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A RADICAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION: ANARCHIST SCHOOLING--THE MODERN SCHOOL OF NEW YORK AND STELTON.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, PH.D., 1979

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A RADICAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION: ANARCHIST SCHOOLING--
THE MODERN SCHOOL OF NEW YORK AND STELTON

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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*****

The Ohio State University

1979

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Educational
Foundations
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To David and Miriam

Whose childhood play surrounded this work, sparking the creative force behind it
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FIELDS OF STUDY

Educational Foundations and Research. Drs. Bernard Mehl and Paul Klohr

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .............................................. iii

VITA ........................................................ v

Chapter

I. TOWARD AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON RADICAL EDUCATION IN THE U.S. ................ 1

II. THE ANARCHIST TRADITION IN THEORY AND PRACTICE ......... 31

III. ANARCHIST EDUCATIONAL THEORY .......................... 80

IV. ANARCHIST SCHOOLING: THE MODERN SCHOOL AND THE FERRER ASSOCIATION IN NEW YORK .... 133

- The New York Years: The Ferrer Association ... 141
- The New York Years: The Modern School ......... 160

V. ANARCHIST SCHOOLING: THE MODERN SCHOOL AT STELTON  .. 200

VI. CONCLUSION: WHERE HAVE ALL THE CHILDREN GONE? ....... 285

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................ 306
Suppose we reject the ideal of the good life as determined by the dominant values of a culture and suppose we reject the worth of continuing this culture, its form, its established roles, its dominant conceptions of pleasure, achievement, integrity. . . .

To simply say that we want to prepare young people to make their own decisions later, doesn't solve much, it mainly expresses our sense of being at a loss to conceive the continuity of social existence and the values clearly enough to provide content to the idea of transmitting a world to the young.  

On one level, Paul Goodman's statement implies that the forms of self expression characteristically attributed to radical educators like A. S. Neill and to cultural forms embodied in the counter culture of the sixties lacked a defined historic connection to the past: lacked a commitment to an ideal, a belief or value system other than a nebulous notion of freedom defined in terms of self expression, vitality or elan vital. On another level Goodman's statement suggests concern with the ways in which schools connect to history, a process both social and personal, that seeks to transform society.

Goodman's concerns are historical concerns, voiced by both philosophers and social theorists since time immemorial. They are visible in all utopian writings from Plato's Republic to Bellamy's

Looking Backward, to Skinner's Walden II. Both educating the young to a new consciousness and a new set of cultural values and ordering society for a "better life" were significant themes for these writers. However, both the forms of education and the conception of "the good life" were distinctly different in each author's work. The notion of education ranged from a behaviorist approach to a tracked system of philosophy, crafts and militarism, to a notion of individual self-expression and creativity. On the other hand, the vision of "the good life" ranged from theories of social justice, equality, liberty, to notions of individual freedom, creativity, imagination and communal living arrangements. Important to all these theorists was clarifying the relationship between schooling and social change.

This concern with the relationship between social theory, social change and education was not only characteristic of utopian philosophers or social theorists like Rousseau and Proudhon, but was also characteristic of American educational philosophers such as John Dewey and George Counts. Here the debate was somewhat different and the concern was not over the ways in which education would act in the new society, but rather the role education would play in the process of social transformation. The focus was on public education, while the questions related to whether the school would become the leader in the process of moving society toward revolution. For John Dewey, schooling in its replication of democratic principles of equality, social justice and community, would extend the notion of political democracy to a cultural and social level. The process of social change would be
gradual. On the other hand, George Counts, writing in the late twenties under somewhat different circumstances in *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order*, suggested the schools become directly involved and play a leadership role in the struggle to fundamentally alter economic and political relationships. The relationship between ways of educating the young and the role education would play in transforming society was a historical and theoretical problem that remained unsolved.

Both radicals and liberals provided a different set of analyses and different solutions. For liberal reformers like John Dewey, Jane Addams, Charles Elliott, schooling and education served to correct the inequalities within the present society and to alter attitudes and ways of viewing the world so that a more democratic and freer social order emerged. Essentially, however, the fundamental power relationships were neither challenged nor completely transformed. For radical educators the goal was more comprehensive. Education was to be used to "build the new social order." For most, the new forms of educating children were connected to a social vision which included altering social, political and economic relationships, as well as work, play, family relationships and childrearing practices. It most often included a radical pedagogy, a critique of existing social relationships, as

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3. George Counts, *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order* (New York: John Day Company, 1932), passim.
well as an implicit theory of how the new social order would be ushered in. Within the radical perspective there were a variety of theories explaining how society would be transformed and the relationship of education to that process. Often as not, the process of change remained vague, giving rise to a series of problems and questions surrounding the ways in which radical pedagogy could be incorporated into a radical social theory. For those committed to radical social change, it meant addressing in both theory and practice questions concerning what constitutes a radical pedagogy and precisely how a radical pedagogy could participate in radical social transformation.

The problems of liberal educational reform and its theories of social change have made up the dominant literature in the history and philosophy of education. On the other hand, what I will term the "Radical Tradition in American Education" has only briefly been acknowledged and as such, mostly in terms of the radical experiments of the sixties' Free School Movement. Yet there is a historical tradition that predates the sixties and shares with it a common set of assumptions and values as well as a common desire for radical social change. On the broadest level it can be identified by its rejection of the dominant cultural, political and social relationships of the period and by its implicit or explicit use of education to alter these relationships. From nineteenth century utopian experiments, to working class union movements, to transcendentalist school experiments, to Socialist and Anarchist educational ventures, an American radical tradition in education developed. It remained distinct from liberal
approaches to education and social change by the way it defined a radical approach to child rearing which attacked traditional notions of how children learn, grow and develop. It was highly critical of and sought to change the dominant political and economic relationships and the cultural expression of those relationships, because radicals found them stifling to human growth and potential. Often the radical tradition incorporated a wide range of activities, beliefs and values which worked in a variety of ways to develop a culture of freedom. Radicals used education as part of the more general process of transformation which included changes in human relationships in the family, the school and the work place as well as political and economic changes.

While what can be counted in the radical tradition in American education has not been expressly defined and the boundaries of this theoretical and experiential framework or world view has not been clearly drawn, a set of theorists and school experiences has come to be associated with this loosely defined tradition. While no definitive history has been written which traces the ideas and practices of the radical tradition, monographs, articles, popular books and scholarly works have dealt with one phase or another of this tradition. Often the information can be gathered indirectly out of the writings of cultural historians who peripherally deal with education: Drew Eggbert and Stowe Persons' history of socialism contains some information on socialist education; The Disciples of Marx deals with Orestes Brownson's relationship to Robert Owen, working class movements and briefly
mentions radical perspectives on Public Education. The only work to deal specifically with socialist educational theory during 1900 to 1920 is the unpublished dissertation of Joselyn Slade Tien entitled *The Educational Theories of American Socialism, 1900-1920.* On the other hand, anarchist educational experiments are dealt with briefly in only two works: Eunice Schuster's *Native American Anarchism* and William Reichert's *Partisans of Freedom.* At other times, information can be obtained from articles of books by educational historians who are critical of U.S. public education and write about alternatives to public schooling. Michael Katz in *Class Bureaucracy and Schools* deals with Orestes Brownson's work for community school control, while *The American Experience in Education* by John Barnard and David Bruner chronicles briefly Margaret Fuller's involvement in the Temple School of Boston, run by Alcott Bronson and the Greene Street School in Providence, Rhode Island, both of which were concerned with radical

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pedagogy.\textsuperscript{7} Writers like Joel Spring in \textit{Education and the Rise of the Corporate State} include chapters on radical education which deal with radical responses to public education from 1900 through the 1920s, as well as information on attempts by radicals to develop and define alternative education.\textsuperscript{8} Other writers such as Beatrice Gross have put together a series of essays on what came to be termed in the sixties the radical experience in education. In her book called \textit{Radical School Reform}, she includes theoretical writings of men like Paul Goodman, Jules Henry, A. S. Neill, E. Z. Friedenberg, as well as descriptions of school experiments.\textsuperscript{9} Still other writers have attempted to define radical education through a history of radical educational ideas which include European as well as American theorists, who in their libertarian views on childrearing, directly or indirectly influenced an American radical perspective in education. Joel Spring's \textit{A Primer of Libertarian Education} is the most comprehensive of such books. It deals with the history of ideas and includes such radical educators as A. S. Neill, Max Stirner, Paulo Freire, Francisco Ferrer, etc.\textsuperscript{10}

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{8}Joel Spring, \textit{Education and the Rise of the Corporate State} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), pp. 126-148.
\item\textsuperscript{9}Beatrice Gross and Ronald Gross, \textit{Radical School Reform} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), passim.
\item\textsuperscript{10}Joel Spring, \textit{A Primer of Libertarian Education} (New York: Free Life Edition, 1975), passim.
\end{itemize}
While there is a proliferation of literature on radical education in the sixties, the most comprehensive analysis of the Free School Movement remains Allan Graubard's *Free the Children*. The book chronicles in detail all aspects of the movement including the weak points, strong points and the serious problems raised by the movement.\(^{11}\) The above enumeration is not comprehensive in that it does not include all books that deal explicitly or peripherally with radical education, but rather includes a cursory survey of the types of works in which information on radical attempts to alter our education can be found, as well as a survey of the kinds of information available on radical education.

As a result of the disparate array of articles and books, a set of theories and a variety of school experiences have come to be associated with radical education in America. Yet an examination of the literature shows that only the sixties has received thorough examination.\(^{12}\) The historical tradition of radical school experiments

\(^{11}\)Graubard, *Free the Children*, passim.

\(^{12}\)Between 1967 and 1975 a proliferation of education books appeared on what was loosely defined as "radical education." These books emphasized the Summerhill definition of radical school reform. By 1975 many of these educators became critical of this view of radical education. Some of the important books on radical education published during this period included: Graubard, *Free the Children*; Michael S. Kaye, *The Teacher Was the Sea* (New York: Links, 1972); and George Dennison, *The Lives of Children: The Story of the First Street School* (New York: Random House, 1969). In addition, magazines of the period were comprehensive in their critique of traditional education and in their attempt to formulate radical educational philosophy. The most influential of these magazines was *This Magazine Is About Schools* (Everdale Place, Toronto: Bryant Press, 1966-1973). In 1973 the magazine became *This Magazine Is About Education, Culture and Politics*. 


that antedates the sixties and begins as early as the nineteenth century has only received minimal attention, if any, in the historical writings on education. Yet certainly these experiments need to be explored and elaborated if we are to understand the radical experience in American education which is not an outgrowth of nineteenth century utopian educational practices begun in communities like New Harmony, Brook Farm, or the many communal utopian experiments in which education played a really significant role.\footnote{Harold Silver, The Concept of Popular Education (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1965), pp. 134-201.} These nineteenth century experiments remained radical in their pedagogical style and in their critique of American industrialization, its resulting oppression and injustices and curtailment of personal freedoms. Yet they remained weak in their conceptualization of how the larger society would be transformed. In keeping with this tradition, and yet remaining outside the radical utopian vision, were writers like Margret Fuller, Bronson Alcott and Orestes Brownson. Bronson Alcott and Margret Fuller started a school in Boston based on individual freedom, while Orestes Brownson was active in radical politics and working class movements and saw school as part of the process of social transformation.\footnote{Herreshoff, American Disciples of Marx, pp. 31-46; and Katz, Class Bureaucracy and Schools, pp. 17-21.} Yet a more detailed history of the nineteenth century social context out of which these radical pedagogical theories and radical social theories grew remains to be written.
The twentieth century brought its own attempts to radically alter American society through schooling and politics. In the early 1900s Socialists and Anarchists, while engaged in revolutionary politics, began a series of schools that they hoped would become integral to social transformation. Yet very little has been written about these radical educational experiences. In the twenties and thirties experimental schools sprang up throughout the U.S., some based in Freudian theories of childrearing and most contained an implicit theory of social change. Little was written about these schools. Again in the 1930s educators like John Dewey, Theodore Bremald, George Counts writing for Social Frontiers at Columbia, worked to expose the class nature of American education and define an educational system that would create a socially, politically and economically equalitarian society. For these men schools became the major way to transform all social relationships in American society. Their vision was to connect public education to a radical restructuring of social institutions so that a freer, juster society would emerge. In the sixties, the Free


School Movement sought to radically alter American society by liberating children, creating new cultural forms, changing consciousness and through radical political activity. While this enumeration of antecedents to the sixties' free school movement only begins to define a radical tradition, its purpose is only to highlight and show that a much wider variety of experiences and perspectives make up what by the sixties has come to be called radical approaches to education and to show that there is a historical tradition in America that can in fact be defined as a radical tradition in education. Clearly this is not a comprehensive history or a comprehensive statement of that tradition; that has yet to be written. It is simply a cursory look through history at radical education because in the traditional literature, radical educational theories and experiences have been isolated and relegated to the specific methodologies, specific philosophies and to a specific historic period, the sixties. As a result, the analysis and perspective of radical education in the U.S. remained ahistorical, asocial and isolated in its presentness. Past experience and the social and historical conditions surrounding radical school reform were seldom examined. The repercussions were that issues and problems were seldom seen in a historical context and even less frequently understood as ongoing problems of what I have called the American radical tradition in education. In isolation the experiences of the sixties became harder to understand or else explanations of their failure were superficial. All this suggests the need for a body of literature that explores, historically and sociologically, the
American radical education tradition in order to understand the more fundamental relationship between radical pedagogy, radical school reform and social transformation. Yet the sixties did represent an important period in the historical tradition I have been speaking of. The experiences of free schools, community schools, liberation schools began to concretely realize the problems inherent in radical social change, through radical pedagogy. As such, a brief examination of the sixties will lay out for us the specific conflicts, problems and issues that a more in-depth historical analysis of radical movements in education can begin to address.

The sixties created a disparate array of literature and school experiments in conjunction with radical protest against the war, racism in the South and the oppressive forms of cultural domination in the schools. One could in fact discern a set of social critics and educators that became associated with a radical critique of American society and provided the basis for a body of radical literature specifically related to education. These theorists included men like Herbert Marcuse, Jules Henry, Paul Goodman and Ivan Illich. Also included were pedagogical theorists like John Holt, Jonathan Kozol, Herbert Kohl who based their theories on Tolstoy, A. S. Neill and Rousseau. While they included a range of educational philosophers as well as a range of theories about social transformation, they exhibited a common critique of American culture and a common desire to see American education and American society radically altered. What is interesting about this literature is the variety of educational models that emerged,
allowing us to create a typology of radical education. It is hoped that this typology will allow the specific problems inherent in each model of education to surface, thereby allowing us to more clearly understand the relationship between radical education and social change.

Ivan Illich's theory represents one model in the typology which seeks to radically alter America by deschooling society and replacing schools with a voluntary exchange of educational needs and services. For Illich radical social change will come when we rid society of the schools, because they are the single most important institution working to perpetuate and reinforce the dominant values, needs, social relationships and dependencies. Implied in Illich's theory is a social theory based on a deinstitutionalized society where minimal production and consumption allow personal freedoms to grow, free from the dependencies and needs created by modern institutional life. A second model in the typology of radical schooling includes the libertarian philosophies of Rousseau, Summerhill and the free schools of the sixties. Often called the romantic tradition in education, these theorists seek to develop the natural expressiveness and creativity within each individual. They believe that this creativity had become repressed either through the hypocrisies of social institutions (Rousseau) or the psychologically repressive nature of the family (A. S. Neill). The latter analysis, which is based in Freudian theory, believes that

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freedom and liberation develops through a libertarian pedagogy which allows children the freedom to develop their inner resources and their natural creativity. Implied is a theory of social change that insists changing consciousness, changing the way people think, relate and talk will create adults who will rebel against the intolerable social conditions of a repressive society and transform that society. The third model is more political and economic in orientation and has its roots in educators like Paulo Freire and social theorists like Karl Marx. It is often explicitly revolutionary and includes Marxist theorists and liberation schools which emphasize social and economic change to end exploitation, alienation, racism. In these schools the expressly psychological orientation of writers like A. S. Neill are minimized as social consciousness is emphasized. A fourth model of radical education works to combine theories of individual freedom and self-expression with revolutionary politics. Marcuse, who combines Freud and Marx, represents the father of this tradition. Schools like the Ann Arbor Community School run by Weather People in the sixties tried to combine both libertarian notions of freedom and a radical political theory. The typologies need to be explored historically to understand the specific problems raised by each theoretical model.

In the sixties a large number of school experiments appeared, and the romantic tradition of Rousseau and A. S. Neill became the dominant model. The practice of schooling which evolved brought to light the limitations of this particular framework, shedding further light on the relationship between schooling and radical social change,
adding another dimension to our understanding of the radical tradition in American education.

The school experiments of the sixties did not arise in isolation but rather as part of a larger protest movement. This movement was begun by students to protest repressive schooling and the life styles of a society whose codes and values seemed meaningless; by Blacks to protest the explicit racism of the south and the implicit racism of American institutions; and by the populace at large against a meaningless war. The sixties protest had an implied social theory which included two dominant visions of freedom, one primarily psychological and cultural in its demands that repressive work and school situations be altered to allow the creative potential in each to flower. This strain incorporated Marcuse, Freud and Goodman in its critique of American life and became known as "the counterculture." It most specifically correlated with model II in our typology of radical education. As such the counterculture established a style of dress, living patterns, sexual patterns which were the antithesis of the dominant cultural forms and were designed to allow for maximum self expression and individuality. The counterculture became the most significant force in the Free School Movement. The other strain was more political and related to a social vision which insisted on altering the economic structure to eliminate racism, exploitation and the oppression of Black people in schools, prisons, jobs, politics, housing, etc. It asked for the overturn of power.
Often the two visions of freedom intertwined; the counterculture worked in ghetto communities outside mainstream schooling, in the Freedom Marches, bus boycotts, voter registration and counter demonstrations at the Democratic convention. Blacks worked not only on political economic freedom but also on cultural issues of family, dress, beauty, etc. The commonality remained, the freedom to reach full potential as humans.

Translated into educational practice, these conceptions of freedom gave rise to a variety of attempts to radically alter schooling in America and to alter American society through the schools. The typology of radical education enumerated could be seen in the free school and community school and black liberation school movement. Unlike the proliferation of progressive schools in the twenties and thirties, these schools not only sought to define a new pedagogy but hoped either implicitly or explicitly to overturn the dominant culture and values. Generally they included children who came from all social classes; poor or middle class. Tuition was often adjusted to the income level of the parent. Some of these free schools were run by politically active people who formed what came to be known as "The New Left": Ann Arbor Community School was run by Dianne Oughton and Bill Ayres, both of whom were in the Weathermen and both of whom were eventually blown up in a bomb explosion in Greenwich Village. Others were Liberation Schools in New York and California run by the Panthers or members of the Pan African Movement. The vast majority, however, were apolitical and exhibited the counterculture model of libertarian
education. In these schools "There was little overt political content and activities. Cultural radicalism—that is ideologically anti-political and which dealt with consciousness; forming children to allow the forces within them to develop in a non-repressive non-authoritarian atmosphere."\(^{19}\)

At its peak it was estimated there were between 300 to 500 free schools in the U.S.\(^{20}\) A free school newsletter called The New Schools Exchange Newsletter was published so as to insure that these institutions communicate with each other. As early as 1966 the first significant free school, Everdale Place, began publishing what would become the major sixties publication on radical education, This Magazine Is About Schools. The magazine, widely read by people involved in the free school movement, contained articles on culture, freedom, and radical pedagogy. In the early days, before 1971, the magazine had a more counterculture than political orientation. Its educational philosophy was libertarian in the tradition of Summerhill. The black liberation schools, on the other hand, looked more to African theorists like Julius Nyerere for their educational philosophy.\(^{21}\)

Implicit in the counterculture culture model of the Free School was a notion that the growth of the movement would bring a new educational system and hence a new culture and consciousness to American life.

\(^{19}\)Graubard, Free the Children, p. 272.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., p. 283.

\(^{21}\)Informal discussion with George Murray, Black Independent School, Palo Alto, Summer 1968.
One active member in the movement predicted that in 1973 there would be 25,000 to 30,000 students and by 1975 two million students would be enrolled in free schools.\textsuperscript{22} For Rosman and others, when the free schools with their alternative life styles replaced public education, we would have social change, known as "The Greening of America." Graubard stated, "For them the Greening of America was an almost euphoric illusion."\textsuperscript{23}

Problems quickly developed within the dominant vision of libertarian education as the more politically concerned members of the New Left or counterculture attacked this model of libertarian freedom, saying that it could not change American society. As stated, "My own experience tells me that a splendid and pure counterculture isolation, so that we can do our thing unsullied by the 'crap of Amerika,' leads nowhere."\textsuperscript{24} Tensions developed between the more political counterculture connected to the New Left and the apolitical counterculture. Tensions also developed between the needs of the working class children attending the school and the more middle class philosophies of those running the schools.\textsuperscript{25}

These tensions became clearer to me, as a mother of two and a single parent when I too became involved in the Free School Movement. My hope, like that of many other parents, was that a libertarian

\textsuperscript{22}Graubard, \textit{Free the Children}, p. 283.
\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 294. \textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 296.
pedagogy would allow my children to grow up unsullied by the materialism, alienation, repressiveness, and fragmentation that characterized American society. I and several parents established The Columbus Community School which drew children from a variety of backgrounds: poor white working class, poor black working class, welfare recipients, students, professors. A sliding tuition scale allowed people to pay according to their income. Our model of education grew out of the variety of free schools visited by me and the other parents; the Roxbury School, a black community school; a Summerhill type school on 10th Street near the Hudson River in the Greenwich Village area of New York, and the Ann Arbor Community School run by political activists like Dianne Oughton and Bill Ayers. Our intention was to incorporate Marcuse and A. S. Neill's Summerhill into a model of radical schooling most clearly resembling model 4 in our typology. Our ideas were drawn not only from schools visited but from reading and discussing Rousseau, A. S. Neill, Goodman, Holt, etc. It included a counterculture vision of freedom, expressiveness and creativity with a radical political perspective. Most often this counterculture notion of personal liberation conflicted with the political-economic realities of many children at the school. Several working class parents were less interested in free expression in the form of curse words, or torn, messed-over clothes, than in insuring their children learn to read. Libertarian ideas of freedom in the concrete were less appropriate to the everyday realities of where they lived, the culture they survived in and the work world they and their children would be forced to enter.
The problems of survival were different in the work world of the poor and tensions resulted from the differing realities each group in the school had to face. In addition, the ways in which children faced conflict were different in the poor than in the middle class communities. Middle class parents became upset by the physically aggressive response of the poorer children to the verbally aggressive middle class child. These parents pulled their children out. The concrete reality of the ways in which a libertarian educational philosophy interacted with the class and cultural differences among the children caused real problems for the school. The problems which hit the Columbus Community school, where parents had a professed political consciousness of race and class differences, hit many more free schools. The resulting tension seemed to spread within the movement, making the "Greening of America" seem less and less like a plausible reality.

Questions were now raised about whether a truly radical education could deal with cultural issues alone. If it did, would it not lose working class and poor children who found the counterculture inappropriate to their daily lives? In addition, could cultural transformation really alter the power relationships in American society? Certainly the latter became more and more a movement concern as the counterculture became more absorbed by the Market economy. As Graubard states, "Cultural revolution without an adequate politics will not bring about the necessary change within America today..." Still others

26Graubard, Free the Children, p. 295.
grew to believe that not only was it impossible to bring about radical change through a radical pedagogy, but truly new values and beliefs could not develop in an already corrupt society.

I am saying that truly good education in a bad society is a contradiction in terms. In short in a society that is absurd, unbearable, wasteful, destructive, secretive, coercive, monopolistic, generally anti-human we could never have good education no matter what kind of school the powers that be permit.  

In both instances, cultural transformation was seen as an insufficient way to radically alter America.

The tensions within the movement created a variety of responses. This Magazine Is About Schools, which epitomized a libertarian critique of society that exhibited some political awareness, turned from an emphasis on cultural issues to a Marxist revolutionary perspective. The magazine began to contain articles on public education rather than alternative schools and it began to develop an analysis of the political economy, the classroom curriculum and the problems of the teachers union. Ultimately the magazine changed its title from This Magazine Is About Schools to a more encompassing title, This Magazine Is About Politics, Culture and Education, indicating one response to the inadequacy of the cultural model for social change. Yet many parents and teachers did not agree with the new revolutionary political emphasis. One letter to the editor in the winter 1971 issue of this magazine clearly voiced this perspective. "Lately there has been less and less about the aims of education, social revolution if you like and more about

27Graubard, Free the Children, p. 267.
political and violent revolution." Tensions within the movement, and the political and economic conditions of the seventies caused schools to fold, others to espouse teaching of violent revolution and still others to continue with the counterculture view of social reality. Many went out of the alternative school movement into public education. For the more politically oriented Black Liberation schools the problems were somewhat different as leaders were arrested, the movement weakened and there was some difficulty in maintaining liberation schools. By 1972 the movement was considerably weakened and the overall reality suggested that a Summerhill model of education was less suitable for social change in a society that encompassed children from a variety of backgrounds.

Yet the problems of how one uses education to transform society and what constitutes a radical pedagogy went even deeper than the inappropriateness of the Summerhill Model for massive social change. Criticisms and questions were raised by Goodman and others stating that not only could the counterculture not bring about the desired change, but as a model of culture it was bankrupt. Goodman offered the criticism that the counterculture in its free living, individualistic dress codes and life styles was rootless; it lacked a heritage, a body of positive cultural values to adhere to. "Willfully ignorant of the inspiration and grandeur of our civilization though somewhat aware of its brutality and terror, the young are patsies for the inevitabilities

of modern times . . . for they no longer know what to claim as their own and what to attack as the enemy." Goodman goes on to say, "In a way, the drug experience, especially the psychedelic hip becomes the paradigm for the good learning experience." What Goodman asserts is that there is a cultural heritage worth knowing and confronting, which is lost sight of in the turning inward of the counterculture's experience of radical education.

The limits of the counterculture lie in its negation of the dominant culture and its becoming a mirror image of that culture. It was the reversal of the dominant society. In a way the relationship of the counterculture to American society was no different than the pimp who becomes the mirror image of white Madison Avenue U.S.A. The limits lie in the way they remained tied to the dominant model, offering little reality outside rebellion. Freedom clearly demanded more. The radical school experiment of the sixties raised serious questions for radicals concerning the ways in which one conveys a meaningful heritage and value system to children.

The Marxist political tradition adopted by This Magazine Is About Culture, Politics and Schools in the early seventies tried to answer these criticisms and to formulate strategies for social change. It moved away from a posture of rebellion and began to tie culture to the

29Graubard, Free the Children, p. 242.

30Ibid., p. 244.
heritage and traditions of a workers movement. The issues were not unlike the cultural issues of the Socialist Sunday Schools at the turn of the century. A book, Schooling in Barbarina, provided another perspective on the ways in which a working class cultural heritage was transmitted to children. While there may have been limits to this model of radical education, nonetheless it did address the questions raised by the Free School Movement. The book described an alternative school, started in Italy by a district priest, where the curriculum dealt with radical social transformation. Father Milani, the priest in charge of the school, did not talk of "ecstasy in education"; instead he stated,

Nothing but politics can fill the life of man today. In Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, in Southern Italy, in the hills, in the field, even in the cities, millions of children are waiting to be made equal, shy like me, stupid like Sandro, lazy like Gianni: the best of humanity.

Within this model of radical education, a radical, social and political vision replaced the values of the dominant culture and the values of the American counter culture.

