution was pigeonholed by the socialist-inspired members of the CGT.\textsuperscript{95}

As the Congress of London approached, the agitation surrounding the Zurich resolution in syndicat circles increased. On June 5, 1896 Pelloutier succeeded in gaining the support of the Comité Federal

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{92} Pelloutier's speech is reported in \textit{L'Ouvrier Chapelier}, September 22, 1895 in \textit{Cahiers de}....
\item \textsuperscript{93} Maurice Pelloutier, \textit{Fernand Pelloutier, Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre} (Paris: 1911), p. 82.
\item \textsuperscript{94} Ibid., p. 83.
\item \textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
of the Bourses du Travail in his fight against the despotism of the Marxists. The Comité Fédéral decided to voice an official protest to the London Committee over the terms of admission to the Congress. Like Pelloutier, the members of the Comité Fédéral objected to excluding delegates on doctrinal grounds, for they felt that all ideas should be heard in a congress of workers. "If," argued Eugene Guérard, that syndicalist of Allemannist political faith, "the libertarians are only an amorphous mass, with no practical sense, this should be communicated to the proletariat by their own words...." To augment their decision, the members of the Comité Fédéral charged Pelloutier to convocate a caucus of all the delegates from the Bourses du Travail who were going to London in order to win their support in the Comité Fédéral's battle against the Zurich resolution.

The Allemannists lined up on the side of the Comité Fédéral. In the summer of 1896 they sent to the Paris syndicats a manifesto which condemned the efforts of the Marxists and their followers to monopolize the coming congress. "The political progressionals," read the manifesto, "do not hide their intention of seizing the congress and using it for the profit of parliamentarianism." The Allemannists asked the syndicats to reject the Zurich decision and "to affirm the

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96 Fédération des Bourses...Procès-verbaux de la Session of June 5, 1896, p. 65.

97 Ibid., p. 66.

98 This circular is reproduced in Maurice Charnay, Les Allemannists (Paris: 1912), p. 82.
General Strike which is the only method to arrive at our economic emancipation." On July 16 they opened the pages of *Le Parti Ouvrier* to the anarchists A. Hamon and E. Malatesta who demanded "the right for the workers to fight the bourgeoisie... without distinction of political ideas." In the months before the congress convened, the Allemanists poured out a day by day indictment of the Marxists.

The Blanquists, maintaining their usual balance between socialism and syndicalism, supported the Comité Fédéral and the Allemanists. In an article written in *La Petite République*, a socialist daily around which clustered the independent socialists including Jaures, Vaillant made his position clear. "All the delegates of the syndicats, regardless of their personal opinions," must be admitted to the Congress, said the chief of the Blanquists. With these words, Vaillant led his followers to the camp of those who opposed the doctrinal intransigence of the Guesdists.

The issue became even more involved when the names of some of the French delegates to London became known. For a few of the syndicats and Bourses du Travail, under the influence of Pelloutier, named several anarchists to represent them at London. On the list of

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99 Ibid.


101 *La Petite République*, June 26, 1896.

the delegates were such well-known libertarians as Emile Pouget, Paul Delesalle, Jean Grave, August Hamon, and others, all bearing the official mandate of syndicat organizations. In delegating these militants, the syndicats were not so much endorsing anarchist principles. What they were really affirming were syndicat independence and neutrality, for these men were under orders to refrain from all political discussion which might jeopardize syndicat integrity. Because of the nature of their beliefs, the anarchists were considered to be ideal spokesmen for the doctrine of political neutrality.

As might have been anticipated, the French Marxists strongly supported the Zurich resolution. Embittered at the results of the syndicat congress of Nantes, they were willing to take their fight against the anarchists right up to the door of the trade unions. To the Guesdists, the anarchists' attempt to infiltrate the socialist congress by posing as syndicalists was intolerable. Yet, by opposing the regularly mandated delegates of the syndicats, Guesde was in fact challenging the right of the trade unions to designate representatives of their own choice. The Zurich resolution itself said nothing of the personal opinions of the delegates. It merely stated that

103 All of these men had proper mandates. Hamon was delegated by the Bourse of Nantes; Delesalle represented the Syndicat des Ouvriers en Instruments de precision; Pouget (Chambre Syndicale de la Metalurgie de Beauvais); Grave (Syndicat des Ouvriers Metalurgistes d'Amiens); Tortelier (Syndicat des Ouvriers Menuisiers de la Seine (etc. See Jacques Prolo, Les Anarchistes (Paris: 1912), p. 69.

104 Hamon, Le Socialisme..., pp. 79-81.
"only those organizations which accepted political action" should be represented at the Congress. Nevertheless, the Marxists fully intended to combat the right of several syndicat delegates to be present at London.

Nothing was heard from the Independent socialists until July 15, 1896. On that day, Gustave Rouanet, writing in *La Petite République*, set down their position on the matter. "The Congress is socialist," he said. "Only the socialists—that is those who pursue the conquest of public powers—are convoked." By this, Rouanet implied that the socialist independents would support the Zurich resolution and take all necessary measures to oust the anarchists at London. To this position eventually came Jaures, Millerand, Viviani, Gerault-Richard, Brousse, and others. Hence, on the Zurich resolution, the French labor world was divided into two camps. As the Congress approached, the dispute over the Zurich resolution increased in bitterness and intensity.

On the evening of July 21, the Comité Fédéral of the Bourses du Travail called a meeting of all the syndicat delegates to London. Sixty men were present, representing the entire gamut of political opinion. Few of them were outright foes of political action, but most had been instructed to maintain a rigid neutrality vis a vis

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106 See in particular Jaures' article attacking the anarchists in *Le Dépêche de Toulouse*, August 12, 1896.
the quarreling politicians. But political neutrality implied rejection of the Zurich resolution, and this is what the delegates proceeded to do. By an unanimous vote, the group asked that "all the working class organization, whatever they are, be admitted to the Congress." Furthermore, their statement read that "all the socialist organizations... should recognize the necessity to organize the working class... according to the method it considers useful." To present this resolution to the Congress of London, the syndicalists chose Pelloutier who had been instrumental in convoking the caucus. After affirming the General Strike, the delegates packed their bags for the journey to London.

What did the manifesto drafted by the syndicalists really mean? By rejecting the Zurich resolution, the syndicalists did not take a stand against political action, but voiced their opposition to the authoritarian Marxists. At bottom, what they really rejected was the idea that socialism should be monopolized by a single point of view. As such, their hostility to the Zurich resolution stemmed from their desire for political neutrality in the syndicates. To have accepted the Zurich decision would have been a vote against those few syndicalists and anarchists in the labor movement who denied completely the value of political action. Recently unified

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107 This meeting was reported in *La Libre Parole*, July 25, 1896 in *Cahiers de...*.

108 Ibid.
and then only precariously, the syndicats were not in a position to separate themselves from this small but vital core of militants. Because of this, the Zurich resolution, like the issue of the General Strike, was a test of the syndicats’ determination to be politically detached, even in respect to the anarchists. By denouncing the conditions imposed by the Marxists, the syndicats voted for a broad, eclectic program which was totally neutral in regard to competing ideologies.

As soon as he arrived in London, Pelloutier set himself to work. Together with several other libertarians, he organized a committee called the Anarcho-Socialist and Anti-Parliamentary Committee. The purpose of this body was to co-ordinate the action of all the anarchists delegated to London by organizations from all participating nations. On the evening of July 26, Pelloutier spoke to the assembled anarchists on their role in the national labor organizations.

What he emphasized was the need for the anarchists to enter the trade unions and propagate their ideas. To the French anarchists, he said that “we cannot delude ourselves, and believe that our marriage with the syndicats is more beautiful than it really is. If... the libertarians have penetrated a few syndicats, many of these organizations

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109 Hamon, Le Socialisme... p. 83.

110 Pelloutier’s speech has been reproduced by Emile Pouget in his articles which appeared in La Sociale from August 2-7 and 9-16, 1896. These articles have been collected and deposited at the Musée Social. See Emile Pouget, Le Congrès Internationale Socialiste de Londres (Paris, n. d.).
are only anti-Marxists... and only want to hold themselves on economic
grounds alone.\footnote{Ibid.} Closing his speech with a pleas for anarchist
unity, he turned to the task of mapping out the strategy of the
libertarians for the next day's congress.

The London Congress officially opened on July 27, Queen's Hall, Langham Place. As was the custom, the various national delegations met separately to verify their mandates and to prepare their program. In the caucus of the French delegation, the latent hostility between the politicians and the syndicalists broke out immediately. The Marxists took the first move. A motion was introduced by Gabriel Deville who asked the various representatives to call out their position on the Zurich resolution before their mandates were verified.\footnote{Eugene Guérard, \textit{Le Congrès de Londres} (Paris: 1896), p. 5.} In this way, this Guesdist hoped to prevent those anarchists from acquiring official status as delegates. After Deville's motion was voted down, the syndicalists, led by Guérand, countered with a trick or two of their own. Several of the socialist deputies, including Jaurès, Guesde, and Millerand, came to the Congress without an official mandate of a working class organization. Immediately, Guérand challenged their right to be present at the meeting.\footnote{Hamon, \textit{Le Socialisme...}, p. 101.} A long dispute followed in which tempers were raised even higher than
voices. During this stormy session, Guesde was heard to make the
remark that all one needed to create a syndicat was a rubber stamp.
In the end, the socialist deputies were admitted. By a vote of 61-40, the
delegates decided that an electoral mandate was equal to a
syndicat badge.\textsuperscript{11h}

The real fireworks began during the afternoon of the first day of the Congress. Following the opening session in which the English-
man Covey made a plea for collaboration and harmony, the French
delegates again retired to their separate caucus. At this meeting, the
Zurich resolution was discussed for the first time. Led by
Pelloutier and Keufer, the syndicalists and their Allemanist allies
refused to submit to the Zurich decision. While Keufer stressed the
division in the syndicats that would result from the acceptance of the
Zurich resolution, Pelloutier's words were a pleas for trade union independence. If anarchists were present, he said, it was with a
bonafide syndicat mandate. He himself was representing the
\textit{Fédération des Bourses du Travail} "which is certainly not anarchist."\textsuperscript{115}

All the syndicats wanted to affirm was the superiority of economic
tactics over political methods. The workers would practice electoral
methods, he said, but they considered them secondary to "corporate and revolutionary action."\textsuperscript{116} For this reason, Pelloutier insisted

\textsuperscript{11h} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 102. \textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 112.

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Le Journal des Débats}, July 31, 1896 in \textit{Cahiers de...}
that "we do not want the exclusion of any socialist group or school to which the group belongs."¹¹⁷

To the defense of the Zurich resolution came Deville and Jaures. Deville poured out the old Marxist line, but Jaures was more subtle. Certainly, he said, syndicat action was necessary but the workers must also affirm political action which, he insisted, was not necessarily limited to parliamentary activities. What he wanted was for the syndicalists to take a positive stand on the Zurich resolution in order to smoke out the real anarchists in their midst. Aware that to repulse the anarchists would be a rebuke to syndicat freedom, he nevertheless proposed to oust any organization which had delegated them for the sole reason that "we do not admit the anarchist theories."¹¹⁸ By these words, Jaures demonstrated his ignorance of the syndicat movement. For he insisted that the syndicalists should violate their self-imposed neutrality by affirming the Zurich resolution which was directed against the anarchists in their ranks.

When the vote was taken, the Zurich resolution was rejected by a vote of 57-56. The syndicalists and their associates had made a

¹¹⁷ Hamon, Le Socialisme..., p. 113.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 111.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.
"revolution by one vote." Following the count, the socialist minority, those who had voted for political action, minus the Blanquists, left the meeting. That evening, they met at the Horseshoe Hotel to hold a caucus of their own. Before the meeting was over, the minority had declared itself a separate delegation, totally distinct from those delegates who had voted against the Zurich resolution that morning. To explain their action, the minority issued a manifesto which attacked the anarchists who "under the cover of syndicat mandates are trying to disorganize the proletariat and push the movement into chaos."

A glance at their past record is sufficient to explain the antics of the Marxists. To them, the Zurich resolution had the same meaning as the General Strike at Nantes. When they failed to get a clear cut approval of political action from the French syndicalists, they refused to respect syndicat freedom. They left the majority and retreated into a narrow dogmatism, just as they had walked out of the Congress of Nantes in 1894. The similarity between the Guesdist antics at Nantes and London was clear. In both cases, they refused to respect the right of the syndicats to determine their own program. When the syndicalists asked for political neutrality, the Marxists arrogantly sought to impose their own beliefs on the trade unions which would no longer be badgered by the belligerent Guesdist.

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121 Ibid., p. 116.

122 This manifesto is reproduced in ibid., pp. 237-38. A compte-rendu of the meeting of the minority is given in Reveil Social, August 23, 1896.
What motivated the other socialist members of the minority is more open to question. Why, after all, did the tolerant Jaures and his followers desert a majority which included the Blanquists and follow the Guesdists into a gloomy orthodoxy? It was an action which would bring upon him the wrath of militants like Bernard Lazare who admonished the popular Jaures "for marching with a socialist faction whose influence is dying." That Jaures had some searching after thoughts about his action was certain. According to no less an authority than Fernand Pelloutier, "Jaures has said publicly that if the Congress was beginning over again, he would not leave the majority." What then was the reason for Jaures' action at London?

What led Jaures and his followers to join the Guesdists was their fear of anarchism and their ignorance of syndicalism. According to Vaillant who attended the meeting at the Horseshe Hotel, the socialists claimed that the entire French delegation was anarchist. "It is tonight, by ourselves," Jaures had said "that French socialism must be delivered from the hands of the anarchists. How can we seriously collaborate with the Pelloutiers..., the Torteliers, and the Malatestas?" When the syndicalists had refused to endorse

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122 L'Echo de Paris, August 3, 1896.
124 See Vaillant's letter to Leon de Seilhac in La Revue Bleue No. 9.
125 Hamon, Le Socialisme..., p. 235.
political action, the independent socialists had equated the syndicalists' desire for neutrality with the anti-political sentiments of the anarchists. The socialists did not understand or did not want to understand the deeply-rooted neutralist desires of the syndicalists. All that the socialists were aware of were the disastrous consequences that would befall their movement if they collaborated with the discredited anarchists. So incensed were they over the anarchist issue that many of them were actually incapable of acting rationally. Like all the rest, the mighty Jaurès was swept along on this wave of prejudice and intolerance. In such a surcharged atmosphere, a leader like Vaillant was completely ignored when he said that "we are not for the anarchists, but we want to respect the liberty of the syndicats." 126

To lump together anarchists and syndicalists, as many of the socialists appeared to do, was the worst of all possible errors. For most members of the majority were far removed from anarchism. If they rejected the Zurich resolution, it did not mean that they rejected political action. "At no time has there been in the French delegation," said Vaillant, "a vote in favor of anarchism. The majority was composed of my friends who approved the resolution of Zurich without believing that they had the right to limit the freedom of the syndicats." 127 According to Guérard, the socialists "want to

126 Ibid., p. 236.

127 Vaillant to Léon de Seilhac in La Revue Bleue No. 9, 1896.
make everyone believe that we have denied political action." But, he continued, this was not the case, for "I have always considered political action to be necessary." He claimed that the only thing the majority wanted was "to defy the politicians who want to direct the workers."  

Of all the socialists groups apart from the syndicalist-inspired Allemanists, only the Blanquists acted with intelligence and insight at London. If the Blanquists voted for the Zurich resolution, they refused to break with the majority which voted it down. For they recognized that "the majority of the French section, outside of all anarchism, was moved by the independent spirit of French socialism and the desire not to limit itself... to the parliamentary method." In the role of mediator, Vaillant was present at the meeting of the minority on the night of July 27. He explained to the minority that "by staying, we have not tried to deny that political action is superior to corporate action." But he emphasized that, out of respect for syndicat neutrality, the Blanquists would remain with the majority. Begging the others to rejoin their comrades, Vaillant made a futile effort to prevent the socialists from splitting the French delegation.

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128 Guérard, Le Congrès... pp. 31-32.
129 Ibid.
130 Vaillant to Léon de Seilhac in La Revue Bleue No. 9, 1896.
131 Hamon, Le Socialisme... p. 234.
132 Ibid., p. 236.
When the sessions of the International Congress resumed on July 28, a full scale debate on the Zurich resolution took place. The French minority delegation sided with those who demanded an official endorsement of political action, while the French syndicalists and their associates opposed this point of view. The final vote gave the defenders of political action an overwhelming victory. By a vote of 17-2, with one abstention, the Zurich resolution was passed. In the minority was included the French delegation which had opposed the resolution in their separate caucus.\textsuperscript{133}

With the majority of the congressistes on their side, the French minority asked for official recognition as a separate delegation. The spokesman for their cause, Millerand, pointed to the influx of anarchists in their midst as the reason for this request. Although Millerand's proposal was opposed by a number of socialists, including Vaillant, the congress voted to admit the French minority as a separate delegation. By this vote, the congress formalized the breach existing in the ranks of the French militants.\textsuperscript{13h}

The rest of the congress was uneventful as far as the French problem was concerned. On all questions relating to political action, the French delegations voted on opposite sides. The majority which included syndicalists, Allemanists, and Blanquists always opposed the narrow formula of political action. To the defense of this type of action...

\textsuperscript{133} Maitron, p. 276.

\textsuperscript{13h} Hamon, \textit{Le Socialisme\ldots}, pp. 1140-49.
dogmatism came the other French delegation composed of Guesdists, Broussists, and Independents. When the nature of economic action was debated on August 31, the majority pushed for the acceptance of the General Strike. It was to no avail. When the General Strike was ignored by the congressistes, it was clear that the Congress of London was a total victory for the Marxist elements which dominated the European labor movement.135

The antics of the French socialists at London were immediately denounced in the labor press. From all sides came criticism after criticism of the socialists' intransigence at the conclave. For the Allemanists, the "political coalition has shown itself under its true colors."136 The anarchists even went further. "The Congress of London," wrote Paul Delesalle, "was a great step forward for anarchistic and revolutionary socialists.... It has illuminated the bad faith, the disloyalty, and the Jesuitism of the so-called Marxist socialists."137

In the camp of the Blanquists, the action of the Marxists and independent socialists was viewed with regret. As he criticized the intransigence of his colleagues, Vaillant promised the syndicats that the Blanquists would "continue to aid with all our power the organization of the French proletariat outside of all political cadres."138

136 Le Parti Ouvrier, August 6-7, 1896.
138 Vaillant to Léon de Seilhac in La Revue Bleue No. 9, 1896.
As for the moderate syndicalists, their reaction was summed up by Keufer. "The Congress of London," he wrote, "made clear the dis­
position of the partisans of political action to judge disdainfully syndicat action... and to subordinate it to political action...."
But, Keufer added, "the contrary will become more and more true.
Without rejecting political action, we are... warning the workers against this dangerous conception of the political role of the
syndicats."

From the Marxists came an effort to justify their action at London. According to Farjat who took up their defense, the division between the socialists and the syndicats was due to the antics of the anarchists. "Is it not strange, he asked, "that just when the ... syndicats have understood the necessity to fight... on all the terrains in co-operation with the socialist groups...that some of their delegates seek... to create a disastrous antagonism between the syndicats and the partisans of political action?" Under such circumstances, he argued, it was necessary for the socialists to take all measures to ensure the safety of the labor forces. Refusing to retreat one inch, he added that he was "certain that the working class army will not hesitate long before accepting the only rational, logical, and productive tactics."

139 Typographie Française, September 15, 1896.
140 La Petite République, August 15, 1896.
141 Ibid. Also see the article of Viviani in ibid., August 8, 1896.
The explanation of Jaures was a weak justification of the socialists' action and a conciliatory gesture toward the syndicats. In explaining his split with the majority over the Zurich resolution, he continued to misrepresent the majority as "pure anarchists or anarcho-syndicalists... who believe that the proletarian can free himself outside of political action." His explanation for his action was that a congress was called for the sole purpose of making certain decisions and no decision could be made with the unprincipled anarchists at these meetings. But, he continued, there was a good chance that the anarchists were evolving into a more mature position. Inspired by men like Hamon and Lazare, he said, they were repudiating individual acts of terrorism and were entering into the syndicats. In this trend should continue, Jaures predicted that a real basis of co-operation between socialism and anarchism would soon be established.