In reality, for American radical education this could not be the complete answer. Yet neither was the freedom which focused in on itself. A critical culture, a creative culture of freedom, like Jazz or Blues could only exist in conjunction with disciplined artistic expression, in a work tradition of Beethoven, Dostoevsky, Muddy Waters, etc.

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32See The Young Socialist 1-14 (1908-May 1920).
33Graubard, Free the Children, p. 248.
Political astuteness and a disciplined sense of a cultural heritage became what was clearly lacking in the sixties' attempt at radical school and societal reform. The free school movement and the literature it produced raised questions on several levels which were only peripherally dealt with in retrospective analysis, but which ultimately remained unresolved. The questions concerned the limits of a cultural vision of freedom without a political and economic notion of social justice. It suggested the need for (1) a more explicit social theory of how society would be transformed and the ways in which new cultural forms could emerge that would not be "on the backs of the many"; (2) a theory of liberation in political and cultural terms that grew out of a historical tradition, a commitment outside itself, a theory that demanded a clearer conception of how the personal, the experiential, the emotional, hooked up to the rational potential for human development through art and culture; (3) a theory that would provide a clearer understanding of what constituted a radical pedagogy and the ways in which schooling became part of the process of social transformation.

The limitations of the practice of the sixties, my encounters with the free school movement, as well as the limitations of the radical literature already discussed, made it clear that a historical perspective was needed to clarify the issues raised by the sixties and by radical education in general. These realizations led me to examine the ways in which schooling and social change had been interrelated in the past. Yet it was not only a historical perspective I was looking for, but rather a perspective which involved a large social movement engaged
in trying to use schools to change society. I was much less concerned with chronicling radical school experiments, for it seemed their vicissitudes in history were less likely to shed light on the problems of massive social change that had been raised by the counterculture, the Black Liberation Movement, the New Left, and the schools they had been involved with. It is for this reason that I began to examine past radical social movements which saw their goal as overturning the values, politics and economics of American society and which saw schooling as part of this process. It seemed that these prominent radical social movements of the past, unlike the "New Left" anti-war or Free School Movement and more like the Black Liberation Movement, had a clearly defined political philosophy that on the surface seemed to address the specific inadequacies in the cultural definition of freedom which was characteristic of the counterculture model of radical education. An examination of how these social theories, their conception of freedom and social change was translated into educational practice might add depth to the problems we have already raised. In other words, my intention here is not to deal with radical educational ideas characteristic of traditional educational literature, but rather to understand these ideas in their historical and social context. The questions I will address are those raised in the sixties and of continual concern to any radical theory dealing with the relationship between schooling and social theory. They ask: What constitutes radical pedagogy? How can this pedagogy be truly incorporated into a mass radical culture? How can schools work in conjunction with a social
movement to radically alter American society.

In addition, since virtually no historical work in education has been written on either socialist educational theory and practice or Anarchist educational theory, one is long overdue. A study on either one of the prominent radical traditions in American history and its relationship to education would add understanding and critical knowledge to the ongoing problems of education and social change and perhaps even create another perspective on what has come to be known as the Radical Tradition in American education.

In the early part of the twentieth century, two dominant radical political movements reached their height in the U.S.A. Socialists and Anarchists were in full activity by 1900, working to overturn the fundamental social relationships and institutions engendered by a capitalist form of social and economic organization. Both used education, schooling for adults and children as part of their process of social transformation. However, in this study I will only deal with the Anarchist attempt to transform society and with the schools they established to help them achieve this goal. The anarchist movement was chosen, not because it was any more radical, nor because it had more schools than the socialist movement. On the contrary, a comparable study could be and should be done on socialist education and schooling. The anarchist movement was chosen because its emphasis on individual freedoms, its anti-authoritarian approach, its emphasis on cultural issues like marriage, the family, childrearing, free love, creativity and the ways in which it worked to create alternative institutions.
more closely resembled the free school movement. In addition, the problems encountered by the free schools, the splits between cultural and political concerns, the problems of structure and freedom were precisely those encountered on a somewhat different level by the anarchist movement. While a study of socialist education would certainly add to our understanding of the free school movement and radical education, it would do so in an entirely different way. Therefore, because of the close affinity between the theoretical and practical concerns of the sixties and anarchists' educational theory and practice at the turn of the century, I have undertaken to investigate the anarchist movement and its educational practices.

The focus of the investigation will be on the problems of translating radical political theory into an educational theory that frees children intellectually, emotionally and culturally while instilling the social vision needed to perpetuate the movement. This seemingly easy task was inherently problematic as tensions developed between a theory of educational freedom and the needs of the movement to perpetuate itself. This contradiction plagued the sixties and many other radical school experiences.

Our discussion will focus on the period 1890 to the 1950s, though the primary emphasis is on the early twentieth century in New York. This particular period and this geographic location was chosen because many of the movement leaders resided in this area (Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman) and because the first successful Anarchist school was begun by these leaders on 12th Street in Manhattan in 1910. The
school, the adult center run in conjunction with the school, and The Modern School magazine published by the school provided concrete material for our study of anarchist education. Furthermore, because the school lasted fifty years and spanned a variety of historical circumstances, and because the magazine lasted over ten years, it is possible to generate a clear understanding of the variety of issues and problems that faced this radical conception of education. The material for the study was culled from a variety of sources: oral histories, taken from individuals who had worked at the school since its early years in New York until its closing in 1953 or were students at the school (Sally Ackerman, Harmony Capolla); the collection of Modern School Papers located in the Jersey Room in the Rutgers Library, which includes all official correspondence, minutes, board meetings, principals' reports, photographs, The Modern School magazine, as well as unpublished manuscripts by teachers at the school; prominent Anarchist publications like Mother Earth and Road to Freedom, to biographies of prominentarchists and individuals involved in the school; theoretical writings on education and anarchist theory by influential anarchist thinkers referred to in school magazines and in the movement and finally secondary sources which include histories of the movement.

The study is divided into four chapters and a conclusion. Because the emphasis is on the ways in which the ideas of a social movement are translated into the theory and practice of schooling, Chapter I delineates the major strains in anarchists' thought. However, it must be made clear from the outset that Chapter I is not a
comprehensive history of anarchism, but rather an attempt to define the major strains and the major issues that influenced American anarchism and its educational practice. Included therefore are the ideas of men often not called anarchists, yet claimed by the American anarchist movement as such in their journals and writings. Chapter II shows the ways in which these major strains are translated into an educational theory and further delineates the educational theory of the major anarchist educators to influence pedagogy at the Modern School, New York and Stelton and the Ferrer Center.

Chapters III and IV are a history of the Modern School for the purpose of chronicling the ways in which the educational ideas and the social theories were actualized into practice and the problems encountered. The conclusion pulls together the dominant issues faced by the anarchists in their attempts to transform American society and the ways in which the study has illuminated the Radical Tradition in American education. It is hoped that this study of Anarchist education in the New York area will shed light on the two main problems of radical educational theory and practice: what constitutes a radical pedagogy; the process by which it grows out of a social vision and the process by which that pedagogy works to transform American society. Whether the school and the pedagogy succeeded or failed is not the main concern. Our focus is rather the problems encountered in creating a radical culture for children and the ways in which anarchist educational theory and practice contributed to the integrity of a tradition often ignored, yet most significant to the history of education, the radical tradition in American education.
CHAPTER II

THE ANARCHIST TRADITION IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Authority

Authority intoxicates
And makes mere sots of magistrates
The fumes of it invade the brain
And make them giddy proud and vain
By this the fool commands the wise
The noble with the base complies
The sot assumes the role of wit
And Cowards make the brave submit

— Samuel Butler

Anarchism as a philosophy and a social movement is, in the most general sense, a revolt against all authority. The word "anarchy" comes from the Greek word anarchos, and means "without rule." From its earliest origins, the word conjured up visions of a society without government or laws. It was first used as a term of deprecation during the French Revolution to imply that society is in a state of chaos. P. J. Proudhon was the first political philosopher to use the term "anarchism" in a political tract to describe an ideal society organized without government or law. The historian George Woodcock provided a working definition of anarchism which includes opposition to the authority of the state as the central principle. He states:


I shall treat anarchism, despite its many variations, as: A system of social thought driving at fundamental changes in the structure of society—particularly—for this is the common element uniting all its forms—at the replacement of the authoritarian state by some form of non-governmental cooperation between free individuals.\footnote{Woodcock, Anarchism, p.13.}

The translation of an anti-authoritarian philosophy into a political philosophy which decried government in the form of the state distinguished anarchism from both nineteenth century liberal political philosophy and from other nineteenth century radical theories.

Yet anarchist social and political theory encompasses more than the belief in a stateless society. However, it is difficult to categorize the other elements that make up anarchism because of the libertarian emphasis of the philosophy, which decried all central doctrines, programs or theories to which all would subscribe.

To describe the essential theory of anarchism is rather like trying to grapple with proteus, for the very nature of the libertarian attitude—its rejection of dogma, its deliberate avoidance of rigidly systematic theory and above all its stress on extreme freedom of choice and on the primacy of the individual judgement—creates immediately the possibility of a variety of viewpoints inconceivable in a closely dogmatic system.\footnote{Ibid., p. 17.}

Because the principles of anarchism were difficult to define, a variety of perspectives and interpretations developed, causing strain and internal conflict. This was exacerbated when the historical movement grounded its daily political activity in a libertarian political philosophy that lacked clearly stated goals. Within the libertarian
framework different strategies for social change developed: civil disobedience, propaganda by the deed, and union organizing. The varying perspectives caused strain and tension within the movement and the populace which will become even more evident when we examine the movement's educational theory and practice of schooling.

Yet despite these tensions and differences, there remained a core of common concerns and categories of analysis which produced theorists and activists who shared a defined set of political and social ideals that extended beyond their central opposition to authority. These individuals provide the basis for an in-depth understanding of the historical tradition called anarchism. In America this tradition included Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Josiah Warren, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. Their writings were found in leading anarchist magazines and in leading historical accounts of the movement. Yet as part of an international tradition, these anarchists were deeply

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5 There has been controversy among historians as to whether Thoreau and Emerson should be included among American anarchists. Some historians would claim that Thoreau and Emerson were transcendentalists who believed in a libertarian individualism but would never have classified themselves as anarchists. Other historians, like Eunice Minette Schuster, Native American Anarchism, include both Thoreau and Emerson in the history of that tradition. In this dissertation, I have included both Thoreau and Emerson in my analysis of the American Anarchist tradition because both the members of the Ferrer Association and the articles in The Modern School, 1912-1922, refer to the writings of Thoreau and Emerson as a guide for their own ideas on education. They often refer to them as contributors to the Anarchist tradition. In addition, Mother Earth, the prominent Anarchist magazine, edited by Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, contained several articles which refer to Emerson and Thoreau as anarchists. See Lillian Browne, "Emerson the Anarchist," Mother Earth 4 (December 1909): 329-333. For additional information on American Anarchism see Reichert, Partisans of Freedom.
influenced by European theorists such as Max Stirner, J. J. Proudhon, Leo Tolstoy, William Goodwin, Peter Kropotkin and Michael Bakunin.  

It is therefore necessary to examine both the European and American anarchist tradition for a complete understanding of Anarchism.

While there were significant differences among the leading anarchists in their analysis of social ills and in their methods for social change—Tolstoy was a pacifist, Proudhon a mutalist who believed society can be transformed through a series of cooperative colonies, while Kropotkin and Bakunin recognized the need for violent revolution and communal living arrangements—there were deep commonalities as well. At the core of anarchism rests a commitment to individual freedom which is defined in terms of spontaneity, elan vital, inner light, spirituality, passion or emotion. Yet despite this core differences among anarchists appear the moment individual freedoms are placed in a social context. While all anarchists agree individual freedom is of the highest value, in practice as well as in social analysis, some emphasize personal freedom to the exclusion of communal needs, while others focus on communal organization and minimize individual freedoms. In either instance anarchism becomes more than a philosophical negation of


7 Tolstoy, Emerson and Thoreau are representative thinkers of the tradition that defines anarchism in private terms. As such they do not have a clearly articulated political theory. Bakunin and Kropotkin define freedom in social terms as well as individual terms and therefore have a more clearly articulated revolutionary political theory.
authority; it becomes a philosophical and political attempt to define "freedom" in individual terms as well as in communal terms and to understand the relationship between the two.

This attempt to define freedom in individual and communal terms is complicated by the fact that anarchism is more than a social and political philosophy of freedom; it is a social movement seeking freedom. This latter consideration adds a historical dimension to a philosophical problem and suggests two levels of analysis: one theoretical and the other historical. The definition of freedom and the relationship between freedom and communal living, therefore, need to be explored theoretically in the writings of Bakunin, Kropotkin and Tolstoy, as well as historically in the activities of the anarchist movement. My task here is to understand the ways in which freedom is explored on both these levels and the implications this has for the educational theory and practice.

The resolution of this question of freedom on both a philosophical and practical level has produced two distinct tendencies within anarchism. The first, a romantic individualistic tradition, which was rooted in a revolt against modernism and which came to the fore as a philosophy in the 1840s. The second, a class-conscious communitarianism, was rooted in the urban experience and became a significant force

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8 Schuster, Native American Anarchism, pp. 87, 91; Woodcock, Anarchism, pp. 453-459; and Reickert, Partisans of Freedom, pp. 239-398.
in the 1870s and 1880s. Tolstoy, Thoreau, Stirner and Proudhon were spokesmen for the former while Kropotkin, Bakunin, Goldman and Berkman were spokespersons for the latter. Each tradition developed its own emphasis, its own definition and expression of freedom and social change. However, threads joined the individualistic to the communitarian causing considerable overlapping of concerns and interests.

By the Progressive Era (1890-1917), it is possible to see the influence of both trends on American Anarchism. For political activists like Goldman, Berkman and Johan Most, the collectivist tradition of Kropotkin and Bakunin was most significant. On the other hand, for the educational theorists of the Modern School both the individualist tradition of Thoreau, Emerson and Tolstoy, as well as the collectivist tradition were influential.

The purpose of this study is not simply to define anarchism, or even to present a history of anarchism and its importance for American anarchists of the Progressive Era. Rather, this study will draw out of nineteenth and twentieth century "anarchist literature," as defined by the members of the Ferrer Association, the key concepts and categories within that tradition. What is significant for our understanding today is the manner in which these categories became crystalized and defined in the practice of education at The Modern School of New York and Stelton. By relating education to the theories of the anarchist movement and its vicissitudes and fortunes in history, Woodcock, Anarchism, pp. 239-424, 444.
we will look critically at anarchist educational theory and practice as it grew out of this movement. Anarchist education is more than simply an educational philosophy or a radical libertarian pedagogy. It is a process by which the anarchist movement in the United States translated its social concerns into reality and attempted to create a culture of freedom for children. To gain a complete picture of the ideas, beliefs, and values, as well as the conflicts and problems in anarchist education and culture, it is necessary to explore the history and theory out of which it grew.

The first stirrings of anarchism were romantic and individualistic: It sought to return to a pre-industrial way of life which emphasized the importance of the individual. It was an essentially private, moral response to industrialization which did not have a clearly articulated political or economic theory other than an anti-government and anti-authoritarian posture. It did, however, have a highly developed philosophy of individualism which explored the concept of freedom in terms of personal conscience and inner well-being and which believed this could be achieved through a life lived close to nature and the land. A primitive social theory emerged when the romantics questioned the relationship of the individual personal conscience to an unjust social order and advocated a moral revolt. They remained romantics in their pre-industrial belief in the land and nature, and individualistic in the personal and private ways they defined freedom and social change. In the United States, Emerson and Thoreau were the spokesmen for this tradition; in Russia, Leo Tolstoy. All
contributed to the definition of American anarchist values and culture.

Emerson epitomized this romantic individualistic tradition in several ways. In his philosophy, he consistently advocated a private personal rebellion which he believed would grow spontaneously out of the "inner light," the "moral sensibility" inherent in each individual. Spontaneity was crucial to his conception of individualism, for it insured that personal conscience rather than the imposed conventionalities dictate individual revolt. He said, "Every project in the history of reform, no matter how violent and surprising, is good when it is the dictate of men's genius and constitution, but very dull and suspicious when adopted from another." For Emerson the individual or personal response distinguished the moral man, the man of conscience, from the immorality of the surrounding society. Spontaneity insured freedom and individuality and therefore could not be directly taught. Rather, it must be cultivated from within. This notion of freedom which is directly connected to private moral sensibility and this notion of the individual developed into one focus of anarchist education.

Thoreau and Tolstoy explored Emerson's questions and concerns in a slightly different way, creating a common ground among all the romantics. An article in *Mother Earth* acknowledges this commonality when it states, "As a free thinker of anarchism, Emerson is unique, though here too we discern a resemblance to Jesus, Shelly but more

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10 Browne, "Emerson the Anarchist."

particularly to the modern Tolstoy. Both Tolstoy and Thoreau were in revolt against the dominant institutions of their society. Like Emerson they felt the oppressive and immoral nature of these institutions. Often they voiced their concerns in an attack against the prevalent notion of progress, which characterized the United States in the 1830s and the European liberal tradition which invaded Russia in the 1860s. They defined progress in terms of human relationships and social justice rather than in the prevailing technological or scientific terms. The anarchist historian Woodcock explains their point of view: "Anarchists see progress not in terms of a steady increase in material wealth and complexity of living but rather in terms of the moralizing of society by the abolition of authority, inequality and economic exploitation." Their romanticism was most evident when they advocated a return to the land, a return to a less materialistic life in order to find real human progress. And, in fact, both did return to the land: Tolstoy to his estate at Yasnaya Polyana where he established a school for peasant children based on his ideas of freedom and individuality, and Thoreau to Walden Pond where he created a life close to the land based on individual self-sufficiency.

Yet it was the Russian, Tolstoy, who of all the romantics, had the most direct and concrete influence on anarchist education during the Progressive Era. Perhaps this was because he worked with the poor

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13 Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 29.
peasant children and therefore had much to teach anarchists working with poor immigrant children in the United States. Perhaps it was because he had the most clearly articulated educational philosophy and the most clearly defined practical experience of schooling in freedom, or perhaps it was because he, in fact, did live when anarchist education was being defined, and his writings appeared in several European anarchist journals. In either of these cases, Tolstoy's notions of freedom, individual self-expression, man's relationship to nature and spontaneity were crucial conceptions for American anarchist educators.

Like the other romantics, Tolstoy focused on individual growth. In his article in *Mother Earth* he stated, "I am an individualist and as such believe in free play for the psychological nature of man."\(^{14}\) Tolstoy's individualism was distinct from modern psychological theory which also emphasizes the free play of emotions. For Tolstoy emotional freedom developed individual conscience and the moral person.

For Tolstoy, conscience and morality developed not only in freedom, but through positive contact with nature and the land. He believed that on the land, the spiritual side of human nature was heightened and the god within each individual was released. This god was Tolstoy's only recognized authority and guide to individual action.\(^{15}\)

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Like Emerson and Thoreau before him, Tolstoy insisted that external forms of authority perverted the soul; it led men away from spirituality and moral conscience. He found the authority of the state particularly reprehensible and he directed his criticism most specifically against the immorality of American government. Here was a clear example of government interest being directly used against the interests of the people. He criticized the American government for allowing corporate profits to cause the death of thousands each year on the American railroad. Here was a clear case of the immorality of government. As a result Tolstoy insisted that individuals look for social justice to the precepts that guide moral men like Moses, Buddha and Christ, rather than to government. According to Tolstoy these men were the real law givers "whose government was one of love, justice and brotherhood."^17

His anti-authoritarianism, his anti-government philosophy was also anti-industrial and anti-urban. For Tolstoy the peasants were the salvation of society. He believed social transformation would come through the individual's relationship to God and the land. As a result, he became known as a christian anarchist. He also believed

^17 Ibid., p. 13.
^18 Tolstoy’s philosophy concerning God, peasant individualism, and morality is most clearly articulated in his novels Anna Karenina, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1930), and War and Peace (New York: New American Library, 1968), and in his educational writings, Tolstoy on Education, passim.
in the power of education to free mankind. For this he became known as a pacifist. Tolstoy translated his social philosophy into an educational theory at Yasna Polyana, which became one educational model for the Modern School of New York and Stelton.

Tolstoy completed the heritage of the romantic tradition in anarchism. He left a legacy of anti-authoritarian belief in the individual and a demand for a morally and socially conscious man. He completed a tradition that insisted that modernization enslaves and the land frees the individual from the oppressive conventions of the day.

To this romantic tradition, P. J. Proudhon in France and Josiah Warren in the United States added a clearly defined political and economic theory which began to discuss the relationship of individual freedom to community. In their economic theory they initiated a critique of economic exploitation, the selling of labor power to industrial factories, that was subsequently revised and expanded by the communitarian anarchists. They advanced the communitarian approach by putting forward conceptions of labor exchanges and communal phalanges which dealt with communal living and selling arrangements. Yet even though they began to deal with notions of community, their theories remained individualistic because they emphasized individual control of labor power and individual control of the products of one's labor.

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What distinguished Proudhon and Warren from the early anarchists we have just discussed is that they addressed questions concerning the relationship of the community to the individual by means of economic theory.

Common to all the theorists within the romantic individualist tradition was the belief that there will be a peaceful transformation of society, and that this will be brought about through civil disobedience, alternative institutions or changing individual consciousness. Out of the tradition of Thoreau, Emerson and Tolstoy came a legacy which defined individual freedom in terms of alternative life styles and personal rebellion; it defined social change in terms of civil disobedience. Out of the Warren and Proudhon tradition came the belief that individual freedom and social transformation will be brought about by the creation of alternative institutions and changes in consciousness. In both cases, the conceptions of freedom and community were very different from the communitarian tradition of Peter Kropotkin and Michael Bakunin, both of whom greatly influenced American anarchism.

The communitarian tradition developed as a direct response to the changing industrial conditions of Europe and was distinctly different from earlier expressions of anarchism. As such, it left American anarchists of the Progressive Era with a somewhat different set of principles which included a more consistent and complicated analysis of the evils of capitalism and a tradition which defined freedom in class terms as well as individual terms. In its more detailed analysis
of social conditions, it demonstrated that freedom could not exist unless the oppressed classes were liberated from economic and political exploitation. In other words, the communitarians added a socio-historical perspective, insisting that private and personal freedoms were political and economic as well. To their critique of capitalism they added a critique of politics under capitalism which included a critique of representative government and law. They believed both to be exploitative of man. Bakunin stated, "But it is necessary to distinguish law from authoritarian, political, religious and civil law which the privileged classes have created in the course of history to enable exploitation of the work of the masses along with the sole aim of curbing the liberty of the masses." To rectify the inequity of power and wealth under capitalism the communitarians advocated the collective revolt of the oppressed masses. They insisted that the personal private response characteristic of the romantic anarchist tradition was inadequate to deal with the centralization of power and authority which characterized the capitalist state. As a result they became the first anarchists to develop a revolutionary strategy for change.

Bakunin, who was the leading theorist of communitarian anarchism, explored the interconnections among freedom, individuation, and community. He highlighted the importance of community by rooting the communal life in an economic theory which advocated collective ownership

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of the tools of production. His political philosophy, which became known as anarcho-communism, placed primary importance on the relationship between the individual and the community. It claimed that individual needs could only be met through the structure and organization of the community. For Bakunin freedom was no longer a private and personal matter; rather it had to be grounded in community.

Yet Bakunin did not agree with the dominant political philosophers of his day who claimed the state or laws were necessary to define social relationships; rather he believed that community grew naturally out of the social relationships already present in all human interactions. In this he differed from classical liberal theorists who saw the state as the guaranteeor of individual liberty and freedom. He also differed from the socialists of his day, particularly Marx, who defined freedom in terms of the working class gaining power and then organizing the state for the benefit of all mankind. He argued that both socialist and liberal theory was antithetical to individual freedom in their construction of a society ruled by the state or government. This was so because for him the state is a contrivance by the few to rule the many and as such suppresses the freedom of the many. He argued that free people will develop communal structures which grow organically out of these original social instincts. He stated:


22 For a more detailed analysis of Bakunin's theories on the relationship between the individual and the community, see: Maximoff, Philosophy of Bakunin, pp. 157-164, 263-271; and Woodcock, Anarchism, pp. 18, 19, 145-184.
Society is the natural mode of existence of the human collective and is independent of any contract. It is governed by custom of traditional usages and never by laws. It progresses slowly through the moving power of individual initiative but not because of the will of the legislature.

For Bakunin, however, the needs of the community never superseded the needs of the individual. The individual was central to Bakunin's concept of anarchism. Yet the theoretical questions tying together individual freedom and community remained, and Bakunin explored these questions in his analysis of labor. He saw in individual labor the connecting link between the free individual and the free society. Through creative labor the individual expressed his uniqueness. He transformed this creativity into a social good through the use of the product by the community. It is the social values of his labor, its use by the community, that connected the individual to the community. At the same time, the individual's freedom remained tied to his ability to creatively express himself through this labor. The community's significance lay in the fact that it supplied the context within which he created while placing value on his individual creativity through the use of the product for its own development. The individual and the community existed in dialectical relationship to each other as each needed the fullest development of the other. For Bakunin, the individual achieved freedom only within a community that supported the individuation process. Bakunin's conception of society, community, individuation, freedom and creative labor were to become central to

23Maximoff, The Political Philosophy of Bakunin, p. 166.
anarchist educators who tried to work with these concepts in the classroom.

Bakunin not only placed the individual into a community which collectively owned the tools of production, he also believed social change would come through a collective revolt of the masses. His notion of spontaneous rebellion contained elements of the theories of the romantics, yet it remained decidedly different in its economic theories, class analysis and its advocacy of a rebellion by the masses against "the Capitalist System."

The central place given to collective revolt, communal ownership of production, communal distribution of goods, and communal living arrangements by Bakunin was further advanced by Peter Kropotkin. Kropotkin demonstrated that anarchism was not a political theory created by philosophers or social theorists, but rather a natural tendency of people who want to determine their own communities. "Anarchism is," writes Kropotkin, "obviously the representative of the first tendency—that is, of the creative, constructive power of the people themselves, which aimed at developing institutions of common law in order to protect men from the power-seeking minority."²⁴ For Kropotkin, anarchism can be seen in the clan, the village commune, the guild of Medieval Europe, the free towns of Italy, and the republics of the Middle Ages.²⁵ These communities were not legislated into existence nor governed by the rule

²⁵ Ibid., p. 9.
of a few. They were created by the people to give meaning and order to daily living. Essentially Kropotkin believed that a community can grow when people are free.

Yet he too recognized that these people-defined communities were few and that often government structures arose which impinged on individual freedom and communal life. At such moments Kropotkin called for the rebellion of the people against the rule of the few. He thus saw anarchism as a historical force developing out of the natural tendency for community as well as for revolt when community is thwarted. "Anarchism, consequently, owes its origin to the constructive, creative activity of the people, by which all institutions of communal life were developed in the past, and to a protest--a revolt against the external force which had thrust itself upon these institutions. . . ." 26

Kropotkin developed a conception of communal life which included a plan or vision of future societies. His theories were used to develop the notion of anarcho-communism, which expanded communal ownership of tools and land to include communal distribution of the products of one's labor according to individual need. The slogan "From each according to his ability and to each according to his needs" epitomizes Kropotkin's conception of a communist society.

In his book, Fields, Factories and Workshops, Kropotkin described a communist society based on a federation of self-sufficient autonomous communities. Property and labor products are to be collectively

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owned and there are no class distinctions. The community grows 
organically out of the individual's material and social needs. Each 
community produces the manufacture and agriculture to fulfill those 
needs. Autonomous communities were to be united in a loose federation.\textsuperscript{27} Kropotkin's social visions further developed what we have come to know 
as anarcho-communism.