That Jaures was making a last minute attempt to retain the links between socialism and the syndicats was obvious. Toward this end also was his argument that one of the reasons why the socialists separated themselves from the syndicalists at London was to clearly define "the responsibilities of each" in the formation of common action. Once this definition was established, he argued, the way would be clear for co-operation between the two methods of action. The proletarian would combine "syndicat action which will permit him
to defend himself in the present society and political action which will enable him to create the new society."\textsuperscript{145}

What was Pelloutier's reaction to the Congress of London? The sentiments of the leader of the Bourses du Travail were made clear in a letter which he wrote to Léon de Seilhac immediately after he had returned to France. According to his letter, Pelloutier was "completely satisfied with all that has taken place."\textsuperscript{146} For he estimated that "all the militants of syndicat action are going to exploit the stupid intolerance of the minority for enlarging the gap that already separates the syndicats from the politicians."\textsuperscript{147}

As to the immediate repercussions of the Congress of London, Pelloutier was "convinced that the congress of the Bourses du Travail will not hesitate to declare that it considers the economic battle superior to all else and that parliamentary action is only valuable as a means of propaganda." The reaction of the CGT was less certain. Yet he said that they "would not be surprised... if it also voted a strong protest against the men who want to 'parlimentariser' the proletariat."\textsuperscript{148}

Pelloutier felt that the most disastrous consequences of the London Congress would probably occur in the ranks of the socialists themselves. "The struggle has been so animated... that... there will

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Letter of Pelloutier to Léon de Seilhac in \textit{La Revue Bleue} No. 9, 1896.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
exist among the parties," he predicted, "a bitterness that will continue to exasperate the workers."\textsuperscript{149} Pointing to the fact that some of the Blanquists were already attacking "the Millerands and the Jaureses" in the press, he anticipated that the socialist union would be hurt by the inevitable disputes.\textsuperscript{150} Only the Allemanists would profit from London, he insisted, for they had conducted themselves honorably and in good faith throughout the entire affair.\textsuperscript{151}

As for Pelloutier himself, the intransigence of the socialists at London was the decisive factor in his final break with them. Whereas before he was willing to accept political action under certain conditions, now he was to reject all co-operation and contact with the socialist parties as useless and futile. In the years to come, he would, in his role as Secretary of the Bourses du Travail, carry out all the decisions of the workers to call upon the aid of the political parties. In his private role as revolutionary syndicalist, however, he would always fight every attempt on the part of his colleagues to link the syndicats to political action. That his radical opposition to socialism was caused by the events of London

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid. See also Pelloutier's article on the Congress of London in \textit{L'Art Social} No. 3 (September, 1896), pp. 93-94.
Pelloutier openly admitted. While explaining his doctrinal position some years later, he was to say that "my sentiments which are those... of all the syndiques really conscious of the power of corporate organizations have not changed since the Congress of London. It is true, I believe, that the syndicats are losing little by little their faith in political action." 152

152 Le Soir, August 28, 1896 in Cahiers de...
On the morrow of the London Congress, Pelloutier occupied an eminent position in the labor world. His skill in leading the syndicat forces at London had earned him a great deal of esteem. Moreover, as the Secretary of the Bourses du Travail, he was proving himself a leader of exceptional ability. The great increase in vitality shown by the Federation was, in large part, due to him. Not only had he guided the Bourses toward complete political neutrality but he had managed to keep these institutions independent of the CGT. In fact, so forcefully had he succeeded in influencing all the recent events in the working class world that he was rapidly earning the respect of friend and foe alike.

Although an able leader, he proved to be a poor prophet. For, in spite of his recent predictions, the socialists showed little sign of losing their hold on the French workers. In fact, during the fall of 1896 the parliamentarians seemed to be moving toward a rapprochement with the CGT.\(^1\) To be sure, the latter did make, in the fall of

\(^1\) During the year, the CGT had engaged in a number of common activities with the socialists. Not only had it carried its demands directly to the parliamentary socialists but the CGT had utilized the socialist newspapers for its propaganda and had organized joint conferences with the socialists. See the report of the National Council at the 8e Congrès National Corporatif, tenue à Tours du 11 au 19 Septembre, 1896 (Paris: 1896), pp. 24-55.
1896, a formal protest against the socialists' conduct at London, but it was a perfunctory one only. In fact, even while condemning the socialists, the ruling circles of the CGT were urging the workers to notify their socialist deputies of their economic grievances. Implicitly or explicitly, the CGT recognized that it was necessary to have some influence among the public authorities even if such purely syndicalist tactics as strikes were to succeed. For this reason, few members of the CGT ever really seriously considered a total break with the socialists.

Another factor contributing to the growing harmony between the CGT and the socialists was the gradual drift of the organized workers toward an out-and-out reformism. In the fall of 1896 the CGT adopted a resolution on the General Strike that smacked of moderation and timidity. Not only did the resolution give this instrument a clearly reformist slant but stated that it would be "absurd to push the workers into a movement of which it is... impossible to foresee the consequences." Before calling the General Strike, the CGT wanted to subject it to careful analysis, since "all the workers do not have absolute confidence in the General Strike." To buttress this new moderation, the CGT voted to remove the Committee of the General Strike from its midst. From now on, the presence of this Committee would offend no prospective member of the Organization.

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3 8e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Tours..., pp. 83, 89-92.
4 Ibid., pp. 82-83. 5 Ibid., p. 85. 6 Ibid., pp. 87-89.
In late 1896 and early 1897 the CGT continued to work with the socialists. The influx of the anarchists into this Organization did not obscure the fact that the majority of the syndicat leaders remained true to their socialist beliefs. Although the majority of them were sympathetic to the Allemanists, some preferred the politics practiced by the Blanquists, Guesdists, or Independents. Nevertheless, the chiefs of the labor movement, in the interest of syndicat unity, refused to single out any one political group for special consideration. To a reunion organized by the CGT in the spring of 1897, for example, came Jaures, Vaillant, and Guesde, all members of rival schools. Yet, as the socialists moved closer together in parliament, political rivalries gradually eased up in the CGT.

Now that their relations with the CGT were progressing smoothly, the socialists were extremely sensitive to events in the labor world. In September many of them appeared worried over the coming CGT congress at Toulouse. They had learned that several anarchists were planning to introduce a number of anti-parliamentarian proposals in this meeting. In response to this danger, the socialists began to hammer home the virtues of political action to the syndicats. In La Petite République appeared article after article by Vaillant,

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7 See the report of the National Council of the CGT for 1896-97 in 9e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Toulouse du 20 au 25 Septembre, 1897 (Toulouse: 1897), pp. 30-42.

8 Ibid., p. 37.
Millerand, and others, all praising the benefits of parliamentary action. Dubreuilh, a Blanquist, summed up the socialists' attitude on this score. A denial of the value of political action by the congress, he wrote, "would go counter to the law that for each function... a different organ is needed.... The patron must also be beaten on political grounds." The socialists had little reason to worry. When Lagailse, Secretary of the National Council, asked the workers "to force the public powers to curb the capitalist crimes," the keynote of the Congress was struck. All of the decisions taken by the delegates, from the endorsement of the eight-hour day to the partial rejection of the pending law on old age pensions, envisioned the support of the state. Few among the militants dissented when the Marxist Soulery claimed that "we are not making politics. All we are asking is what appears good to us from the law." Even on such a sensitive issue as the General Strike, the CGT associated itself very closely with the socialists' viewpoint. Of the twenty-three propositions on this tactic proposed at the meeting, only two viewed the General

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9 See in particular La Petite République, August 20, 27, September 23, 1897.

10 Ibid., August 20, 1897.

11 9e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Toulouse..., p. 33.

12 Ibid., p. 173.
Strike as a weapon to overthrow the capitalist system. The majority of the delegates who supported the General Strike felt that it should be used exclusively to strengthen the workers in their economic tug of war with capital. 13 In fact, most of the syndicalists identified themselves with the notion of the grève généralise when they voted to "generalize the partial strike by industry." 14

The results of the Congress were greeted with alacrity by the socialists who watched their influence growing among the syndicats. Praising the Toulouse meeting, Millerand carefully noted that the decisions taken there "requires political action as an indispensable complement of trade union action." 15 To the more optimistic Jaures, the Congress had proved beyond all doubt that "the workers know... it is necessary to detach political power from the directing class." 16 For this reason, he predicted that "between the proletariat organized economically in the syndicats and the socialist party... there will not only be accord but there will be cordiality. With one heart, with an unanimous and joyous elan, all the workers and all the elected socialists will march together against the capitalist society." 17

15 La Petite République, September 23, 1897.
16 Ibid., October 2, 1897.
17 Ibid.
As might have been expected, Pelloutier was scarcely happy over the clearly reformist bent of the CGT. Watching this Organization move toward the moderate camp, the Secretary of the Bourses saw the prospects of a really revolutionary labor movement grow progressively dimmer. The evolution occurring in the CGT he attributed to the corporate egotism of the large federations, more interested in immediate advantages for their members than in furthering the interests of the proletariat as a class. To counteract their influence, he continued to induce the anarchists to work more closely with the other revolutionaries in the syndicats. He knew that only by establishing a coalition of all the revolutionaries could the main course of the CGT be altered.

What really disturbed Pelloutier, carefully watching the growth of reformism in the CGT, was the growing sentiment to incorporate the Bourses in the new Organization. He had fought this merger since 1895 when at the Congress of Limoges he had proposed a plan which would have enabled the Bourses to co-operate with the CGT without being absorbed by it. The Bourses du Travail had consented to this scheme at their late Congress of Tours, but Pelloutier's proposal had so far been ignored by the CGT. The latter still insisted the Fédération des Bourses du Travail should enter the ranks of the CGT with the same status as the other national federations of

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syndicats. Now, in the winter of 1897, the National Council of the CGT was making new efforts to incorporate the Bourses on these terms.  

Since its formation, the CGT had done little to dispel Pelloutier's mistrust of it. To even the most casual observer, it was obvious that the CGT was badly in need of repair. Led by a rather incompetent Secretary, Lagailse of the Syndicat National des Chemin de Fer, it appeared headed for an early end. The lack of support given to this Organization by its members was its most glaring weakness. Of the thirty-one organizations which adhered to the CGT, only the Fédération du Livre and the Syndicat National des Chemin de Fer paid their dues regularly. "No organization, no matter how useful or indispensable it may be," Keufer had said, "can survive under such conditions." Fewer still were the syndicats which attended the meetings of its National Council. At once meeting, only eight of its forty-two members had been interested enough to appear. Moreover, the CGT was composed mostly of the large federations of métier or industry. As might have been anticipated, this situation led to a great deal of internal rivalry in its ranks.  

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20 8e Congrès National Corporatif, tenue à Tours, pp. 52-53.  

Also apparent was the fact that the CGT was more riddled than ever by political factions. As Pelloutier had predicted, the new Organization, during its first two years of life, suffered from political quarrels. The Allemanists in particular were trying to profit from their new prestige acquired at the Congress of London. In September, 1896 they sought to increase their strength by bringing politically-oriented syndicats into the CGT. Guérard, one of theirs, proposed a change in the CGT's statutes to this effect at the National Congress of Tours. Supported by his political colleagues, he argued that such a change was necessary to attract all the syndicats to the CGT. "If we include political groups, we can show them the error of their ways," Guérard claimed. "But if we do not include them, they will never know."23

The Allemanists' proposals were opposed by those Blanquists and Guesdistes at the Congress who knew that the CGT would be swamped by the Allemanists' supporters.24 Nevertheless, the Allemanists were partially successful, for they persuaded the delegates to vote a motion stating only that the Congress "invites all the organizations to remain outside of political schools."25 It was clear that the

22 *8ème Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Tours...*, pp. 60-64.


CGT was unwilling to take a strong stand against the influx of political elements in its midst.

Aware of the CGT's internal problems, Pelloutier, despite the growing clamor for the merger of the Bourses and the CGT, continued to oppose the union of these two organizations. During the late winter of 1897, however, his efforts came more and more under the attack of those who shared the reformist and political sentiments of the CGT. The movement to link the Bourses with the CGT was led by the Bourse of Toulouse whose Blanquist delegate on the Comité Fédéral, Capjuzan, insisted that the coming congress of Bourses should again review the issue. He was joined in this campaign by several other members of the Comité Fédéral who were opposed to the political ideas of Pelloutier. As the Congress approached, the debate on this subject in the Comité Fédéral grew in bitterness and intensity.26

His personal ascendancy on the Comité Fédéral gave Pelloutier the victory. On September 3, 1897 the Comité Fédéral recommended that the Bourses maintain the decision voted at the preceding Congress of Tours in regard to the CGT. So incensed was Capjuzan over this turn of events that he asked the Comité Fédéral to replace Pelloutier as the its representative to the Congress of Toulouse. The militants decided to stick with Pelloutier, regardless of Capjuzan's insistence that Pelloutier "is able to exert too much influence on the Congress' decisions."27

26 Fédération des Bourses...—Procès-Verbaux de la.... Sessions of August 14, 27, September 3, 10, 1897, pp. 110, 115, 181, 118.
27 Ibid. Session of September 10, 1897, p. 118.
Scarcely had the Congress opened on September 15, however, when Pelloutier realized that he was in for a great deal of difficulty. From all sides of the hall came sharp indictments of the Secretary who had written several anti-political circulars during the course of the preceding year. It was Pelloutier's leanings toward anarchism that brought on the anger of the delegates. Not only was he accused of assuming dictatorial powers but was also charged with eliminating "constructive political action." For, as the delegate from Cognac pointed out, it was inadmissible for the Comité Fédéral to condemn political action at the very moment when the Bourses were preparing to ask the parliament to vote certain laws. In the end, the Congress, over the protest of Pelloutier, passed a motion "inviting the Comité Fédéral no longer to incite incidents on this subject in future reports."

Pelloutier was also charged with stacking the Comité Fédéral with anarchists. "Whenever a Bourse needs a representative, it is forced to ask the advice of the Comité Fédéral," complained the Bourse of Angers. "Who is the Secretary who does not select this representative from... those who think as he does." To the support of this charge came the Richter of Le Mans, who claimed that Pelloutier deliberately named an anarchist to represent the Bourse of Saumur on

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29 Ibid., pp. 28-29. 30 Ibid., p. 29.
31 Ibid., pp. 62-63.
the Comité Fédéral. He admonished the Secretary for "allowing the anarchists to infiltrate our organization." The working class must not be deceived, he continued, "by men... who propagate ideas which are injurious to our interests... since it seems necessary to accept the measures which the bourgeoisie are taking in our behalf."\(^{32}\) Before the session was over, several more of the Bourses made other accusations against the Secretary.

Pelloutier made a spirited defense of his conduct. At no time, he argued, had he abused the authority invested in him. He claimed that the three anarchists sitting on the Comité Fédéral had been chosen by the Bourses themselves, without pressure from the Comité Fédéral. To prevent any future confusion on this score, he promised the Congress that he would send a summary of the political opinions of every delegate that he suggested to a Bourse seeking representation on the Comité Fédéral.\(^{33}\) His explanation seemed to satisfy most of the delegates. By a rather close vote, the Congress decided to declare the incident closed.\(^{34}\)

When the discussion turned to the relationship of the Bourses with the CGT, Pelloutier knew that he would have trouble in persuading the Congress to keep the Bourses outside the CGT. For behind the attacks on his behavior stood the same political and reformist elements which controlled the CGT. It was these militants who were sure to

\(^{32}\) Ibid., pp. 88-89.  
\(^{33}\) Ibid., pp. 91-92.  
\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 94.
press for the merger of these two Organizations, even at the risk of dismantling the Fédération des Bourses du Travail. Not only were they sympathetic with the aims of the CGT but they felt that the financial advantages of associating with the wealthy federations of métier were worth the breakup of their own Organization. It was an anxious Pelloutier who listened while these militants, as he had expected, demanded the adhesion of the Bourses to the CGT.

Most of them wanted the Fédération des Bourses to join the CGT under the provisions established by the CGT Congress of Limoges. According to these terms, the Fédération des Bourses would take its place along side the other national federations, sending three delegates to the National Council. Other delegates asked the Bourses to enter the CGT as individual units, not en bloc or as members of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail. In this way they claimed, no friction could arise between the two Organization, for the Bourses would owe loyalty to the CGT instead of the then defunct Fédération des Bourses du Travail. As far as Pelloutier was concerned, both of these plans would mean the destruction of the Fédération des Bourses.

Pelloutier began the defense of his project by repeating his old arguments against the merger of the two Organizations. As his speech progressed, however, it was clear that he had formulated new ones since the preceding year. In a line of reasoning that displayed

36 Ibid., pp. 64-69.
37 Ibid., pp. 106-107.
a strong touch of libertarianism, he accused the National Council of being too cumbersome to carry out its duties. A smaller council would be no improvement on the matter, for it would "constitute a proletarian dictatorship which would be capable of harboring political conspirators." According to Pelloutier, there was only one way to insure the strength of the working class—to limit the duties of the CGT and to expand the role of an autonomous Fédération des Bourses du Travail.  

He then proceeded to unfold before the Congress the fruits of his recent reflections on the labor movement. As Pelloutier saw it, both Organizations had an important role to play in the social struggle. Whereas the work of the CGT was to agitate for reform and to carry on revolutionary propaganda, the Bourses should concern themselves with the study and elucidation of all problems pertaining to the labor world. For, he was to say, "besides the association which... leads... the daily struggle, the proletarian has created another association. It is a foyer of study where he can reflect on his condition and fortify himself... for the task of achieving the freedom for which he has a right." Unlike the federations of métier, the Bourses "rest on the principle of social solidarity," for they were not concerned wholly with the professional interests of only a certain section of the workers. Because of the particular

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38 Ibid., p. 106. 39 Ibid., p. 107.

40 Fernand Pelloutier, L'Ouvrier des Deux Mondes, No. 10.
nature and role of the Bourses, they should remain separate and
distinct from the CGT. To promote co-operation and cordiality
between the two Organizations, the Comité Fédéral should meet
periodically with the National Council to co-ordinate their action
on all problems of mutual concern. Such an arrangement would have
the added advantage, Pelloutier assured the delegates, of preventing
an overcentralization of the labor movement. A system of checks and
balances would be enacted, assuring the workers of the best possible
leadership. 41

Pelloutier's words were greeted by the applause of the delegates.
To his support came Paris, Tours, Cognac, Nevers, Le Mans, and
others, all of which asked the Bourses to accept the plan of working
class union proposed by Pelloutier. 42 When an order of the day
demanding the "complete suppression of the Fédération des Bourses du
Travail and the fusion of it in the CGT" was defeated, Pelloutier
knew he had won. 43 The Congress, by a sizable majority, decided that
the CGT should be composed of the Comité Fédéral meeting jointly
with National Council, without the one impinging on the autonomy of
the other. 44 As far as Pelloutier was concerned, it was the salva-
tion of the Bourses du Travail.

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41 6e Congrès de la Fédération des Bourses..., tenu à Toulouse
... , pp. 57-59.
42 Ibid., pp. 59-66. 43 Ibid., p. 66.
44 Ibid.
When the CGT met several days later, it immediately took up the project of union voted by the Bourses. There was a great deal of opposition to Pelloutier's plan in the ruling councils of this Organization. Some Blanquists and Guesdists in the CGT feared that the Bourses were trying to control the working class movement by overwhelming the National Council with the prestige and power of the Comité Fédéral. "The spirit of some members of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail is to reinforce the CGT by seeking to have the majority," charged Capjuzan, the most outspoken opponent of Pelloutier's scheme. He then proposed that the CGT admit the Bourses individually, and not the Federation of Bourses itself. In this way, he hoped to undermine the Fédération des Bourses du Travail by absorbing its member Bourses in the CGT. The Guesdist Soulery wanted to go even further. What he asked was the complete rejection of the Bourses' plan of union, since the CGT had nothing to gain and much to lose by altering the status quo.

But most of the members of the CGT were favorable to the project of union proposed by the Bourses du Travail. According to the report on this subject prepared by the CGT, the National Council would be composed exclusively of three delegates from each national federation of syndicats and one from each local or regional federation. To co-

45 9e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Toulouse..., pp. 92-93.
46 Ibid., p. 92.
ordinate the action of the working class, the National Council, as
the Bourses had suggested, would meet with the Comité Fédéral of the
Bourses. Although each Organization would have its full autonomy,
the National Council and the Comité Fédéral, when meeting jointly,
would become the Confederal Committee of the CGT.\(^{47}\) Thus, the
CGT, following essentially the recommendations of Pelloutier, voted
the unification of the working class forces in France.

The CGT's decision to accept the Bourses' offer was received
enthusiastically by Pelloutier who felt that a great step had been
taken toward effective working class unity. As he turned to his
duties on the Comité Fédéral, he was determined to disarm his critics
in the Bourses by discharging his task with competence and impartiality.
On November 5 he urged the members of the Comité Fédéral to be present
faithfully at the joint sessions with the National Council.\(^{48}\) During
the succeeding months, he took every opportunity to induce the
Bourses to impose their demands on the socialist deputies, although
he himself opposed all recourse to the public powers.\(^{49}\) Nor did he
neglect his promise to the recent Congress to inform the Bourses of
the political opinion of all prospective delegates to the Comité
Fédéral. When the Bourse du Travail of Bourges asked for representa-
tion of this body, Pelloutier sent it a list of three possible choices,
together with a synopsis of their political viewpoints.\(^{50}\)

\(^{47}\) Ibid., pp. 85-91. The National Council of the CGT and the Comité
Fédéral of the Bourses retained their separate names and identity until
1903. In that year, they merged to become the Confederal Committee as
a result of the unification of the Bourses du Travail and the CGT.
See below, pp. 380-381.

\(^{48}\) Fédération des Bourses...--Proces-verbaux de la..., p. 121.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., p. 129.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 119.
Nevertheless, opposition to Pelloutier was still present in the Bourses du Travail. The political elements on the Comité Fédéral were determined to replace him with someone more sympathetic to their own viewpoint. Led by a Guesdist, Zimmer, and an old enemy, Capjuzan, the drive to oust Pelloutier came to a head when the annual nomination of officers took place. Zimmer asked the Comité Fédéral to replace Pelloutier, for "the abuse of authority results from a too frequent renewal of a mandate." As for Capjuzan, he was going to vote against Pelloutier because the Secretary had misused his personal influence.

The other members of the Comité Fédéral respected the enormous contributions made by Pelloutier during his tenure of office. In the end, it was Pelloutier's a-political orientation that gave him the victory. No one pointed this out better than Lavaud who argued that "Pelloutier must be elected... because he is outside political hatreds. If we elect a Guesdist or an Allemanist, he will try to direct the Comité Fédéral toward his Party. We do not have to worry about this from Pelloutier." In a rather close vote, Pelloutier was formally re-elected Secretary of the Bourses.

Meanwhile, trouble again broke out between the Bourses du Travail and the CGT. As provided in the plan of union, several meetings were held between the Comité Fédéral and the National Council in the months

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51 Ibid., p. 120. 52 Ibid. 53 Ibid., p. 120.
following the Congress of Toulouse. These joint meetings immediately bogged down in numerous disagreements between the two Organizations. At the heart of these differences lay the basic fact that the CGT could not live up to its own ambitions. Without real strength or influence, the Confédération embarked upon an extensive plan of operation which left the Bourses little to do in the social struggle. Moreover, the two Organizations disagreed over the nature of their relationship. According to the Bourses, the Congress of Toulouse had only envisioned the periodic reunion of the two Organizations. On the contrary, the National Council insisted that it was to merge totally with the Comité Federal in order to form a permanent Confederation Committee of the CGT.\(^54\)

It seemed to Pelloutier as if the politicians on the National Council intended to ride roughshod over the Bourses. What they wanted, he felt, was to suppress the Fédération des Bourses du Travail and to incorporate the member Bourses directly into a CGT which they controlled. In response to this threat, he called a conference in June, 1898 of all the Paris delegates to the late Toulouse Congress of Bourses. He polled the delegates for their opinion on how the Congress of Toulouse had intended for the Comité Federal and the

\(^{54}\) See the report of the National Council of the CGT read by Lagailse at the 10e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Rennes du 26 Septembre au 1 Octobre, 1898 (Rennes: 1898), pp. 58--; Also see the report of the Comité Federal of the Bourses read by Pelloutier at the 7e Congrès National des Bourses du Travail, tenu à Rennes, Septembre, 1898. Pelloutier's report appears in L'Ouvrier des Deux Mondes No. 18 (August 1, 1898). The Compte-Rendu of the Congress is found in ibid., Nos. 20, 21, 22 (October, 1898), pp. 274-285.
National Council to co-operate. Had the Congress meant for these two organs to merge completely? Or had it ruled that they should meet only occasionally to discuss matters of "exceptional importance?" On this question, the conference ruled that the Comité Fédéral and the National Council were not to be permanently aligned but were only to meet at intervals in order to discuss problems common to both. 55 Armed with this mandate, Pelloutier induced the Comité Fédéral to boycott the meetings of the National Council throughout the summer of 1898.

When the National Congress of the Bourses opened at Rennes in 1898, Pelloutier obtained the official consent of the Bourses to notify the CGT that the National Council and the Comité Fédéral would meet only "in case of unforeseen and serious events." 56 Moreover, the Bourses made a formal protest against the grandiose pretensions of the CGT. Insisting that the CGT should take a more limited role in working class affairs, the Congress asked this Organization to concentrate on creating new federations of syndicats instead of launching new services and projects which it could not afford. Finally, the Bourses pledged their time and money to support the CGT in the fulfillment of its legitimate activities. 57

Pelloutier had little difficulty in persuading the Bourses to take these measures. When Paris explained that the "politicians have

55 *7e Congres National des Bourses...*, tenu à Rennes..., p. 282.
seized control of the CGT," most of the Bourses recoiled.58 To be
sure, several of them, led by Angers, asked the Congress "to suppress
the Fédération des Bourses du Travail in order to end the struggle
with the CGT."59 But when the Bourse of LeMans notified the delegates
that the CGT was planning to ask all the Bourses to desert their
Federation and enter in the CGT, almost all the opposition melted.60
While Beausoleil shouted that such a measure would "place the Bourses
in the hands of the politicians," the militants voted to send
Pelloutier himself to the coming CGT Congress to announce their
decision to the CGT.61

The rivalry between the National Council and the Comité Federal
took up almost all the National Congress of the CGT, meeting at
Rennes in September of 1898. In his annual report to the delegates,
Lagailse blamed Pelloutier for all the tension between the two
Organizations. The Secretary of the CGT, who took no pains to hide
his beliefs that the syndicats should work closely with the socialists,
charged that Pelloutier was hostile to this point of view. According
to Lagailse, Pelloutier had tried to dominate the joint sessions of
the two committees, but, upon failing, had tried to destroy all ties

58 Ibid., p. 328.
59 Ibid., p. 320.
60 Ibid., p. 327.
61 Ibid.
between the two Organizations. Pelloutier was afraid, claimed Lagailse, that the Bourses might leave the Federation of Bourses for the CGT. This would "be a grave danger to the salary of the Secretary," he stated, unveiling his full hatred of Pelloutier.62 Villifying the latter on a number of other accounts, Lagailse ended his speech by asking the workers to continue their cordial relationship with the socialists.63

To answer Lagailse, Pelloutier himself took the tribune. Unlike that of his assailant, Pelloutier's speech was a dispassionate account of the reasons for the antagonism between the CGT and the Comité Fédéral. The major problem between the two, he claimed, was a difference in interpretation of the plan of union voted at Toulouse. Whereas the National Council had thought that it was to meet with the Comité Fédéral regularly, the Bourses had interpreted the plan to mean that the two were to assemble only on exceptional occasions. It was this misunderstanding, more than anything else which had caused all the animosity. As for the Comité Fédéral, it did not really feel that regular meetings with the National Council could be fruitful. For, continued Pelloutier, the National Council showed no sign of real vitality. Instead of concentrating on creating more federations of syndicats to increase its strength, it was

62 10e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Rennes..., p. 68.
63 Ibid., pp. 68-.
attempting too much too soon. So weak and underdeveloped was this body that it had been unable to undertake two minor inquiries among the syndicats when it had been asked to do so by the Comité Federal. In Pelloutier's opinion, the major cause of the CGT's weakness were the politicians on its National Council, who were not interested in creating additional federations. "The comrades want to indirectly monopolize the syndicat movement by eliminating the federations of métier one by one. All they want to do... is to group the syndicats in a single framework for keeping them well in hand." For this same reason, he continued, they wanted to swallow the Bourses du Travail. Thus, working class liberty and independence made it "necessary to combat this at any price." His libertarian instincts aroused, Pelloutier concluded his speech with a diatribe against the politico-syndicalists who sought to establish a dictatorship over the syndicats.

What followed was a long discussion in which every shade of working class opinion on the nature of the labor movement came to the fore. To those delegates from the provinces, many of the issues were incomprehensible. In fact, the debate took such a complex turn that one provincial admitted that he was completely bewildered as to what was involved. Essentially, the struggle was

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64 Ibid., pp. 101-107.  
65 Ibid., p. 126.  
66 Ibid.  
between the protagonists of a strong, centralized labor movement controlled by the CGT and the supporters of a loose organization of syndicats centered around the Bourses du Travail as well as the CGT. In the first camp were most of the politically-inspired delegates such as Lagailse, Copigneaux, Lauche, Capjuzan, and others who wanted to incorporate the Bourses into the CGT. Leading the drive to decentralize the syndicat movement were Riom, Guérard, Riche, Trabaud, and Pelloutier. Furthermore, the neutralist sentiments of the latter group was clearly evident. It was summed up best by Riom when he pointed out that from a centralized organization "a comité directeur could occur. And it would be easy ... to allow the direction of it to fall into the hands of a political school."  

The supporters of decentralization carried the day. As Pelloutier had hoped, the Congress accepted his proposal to convoke joint sessions of the Comité Fédéral and the National Council only on occasions of exceptional importance. The Congress also took a number of steps toward defining the role of the CGT. From that time on, the National Council was asked to concentrate its attention on the creation of new federations of syndicats. Among its newly delineated duties were such tasks as making syndicat propaganda, approving or rejecting working class legislation, and aiding and

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70 10e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Rennes..., pp. 136-38.
co-ordinating strike action by the workers. Despite the outcries of Capjuzan, Copigneaux, and Lauche, Pelloutier again had managed to get the CGT's support for the proposals made by the Bourses du Travail. 71

As for Pelloutier himself, his quarrel with Lagailse threatened to end his militant career. The rivalry between the two men provoked several of the delegates to propose that both should resign in the interests of working class harmony. Lagailse complied, but Pelloutier hesitated. Fortunately, a number of his loyal supporters came to his rescue. That impassioned spokesman for the Bourses, Richter, stirred the whole Congress when he said that "if you ask for the resignation of Pelloutier, you are asking the Federation to disappear. If this should occur, it will not be long before they also try to dissolve the federations of métier." 72 As it turned out, Pelloutier was vindicated. When he promised the Congress that he would never be a candidate for a position on the National Council, he was allowed to retain his secretarial post at the Bourses du Travail. 73

Regardless of how it appeared, the Congress of Rennes was far from an anti-political rally. Like all the CGT congresses since 1895,

71 Ibid., pp. 278-86. 72 Ibid., p. 80.
73 Leroy, II, 461.
the Rennes conclave expressed a desire for political and state support in the struggle for reform. In fact, not one delegate spoke out against Riom when he said that "the only action possible... for achieving some results is parliamentary action. The intellectual education of the working class is still not developed enough for exerting any pressure other than political ones." The futility of demanding reform without acknowledging the necessity of political action was noted by Lauche. "We do not want to make politics here," he said, "but we are led to it every time we take a decision.... It is the élus ... upon whom it is necessary to impose the task of obtaining our claims." Noting the clearly political, if neutralist spirit of the Congress of Rennes, the socialists acclaimed it tumultuously in the press.

II

Fernand Pelloutier was a sickly man of twenty-eight when he took over the reins of the Bourses du Travail in 1895. In spite of his illness, he seemed to bring a limitless supply of energy and resourcefulness to the secretarial post. From the time of his election as

74 10e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Rennes..., p. 154.
75 Ibid., p. 157.
76 La Petite République, September 30, October 7, 1898.
Secretary of the Bourses, a running intoxication seemed to carry him toward his death. It was almost as if Pelloutier knew his days were numbered and sought to create the most in the least amount of time. So feverishly and laboriously did he struggle that, during the period from 1895 to 1900, he bequeathed a body of thought and work which have since become legendary in the annals of the French labor movement.

Pelloutier's devotion to the Bourses du Travail was rooted to his sincere conviction that these institutions had an unique role to play in French history. Seeing through the verbal smokescreen to the reformism in the CGT, Pelloutier felt that the Bourses were the only truly revolutionary force in the working class world. To them, he assigned the task of leading the workers out of the capitalist desert, across the sea of revolution, and into the new society.77

Not that he expected the Bourses to lead a bloody assault on the capitalist fortresses. Insofar as it was prepared to do so, he felt that this was the task of the CGT. Moreover, Pelloutier knew better than anyone else that many of the Bourses were very bit as reformist and concilatory toward capital as were many of the large professional syndicats. What Pelloutier really had in mind when he spoke of the revolutionary role of the Bourses was something entirely different.

To him, the real revolutionary forces in history were the minds of men. Ample evidence was available to support his view that the great social changes in the nation's past had always been preceded by a transformation in the intellectual realm. Unless a revolutionary élan could be generated in man's spirit, he claimed, the material struggle against capital would never end in a complete renovation of society.78 In the Bourses du Travail, Pelloutier found the foyers of revolutionary instruction. Only the Bourses could carry out this intellectual transformation which was vital to the creation of a real revolutionary will and purpose among the workers.79

To alert the workers to the need of revolution, it was necessary to demonstrate to them the reasons for their misery. According to Pelloutier, it was the knowledge of their malheur that would give the workers the will to overthrow society.80 Once they realized that they could expect no improvement of their conditions under capitalism, they would face up to the fact that they had no alternative but to revolt. "Let it be a question of wages, a reduction in the work day, or any other issue, and eventually the workers will have to revolt...," Pelloutier once lectured his colleagues. "All

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of the syndiques, regardless of their present opinions, will be revolutionary someday."

In his opinion, the courses conducted at the Bourses du Travail would go a long way toward demonstrating the futility of reform to the proletarian. As he studied the history and development of capitalism, he would come to realize that his misery was irrevocably tied to the capitalist order. Moreover, the workers would develop new dignity and self-confidence in proportion to the increase in their intellectual development. Soon, they would learn that real happiness consisted "in a busy and satisfying life and that man can only find in the cultivation of his intellect and the exercise of his muscles the principle regulator of the world." Out of the Bourses du Travail would spring forth a race of "proud and free men," secure in the knowledge that "they alone could achieve the freedom to which they have a right."

Pelloutier spent his militant life seeking new methods to foster the education of the workers. In early 1898 the idea came to Pelloutier that the proletarian would learn the lessons of political economy more quickly if he were given some form of visual aid.

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81 Fédération des Bourses...—Procès-verbaux de la..., p. 114.
83 Fernand Pelloutier, Les Syndicats..., p. 15.
84 Ibid., p. 9.
Reflecting on this notion, he conceived of a project by which the proletarian could view, in the various stages of production, the material with which he worked. Not only would he see what his labor produced but he would learn his political economy by observing the difference between production and selling price, the outrageous cost of transport and duties, and the cost of other parasitical additions to the product. With the aid of visual stimulants, he would learn such basic facts as what countries manufactured what products and the condition of the working class in these nations. From these reflections came Pelloutier's project of the Musée du Travail which he asked each Bourse to establish in its locality. For, as he said in way of explanation, "what the people lack is not moral or intellectual courage... but knowledge of their servitude."

Besides its task of generating a revolutionary élan among the workers, education would also prepare the proletariat for the future society. Unlike the materialistic philosophers of his day, Pelloutier felt that the moral development of man was not subordinated to the march of social evolution. According to him, it was absurd to expect man's moral transformation to occur immediately upon the establishment of the new society. An abrupt change from capitalism

to socialism would merely "open a new account" to the moral defects prevalent under the iniquitous system of private property. To insure the future against the evils of the past, Pelloutier sought to "subordinate the social adjustment to the integral education of the people." Ideas such as justice and benevolence which would be the regulators of the post revolutionary world had to be acquired in the present. For, as Pelloutier was to say, "the working class must be instructed for revolution" or the revolution itself would be useless and sterile.

But what of those systematic thinkers who maintained that man was a prisoner of his social milieu, that his nature was intricately bound to the economic system in which he lived? To them, Pelloutier answered that human intellect and will was capable of independent development. Once man had achieved the minimum of sustenance, he was no longer controlled by acquisitive instincts. By sheer discipline and instruction, he could rise above his environment and scoff at economic determinism. It was his faith in man's ability to think and act independently of his social environment that gave moral fiber to Pelloutier's socialism.

88 Fernand Pelloutier, L'Ouvrier des Deux Mondes No. 15.
89 Ibid.
91 Fernand Pelloutier, L'Ouvrier des Deux Mondes No. 15.
In Pelloutier's opinion, the Bourses du Travail would carry out the moral transformation of the working class. Unlike the federations of métier and industry, which catered to man's acquisitive nature, the Bourses were capable of instilling in him the real meaning of justice and benevolence. As the workers came together in these "chambers of labor," they would take on the virtues that gave moral significance to a revolutionary movement. Participation in the diverse activities at the Bourse would teach them to co-operate with one another. Joining in common tasks and projects, they would lose the ignominious propensities based on greed and egotism. Upon these islands of socialism, suspended in the capitalist ocean, would be bred a race of competent and virtuous men who would reconstruct society in accordance with the noblest ideals of the human mind.  

The moral and educative functions which Pelloutier assigned to the Bourses was the major reason why he devoted his life to the creation of a strong and vigorous network of them in France. Hardly a day went by that he was not thinking of some new plan or project to enhance their influence. To bring the seamen into these institutions, he asked the Bourses in the coastal cities to establish "sailor homes" where a free employment bureau, a library, and a subsidized restaurant and hotel would aid the maritime workers when they were not at sea. Nor did he forget the agrarian workers. From 1896 on he encouraged the Bourses to provide the farm workers with

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such services as co-operative granaries and cheap transport of goods to and from market. For the fishermen, he succeeded in fostering co-operative societies which reduced the cost of transportation and contributed to price stability in the market. As Pelloutier had hoped, all of these measures resulted in an extension in the range and influence of the Bourses du Travail.

His proudest achievement was the viaticum. In 1898 he asked the Bourses to raise the money necessary for assisting all the needy workers passing through their regions in the pursuit of employment. According to Pelloutier's plan, the Bourses would help the workers meet the cost of travel and provide them with food and lodging during their sojourn in the various towns. Furthermore, if the workers were unable to find employment, the Bourses would subsidize their journey to the nearest town where work was available. A great number of difficulties were involved in the establishment of the viaticum, but Pelloutier, during the next two years, was able to solve them. By 1900 the viaticum was well on its way to becoming a major service of the Bourses du Travail.  

Another contribution made by Pelloutier to the working class was the creation of the Office National Ouvrier de Statistique et du Placement. In 1899 it occurred to Pelloutier that if the viaticum was to be effective, it was necessary to have a knowledge of the

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93 Maurice Pelloutier, pp. 97-98.
94 Fernand Pelloutier, Histoire des Bourses..., pp. 149-156.
labor market throughout the nation. For this reason, he asked the government to establish an office which would compile statistics and collect information on the supply and demand of workers in almost every region of France. By allowing the Comité Federal to work hand in hand with this office, Pelloutier hoped to co-ordinate the vaticum with these statistics. The government, after careful study of the project, gave its consent in 1899. It was not long before the Office National Ouvrier de Statistique et de Placement, subsidized by a generous stipend from the state, was working closely with the Comité Federal.95

Along with his efforts to extend the range and improve the services of the Bourses du Travail, Pelloutier continued to give a great deal of thought to working class education. For a long time, he had thought about the need for a revue which would be devoted exclusively to working class problems. He felt that the workers needed a journal that would play the same role in the labor world as did the Economiste Francais in the world of capital. After consultation with his friends, Pelloutier laid the plans for the journal before the Bourses du Travail in late 1896. He asked the Bourses to pledge themselves to the purchase of ten to fifteen copies per month in order to assure the financial success of the project. "It is a modest effort," he said, "but no more is necessary for guaranteeing the life of the journal."96 With the hope that the

95 Ibid., pp. 156-74.
96 Maurice Pelloutier, p. 90.
Bourses would support his efforts, Pelloutier threw himself into the task of bringing out the first copy of *Ouvrier des Deux Mondes.*

The purpose of this journal was to inform the workers on the economic conditions of the proletariat in Europe and America. It included articles on working class legislation in the various nations, reports on the conditions of the workers of every industry, studies on the history of the labor movement in every country, and a social bulletin on the day to day events in the labor world. Besides these articles on working class life, the journal would offer the workers a smattering of literature and poetry which Pelloutier hoped "would awake courage in the soul of the humble."  

The first issue of the *Ouvrier des Deux Mondes* appeared on February 1, 1897 and set the tone for the subsequent issues which appeared monthly until July of 1899. In the inaugural issue appeared a long study of the conditions of women and children in industry. According to Pelloutier, all laws passed to protect women and children in the factories had proven ineffective in curbing the evils of the wage system. He reached the same conclusion in regard to his study on the duration of the work day, published in the journal from April to June of 1897. In the July and August issues, he produced a wealth of evidence to prove that the real wages of the workers had

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97 Ibid., pp. 87-91.

98 Ibid., p. 88.
not increased but had declined over the past fifty years. Even when he turned to the study of individual industries, his conclusions were always the same—only by overthrowing the system could the workers hope to better their conditions.

*L'Ouvrier des Deux Mondes* immediately ran into difficulty. As was usually the case of labor journals in the nineteenth century, the problem was a financial one. By the end of 1897 the sales of this revue were diminishing to the danger point. Not only were the Bourses refusing to pay for the copies they ordered but many packages were being returned unopened. The failure of the newspaper was due, reported Maurice Pelloutier, to working class apathy. So involved was the type of material that Pelloutier asked them to read that few workers had the will to master it. Nevertheless, Pelloutier refused to lower his journal’s standards. His faith in the workers’ ability to understand and learn was so great that he sought to elevate as well as instruct them.

In early 1898 subscriptions had declined so much that Pelloutier was forced to offer the Journal to the Fédération des Bourses du Travail. When they refused it, Pelloutier made every possible effort to continue its publication. Throughout 1898 he turned out faithfully the monthly copies of the revue. To reduce the cost of publication, he decided not only to compose, but to print the newspaper himself.