Both Kropotkin and Bakunin found anarchism to be a political 
philosophy natural to man's original social inclinations and grounded 
in historical experience. Their tradition of anarcho-communism left 
a legacy for American Anarchists of the Progressive Era which defined 
the importance of revolutionary politics for the oppressed classes, 
the importance of community based on collective ownership, and the 
integration of personal freedom with social and political freedom.

The experiences, legacies, and categories of analysis can only begin 
to be understood on a theoretical level when we examine philosophical 
 writings of anarchists. A more complete understanding demands an 
analysis of the ways in which these ideas worked themselves out in 
the practice of anarchism. It is therefore important for our theoret­i­
ical understanding to examine the relationship between theory and 
practice by examining the history of anarchist movements, or more 
specifically, the ways in which anarchist ideas became a historical 
force.

\textsuperscript{27}Peter Kropotkin, \textit{Fields, Factories and Workshops} (New York: 
Harper Row, 1975), passim.
As a historical movement, anarchism did not develop until the 1860s when Bakunin became interested in using his philosophy to activate the discontent of working men and peasants in Southern Europe.\textsuperscript{28} With this in mind, he joined the First International, a radical socialist organization founded by Karl Marx. During this period the fine distinctions between radical social organizations did not exist and the First International consisted of all who were anticapitalist—Marxist, Proudhonist, and other communitarians. It is within the meetings of the First International that anarchism as a distinct revolutionary movement developed. It originated in the conflict between Bakunin and Marx over what appeared as an irreconcilable difference between the "libertarian wing" and the "authoritarian wing" of socialism. The faction Bakunin led gradually shaped itself into the nucleus of what became the anarchist movement.\textsuperscript{29} By the time of  

\textsuperscript{28}Woodcock, Anarchism, p.147.

\textsuperscript{29}The conflict that caused bitter disagreement at the Basil conference of the First International in 1869 was specifically over the question of the abolition of the right of inheritance. However, the larger issue of "authoritarian versus" approaches began to loom large and it was the latter issue, which took a variety of forms, that ultimately caused the final split between anarchists and socialists. Briefly, the historical events that ended the partnership of anarchists and socialists proceeded as follows: By 1872 the First International emerged as a predominantly anarchist group. In part this was due to the Marxists' move to New York. In 1889 the socialists' headquarters returned to Europe and formed the Second International which the anarchists infiltrated. This happened again in 1891 at the Brussels congress but now the presence of the anarchists became a major issue. By 1893 the anarchists refused to accept their non-invitation and demanded admission on the grounds that they were socialists too and heirs of the First International. This time they were expelled by force. They were expelled for the last time in 1896 and remained distinctly separate from Marxian Socialism. Woodcock, Anarchism, pp. 239-274.
their final ejection from the Second International in London in 1896, anarchism could be seen as a distinct social movement. Even though they did not meet again until 1906, they continued to function as an international social movement with many distinct problems; the central problem being the need for organization and structure to sustain a movement with a libertarian philosophy, opposed to restrictive structures. This problem plagued both the movement and its educational institutions throughout Anarchist history.

Anarchism became a significant social movement between 1880 and 1917. During this period anarchists engaged in a wide range of activities which included secret societies, peasant and workers' uprisings, sabotage, bombings, and assassinations. These actions were guided by two principles: "Propaganda by the Deed" and "Propaganda by the Word." They demonstrated both a communitarian perspective and a romantic passion characteristic of the earlier movement. What is interesting is the way these traditions became interwoven and the ways in which they affected the oppressed populace.

In the 1870s the secret societies and small collectives exhibited a communal social philosophy in the way they were organized and a romanticism in their notion of themselves as the vanguard of social change. In this latter notion, they saw themselves operating as small bands of revolutionaries, made up of men and women of higher consciousness, who could lead the revolution. In place of the old individual

Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 264.
romanticism a new type of collective romanticism emerged, which emphasized the heroics of the small group who would assume a leadership role in the revolution. However, this ultimately minimized their link to workers and students. In contrast, "Propaganda by the Deed" attracted a new type of romantic individual who elevated the individual heroic act against an unjust society. When the anarchist Alexander Berkman attempted to assassinate Henry Frick, a U.S. Steel executive in 1892, he epitomized this tradition. He thought he was publicizing through his dramatic actions the brutal and immoral ways the mine operators destroyed the workers of Homestead, Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{31}

Anarchists believed that only extreme acts could be heard by a government that was immoral and a populace that was asleep.

One historian described the 1890s as a "... period of dramatic gestures and the cult of violence and it came to a climax in the series of sensational terroristic acts that marked the beginning of the 1890's."\textsuperscript{32} The extreme acts advocated by the anarchists were seen as a personal rebellion against the immorality of the social order. The moral hero was recreated in the anarchist revolutionary's actualization of "Propaganda by the Deed." The personal rebellion became united with the collective rebellion when the individual who gained a "higher consciousness" rebelled against society and publicly called attention to that rebellion in order to raise the general consciousness of the

\textsuperscript{31}Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 464.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 297.
oppressed.

Yet the collective significance of the "Propaganda by the Deed" was weak and the movement experienced general isolation. Often the average worker experienced these isolated acts of courage as terrorism. Such politics seemed remote from the worker's daily life, and the violence of the deed served to frighten and alienate the workers rather than raise consciousness. This was particularly true in the United States. "In later years, anarchists in the U.S. indulged in very little violence, but unfortunately two of the few incidents in which they were involved became so notorious that they vastly increased the general sweeping unpopularity of anarchism." 33

The drama of the "Propaganda by the Deed" which alienated workers and peasants, appealed to the romantic vision of some European and American intellectuals who saw in the "Propaganda by Deed" the possibility for individual creativity, spontaneity, acts of courage, rebellion, daring, unconventionality, and experimentation. Yet these individual acts of violence were antithetical to creating a communal revolution for large groups of people. Those who advocated bombs, assassinations, and secret societies—within a strategy of a collective revolt of the masses—presented problems in terms of the movement's effectiveness which raised serious questions concerning the relationship between individual freedom and communal needs.

33Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 464.
Another strain of anarchism which grew out of the communitarian philosophy of Bakunin and Kropotkin attempted to overcome the isolation of the secret societies and the "Propaganda by the Deed" by developing anarchism in working class unions. This effort became known as anarcho-syndicalism. One historian of the syndicalist movement in Spain claimed that this "renewal of trade unionism gave a life to the collectivist wing of Spanish Anarchism." This was true, in the sense that syndicalism gave anarchism a mass appeal, which served, after 1890, to revitalize it as a political force. While syndicalism developed within the trade unions of France, Spain, and Italy, it remained distinctively revolutionary in its politics and activities. It remained anarchist in its anti-authoritarian and anti-government stance. Anarcho-syndicalism envisioned a society ruled by a federation of workers' syndicates. The syndicates were to replace the autonomous communities of Kropotkin and would be joined together in a federation. Syndicalism took the concepts of the communitarian anarchists and united them with unionism, creating a movement of anarchist workers. This created its own set of problems concerning the relationship between individual freedom and mass political organizations.

34 Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 370.

35 There has been some controversy over syndicalism. Some writers suggest that syndicalism is not an anarchist movement, while others clearly categorize it as a form of anarchism. For details see: Emma Goldman, Red Emma Speaks, ed. Alix Kates Shulman (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 54-77; and Woodcock, Anarchism, pp. 275-463. Both these writers tie syndicalism to anarchism: Goldman does so from a theoretical perspective while Woodcock shows the historical connections...
The aim of the syndicalists was to create "an atmosphere of struggle in which class enmities would sharpen and the worker would learn from experience the need for revolutionary solutions to the social problems." Their activities were designed to develop revolutionary consciousness among the workers of the trade unions who would, through a general strike, create a new society. Their activities in the unions created a significant anarchist working class movement in France, Spain, and Italy before the first World War. However, while leading anarchists in the United States advocated syndicalism, it never really took hold. Emma Goldman discussed syndicalism: "The feature which distinguishes syndicalism from most philosophies is that it represents the revolutionary philosophy of labor conceived in actual struggle and experiences of the worker." This may have been true of syndicalism in Europe, but in the United States the International Workers of the World (IWW) was the only labor organization to incorporate elements of syndicalism.

What is particularly interesting about the mass appeal of syndicalism is that it sustained organizations that enabled it to perpetuate itself. This was not possible in the earlier phases of

in France, Italy, Spain and Latin America. In "Syndicalism Not a Form of Anarchism," author J. A. Estey claims otherwise; see Krimerman, Patterns of Anarchy, pp. 38-43.

36Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 323.

37Ibid., p. 226.

anarchism. It is in connection with syndicalism that many workers in France and Spain established workingmen's associations, schools for children, education magazines for teachers, as well as Radical textbooks for children. A European syndicalist, Francisco Ferrer, developed the Escuela Moderna and a philosophy of education known as Rationalist Education with which he brought education to the children of workers and peasants. Ferrer also influenced children's texts and teacher training institutions, which he established in Spain. By 1908 the libertarian education magazine Ecole Renouvee opened its columns to the problems of syndicalism and revolutionary education. Teachers were invited to write for the magazine. Ferrer and the editors of the magazine established a society in France for syndicalist teachers called the League for Rational Education.39

Even though anarchism had more power when rooted in workers' organizations, real problems were created. These problems, common to all radical mass movements, concerned the relation of individuality to the group process, and led to tensions between the desire for mass appeal and power and the tendency for mass organizations to lose their radical stance. In a mass organization, the need for structure, organization, and decision making often conflicted with individual rebellion and spontaneity. The dramatic flair and impact of the romantics of the "Propaganda by the Deed" would no longer be acceptable.

The most spontaneous action was to be the general strike. The tensions between the individual act and the group process were defined through the internal organization of the syndicates and through an ideology which limited revolutionary politics to the working class. The class notion of revolution was seen by some as inhibiting individual acts in two ways: first, that spontaneous individual acts must be held in check for the sake of creating community; and second, class, not individual intention, must be the primary way of defining the revolution. This latter assertion threatened many anarchists who conceived of revolution as the rebellion of all who could be brought to fight against unjust authority.

At the same time, there was a struggle within syndicalism to maintain its revolutionary stance even though it sought affiliation with reform trade unionism. "From the beginning the anarchists regarded the CNT [the French syndicalist union] as a revolutionary weapon, but it is in the nature of mass organizations to develop inertia and the CNT was in its turn to reveal its reformist trends and tendencies."\(^{40}\) The specifics of the process had different forms in different countries. When the CNT was accepted by the government, the syndicalists began to mistake organization for revolution and saw the party's increased growth and power as the revolution.

Syndicalism did, however, try to reconcile the essential tensions between personal liberation and the will of the community. Its

\(^{40}\) Woodcock, *Anarchism*, p. 373.
limitations lay in the emphasis it placed on organization. Syndicalism became less appealing to the artisan classes of Europe and romantics within the anarchist movement and more appealing to individual workers. The syndicalist strain of communitarian anarchism added several important ideas to anarchist theory by raising questions concerning the relationship of cultural activities to a mass movement, and adding to the notion of individual liberation and freedom a clearly defined class conception of freedom.

In the United States, anarchists incorporated many European practices and traditions, yet they altered these traditions to suit the particularities of American conditions. In the United States, the movement began to grow and develop in the 1880s. By 1883—at the Pittsburgh Congress of the International People's Association—anarchists issued a manifesto calling for the abolition of class rule, the creation of a free society based on cooperative communities, and a commitment to making education an essential component of anarchism.\(^1\) Johann Most, a German immigrant, emerged as the leader of the 6,000 delegates who attended the conference as well as a leader of the American anarchist movement. Anarcho-communism, as expressed in the writing of Kropotkin and Bakunin, became the dominant influence, even though strains of a purely native American tradition were visible.\(^2\) Yet the different economic and political structure of American society,

\(^1\) Schuster, Native American Anarchism, p. 164.
\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 159–161.
i.e., the newness of the industrial process, the rise of cities, and the enormous immigrant population in the work force, created a unique set of conditions for American anarchism.

The large proportion of immigrants among the working class was the single most important factor in shaping American anarchism. Because these workers were alien to American life and many held unskilled jobs, they had a different perspective on the "promises" of American life than did many native American workers, or the workers of France and Spain. Their experience of cultural dislocation because of the different dress, language, style of life, eating habits, child rearing practices, and the extremely poor conditions under which they lived alienated them from American culture. This alienation allowed many of them to become critical of the realities of American life and to be drawn to political philosophies which echoed these criticisms. In addition, many of these immigrants had been exposed to radical politics in their native European countries, where it was more accepted among the working class.

A second distinction between the American and European movement was the fact that the leaders in the American anarchist movement were workers and immigrants. Johann Most, an immigrant worker, became

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43 In Europe the leading anarchists came out of a somewhat different background. Often they were neither factory worker nor immigrant but rather members of the dislocated aristocracy like Prince Peter Kropotkin or Count Leo Tolstoy or the artisans who were rapidly being displaced by the industrial revolution like prodhoun or the intelligentsia of Europe. Mikhail Bakunin's father had a Ph.D. and he himself had studied philosophy in Italy and had been considered for a professorship. Matalstesta had been a medical doctor in Italy. See Woodcock, Anarchism, passim.
one of the first leaders of the American anarchist movement, while Emma Goldman, an immigrant seamstress and a nurse, became a prominent leader after 1893.\textsuperscript{44} In addition, two leaders of the famous Haymarket affair, August Spies and Albert Parsons, were factory workers for the McCormick Reaper Company in Chicago.\textsuperscript{45}

German and Slavic immigrants in Chicago were initial supporters of the American anarchist movement. They organized a labor union consisting of several thousand workers who were mostly anarchists. In 1883, Chicago alone sent 3,000 delegates to a founding anarchist convention in Pittsburgh. At the same time, the Chicago anarchists supported five anarchist daily and weekly newspapers, which appeared in both English and foreign language editions.\textsuperscript{46} These roots among the workers made anarchism in the United States predominantly a workers' movement, while in Europe it was a heterogeneous movement which included peasants, workers, artists, and intellectuals. As a result, the American anarcho-communist movement seemed less influenced by the romantic conception of individualism and the peasant notions of the land than was European anarchism. As one historian states of American anarchism, "It was class conscious philosophy of the propertyless wage earner."\textsuperscript{47} What is particularly interesting about these roots in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Schuster, \textit{Native American Anarchism}, p. 168.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 165.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Woodcock, \textit{Anarchism}, p. 402.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Schuster, \textit{Native American Anarchism}, p. 161.
\end{itemize}
working class is that the American movement was strongest among workers before the 1890s, while the European movement was strongest after 1895 when syndicalism developed.

While these distinctions existed, there were similarities in the way the movements developed. In both instances, the violence, the "Propaganda by the Deed," and the romantic tendencies alienated many in the working class. In the United States this was particularly evident when, after the Chicago bomb explosion at Haymarket, many workers were frightened away, particularly organized labor. One historian described the effect of the Haymarket incident on working people as follows: "The Chicago incident was the beginning of the popular American prejudice against anarchism of any type." Another historian claimed that "However falsely, it permanently identified anarchism with bomb throwing and violence and inspired a terror of anarchism in the popular mind." While the effect of the Haymarket affair was to turn away groups of workers from anarchism, it had the opposite effect on some of the East European immigrant Jewish communities whose members were drawn to the questions of social justice

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48 Strikers at the McCormick Reaper factory, who had been locked out the preceding day and had had a skirmish with the police, were holding a rally at Haymarket Square, Chicago, when a bomb exploded killing several policemen. As a result, seven anarchist leaders involved in the strike were arrested, tried, and convicted even though there was no evidence linking them to the bombing. Four were executed and three were finally acquitted by Illinois Governor Altgeld. Schuster, Native American Anarchism, p. 161.

49 Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 464.

50 Schuster, Native American Anarchism, p. 166.
the incident raised. For these immigrants the injustices of the courts paralleled the injustices of the pogroms they had experienced in Russia and the martyr-like quality of the defendants greatly moved them. It is for these reasons that Emma Goldman joined the movement.51

After 1900 the movement, though greatly weakened, became rooted primarily in these Russian Jewish communities. It was kept alive through the leadership of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman and through the organizing efforts of anarchists working among Italian and Jewish immigrants. At this time, except for one union of Russian workers in the New York area, anarchism became primarily a movement of small, isolated circles and nonaffiliated workers.52 This was particularly evident in New York City where "it was becoming clearer anarchism would never fit the Jewish workers, it had no answers for their immediate needs."53 While it is unclear whether its heyday was over because anarchism had no program or because romanticism and violence in the movement alienated workers, it was clear that both or some combination of the above had caused American anarchism to follow a similar fate to that which befell the European movement. However, what remained distinct for the European anarchists was that there had been a syndicalist anarchist movement to rally the discontent of the workers, while in America no such movement existed in any real sense. William

51Schuster, Native American Anarchism, p. 167.
52Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 465.
Z. Foster, who later became a leader of American Communism, founded a Native American Syndicalist League that was short lived. After 1905 the IWW was closest to a syndicalist form, and anarchists interested in a workers' movement either joined with the IWW or worked independently in other unions. It seems clear that in the United States after 1900 a radical mass movement of workers was developed only by the socialists.

From 1893 to 1919, anarchists' roots in a working class movement became nebulous and less clearly defined. During this period, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman emerged as leaders of the movement. In terms of tactics and concerns this period is characterized by "Propaganda by the Word," or education, as well as organizing workers in and out of trade unions. In terms of education, the movement encouraged schools, magazines, experimental theater, poetry, adult education centers, and lectures on a wide range of subjects. It is marked by a curious mixture of political and cultural activities which emphasized individual freedom.

In New York City, the educational and cultural activities of the era included the formation of the Modern School, a libertarian experiment in education for children, the formation of the Ferrer Association for adults, and the publishing of the anarchist magazine, Mother Earth. The topics and concerns of the center and the magazine

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54 Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 466.
included a wide range of cultural issues. Goldman and others wrote and spoke on personal freedom, free love, marriage, the family, child rearing, the church, modern drama, and other topics. She delivered lectures to fellow anarchists, ordinary working people, and other people all across the country. Between 1899 and 1900 in an eight month period Goldman visited over sixty cities, and in the next two decades of the century she made many more lecture tours across the United States.\textsuperscript{56}

In these lectures Goldman attacked the basic tenets of American life and culture, and advocated birth control, free love, and woman's emancipation. As a result, the police and citizen groups across the country harassed her and attempted to stop her speeches, while intellectuals and liberals defended her right to free speech. Her speeches served to unite a variety of groups not necessarily workers, on issues other than anarchism.

While speaking was seen as one form of education, magazines and schooling were others. In 1906 Emma Goldman launched the anarchist magazine, \textit{Mother Earth}. Soon the magazine, which was edited by Alexander Berkman, became one of the foremost radical publications in the United States.

Over the years \textit{Mother Earth} played a significant role in American Radicalism. It acted as a rallying center, as an outlet for their ideas and feelings and as a source of support for them in their difficulties.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} Schuster, \textit{Native American Anarchism}, p. 171.

While the magazine served to rally radicals, its influence went beyond its 3,500 to 10,000 subscribers. The readers and writers were generally not of the working class. The form and content of the magazine had little to offer working people. The magazine was considered an avant garde publication and was often compared to artistic magazines like The Little Review. Yet many people were disappointed that it really did not fit into the Review tradition either. What is interesting was that an anarchist magazine, which was avant garde and addressed itself to people other than workers, still advocated revolution by the working class. Perhaps this suggests something about the conflicts within the anarchist movement in America, conflicts concerning the relationship between mass political activity and new cultural forms. That this was a problem in Goldman's mind and in her relationships to others in the movement can readily be seen when she tried in her autobiography to defend herself against the criticisms leveled against the magazine. "Mother Earth is not revolutionary enough they claimed, the reason no doubt being that it treated anarchism less as a dogma than as a liberating ideal." She claimed the freedom exhibited in the magazine, its libertarian nature, put people off and made them define it as not revolutionary. However, she did not deal with the deeper questions the magazine continued to raise, which concerned the relationship between an essentially theoretical and cultural avant garde magazine and a revolutionary movement of workers.

While it is true that *Mother Earth* was not a magazine designed for mass appeal, it is also true that by raising questions about free love, contraception, woman's rights, and the family, it alienated many members of the working class who were dedicated to traditional values of family, womanhood, child rearing and schooling. These questions of culture and politics were similar to those raised by Emerson and Thoreau. In either case, their pointed critique of traditional values often served to isolate these critics from the masses. While for Thoreau and Emerson this isolation was acceptable, for the anarchists of the Progressive Era, it was a difficult isolation to accept because it was antithetical to their purpose as a revolutionary movement.

This issue of alienating the working class was raised by Berkman in his criticism of the magazine. It is apparent in Miss Goldman's description of her response to Berkman's comments about taking charge of the magazine while she went on tour in 1909. "His heart was not in *Mother Earth*, he wanted a weekly propaganda paper that would reach the workers." 59 This tension which, as we have seen, is central to anarchism, kept reappearing. It was obviously not easy to resolve the demands of the spirit seeking release in cultural freedoms and experimentation in living patterns and the political and economic conception of freedom expressed by the needs of the workers. Yet it was precisely this tension that Goldman was trying to resolve in her writings, speeches and political work.

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The attempt to resolve these tensions between cultural and political activity was particularly evident in the history of The Modern School and the Ferrer center which she helped to establish in 1910. The center was designed as a meeting place to discuss political, social, and cultural issues, while the school was designed to experiment with libertarian notions of childrearing and freedom. Yet here, too, tension arose between mass education for workers and an experimental school for artists and revolutionaries and the relationship between these models and the surrounding working class communities.

Goldman was the spokesperson, the intellectual figure of the anarchist movement in 1900 and her cultural criticisms, while often avant garde, grappled with issues native to the American experience of work, quality of life, and the cultural values that infused daily life in America. Her pointed criticism remains pertinent today. Many students voiced similar concerns in the 1960s as they searched for ways to define freedom, individuality, art, and schooling, and these concerns became significant in the educational practice and culture of The Modern School.

Goldman's attempt to integrate her critique of American culture and the various traditions of anarchism can be called an American anarchist experience. While she essentially remained an anarcho-communist and was intimately tied to the European tradition, Goldman blended the American and European traditions in her critique of American society and culture.
Her blending of these traditions in part seemed to grow out of her change in experience from a speaker and worker in the immigrant communities of New York in the 1880s to a national figure. In her early years as a student of Johann Most, the German immigrant leader of anarchism, she spoke to the Jewish communities in Yiddish. She spoke to them as a fellow worker in the needle trades and made a decided impression on these communities: "Goldman loomed across the immigrant milieu as a solitary heroic figure of emancipation; a little admired, a little feared, an astonishing sort of Jewish daughter to have arisen in a world far from morally relaxed or even at ease with its secularism." \(^{60}\) At odds with convention, she left her husband in Rochester and ran off to New York City where she lived with men outside the bonds of marriage, and was critical of the religious practices of the Lower East Side. She worked, lived, and spoke to the Jewish community in Yiddish, but she was not "in the community" because she remained critical of their customs. She sought to reach out to the rest of the nation because she found this community limiting. In her autobiography she stated,

> But they, comrades, had never been able to reach a large American public. Some of them had been too centered in their own language group activities to trouble about unleashing the negative elements. The results during those years were scant and unsatisfying and now with Ben as my manager my work was lifted out of its former narrow confines. \(^{61}\)

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\(^{60}\) Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 107.

Emma Goldman emerged as a national anarchist figure after 1900 when she began to speak to many groups outside the Jewish and German anarchist community. Her interest in the American native tradition of anarchism began as early as 1893. When in prison she read Albert Brisbane and developed an interest in American radicalism of the 1840s. Her interest grew and she sought out men like the radical John Swinton. "Through conversation with Swinton and others she comes to an understanding of the anti-capitalism strain in American life and therefore scored an achievement which proved to be almost impossible for foreign radicals." This does not mean she abandoned the tradition of Kropotkin and Bakunin which had been the most influential in shaping her ideas, but rather, that she incorporated these new ideas into the tradition she already was familiar with. In this way, she was better able to understand American society and clarify the cultural issues indigenous to the American experience. This process can be termed "the Americanization of anarchism"; it incorporated a European notion of workers' freedom and social freedom with a native American anti-capitalist tradition that dealt with individual emancipation and cultural concerns.

Mother Earth, the magazine she published, and her speeches of this period, provide valuable sources for examining this blend of concerns on cultural and political issues which was soon to characterize

62Drinnon, Rebel in Paradise, p. 62.
63Ibid., p. 63.
American anarchism. Philosophically, Goldman used the ideas of Kropotkin and Bakunin to affirm that a free individual can only grow when a free community develops. She reaffirmed the close relationship between individual and community when she described Kropotkin's theory of "mutual aid." She stated, "Kropotkin shows that co-operation--as opposed to internecine strife and struggle--has worked for the survival and evolution of the species," and she goes on to state, "man's true liberation, individual and collective lies in his emancipation from authority and the belief in it." For Goldman the species which survive are those in which individuals protect each other rather than compete against each other. Goldman used these European theories to attack the prevalent American ideology of Social Darwinism which claimed that the survival of the species depended upon struggle and individual competition. In contrast, Goldman claimed that success and individual achievement in a liberal society is often obtained at the expense of the other members of society and therefore becomes oppressive to the individual. She stated of individuality,

Individuality is not to be confused with the various ideas and concepts of individualism; much less with that "rugged individualism" which is only a masked attempt to repress and defeat the individual and his individuality. So-called individualism is the social and economic laissez-faire: the exploitation of the masses by the classes by means of legal trickery, spiritual debasement. . . .

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64 Goldman, Red Emma Speaks, p. 95.
65 Ibid., p. 97.
66 Ibid., p. 89.
Goldman connected the American conception of individualism with the competitive needs of the political economy when she stated, "This 'rugged individualism' has inevitably resulted in the greatest moral slavery. . . ." For Miss Goldman, true individualism in the United States was suppressed through the notion of survival of the fittest and men and women became commodities who were alienated from each other and society rather than whole human beings.

Private property further insured the oppression and alienation inherent in rugged individualism, because it established domination of the many by the few. Miss Goldman went on to state that a culture of domination arose when a few individuals appropriated the goods and services of society and blocked access to these goods and services. As a result of this basic act, alienation and domination became the dominant modes of interaction. Individuals continuously saw each other as commodities whose value lay in their ability to create wealth. At the same time, those who owned property and wealth had power to define through social institutions the lives of those who did not. All this resulted in social injustice and a culture that lacked vitality. Miss Goldman stated,

Property means domination over things and denial to others of the use of these things. It is private dominion over things that condemns millions of people to be mere non-entities, living corpses without originality or power or initiative, human machines who pile up mountains of wealth for others and pay for it with a grey dull existence for themselves.

67 Goldman, Red Emma Speaks, p. 89.

68 Ibid., p. 36.
The net effect of the culture of domination was different for the different social classes. Manual workers suffered physical exploitation and a degrading life for themselves and their children. Cultural workers or professionals were destroyed in their souls because their jobs required that they accept someone else's "truth," the "truth of their bosses"; writers and artists would lose their own voices, their own individuality when they accepted the conventions of the dominant culture because it carried with it the promise of fame and fortune. Rather than leaders or rebels they too became social property.

For Goldman, domination was perpetuated through the social institutions of society as well as through the economic system: marriage, child-rearing, schooling, the church, etc. Miss Goldman saw marriage as instituting the domination of men over women by making women the property of man economically, emotionally, and legally. She felt that marriage limited a woman's potential because it defined her in terms of the needs of her husband and because it often demanded that she become a helpless servant. On the other hand, schools stifled the natural curiosity, intelligence and vitality of the child by controlling the child's experiences in the classroom through the curriculum, the teachers and the classroom organization. All worked to fit the child into the needs of the political economy and help them adjust to their social role in society. As a result of this mutilation, the poetic

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69 Goldman, Red Emma Speaks, p. 177.

70 Ibid., p. 43.
self expression, the creativity and joyfulness were repressed and society was populated with dull, lifeless individuals.

It is not only the oppressive institutions but the concomitant emotional world with its lack of passion and feeling that Miss Goldman attacked. She criticized marriage for institutionalizing and binding individuals in a relationship based on law. She felt laws cannot define individual consciousness and feeling and relationships defined by laws were meaningless. For Goldman, relations between men and women must be based on love and individual choice rather than legality. In this she exhibited elements of the romantic tradition of Thoreau and Emerson who rejected social convention and legalism as a way to define human actions. She talked about relationships between men and women being based on passion, a life force which draws people together.

However, for Goldman passion determined even more than personal relationships; it was the force which propelled the individual to creativity, rebellion, and understanding as well as defiance of repressive laws and institutions. When passion underlay human activity, radically new cultural forms and social arrangements emerged. For this reason passion and emotions were central to Miss Goldman's critical evaluation of American culture; it was central to educational theory, theories of life and marriage and theories of society. Eventually it became central to the educational writings of The Modern School magazine and the practice of the Modern School. To explore the interconnection between passion and freedom Miss Goldman looked to alternative institutions. She worked on Mother Earth from 1906 to 1917, and in
1909 began the Modern School. In both institutions she explored cultural forms seldom expressed in traditional magazines, literature, art or the public schools of the period. She believed these emerging new forms would liberate the individual whose passions and mind had been repressed by traditional capitalist institutions.

Mother Earth, founded in 1906, became a repository for anarchist and experimental poetry, stories and drama. For Miss Goldman this cultural repository was an important aspect of the revolutionary struggle for freedom. In her autobiography Miss Goldman explained why she chose the title Mother Earth; she saw mother earth as "the nourisher of man, man freed and unhindered in his access to the free earth."71 That was what revolution and the magazine would be about.

The magazine was to provide moral direction, cultural expression and a passionate search for freedom. In the first issue, an article related the purpose of the magazine when it stated,

We the children of the twentieth century lack convictions and a positive weltanschaung. Rudderless we drift the ocean of life. We are tormented by the consciousness that in spite of all knowledge systematized into sciences, we have not approached nearer the adequate solution of life's enigma than our forefathers. . . . But the strong and vigorous seek new leaders and new values; Ibsen, Neitsche, etc.72

In fact, the magazine did define through art, poetry and social theory revolutionary perspectives on culture.


The magazine confirmed the central role of the artist in anarchist revolutionary struggle. Articles by Emma Goldman and others expressed belief in the artist who unleashed the poetic search for freedom buried in each individual. The artist could bring this search for freedom to consciousness directly through the content of the play or indirectly through the overriding spirit of the work. In either case the artist was believed to have a romantic as well as a class-conscious purpose. When the work of art was a catalyst in releasing the creativity within each of us, the romantic individualistic focus of art, which seeks to free our inner voice, became uppermost. When, on the other hand, the work of art rallied workers to revolution because of its passionate depiction of social issues, the class-conscious focus became apparent. In both instances the audience was reached through ideas as well as through an intensely emotional experience.

Miss Goldman, in her lectures on art, poetry and drama, further emphasized the revolutionary value of the arts. She believed drama, as a cultural form, was particularly suited to the radical purpose of the anarchists in that its emotional impact on large audiences could inspire individuals to see their lives differently. Miss Goldman believed that, "through her discussion of modern plays, she would be able to spread her radical ideas,"\textsuperscript{73} even though she was attacked for lecturing on "high brow" art. She defended herself by claiming "the creative effort which portrays life boldly, earnestly and unafraid,

\textsuperscript{73}Drinnon, Rebel in Paradise, p. 156.
may become more dangerous to the present society than the loudest harangue of the soap-box speaker."\textsuperscript{74}

The dramatist most admired was Ibsen and Miss Goldman spoke and wrote articles on Ibsen and "The New Drama." She felt Ibsen had broken new ground in the theater by the way in which he elevated ordinary persons and dramatized their heroic confrontation with social conditions. She also admired Ibsen because his plays questioned the social conditions of the day, including the role of women, marriage, the family and middle class life. In this way he was Miss Goldman's ideal revolutionary artist.

Poetry was also a source of liberation and so Mother Earth published poetry children in the schools wrote, and Goldman lectured on poetry and the poetic experience. Poetry freed the spirit and the emotions. It was Walt Whitman who was the favorite poet among these anarchists. They saw in Whitman "the spontaneous voice, the spokesman who went above the herd and told of life." Goldman was impressed by his "inexhaustible force of spontaneity" which seemed a rarity in the world of her day.\textsuperscript{75} For Miss Goldman and Mother Earth the artist was not revered in a bourgeois sense but rather as an inspired individual who had a social responsibility.

As a member of the working class who worked with his or her intellect rather than hands, the artist's individual rebellion was

\textsuperscript{74}Drinnon, Rebel in Paradise, p. 156.

\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., pp. 155-160.
tied to a working class rebellion which formed the basis of anarchist
revolution. Goldman was very clear on the role of artists when she
stated that they must not only go among the people and teach them, but
must work with workers to teach as well as learn from them. She claimed
that "Only when the intellectual forces of Europe had made common
cause with the struggling masses, when they come close to the depths
of society did they give to the world a real culture."\footnote{Drinnon, Rebel in Paradise, p. 161.}

In this way Goldman did not see the artist or the intellectual
worker or the magazine \textit{Mother Earth} as the creator of culture, but
rather as part of a process wherein the interchange between artist,
intellectual and worker would create new values and beliefs for everyone.
Gorky, who participated in the Russian revolution in 1905, and Tolstoy,
who worked with peasant children at Yasna Polyana, were her models of
the relationship between the artist, the intellectual and the people.

Her insistence on the unity between the working class and the
artist, her criticism of American social institutions, her interest
in native American anarchism as well as the European tradition all
served to give the magazine and the movement a unique blend. The
difficulty remained, uniting the artist, the \textit{avant garde} thinker, and
social critic with the masses. Miss Goldman, the movement and the
school, all exhibited tension in trying to overcome these obstacles.

The American anarchist tradition during the Progressive Era
added to the anarchist tradition of freedom, spontaneity, and
individuation first, the role of the creative artist as revolutionary, and second, the importance of the poetic experience to the culture of daily life. At the same time, it went beyond an individualistic conception of freedom when it united this creativity with class struggle. The problems encountered in this union of the revolutionary artist and worker and the problems it encountered in defining the relationship between individual freedom and group activity were the problems faced by the American anarchist movement in general, and by anarchist education, specifically.

However, while problems existed and divided anarchists, a common social vision of freedom united them. Though each tradition defined this concept differently, all anarchists were committed to this search for freedom and this freedom became the watchword of the educational theory as well as their political theory. One historian of anarchism, Schuster, stated,

Anarchists declared that freedom is fundamental, a basic condition about which all solutions to the social problem must come. Although the ideal may be impossible to realize, its importance and value lies in its being affirmed so positively and under all conditions. In short what the Modern School method would apply to the school alone, anarchism would apply to the whole of life.77

The variety of strains in American anarchism that grew out of its heritage in the native American as well as the European tradition deeply affected the ways in which anarchist educational theory and practice evolved. To understand anarchist education in America, it

77 Schuster, Native American Anarchism, p. 179.
is therefore necessary to examine the ways in which differing traditions of freedom become entwined and redefined as a culture of freedom and an anarchist educational experience is forged for working class children in the United States at the turn of the century. It is for this reason we turn to an examination of the educational institutions in and around New York that furthered the anarchist ideals: The Modern School, The Modern School magazine, The Ferrer Association, and a look at the educational philosophy inherent in these institutions.
Anarchists in New York, during the Progressive Era, faced the problem of translating their social and political vision of freedom into educational theory. The task was difficult. In many ways the problems they encountered paralleled those raised by the movement in its general fight for human liberation. Yet these problems were exacerbated by the peculiar challenge of translating human liberation into a theory of childhood and evolving from this theory a philosophy of education and a practice of schooling. Their task included:
(1) defining the process of individual liberation in terms of a psychology of childhood and a culture of freedom for children, and
(2) defining the relationship between personal liberation and group liberation in terms of childhood; the relationship of children to the political struggles of their community. The importance of education was clear: The young held the seeds of freedom which could either be sown and brought to bloom through education or lost in the wind. The goal was to create a culture of freedom for children and to define that culture in terms of the process of social transformation. To deal with the difficult task of creating a radical education integral to their revolutionary concerns anarchists in New York, at the turn of the century established the Ferrer Association, The Modern School, and The Modern School magazine.
Philosophically and historically there had not been much precedent for a revolutionary educational theory or for establishing radical schools for children of the working classes, although liberal educators—Froebel, Pestalozzi and Montessori—had developed materials designed specifically for the children of the poor. Anarchists drew on these theories of learning and child development, yet remained critical of reform educators whose theories helped working class children adjust to the society that had created their poverty. These liberal reformers were wedded to a form of social organization which could never provide a pedagogy of freedom for the poor; at most it might ameliorate their condition. For this reason, anarchists worked to define their own educational perspective which would include a critique of exploitation, a critique of the cultural institutions of capitalism and a definition of the precise relationship of educational institutions to social change and revolutionary struggle.

For a clearer analysis of these issues, anarchists turned to their own historical experiences and to radical educators who were involved in the anarchist movement. As radicals, these educators were distinguished from liberal educators in their critique of capitalist society and their insistence that education play a revolutionary role in social transformation. An article in one anarchist magazine articulates this distinction when it says,

Ferrer as a free thinker and social revolutionist treats the schools as an essential factor in the struggle for a new society.
Montessori, a reformer, regards the school as a means to repair an imperfect society but one generally improving.

While these educators agreed on the revolutionary role of the schools, it remained for the American anarchists to formulate the precise role schooling would play in revolutionary struggle. Conflict arose because the two dominant strains in the movement at large defined this role somewhat differently. The romantic tradition argued that the radical significance of schooling lay in transforming individual consciousness, out of which new social relationships and a new society would develop. The communitarians, particularly the syndicalists, argued that education contributed to social revolution through a class-defined pedagogy predicated on the needs of the movement. They claimed the revolutionary potential lay in bringing class consciousness to workers' children, thereby freeing their minds from traditionally oppressive beliefs. On the other hand, many anarchists within the movement in America argued that the education of children was irrelevant to workers' struggles in the factory or on the bread line. Lola Ridge, an anarchist educator of the period, described this disdain toward education: "When workers are fighting the system of wage slavery said one in my hearing not long ago, 'you people are spending time and money for a fad, for a new kind of education.'"


Yet once American anarchists made the commitment to revolutionary schooling, a series of questions and concerns emerged which included the following: Should revolutionary schools teach anarchist doctrine? Would the schools be a means to specifically educate the mass of workers' children? What would be the relationship of the school to the political struggles of the anarchist movement? Would the goal of schooling be to create revolutionaries to continue the workers' struggle?—and so on.

Defining a radical pedagogy was a second focus of concern. There were several possible avenues of approach. One could directly instill radical anarchist ideas in children through books and newspapers and call this a radical pedagogy; one could explore new forms of social relationships in the classroom, which might lead to an anarchist philosophy, but which did not directly teach anarchism; or one could in fact devise a third approach, combining the first two. In all cases, defining a radically new pedagogy entailed exploring new ways of looking at childhood and childrearing, as well as new ways of relating to children. It involved creating a pedagogy which incorporated the radical critique of culture made by Emma Goldman and the central tenets of anarchism: individuation, spontaneity, rebellion and creativity, into a psychology of childhood. It also included a methodology which insured that the children would carry on the revolutionary tradition of the parents.

It was difficult to clearly formulate ways of dealing with these concerns. In fact, it was a long journey through the Progressive Era
before the answers to the two central questions of anarchist education—what was the relationship of school to social change and what constituted a radical pedagogy—were clarified. The process of clarification entailed visits to radical schools in France, discussion and debate on childrearing, visits to libertarian schools in the United States, the investigation and critique of the educational theories of Ferrer and Tolstoy, as well as those of reformers such as Dewey and Montessori, the translation of anarchist political theory into educational methods, and experimentation in The Modern School. It was with the unique blending of all these investigations, most particularly those of anarchist social theory and cultural criticism with the educational theories of Ferrer and Tolstoy, that the American tradition of anarchist education begins.

Out of the social theory and historical practice of anarchism, which was characterized in differing degrees by an anti-authoritarian core of beliefs, came the initial attempt to answer the radical pedagogical questions raised by American educators. As we have already described these anti-authoritarian ideas of anarchism in the previous chapter, we need only briefly show the ways they affected educational theory. Specifically, the anarchist conception of freedom, which sought to rid individuals of the chains of authority expressed in the conventions of society, the laws, and the authority of the state, was translated into an educational theory which sought to free children from the authoritarian forms of education which dominate children's consciousness through the teacher, classroom atmosphere, school books,
curriculum guides and the hierarchical structure of schools. This anti-authoritarian stance, which was often described in education and political theory as libertarian, provided the broadest base for defining freedom in pedagogical terms. Most anarchists agreed that traditional schooling, because of its basis in authoritarian modes of pedagogy, stifled the creative, the spiritual, spontaneous and individual voices inherent in every child. They also agreed that the reform pedagogy of progressives like Dewey replaced traditional and direct forms of authority with indirect forms of authority, and therefore remained authoritarian. In either case, under direct or indirect forms of authority, children did not explore their inner needs or voices, and the individual needs of each child were lost sight of. Emma Goldman quoted Emerson to show the ill effects of all education based on authority: "We are students of words; we are shut up in schools and colleges for 10-25 years and come out a bag of wind, a memory of words; we do not know a thing. . . ." 3

Because of the overriding commitment of anarchism to anti-authoritarian values and a libertarian world view which emphasized freedom of choice and a non-dogmatic exploration of the world, European and American anarchists adopted a libertarian model for their educational theories and practices. 4 This meant that they drew on a

3Goldman, Red Emma Speaks, p. 117.

4To describe the relationship between anarchism and libertarian ideas see Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 14. The relationship between anarchism and libertarian education is, however, never definitively stated, yet a variety of anarchists have in their works described the
variety of non-authoritarian approaches of childrearing in order to create a radical pedagogy appropriate to their needs as a social movement. The variety of models united under the umbrella title of "libertarian" showed a common commitment to freedom in education, anti-authoritarian schooling, child-centered classrooms and individual choice. Anti-authoritarian pedagogy and choice were crucial threads running through the variety of pedagogical styles. Joel Spring in *The Libertarian Primer*, defines the intention of libertarian education. He stated, "Radicals have searched for an educational system and a process of childrearing that will create a non-authoritarian person who will not obediently accept the dictates of the political system and who will demand greater personal control and choice." According to Spring, libertarian education was designed to produce the rebel child, the "free spirit," the critical thinker. Emma Goldman drew on this umbrella model of non-authoritarian education when she described education:

The underlying principle of the Modern School is this; education is a process of drawing out, not of drawing in. It aims at the possibility that the child should be left free to develop spontaneously, directing his own efforts and choosing the branches of knowledge which he desires to study. Therefore the teacher instead of opposing or presenting as authoritative his own opinions, predictions or beliefs, should


be a sensitive instrument responding to the needs of the child as they are at any time manifested. . . .

She showed her commitment to these educational ideas and to a libertarian notion of freedom when she advocated that the Modern School be libertarian. She said: "The Modern School must be libertarian. Each pupil must be left free to his own true self."7

While both European and American anarchists advocated a libertarian educational philosophy, they often found that this anti-authoritarian non-dogmatic approach characteristic of libertarian education was insufficient to deal with their social concerns. It was too nebulous to insure that a historical tradition, a defined world view, a belief in a specific kind of freedom, or a specific form of social organization would be imparted to the children. It often seemed to imply that the creative factory owner was as significant or valid a life role as a revolutionary worker. As a result, anarchists who believed freedom had limits set by the history and politics of the movement sought a more direct approach which clearly articulated their commitment to freedom and revolutionary politics.

When, as a direct approach, they incorporated political struggle into an educational philosophy, conflict arose between their libertarian commitment to freedom in the abstract sense of all freedoms, all choice and a gravitation toward a defined or limited freedom; a particular form of revolutionary politics. This conflict between negative freedom

6 Goldman, Red Emma Speaks, p. 120.
7 Ibid.
defined primarily as anti-authoritarian which demanded that no bonds, no informal organization, no molds, no ties, and no dogma be placed on the child, and a positive freedom which insisted that freedom was more than a limitation of oppressive authority; it was the freedom to create or define a new society based on the political and social concerns of anarchism, provided the central tension within anarchist educational theory. Put another way, anarchists were faced with conflicting demands: the demand for a pedagogy that would insure emotional exploration and personal freedom through the absence of all constraints and conventions and the demand that the specific history, culture and tradition of anarchism limit freedom of choice.

What resulted, within the libertarian framework, was a series of educational models, essentially anti-authoritarian in orientation. Yet in the ways they addressed the central problems posed by anarchist education—what is a radical pedagogy and how does a radical pedagogy relate to revolutionary change—they differed greatly. When placed on a continuum, libertarian educational models exhibited a wide range of pedagogical, methodological and philosophical differences. At one end of the continuum was a non-authoritarian pedagogical model which was apolitical and ahistorical. This model defined freedom in individualistic terms of self-exploration, creativity and imagination. At the other pole of the continuum the libertarian model defined freedom in class terms. It emphasized the teaching of revolutionary culture and tradition to working class children in a non-authoritarian, non-competitive classroom. The two polarities of the continuum consisted
of an anti-authoritarian pedagogy with a defined political and economic
type of revolution, and an anti-authoritarian pedagogy which claimed
that social change was brought about through changes in people's
consciousness. The latter perspective emphasized classroom activities
dedicated to exploring psychological freedoms as a prerequisite for
changing the culture and the society, while the former perspective
emphasized the direct teaching of class consciousness and revolutionary
social theory in order to effect social change. The polarities
represented the divergent pedagogical perspectives which were often in
conflict. Different historical conditions and differing political
climates during different historical periods made possible a variety of
combinations within this libertarian educational tradition. This is
evidenced by the variety of libertarian models found in European culture:
Francisco Ferrer, a Spanish syndicalist educator of 1900, represented
the political pole of the continuum; Tolstoy, the Russian romantic
living in the 1860s, represented the individualistic polarity of the
continuum; and Sebastian Faurer, a French syndicalist, represented a
fusion of the two.

Yet the fusion of the two polarities was difficult to achieve,
and only in highly specified circumstances could a class conscious
perspective and a psychologically oriented political perspective come
together in a pedagogical theory of freedom. Most often American
anarchists found that when they tried to unite revolutionary concerns
and working class culture with private and personal freedoms, tensions
and conflict developed. In fact, the attempt to unify the two
traditions raised serious questions central to the American experience of anarchist education, which included: Can libertarian schools which adopt the individual model of freedom impart a particular value system and historical tradition to their children? If not, how will anarchist parents transmit the belief in revolution and freedom needed to perpetuate the movement? The individualistic or apolitical pole of the continuum suggested the demise of the movement because it did not define institutional or pedagogical mechanisms by which the movement could perpetuate its ideas in the young. On the other hand, the commitment to individual freedom, the inner, the expressive world, raised fears in educators that imparting a social/political tradition would hinder individual and personal growth. It would force a set of beliefs and values on children before they are ready to accept them, thereby stifling their inner voices, their creativity and imagination.

The two educational models most influential in raising these questions represented the polarities of the libertarian continuum and correlated with the two major strands of anarchism. Each pole of the continuum expressed the philosophy and perspective of one of the major strands of anarchism defined in Chapter II, our history of the movement. Tolstoy, who provided the model for the psychological and individualistic polarity of freedom at Yasna Polyana, asserted in his educational philosophy the romanticism of his anarchist vision. Ferrer, who provided in his school at Barcelona the model for the class-conscious polarity of freedom, asserted in his educational theory the communitarian syndicalist tradition of Spain. As such, both theories shed
light on the tensions within American anarchist education. They raised critical questions for American anarchists who based their educational philosophy and schooling on these two models.

As educational models, they addressed or began the examination of the relationship between politics and freedom: educational form and educational content, political community and individual liberty, an educational culture which is avant garde and experimental, reaching the few, and one that incorporates prevailing cultural forms into a "common culture for the many." Most significantly these educational theories and models suggested that there was a direct relationship between the pedagogical methodology of the school and the school's effectiveness in the revolutionary process. It also suggested that there was a direct correlation between the movement's effectiveness and the effectiveness of radical schooling. For these reasons we begin an examination of the historical antecedents, the historical models for American anarchist education, the romantic tradition of anarchism and the syndicalist tradition of anarchism.

The romantic tradition, which we have discussed in relationship to Tolstoy, Emerson and Thoreau, contributed to education a set of ideas and beliefs which must not be confused with the term romantic as it is commonly used in educational theory. The term has been used in education to imply that a particular philosophy was "unreal," "utopian," "idealistic," "a fantasy which was impossible to achieve." However, in a broader context, the romantic tradition suggested a particular world view which, in the nineteenth century, counterposed
to the values of rationalism and scientific progress the belief in
the importance of the irrational as found in nature, the emotions and
imagination. The central concerns of this world view were liberty
or freedom, and the individual private world of emotions. A literary
dictionary succinctly illuminates these two concerns:

Liberty covers individualism and rebellion against rules,
authority, and tradition; the emotions seem to involve
spontaneity, the subconscious as the springs of action and
the artistic creator and other characteristics that are non-
rational such as life force, intuition, the mystical faculty.

When applied to educational theory, these values were translated
into libertarian schooling which emphasized a child-defined classroom
organized to permit the free play of the psychic life of each child.
More specifically, this educational tradition which revered individual
initiative, spontaneity, the intuitive and the emotional experiences
of childhood was much like the historical tradition of Tolstoy, Emerson,
and Thoreau. Within this tradition education was seen as a primary
tool to revolutionize society through changing consciousness and creat­
ing new forms of social relationships based in love and equality. It
is Leo Tolstoy who explored this tradition in his school at Yasna
Polyana.

The distinctive qualities of this tradition grew out of its
conception of childhood and its emphasis on the irrational and emotional
life of the child. In this it differed from more traditional theories
of education that relied on reason or rationality to liberate the child

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8 Joseph T. Shipley, ed., The Dictionary of World Literature
from the conventions and authority structures of the day. On the contrary, the romantics looked to the original nature of man, to his inner being, for liberation. They believed that children being closest to the natural life force, because their original nature and goodness had not been corrupted by the hypocrisy and authoritarianism of adult society could through their reliance on their imagination, spontaneity and creativity become liberated from the chains of conventional society.

Tolstoy's libertarian educational theories grew out of this romantic world view. In his educational theory he claimed that children, in their innocence, contained the vitality, creativity and imagination that resided in each of us, but which became perverted through our relationships with social institutions. For Tolstoy, children were the repositories of the truth, beauty and goodness that have been repressed through the authoritarian structure of the family, the conventions of society and the artificialities of city living. He claimed, as did Emerson and Thoreau, that cities remove children from the land and from the natural forms of play and growth, while the schools, by force, impose foreign cultural values onto the child's natural instincts. It is because of this that the child grows into a distorted, frustrated adult who lacks the vitality, responsiveness, honesty and integrity to fight the authoritarian and corrupt institutions of society.

Tolstoy believed that libertarian, non-prescriptive schools, which give free reign to the natural life force of children and which were not constrained by the conventions and proscriptions of teachers, books or the physical classroom itself will allow the original goodness,
creativity and spontaneity of children to flourish. In these schools human potential would be realized as the poet, the artist, the lover of the land and the thinker in each of us is allowed to flower. Emma Goldman expanded this romantic view of education with a conception of the imaginative, creative and poetic waiting to be released in all children.

This romantic view of childhood contributed to educational theory a belief in the innate goodness of the individual child and a pedagogy which allowed that goodness to flourish in an atmosphere of freedom. It defined education as a process of "drawing out" rather than a process of molding, shaping or developing the child. Its contribution of a child-oriented, individualistic, libertarian philosophy of education remains distinct from traditional pedagogy which imposed adult values and beliefs on the child's mind.

This romantic tradition, which emphasized personal freedoms, also endorsed a social theory of liberty when it claimed a new society based on equality, individual freedom and community would emerge when education changed the individual's consciousness. Tolstoy articulated this position when in an article in Ecole Renovee, an anarchist magazine, he stated,

I started social activity with the school and teaching and after forty years I am more and more convinced that only through education alone, free education can we ever manage to rid ourselves of the horrible order of things and replace it with a rational order.  

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9Leberstein, "Revolutionary Education," p. 165.
10Ibid.
His fervent belief in education as a vehicle for changing consciousness and hence revolutionizing society, was central to anarchist educators like Alex Perm of the Modern School. This belief became a major political and social perspective in the 1960s with the emergence of the counter-culture, Free Schools and the "Greening of America." All claimed as Tolstoy had before them, that revolutionary change came about when people got "into a different head," a "third consciousness." These ideas came into conflict with the communitarian and class-based pedagogy of Ferrer at the Modern School of New York and they provided the point and counterpoint of the tension that emerged as the school evolved to maturity and then old age.

For Tolstoy, consciousness was a complex phenomenon. He proceeded to expand his theories of consciousness by defining it in class terms and by evolving a theory of cultural domination which was mirrored in later years by Emma Goldman's analysis of the cultural domination of workers' children in the public schools. Tolstoy criticized the schools for the hypocrisy and conventionality that destroy and corrupt peasant culture. He argued that peasant children living on the land, outside the industrialization process, were in more natural surroundings than urban middle class children. As such, these children represented pre-industrial values which were less corrupt than those of industrial life. Tolstoy believed that schools, through their curricula, books and teachers, imposed a culture and ideas that were foreign to peasant life on the land. In this way they destroyed individual spontaneity and perverted the god within each child. He
was particularly critical of the scholastic training and classroom
discipline needed to insure the imposition of this foreign culture.
He claimed these methods of pedagogy stifled the higher faculties of
creativity and imagination.\textsuperscript{11} He went on to show that the imposition
of class culture on peasant children halted growth and learning and
resulted in the development of conventional adults whose life force
was forever dulled. Describing the antagonism between two distinct
cultural worlds, Tolstoy stated,

School justly presents itself to the child's mind as an
establishment where he is taught that which nobody understands,
where he is generally compelled to speak not his native patois
mundant but a foreign language, where the teacher for the greater
part sees in his pupils his natural enemies who out of their
own malice and that of their parents do not wish to learn that
which he has learned and where his pupils on their side look upon
their teacher as their enemy. . . . \textsuperscript{12}

Miss Goldman's article, "The Child and His Enemy," made many of the
same criticisms when she denounced the artificiality of learning taking
place in the Public Schools.\textsuperscript{13}

Tolstoy believed the art of teaching could not be learned from
texts which highlight the culture of domination; it could only be
learned through direct observation of the children's activities and
language. The teacher was like an artist who creatively sculpted the
figures of her class so that each child took the form best suited to
his innate disposition. He stated,

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\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{11} Weiner, \textit{Tolstoy on Education}, pp. 16-17.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 12.
\textsuperscript{13} Goldman, \textit{Red Emma Speaks}, pp. 3-16.
\end{flushright}
The business of the teacher is to afford a choice of all known and unknown methods that may make the matter of learning easier for the pupil. . . . For the teacher who has adapted himself to the liberty of the school, each pupil represents a separate demand which only the freedom of choice can satisfy.\textsuperscript{14}

Tolstoy insisted that the classroom be an environment where the innate vitality and animation of the individual is fostered. He said,

It is enough to look at one and the same child at home, in the street or at school: now you see a vivacious curious child with a smile in his eyes and on his lips, seeking instruction in everything as he would seek pleasure, clearly and frequently strongly expressing his thoughts in his own words; now again you see a worn out retiring being with an expression of fatigue, terror. . . . It is enough to look at these two conditions in order to decide which of the two is more advantageous for the child's development.\textsuperscript{15}

Play was the child's natural way of developing an understanding of the world and Tolstoy believed that the school ought to foster this form of play. In his school at Yasna Polyana he hoped to resolve the traditional dichotomy between play and work because he strongly believed that for children who freely explored the world, play and work were intermingled with their natural curiosity to resolve problems, find answers, explore situations and develop ideas.