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For the next thirteen months, L'Ouvrier des Deux Mondes trickled out of Pelloutier's immeuble. Finally, in July, 1899 its subscriptions fell far below the level necessary for its maintenance. In that month, Pelloutier, weak and exhausted, abandoned his project. 100

By the beginning of 1899 Pelloutier's health was completely shattered. He had suffered a lung hemorrhage the preceding year and the lupus on his face was rapidly consuming his features. Now, losing weight daily and experiencing difficulty in breathing, Pelloutier could no longer keep up his former pace. In January he left for Bruyères-de-Sevres, a small village outside of Paris, where he hoped to recover enough of his strength to return to his post. There, in the Meudon forest, he rested in complete solitude for several months. During this period, he continued to write for several journals. He wrote an important study on the Bourses du Travail for the Revue Politique et Parlementaire, and also contributed several articles to the Journal du Peuple. In July, 1899 he suffered another hemorrhage, more crippling than the last. 101 It was obvious to all that Pelloutier's days were coming to an end.

In the period from 1895 to 1899 Pelloutier became the acknowledged leader of the labor movement. A revolutionary, dedicated to the destruction of the existing order, he nevertheless proved himself to be a creator of the first rank. His work in building the Bourses

100 Ibid., pp. 91-106.
101 Ibid., pp. 104-106.
du Travail into a powerful and influential force in the labor world
was one of the most remarkable achievements of any one man in the
last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was a creative effort
done, not out of ambition or vanity, but out of his faith that the
Bourses were vital to the moral advancement of the working class.
Never did he concur in the despair so prevalent among intellectuals
in fin de siècle France. To the optimistic Pelloutier, it was the
workers who were destined to save and regenerate the nation. For
this reason, he dedicated his life to inculcating in them the
intellectual tools and moral principles necessary to create a new
world as well as destroy the old.

III

All signs pointed toward an eventual unification of the socialist
forces in early January of 1898. For the last several years, the
various parties had been collaborating closely in and out of the
Chambre. Although certain distinctions in doctrine still existed
among them, their actual conduct was very much the same. For each
of the socialist groups, regardless of their previous viewpoint,
moved gradually toward reformism in the period from 1893 to 1898.

Even those intransigent warriors on the left, the Allemanists, lost
much of their revolutionary zeal during their stay in parliament.102

102 The clearly reformist drift of the Allemanists caused a split
in the Party. In 1896 the political leaders of the P.C.S.R. threw in
their lot with the parliamentary socialists, while most of its syndicat
adherents went into the COT. See Georges Weill, Histoire du Mouvement
By 1898 so closely were the socialists co-operating in the social struggle that a Jaurès, Vaillant, or Guesde could speak for all of them without fear of reproach. 103

When on January 13, 1898 Emile Zola published "J'accuse," the world famous Dreyfus case burst upon the French scene. Few men had believed Captain Alfred Dreyfus anything but guilty when in 1894 he had been convicted of selling secret military documents to Germany. That he was a Jew seemed to be additional evidence of his guilt, but, in spite of the efforts of the Anti-semite Edouard Drumont to make political capital out of this fact, the public soon lost all interest in the case. It was not until 1897, when it was discovered that Dreyfus had been convicted on forged evidence, that some men renewed their interest in the episode. One of these was the politically-minded novelist, Emile Zola, who, in his article, accused the War Office of having railroaded Dreyfus to cover up its own errors. The very honor of the French army seemed to be at stake as Zola charged that the military court had knowingly condemned Dreyfus on the basis of secret evidence known by many to be a forgery.

Zola’s accusations fell like a bombshell on the French political scene. To the side of those who demanded a retrial of the case rallied the majority of the Republican forces of the nation.

Radicals, many progressistes, protestants, Jews, liberal intellectuals--

all joined with the other Dreyfusards in demanding a new trial for Dreyfus. The anti-Dreyfusards, the name given to those who opposed a new trial, consisted of catholics, monarchists, nationalists, and military leaders who were either certain that Dreyfus was guilty or were determined to protect the army's honor and prestige at any cost. In the months that followed, these two groups locked horns in a bitter struggle that threatened the very existence of the Republic.

The initial reaction of all the socialists to the Dreyfus agitation was one of disinterest. It was not long, however, until an important section of the Party, led by Jaures, placed themselves firmly in the ranks of the Dreyfusards. A long study of the case had convinced Jaures that Dreyfus was innocent, and the tarnais was not one to remain silent in the face of injustice. To him, socialism was not a matter of a few rigid formulae which, if repeated often enough, could be used to fit any situation. As far as Jaures was concerned, the doctrine was nothing if it did not have a moral quality capable of lifting it above the narrow exigences of the class struggle. "If Dreyfus is innocent," he was to say, "then he is no longer an officer or a bourgeois.... He is nothing less than mankind itself in the deepest pit of despair.... We cannot, in the name of socialism, turn our backs on despoiled


Coming as he did from the region of the Tarn, Jaures was often referred to as the tarnais.
With these stirring words, Jaures threw his weight behind Dreyfus. To his side came the Possibilists, Allemanists, and most of Jaures' own group, the Independents.

While Jaures joined the crusade for Dreyfus, the Guesdists and the Blanquists refused to take up his cause. Many of them privately applauded Jaures' efforts on behalf of the accused, but they insisted that the socialists should refrain from becoming involved in the Affair. Almost desperately it seemed, they clung to the safety of a narrow orthodoxy which enabled them to dismiss the whole episode as a quarrel among the capitalists. In the final analysis, neither group was imaginative enough to see any advantage for socialism by linking it to the cause of Dreyfus.

As was generally the case, the divergences in the socialist ranks over the Affair had their counterpart in the CGT. In March, 1898 the National Council published a circular in support of Zola that drew the fire of the intransigents within the Organization. That Guesdist-inclined syndicalist, Constant, informed the National Council of the CGT that "we do not have the mission to fight the army and the church in the name of the CGT."107 The official position of the CGT came later. In the interest of syndicat neutrality, the National Council issued a manifesto which asked the workers to refrain

106 La Petite République, August 10, 1898.
107 10e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Rennes..., p. 120.
from taking sides in the Affair. For, read the circular, "it is a struggle between Jews and Christians which does not concern the working class." By the summer of 1898 the CGT was formally committed to a policy of non-intervention in regard to the political crisis besetting the Republic.

The Socialists' difference in viewpoint over the Dreyfus Affair did little to slow the pace of their unification. In the election of 1898 held during the height of the agitation over the case, the socialists co-operated as much as before. Not only did they join in electoral alliances but almost all their candidates, regardless of Party, ran on similar programs. In fact, the prospects of socialist unity looked so bright in May of 1898 that Jaurès sent out a call for a general congress of the socialists at which unity might be created. Since all of the groups agreed on the fundamentals, he said, it only remained for them to meet and enact a common program acceptable to all.

So turbulent was the French political scene that, for the moment, the call of Jaurès went unheeded. On July 7 the Minister of War disclosed to the Chambre that he had new evidence proving conclusively Dreyfus' guilt. On the next day, Jaurès, the acknowledged leader of the Dreyfusards, labelled the new documents as complete

108 Ibid., p. 63.
109 Noland, pp. 68-69.
110 La Dépêche du Toulouse, May 22, 1898.
forgeries. His charges were substantiated on August 30, when Colonel Henry, a member of the General Staff, admitted that he had falsified the new documents. But instead of retreating, the anti-Dreyfusards stepped up their agitation, upholding Henry's deed as the act of a true patriot trying to protect the honor of his country. Ultra-nationalist and anti-semitic leagues were formed and a number of street riots broke out. To many, it seemed as if France was beset by civil war as the militarist and conservative elements in the nation lashed out at the Republican forces around Jaures, Clemenceaux, and the revisionists.

In the midst of this turbulency, the CGT decided to test the appeal of a General Strike among the workers. On September 13 the terrassiers of Paris struck for higher wages. As the strike spread among the other building trades, the CGT Committee of the General Strike began to agitate for a general walkout of all the Paris working class. On October 3, 7000 masons and stone cutters left their jobs. It seemed to many as if the General Strike was on, although even the CGT knew that, far from being the revolution, the strike was aimed only at securing a number of basic reforms for the workers.

The success of the strike depended upon the Syndicat National des Chemin de Fer which was confronted with the dilemma of whether or not to stop the rail service in support of the construction workers. The railroad workers had been threatening to strike since July, when
the companies had refused to grant them the right to organize and bargain collectively. Now, with Paris in the middle of political and economic chaos, the leaders of the railroad workers vacillated, unable to make up their minds whether or not to link their demands to the striking workers.

When an appeal to their syndicat membership brought no decisive result, the National Council of the railroad workers decided to risk the strike. On October 12 the members of this body, divided among themselves, sent out the strike order to all their branch syndicats. Learning of this decision, the CGT asked the trade unions to join in this crusade for reform. However, by some unknown method, the government got wind of the railroad workers' plans for a walkout. The Minister of Interior instructed all the post offices to intercept the strike order sent out by the National Council of the Syndicat National des Chemin de Fer. For this reason, the strike was a total failure. Only 135 workers walked off their jobs and they only remained away for three days.111

The socialists did little to aid the abortive strike, for they felt that it would strengthen the anti-Dreyfusards.112 In the end, however, the strike, far from hurting the socialists' cause, succeeded in tightening the socialists' ranks. As the government learned of the working class agitation in the capital, it took

111 Dolleans, II, 47-49.
immediate steps to choke off any unwonted radicalism. In early October an entire army corps was ordered into Paris. As these troops patrolled the streets and took up posts outside the train stations, the Socialists believed that a military coup was imminent. In response to the physical presence of danger, the Guesdist and the Blanquist shook off their doctrinal stupor and moved closer to the Dreyfusards. On October 16 Guesde called a meeting of all the socialists and asked them to form a Committee of Vigilance to thwart any threat from the Right. By the late fall of 1898 all the socialists were working hand in hand in the defense of French democracy.  

For a full six months, events passed smoothly in the socialist camp, regardless of the chaos in the rest of the nation. With unity achieved in practice, it was generally recognized by the socialists that actual unification was simply a matter of time. To many, it seemed that the International Socialist Congress, scheduled for Paris in 1900, would be an excellent occasion to present a united French socialist movement to the world. By March, 1899 preparations were being made to achieve socialist unity before the Congress convened.

As might have been expected, the syndicats were included in the socialists' plans for unity. The cordial relations between the


113 Noland, pp. 76-86.
socialists and the CGT since the Congress of London substantiated Jeures' conviction that "there is general agreement... for the organization of the proletarian in a party of class which will develop both his economic and political power."\textsuperscript{114} Now, as the International Socialist Congress approached, the socialists opened a campaign to attract the trade unions to this meeting.\textsuperscript{115}

Suddenly, the ranks of the socialists were torn wide open by an event in French history known as the Millerand Case. In early June the Court of Cessation, amidst the started outcries of the anti-Dreyfusards, ordered a retrial of Alfred Dreyfus. While the nationalists and their allies spoke openly of a coup d'état, the government appeared indecisive and confused. On June 12 the Ministry fell and France was left without leadership. All of the Republican forces, including the socialists, waited anxiously as the threat to the Republic loomed larger than ever before. Several days passed before Waldeck-Rousseau, a moderate Republican, managed to form what he called a "Ministry of Republican Defense." His cabinet was composed of representatives from all the Republican factions, and even included as Minister of War, Gallifet, known to the socialists as the "butcher" because of the role he had played in putting down the Commune of 1870. As Minister of Commerce, it also included Alexander Millerand, prominent leader of the

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{La Petite République}, June 30, 1899.

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}, March 7, 14, July 1, 1899.
socialists in the Chambre. For the first time, a socialist had entered a bourgeois ministry. In doing so, it seemed as if he had violated one of the fundamental principles of socialism—the notion of the class struggle.

Millerand's entry into the government brought mixed reactions from the socialist factions. Upon learning of Millerand's action, Jaures wavered, then led his supporters to the defense of the new Minister of Commerce. According to Jaures, Millerand's action was justified by the need to safeguard the Republic. Moreover, he felt that the socialists could demand a number of real reforms in return for their support of the new Ministry. In his opinion, the turn of events had offered a great challenge to the socialists, and he pleaded for the Party to accept it by supporting Millerand's entry into the government. Heeding his call, most of the Independents, Possibilists, and some of the Allemanists followed Jaures in announcing their approval of Millerand's action.\footnote{Noland, pp. 92-93.}

The Guesdists reacted sharply in the opposite direction. Claiming that Millerand had negated the class struggle, Guesde spoke out against Millerand's participation in a bourgeois ministry, especially one that included the hated Gallifet. In the days that followed, the French socialists were divided into two antagonistic camps over the Millerand Case. One group, known as the "ministerialists" or the reformists, was composed of all those sympathetic to Millerand's...
action. The other, often called the "anti-ministerialists" or the revolutionaries, consisted of the Guesdists, Blanquists, and a number of Allemanists. It was not long before the issues between these two groups demonstrated clearly that they were at odds on the very nature of socialism. 117

Although there was no official response from the CGT in regard to the Millerand crisis, a strong body of syndicalists were clearly sympathetic to the ministerialists' cause. Like the reformist wing of the socialists, these men looked forward to the reforms that Millerand's presence in the government might produce. When Millerand, in July, was instrumental in settling a Paris strike in the workers' favor, his action was praised by such leading figures in the syndicat world as Baume, Moreau, Briat, and Maynier. 118 On September 17 the influential Keufer showed himself favorable to Millerand. While thanking the Minister of Commerce for modifying certain legal restrictions on the Fédération du Livre, Keufer stated that "it was necessary to await the arrival of a socialist minister... to obtain what we have been asking for twenty-five years." 119 Even from official circles in the CGT came a plea for closer relations between the syndicats and the deputies. "We ask that the parliamentary socialists... keep themselves in constant relations with the CGT,"

117 Ibid., pp. 93-98.

118 See the letter of these syndicalists to La Petite République, July 30, 1899.

119 Ibid., September 18, 1899.
requested Copigneaux, Secretary of the Organization, "for in achieving the claims of the working class... it is necessary to be in agreement." Nevertheless, continued the Secretary, "the CGT will remain on economic grounds... until future corporate congresses decide otherwise." It was clear to all, in the fall of 1899, that the ministerialists had strong support in the trade unions.

In an effort to iron out their differences over the Millerand affair, the socialists agreed to submit the matter to arbitration. In the fall they decided on the convocation of a General Socialist Congress at which they hoped, not only to settle the Millerand issue, but to lay the foundation of a united Socialist Party. Thus, on December 3, 1899 all the socialist groups in the nation assembled at the Salle Japy in Paris for the conclave. Besides the socialists, a small number of syndicats were present, few of which were affiliated to the CGT. Among the many observers at the Congress was Fernand Pelloutier, who had left his bed to attend this important meeting at which the future of French socialism would be decided.

No one was more interested in the proceedings of this socialist conclave than Pelloutier. During the entire year, he had watched with alarm the growing rapprochement between the socialists and the syndicats. In fact, he had spoken out vigorously against the socialists' efforts to lure the trade unions to the International

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120 See the letter of Copigneaux to Gerault-Richard, director of La Petite République, in ibid., December 23, 1899.

121 Ibid.

122 Almost all the syndicats present were political satellites and unaffiliated with the CGT. See Congres Général des Organisations Socialistes Françaises, tenu à Paris du 3 au 6 Décembre, 1899. (Paris: 1900), pp. 417-76.
Socialist Congress. Pointing to the socialists' conduct at the late Congress of London, he had urged the syndicats to boycott this meeting. On May 12, 1899 he had succeeded in convincing the Bourses du Travail of the soundness of his views. Despite strong opposition from some members of the Comité Fédéral, Pelloutier had pushed through a resolution which suggested that the Bourses should ignore the forthcoming Congress. Nevertheless, he was acutely aware of the ministerialists' support in the trade unions. Now, sitting in the wing of the Salle Japy, Pelloutier readily admitted that the future of syndicalism depended greatly on the outcome of this socialist meeting.124

The Secretary listened intently as Jaurès undertook the defense of ministerial participation. Although he disagreed with Jaurès' argument that this tactic would produce reform, he concurred in the tarnais' conclusion that ministerial participation was a natural result of the socialists' entry into the Chambre. In Pelloutier's opinion, Jaurès' reformism was based on his need to justify his parliamentary career and ambitions. Yet, continued Pelloutier, Jaurès was the "most logical," for at least he was willing to carry parliamentary socialism through to its logical end—the entry of a Millerand into the government. Such an action was, as the Quesdists

123 Fédération des Bourses...—Proces-Verbaux de la..., p. 139.


125 Ibid., pp. 25-26.
charged, a violation of the class struggle, but all the socialists
had negated the class struggle when they had entered parliament for
the first time.\textsuperscript{126}

For Guesde, both as a leader and a man, Pelloutier had only dis­
dain. As the Marxist chief joined Lafargue, Zévaës, and others in
denouncing the ministerialists, Pelloutier was moved to sarcasm.
To him, Guesde was "an admirable comedian" was "imposes his concep­
tions,... not with the chaleur of Jaures but with seven or eight
hundred mandates and the open threat of scission."\textsuperscript{127} The other
socialist leaders fared little better at the hands of Pelloutier.
As to Vaillant, he "disguises the jacobinism of his principles
under the appearance of ... liberalism," wrote Pelloutier, while
Jean Allemane was a leader of little significance.\textsuperscript{128} According
to the Secretary, the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire had
degenerated to the point where the other groups did not hesitate "to
pass over the P.O.S.R. in silence. Death to its ashes!"\textsuperscript{129}

Of all the socialists, only Briand, an old friend, was favorably
received by Pelloutier. Closely allied with the ministerialists,
Briand heckled the Guesdistes by dangling the General Strike in front
of them. He sought to drive a wedge between the Blanquists and the
Guesdistes by introducing this instrument which the former accepted
and the other rejected.\textsuperscript{130} Despite Briand's fraudulent advocacy of

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., p. 27. \textsuperscript{127} Ibid., p. 42. \textsuperscript{128} Ibid., p. 45.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p. 44.
\textsuperscript{130} C. Chambelland, "La Greve Générale, Theme de Pensée de Fernand
Pelloutier et d'Aristide Briand," L'Actualité de L'Histoire No. 19
the General Strike, he was acclaimed by Pelloutier who praised him for being "free of all dogmatism." So "sharp and pointed" was his defense of the General Strike, wrote Pelloutier, that even the Guisists "for the first time in seven years are almost... going to accept it." Despite his kind words for Briand, Pelloutier's hostility to the socialists runs throughout his entire report on the Congress. More than anything else, he feared that if the socialists emerged from the Congress as a unified group, many of the syndicats would be induced to give their adherence to the new Party.

To the chagrin of Pelloutier, the Congress managed to create at least the appearance of socialist unity. This was done by adopting an equivocal resolution on the question of ministerial participation. In an attempt to reconcile all the divergent viewpoints at the meeting, the delegates condemned ministerial participation in principle, but admitted that "exceptional circumstances might arise" in which the socialists should examine the possibility of participation. Everyone present seemed willing to accept this solution, although it was obvious that the dispute was far from over. However, the general desire for unity was so intense among the socialists that they were willing to delude themselves over the degree of their differences.

131 Fernand Pelloutier, Le Congrès General..., p. 47.
132 Ibid., p. 50.
133 Ibid., pp. 103-114.
Following the Socialist Congress, Pelloutier, highly concerned over its possible repercussions among the syndicats, alerted the revolutionaries for action. In a letter to the anarchists, published just one week after the Congress, he revealed his anxiety over the fact "that an enthusiasm... is seizing the syndicats... to place themselves again under the political yoke." He then urged the anarchists to increase their anti-political propaganda in the trade union in order to check this danger. For, regardless of their language, continued Pelloutier, these "men truly without God, master, or country," he asked them "to carry on more obstinately than ever the work of moral, administrative and technical education so necessary for creating a society of free men." From those anarchists who disdained syndicat action, Pelloutier requested the "benevolent neutrality to which we have a right." In conclusion, he warned his colleagues that "if we do not aid and encourage the syndicats, their difficulties might relead them to politics."

Pelloutier's fears were not unfounded. From January of 1900 on, a large bloc of socialists, despite the decision of the late Congress, continued to support the Waldeck-Rousseau ministry. Millerand's campaign to push a number of working class laws through parliament received the special praise of the ministerialists. Supported by a combination of Radical and Socialist elements, the three most

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Fernand Pelloutier, *Lettre aux Anarchists*, Preface to *Le Congrès Général du Parti Socialiste Français* (Paris: 1900). This quotation as well as the following in the paragraph are from this source.
important of these bills was a project modifying the 1884 law on the syndicats, a measure providing a pension to retired workers, and a proposal requiring the compulsory arbitration of pending strikes.\footnote{Louis Levine, \textit{Syndicalism in France} (New York: 1911), pp. 106-109. Also see A. Lavy, \textit{L'Oeuvre de Millerand} (Paris: 1902).} To many syndicalists, it seemed as if \textit{ministerialisme} was opening a new era of social reform.