Tolstoy's pedagogy and curriculum developed out of the games, fantasies and play of childhood. The children in the school were left free to explore their own learning rhythms, to decide whether to come to class, which class they would attend and which subjects they would learn. The reading and writing skills were developed out of the

\textsuperscript{14}Wiener, \textit{Tolstoy on Education}, pp. 268-269.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 16.
children's own language as proverbs, personal experience and the customs and beliefs of their culture provided a basis for their own stories. In an impressionistic section of the book *Tolstoy’s Views on Education*, Tolstoy described the stories and the written materials the children developed as well as the curriculum they helped create. His emphasis on the child-centered school, freedom in education, and a respect for the culture of the child, constitutes the romantic heritage of the individualistic polarity of libertarian educational philosophy.

Tolstoy’s philosophy left a legacy for the Modern School which defined freedom in terms of individual creativity, imagination and vitality, and a legacy which believed that these traits could only be developed in an environment close to nature. His philosophical and pedagogical emphasis provided the basis for the belief that social change would come through libertarian education because it emphasized changing consciousness. This model provides the counterpoint to the communitarian model of anarchist education which also influenced the Modern School of New York.

The communitarian model which grew out of the syndicalist tradition provided the second major strain of anarchist educational theory. This model of pedagogy which was practiced in the schools of Spain, France and Italy emphasized pedagogy to the masses of working class children of Europe. Francisco Ferrer of Spain was the leading educational figure connected with the tradition he named Rational Education.

He opened the first such school in Barcelona in 1901 called Escuela Moderna which became the educational model for hundreds of working class schools in Europe and Latin America. At his school, Ferrer's ideas of freedom were incorporated into the classroom pedagogy as the children were taught, "militarism was a crime, that the unequal distribution of wealth was a thing to be abhorred, that the capitalist system was bad for workers and that political government was an evil."

While Ferrer's educational theories and practices were adapted to the beliefs, attitudes and needs of Spanish workers, his theories formed an important strain in American anarchist schooling. In fact, The Modern School, founded by Emma Goldman and her colleagues in New York, was named after Ferrer's Barcelona Escuela Moderna; and the Ferrer Association, which provided support for the Modern School, was founded in 1910 to commemorate Ferrer's execution for revolutionary activities and to honor his contribution to radical educational theory and practice. In addition, The Modern School magazine, the educational journal connected to the American School, had many similarities to the Barcelona Bulletin published by the Spanish school. Essentially, both


institutions were committed to the education of working class youth. These ties provided the Modern School and American anarchist education with a distinctly different legacy than the romantic legacy of Tolstoy and became the grounds for conflict with that tradition.

The legacy of Ferrer had many components. It applied the central concerns of class to educational philosophy, methodology, knowledge of childhood, learning theories, classroom organization and theories of social change. Its central component defined freedom in education in economic and political as well as pedagogical terms. Individual liberation was identified with class liberation. For educators this meant establishing schools for working class children, which had a political and economic orientation and a revolutionary commitment. Other than working class children could attend the schools, but, according to Ferrer, the schools had to maintain their revolutionary commitment. Of Ferrer, Archer, his biographer, stated: "Ferrer was first to last an ardent revolutionist but the whole object of his work was to correct her unripeness by educating revolutionaries."

The commitment to radical politics colored the educational concerns and the pedagogy of the school Ferrer established in Barcelona. Here he developed his theories of "Rational Education," which he hoped would expand children's consciousness, freeing them from the dogma of church and state schools. He believed that through scientific inquiry and rational thought children could learn to attack the dominant authorities

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of the day. Yet it is not simply dogma or authority that he attacked but rather the political and economic oppression which grew out of the class nature of church or state education. William Archer pointed out in his historical analysis of Ferrer's work that Ferrer, having been a working class child himself, knew in direct and immediate ways the class bias and oppressive nature of the social institutions of Spanish society. Ferrer abhorred the power of the ruling class to use these institutions to subjugate the poor. He stated in the Bulletin in 1905,

The working class child is a human child and as such it has a right to the development of all its faculties, the satisfaction of all its needs, moral and physical. For that purpose society was instituted. It is not the function to repress or subjugate the individual as it is selfishly pretended by the privileged and reactionary class and all who enjoy what others produce.

Ferrer believed that schools for rational education would free working class children from class domination, thereby contributing to

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21 Ferrer, Origins and Ideal of the Modern School, passim. Particular attention should be paid to the announcement of the "Programme" of the Modern School. Here Ferrer stated, "The mission of the Modern School is to secure that the boys and girls who are entrusted to it shall become well instructed, truthful, just and free from all prejudice. To that end the rational method of the natural sciences will be substituted for the old agnostic teachings" (p. 15).

22 Ibid., pp. 43-53. In this chapter, "The Reform of the School," Ferrer explains the ways in which the ruling class has control of education and does violence to the children and the ways in which the reforms being instituted serve to continue domination. He said, "From this we can understand how easily education is conducted and how light is the task of those who seek to dominate the individual. The best conceivable methods become in their hands so many new and more effective means of despotism."

23 Ibid., p. 98.
revolutionary struggle.

As an educator, Ferrer was committed to defining a working class perspective through Rational Education. "But he was a child of workers and he had a passion and noble resentment of the ignorance of so large a portion of workers." He believed liberation would come through eliminating the ignorance and the false ideas found in the working class as a result of inadequate and class-biased education. Schooling was an important instrument of liberation. Yet large numbers of working class children did not attend school or were educated in church or state schools, and were blinded to their real needs. He believed that if these children could attend a school that dealt with the issues they faced in their daily lives, they would gain an understanding of their oppression and begin to believe in the possibility of transforming society.

Ferrer's educational theories were distinguished from Tolstoy's in their class commitment, their emphasis on reason, their conception of childhood and in the methodology or pedagogy advocated. Ferrer was radical in terms of his political and economic orientation, but remained in the liberal tradition in his definition of childhood and learning. Like John Locke, he believed that at birth the child's mind was a blank tablet. As a result the child's fundamental values were to be defined by the environment: schools, family, books, friends, community, etc.

24 Ferrer, Origin and Ideal of the Modern School, p. xiii.
He stated, "I was convinced that the child comes into the world without innate ideas and that during the course of his life gathers the ideas of those nearest to him, modifying them according to his own observations and reading."26

Ferrer emphasized the direct intervention of education into the child's environment, modifying that environment in keeping with specific values and beliefs. He felt schools should transmit the rational knowledge which would help working class children define their reality from a class perspective. He severely criticized the traditional belief in education as free of prejudice or a particular perspective. As Archer, his biographer, points out,

The distinction between justice and injustice is perhaps the first moral distinction which a child can and does grasp and it would be ridiculous to pretend it lies outside the proper sphere of education. Our intrinsic plea that it is not fair to prejudice the mind of a child on subjects which he cannot fully understand, is nothing but a fallacy of bourgeois self defense.27

Ferrer did not object to bias per se; what he did object to was that only the privileged classes had the right to indoctrinate all children with their view of the social order.28

The Escuela Moderna used literature and historical texts to transmit a class perspective, to make children aware of their class interests and to help them develop a notion of freedom and a will to change their present conditions. Ferrer believed that literature was

27Archer, The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer, p. 48.
28Ibid., p. 49.
an important tool of pedagogy because, "It penetrates to their intelligence and implants in them a rooted conviction of the possibility of an order of things in which peace and happiness shall reign supreme, very unlike our present conditions of social injustices, strife and unhappiness."  

Several texts used at the school are described in William Archer's biography of Ferrer. These texts clearly illustrated the kinds of curriculum material used at the school and the perspective emphasized. The children's favorite story book, The Story of Nono, was an allegory wherein Nono, a working class child, was the hero of the story. Jean Grave, a French anarchist and author of the Nono story, developed a class perspective in the opening sequence of the story when Nono's parents promise to buy him a book as a gift. The author, describing this purchase, states, "Not an expensive one of course, for the parents of Nono were working people and the rich squander money on frivolities to such a degree that scarcely anything is left over for the working people to buy their children what they require." The allegory continued to describe Nono's wanderings and adventures through magical kingdoms until he met the fairy Solidaria who conducted him to the delightful region of "Autonomie" entirely populated by good and happy children. In this kingdom the readers were introduced to

29 Archer, The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer, p. 40.
30 Archer's The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer contains the complete translation of Nono by Jean Grave, pp. 40-48.
31 Archer, The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer.
the genius of labor, his sister Liberta and the fairy Electricia. Unfortunately Nono's happiness is short lived. One day when he is alone in the fields of Autonomie, he is kidnapped by a "Pot bellied flat nosed gentleman of vulgar respect, richly dessed; an enormous gold chain dangling in front of his corporation; his shirt front gleaming with diamonds"<sup>32</sup> who takes him to Arigoracy, the kingdom of Capitalism. Here there are three classes of people, among which are, "Those who work and enjoy no pleasure; and those who in the interest of the former class, force the latter class to work."<sup>33</sup> Nono is forced to work for a tailor whom he begins to tell about the wonders of the kingdom of Autonomie where everyone is equal. The authorities find out and Nono is arrested on charges of preaching subversion and sentenced to life imprisonment. Soon his friends from Autonomie come to rescue him and Nono wakes up from his dream. Through the use of traditional fantasy techniques akin to Alice in Wonderland, the Jean Grave story transmitted to children of all ages a political vision of the world.

Man and the Earth by Elise Reclus represented an example of a history text used by the school to develop class consciousness among the children. The book was composed of four chapters: "Ancestors," "Ancient History," "Modern History" and "Our Present World." In each chapter the perspective of the oppressed was always clearly articulated. Of our present order the book states,

<sup>32</sup> Archer, The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer, p. 42.
<sup>33</sup> Ibid.
Our present vaunted civilization, Reclus argues, is merely a semi civilization, because only a minority enjoy all its benefits. . . . The modern laborer is devoid personally. . . . The slums of our cities are more repulsive than anything to be found among the so-called savage tribes. 34

The school developed a working-class culture and provided the children with a view of the world which reflected their own particular heritage and their own experience as workers' children.

The cultural emphasis of the school was reflected in the children's stories published in the school magazine, The Bulletin. These essays and stories dealt with philosophy, religion, government and private property from a radical perspective. 35 One such short story told of a policeman who arrested some people because they stole, yet did not understand how and why these people had been forced to steal in order to feed their families. Other essays dealt with political and economic issues. While all this clearly established the kind of critical consciousness the children developed, it remained unclear if the curriculum and literature infused children with a class perspective, a class identification, or whether other circumstances—parental commitment to working class politics, the relationship of the school to unions and syndicalist struggles, the location of the school in politically active communities like Barcelona, the involvement of parents in the school through Sunday lecture series, and so on—were


35 Archer, The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer, p. 58.
the significant factors in developing this working class perspective.  

It is more than likely that neither one nor the other condition explained the political consciousness of the children, but rather that the unique combination of radical political activity, a network of over forty-seven Modern Schools in Barcelona alone and the political economic perspective of the classroom created and reinforced the working-class culture of the school.

The classroom sought to further develop its culture through a libertarian and anti-authoritarian orientation which stressed cooperation rather than competition and which frowned on exams and grading because they "puff some children up" at the expense of others. The school's general orientation toward developing independent minds through a non-competitive atmosphere developed a kind of counter culture to that of traditional Spanish schools. Most radical was the notion of equality which allowed boys and girls to receive the same education.

As an experiment in radical education which grew out of the Syndicalist tradition, The Modern School came closest to uniting a non-dogmatic approach to childrearing with a non-authoritarian pedagogy. Yet at this end of the libertarian continuum, a problem arose which suggested that in the more political model, the social and political

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36 It is important to note that the Modern Schools of Spain were located primarily in cities where working people lived rather than in the country away from the everyday life of industrial society. There were, for example, over forty-seven such schools in Barcelona alone. Archer, The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer, p. 61.

37 For details on theories of co-education at the Modern School, see Ferrer, The Origins and Ideals of the Modern School, pp. 24-31.
concerns overrode the poetic and creative concerns emphasized in the more individualistic model. While it is hard to say how often and in what ways this happened at the Ferrer school, one can surmise from the literature written by the children that the subject matter was drastically different from that of *Voice of the Children*, which came out of the New York and Stelton Modern School. In the latter, nature, allegory and fantasy characterized the children’s work, while in the former, social concerns and politics were the mainstay of the children’s creative writing efforts and these were written in a very traditional way.\(^{38}\) That the poetics and creative concerns were over-ridden seems to be further suggested by Ferrer’s discussion of pedagogy and classroom organization in *The Origins and Ideals of the Modern School*.

However, the significant legacy of the Modern School lay in the ways in which it managed to connect to revolutionary struggle in Spain and France, Italy and Latin America, where schools for workers based on the Ferrer Model took hold and succeeded.\(^ {39}\) It also lay in the ways in which the school managed to transmit working class and revolutionary perspective to the children, for in this it remained distinct

\(^{38}\) Copies of the *Voice of the Children* which was the children’s publication at the Modern School between 1922 to 1932 comment sporadically during this period. Many copies of the magazine are available in the Modern School Collection at Rutgers Library. The writings of the children at the Barcelona Modern School are only available in reprinted form as they appear in Archer’s *The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer*, p. 58, and in Ferrer’s *The Origin and Ideals of the Modern School*, pp. 88-95.

\(^{39}\) Archer, *The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer*, p. 60.
from the libertarian tradition emphasized by Tolstoy.

It is hard to know precisely why Ferrer's school took hold among workers, although one can speculate as to the reasons for its success. Perhaps the connection between the school and the syndicalist movement as well as the formation of the League for Rational Education helped to perpetuate and develop the educational movement. In any case the schools clearly linked themselves to revolutionary politics, and the magazine which Ferrer edited, The Ecole Renovee, reinforced this link. The magazine "was not only the organ of rationalist instruction, but it also gave a good deal of space to the syndicalist movement." In fact the magazine contained a column where syndicalist teachers wrote on the ways in which to implement radical educational theories in the public schools. 40 One wonders if this commitment and that of other educators to spreading radical education in both public and alternative institutions strengthened and made possible the network of radical schools in these countries. McCabe states of Ferrer,

He realized that it was always necessary to establish in addition to state public schools, free schools which would be wholly unhampered and should be qualified to serve as models. It was useful that state authorities themselves should cause the new methods to penetrate official education. 41

The connection to a large revolutionary workers' movement not only strengthened the efforts of each individual school, but it also provided the concrete reality of working class struggles to support


41Archer, The Life, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer, p. 42.
the ideas of freedom expressed in the schools. The culture developed in the Modern Schools of Europe dealt concretely with the lives and struggles of the workers themselves. In this way it gave working people and their children a direct understanding of their conditions and it presented it in a way that made it unobtainable in the more traditional state or church schools. In fact in today's terminology, one could say that the culture of the school was relevant. Some combination of the school's culture, the connection to a political movement, and the tie-in with other radical educators in the League for Rational Education, made possible the alternative network of radical schools for working class children in European countries at the turn of the century. This will become even more interesting when, in looking at the history of the Modern School of New York, we begin to examine the ability of the Modern School to ground itself in a working-class culture among the working people of New York.

The legacy of Ferrer counterposed to Tolstoy's model of individual freedom, a model which developed a class-conscious culture of freedom rooted in the working class and capable of reaching thousands of Spanish working-class youths. Ferrer's model became problematic in the United States because of the absence of a strong political movement rooted in the working class and because of the cultural and political differences between Catholic Monarchy Spain and Capitalist America. For American anarchists neither model could sufficiently deal with the realities, cultural criticisms, or the life of an urban immigrant proletariat. Yet each view offered concrete means for
liberation, which demanded reconciling the notions of individuation and creativity characteristic of Tolstoy, with a class-conscious, radical, political philosophy characteristic of Ferrer.

Yet the real differences between the two polarities, the two traditions of anarchist education, proved to be problematic for American anarchist educators who, during the Progressive Era, worked to unite the romantic and syndicalist traditions into a native American radical pedagogy. While the tensions surrounding the attempt to reconcile contrary theoretical perspectives were not openly debated, the variety of theoretical writings in anarchist journals, as well as the open discussion between parents and teachers in the Modern School, suggest that the tensions between the two perspectives with all the concomitant issues, remained ever present. In one way or another, both the history of the school and the theoretical writings of anarchists tell us that the contradiction between the two polarities of the libertarian education model was the central problematic American radicals faced, and the unity of creative self exploration and a revolutionary class conscious pedagogy. The precise nature of the tension is highlighted in a debate entitled "Can Propaganda Have Any Value in Education?" While the debate was between a socialist educator, Scott Nearing, and a libertarian, Alex Ferm, the debate does isolate the issues and practical problems American anarchists would face, directly or indirectly, as they worked to put into practice an educational philosophy of freedom, creativity and revolution.
The central question raised in the debate "Can Propaganda Have Any Value in Education?" surrounded how schools create a radical culture. This was addressed by Scott Nearing, who defined education as the passing on of culture through the direct teaching of this culture from a particular perspective. Nearing argued that all education was propaganda and a significant function of education was to propagandize. He said,

I believe it is absolutely essential for the freeing of the individual and for the freeing of society from its errors and blunders. I believe that both as regards the individual and as regards society, propaganda has a very definite nature in education.  

Nearing affirmed Ferrer's arguments that since all education passed on cultural values and beliefs, the job of radical education must be to pass on those aspects of culture that explained the reality of the poor. He again reaffirmed Ferrer's view of childhood by claiming that education must have a social function, because children, who were social creatures and part of a social world, were capable of generating ideas and values tied to the social life of the community. As such, the schools must recognize the social nature of childhood and teach social issues; this he termed propaganda. He stated,

I am loath to put these problems on the shoulders of children just as I am loath to put on the shoulders of boys of eighteen and twenty the task of slaughtering their fellows. But if that is the kind of world we live in, I believe we ought to say so and if I had a choice, I would go into every High School in the country and talk about poverty and war and the wage system and make every girl and boy hate both these things as they hate and loathe small pox. ...  

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42 Has Propaganda Any Value in Education? Debate Between Dr. Scott Nearing and Alex Ferm (New York: Rand School, 1925), p. 12.
Nearing's position argued that there is freedom in education when children are taught to see the contradictions and evils of society. Freedom comes through the direct teaching of social issues. He clearly reaffirmed the essential components of the Ferrer tradition.

On the other hand, Alex Ferm, a libertarian educator in the tradition of Tolstoy, countered Nearing's arguments when he claimed that the world of childhood was distinct from the adult world of social concerns. He believed that education should not force adult concerns onto children who, when forced, either rebel or mouth values they do not believe. Such education created adults who expressed one idea and in critical situations acted contrary to this value or idea. Ferm's example was drawn from the popular response of the adult population to World War I. He complained that many stated pacifists or anti-war people proceeded to enlist in the service. He said,

The average individual does not know what war means. When it comes again he will go just as he did the last time. It was not only the boys who went to war but men, civilized men who battled against it all their lives. Anarchists, socialists, all kinds went into it. . . . It is not propaganda we need.

He argued against propaganda because he felt that in actual situations people go against expressed ideas when these ideas conflict with their deeper emotional needs. Education must therefore allow children to explore these deeper needs. In this way children will encounter their beliefs on an emotional level and these beliefs will in turn grow out of the child's emotional world. The values and beliefs of such children

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\[^{44}\text{Has Propaganda Any Value in Education?}, \text{ p. 27.}\]
will be authentically expressed in their behavior. Ferm stated,

As he grows, he will develop culture, he will on his own be able to see the improvements that past generations have made and be able to make use of them if they are worthwhile. Independent theories, creative minds, people who know why they do things, who know whether or not things are worthwhile, can only come from being permitted to grow like plants.  

Ferm argued that freedom in education involved the indirect teaching of radical culture through libertarian classroom policies and individualized methods of teaching. In this way schools developed individuals with strong independent minds, individuals capable of defending their beliefs. He objected to the direct teaching of radical culture because it imposed an adult world on children. In this way he followed the romantic tradition of Tolstoy which differed significantly from the tradition of Ferrer and Nearing.

The significance of the debate did not simply lie in the pedagogical question raised: Should schools teach radical culture directly or indirectly? It lay in the deeper suggestion that a particular pedagogical style had ramifications for the revolutionary potential of schooling and for the ability of the school to root itself among the working population. In his concluding remarks Nearing pinpointed this connection. He stated:

Not what are you going to do with the child who lives a more or less sheltered life in Stelton, not with that child in a vacuum, not with a child living in a society in which he can do as he likes, my question is what are you going to do with the children by the tens of thousands living on the east and west side of New York City?

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45 *Has Propaganda Any Value in Education?*, p. 27.

46 Ibid., p. 23.
He made the connection between pedagogy, revolutionary struggle and mass movements much more visible when he criticized Ferm's pedagogical style because it was suited to the few who lived in special, isolated circumstances and was unrelated to the masses of poor living on the Lower East Side. Nearing argued that there was a close connection between pedagogical style and radical education designed to reach large numbers of the poor, which Ferm ignored in his conception of libertarian education.

Nearing's position raised questions concerning the relationship of pedagogy to communal needs and revolutionary struggles, while Ferm's position raised questions concerning the role education plays in creating the questioner, the outsider, the critic, the Socratic hero, as well as questions about the relationship of this outsider, this poet, to social change. Yet when both positions are fused, the question becomes, can a revolutionary pedagogy create the individual rebel, the Socrates, the poet, and still become rooted in a mass revolutionary struggle?

The significance of the debate Has Propaganda Any Value in Education? lies in the ways it illuminated the central "Problematic," the configuration of questions which American anarchists dealt with directly or indirectly during the Progressive Era. This set of questions differed significantly from those raised by the Progressives who were also dealing with the education of the immigrant poor in the Lower East Side, Harlem, Chicago, and other urban centers. It differed from the more radical of these reformers, John Dewey and Jane Addams,
who raised questions of how to humanize, extend, and democratize education so that the gross inequalities of the Progressive Era are adjusted and the needs and desires of the poor are addressed by the educational institutions. Anarchists countered the Progressives with a set of concerns related to revolutionary change and an education that would expedite that change. The configuration of questions surrounded the central theme of the ways in which a radical pedagogy created a culture of freedom on an individual and class level. Specifically, they asked: What was the relationship between pedagogical style and the revolutionary quality of schooling; what was the number of children involved, the kinds of consciousness the children developed, and so on? Did style affect the ability of the school to root itself among the working populace? Could the school redefine a radical culture on the basis of freedom and a conception of childhood which is antithetical to the prevailing culture of the community, or would it remain isolated from these communities in the way Bakunin's secret societies or the Mother Earth magazine with their avant garde ideas had? If these schools were to become rooted in a community, must their radical pedagogy include cultural forms already present in the lives of working people? If they incorporated existent culture, would these schools lose their radical potential and suffer the fate common to mass organizations? Would the attempt to create a "common culture" have a leveling effect that rooted out the individuality and creativity needed for real revolutionary change?
Whether these questions were addressed directly or indirectly, they formed the central theme of American anarchists who were writing during the Progressive Era and the central problems faced by the Modern School. They were analyzed and addressed not only from a romantic or syndicalist perspective, though these did provide the central polarities to each question; they were addressed through the unique blend of the American cultural criticism of Emma Goldman and the native American tradition of libertarian education. While the latter two world views did not appreciably alter the polarities between a definition of freedom in class terms, they did soften these polarities. These writers came from a wide range of backgrounds; some were activists, others libertarian educators, still others, revolutionary immigrants. They included such individuals as Emma Goldman, Elizabeth Ferm, Carl Zigrosse, Leonard Abbott, Harry Kelley, W. T. Brown. Many were actual teachers in the Modern Schools, others wrote on education for The Modern School magazine and still others were parents in the Modern School. All provided the theoretical writings and practice that could be called American Anarchist Educational tradition.

Emma Goldman was the most widely known of the above-mentioned writers. At times her speeches and articles on schooling united both traditions; at other times she emphasized one to the exclusion of the other.\textsuperscript{[47]} Two experiences, one out of the European syndicalist tradition,

\textsuperscript{[47]}Miss Goldman describes the importance of the child becoming a social being "and to realize himself in a harmonious blending with society." Other times she emphasizes the importance of the individual. The problem remained; finding the proper relationship between individual
the other out of the American libertarian tradition were particularly significant to her development of educational theory. One was her meeting with the syndicalist educator Sebastion Faure at La Ruche, and the other was the meeting of Elizabeth and Alex Ferm in New York.

In 1906 Miss Goldman visited La Ruche in the French countryside. The significance of this visit lies in the fact that Faure, a French syndicalist, created a libertarian school known as "the Beehive" for the working class or orphaned children of the district. Here he put into practice anarchist philosophy and beliefs about human nature and human relationships. What was particularly interesting in Miss Goldman's description of that visit was the way in which La Ruche combined a libertarian educational philosophy of freedom much like that of Tolstoy with a working-class perspective. This unity seemed to be accomplished indirectly through Faure's political work in the movement and his affiliation with other revolutionary educators. While there was no evidence of the direct teaching of class culture, there was the assumption that on some level his political commitment infused the school. Emma Goldman in her autobiography described her admiration for Faure, a political man and an educator. Both traits were impressive to her. The school itself was impressive because of the humanness,

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49Leberstein, "Revolutionary Education," pp. 159-189.
50Goldman, Living My Life, p. 408.
warmth and general sense of community and freedom found when children worked their gardens, came to small group discussions, listened to stories and painted their rooms. The description she gave of the enthusiasm and freedom found at the school had much in common with that of Tolstoy's school. The general libertarian atmosphere meant there were no texts, no grades, no exams, and freedom for children to come and go to class as they wished. Miss Goldman described her impressions of this experience: "My visit made me realize how much could be done even under the present in the way of a libertarian education to build the men and women of the future, to unshackle the soul of the child." In a sense her realization and commitment to the notion of freedom in children before the revolution caused Faure to be an important influence on her involvement in the Modern School. Yet, of course, the situation in America between education and politics was different; on the most basic level there was not the political movement nor the commitment of large numbers of workers.

The second experiment, the Ferm school, the Playhouse, had somewhat different implications for Emma Goldman and the Modern School. Its roots lie in a native American libertarian tradition which was not connected to a political movement. Miss Goldman visited the Ferm school in 1901 before she became actively involved in the formation of the Modern School. That it impressed her greatly can be seen

51 Goldman, Living My Life, p. 408.
52 Ibid., p. 409.
53 Ibid., p. 336.
from her statement: "The Ferms were the first Americans I met whose ideas of education were akin to mine, but while I merely advocated the need of a new approach to the child, the Ferms translated their ideas into practice." The school itself was libertarian and its pedagogy, its values and its beliefs were much like Tolstoy's and very similar to those Emma Goldman was to express in later years. It seemed to translate the cultural criticism of Miss Goldman into an actuality of childrearing. Here freedom and individuality were explored by children who were not bound by rules or texts, and who were free to learn as they wished. Here Miss Goldman saw her ideas of passion, creativity, and imagination transformed into a practice of schooling. Yet this educational practice was a radical departure from both the public schools and the private religious schools which the immigrant child of the Lower East Side attended. In both cases a particular tradition, Americanization of Jewish culture, was transmitted, while at the Playhouse the notion of freedom did not include the transmission of a particular culture or tradition. In this, it was the antithesis of the cultural world from which Emma Goldman and the children of the soon-to-be Modern School would come. Its cultural form came from the experience of the native American intelligentsia and their world view, even though it contained within it the romantic heritage of Tolstoy as well as elements of Miss Goldman's critique of American culture.

54Goldman, Living My Life, pp. 335
55Ibid., p. 333.
Miss Goldman was introduced to this tradition on a speaking tour of libertarian clubs in and around New York. She became interested in the tradition for reasons discussed in Chapter II. She made several friends who would become teachers in the Modern school or writers in The Modern School magazine. She says,

I accepted gladly because of the opportunity. I had been wanting for years to reach the native intelligentsia, to enlighten it as to what anarchism really means. At the gathering I made new friends and met old ones, among them, Ernest Crosby, Leonard D. Abbott and Theodore Schroeder.\(^56\)

Alex and Elizabeth Ferm and John Coryelle are among the friends who were to become teachers in the Modern School. In actuality, it seemed that the major portion of the teachers at the Modern School between 1910 and 1920 came from this native American tradition.\(^57\)

However, problems arose because the libertarian tradition in its definition of freedom, left undefined in its educational theory, the political tradition of revolution and the cultural world of the immigrant workers. On the other hand, the political activities of the immigrants often left undefined the emotional world of childhood.

In practice, the political activities of the workers did infuse the

\(^{56}\) Goldman, Living My Life, p. 335.

\(^{57}\) The Head Teachers in charge of the Modern School between 1912 and 1920 came out of the native American tradition. Many were graduates of elite universities. William Preston Brown had been a student at Yale where he studied divinity, 1892-1895. He was born in upstate New York and had been a minister in a Connecticut church (Reichert, Partisans of Freedom, pp. 452-454). Will Durant came to the school from a Catholic seminary (ibid., p. 446). Robert Hutchinson was married to the granddaughter of W. W. Longfellow and came to the school from Yale. "Who the Teachers Are," The Modern School 1 (September 1914): 8.
libertarian methodology of the school with a tradition of class consciousness. Even though the libertarian tradition, with its conceptions of freedom, remained foreign to the workers' culture, many workers found it appealing; it offered a critique of American culture and childrearing which was compatible with their search for freedom from the dogma and traditions that characterized the education of their forefathers. They also found it appealing because many were alienated from the rigid Americanization programs in the surrounding public schools. However, in the unity of the two traditions, the philosophical and practical problems of defining a radical anarchist culture of childhood emerged. When the two strains existed harmoniously, the problems remained in the background; when the two strains separated to form distinct strands, they produced tensions and conflicts in the school and in the philosophy of the school as it was articulated in The Modern School magazine.

Miss Ferra, whose writings had much in common with Tolstoy, was representative of the romantic libertarian tradition as it existed on the American scene. Miss Ferra added to the romantic conception of children and childhood psychological and sociological insights appropriate to the American scene. Her major contribution to the Modern School educational theory was her emphasis on teaching radical culture in an indirect manner based on child psychology. Her article "Activity and Passivity of the Educator," written in 1907, placed heavy emphasis on the inner life of the child and the relationship of the teacher to this inner life. She said, "I maintain that the psychic quality must exist
in order to make the relationship real and enduring, filled to weather
the storm and stress of their intercourse and association as child
and educator."\(^{58}\) Essentially Miss Ferm believed that learning took
place as part of an emotional relationship between child and teacher.
The teacher's role was to study the child, be available for the child
and wait for the appropriate moment to intervene in the child's
activities in order to draw her out and aid her development. Yet the
freedom to develop, which the child experienced in the classroom, was
not simply individualized liberty. For Miss Ferm, freedom in the
psychological realm was connected to the social realm and much of her
effort went toward creating a free flowing community where new forms
of relationships were experienced rather than taught. In her under­
standing and direction of this classroom, she used many of the
categories that are found in the social theory of Bakunin and Kropotkin:
Manual labor she developed through children's newspapers and the build­
ing of classroom furniture; individuation and creativity she developed
through art projects, poetry and creative writing; community she
developed through a non-authoritarian and equalitarian classroom
atmosphere where all participated in the decision making.\(^{59}\) Her

\(^{58}\) E. Ferm, "Activity and Passivity in Education," *Mother Earth*
2, no. 1 (1907-1908): 30.

\(^{59}\) For a more detailed description of Elizabeth Ferm's educational
philosophy, see E. Ferm, Freedom in Education (New York: Lear
Publishers, 1949), as well as her articles, some of which have been
published, others of which have been given as speeches and all of which
can be found in the Modern School Association of North America, Special
Collections, Rutgers University Library. Particular attention should
be paid to the following articles in this collection by E. Ferm:
terminology and her classroom values grew out of an anarchist philosophy and in this way she exhibited the close connection between a libertarian educational philosophy and anarchist social theory. This was particularly evident when she tried to create a community in the classroom without rulers. She removed the traditional barriers between teacher and student, and student and student, through the denial of any system of rewards or punishments. Power and decisions were shared; discipline or the disruption of order was seen as a breakdown of the community. In this she exhibited many of the characteristics of both Ferrer and Tolstoy, and remained distinct from the traditional educators of her day who saw disorder as a breakdown of classroom authority. When chaos existed, the role of the leader was to help the children regain consciousness of themselves as individuals and of their relations to one another. She said, "The children are scattered mentally, their human association is disturbed. They are simply reflecting their own disturbed state to one another." Here Miss Ferm defined a social theory of the classroom that fitted directly into anarchist theories of society.

While Elizabeth Ferm's educational philosophy had anarchist implications for the classroom in terms of individual freedom and community, it had no defined analysis of the political and economic


relationship of schooling to revolutionary change. In this way, its impact on the immigrant community, while impressive, remained limited. It could not provide a model for those anarchists who were concerned with passing on their particular social vision to their children. Her educational theory remained connected to the native American experience precisely because it ignored the questions of class exploitation, revolutionary struggle, and so on. She most clearly articulated this position in the 1930s, the theme of which can be found in her earlier writing as well. She stated: "The saviour of the world will not be the class-conscious worker but the creative artist."  

While many of Miss Ferm's ideas became central to the educational theories of the Modern School, other educators in the movement sought to add to and rework Miss Ferm's educational theories and her conception of freedom. These educators wished to add a distinct social or political component to her libertarian emphasis. For these educators it was not enough to teach social concerns through the indirect atmosphere and ambience of the classroom. There had to be a more direct and honest attempt to raise social questions in the classroom. This did not mean that men like Carl Zigrosser or W. T. Brown rejected the psychological and social insights of creativity which characterized libertarian theory, but it did mean they found these insufficient to deal with social injustices and revolutionary politics. Their solutions ranged from the direct teaching of anarchist philosophy and workers'  

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history, in keeping with the Ferrer tradition, to those who wished to discuss and teach social issues, but did not wish to emphasize anarchist philosophy and class issues for fear their teaching would become too dogmatic and authoritarian.

W. T. Brown, who became a principal at the school in 1916, voiced this criticism of schools that deal with educational freedom and educational innovation and refuse to deal with the political economy of the larger society. He claimed such schools could not be radical because in their classrooms they masked the inequality and exploitation of the larger society. He believed this to be particularly true of the Progressive educators who claimed to be democratizing the classroom, while in reality neglecting the source of inequality and exploitation which constituted the reality of each child's daily existence outside the classroom.

In the School they are all members of a perfect democracy as far as their relations to one another are concerned. But in society as it exists in America today and as it has existed for 1,000 years or more the whole flavor of human liberation is radically different. Some individuals are employees and others are employers. Some near slaves and others visibly slaves.

Brown's criticism of the Progressives suggested that whether an educational philosophy is progressive or libertarian, if it did not deal with the political economic questions outside the classroom, it could not hope for social change. In other words Brown was critical of


63 Ibid., p. 16.
innovations in the classroom alone. Brown raised questions educators are asking today: Can a radical pedagogy be defined in purely pedagogical or methodological terms? On another level, Brown suggested that a radical pedagogy with a political economic perspective must be part of a political movement. He attacked the Frances Parker School which claimed democracy and freedom were important tools of pedagogy because it remained a select school for rich kids. In a sense, what Brown was asking was, where were the democracy and freedom? He believed that the issues of inequality and social justice, which must be clearly taught to children in radical schools, will not be taught when they go against the class interest of the school. He asked, "Is it conceivable that a Rockefeller Modern School in New York will ever teach any principle of economics which condemns the method by which its founders got its wealth?" In this statement Brown showed that the class bias of education could not be rectified through changes in curriculum. Class education and inequality could only be altered through a radical pedagogy which was attached to a political movement. Brown insisted, much in the communitarian tradition of Ferrer, that a radical pedagogy was not only a matter of innovative teaching, it was a matter of political economy and a matter of social movements. It was not that Brown advocated the direct teaching of anarchist ideas; it was rather that he demanded the school be committed to worker education and

64 Brown, The Most Important Educational Experiment in America, p. 16.
65 Ibid., p. 17.
revolutionary social change in terms of the students who attend, philosophy of teachers, the activities of the parents of the school, and the overall perspective of the material presented in the school. In this he represented the American version of Ferrer's notion of radical education.

Other members of the Ferrer Association amplified Brown's position. Leonard Abbott showed that the Modern School and the philosophy of the American anarchists could not be understood outside the tradition from which it emerged. By this he meant that anarchist education in The Modern School grew out of the tradition of Joe Hill, the I.W.W. and the American working class, and that the function of the school was to keep these struggles alive. He made it clear that the educational philosophy at the school was not designed to simply experiment with innovative ideas, but rather to keep alive that political and historical tradition out of which the school grew. On the other hand, Carl Zigrosser, who probably came out of a less active political life than Brown and Abbott, also demanded that the teaching of social consciousness be a part of the school philosophy, though he is less precise in terms of the revolutionary import of this consciousness. He said,

None are so blind as those who do not wish to see; almost all schools ignore the glaring injustices of our civilization and whether consciously or unconsciously, proceed to

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train children to become virtual slaves. The Modern School opposes inequalities.\textsuperscript{67}

He goes on to reassert the social importance of education when he says, "The job of pedagogy is to prevent the child from entering the world blindfolded."\textsuperscript{68}

Whether the debate goes on in the United States between Elizabeth Ferm and W. T. Brown, between Alex Ferm and Scott Nearing, or between their European predecessors, Francisco Ferrer and Leo Tolstoy, the theme remains the same. Anarchist education explored the boundaries and the polarities of freedom, the outer limits of freedom. The philosophical questions, the polarities, the limits and the answers or compromises are much like those found in the history of the movement. The pedagogical questions and the educational philosophy they evolved were the tools used to theoretically work out the boundaries in terms of childhood and in terms of revolutionary pedagogy. The questions they each raised are historical, sociological and philosophical and covered the potentialities for freedom in adults, children, the world, the city; they asked where? how? when? why? in which ways? through which pedagogy? for which children? under which historical circumstances? The polarities and limits were defined on one end by Tolstoy and Ferm and the romantic libertarian tradition and at the other end by Ferrer and W. T. Brown and the syndicalist or communitarian tradition. Yet

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\item Ibid.
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within each polarity and within each tradition lay the seeds for its own demise. The question remains, at what point does this conception of freedom break down in philosophical as well as socio-historical terms. In other words, when pushed to their most extreme form what do they tell us about the limitation of freedom in anarchist terms?

When the romantic individualistic tradition is pushed to its most extreme form, imagination, the life force, and creativity are turned into tyrannies; the child is lost inside his own head and the world he himself has created. Freedom is obscured because the social connection between individuals is lost sight of. In its most extreme form, the drug experience becomes the ultimate formulation of creativity. The individual child explores the inner world of his own imagination. Yet this inner freedom is an illusion, as the outer world of tyrannies, wars, racism, poverty impinge on the child and the young adult perverting their meaning of life. At the same time, the loss of social connection means that the positive notions of freedom characteristic of Bakunin and Kropotkin, the freedom to create community, to create a social world, is obliterated. In its most extreme form, in its most extreme exultation of the inner world, the experience turns nihilistic in its demand for self-exploration, in its notion of anything-goes and in its conviction that all experiences are valid and are expressions which are worthwhile. It loses sight of the fact that "self-expression" is meaningless when it grows in a vacuum, when it emerges out of emptiness. It turns in on itself and becomes
narcissistic. In neither of these instances is the child or the individual free. While this is neither the position of Ferm, Tolstoy or the romantics, they each have within their educational philosophies these potentialities for the loss or destruction of freedom, while at the same time, they each contain the seed for liberation.

On the other hand, Nearing and Ferrer provide the contradiction, the other polarity of freedom in their claim that freedom must be anchored to a particular class in society. Yet in its most extreme form this too breaks down when the revolutionary fervor of the class insists on defining the class perspective, the historical tradition, and the demands of the revolution for everyone. In its definition of the revolution of the outside world, of the social experience, of the workers, it becomes so defined, so rigid, that it serves to bind the mind in categories defined by others, while the individual loses his connection to his inner self, his inner world. In the fervor of class revolution when the teaching of dogma often supplants revolutionary critical thought, totalitarianism and dogma replace freedom. While this is not Ferrer's position, the seeds for this extremity lie within this philosophy as does its liberating connection to the social world.

Freedom demands that the polarities unite and it is this that American anarchist educational theory and practice was trying to do. To prevent self-absorption, creativity and imagination must be contained; it must be rooted as a seed is rooted in the earth in order to flower and develop. Unanchored, or in flight, it bounces with the wind; it becomes nothing; it remains a seed flying around, but never flowering.
By not flowering it loses its freedom. So, too, with creativity and imagination—its limits, its anchorage lie in the ways it is harnessed outside itself. Its flowering depends on this anchorage. What this means is that freedom finds its own limitations in commitment to something outside itself. In this, the problem is much like that defined by Camus in *The Plague*: When the doctor who is free to leave the stricken town chooses to remain and help the victims of the town, running the risk of death from the plague. It is also much like I. B. Singer, whose creativity lies in his commitment to defining his heritage, to exploring his history. For the anarchists, the commitment lies in harnessing the imagination and the creativity of the romantic pedagogy outside itself in a commitment to the revolutionary struggle of the class liberation that was characteristic of the communitarian tradition. This central dilemma could not be easily resolved as tensions developed. Harnessing the imagination in struggle was not easy; practice and the history of the school during the Progressive Era revealed the difficulties, the tensions, and the confusions created by the unity of the two polarities. The problem theoretically posed could only be realized, understood and answered by examining the practice of anarchist schooling in New York. It is for this reason we turn to *The Modern School of New York* to explore the ways in which anarchists defined and redefined freedom in the practice of schooling in America and the ramifications this definition had for the revolutionary struggles of anarchists.
CHAPTER IV

ANARCHIST SCHOOLING: THE MODERN SCHOOL AND THE FERRER ASSOCIATION IN NEW YORK

Anarchist education began in New York in 1910 with the formation of the Ferrer Association. Soon afterwards the Modern School and The Modern School magazine, the Stelton Colony and the Modern School Association of North America were established. These institutions comprised the first attempt by anarchist revolutionaries to organize, in the United States, an alternative to public schooling and traditional living arrangements. As alternative education, The Modern School, which educated workers' children, was based on libertarian educational theories, while the Ferrer Center, the Stelton Colony and the Modern School Association of North America served to strengthen the school's ties to the anarchist movement. What is interesting is the way in which political concerns infused educational goals and the way in which educational goals were tied to a political definition of radical change.

The movement's concern with freedom and authority became the central focus of the school, the center and the magazine. An early editorial in The Modern School magazine reads: "The ideal to which the school is dedicated is not easy to define. Anything really large is difficult to define. Freedom by its very nature is vague and the
spirit of freedom is what inspires our work."¹ This vagueness as to the elusive quality of freedom engendered major difficulties for anarchist schooling and education and the school, the magazine and the Ferrer Association soon were caught in the same dilemmas that had engulfed the political movement and educational theorists. The central tension between the romantic individualism of Emerson, Tolstoy and Thoreau, and the class orientation of the syndicalists reappeared in the practice of schooling. It became clear that historical conditions and the different educational decisions made by the association to deal with the changing needs of the movement forced the two conceptions of freedom into contradiction. The net effect was to alter the school experience from the early days of 1911, when the school first opened in New York, to the later years, the thirties and forties when the school was located at the Stelton Colony in New Jersey.

What is interesting about the change in direction is the way in which the two strains of educational philosophy worked themselves out and the effect this had on the relationship of the school to the Anarchist Movement and revolutionary politics. At times it was possible for the school to infuse a personal, individualistic, romantic pedagogy with a revolutionary class perspective without stifling individual growth. During these periods the underlying tensions between the two philosophies receded and the strength of each philosophical conception of freedom compensated for the weaknesses inherent in the other position.

At these times, unity between the two strains of thought seemed possible even though the underlying tension remained. However, at other times, the romantic and class-based pedagogy were in open conflict, making it difficult for the school to define clearly its goals and its classroom orientation. This served to create splits within the school between parents and teacher or between members of the association. Under still other circumstances, one philosophical view dominated, and although the school experience and the pedagogical orientation became stabilized, the direction taken sacrificed the expressly political goals of the founders.

These shifts between a private, personal notion of freedom and a class conception of freedom had serious repercussions for radical education and the Anarchist movement. The philosophical question whether freedom in education could be harnessed to a historical commitment to workers' struggles, was deeply affected by the shifts in educational policy, as were related questions concerning the ways in which revolutionary traditions and workers' culture would be transmitted to the next generation. Clearly a romantic, individualistic orientation could effectively isolate the school from workers' struggles when it focused on individual creativity, imagination and personal freedom to the exclusion of political and social concerns. On the other hand, a class conscious orientation might over-emphasize external issues, thereby inhibiting personal and emotional freedoms.

These philosophical tensions were visible on concrete level, in the splits that arose in The Modern School between the members of the
Ferrer Association and the teachers, as well as in the arguments between the parents and the teachers. They were visible on another level, in the kinds of activities developed at the center and the ties that did or did not develop between the school, the center and the movement. They were articulated most clearly by the students of the Modern School in their reminiscences of their early school experience.

These students who in the 1930s looked back at their early years in the Modern School, articulated the central problems faced by these anarchists when they erected an educational complex for workers' children, based on radical notions of personal and political-economic freedoms. Their criticisms of their school experience suggest several problems: the schools' ultimate isolation from the lives of workers struggling in the urban areas; the often directionless quality of classroom experiences when a working class perspective had not been clearly articulated; the too heavy emphasis on private or personal freedoms to the exclusion of social ties to freedom, and the lack of a class perspective and revolutionary politics in the graduates.

The specific comments of former students took a variety of forms. Several students criticized the school for failing to meet its original goals. Many believed the goal of anarchist education in America was to create intellectual workers who were to become part of the anarchist tradition. They felt that the apparent directionless quality of the classroom made it impossible to achieve this goal. One student,

2"Reunion and Conference of Former Students and Pupils and Teachers of the Modern School," p. 6.
Sasha Winick, claimed the school had never made an impression on the students and therefore it never gave the students a sense of its purpose. He said, "The teachers at the school had not sufficiently defined the purpose of modern education and as a result the pupils left the school without it having made a real impression." Another former student, Leo Shapiro, had a similar complaint when he asked, "Did the School want to produce a group of artists?" Mr. Shapiro was critical of this goal, not because he was opposed to educating artists, but rather because creating artists with revolutionary consciousness did not deal with larger social issues, such as strikes, exploitation, and capitalism. On the other hand, Walt Kremont believed that the strength of his education at the Modern School lay in the questioning atmosphere of the school, the freedom of choice available to all students and the open quality of the education. He claimed that in the Modern School he was able to explore and develop his own ideas while feeling a part of a real community of students. Perhaps if the school had had a defined political curriculum Mr. Kremont would not have been able to explore ideas as freely. The students' comments and criticisms suggest that on a practical level there was a problem of realizing a pedagogy of freedom, and that as late as 1930 the tensions between personal liberation and a clearly defined class conscious pedagogy remained unresolved.

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3"Reunion and Conference of Former Students and Pupils and Teachers of the Modern School," p. 6.
4Ibid.
5Ibid.
Further comments by the students suggest that the philosophical tensions experienced in school were connected to the specific relationship between the school and the movement that grew out of the changing historical times. Sasha Winich stated that the isolation of the school at Stelton from a city organization created the lack of direction and clarity of purpose he had experienced at the earlier school. He believed the urban setting in the past had served to infuse the school with political and social vitality. For Winick, the school needed to be coupled with a workers' movement if the philosophical and educational direction of the school were to remain clear. Harmony Capolla, a former student and parent of a former student in the school, suggested that the school was most vital when it was backed by the "New York Intelligentsia." Both Mrs. Capolla and Mr. Winick agreed that the close connection between a libertarian education and the anarchist movement gave direction and vitality to the school.

Somewhat connected to Miss Capolla's comments and Mr. Winick's statement was the criticism made by another student who also believed that the school's isolation in the country created a gulf between the students and the daily lives of the workers in the city. This student felt that such isolation made workers' struggles seem remote from the ongoing world of Stelton. Another student, Mr. Shapiro, believed that this isolation could be countered by clearly defining the educational,

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6 "Reunion and Conference of Former Students and Pupils and Teachers of the Modern School," p. 6.

7 Interview with Harmony Capolla, Stelton Colony, Piscataway, N.J., Summer 1976.
philosophical, and political direction of the school, and through introducing "more propaganda in the schools." Certainly his suggestion is in keeping with the Ferrer pedagogical tradition.

The majority of students at the reunion desired unity between what we have termed the romantic, and class-based philosophical traditions. They expressed this when they emphasized the need for a libertarian school that would maintain close ties to the movement; the need for the Stelton school to move out of its isolation in the country and into a workers' community; the need for a classroom pedagogy which emphasized the direct teaching of class-consciousness in keeping with the tradition of Ferrer and Nearing. The students offered a variety of approaches which they believed would help cement unity between the two traditions. Some placed more emphasis on the direct teaching of class struggle, while others hoped that in an indirect way, closer ties to a political movement would produce class-consciousness in the students and still others emphasized the need to maintain an open atmosphere at the school.

In actuality the school experimented with several of the above orientations. Each afforded a different set of consequences in terms of freedom and radical social change. Our intention here is to examine the school's history from the time it opened its doors in 1910 to the day it closed its doors in 1950, in order to understand the ways in which radical pedagogy and radical schooling can be sustained to create

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8"Reunion and Conference of Former Students and Pupils and Teachers of the Modern School," p. 6.
a radical culture leading to the transformation of society.

Our emphasis will therefore be on the ties between the school and the movement, and the ways in which anarchism was transmitted to the next generation, rather than pedagogical methods, grading, curriculum and so on, although these areas will also be investigated. Our purpose here is to use the school's history to understand the philosophical problems of freedom within an anarchist framework. While we will focus on the school's early years, 1910-1925, we will also briefly examine the later years. The early years remain the most interesting for our purposes because it was during these years that shifts in philosophy, methodology and general orientation of the school are most dramatic. Looking at these early years is, in a sense, similar to examining a person's youth in order to understand the process of struggle for self-definition. It is during these years that the choices made, and the historical conditions under which they were made, were most visible. It is during these years that the conflicts and tensions in anarchist educational philosophy can be most clearly examined as they worked themselves out in the history of the school. Our particular examination will be divided into two distinct periods: "The New York Years, 1910-1915" and "The Stelton Years, 1915-1950." It will become evident that by 1921 the school's philosophical direction became established and the period of youth in the school's history was over. After this period the changes that occurred in the school's philosophy, educational practices and commitment to revolutionary struggle remained within a context defined by the crucial decisions and historical
circumstances of the early years. While there were real changes in
the 1930s and 1940s, these changes remained within the context
established by 1923. Thus the purpose of this study is to discern the
ways in which the choices of location, commitment, and hiring of
teachers affected the bringing together of the romantic and syndicalist
traditions in education and how the various strains worked themselves
out and became solidified, by 1923, into an American Anarchist
experience of education.

"The New York Years," The Ferrer Association

The New York Years, 1910-1915, can be singled out as a unique
period in the historical development of the Ferrer Association and the
Modern School. Beginning at the height of the Progressive Era when
radical and labor activity was most intense and operating in the Jewish
working class communities of New York, the school combined political,
class-oriented and personal definitions of freedom. In these years

9The fact that the school began in a period of intense and
militant labor struggle is important for an understanding of the
school's development. The fear of labor and working class movements
set the tone for the official government response as well as for
industry's response to radical political activity. In turn this
political climate affected the Modern School and the Ferrer Center
particularly as we shall see in terms of harassment at the hands of
the New York establishment. At the same time the militancy of labor
also had a positive affect on the development of radical consciousness
in the children of the school. The intense labor activity that
characterized the period at the school in New York in 1910 to 1915
included the Patterson silk strike, the New York shirtwaist factory
strike, the Lawrence textile workers strike and the Colorado mining
strike which became known as the Ludlow Massacre of 1914. These are
only some of the major struggles of 1910 to 1915. Most of these turned
out to be long, intense and bloody and this period was in fact
there was unity between the two strains of anarchism. While the combination was sometimes awkward, often confused, and at moments detrimental to the continuance of the school, it was also particularly exciting. At no other point in the history of the school was there the same consistent and prolonged unity of personal, cultural and class notions of freedom. Why and how this unity was achieved and the problems inherent in unifying two distinctly different traditions is what we are going to explore in this section.

Crucial to the successful unity of these two traditions is the fact that the school originated in the radical politics of workers, political activists, immigrants, anarchists and socialists. The Ferrer Association, which is responsible for the Ferrer Center, the Modern School and The Modern School magazine, originated in the winter of 1909-1910, when the radical community of New York anarchists and socialists rallied to protest the execution of the Spanish anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer.10 Ferrer, whose theories we have explored in Chapter II, had been an educator connected with syndicalist and anarchist politics. At a Spanish workers' uprising in 1909 he had been

arrested and finally executed both for his politics and for his work at the Modern School of Barcelona.\(^\text{11}\)

In the winter of 1909–1910, in New York, a series of demonstrations were held to protest Ferrer's execution. In June 1910 these same demonstrators met at the Harlem Liberal Alliance to form the Ferrer Association. The organization consisted of twenty-two members, though at that time, no real general play, by-laws or constitution was established.\(^\text{12}\)

The new organization did not really get underway until the following fall, when Emma Goldman revitalized the association with a second series of activities and demonstrations around Ferrer's death. In October of 1910 the New York members held a mass meeting to mark the first anniversary of Ferrer's death. Five hundred dollars was collected at the meeting and the financial base for the continuance of the association and the opening of the school was laid.\(^\text{13}\) This action allowed the association to become somewhat stabilized, and that winter the concerns of the association were articulated. These concerns included the promises to (1) create an educational center for radical thought that would service the New York community by providing evening classes and a radical reading room consisting of

\(^{11}\)He is reputed to have said at the moment of execution, "Aim carefully, my children. It is not your fault. I am innocent. Long live the modern _______." William Heaford, "Francisco Ferrer," in Francisco Ferrer: His Life, Work and Martyrdom (New York: Ferrer Association, 1910), p. 55.


radical literature not available elsewhere in the community; (2) to continue the protest of Ferrer's execution; (3) to begin a day school for children along the lines of the Modern School of Spain; and (4) to aid all movements for human liberation. The political base of the educational complex was clearly defined; education, politics and notions of freedom were intimately connected and class-defined. The intentions of the founders were grounded in the Ferrer schools of Spain and in a revolutionary outlook.