Behind his desk at \textit{La Petite République}, Jaures worked arduously to demonstrate the merits of \textit{Millerandisme} to the workers. All the reform measures introduced by Millerand were warmly defended by the persuasive Jaures. In his opinion, these measures were enabling the proletarian to increase his revolutionary strength. "Let the workers have confidence in their own wisdom," Jaures wrote in defense of Waldeck-Rousseau's proposal to give a civil personality to the syndicats. "Let them claim all their liberties... and use them to do all that is convenient for their mission emancipatrice."

\footnote{\textit{La Petite République}, March 10, 21, 1900.} According to Jaures, the present strength of the workers was so feeble that all reforms allowing the syndicats to become larger and more solvent should be eagerly accepted. This was the reason why he was quick to endorse compulsory arbitration. For he realized the essential fact that most requests for arbitration came from the workers, not the employers.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, June 19, 1900.} To Jaures, that astute observer of the power realities of the Third Republic, it was necessary to counterbalance the overwhelming forces of capital with enough legal
guarantees to prevent the syndicats from being crushed by an unsuccessfu
strike. "Compulsory arbitration is favorable to the
workers, he said, "for it substitutes... for the arbitrary force
of capital... the regime of discussion."138

Jaurès' campaign found its major opponent in Pelloutier.139

During the course of the year, the Secretary of the Bourses repeatedly
warned the syndicats that the price for co-operation with the
ministerialists would be betrayal and subjugation. On March 9 he
succeeded in persuading the Comité Federal of the Bourses to reject
Waldeck-Rousseau's project giving a civil personality to the trade
unions.140 However, he was less successful in imposing this view-
point on the individual Bourses. Consequently, he was forced
to notify the socialists that a number of Bourses were in favor of
the project.141 The pending law on working class pensions, then
before the Chambre, was also combatted by Pelloutier. He proposed
that the Comité Federal "denounce this in the same way as it did the
project of Waldeck-Rousseau on the syndicats and, if need be, denounce
as traitors the socialist deputies who vote for it."142

138 Ibid.

139 In February, the ministerialists denounced Pelloutier whom
they accused "of fearing that the complete unification of the Party"
would relead the syndicats to "socialist political action." Ibid.,
February 1, 1900.

140 Fédération des Bourses...—Procès-Verbaux de la..., pp. 118-50.

141 Ibid., p. 51.  142 Ibid., p. 162.
In the middle of his struggle against ministerialism, Pelloutier was struck by another foe, more formidable than the socialists. In early July he suffered another lung hemorrhage from which he would never completely recover. From his sick bed at Bruyères-de-Sevres, he carried on as best he could the work of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail. At his side was his brother, Maurice, helping the stricken Fernand handle the official business of the Bourses. In August Pelloutier was pleased to learn of the publication of his book, La Vie Ouvrière, a study of working class conditions in Europe and America.\textsuperscript{143} Nevertheless, he yearned to return to the struggle. New developments on the labor front threatened the neutrality and autonomy of the trade unions.

The Second General Socialist Congress had been set up for late September, 1900. As the Congress approached, the General Committee of the Socialist Party, established in 1899 to co-ordinate socialist activity, was divided between the ministerialists and the anti-ministerialists. So violent had been the reaction of the Blanquists and Guesdist to Jaures' support of millerandisme that socialist unity was more apparent than real. With the Second General Socialist Congress drawing near, both sides prepared for a showdown on the question of ministerial participation.

\textsuperscript{143} Pelloutier's final and most important work, Histoire des Bourses du Travail, was not published until after his death. Compiled by his brother, it was a collection of studies on the Bourses done by Pelloutier from 1895 to 1900.
One month before the Congress convened, the ministerialists on the General Committee launched an appeal for the syndicats to adhere to the Congress. Immediately, Jaures took up the cry for trade union representation at the meeting. On September 1, 1900 he analyzed in some detail the reasons for his action. Promising the syndicats that "the quarrels of the Congress of London will not be repeated," he assured them that their autonomy would be fully respected by the socialists. He then proceeded to enumerate the advantages of socialist-syndicat co-operation. Even the General Strike, the pet project of the syndicalists, required close relations with the socialists, claimed Jaures, who viewed this instrument as the "point where economic action transforms itself into political action." For this reason, the trade unions should adhere to the Congress where plans for the General Strike would be discussed. "Without the assistance of the economic organizations," he pointed out, it would be impossible for the socialists to undertake this project. By appealing to the syndicats, Jaures hoped to confront the Guesdistes and their allies at the Congress with a solid bloc of socialist and trade union delegates favorable to a policy of collaboration with the Waldeck-Rousseau Ministry.

In late August Pelloutier, lying helpless at Bruyères-de-Septvres, learned of the ministerialists' efforts to lure the trade unions to

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1 La Petite République, August 30, 1900.
2 Ibid., September 1, 1900. 3 Ibid. 4 Ibid.
the Second General Socialist Congress. Surprisingly enough, Pelloutier showed little concern over the matter. Writing to Paul Delesalle, the assistant Secretary of the Bourses, he predicted that the ministerialists' campaign would end in failure. The major reason why the syndicats would boycott the Congress, Pelloutier wrote, was that the establishment of a General Committee among the socialists, "far from appeasing personal quarrels... has aggravated them." He felt certain that the syndicats realized the "right calls them because it believes they will be favorable to a... ministerial politics.—They feel that they have been invited to adhere to the General Committee, not for working there for the propagation of socialism, but in order to serve the political interest of a minority." For this reason, continued Pelloutier, "there will not be any more syndicats at the Socialist Congress of 1900 than there were at the Congress of 1899." Perhaps, the syndicats would have adhered, suggested Pelloutier, if the General Committee had realized "absolute, loyal, and disinterested unity. But they know that each socialist faction means by union the exclusive adhesion to its own politics." For, he concluded, "in spite of the appearance, Jaures is just as sectarian as Guesde, since in the interest of a... sterile reformism, he... disapproves of energetic action... by the syndicats."

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This quotation as well as the following in the paragraph are taken from a Letter of Fernand Pelloutier to Paul Delesalle n. d. MS deposited in the Institut Francais d'histoire sociale. Fonds Pelloutier.
A few days later, Pelloutier's condition worsened. The bleeding from his throat and lungs increased, and he began to suffer frequent and violent coughing spells. It was becoming virtually impossible for him to sleep, especially at night when the pain was at its worst. His fading strength, nevertheless, was spent preparing the program for the coming congress of the Bourses. Pelloutier hoped desperately to attend this meeting. Not only did he want to introduce some new ideas on the vaticum but he wished to get the Bourses' consent for the establishment of the Office National Ouvrier de Statistique et du Placement. At this meeting also the Bourses would decide whether or not to attend the Second General Socialist Congress. Lying bedridden at Bruyères-de-Sevres, Pelloutier knew that the coming congress would be one of the most important meetings in the history of the Federation. Yet his doctor warned him that his appearance there would cost him his life.  

Pelloutier's dilemma was soon solved. At the end of August he learned that several Bourses were planning to attack him at the congress for his practice of "ministerialisme." What these critics were referring to was the semi-governmental position which Pelloutier had accepted the year before. Extreme economic plight had forced the Secretary into accepting this job. The meager salary he earned as Secretary of the Bourses du Travail was totally inadequate for his personal expenses, especially since he was now confronted

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Maurice Pelloutier, p. 112.
with soaring medical bills. So, when Le Journal du Peuple had gone under, cutting off the small stipend which Pelloutier had received for his collaboration, he had accepted the job found for him at the Office of Labor by Georges Sorel. Now, learning that his new position was causing consternation among the Bourses, he immediately resolved to answer his critics at the forthcoming congress.

As it turned out, the National Congress of the Bourses du Travail, convening in September of 1900, was the scene of Pelloutier's greatest triumph. When he had finished his secretarial report, he was greeted by a long and thunderous ovation. It seemed as if every militant present realized he was witnessing the closing act of a man who was the very spirit and soul of the Bourses du Travail. However, it was not only sympathy and gratitude that the comrades felt for this emaciated figure of a man, forced to suck bits of ice to hold back the bleeding from his ravaged throat. As Pelloutier's report made clear, the Fédération des Bourses du Travail had reached its point of highest development. Now grown to include forty-eight Bourses and encompassing 1,065 syndicates, the Federation had inaugurated such outstanding services as the viaticum, sailors' homes, and agricultural co-operatives. As a result, the delegates were quick to show their respect for a Secretary who had fashioned the Bourses with so much care and devotion as to render them a monument to his life.

150 Ibid., p. 106.
Pelloutier managed to get his way on all the important questions settled by the Congress. So thoroughly did he convince the Bourses that adhesion to the socialist congress would create dissension in the syndicats that the Congress voted to boycott the socialist conclave in the interest of syndicat neutrality. Moreover, it was almost at unanimity that the delegates consented to the establishment of the Office National Ouvrier de Statistique et du Placement. Upon Pelloutier's suggestion, the Congress decided to broaden the range of the viaticum. Furthermore, the delegates voted to intensify their campaign to create sailors' homes and agricultural syndicats in the maritime and agricultural regions of France. Finally, Pelloutier succeeded in persuading the Congress to vote a resolution asking the Bourses to remain outside the CGT.

Only one episode occurred to darken Pelloutier's triumph. As he had anticipated, several of the Bourses challenged his right to hold a position at the Office of Labor. Trozet of Lyon took the floor against the Secretary, charging that Pelloutier's presence at the Office of Labor was "dividing the working class at Lyon. Because the "Office is so governmental," he continued, "there is a great deal of suspicion of Pelloutier." In the end, he asked the Secretary to resign his position at the Office of Labor or to give up the secretarial post of the Bourses du Travail.

155 Ibid., p. 130. 156 Ibid., pp. 22-27.
157 Ibid., pp. 87-88. 158 Ibid., p. 88.
Pelloutier made a ringing defense of his conduct. "I have failed in none of my duties as a revolutionary in accepting this work," he argued, while explaining to the Congress why he had been compelled to accept the position.\(^\text{159}\) He had taken the job, he said, because of extreme financial plight, but "at the Office, I have remained... anti-governmental like I have always been."\(^\text{160}\)

According to Pelloutier, it was those "who have long combatted me because I have sought to keep the Federation on the economic terrain" that were attempting to cast suspicion on him.\(^\text{161}\) Promising the Congress that he would "continue to oppose all propositions which... push the working class in the direction of parliamentarianism," he asked that the charges against him be dismissed. "My past," he said, "guarantees my future; and until I fail... for all men can fail... I ask the Congress to maintain its confidence in me."\(^\text{162}\)

The Congress almost at unanimity voted to "maintain confidence in the Secretary." Moreover, it declared that "the situation which he occupies at the Office of Labor is not incompatible with his functions as Secretary."\(^\text{163}\) With these words which gave him a clean bill of health, Pelloutier's triumph was complete. He emerged from the Congress as he had entered—the leading spokesman and protagonist of an independent and autonomous French labor movement.

\(^{159}\) Ibid., pp. 89-90. \(^{160}\) Ibid., p. 89. \(^{161}\) Ibid., p. 90. \(^{162}\) Ibid. \(^{163}\) Ibid.
Following the Congress, Pelloutier returned to Bruyères-de-Sevres. Immediately, he took his bed again. The exacting demands of the Congress had exhausted all his remaining energy, and death hovered near. Nevertheless, he made efforts to recover, and, by September, he was able to spend several hours a day at his desk.  

In late September he learned that the Socialists had failed to attract the Syndicats to their latest meeting. As Pelloutier had predicted, only a handful of trade unions had appeared at the Second General Socialist Congress at Paris in September. The failing Secretary also learned that the Congress, far from solidifying the socialists, had erupted into an open scission. Hurling their invective at the ministerialists, the Guesdistes had walked out of the meeting, reducing socialist unity to shambles.

The news of the split in the socialists' ranks was little consolation to the dying Pelloutier at Bruyères-de-Sevres. At this time, he was undergoing a physical suffering that would bring him close to martyrdom. His facial lupus had reopened, and the drainage from his throat subjected him to frequent periods of suffocation. After January he could no longer get through the day without a substantial dose of morphine. Throughout this indescribable ordeal, Pelloutier bore his sufferings stoically, almost with resignation.

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164 Maurice Pelloutier, p. 122.
166 Noland, pp. 131-32.
167 Maurice Pelloutier, p. 123.
His preoccupations with the Bourses remained until the end. During his final days of consciousness, he spent his time writing instructions to the acting Secretary of the Bourses, Paul Delesalle. In his last letter, written for him by Maurice, he asked Delesalle to inspect his books for him. He was concerned because the Bourses had never questioned his honesty. "The more that they show confidence in me," he wrote, "the more I must hasten to justify it." Finally, on March 14, 1901 his agony ended. At 11 o'clock in the morning, after passing a peaceful night, he died in the arms of his brother.

Felloutier had struggled all his life to create a revolutionary plan among the syndicalists. But during his lifetime, the labor movement had remained wedded to the method of limited reform. Few were the militants who, in spite of the revolutionary rhetoric in which they often indulged, were willing to sacrifice tangible gains for the sake of eventual unknowns. Neither did the majority of syndicalists pay more than lip service to Pelloutier's advice to rely only on themselves and to bypass the agency of the state. Yet, at the very moment of Pelloutier's death, certain forces were turning the course of the labor movement into those channels which he had long sought to direct it.

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Letter of Fernand Pelloutier to Paul Delesalle, February 21, 1901. MS deposited at the Institut Francais d'Histoire Sociale.

Maurice Pelloutier, p. 123.
The ministerialists, despite their failure to draw the French syndicats to their Second General Congress, did not give up hope of enlisting the trade unions for the support of millerandisme. In fact, the ministerialists, weakened now by their break with the Guesdists, were more insistent than ever on the need to win the syndicats to their cause. It was the hope of Jaures that the syndicats would provide the means to heal the split in the socialists' ranks. He felt that a large syndicat-socialist party, including all the major groups in the labor world, would force the recalcitrant Guesdists to rejoin their comrades in the socialist party. In view of this plan, the Third General Socialist Congress, scheduled for May of 1901, seemed to Jaures and his followers as another excellent occasion for the syndicats to show their sympathy with the reformist socialists. So, as the Congress approached, the pages of La Petite République again resounded with the socialists' pleas for closer ties between their party and the trade unions.¹

Immediately, the syndicat question became entangled with the factional quarrels of the socialists. Sensing Jaures' intentions,

¹ La Petite République, April 16, 18, 25, 1901.
the Guesdists fought his efforts to include the syndicats in the party. "No reason has yet been given to justify the need to incorporate the syndicats into the socialist party," insisted Lavigne, who feared that trade union support would strengthen Jaures' hand. 2 Posing as the defenders of syndicat autonomy, the Guesdists joined the Blanquists, long supporters of an independent trade union movement, in urging the syndicats to remain aloof from the ministerialists. 3

Their opposition to the syndicats brought an immediate response from Jaures who tried to assuage the Marxists' fears that the trade unions would "bring an element of moderation"to the Party. "Although Guesde and Vaillant want to ignore the syndicats in the name of revolution," he wrote, "there are many syndicats which are too revolutionary for the Party, hating all the politicians and only demanding the General Strike." 4 What was really needed, he insisted, was the creation of a syndico-socialist party in which the socialists and syndicalists would "co-ordinate their action, both revolutionary and reformist." 5

Again, Jaures was to be disappointed. When the socialists convened at Lyon in May, few syndicalists were among them. 6 Furthermore,

2 Le Socialiste, January 6-13, 1901.
3 Ibid., April 21-28, 1901.
4 La Petite République, July 18, 1901.
5 Ibid.
6 3e Congrès Général des Organisations Socialistes Française, tenu à Lyon, au 26 au 28 Mars, 1901 (Paris: 1901), pp. 525-76.
the Congress, instead of healing the breach in the socialist camp, provoked further division. When the delegates refused to take a strong stand against ministerialism, the Blanquists walked out of the meeting. In August of 1901 they joined with the Guesdists to form a new party called the Parti Socialiste de France. The program of this new group was based on an unqualified hostility to ministerialism. The Parti Socialiste Français, supported by the Independents, Possibilists, and some Allemanists, continued to back Millerand's program in the Chambre. Largely the work of Jaurès, the platform of this Party was notable for the moderate, frankly reformist manner in which it expected to operate. By the summer of 1901 the split in the socialists' ranks was formalized by the existence of two different Parties, each one claiming to speak with the authentic voice of the workers.  

The dispute raging in the ranks of the socialists had important consequences for the syndicat movement. To many syndicalists, the entry of Millerand into the Waldeck-Rousseau Ministry seemed to prove the insincerity of the socialists. And, as Jaurès and his followers continued to offer their support to Waldeck-Rousseau, it appeared that they were definitely embarked upon what many syndicalists considered an opportunistic program. The ministerialists, seemingly violating the class struggle at will, were opposed mostly by the syndicalists who were sympathetic to the Blanquists and Guesdists.

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Joining with these two groups in their opposition to Millerand were the anarcho-syndicalists, always intransigent opponents of class collaboration. As the ministerialists moved to enlist the syndicats for their clearly reformist program, these groups joined together to ward off this threat. Gradually, the Blanquists, Guesdist, Allemanists, and anarchists in the CGT formed a loose revolutionary bloc bent on destroying the ministerialists' influence in the trade unions.  

Few documents are available to demonstrate conclusively the formation of an anti-ministerialist coalition in the CGT during the Millerand affair. Records of the CGT's inner councils were never kept and no national congress of this Organization was held in 1899. For this reason, it is necessary to rely on the words of the militants themselves who, on numerous occasions, referred to the creation of this revolutionary alliance. Speaking in 1906, Griffuelhes, then Secretary of the CGT, was quite specific on this subject. "At the time of the Millerand affair," he said, "there was a coalition of anarchists, Guesdist, Blanquists, Allemanists, and other elements for protecting the power of the syndicats." This explanation is the same as that given by Pierre Monatte who traced the revolutionary orientation of the CGT to the threat which millerandisme posed for the syndicats. "His agents worked for him in the organizations,"

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claimed Monatte, "and the danger was great. It was warded off... by an entente among all the revolutionary factions—the Guesdist,
Blanquist, and anarchists." During the next several years, this revolutionary coalition was going to play a pivotal role in the CGT.

To this revolutionary group, it appeared as if Millerand’s efforts to give a legal personality to the syndicats and to provide for the peaceful settlement of strikes were deliberate attempts to ensnare the trade unions in the web of the state. Just as Waldeck-Rousseau had tried to channelize the syndicats into moderate waters in 1884, so he and Millerand were seeking to pacify the trade unions in 1899. It was the government’s aim, the revolutionaries felt, to impose legal restrictions on the trade unions under the guise of reform. In response to this threat, the Blanquist- and Marxist-inspired syndicalists, like their political counterparts, retreated into a revolutionary orthodoxy which eschewed the tactics of collaboration pursued by the ministerialists. Anti-statism, always a part of their socialist creeds, was rediscovered by these militants who


11 Other observers have also referred to the formation of a revolutionary coalition in the CGT during the Millerand Affair. See, for example, the comments in H. Lagardelle, Syndicalisme et Socialisme (Paris: 1908), pp. 40-54.

Interestingly enough, the alliance among the revolutionaries did not only occur on the national level. What regional studies of French syndicalism there are available indicate clearly that his coalition also occurred locally. For instance, consult G. Thomas, "Le Socialisme et le syndicalisme dans l’Indre des origines à 1922," L’Actualité de L’Histoire No. 20-21 (December, 1957), pp. 4-5, 15-19; P. Cousteix, "Le Mouvement Ouvrier Limousin de 1870 à 1939," ibid.; M. T. Lourin, "Le Socialisme dans l’Ain, Le Mouvement Socialiste, No. 147 (January 15, 1905), pp. 110-11.
gradually developed an anti-governmental outlook almost as rigid as that of the anarchists.

As early as 1900 the CGT was beginning to undergo the effects of this new revolutionary coalition being formed in its ranks. During the discussion of the General Strike in that year, it was apparent that a new radicalism was seizing the CGT. Voted perfunctorily year after year, the General Strike had received scant attention from the militants since 1895. Now, in 1900, the General Strike became the key tactic of the revolutionaries who were sincerely opposed to ministerialisme. For this reason, it was debated with a precision and enthusiasm which was in striking contrast to the desultory manner in which it had been discussed in former congresses. So ardently did the revolutionaries embrace the General Strike that it was clear that the CGT was entering a new era.