The members of the association, several of whom would, over the next few years, become actively involved in creating the educational complex, included a wide range of individuals: writers, artists, intellectuals, and free-thinkers, although Russian Jewish immigrants made up the bulk of the association. These immigrants came out of a long history of political struggle in Europe and were well-read in philosophy and politics. Miss Ackerman, one of the early members of the association, called them "worker intellectuals." The range of membership was broad and included militant activists and revolutionaries like Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman; union organizers and organizers of the unemployed; those who were exclusively educators; individuals who had had experience with Socialist Sunday Schools; and others who had read the theories of Tolstoy and Ferrer. All agreed that it was


15 Sally Ackerman, interview, Stelton Colony, Piscathway, N.J., Summer 1976.
important to educate workers as part of a revolutionary movement, and all were determined to develop and explore radical ideas in relationship to literature, art, poetry, and child-rearing, while actively working with the liberation struggles of the Lawrence textile workers, the Patterson silk workers, and the Mexican Revolution.  

During these New York years several individuals became active. Among the most visible were Alexander Berkman, who edited Mother Earth, Harry Kelly, who had been involved in the socialist Sunday schools, and Leonard Abbott, who had been an editor of Literary Digest and Current Opinions. Emma Goldman was around the center a great deal, but was often too busy with political organizing and Mother Earth to be deeply involved in policy decisions. In his reminiscences, Carl Zigrosser describes these activities: "All these people called themselves anarchists but were not terrorists." Many of these people were members of the literary intelligentsia in and around New York. Mr. Abbott knew many prominent intellectuals, such as Margret Sanger and Edwin Markham, and involved these individuals in the life of the center. Berkman and Goldman were politically militant as well as being intellectuals. All this suggests that while the founders of the Ferrer Association considered themselves political activists, there was a wide

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16 Ackerman, interview.


range of political and intellectual involvement at the center. By the end of the New York years, this will be significant; the harmony that existed between the different kinds of anarchists will be called into question as tension erupted over militant political activity and the place of the school and the center in such activity.

The fact that the Ferrer Association was born out of the activities of political demonstrations rather than the philosophy of educators insured the center's political leanings. In actuality the center's politics were clearly defined in the cultural and intellectual activities, as well as through direct political involvement in revolutionary struggles. While the political commitment of the founders defined the ideological direction of the center and the soon-to-be-created Modern School, the pedagogical direction of the school remained less clearly defined. It remained for the parents, founders as political activists, the teachers and the association to determine how these politics would be incorporated into schooling for young children and to determine the pedagogical orientation of the day-to-day working of the classroom.

The center itself was the first of the projected educational ventures to open its doors. In January 1911 it opened at St. Marks Place and was designed to create a communal atmosphere for intellectual inquiry into radical political ideas. The Ferrer Association hoped that the center would attract workers from the surrounding community. It was hoped that the center would become a place where workers would gather to discuss ideas, read about anarchism, and hear lectures by
leading intellectuals and activists, such as Bayard Bojeson of Columbia, Dr. Gilbert Roe, a partner of Clarence Darrow, and speakers from the International Workers of the World and the Socialist Party. 19 The belief was that in a communal atmosphere, radicals and workers would become familiar with ideas seldom expressed elsewhere: the ideas of Emma Goldman, Francisco Ferrer, Peter Kropotkin, Michael Bakunin and other radical thinkers.

The center attracted many kinds of radicals, although the numbers involved were small. Sally Ackerman, a member of the association in those early years explains, "At that time the distinctions between radicals were not clearly defined or as sharply drawn as today." 20 She goes on to explain that the theories of Ferrer appeared so broad that almost everyone concerned with human liberation found something of value in his ideas, a fact which allowed the center to attract many different kinds of people. There were socialists, anarchists, single-taxers, food faddists, and so on, although the predominant group remained anarchists. 21

The center had a strong impact on several of the working women and men who attended, though it is unclear precisely how deeply the vast majority of workers in the community were affected by the existence of the center. Sally Ackerman, who had been a union organizer during

20Ackerman, interview.
these years, claims her revolutionary involvement with libertarian ideas and with The Modern School at Stelton grew out of her visits to the Ferrer center at age fifteen.\(^\text{22}\) It is clear that several other women workers were deeply affected by their relationship to the center. One woman, Minnie Lowensohn, reflected on the significant role the center played in her life:

To go to the school or college is the privilege or good fortune of millions of people, but to meet a group of educators who were big enough to raise plain and simple average men and women to their own level in perfect freedom and equality is a rare treat indeed. It takes little imagination to realize the impressions made by the ladies of the Modern School upon working women in America who up to the time of the Ferrer Association thought that writers and painters and lecturers belonged on a separate planet and who suddenly felt herself one of a group of not only creative artists but great humanitarians. . . .\(^\text{23}\)

It is clear that the center helped shape the consciousness of those workers who attended. What is less clear was the impact of the center on the workers in the community who had no real radical affiliation.

The center itself was vital and active through the ways it sought to create a radical culture for workers. It held lectures, presented theater groups, offered courses, held community dinners and discussions, and housed revolutionary liberation struggles. Its beginnings at St. Marks were inauspicious, yet it grew, the following year, when it moved to East 12th Street and the Day School opened.\(^\text{24}\) Here lectures were

\(^{22}\) Ackerman, interview.


hoped on a variety of subjects. English courses for immigrants were
offered and art classes for interested community members were held.
Emma Goldman spoke frequently on a variety of subjects. As one article
in the first issue of The Modern School stated:

> anyone who doubts the vitality of this movement should have the
> exultant life here, on the day when Emma Goldman delivered the
> lecture on communism given for the benefit of the school. As
> Comrade Goldman leaves on her lecture tour on February 5 the
> school will be losing for a time at least one of its earliest
> sponsors and staunchest supporters.²⁵

The center was a vital place. That same year, the center opened
a tea room and a supper room as part of a fund raising drive and an
attempt to create a communal and informal atmosphere in the center.
The tea room and supper room were open daily from 4:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.
and the food was inexpensive.²⁶ The intention was to draw working men
and women to the center after working hours. A Ferrer discussion club
was started and meetings were held over dinner in the restaurant or
in the tea room.²⁷

That spring saw the second anniversary of the Ferrer Association
and a celebration dinner was held, which over 240 people attended.
Funds were raised for a new building to house the center and the day
school. The aim and objectives of the association were set forth by
various speakers, among whom were Emma Goldman, Leonard Abbott and

²⁵"Notes and Comments," The Modern School 1 (1 February 1912): 44. The connection between the Ferrer center and politics was clear
as another issue of The Modern School called the center and school "The
Cradle of Syndicalism." "Notes and Comments," The Modern School 1
(Winter 1912-1913): 12.


The association had grown, and had begun to stabilize itself, through such annual events as fund raising dinners. On October 12, the school and the center moved to a brownstone on 107th Street near Central Park in what was then a Jewish working class community. The center and the adult program began to expand and flourish in the winter of 1912-1913. Evening classes were established: The History of Philosophy was taught by Will Durant and Esperanto was taught by James Morton, Jr., and the Friday evening art classes were taught with live models. A Saturday discussion club was also begun in order to deal with current issues and concerns. A Sunday lecture series included guest speakers such as Emma Goldman and Leonard Abbott. Mr. Abbott lectured on the poetry of Shelly, Byron, Neitzche, and Blake. There was a great deal of experimentation in the arts, and there was always a political focus to the artistic experimentation.

By the winter of 1913-1914, the cultural events at the center--art shows, concerts, sculpture exhibits and poetry readings--became more frequent and more integrated into the overall structure of the center. The center developed an experimental theater group, and the artists Robert Henri and George Bellows came to teach an art class. Carl Zigrosser, who was also a teacher at the center in the winter of 1913 and who was later to become editor of The Modern School magazine, describes the vitality of these early years: "There was nothing like

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  \item \textsuperscript{28}Kelly, "A Short History of the Francisco Ferrer Association," p. 8.
  \item \textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 9.
  \item \textsuperscript{30}"Activities at the Center," The Modern School 1 (Spring 1913): 19.
\end{itemize}
it on the cultural scene." Mr. Zigrosser refers to the innovation, new ideas, enthusiasm, willingness to experiment and general excitement present in the cultural life of the center. He specifically refers to activities such as Leonard Abbott's literary forum, which had such prominent speakers as Clarence Darrow, Hutchins Hapgood, Edward Markham and Margret Sanger. Yet it was not the luminaries who came to the center who made it most exciting, nor the fact that the center was a cultural haven for intellectuals, but rather that the center had the potential to become a genuine people's university. As Mr. Zigrosser states in his memoirs, "What was present at the center was something more than just entertainment or easy culture. It had the potential for a genuine people's university." The center was in fact evolving a radical culture for working people.

The art forms at the center focused on personal and social liberation, and the content had similarities with the cultural values explored in *Mother Earth*. The radical culture that was presented, read, or exhibited, demanded that the artist exhibit freedom in an aesthetic sense as well as in terms of the content of the poem or play. The poets and artists who frequented the center, those who were read and discussed in the poetry classes or taught in the art classes, were poets and artists who experimented with form, such as free verse and expressionism, as well as content. The goal was to find artists who broke with the arbitrary conventions of their crafts and expressed in their experiments the fundamental fight for creative self-expression.

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32 Ibid.
Many artists were applauded not only for their formal experiments in free expression, but also for their revolutionary subject matter. These artists wrote about working class heroes; they raised important social questions which previously had been condemned as unfit subjects for poetry or drama. They raised questions in a series of cultural events which included poetry readings, discussions, literary forums, sculpture shows, concerts and painting classes.

Each of the art forms contributed something unique to the revolutionary struggle and to the evolution of a radical culture of working people. Poetry served to release emotion and to capture in epic proportions the heroics of radical leaders. The poets most discussed and read were Walt Whitman, William Blake and several contemporary anarchist poets. Walt Whitman was probably read for the break he made with traditional poetic form through his adoption of free verse and for his exaltation of "everyman." In fact, by 1919, Whitman's creativity became the subject of an entire issue of The Modern School. William Blake was probably extolled for his revolutionary visions and creative expressiveness, while the more contemporary poets were applauded for their writings on radical social issues. Poets were seen as necessary to revolution for the same reasons that Emma Goldman and Mother Earth had extolled their virtues.

In dance it was Isadora Duncan who was applauded because of the ways in which she broke with traditional drama and evoked spiritual and aesthetic freedoms. To many her movements embodied the potential

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33 The Modern School, April-May 1919.
for a freer life for everyone. Robert Henri stated, "The dancing of Isadora Duncan and Anna Pavlova are studies. The first however, is the more important and valuable for it inspires us with life and action to overthrow the old."\textsuperscript{34} Robert Henri further described the feelings Isadora evoked through her dancing when he stated, "When I see her, Isadora dance, it is not only the beauty of expression that fills one with emotion, but it is the promise she gives of a full and beautiful life."\textsuperscript{35} The children also seemed to be infected with the spirit of freedom evoked by her dancing and attended concerts given by her in February 1915. A photo in one issue of \textit{The Modern School} which shows four children in Grecian goddess-like costumes was entitled "The Quartet of Isadora Duncan."\textsuperscript{36}

On the other hand, in the new revolutionary drama the potential for freedom grew out of the ways in which drama dealt with social issues and proletarian life and out of the theater's potential for reaching large audiences. The new theater engendered excitement as it worked to alter consciousness and raise serious questions, through the visual impact of the art form, about the nature of everyday life under capitalism.

\textsuperscript{34}Marie Yuster, "Symbolistic Dancing," \textit{The Modern School} 2 (April 1915): 39.


\textsuperscript{36}"Quartet of Isadora Duncans," \textit{The Modern School} 2 (July-August 1915): 83, photograph.
Because of the importance of drama to radical culture, the center opened an experimental theater in the winter of 1914 which was dedicated to "thinking authors whose works did not reach the stage. The Ferrer school will henceforth include among its activities a theater to produce such plays and encourage playwriting." At the experimental revolutionary theater, dramas not presented elsewhere in the city were staged. Floyd Dell, who was managing editor of The Masses, appeared in the theater. Often the experimental theater fell short of the expectations and goals of the founders because the new dramas created a climate of despair and hopelessness; they portrayed human nature as weak and dishonest. In an article in The Modern School one author explained his criticism of the new theater when he stated that, "The Free Theater needs to cultivate a brighter and a more healthy spirit if it is to fulfill its mission." The author continued to criticize the theater productions because they did not include plays dealing with "proletarian life." However, several plays did deal directly with the poor. One play presented in the fall of 1914 in the garden in back of the school was called A Cut from the Dark and was a study of hoboes and thieves exchanging confidences on a park bench. The Modern School magazine describing this presentation stated, "It was evidently inspired


in part by the unemployed demonstrations in New York last spring.\textsuperscript{39} Children also participated in these drama presentations and in one production played the parts of the flowers.\textsuperscript{40}

In the theater, as well as in the other cultural activities, the center worked to encourage art that dealt with working class life. This was unusual in terms of the kinds of cultural activities available in the city, and was unique because the works at the center grounded creativity and self-expression in a revolutionary political perspective. The art forms explored both self-exploration and social transformation; they became an important component of anarchist revolutionary struggle during the Progressive Era.

These cultural activities were only one aspect of the center's vitality, which also included the active involvement of members in revolutionary politics. The political commitment of the center was clearly stated in an editorial in \textit{The Modern School} that states,

\begin{quote}
The most democratic of all organizations, we are exclusive in the things we attempt to do. Town Pumps do not interest us and we are indifferent to tariffs, trusts of the election of socialists alderman for the 27th Ward. Fundamentals such as the unemployed, free speech, Colorado and Mexico are a few of the things other than questions dealt with in response, that occupy our attention. To blaze trails and plant untrodden fields has been our mission and in no institution in the country is the job of living so manifest as at the Ferrer Center. \textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{39} "The First Performance of the Free Theater," \textit{The Modern School} 2 (October 1914): 1.
\bibitem{40} Stanley LaDoux, "The Free Theater a Great Success," \textit{The Modern School} 2 (December 1914): 11.
\bibitem{41} "Introduction," \textit{The Modern School} 1 (July 1914): 1.
\end{thebibliography}
By the winter of 1912-1913 the anarchist politics of the center took on a specific syndicalist orientation. The members of the Ferrer Association clearly articulated their belief in syndicalism because it was "a scientific war against capitalism such as having its objective or ultimate aim—the capture of the industrial system and its management by the workers—harnessed for the benefit of the whole country." For these anarchists the defined perspective of syndicalism, its clearly revolutionary and anticapitalist perspective, was rooted in the working class and served to connect New York with the large revolutionary syndicalist movements of France and Spain. To solidify this connection, the members of the center held a syndicalist conference as preliminary to the formation of a syndicalist league. However, the Syndicalist League that resulted never became as strong as its European counterpart, and after a few years it folded. Yet the syndicalist orientation of the center continued in the lectures, discussions, and literature of the evening classes.

The revolutionary political activities of the center were numerous; members participated in strikes, collected funds for strikers and worked with revolutionary committees. During these early years, the center housed revolutionary groups, such as the Mexican Committee for the Revolution, the Unemployed Workers, the Committee of Striking


37 Ibid.
Workers at Patterson. At still other times the members were actively engaged in struggles like Lawrence, and the "Unemployed." They housed the children from the Lawrence Strike while engaging in many major working class struggles in and around the New York area.

The activities at the Ferrer Center during its first five years in New York were unique to American anarchist history. The cultural activities deeply influenced workers who came to the center. The center succeeded in bringing together radicals, intellectuals, artists, poets and workers in an attempt to work through and develop new cultural forms and revolutionary consciousness. Both cultural transformation and direct political activity were united at the center. Sometimes the center showed real revolutionary potential in terms of uniting workers, creating cultural experiences and engaging in political struggles. Often it failed. At all times, the Ferrer Center ventured where few revolutionary groups had ventured.

It is difficult for us to assess the success of this venture. From written documents and interviews with ex-students and members of the association, what can be gathered is that the center was vital to shaping the thought patterns, the beliefs and the cultural values of its members. It was important for the continuation of workers' struggles and to the evolution of a radical culture for working people. It created the kind of cultural experimentation that was absent in almost all cultural institutions of the city. It was certainly one

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of the very few places where one could consistently hear radical ideas
and see experimental works in art, music, and poetry that spoke to
workers about freedom of the self. The center was also significant
for the development of a radical culture among children. The vitality
of the center infused the day school housed in the same building with
many revolutionary values and beliefs. Harmony Capolla, a former
student of the school, suggests that the strength of the school in these
eyears lay in the close association and the strong backing of
the school by the intellectual community of radicals. In light of all
this, one can say the center was important to the survival of a radical
education and a radical culture.

Yet another question remains less clearly answerable. This one
suggests that though the importance of the center was enormous, its
effect in terms of community involvement and the amassing of large
numbers of workers was less than enormous. From all accounts of funding
and attendance at important dinners, it seems unlikely the center
attracted more than 300 workers. It is, however, hard to tell just
how many workers were actually reached by the center. Why so few were
drawn into the association when there were so many working poor
immigrants to whom the association tried to appeal can only be surmised.
While the reasons appear to be manifold, two seem most significant.
The first concerns the weakness of the anarchist movement. The workers
on the Lower East Side after the 1890s were embracing unions and
socialism rather than anarchism, because on some level, the romanticism,
the lack of a clearly defined organization or party, and the avant garde
politics of the anarchists were too remote from the workers' daily needs. The second reason, directly related to the first, suggests that on a cultural level, the concerns of personal freedom in the dances of Isadora Duncan, and the sexuality of Emma Goldman and Margret Sanger, represent values remote and foreign to the Jewish immigrant worker on the Lower East Side. The center probably attracted men and women who had already denounced their cultural heritage and life style and were in search of new roads to freedom. It also attracted those artists, revolutionaries and intellectuals who had formulated radical ideas in Russia and Poland and who had become involved in the center on the basis of their past political commitment. While some workers would be attracted to the avant garde politics and ideas fostered by the center, these were comparatively few. The center simply seemed to remain aloof from the majority of workers' lives. It did, however, establish itself as a basic model for education in the adult colony

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46 Ibid. Irving Howe provides examples of the ways in which the anarchist cultural criticism alienated the Jewish immigrant worker. He gives one example of a "Yom Kippur ball" held by the anarchists at the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum on Myrtle Avenue, which was advertised as follows:

"Grand Yom Kippur Ball with theater
Arranged with the consent of all revolutionary rabbis of liberty
Koll Nydre night and day
Koll Nydre will be offered by Johan Most.
Music, dancing, buffet, 'The Marseillaise' and other hymns of Satan." Certainly this offended immigrants who though no longer orthodox, maintained a commitment to their heritage. To these immigrants anarchism was too irreverent. Ibid., p. 106. It is further interesting to note that socialists like Abe Cahan never directly attacked these roots. Ibid., p. 112.
after the association moved to Stelton, even though, in the Stelton years, the vitality of adult radical culture never reached the height it did during the New York years.

The New York Years: The Modern School

The Modern School, which was the day school for children four to eighteen years of age, opened one year after the opening of the Ferrer Association center on the second anniversary of Ferrer's death, October 11, 1911 on East 12th Street in Lower Manhattan. In commemoration of the life and work of the Spanish educator and anarchist, the school was named after his Escuela Moderna in Barcelona, Spain. While the New York school began modestly with two students, in a few days two classes were in operation. The pupils, with the exception of one, were all under the age of ten years and numbered eight. Soon the Modern School assumed a more important role in anarchist educational history than the center because of its growth, experimentation and the ways in which it would span fifty years in American history. Yet during the early years, the school and the center were not really separate institutions. Housed in the same building, they created an entire community of anarchist education for young and old. Each added an important dimension to the other and to the community.


48Ibid.
The original intentions of the day school itself are clearly set forth in the first issue of *The Modern School*, in which the school's revolutionary purposes are defined. The editorial of this first issue connects the New York school to the Barcelona experiment and to the revolutionary politics of Spain. It stated:

The Flame of Revolution can never be stamped out. The most that can be done by such tactics as the Spanish Government employed against Ferrer is to scatter their fire. Has not the Modern School in New York grown from such a tiny spark, born from the toppled flame in Barcelona.\(^49\)

The editorial continued with an explanation of the focus of the day school:

In the class war of the world, the object is to liberate men and women industrially. In the educational war, the object is to lift from them the crushing weight of centuries of error, to cut away from all around it the weeds of superstition and prejudice that stifle it, to expose it fully to light and the air and the freedom of space that may sprout out in all its fullness and spring to its utmost. . . . The Modern School is a sort of alchemist laboratory where the philosopher's stone of education is being evolved. It is the great pedagogical and experimental station of the new society.\(^50\)

Yet the members were unclear as to the ways in which intellectual and personal freedom for children would be translated into classroom pedagogy. Certainly the first few issues of *The Modern School* magazine which were designed to discuss radical pedagogy do not clearly define the philosophical orientation of the school, other than to call it libertarian. But the nature of a libertarian anarchist school remained

\(^{49\text{"Editorial," The Modern School 1 (February 1912): 13.}}\)
\(^{50\text{A. W., "The Modern School," The Modern School, no. 4 (Spring 1913), p. 20.}}\)
vague; perhaps this resulted from the fact that political activists rather than educators with a clearly defined educational philosophy founded the school. Yet this was clearly not the only reason for the lack of clarity. Pedagogically, the nebulous nature of freedom meant that its content and form would only become known to the founders, parents, teachers and students through experimentation. Many of the founders believed that a revolutionary social vision could not be easily translated into pedagogical terms, nor was it possible to foretell what education would be like in a liberated society. In an article in The Modern School, William T. Brown articulated this view when he stated,

> It would be impossible for any of us to completely forecast the educational system that a revolutionary society will require and create. The most we can do is outline the educational system which must arise somewhere in this period of transition.\(^5\)

The outline for the school was drawn from the Barcelona experiment of Ferrer as well as from more libertarian definitions of freedom. Mr. Becovicci in an article in The Modern School expresses in vague terms the notions of freedom he envisions for the school. He hoped the Modern School would become a place where workers' children would experience the kinds of joy they experience when playing on the street, rather than a place of oppression, like the public schools. He believed that children who run to school joyfully, children who experience real freedom in their classroom rebel against coercion in any form including factory work. He says,

And we who dreamt of the time when to work will be joy—is it not well we should commence by having a school to which children may go with eager steps and dancing eyes.... Perhaps this will be the first impetus to the wheel of revolution. Children who run joyfully to school will not want to work with sadness.

In one sense Mr. Becovicci's view of education at the Modern School had much in common with the Tolstoyean view that freedom in school would change consciousness and therefore lead to social transformation.

Both visions of libertarian education that grew out of Ferrer and Tolstoy remained committed to the education of working class children and revolutionary struggle. Concretely this meant that in the early issue of *The Modern School*, the definitions of radical pedagogy included the individualistic romantic perspective of anarchism and the class-conscious perspective, even though a defined pedagogy had not been worked out.

In practice this resulted in teachers defining the pedagogy of the classroom while the association set the tone and direction of the school. The daily involvement of the center in political activities served to infuse the school, which was housed in the same building, with a political orientation. The center and the movement provided the class perspective and the libertarian teachers provided the atmosphere of freedom necessary to explore personal freedoms. The relationship between the political and educational was maintained in an interesting and complex way.

The teachers who played an important role in defining the classroom orientation came from experiences that were often dramatically different from those of the founders. The members of the Ferrer Association were mainly political activists and often revolutionary, immigrant laborers. Yet the teachers they chose to head the school came from outside the association and were generally upper middle class, native American intelligentsia. John Coryelle, the first teacher at the school, came out of the Free Speech Movement. Robert Hutchinson, who served as teacher from fall 1914 to spring 1915, had been an upper middle class youth and had attended Harvard University and taught in a prep school in the Berkshires. And Will Durant, who taught from winter 1912 to spring 1914, also came from a middle class American tradition, and had been in attendance at the Catholic College of St. Peters College and a teacher at Seton Hall College and Seminary. Most of these people had only been peripherally involved in workers' struggles, though all were sympathetic to the workers' plight. Certainly none had been revolutionaries in Russia or Poland and few had been actively involved in strikes or demonstrations. These teachers had been chosen for their involvement in libertarian education in the United States. This often meant their pedagogy and view of childhood were more in keeping with a romantic conception of childhood and

53 Goldman, Living My Life, p. 335.

54 "Who the Teachers Are," The Modern School 1 (1 October 1914): 8.

education. Their educational practices were more like Tolstoy than Ferrer. Though all had a commitment to workers' struggles, this commitment was often abstract and less likely to infuse classroom practice. It is probably for this reason that the romantic conception dominated the classroom style of the period and political issues and concerns were not frequently part of the school curriculum.

When the Modern School opened with two pupils in the fall of 1911, John Coryelle, the author of the Nick Carter stories, was the teacher. Mr. Coryelle had been involved with Emma Goldman in free speech issues and was friends with the Ferms, who ran a libertarian school. While there is no direct explanation of how Mr. Coryelle came to be a teacher at the school, one can only surmise from items found in Miss Goldman's autobiography that there had been a close connection between anarchists and libertarians prior to the founding of the Ferrer Association, and this closeness had led to Mr. Coryelle's being hired, even though he had not had direct ties to the anarchist movement.\(^{56}\) He remained at the school for three months and left in the winter of 1911-1912. There were only eight students in attendance at that time. Mr. Coryelle's leaving was explained by his not being able to stand the unusual actions of the children.\(^{57}\) There are two possible reasons for this statement. Either the manners and customs of immigrant children were foreign to the style of the native intelligentsia, or

\(^{56}\) For details about the relationship between Emma Goldman and Mr. Coryelle, see Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. I, pp. 335, 336.

Mr. Coryelle had found it difficult to define the boundaries of freedom and the children's antics often seemed bizarre to him when limits were not placed at what he might have thought were appropriate points.

Will Durant became the next teacher of the school. Shortly thereafter, in February of 1912, The Modern School, the organ of the school, began publication. During the six to eight months following Mr. Durant's appointment, the school itself was beset with difficulties which the articles in the magazine reflected. There were specific problems concerning lack of funds, too few students and lack of space. The location of the school was found to be wanting for two reasons: First, it was not located in a working class or residential community; and second, the building was entirely too small for children's activities and play. These facts increased the difficulties in defining a coherent philosophy and in developing a radical school curriculum. In fact it was not until the following fall—October 1912, when the school moved to a brownstone near Central Park—that Mr. Durant was able to more fully explore libertarian educational philosophy.