The revolutionaries were led by a newcomer to syndicalism, Bourchêt, whose anarchist background was well known. In the best of anarchist traditions, he pointed out that the lack of a conscious electorate made it impossible to achieve the revolution by the conquest of public power. "Let those who believe in political action... use it to introduce their men in the public powers," he said, "but they cannot prevent us from saying that the real means of emancipation... cannot be the conquest of public authority." 12


14 Ibid., pp. 107-108.
He then proceeded to unfold his plan of revolution. What he outlined was a violent and bloody General Strike, launched by the CGT alone. Calling for the CGT to prepare a specific plan for the revolution, he insisted that it was only necessary to have a "conscious minority" to insure the success of this tactic.15

The socialist wing of the revolutionary coalition viewed the General Strike somewhat differently. Unlike their anarchist cohorts, these syndicalists did not refuse the aid of the socialists in the entrainment of the General Strike. Nor were they willing to dismiss the possibility that the revolution could be achieved peacefully. Nevertheless, they were every bit as sincere in their revolutionary sentiments as were the anarchists. To them, the General Strike, far from being a reformist instrument, was the method par excellence of revolution.16

Speaking for this group, Bourdon urged caution on the CGT. Unless a "majority" of the workers could be enlisted for the General Strike, he argued, "we will have an insurrection where several thousand advanced militants will be sacrificed and nothing will result."17 He asked the Congress to prepare a systematic plan of attack which would be used to enlighten the workers on the prospects and aims of the General Strike. Once this was done, it was necessary to ask the

15 Ibid., p. 108.
16 Ibid., pp. 110, 111, 114-20.
17 Ibid., p. 120.
help of the politicians for this venture.18 "We must use the political arm... but we must not let it dominate us," he said. "All are in our own ranks, whether they be Guesde, Jaures, or Viviani.... I have struggled along side of comrades from the socialist organizations for twenty years and they... are comrades, not masters."19 His words were echoed by Roche and Guérard, both Allemanists, who wanted to obtain the aid of the socialists for the insurrection.20 So too did the militant who reminded the delegates that "the idea of the General Strike was first elaborated by a political party. The Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire planted the seed of which you are today seeing the results."21

As the discussion progressed, it was clear that almost all the syndicalists were favorable to the General Strike. But those militants sympathetic to the ministerialists refused to accept the revolutionary slant given to it by the revolutionaries. As in the past, the moderates envisioned a grève généralisée which would allow the workers to seize concessions from capital, not to overthrow the state.22 Nor were they willing to sever their ties with the politicians, for, as one of them pointed out, "the road to emancipation... is a multiple one, and we must use every possible method.23

18 Ibid., p. 121. 19 Ibid. 20 Ibid., pp. 118-119, 123.
21 Ibid., p. 123. 22 Ibid., pp. 114-16, 117, 110.
23 Ibid., p. 117.
The reformist syndicalists were led by Treich, former Guesdist from Limoges and now a supporter of Millerand. He began by admitting that "those who want the General Strike today are really revolutionaries, while those who demanded it four years ago were only using it to combat the politicians." But in spite of the revolutionary clique behind the General Strike, he argued, this tactic could still be used by the moderates for their own purposes. For this reason, he asked them "not to work against the General Strike, but... aid it as much as possible." According to Treich, if it was used in conjunction with political methods, it would be an excellent means to achieve reform.

The final statement on the General Strike which emerged from the CGT Congress was acceptable to all. "The General Strike," ran the report voted by the Congress, "is only one of the methods which will assure the emancipation of the workers, while not excluding other methods employed on a different terrain. These methods will precipitate the fall of the capitalist class and will install the sovereignty of the people in the social revolution." Worded broadly and vaguely enough to satisfy revolutionary and reformist, it was still a more radical pronouncement than any issued by the CGT during the last five years. On the morrow of the Millerand Affair, the revolutionaries in the CGT were stronger than ever before.

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24 Ibid., p. 114. 25 Ibid. 26 Ibid., p. 115.
27 Ibid., p. 200.
As the ministerialists continued to spread their influence among the syndicates during the next year, the anti-ministerialists in the trade unions drew more closely together. A militant favorable to their point of view, the ex-Blanquist Griffuelhes, was elected Secretary of the CGT in early 1901. In December, 1900 when La Voix du Peuple, the official organ of the CGT, made its appearance, the editorship was given to Emile Pouget. The latter, a convinced anarchist, proceeded to give this journal a sharp revolutionary slant. With this organ now in their control, the revolutionaries stepped up their campaign against the ministerialists. From La Voix du Peuple poured article after article warning the workers of the dangers of class collaboration.

According to Guérard, a leading contributor to the weekly, the ministerialists were seeking the aid of the syndicates "so that a balance would be struck for... a method of action... which justifies the participation of a socialist in power."\(^{29}\) Braun, that Allemanist who ruled the Fédération de la Métallurgie, was more bitter in his denunciation of the ministerialists. "Their aim is to use the syndicats for their electoral propaganda," he wrote in early 1901, while pointing out the dangers that this would pose to the syndicats.\(^{30}\)

As might have been anticipated, the revolutionaries turned more and more...

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\(^{28}\) La Voix du Peuple, December 1-9, 16-23, 23-30, 1900; January 13-20, March 17-24, 1901.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., December 1-9, 1900. \(^{30}\) Ibid., January 27-February 3, 1901.
more to the General Strike. "Since the socialists want to use us as a pawn," one militant explained, "we must concentrate all our efforts on the General Strike... and vulgarize this... revolutionary method." 31

The reforms sponsored by Millerand in the Chambre were rejected by the revolutionary coterie on the Voix du Peuple. When Millerand called for the creation of Conseils du Travail to help settle the conflict between capital and labor, his proposal was denounced by the anarchist Girard who accused Millerand of trying to "channelize the labor movement." 32 So too was Millerand's project for the compulsory arbitration of strikes condemned. This time, Pouget applied the axe to the reform. Under his penetrating acuity, compulsory arbitration turned out to be a trap which would prevent energetic action by the few. 33 In regard to the workers' pension project, so strongly supported by Jaurès, it was an "illusion." 34 According to Quérard, who used Pelloutier's arguments, the plan would actually be detrimental to the proletarian. Not only would he have to pay one-half the cost of the plan but he would be forced to take a cut in salary, since the employers would try to regain the amount they paid in support of the pensions. 35 Thus, by early 1901 the revolutionaries had rejected, although sometimes only conditionally, the entire program of the ministerialists.

31 Ibid., January 27-February 3, 1901.
32 Ibid., December 23-30, 1900.
33 Ibid., January 27-February 3, 1901.
34 Ibid., April 19-25, 1901.
35 Ibid.
The intransigence of the revolutionaries brought on the criticism of *La Petite République*. Jaures continued to point out the advantages of the reforms proposed by the Waldeck-Rousseau Ministry, refusing to see any trace of duplicity in Millerand's program. As to the General Strike, now gaining momentum in the CGT, he subjected this tactic to a searching analysis in the late summer of 1901. His conclusion was that the General Strike, lacking the spontaneous support of the majority of workers, was doomed to failure. Perhaps in some situations, he admitted, it could be used to achieve urgent reforms or to prevent reactionary measures on the part of capital. Yet, he concluded, "the working class will be the victim of an illusion if it mistakes what is only a tactic of despair for a method of revolution. For the socialists today, there is only one sovereign method—to conquer legally the majority."  

By September of 1901 the revolutionaries had managed to infiltrate many key positions in the CGT. Now, as the National Congress of this Organization convened at Lyon, they were determined to make their influence prevail. Competing with them for control of the CGT, as the revolutionaries well knew, would be the syndicalists sympathetic to the ministerialists' program. Led by moderates like Maurice and Bonnevial, the reformists had already indicated their willingness

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36 *La Petite République*, November 16, 27, December 12, 1900; April 16, July 4, 1901.  
37 Ibid., September 1, 1901.
to accept the reforms sponsored by the Parti Socialiste Français.\textsuperscript{38}
In response to what they considered a real danger to the trade unions, the Blanquists, Allemanists, Onesdists, and anarchists now prepared to battle it out with the reformists for control of the CGT.

When the Congress turned to a discussion of working class reforms, the revolutionaries won a convincing victory over their rivals. For the most part, the bloc repeated their usual objections to Millerand's projects, calling them either "shams" or "illusions."\textsuperscript{39} Compulsory arbitration of strikes for example, was a "bulwark against our revolutionary sentiments," while the pending law which sought to give a civil personality to the syndicates was "a sham and a trap."\textsuperscript{40} Only when they were discussing the working class pension project did the revolutionaires admit that the "law has some good in it."\textsuperscript{41} They added, however, that "it would be a blunder to declare ourselves content with it. The workers must never say they are satisfied, but always demand more."\textsuperscript{42} In the end, the revolutionaires succeeded in persuading the Congress to reject all these measures.\textsuperscript{43} The working class pension project, however, was not rejected categorically as were the other two. Even some of the revolutionaries were willing to accept this law if certain revisions were made in it.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., August 9, 1901.
\textsuperscript{39} 12e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Lyon du 23 au 27 September, 1901 (Lyon: 1901), pp. 107-115.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., pp. 109, 120. \textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 1140. \textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., pp. 109, 122-23. \textsuperscript{44} Ibid., pp. 187-88, 192.
One of the most important subjects discussed at the meeting was that of the syndicats and political action. Although it had worked side by side with socialists on several occasions, the CGT had often proclaimed its desire for political neutrality. Now, with the ministerialists hoping to lead the Organization into the political arena, the question had again engendered some controversy among the militants. The revolutionaires wanted the Congress to take a strong stand on this issue in order to discourage any further efforts by the reformists to create an alliance with the Parti Socialiste Français.

But the delegates, even the revolutionaires among them, were divided on this question. Those sympathetic to the ministerialists felt that the syndicat organizations should adhere to no one political school but should press their claim on all the parliamentary socialist parties. Some of them did think that, if the socialist party should achieve unity, the CGT should send a commission to act as a consulting body to it. In this way, the CGT could work closely with the unified socialist party in regard to the enactment of laws affecting the workers. Many of the revolutionaries shared the attitude of the ministerialists on this question. Like the reformists, they were opposed to syndicat adhesion to the political schools, but they did not reject political methods categorically. "We believe,"

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\[45\] Ibid., pp. 146-48, 150.

\[46\] Ibid., p. 150.
said one revolutionary of Blanquist faith, "that it is our duty... to march together with the political organizations.... But since there are divisions in the socialist party... we cannot accept in the CGT those groups adhering to the socialist schools." Of all the groups in the revolutionary bloc, only the anarchists were categorically opposed to all political action. Led by Bouchet and Delesalle, the libertarians stubbornly fought the very principle of political activity.

The anarchists were too weak to get their way. The resolution voted by the delegates emphasized only the need to keep political influences outside the CGT. In no way can it be read as a sweeping denunciation of political methods in general. In fact, it merely confirmed what the syndicats had been affirming since 1895—the need for neutrality in the working class organizations. Insofar as it prohibited formal ties between the CGT and the socialist groups, however, it must be considered as a defeat for the ministerialists.

From the sum total of the decisions taken by the CGT at Lyon came the outlines of what has been called a new doctrine in French Labor history. The action of the workers in rejecting the program of Millerand, in affirming the autonomy of the CGT in relation to

48 Ibid., pp. 151-52.  
49 Ibid., p. 155.
the socialists, and in placing their faith in the General Strike as the method of achieving the revolution seemed to many to denote a new departure on the part of the CGT. According to one impartial commentator, "with the congress of Lyon, the CGT entered definitely on the revolutionary path." In the next few years, this Organization embarked upon a course of action which has come to be known as revolutionary syndicalism.

A group of intellectuals, especially Georges Sorel, Hubert Lagardelle, and Edouard Berth, around the journal, Le Mouvement Socialist were the first to attempt a precise definition of revolutionary syndicalism. Close observers of the CGT from 1900 to 1906, these men sought to give an intellectual foundation to the new revolutionary behavior of the syndicats. What emerged from their attempts to define the movement was a body of thought which viewed revolutionary syndicalism as a synthesis of radical labor doctrines with trade unionism. In spite of their individual differences, almost all the intellectual theorists around Le Mouvement Socialists insisted on giving the movement more philosophical and intellectual depth than it actually possessed.

Since the apogee of the movement, following the precedent set by Le Mouvement Socialist, a large number of writers have grappled with the nature of revolutionary syndicalism. From their efforts

50 Levine, p. 117.

51 This journal, started by Lagardelle, was at first a socialist monthly. By 1904, however, it had become a revolutionary syndicalist organ.

52 For an excellent discussion of Le Mouvement Socialists intellectual contribution to syndicalism, see Levine, pp. 136-54.
have come a variety of definitions, almost all of which have taken one or several characteristics of the movement for an explanation of the whole phenomenon. To some, those who noted its frequent expressions of anti-statism and its penchant for direct economic action, it was merely anarchism applied to the trade unions. Such is the view, for example, of scholars like Jean Maitron and R. Garmy who refuse to see anything different in revolutionary syndicalism from the anarcho-syndicalism of which Fernand Pelloutier was the great architect. In spite of its "verbal protestations against anarchism," they claim, revolutionary syndicalism was the natural consequence of the anarchists' entry into the trade unions. Other scholars have argued that "revolutionary syndicalism and anarchism are two different things." Such was the position taken by the late Edouard Dolleans, for example, who insisted that "revolutionary syndicalism is a break with anarchism as well as socialism." For him, the movement was essentially a pragmatic one, developing without conscious direction on the part of the militants. For this reason, revolutionary syndicalism had neither the coherency or the consistency of earlier social philosophies. According to Dolleans,


54 Garmy, p. 276.


it was this pragmatism which gave the movement its distinguishing characteristics in French labor history. 57

Almost all the definitions of revolutionary syndicalism offered by the militants, theorists, and students of the movement rest upon the premise that the phenomenon could be systematized and labelled. In other words, what all of them assume is that the movement was consistent and rational enough to be defined. Only within certain limitations, however, are these assumptions correct. The truth is that revolutionary syndicalism resulted from an alliance among militants of diverse temperaments and beliefs. The coalition of revolutionaries controlling the CGT from 1901 to 1906 included Blanquists, Guesdists, Allemanists, and anarchists. Consequently, it is just as difficult to systematize revolutionary syndicalism as it is to reconcile the logical and doctrinal differences among these various creeds. For this reason, any classification of revolutionary syndicalism must concern itself with the differences as well as the similarities among the revolutionaries who directed the destiny of the CGT from 1901 to 1906. Between the anarchist and socialist members of the revolutionary coalition, there was often a conflict of outlook and behavior which prevented consistent and logical action by the CGT.

Both wings of the revolutionary coalition were insistent on keeping the class struggle inviolate. Neither the socialists nor the anarchists were willing to accept class collaboration, so convincingly

57 Dolléans, II, 117-118.
sponsored by Millerand. To both, the struggle of classes was the motor force of historical development. From it emerged the division of society into two sections—capital and labor. It was due also to this conflict that the workers were becoming conscious of their own force and were developing the will and moral character to bring down the system. To carry on the war of classes, the workers had organized themselves in syndicats. These organizations belonged exclusively to the working class. Whereas the socialist party enrolled lawyers, journalists, and other bourgeois elements, the trade unions were composed of workers alone. For this reason, the syndicats, not the socialist party, were the guardians of working interests. If the revolution was to be achieved, it would have to be carried out by the trade unions. Only the latter could be entrusted with the delicate task of building a new society on the ruins of the old.58

All the revolutionary syndicalists, both the socialist and anarchist wings, were dedicated to complete and total revolution. Neither had much confidence in the efficacy of reform, although, to be sure, the socialists were more prone to admit the value of working class laws than were the anarcho-syndicalists. In spite of this difference of temperament, both realized that no amount of reform would succeed in abolishing the capitalist system. From this

58 Among the numerous works on this subject, consult in particular R. Goetz-Girey, La Pensée Syndicale Française (Paris: 1948), pp. 37-75, an excellent synthesis of the literature on this complicated topic.
realization, they were led inevitably to ponder the best method to overthrow the state. For both, it was the General Strike, the only insurrection which could be carried out by the workers themselves without the aid of intermediary forces. Finally, all the revolutionary syndicalists assigned a predominant role to the Bourses du Travail and the syndicats in the post revolutionary world. The production and distribution of goods in the future society would be organized around these exclusively working class organizations.

Apart from these similarities among the revolutionaries, each of the elements in the coalition contributed many of their own particular characteristics to revolutionary syndicalism. The anarchists, whose influence in the CGT was considerable during its "heroic period," found a source of inspiration in the life and writings of Pelloutier. Like the late Secretary of the Bourses, the anarcho-syndicalists sought to instill in the workers the moral and intellectual qualities needed to create a new society as well as destroy the old. The libertarians preached self-reliance and intellectual accomplishment to the proletariat as the necessary

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60 Dolleans, II, 118.
requirements to the good society. Only by relying on themselves and increasing their moral and intellectual aptitudes could the workers develop the dignity and strength necessary to a society of free men. Insofar as the anarchists managed to permeate the movement with their moralistic principles, revolutionary syndicalism bears the indisputable mark of Fernand Pelloutier.

The most important contribution of the anarchists to the revolutionary movement was the tactic known as direct action. During 1901 to 1904 this idea crept more and more into the strategy of the revolutionaires. The concept of direct action flowed naturally from the anarchists' opposition to parliament and the state. Instead of appealing to the government for any measure sought by the workers, a move that would drag them inevitably into politics, they felt that the syndicats should enter into a direct struggle with capital. In this way, the inexorable conflict of classes would be demonstrated forcefully and unmistakably to the workers. No intermediary would be present to obscure the naked war between capital and labor. The forms of direct action were multiple. Not only did it entail direct warfare with the employers via the strike but it took the less obvious forms of boycotting and sabotage. Closely linked to direct action were such notions as anti-patriotism and "conscious minority" which the anarchists introduced into labor movement after 1901.

Neither of these concepts were new in working class history, but now,
sponsored by the anarchists, they became an important part of the CGT's tactical and intellectual armory.

From their position of the Confederal Committee of the CGT and La Voix du Peuple, the anarchists exercised a great deal of influence on the day to day action of the CGT. It is impossible to determine the exact strength of the libertarians in this Organization, but it is safe to assume that they comprised a large section of the revolutionary coalition controlling the labor movement after 1901. On the Confederal Committee sat such well known anarchists as Pouget, Bouchet, Latipie, Bousquet, Delesalle, Yvetot, and Villeval, while Pouget directed La Voix du Peuple with one eye on the anarchist star. 62 Furthermore, much of the anarchists' strength stemmed from the fact that they were able to convert other revolutionaires, especially from among the Blanquists, to their cause. Blanquisme, more of a "temperament than a doctrine," had a tradition of putschism and elitism that was similar to the anarchists' notions of direct action and conscious minority. 63 For this reason, it was not surprising to see the ex-Blanquist, Victor Griffuelhes, acting very

An excellent discussion of "direct action" from the revolutionary point of view is found in Maxime Leroy, La Coutume Ouvrière (2 vols.; Paris: 1913), II, 587-685.

62 Although the membership of the Comite Confederal was always shifting, the anarchists retained their seats on this body from 1900 to 1906. Most of the important sessions of the Comite Confederal are summarized in La Voix du Peuple during these years.

63 Dolléans, II, 118.
much like an anarchist in this period. It was he, in his capacity of Secretary of the CGT, who became the most outspoken advocate of direct economic action conducted by an energetic and enlightened minority.

Like the anarchists, the socialist-inspired revolutionaries, coming out of either a Guesdist, Blanquist, or Allemanist tradition, brought certain principles of their own to revolutionary syndicalism. None of these militants shared the anarchists' extreme hatred of parliamentary action. Their attitude in regard to politics was best summed up by Cheminot, writing at the height of the revolutionary movement, when he said that "we discuss laws, criticize ministerial decisions, and submit projects of law. We try to accomplish political acts, but... without political preoccupations." In other words, the socialist wing of the revolutionary coalition looked with favor on parliamentary assistance, although they refused to provoke division in the syndicat ranks by sponsoring an alliance with one socialist group or another. Even the support of the anarchists was necessary to the working class organizations, they felt, for although "we cannot agree with them ... we cannot deny that their work is necessary for combatting the illusions of those who wait for the intervention of providence."  

64 La Voix du Peuple, January 26-February 2, 1902.  

65 Ibid.
The refusal made by a large number of the revolutionary syndicalists to outlaw politics as a method of combat was based on the recognition that many reforms required the aid of parliament. Unlike the anarcho-syndicalists, the socialist-oriented militants never viewed all reform as useless. As far as they were concerned, reforms could be divided into two categories: those that strengthened the workers in the revolutionary struggle and those that weakened them in their fight for emancipation. Thus, when they joined with the anarchists in denouncing millerandisme, they acted in the belief that it would attenuate the strategical position of the syndicats. Seemingly a threat to the independence and elan of the trade unions, Millerand's law on the syndicats and his project of compulsory arbitration of strikes were rejected categorically. Such measures as the eight-hour day or the working class pension plan, however, were wholeheartedly approved by many revolutionaries. Far from being attempts to channelize and control the syndicats, these measures seemed to them to enhance the workers' prospects of achieving their ultimate goals.

The revolutionary syndicalists of socialist leanings comprised a large part of the CGT. Although it is impossible to determine their

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67 The revolutionary socialist members of the CGT were always advocates of parliamentary action, even to the point of affirming that the success of the General Strike was dependent on the parliamentary socialists. See above, pp. 350-52.
strength relative to the anarchists, it is safe to say that they constituted the major part of the revolutionary coalition. Such well known socialist-syndicalists as Majot, Martin, Jacoby, Guérard, Luquet, Griffuelhes, Lelorrain, Hardy, Coupat, and Merheim occupied seats on the Confederal Committee during this entire period. On La Voix du Peuple, that important voice of the CGT, the socialists were represented regularly by Guérard, Luquet, and Briat from 1901 to 1906. If, due partly to their diverse socialist sentiments, they did not seem to co-operate as thoroughly as the anarchists, they still managed to make their weight felt in the CGT.

As might have been expected, the revolutionary coalition was often subjected to serious internal strains. In 1902 during the National Congress of the CGT, the alliance appeared on the verge of dissolving. The issue between the two wings was the question of political action. To be specific, both parties were agreed on the need to abrogate a certain section of the Civil Code which hindered the syndicats' ability to combine, but they were at odds on how this might best be accomplished. As far as Guérard and Lelorrain were concerned, the only method was to ask the Chambre to eliminate the offensive article. "We are forced to use the methods which we have and not what we would like...," argued Guérard, who asked the

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68 See La Voix du Peuple for the irregular sessions of the Confederal Committee during this period.

The anarchists, however, defended their doctrine of "no politicians, no parliament." Not "believing in the necessity of addressing... the public powers," Bourchet asked the workers to choose between a method which was "illusory as it is simple" or to emancipate themselves by "direct revolutionary action." As to what constituted direct action, he, when pressed, offered a fairly clear definition of this method. Direct action, he insisted, had really been the decisive factor in the Dreyfus affair. Instead of using legal methods to secure a revision of the case, the people agitated in the streets and held meetings in support of revision. If Dreyfus was eventually released, he concluded, it was because "revolutionary methods did what legality could not." The dispute was finally patched up, thanks to a rather vague compromise on this matter. But it was evident to all that real differences existed among the revolutionary syndicalists in the CGT.

The revolutionary coalition which led the CGT along a more radical path after 1901 was rather small in comparison to the total membership of this Organization. At bottom, the rank and file of the workers were no more revolutionary than before. Although it is impossible to determine the exact strength of the revolutionaries in comparison to the moderates, even the revolutionaries were quick

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70 Ibid., 200-201.
71 Ibid., p. 200.
73 Ibid., pp. 202-203.
to admit that they constituted a small minority in the CGT. In such a situation, the question arises as to how the revolutionaries managed to win and retain control of the CGT.

A part of the explanation, no doubt, lies in the general apathy of the organized proletariat. It was fairly easy for the radical militants to penetrate the key positions of leadership because they were the most energetic and active of the workers. In addition, the revolutionaries were aided by a system of voting which enabled them to exercise disproportionate strength in the Organization. In 1901 the National Congress of the CGT adopted a voting procedure which permitted each syndicat, regardless of its actual size, to seat one delegate on the Confederal Committee. For this reason, the top echelons of the CGT were swelled by radicals who came from undersized trade unions which were frequently more revolutionary than the larger, more stable ones.

Once the radicals occupied an important place in the Organization, it was very easy for them to retain and even increase their power. The seat of the CGT was located in Paris, and the delegates of the provincial syndicats were selected from among the Parisians. From their key positions on the Confederal Committee, the revolutionaries were able to influence the syndicats' choice of a representative to this body. Since they always induced the trade

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An excellent discussion of the voting system of the CGT is found in Leroy, II, 558-60, 681-689.
unions to select delegates who shared their own point of view, the radicals were able to retain their strength on the Confederal Committee. The large number of anarchists on this body was due to the syndicats' fear of political division. Since the libertarians professed no political loyalties, they were often regarded by the syndicats as the most likely to remain aloof from the political quarrels engendered by the Millerand affair.

With the control of the Confederal Committee went the effective control of the CGT. Since the national congresses of this Organization were held only once every two years, the day to day policy was made by the Confederal Committee. It must be remembered, however, that it was impossible for this body to enforce its decisions on the member syndicats. If the CGT appeared to be racked by inefficiency during this period, it was usually due to the differences of opinion between its revolutionary leadership and its rank and file. The revolutionaries found themselves in a position where they could proclaim policy but could not carry it out.

In summary, the revolutionary syndicalist movement which dominated the CGT between 1901 and 1906 was composed, not of any single creed or viewpoint, but of a number of groups and doctrines. For this reason, it does not lend itself to systematic definition. Almost all the inconsistencies and contradictions in revolutionary syndicalism


76 Le Socialiste, June 16-23, 1906.
can be explained by the differences among the groups which created
the movement. The constant tug of war between the anarcho-
syndicalists and the socialist-syndicalists prevented the CGT from
approaching events in the labor world with an united front and
consistent viewpoint.

Finally, revolutionary syndicalism, despite the claims of some
writers, did not represent a total break with the past nor did it
consist of any new ingredient. All the elements and doctrines were
present long before 1900 and only needed the catalyst of millerandisme
to amalgamate them into revolutionary syndicalism. If the movement
appeared unique and new, it was due to the haste in which the
revolutionary coalition was formed. This alliance was slated to
endure as long as the danger which produced it.

II

As the twentieth century opened, the majority of French workers
were still unorganized. The legal recognition of the trade unions
in 1884 had resulted in a great expansion of syndicalism, but, in
1900, the largest part of the working class remained outside of the
unions. In January of 1900 only 492,617 workers belonged to a
syndicat, out of a total working class population of roughly five
million. An even smaller percentage of workers adhered to the
CGT and the Bourses du Travail, the two central organs of the
proletariat. Of the 2,695 syndicats existing in 1900, less than

77 *Annuaire des Syndicats Professionnels, Ministère du
Commerce, de l'Industrie, des Postes et des Télégraphes (Paris:
1900), p. 505-6.
half were affiliated with the Bourses or the CGT. The exact number of workers represented by these two Organizations is impossible to calculate with accuracy. Each of the 1,298 syndicats which they claimed could be represented several times over in a local federation, a Bourse, or a federation of métier. Moreover, there was a general tendency among the syndicats to exaggerate their membership. For these reasons, the claim made by the Federation of Bourses and the CGT, in 1901, to represent over a half million workers cannot be taken at face value.

In addition to their limited membership, the working class organizations were still far from being united. The political parties retained their hold on some syndicats, especially in the Guesdist-controlled regions of the country. Other syndicats remained completely local, refusing to adhere to any higher political or economic organization of their class. On the national level, the Fédération des Bourses du Travail and the CGT were still divided. Although the two often worked together, the Comité Federal of the Bourses refused to align itself permanently with the CGT.

In 1901 the CGT showed little promise of living up to its claims of working class leadership. Since 1898 only a handful of new federations had joined this Organization. Its adhering members

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78 Ibid.
80 Lercy, I, 31.
paid their dues irregularly and the Confederal Committee had little success in carrying out the decisions of the congresses.\textsuperscript{81} \textit{La Voix du Peuple} was in poor financial shape. Only 260 out of 2,700 existing syndicats were regular subscribers of the paper. In 1901 the budget of \textit{La Voix du Peuple} showed a deficit of over 6,000 francs.\textsuperscript{82} In such a situation, Puigut, editor of the journal, was hardly guilty of overstatement when he stated that the CGT "suffers from the apathy and negligence of the comrades."\textsuperscript{83}

In sharp contrast stood the \textit{Fédération des Bourses du Travail}. Although hurt by the death of Pelloutier, the Federation was still the most powerful and influential Organization in the labor world. Its continued effectiveness was due to the fact that the Comité Fédéral was controlled by men like Yvetot, Delesalle, and Besombes who sought to carry on the work and ideals of Pelloutier. Nevertheless, the rank and file of this Organization, like that of the CGT, was far from sharing the radical sentiments of its leaders.\textsuperscript{84} In fact, as the congresses of the Bourses always indicated, the majority of syndicalists in the Federation of Bourses, in sharp contrast to the revolutionaries on the Comité Fédéral, were definitely moderate in outlook.

Immediately after the death of Pelloutier, the movement to unite the CGT and the Bourses du Travail took on new life. The rivalry formerly existing between the two Organizations had slowly disappeared

\textsuperscript{81} Levine, 99-101. \\
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{83} Quoted in Ibid., p. 100. \\
\textsuperscript{84} See above, pp. 290-93.
and they often worked closely together. As might have been expected, the existence of two central Organizations seemed to many to be superfluous and irrational. For the CGT and the Bourses were interested in the same problems and were often composed of the same elements. Furthermore, the maintenance of two national organizations was expensive. The syndicats, adhering to both, had to pay a double fee and had to attend two national congresses where the same decisions were often taken. Nor was the leadership of the two substantially different. Many of the same militants sat on both the Comité Fédéral of the Bourses and the Confederal Committee of the CGT. For these reasons, it was not surprising that an increasing number of workers began to agitate for complete unification of the two Organizations.

The unity movement was led by Louis Neil of Montpellier, leader of the local Bourse in that town. Several months after Pelloutier's death, Neil, of anarchist sentiments, began an active campaign to merge the two Organizations. Writing in La Voix du Peuple during the summer of 1901, he developed a concrete plan of union that was immediately assailed by a number of militants opposed to the merger. 85 A full scale debate ensued with Neil answering all the objections to his plan with forceful arguments. As a result of the debate, the issue of working class unity was brought to the attention of the syndicalists. It was not long before the question of

85 La Voix du Peuple, June 2-9, July 14-21, August 18-25, 1901.
unity became the leading issue of the day.

The National Congress of the Bourses, held at Nice in September, 1901, was the occasion for the most extensive debate on working class unity since 1897. Many of the Bourses, won over to the side of union, supported Neil's scheme which asked, not the total merger of the two Organizations, but only the permanent alignment of the Comité Fédéral with the National Council of the CGT. "The CGT," he said, "must be the reunion of the two central organizations only—the Fédération des Bourses and the corporative federations." He tried to persuade the Bourses that unity would not result in the disappearance of the Fédération des Bourses. In his plan, the Bourses du Travail would become an autonomous but integral part of the CGT. He insisted that union for those "who think the same way" was imperative. "We must combine to fight the Jaureses," he argued, "who are growing in an alarming fashion." According to Neil, his plan would result in "a single brain, functioning for the greatest interest of the proletariat." So enthusiastic was the response to Neil's project that his opponents could not prevent the Congress from deciding "that a profound study of this project must be submitted to the next congress."
The most outspoken enemies of unity in the Bourses were the anarchists. From the first, they had combatted Neil's project on the grounds that it would result in an excessive centralization of the labor movement. During the debate on this subject at Nice, Yvetot, new Secretary of the Bourses, and Paul Delesalle had repeated Pelloutier's arguments on the need to maintain two distinct organs if a comité dictateur was to be prevented. In Delesalle's opinion, "centralization, even for those with the same views, had often grave inconveniences. Neil's project would place the direction of the syndicat movement in the hands of a few." After the congress, the anarchists continued their opposition to unity, using the pages of Les Temps Nouveaux and La Voix du Peuple to express their objections to Neil's plan. Joining the anarchists in opposing unity were other militants who feared that the incorporation of the Bourses du Travail into the CGT would aggravate the rivalries in the latter Organization. "Since Neil is not a member of the National Council," wrote one militant, "he does not realize the rivalries that exist among us." The status quo should be maintained, he concluded, because "we have the same shortcomings as the political organizations."

In the course of the following year, Neil kept up his campaign.

From La Voix du Peuple came article after article advocating unity

91 La Voix du Peuple, July 7-11, August 11-18, 1901.
92 Le Congrès National des Bourses..., tenu à Nice..., pp. 51, 58-63.
93 Les Temps Nouveaux No. 23, October 5-11, 1901.
94 La Voix du Peuple, December 8-15, 1901.
which was "economy of congresses, economy of money, simplification of the syndicat framework, order, logic, and concentration of forces." 95 Soon, the popular enthusiasm for unity forced the anarchists to give way. In June, 1902 Delesalle, speaking for the libertarians, announced that unity would be an excellent thing if too much centralization could be prevented, although he still feared the "influence that... this parliament of workers would be able to wield." 96 Thus, he insisted on the "separation of the power and the functions of the two organizations." 97 What followed was a plea for the greatest possible amount of decentralization compatible with union. When Neil answered Delesalle in a subsequent issue of La Voix du Peuple, he was able to say that he and Delesalle disagreed "only on the details and not the substance of unity." 98

When the Bourses gathered at Algers for their National Congress in September, 1902, they gave their wholehearted approval to working class unity. All the anarchists' qualms seemed to vanish under the persuasive arguments of Neil who insisted that "the militants... who seek unity are the established adversaries of all authority.... If they combat the capitalist tyrants, it is certainly not for replacing them with working class despots." 99 Only Yvetot seemed reluctant; but, when he received the assurance that the Bourses would have

95 Ibid., May 25-June 1, 1902. 96 Ibid., June 1-8, 1902.
97 Ibid. 98 Ibid., July 6-13, 1902.
autonomy and equal representation with all the other federations, he gave his consent. In the end, the only opponents of unity proved to be several moderates at the congress who charged that the CGT was so radical that it would contaminate the Bourses. Nevertheless, a project of union, essentially following Neil's suggestions, was voted by the delegates. Properly so, Neil was designated to present the unity project to the next congress of the CGT.

The National Congress of the CGT, meeting several days later at Montpellier, immediately took up the question of working class unity. Since the CGT had long been in poor financial straits, most of the delegates were favorable to a union with the powerful Federation of Bourses. Nevertheless, there were some, mainly from among the anarchists, who urged caution on their comrades. For they feared that the moderate and reformist elements in the Bourses might push the CGT from the revolutionary path. "The number of Bourses which are really revolutionary is small," protested one anarcho-syndicalist, "and the rest are so busy receiving subventions that they are always ready to make concessions." In his opinion, "unity is impossible because we are not in agreement over the basic means of struggle."

Possibly because they feared the moderates in the Bourses, the anarchists in the CGT were unwilling to accept union unless the CGT

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100 Ibid., p. 42. 101 Ibid., pp. 42-43.
102 13e Congres National Corporatif, tenu à Montpellier..., p. 115.
103 Ibid., p. 116.
took steps to prevent the Bourses from becoming predominant in the Organization. Several of them proposed schemes limiting the number of representatives that the Bourses could have on the National Council of the CGT. Pouget, arguing that "the Bourses du Travail are able to multiply to infinity while the federations cannot," asked the former to be content with two delegates each to three for every national federation.

But Neil, representing the Bourses, proved stubborn. He upheld the right of the Bourses to have as many delegates as the national federations, insisting that it would make no difference on the orientation of the CGT. "It has never been in my mind to create a CGT in which one section will eclipse the other," he said. On the Confederal Committee, "there will only be determined men... who will take decisions... without concerning themselves as to whether they represent a Bourse or a federation." To most of the delegates, his words seemed sincere. The commission, charged to draw up the final plan of union, presented a project very similar to Neil's original draft. By an overwhelming majority, the Congress voted the merger of the Bourses and the CGT.

According to the unity project voted at Montpellier, the CGT would be composed of two distinct sections—the national federations of métier or industry and the Fédération des Bourses du Travail.

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104 Ibid., pp. 129-33. 105 Ibid., p. 158.
106 Ibid., p. 159.
Every syndicat was required to belong to both of these sections, for "no syndicat will be permitted to affiliate with the CGT if it is not federated nationally and a member of a Bourse du Travail."\textsuperscript{107} In this manner, the traditional conflict \textit{between} these two methods of organization was resolved in compromise. Both sections were to remain autonomous in their own right, with a separate budget and bureau. Their action would be co-ordinated by the Confederal Committee, consisting of one delegate from every Bourse and one delegate from every national and regional federation of métier or industry. In the interim between the national congresses of the CGT, the Confederal Committee, headed by a secretary, was to carry out the day to day policies of the CGT.\textsuperscript{108}

\textbf{III}

As long as the threat of \textit{ministerialisme} appeared imminent, the socialist-oriented revolutionaries in the CGT were willing to work with the anarchists. In June of 1902, however, the Waldeck-Rousseau ministry and with it, Millerand fell from power. Although the ministerialists transferred their support to the new Ministry of Emile Combes, \textit{Le Parti Socialiste Français}, caught up in the struggle between church and state, relaxed its efforts to woo the syndicats.

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 151-52.
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 140-77.
To many of the syndicalists, millerandisme appeared dead, even if the socialists were still at loggerheads with one another. Now that they were no longer under so much pressure to co-operate with the anarchists, the socialists members of the CGT were ready to have it out with the libertarians.

By the middle of 1902 the revolutionary coalition controlling the CGT was showing signs of disrupting. The anarchists' refusal to tolerate any type of activity smacking of politics was causing consternation among the other revolutionaries who saw all prospects for creative action slipping through their fingers. In July the socialist-syndicalists began to lash out at the libertarians. A number of articles appeared in La Voix du Peuple, demanding an end to the abstentionist policy pursued by the anarchists in the CGT.  

These attacks brought on the counterfire of the libertarians who defended their position with zeal and forcefulness. It was not long before the revolutionary coalition was seriously strained by the tension between its two wings.

Accusing the anarchists of combatting "all politics in order to propagate their own," the socialist-syndicalists pointed out that the syndicats' refusal to play politics "did not mean political abstention in all circumstances." If political neutrality was necessary in regard to the various parties, they argued, "not to

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109 La Voix du Peuple, June 8-13, August 3-10, August 10-17, 1902.
110 Ibid., June 8-13, June 22-29, August 17-24, 1902.
111 Ibid., August 3-10, 1902.
vote at all... is equally wrong.\textsuperscript{112} It was their contention that
the syndicats had the obligation to vote for candidates most likely
to initiate reform legislation. According to Guérard, writing in
opposition to the anarchists, there was a crucial "difference between
electoral action and political preoccupations."\textsuperscript{113} The proletariat
should utilize the former, if only "to defend its economic interests."\textsuperscript{114}
Following this line of reasoning, the socialists in the CGT challenged
the anarchists who were seeking "to impose a uniform method of
them."\textsuperscript{115}

The strike of the miners, in the fall of 1902 brought the two
wings of the coalition close to rupture. In September of that year
the National Federation of Mineworkers, led by the moderate Cotte,
called for a general strike if certain of the miners' claims were
not met by the companies. Cotte, hoping to avert a long and costly
strike, made peace overtures to the government and the companies.
When the companies refused to negotiate and the government gave an
evasive answer, the strike was called. Nevertheless, Cotte continued
his efforts to bring the strike to an early end. Working with the
socialists in parliament he proved willing to meet the companies more
than half way. But his efforts proved fruitless. By October 19 the
strike had spread to over eleven Departments and involved fifty-one

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.} \quad \textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}, August 10-17, 1902.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Ibid.} \quad \textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}
mining companies in the nation. Only the mine workers of Montceaux refused to join the Federation of Mineworkers in its battle against the companies.

The ruling councils of the CGT were at first eager to aid the striking miners. Hoping to turn this strike into the long awaited revolution, the Confederal Committee, on October 9, called upon the French workers to support their comrades. Soon, however, the clearly reformist aims of the Federation of Mineworkers, increasingly evident as the strike progressed, alienated the anarchists and their followers in the CGT. Their hostility took concrete form on October 14, when Cotte asked the Confederal Committee to persuade the workers of Montceaux to join the walkout. Led by Latipie, Baudin, and Griffuelhes, the anarchists denounced the strike for its reformist character and refused to solicit the support of the miners of Montceaux. According to the anarchists, the fact that the Federation of Miners was working with the parliamentary socialists proved beyond all doubt the miners had no revolutionary intentions. For this reason, the anarchists replied that they considered it "useless" to ask the Montceaux miners to strike. Although this line of reasoning was opposed by many of the socialist members of the

116 La Voix du Peuple, October 12-19, 1902.
117 Session of the Confederal Committee, October 14, 1902. Reported in Voix du Peuple, October 26-November 2, 1902.
118 Session of the Confederal Committee, October 20, 1902. Reported in ibid.
119 Ibid.
Confederal Committee, the CGT gave very little assistance to the miners during the entire episode.

Both the Federation of Mineworkers and the companies finally agreed on arbitration. In November the bargaining began and the workers slowly drifted back to work. Although it had done little to aid the miners, the CGT was infuriated when it learned that the local mining syndicates were bargaining individually with the various companies. According to Griffuelhes, sectional arbitration "demonstrates an absolute lack of solidarity. It is the negation of all the engagements taken and accepted by all."120 By the beginning of December almost all the strikers had returned to work. Examining the meager results of the arbitration, the anarchists found a "new proof of the impotence... and inefficacy of all half measures proposed by the democratic reformists."121 A more sober lesson was drawn by Griffuelhes. "In spite of the affirmations in favor of the General Strike," he wrote, "its conception has only slightly penetrated the working class." If, he continued, "the miners had really understood the General Strike, they would have given it the general character necessary to its success."122

Now that the miners' strike had clearly demonstrated the obstinacy of the libertarians, the moderate rank and file of the CGT began to move against the anarchists. For several years, the non-revolu-

121 Ibid. 122 Ibid., December 28-January 4, 1903.
tionaries had looked with chagrin upon the radical orientation given this Organization by the revolutionaries. Always, the moderates had been outspoken critics of the revolutionary General Strike, preferring a mild brand of socialism not unlike the ministerialists' program. In fact, the moderates' flirtation with millerandisme had provoked the alliance between the anarchists and the other revolutionaries in the CGT. But few of the moderates really wanted to see the CGT linked to the socialist parties, for they were almost all protagonists of political neutrality. Nevertheless, they insisted that political efforts were necessary to achieve reform. For this reason, they were bitterly opposed to the policy of total abstention preached by the anarchists.\textsuperscript{123} Now, as the dispute between the revolutionary elements grew, the moderates, led by Keufer, threw in their lot with the revolutionary socialist elements in the CGT.

The moderates directed a steady stream of fire against the anarchists who, they claimed, had "no feeling for limited strikes."\textsuperscript{124} In scathing terms they denounced the members of the CGT who "demand that the organized workers accept a new credo—the revolutionary General Strike."\textsuperscript{125} It was folly, argued the moderates, to insist upon this all or nothing method, for few of the workers were really partisans of the General Strike. Instead, the CGT should concentrate

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Les Temps Nouveaux}, October 5-11, 1901; \textit{La Voix du Peuple}, April 5-12, 1903.

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{La Voix du Peuple}, April 12-19, 1903.

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid.}
upon limited reforms and be willing to call upon the state to obtain them. "It is impossible," wrote Keufer, "to have health inspection, to safeguard women and children in industry, etc.... without the intervention of the law—without politics." Then, in a moment of anger, he asked:

Are not the libertarians members of our syndicats against their real convictions and...only because they feel it... is the necessary terrain for the revolution? If they fail, can we really say that they won't again become adversaries of our syndicats?127

For the next two years, the anarchists, to the dismay of their opponents, continued to proselytize their creed. Their behavior during this period was far from exemplary. On every possible occasion, they denounced the reformists, singling out Keufer and the Fédération du Livre for special attention. These antics angered the moderates, especially when the anarchists on the Confederal Committee took steps to admit a revolutionary, rival organization of the Livre into the CGT. What really infuriated the moderates, however, was the anarchists' refusal to accept the moderate Federation of Mineworkers into this organization. In May, 1903 the libertarians turned down the Federation of Mineworkers' request for admission, but proceeded to admit in the CGT several of the more revolutionary, regional units of this Organization.129 It seemed

126 Ibid., August 9-16, 1903. 127 Ibid.
128 Session of the Confederal Committee, December 28, 1903, January 4, 1904. Reported in La Voix du Peuple, June 5-12, 1904.
to the moderates as if the anarcho-syndicalists were determined to violate at will the statutes of the CGT, so unscrupulously were the former using their influence in the Organization.

By 1904 so impassioned had become the conflict in the CGT that the National Congress, convoked at Bourges in September, was a veritable field of battle for the various factions. Hatred of the bourgeoisie was temporarily forgotten as the militants turned to the quarrels in their ranks. From the start, three tendencies were present at the congress. The moderates, ably led by Keufer, Coupat, and Hardy were there, hurling their defiance of the Confederal Committee. They had come to push for a new method of voting in the CGT. To counter the anarchists, they wanted to impose a voting system known as proportional representation, whereby the large organizations, usually the most moderate, would receive a number of votes equal to votes equal to their actual strength. If this method were adopted, the strength of the smaller, frequently more radical syndicats would be greatly reduced. Further to the left were the revolutionary socialist members of the CGT, led by Guérard and Lauche. Like the moderates, they were opposed to the anarchists, but not all of them were willing to support proportional representation. Such a system of voting, they knew, would allow the moderates to seize control of the CGT. What would follow was obvious. Not only would the General Strike be watered down to a purely reformist instrument, but the moderates would be able to form an alliance with the socialists. At the extreme left were the anarchists, bitterly opposed
to proportional representation which would be a serious blow at their influence in the CGT. In short, all the factions in the labor world were ready to battle for control of the CGT.

Immediately, the moderates took the offensive. On the first day of the Congress, Keufer asked for a motion of censure against the anarchists on the Confederal Committee. He accused the anarchists of having dictatorial ambitions, of trying to dismember the Fédération du Livre, and of flagrantly violating the statutes of the CGT. To be sure, their antics were rooted to their revolutionary beliefs, but "who," he asked, "is able to affirm the superiority of any one method of action? Even if the anarchists feel that the reformists are in error, is this a good reason to... destroy their organizations?" He concluded his speech with a plea for complete freedom of expression in the CGT, regardless of how unpopular the ideas may be. "The parliamentarians and the anti-parliamentarians are struggling among themselves," he added, "but I accept neither one nor the other. We are for a reformist doctrine." Keufer's drive to censure the anarchists was supported by Hardy and Lauche. While Hardy blamed the anarchists for the failure of the miners' strike of 1902, Lauche accused them of refusing "to tolerate contrary ideas."

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Ibid., pp. 93-95.  
Ibid., p. 93.  
Ibid., pp. 95-96.  
Ibid., pp. 131-32.  
Ibid., pp. 98, 121.
To the defense of the Confederal Committee rushed Latipie, Villeval, and Yvetot who denied the accusations against it. No attempt had been made to subvert the liberty of the trade unions, they claimed, nor had the Confederal Committee attempted to break up the Fédération du Livre. If the anarchists had spoken out against the reformists, they had merely exercised their right to express their own views. What was really causing the tension in the CGT was the duplicity of the moderates who wanted to "divide the revolutionaries into parliamentarians and anti-parliamentarians" so that their own doctrine would triumph.

Ending their defense with a ringing proclamation of anarcho-syndicalism, the anarchists asked the Congress to dismiss the charges against the Confederal Committee.

Guerard led the parliamentarian wing of the revolutionaries down the middle of the road. Certainly, the anarchists had not conducted themselves well, he admitted, for they had taught "that political and economic action cannot march in unison." At the time of the miners' strike, he continued, they had been guilty of "intransigence." Nor had their behavior toward the Fédération du Livre been beyond reproach. Nevertheless, "although we can say that there have been shortcomings, we do not have the right to... vote blame or confidence."

With these words, he asked the Congress to overlook the charges

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135 Ibid., pp. 99-100, 103-105, 116-120.
136 Ibid., p. 117.
137 Ibid., p. 110.
138 Ibid., p. 111.
139 Ibid., p. 141.
against the Confederal Committee. In the vote that followed, the moderates could not muster enough strength to overcome the revolutionaries. Their efforts to censure the anarchists failed by a vote of 825-369.

The most impassioned struggle among the factions occurred on the question of proportional representation. Early in the Congress, the moderates launched an attack on the current method of voting.\textsuperscript{1h0} By allowing each organization, regardless of its membership, to have one voice on the Confederal Committee, a minority was able to impose its will on the majority. The results of this thoroughly undemocratic system were defection within the CGT and the inability of the Confederal Committee to impose its decisions on the workers. "If the decisions of the CGT are not followed," they charged, "it is because they do not reflect the opinions of the syndicates."\textsuperscript{1h1} As to the Confederal Committee itself, it was composed, not of "simple administrators who act in the name of the majority," but of "directors who lead the working class."\textsuperscript{1h2} It was obvious why the anarchists were opposed to proportional representation, continued the moderates, for they "fear to lose their influence on... the French proletariat of which the large majority is hostile to libertarian ideas."\textsuperscript{1h3} But if proportional representation were adopted, all this would be corrected. Not only would it give the CGT the support of the workers

\textsuperscript{1h0} Ibid., pp. 146-50, 156-61, 180-82. \textsuperscript{1h1} Ibid., p. 146. \textsuperscript{1h2} Ibid., p. 146. \textsuperscript{1h3} Ibid., p. 150.
but it would force the Confederall Committee to pursue policies and tactics, even in regard to the controversial General Strike, which reflected the real working class viewpoint.

The anarchists argued that proportional representation would stifle the small syndicats which "often contribute the most to the labor movement."¹⁴¹ They did not feel that it was fair to let the large organizations override the small, for all the syndicats were of equal value in the struggle. Some trades, the anarchists contended, were incapable of producing large trade unions. The syndicats organized in such trades should not be penalized by being forced into a minor role, especially since many of them included a larger percentage of workers in their professions than did the larger federations. It was not true, insisted the anarchists, that only the small trade unions were opposed to proportional representation, for several of the large federations were also hostile to it. As for the charge that the present system was undemocratic, the anarchists pointed out that democracy was a bourgeois institution. It was neither applicable or desirable in organizations of the working class.¹⁴⁵ So forcefully did the anarchists argue their case that the Congress, by a vote of 822-380, decided to retain the old system of voting.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 178.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 177-78. Also see Leroy, II, 486-87.
When the Congress was over, it was clear that the moderates had suffered a convincing defeat. August Keufer, leader of the moderate faction, attributed their setback to the fact that two-thirds of the delegates were newcomers to syndicalism and under the influence of the anarchists. Yet the Congress of Bourges was far from a sweeping endorsement of anarcho-syndicalism. No one knew better than the libertarians that they owed their victory to a voting method which favored the radicals at the expense of the moderates in the CGT. Nor were they unaware that the margin of their triumph had been provided by a number of socialist militants who had supported them only with a certain reluctance. As it turned out, the most important result of the Congress of Bourges was that it forced the anarchists to alter their behavior in the CGT.

Following the Congress of Bourges, the anarchists greatly curtailed their abstentionist and anti-reformist activities. The CGT, between 1904 and 1906, gravitated into a middle of the road position. It adhered, to be sure, to its revolutionary goals, but overlooked no possibility or occasion to obtain basic reforms. No longer did the anarchists in the CGT push the Organization so far in the direction of political abstention. The CGT made efforts, both in and out of the Chambre, to enlist the support of the socialists.

August Keufer, Le Mouvement Socialiste No. 112 (November 1, 1904), pp. 93-96.

In spite of the moderates' claims, several of the large federations (Fédération du Metalurgie and Fédération du Maritime) were opposed to P. R. in the CGT.

La Voix du Peuple, September 25-October 2, 1904.

Weill, pp. 366-82.
groups for its program. Although evidence of the struggle among the factions were still present, the stresses and strains were greatly reduced. In the period from 1904 to 1906 the various factions appeared willing to bury their differences in the interest of French syndicalism. So harmonious were the relations among the rival factions that Neil, analyzing the cause, could refer to the CGT's, "middle of the road" orientation as the "perfect syndicalism."

The relative calm in the CGT enabled it to attract an increasing number of workers to its ranks. In fact, the period from 1904 to 1906 was the greatest period of expansion hitherto known by this Organization. In spite of this, it was still far short of its goal of organizing all the French workers. In 1906 the CGT encompassed around 2,399 syndicate organizations, about one-half the number of trade unions existing in France. According to the report of the Confederal Committee in 1906, however, the total membership of this Organization was not so impressive. Of the 836, 134 workers belonging to working class organizations of one kind of another, the CGT had a membership of only 203, 273, approximately one-fourth of the organized workers in France. Only by comparing these figures with the total working class population of the nation,

150 Levine, pp. 165-70.
151 La Voix du Peuple, September 24-October 1, 1905.
153 15e Congres National Corporatif tenu à Amiens..., pp. 21-31.
however, does the real strength of the CGT become clear. According to official publications, the total number of French workers in 1906 was around five million. Of these only 836 thousand were organized and only 203 thousand were in the CGT. In other words, only five out of every one hundred workers were enrolled in the CGT in 1906.

While the CGT was putting its house in order and expanding its membership, other events were occurring in the labor movement. In 1905 the socialists, at long last, took on the outward appearance of unity. When the International Socialist Congress of Amsterdam in 1904 took an unequivocal stand against ministerialisme, Jaurès and his followers decided to submit. Soon, after a series of discussions between Le Parti Socialiste Français and Le Parti Socialiste de France, a joint commission of unification was formed. In March, 1905 the ministerialists withdrew from the Déléguation des Gauches, honoring the decision of the Congress of Amsterdam. Now that the ministerialists had returned to the fold, no real obstacle to union remained. Unification finally took place at a General Socialist Congress, held at Paris in July, 1905. Le Parti Socialiste Français and Le Parti Socialiste de France merged to form the Parti Socialist, section française de l'Internationale ouvrière. The conflict which had disrupted the labor world since 1899 was declared formally at an end. 155

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154 Annuaire Statistique de la France pour 1906. Quoted in Mermeix, pp. 210-12.

155 Noland, 165-207.
That the creation of a unified Socialist Party would have repercussions for the CGT was inevitable. With the advent of socialist unity, a large number of militants in the Socialist Party felt the time had come for the two Organizations to join hands in the interest of the common struggle. As early as August, 1905, Jaures, picking up where he left off in 1902, called for an entente between the two Organizations. This could be established, he insisted, if the CGT would "state clearly that it accepts universal suffrage and the political representation of the proletariat. On the other hand, the Socialist Party... must ascertain that partial reform... is only the preparation to the total transformation." Once all misunderstanding was cleared up, he continued, the way would be clear for close collaboration between the CGT and the Socialist Party.

In 1906 the question of the relations between the two became a subject which stirred the whole labor world. In August of that year, the Federation du Textile, a Guesdist-controlled Organization, announced that it was going to place this question on the agenda of the coming CGT Congress of Amiens, scheduled for October of 1906. Almost simultaneously, Jaures, in an effort to improve syndical-socialist relations, opened the pages of L'Humanité to the militants of the syndicalist movement. During the next several months, the

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156 L'Humanité, August 29, 1905.
157 Ibid.
relationship between the CGT and the Socialist Party was debated with an intensity hitherto unequalled in the history of the labor movement.

In General, the socialists insisted on the need to establish close links between their party and the CGT. What the Guesdist wanted was a "permanent delegation or a special delegation to the Socialist Party in view of common action... on certain measures."158 In their opinion, only the anarchists, whom they accused of propagating their own politics under the guise of neutrality, were really opposed to political action.159 The Blanquists were less emphatic on a method of cooperation with the syndicats. According to Vaillant, the Socialist Party should remain a distinct Organization, but the two should work together from time to time.160 He felt that neither was yet for a real union, although "the entente will come in its own time."161 His was essentially the position of the Allemanists who insisted that the two should work together but both should retain their separate identity and independence.162

As the Congress of Amiens approached, the anarchists appeared genuinely concerned. Utilizing La Voix du Peuple, they sprayed the

158 Le Socialiste, October 6-13, 1906.
159 Ibid., August 25-September 1, September 8-15, October 6-13, 1906.
160 L'Humanite, September 9, 1906.
161 Ibid.
162 Le Parti Ouvrier, September 8, August 11, 1906.
workers with all the old arguments against an entente with the politicians. In addition, the anarchists claimed the moderates were plotting to link the CGT with the Socialist Party for assuring the triumph of reformism. The real goal of the Fédération du Textile, they insisted, was to drive the anarchists from the syndicats by giving the CGT a political orientation. 163

What really worried the anarchists was the possibility that the moderates and the revolutionary socialists in the CGT would form an alliance against them. Now that the reformists and the revolutionaries had united in one socialist party, there was a chance that they might combine on the syndicat terrain. "Two years ago," wrote one anxious anarchist, "the reformist socialists and the revolutionary socialists were at each other throats.... But now socialist unity has been achieved, and we have not yet heard them speak out against this political interference."

If this alliance did materialize, the anarchists feared that they would not be able to keep their majority intact. Writing in 1956 Pierre Monatte recalled vividly the anarchists' anxiety. "Among the elements of the revolutionary majority at Bourges," he writes, "there were... members of the Socialist Party. Would there not be a wavering among them?" 165

The anarchists' fears proved to be groundless. When the question was broached at Amiens, almost all of the syndicats were opposed to

163 La Voix du Peuple, August 19-26, September 2-9, 1906.
164 Ibid., August 19-26, 1906.
any type of alliance with the socialists. Introduced by the Fédération du Textile, a motion calling for the creation of "a permanent or intermittent delegation to the National Council of the Socialist Party" was almost unanimously rejected. Instead, the anarchists, the revolutionary socialists, and the moderates rallied to a motion formulated by Griffuelhes. Known in French labor history as the Charter of Amiens, this motion was voted by the overwhelming majority of 880-8. In substance, it affirmed that the syndicalists, when agitating outside the trade unions, should have "complete liberty to participate... in any form of combat which corresponds to... their political conceptions." As members of the syndicats, however, "they must not introduce here any of their personal opinions which they profess when outside the trade unions." In effect, the Charter of Amiens closed the door to an alliance between the CGT and the Socialist Party.

It is not difficult to explain why the Congress acclaimed the Charter of Amiens. In almost every respect, it was a compromise solution, worded to rally all the divergent elements in the CGT. In deference to the anarchists, the Charter rejected any binding ties between the syndicats and the Socialist Party. It was also acceptable to the partisans of political action, for it in no way

166 _15e Congres National Corporatif tenu à Amiens..._, p. 167.
167 Leroy, I, 350-51.
168 Ibid.
eliminated the possibility of co-operating with the socialists.

What it really was, was a clear statement of political neutrality, squarely in the tradition of French syndicalism.

It is this which explains why the revolutionary socialists and the moderates were willing to give the Charter their approval. Few among them were interested in creating an alliance with the Socialist Party, for they knew that to commit the CGT to socialism would mean a split with the anarchists in the syndicats. Thus, to insure the health and integrity of the trade unions, the socialists affirmed at Amiens, just as they had done at London in 1896, the necessity of political neutrality. This is the reason why militants like Coupat, Guerard, and Neil could oppose an entente with the socialists while affirming the need for political action. Even Keufer, acknowledged leader of the moderate wing and certainly no opponent of political methods, was opposed to an alliance "because of the inevitable divisions that... would be produced."

The affirmation of political neutrality embodied in the Charter of Amiens was by no means a victory for the anarchists. In spite of their claims to the contrary, the Charter was aimed at the anarchists every bit as much as the socialists. For, as the debates on the question made clear, the delegates recognized that

169 15e Congrès National Corporatif, tenu à Amiens..., pp. 142-49, 163-66.

170 Ibid., p. 155. Also see Keufer's article in L'Humanité, October 1, 1906.

anarchism was a political creed which, like all the others, should be eliminated from the CGT. Even as the Fédération du Textile proposed an alliance with the socialists, it emphasized that this was "to prevent the politics pursued by the Confederation in regard to anti-patriotism, anti-militarism, and electoral abstention." In the debates that followed, militant after militant arose to demand political neutrality, "not only in respect to the Socialist Party but toward all doctrines." Almost all of them recognized that real neutrality was only possible if the CGT "abstained from making anti-military, anti-patriotic propaganda and from propagating anarchist tactic." So general was the agreement on this score that, in many circles, the Charter of Amiens was hailed as a defeat for the anarchists.

In 1906 the metamorphosis which, since the 1880's, had been changing socialists into syndicalists had reached its zenith. More than ever before, the workers were agreed on the need to bury their political convictions in the interest of a strong syndicalist movement. In the words of one militant, "there is neither socialist or anarchist at this congress. There are only syndicalists... and a new doctrine—syndicalism." The debates at Amiens demonstrated

\[172\] 15e Congrès National Corporatif tenu à Amiens..., pp. 154-56, 162-49, 157, 163-64.

\[173\] Ibid., p. 134.

\[174\] Ibid., p. 156.

\[175\] Ibid.

\[176\] L'Humanité, October 19, November 7, 16, 1906; Le Socialiste, October 27-November 3, 1906.

\[177\] 15 Congrès National Corporatif tenu à Amiens..., p. 162.
clearly that the militants were convinced that the syndicalist movement, and not the Socialist Party, would determine the future of the working class. It was this faith or belief which lay at the heart of the Charter of Amiens, a document that assigned the trade unions the major role both in creating the revolution and in building the new society. In this respect, the Charter bore the mark of Pelloutier.

In spite of the workers' faith in themselves and in their own institutions, they had not outgrown their cradle legacy. In 1894 they had declared themselves independent of the socialists. Yet, every major crisis in the Socialist Party from 1894 to 1906 had widespread consequences for the CGT. The explanation for this ironic turn of events is based partly on the fact that, if they were to achieve their aims, the syndicalists could never dispense with political considerations. This paradox was also due to the syndicalists' inability to break completely with their socialist backgrounds. The entire history of French syndicalism between 1895 and 1906 centers upon the political aims of the militants almost as much as their legitimate trade union goals. In 1906 with the emergence of a real syndicalist mentality, the CGT was still riddled with rivalries and factions based partly on political differences. For proof, it is only necessary to examine the structure of the newly
united Socialist Party, whose composite elements each had a syndicalist counterpart in the CGT. Hence, by 1906 syndicalism had become a significant force in the social life of the nation, but, like the Socialist Party, it did not have a singleness of purpose or a monolithic structure. For this reason, it was seriously handicapped for the role which it would be called upon to play in the twentieth century.
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