That October the school moved to 107th Street, near Central Park. This new location, in the Jewish tenement district, made it

58 The magazine which would continue publication till Midwinter 1922 is a major source for understanding the changing political and educational issues of the school. As a journal it contained articles on poetry as well as articles on education and culture. A great deal of space was dedicated to school events and events at the Ferrer Association. Under different editors and during different historical periods the content and direction of the magazine changed.

easier to recruit students, while making the adult center more accessible to workers in the community. The building was a rather interesting brownstone with a high Gothic entranceway and a sizable yard. The basement was used as an office, and the play yard in the back was also used for meetings. The radical politics of the school were apparent to visitors through the wall hangings, sculptures and paintings that began to decorate the schoolhouse. In the auditorium, located on the first floor, they hung pictures of prominent figures in the radical movement. Upon entering the auditorium one could see, opposite the door, a life-size portrait of Ferrer. Over the speaker's platform was hung a bronze sculpture of "A Proletariat" by Constance Meunier. Around the wall were paintings of Tolstoy, Whitman, Ibsen and William Morris. The political heritage of the school was not only clear to visitors; it must have been equally clear to the children who attended the school. The fact that the children were surrounded with pictorial representations of a radical culture must have conveyed a sense of the revolutionary traditions of which they were a part.

The classes taught by Will Durant showed only small signs of a working-class heritage or of revolutionary politics. The social studies or history classes dealt with labor and industries and children carried on independent research in matchmaking, industry, and so on. In


these years the dominant struggle centered on defining freedom, liberty, and license in concrete classroom terms. Durant claimed that the difference between liberty and freedom needed constant exploration and development. In the day-to-day operations of the classroom, the children expected their needs to be met regardless of the needs of the others. The resulting demanding qualities caused freedom to become perverted into an oppressive individuality. The limits of freedom needed to be defined more clearly and this was one of the primary emphases of Mr. Durant. Durant made the distinction between freedom and license, a distinction that would later be made by A. S. Neill and other libertarian educators. He felt license was distinct from freedom in that license was unwholesome and destructive. He went on to define what determined "the unwholesome and destructive thing they called license—the sacrifice of the liberty of others for the sake of our own." In Durant's definition, license became self-centered and solopsistic, exhibiting the narcissistic potentials inherent in the individualistic conception of freedom we have already discussed. What was striking was that the limits of freedom seemed most problematic in classrooms where freedom was not really grounded in a defined commitment, in something outside itself or in something other than an abstraction. Perhaps this is why the distinction between freedom and license was frequently problematic in libertarian schools, such as Summerhill or the sixties free schools, and less so in the Escuela

Moderna of Barcelona or Tolstoy's Yasna Polyana. In the former, freedom was clearly defined by the commitment to working class culture and revolution. In the latter, freedom was tied to the land and religion. All this is not to say that The Modern School in 1912 did not have a commitment outside itself, for it did. Yet it seems that because the commitment to class struggle had not been clearly articulated in pedagogical terms, confusion resulted and the boundaries between freedom and license were blurred.

Durant worked to eliminate this confusion. His classroom most clearly paralleled Tolstoy's school and had much in common with a romantic individualistic educational orientation. In a description of a day at the Modern School Durant gives the reader a sense of the kinds of activities and freedoms he evolved. He says that when he arrives at the school, the children are already there and run to tackle him. They continue their friskiness and play for the next half hour. Then some go to the classroom to do work, and others continue their roughhousing. Those that are ready for work go into the quiet room where they do specific lessons, such as reading, encyclopedia work, and so on. Later, there would be lunch, after which the children would go to the park to play and tell stories. Most of the time the eight older children were given lessons every day, while the younger children received their individual instruction approximately every other day. Outsiders often helped in the classroom. Mrs. Margret Sanger gave

the class a set of encyclopedias which were used for research projects, and Mr. Wolfe, a poet, came every Thursday to develop the children's aesthetic sensibilities. The overall curriculum was heavily academic and the manual arts were often neglected in favor of these more liberal arts subjects. The school incorporated the tone of the Tolstoy School with some of the academic emphasis of the Ferrer school, although the Tolstoy model seemed to be accentuated.

While Mr. Durant's definition of freedom had a particular emphasis, parents at the school often disagreed with its interpretation of freedom and education. As a result, some parents withdrew their children from the school. Other parents organized a parents' group in the autumn of 1913, which met every other Thursday evening at eight o'clock to discuss school-related issues and practices of child rearing. Several of these parents were concerned that their children were not being properly educated around political issues. They insisted that their children needed to study current events, industry, sociology, and history from a critical perspective if they were to develop radical political values. Many of the parents were revolutionaries and were more concerned that their children received a revolutionary class perspective than a cultural and psychological sense of freedom. The staff who attended these meetings promised that the school would deal

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64 Durant, "Problems En Route," p. 5.


66 Ibid., p. 1.
more directly with these concerns. Miss Stephenson said,

We do not expect these parents to be disappointed. We believe that honest study of social phenomena eventually makes radicals and we propose to throw aside tradition and superstition assuming the scientific attitude in the study of vital concerns.

Other parents in the group were less concerned with the political content of the classroom and more determined that their children learn the basic skills needed to survive in a difficult world. They objected to their children spending so much time playing in the park when they should be learning these skills. For this reason, they wished to curtail the individualistic libertarian notions of classroom freedom in order to focus on the direct teaching of academic subjects. For these parents, freedom was tied to their vision of a better life in terms of material possessions and the work world. They most certainly did not wish their children to be factory workers as they had been. These parents experienced a tension between their radical beliefs and values and the immediate need to insure that their children live a more comfortable life than the one they were living. Miss Stephenson described these parents: "These parents wished to save their children from the hardships they themselves had experienced. They wanted their children to pass regents examinations and do well."


68 Ibid. At this point it is interesting to note the similarity of complaints between these parents and the Black parents who in the sixties confronted the free school experience.

69 Ibid.
While there was conflict within the individual parents and among them over what freedom in education entailed, the greatest conflict occurred between these parents' ideas and the more romantic libertarian ideas of the teachers, many of whom came from outside the Jewish and Italian working class community.\textsuperscript{70}

The parent meetings were not only a place to voice concerns over school curriculum or school policy, but they were also a place where a radical philosophy of childrearing could be defined communally. Here, too, individualistic libertarianism came into conflict with the parental need to insure that their children obtained sound values in harmony with their own particular world view. Parents focused on the picture show because they objected to the uninspired themes and the meaningless plots of the films. They believed these films gave their children poor values.\textsuperscript{71} The concerns and complaints of the parents often resembled those of today's parents who believe that TV is "too violent" and thereby gives their children poor values. When the parents curtailed and defined their children's leisure activities, their actions

\textsuperscript{70}This situation is particularly interesting because of the similarities to the free school experience of the 1960s and the response of the Black parents who were involved in this experience. The parallels are many. One must particularly remember that the philosophy of these free schools was defined by teachers who were often also from outside the community and who were generally white and middle class in much the same way that the philosophy at the Modern School was often defined by the native American intelligentsia who came from outside the immigrant community. In both instances, parents responded in similar ways. It is obvious that the needs and concerns of the teachers and the parents differed greatly.

contrasted sharply with their professed educational beliefs, and it was obvious that, in reality, the notion of freedom in childhood was difficult for them to accept. What is most interesting about the parental concerns is the difference between their class-based needs as working people and the ideological demands of a libertarian philosophy that was defined by more middle class teachers. In fact, the tensions between the theoretical polarities were now most clearly articulated.

Yet these tensions did not remain static. By 1915, parents voiced objections to the ideological emphasis of their children's writings and the children's magazine. These parents felt that the children were too adult and too austere in their choice of subjects. They believed that children need the freedom to be childlike, to write and experience nature, beauty and tranquility, more than being preoccupied with adult concerns of hunger, poverty, social class, justice, and so on. For this reason they wished to relocate the school in the country where children would have the freedom to roam and explore nature. These parents believed there are real pitfalls when academics and class perspective are emphasized. They wanted to base their children's education on the more romantic and individualistic theories of childhood. The tensions between class freedoms and individual freedoms moved to still another level as the conflict raged not only between parents and teacher, but among the parents themselves. These conflicts would

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reappear throughout the history of the school.

In the spring of 1913, Will Durant resigned. He had been with the school for over a year when he had begun to get the slow process of self-definition under way. Joseph Cohen, who worked with radical education in Philadelphia, took over as organizer and set up his office in the basement of the brownstone on 107th Street. At this point the Day School, which consisted of twenty-two children, seemed to be in a state of decline; according to Cohen, the building and classes seemed permeated with negligence and decadence. However, by the winter of 1913-1914, when Mr. Cohen began organizing, there were eighteen students in the primary class and twelve students in the older group. During these years the curriculum of the school remained much like that of the Durant years. The students studied art, dancing, arithmetic, and geography with an emphasis on history. Perhaps the complaints of the parents had made a real impression. History became a major emphasis in the school curriculum. There was a great deal of work on the Civil War labor strikes, particularly the Homestead and Lawrence strikes.

That winter (1913-1914), New York witnessed a severe depression and great masses of people were thrown out of work. As a result, the

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73 Cohen and Ferm, *The Modern School of Stelton*, p. 23. It is not clear if this is an accurate assessment of the situation because the statement is made by Joseph Cohen, the new organizer for the school. Often new administrators devalue or are highly critical of the work done by the previous head teachers.


75 Ibid., pp. 1-3.
school became the headquarters for the Unemployed Movement and the headquarters for the protests against the Ludlow Massacre of 1915. According to The Modern School of Stelton by Alex Ferm and Joseph Cohen, this bustling activity rejuvenated the school. The center made school rooms available to the Unemployed Conference Committee and the members of the association became deeply involved with this committee. Their activities placed the school in a vulnerable position vis-a-vis the Establishment of New York City. This was particularly true after the "revolt of the unemployed." The event in question consisted of "200 ragged men" entering a Manhattan church to dramatically demonstrate the incongruity between the church doctrine of cooperation and aid to the poor and the reality of hunger in a city of so many wealthy churches. The clergy, visibly upset by this action, had the men arrested. There was a great deal of anger generated and the press denounced the "anarchists" for their disruptive tactics, which the press claimed were particularly destructive in light of the mayor's promise to work on these issues. Anarchists met to discuss and decry the establishment's response to their activities. The Ferrer Association applauded the role they had played in helping to organize the agitation and the church raid. They said,

We must emphasize our oft-repeated declaration that the Ferrer Association is not only a day school for children, it is a social institution where libertarian ideas are taught and the aspirations of those who strive for a free society made

76 Cohen and Ferm, The Modern School of Stelton, p. 23.

77 "The Unemployed," The Modern School 1 (1 April 1914): 2.
articulate. We do not pretend to be indifferent where injustice prevails and freedom is violated and we do not palter about words with those who accuse us of being dogmatic. If to demand the abolition of exploitation and the right of men to be free be dogmatic, our critics may make the most of it.

The establishment newspapers indicted the Ferrer Association and the Modern School for acting in a lawless and irresponsible way. The newspapers clearly linked the school and the association to anarchism and to the IWW. As anarchists they were described as rowdy, subverting justice and attacking authority in the form of the church. One must remember that in the winter of 1914 labor struggles and violence against labor reached a peak. Clearly the activities of the unemployed and the support their activities received from the school threatened the New York Establishment. One backer withdrew his monetary support, leaving virtually no funds to pay the teachers that spring semester.

While the school and the center had been involved in radical activities since the center opened in 1910, this was the first time they were directly involved in a militant action against the established New York institutions; as such, they posed a clear revolutionary threat, which evoked both fear and resentment in the established press and among the large New York churches. The Modern School was then dramatically linked to militant political activity, and the close connection between the activities of the association and the education of the young would

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78"The Unemployed," p. 2.

79Ibid.

have serious repercussions for the school.

The many crises faced in the winter of 1913-1914 forced the school to reorganize. The Ferrer Association hired a new principal, R. Hutchinson of Philadelphia, who began to revamp and tighten up the school program. The process of rethinking the educational theory and practice of the last three years was a difficult task. Joseph Cohen began this task in an article in The Modern School magazine. He ascribed the major difficulties encountered by the school in its first three years of existence to the fact that there had been a yearly changeover of teachers which made it difficult to define a sound and consistent educational philosophy, as well as the fact that the school was run by an association of a few hundred people who agreed on the basics of a libertarian education but disagreed violently on the specific details of such an education. He made a plea for the development of a more consistent educational theory.

The new ideas were implemented in the fall of 1914 when the 1914-1915 school season began with an official opening exercise, the first such event in the history of the school. At the party, teachers and parents pledged to unify and define the curriculum in a systematic way. They discussed bringing a variety of individuals to the school to provide weekly instruction in hygiene, gymnastics, modeling, drawing, 

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81 Ferm, "A Sketch of the Life of the Modern School," p. 3.
music and dance. The essential libertarian philosophy would remain and the children would not be forced to attend these classes. The hope was that the classes would be interesting enough to draw large numbers of students. In a sense, the very offering of specific classes in specific areas meant the school was moving to a new form of defining libertarian education. The choices available came out of the values of the parents and the range was clearly defined: manual arts and woodcraft or sewing were not a part of the curriculum, while academic subjects, such as history, science and the creative arts were. This did not mean children could not choose outside these defined areas; it did mean that choices outside these areas were less likely because there was so much activity already going on.

The remainder of the opening exercises took place in the garden, where parents, children and members of the association ate lunch and talked together. The description of Alexander Berkman, chatting and playing with the children at the luncheon, is particularly interesting, for it shows the ways in which the movement and the school were connected through school celebrations. Even though political ideas were not always directly taught, politics remained a part of the children's lives because political figures were always incorporated into school events and school activities. Anarchism became a part of the living culture of the school in indirect ways as the values

\[83\] Cohen, "The Formal Opening of the Day School."

\[84\] Ibid., p. 7.
of the school and the values of the movement were indirectly intertwined in the children's minds.

This school year, 1914-1915, was in fact different. It was by all accounts the most exciting year the school had had thus far. The teaching staff came from an interesting mixture of backgrounds. The head teacher, Mr. Hutchinson, who came out of the native American intelligentsia, was a graduate of private schools and a teacher in the Berkshire School for Boys. He was married to the granddaughter of H. W. Longfellow and became interested in, as he phrased it, "social amelioration" early in life, when he turned to radical teaching.\(^\text{85}\) The teacher of the older children was Gussie Miller, a Russian immigrant who had been deeply involved in the anarchist movement and had been arrested the previous year for participation in the church raids by the unemployed. This was Mrs. Miller's first year of teaching. The third teacher, Helen Lund, came from a Chicago Church background, and she had been peripherally involved in the individualist wing of anarchism, the precepts of which were most clearly linked to the romantic tradition.\(^\text{86}\)

It is clear that the teaching staff included the range of anarchist philosophy which characterized the movement and libertarian

\(^{85}\)"Who the Teachers Are," September 1914, p. 8. It is interesting to note that in 1915 Robert Hutchinson left the Modern School at Stelton because he felt he could not fully develop a libertarian educational experience. He began his own school at Stoneyford which educated middle class children and which had no clear political orientation or connection to a political movement.

\(^{86}\)Ibid.
educational theory. At one end were Hutchinson and Miss Lund who had defined notions of individual liberty but lacked clear ties to a workers' struggle. At the other pole was Gussie Miller, whose clear political involvement as a Russian immigrant was visible to all. Whether these polarities were evidenced in classroom organization or teaching method is not stated in the sources examined, yet it is clear that the wide range of perspectives existing within the movement operated in some way at the school.

When Mr. Hutchinson took over he began reworking the classroom pedagogy. He developed a community of children in a classroom where a network of disparate individuals had existed. He did this by creating projects like redecorating the classes, publishing a class magazine, and so on. In these communal class projects, children were forced to work together toward a common goal. For the first time since the school opened, this common activity gave the students a sense of belonging and a sense of community. The romantic individualism was enhanced by projects demanding cooperative effort. Mr. Hutchinson worked to alter the relationships in the school and to address the complaints of the parents who felt that, in the past, the children had shown a lack of concern and consideration for the school, each other and the teachers. He described the ways in which he worked to create a different atmosphere at the school when the whole school actively redecorated the rooms. As each student participated, some wallpapering, others painting pictures on the wall, etc., they began to gain a sense of community. He stated, "For the first time since school opened this
year everyone was working together for a common purpose." The new program worked to bridge the gap between individualism and communal life as it worked to move children from a notion of freedom which stated "I can do what I want here," to a realization that individual freedom cannot and should not interfere with the freedom of others and in fact should coexist in a community of others. Describing his work to transform The Modern School, Mr. Hutchinson stated,

> While the process of overturning old ways was difficult, new values had been established. They have lately had a taste of a new one. The habit of community works and there is no doubt with constant practice they will grow to appreciate that too.

That winter there were many outings and activities at the school and one could sense that a defined notion of libertarian educational theory had begun to develop.

> While a sense of community developed, the classroom philosophy remained romantic and libertarian. The Ferrer tradition was only peripherally maintained through direct teaching, and a political and social perspective was gotten in indirect ways. For the most part, during these early years in New York it was not necessary to spend a great deal of curriculum time teaching class consciousness or revolution. Both were integrated into the ambience of the center and the world view of the children. In fact, one could say, it would be hard put for these children not to develop a class-conscious notion of freedom given

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88 Ibid.
their backgrounds—parents who are radical activists or worker intellectuals—and given the ambience of their surroundings. The political origins of the school were clearly a part of the lives of the children and the life of the school.

While the politics developed in the school on an informal level, there were several formal attempts to teach history from a class perspective and to discuss work, workers' struggles, strikes, and so on. Yet the impact was most immediate on the informal level. The close ties between the center, the school and the anarchist movement made politics a daily reality at the Ferrer Association. Political figures came to speak and they directly addressed the children in the classrooms. In the spring of 1913, Edward Myleus came to the school immediately upon release from Ellis Island. Mr. Myleus had been an active radical who, after having been refused admission to the United states, fought the immigration authorities and won. The Modern School described Mr. Myleus' visit to the school: "It was a historic moment in the history of the association. The next morning Mr. Myleus met the teachers of the day school. Every member of the association rejoices with Mr. Myleus." The article went on to describe elements of the speech made by Mr. Myleus. In his speech he emphasized his victory over the officials at Ellis Island, and the kinds of proletariat oppression that existed in the United States. His speech went on to

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deal with the need for a workers' uprising to create a just society.\textsuperscript{90} Visitors like Mr. Myleus must have been influential in shaping the class-conscious perspective of the Modern School children.

That same year the children of the Modern School came in contact with the children of the Lawrence strikers who had been moved from Lawrence because of the dangerous conditions. They were now being housed in the school until temporary living arrangements were found with members of the association.\textsuperscript{91} In fact, the many liberation movements and struggles housed at the center must have influenced the perception of the children and made them see revolution and workers' struggles as a normal part of their daily existence. Because the school's connection to the political movement was ongoing and active, it was less necessary for the curriculum to have a defined course of study on anarchism. Anarchism was a living reality, not something children read about or studied in textbooks or curriculum guides.

The children themselves met many union organizers and leaders in the anarchist movement. One student described the walks she and the children took to the \textit{Mother Earth} office and the deep impressions made on her by anarchist leaders whom they met there: Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. She went on to describe Berkman's playfulness, his romping with the children and Emma Goldman's aloof stance. She said, "Emma Goldman would come out and somehow it grew colder. She never said

\textsuperscript{90}Myleus, "Stepping Stones Towards the New Social Order," pp. 17-18.

\textsuperscript{91}Kelly, "A Short History of the Modern School," p. 10.
anything but we knew she did not care for children and we went away."

The incident demonstrated the close connection children had with revolutionaries, who were a natural part of their upbringing and education. Anarchist leaders were not terrorists, as described in the newspapers or in texts. They were friends of the children and the children's parents. Berkman, who had been in prison for his attempted assassination of Henry Frick, came alive for these children because he appeared at many of the school celebrations and seemed to know the children quite well.

The politics of the association and the individuality of the classroom were fused into a class conscious libertarian form of education. The poetry and articles the children wrote in the children's magazine demonstrated their level of political consciousness.

The magazine, which was begun by Mr. Hutchinson in 1914-1915 and was written, edited and published by the children themselves, contained political articles the children had chosen through group decisions. Parental criticism of the magazine pointed out the deep


93 There were no copies to be found of this magazine, yet the magazine and its contents are discussed in several articles of the adult magazine, The Modern School. One article by a parent entitled "Our Children and Philosophy," The Modern School 2 (May 1915): 53, describes the children's magazine as evidence of "artificial thinking" and as providing a "pretty clear example of our pupils' thoughts." The magazine is again mentioned in "The Children's Magazine," The Modern School 2 (February-March 1915): 15, and again in Robert Hutchinson, "A Children's Magazine," The Modern School, March 1919, p. 77.
concern the children had for political and social issues and the sophistication with which the children dealt with these issues. Parents were concerned that the majority of articles in the children's magazine dealt with free speech, anarchism, death, or boycotts rather than "childhood concerns." It was clear that even though the classroom orientation was individualistic and romantic, the children had a revolutionary class perspective which could be traced directly to the general ambience and the indirect teaching of the center and the parents.

The historical examination of the school, the center, the curriculum, the teachers and the parents revealed that the overall political commitment of the association was far more important to the formation of class conscious politically astute children than the specific content of the curriculum or the particular methodology of the classroom. The New York years witnessed an active radical movement in conjunction with labor organizing which was directly connected to the school. Radical activity was visible to the children at all times; it infused their daily lives. Harmony Capolla, a student at the school, claimed that the uniqueness of this period lay in its fervor, and this fervor was directly related to the ongoing activity of the movement.

She said, "In these early years in New York, the vitality of the school grew out of the close connection between the school and the intelligentsia." Miss Capolla seemed to be using intelligentsia to mean


95 Capolla, interview.
the movement and its leaders. In the years of the school, radical education fused both polarities of libertarian education: the romanticism of Tolstoy and the class consciousness of Ferrer. It was a unique venture in radical educational history that would not be repeated in the years to come.

The New York years were abruptly brought to a close in the spring of 1915 when the school moved to Stelton, New Jersey, and the Ferrer Colony was formed. The New York years are crucial to understanding the relationship between radical education, culture and political transformation and the anarchist vision of freedom. It was during these years that anarchists began to forge a culture of personal liberation while anchoring these experiments to a class conception of freedom in syndicalist terms. Whether the activities at the center and the school would lead to the kind of liberation defined by both Tolstoy and Ferrer, we can never really know. We can also never really know if the class conception would freeze the art and literature and thinking of the children into a totalitarian form or if the kinds of social concerns expressed at the school would ultimately turn into reformist education.

All we can say is that in these early years the struggle for survival and self-definition was at its height. The vitality of the school, and the unity between the two libertarian traditions, grew out of this interchange between the movement, the center and the school. Yet as we have seen in the complaints of the students, teachers and parents, there were real problems in this unity: too much freedom,
not enough class-consciousness, too much class-consciousness, and so on. However, even though these problems existed, the two polarities remained most successfully united during these years when freedom was defined in class as well as personal terms. Education was clearly revolutionary.

The question of why revolutionary education was possible in these early years and less possible as the school matured suggests that external events such as the historical times, the conditions of life, the strength of the movement, the location of the school, the students at the school, as well as the internal conditions we have considered, influenced the unity of the two traditions, and created the revolutionary fervor of the school. In brief, the historic period 1910-1915, the early years of the Modern School, are often referred to as "The Years of Industrial Violence Years." It is certainly considered to be a period of intense labor struggle as evidenced by the Lawrence strike, the Colorado massacre and the Patterson silk factory strike, as well as the era of the IWW and the socialist party. Radical

96 Adams, The Age of Industrial Violence.

thought existed among the working classes who were actively engaged in struggle through strikes, union activities and so on. Many of the values of the school were supported by the surrounding community, by the historical times and by the active struggle of these workers. Because the school was located in the city, it became actively connected to working class strikes and the struggles of the unemployed. The culture of revolutionary struggle was everywhere, as the children walked to Mother Earth met with political prisoners at the school and embraced radical political figures in the decoration of their school environment. In the city, the close connection between movement activities and workers' struggles made the New York years have a great deal in common with the Escuela Moderna in Barcelona. In each case the schools derived strength from the activities of the movement and the historic struggles of the workers, though it must be made clear that the American experiment never reached the widespread acceptance of the Escuela Moderna in Spain.

All this suggests that the internal conflicts of the school were exacerbated and shaped by the reality of history: the state of the movement, the activities of the workers, and so on. The reality of history, as well as the internal conditions, allowed these years to become the most revolutionary in the school's history. One could indeed say that during these years there was a supportive community committed to revolution which shaped the direction and concerns of the school. Yet this revolutionary nature of the school created its own contradictions, its own problems, both in Barcelona and in the New York school, which could not be overcome by a relatively weak revolutionary community.
While politics provided the vitality of the school, it also created the tensions which forced the school to move out of the city or close its door forever. The harassment of the school by the authorities, the withdrawal of funding and the disruption of school activities, could not be easily overcome.

In the spring of 1915, the Ferrer School left New York City in a blaze of notoriety, bringing to a close the New York years and a set of experiences that would uniquely characterize these years. The events which preceded the final decision to leave the city were complex and began with several harrowing experiences, most notably the July 4 bomb explosion on Lexington Avenue. The subsequent harassment of the school and the center by the police and the establishment precipitated the formation of the Ferrer Colony Association in July 1914. The purpose of the colony association was to search for land for a school and colony within a thirty mile radius of New York City. The formation of the colony association was a momentous event in the history of the association, as was the search and final move to the country.

The bomb explosion and the subsequent harassment seemed to force the members of the association to look for an alternative existence for the school, and the decision to move to the country was buttressed by their romantic philosophical consideration which had always been a part of the school's heritage. For many members, the city was a place of dirt, disease, disorder and chaos. Their dream of life in the country grew out of a romantic notion of the land in the Tolstoyean sense. They believed that the soil and the land rejuvenated the
individual. Life in the city dehumanized and strangled people who could only realize their human potential through closer contact with nature. For these members, the dream of land was not only based on their philosophical principles but also grew out of their concrete experiences as peasants in Eastern Europe and their vision of the kinds of freedom obtainable.

To these parents, personal freedom could not develop when children are filled with abstractions of politics and lose touch with the joys of childhood: the joys of the woods and of romping, playing, feeling, and so on. For this reason they sought peace in a return to the land. One parent stated,

Nature with its simplicity and quietness will so strongly attract our children that they will rush out and fulfill themselves with it and it will take the place in the young intelligence of the oppressive atmosphere their home has given them.98

These parents exhibited the same desires as the rest of the immigrant population and were torn between children involved in revolution and children experiencing the freedom of a life that is lived close to nature and away from the dirt and grime of factory and slum living. The mystique of the earth and nature symbolized the individual freedoms characteristic of the romantic tradition and showed a desire on the part of the parents to move their children away from the hardship of revolutionary struggles in the city, away from the hardships of syndicalism.

This romantic concern for the land which had always been a part of the school surfaced in 1915 as a strong educational strain because it became difficult to maintain a revolutionary school for children in New York City. The Modern School was deeply troubled and harassed precisely because the revolutionary struggle of the parents and the association had become militant and the New York establishment felt deeply threatened. At this historical moment, the unity of politics and education provided its own contradictions; the education of the young became threatened because of the revolutionary activities of the adult center. This contradiction was not unique to the New York experience: Recall Ferrer's arrest and the closing of the Modern School of Barcelona in 1906. Clearly the involvement in revolutionary politics which included demonstrations, uprisings and irreverent activities against the establishment would always place the schooling for the children in a precarious position. In fact committed revolutionaries, even when not engaged in direct activities against the state, are always vulnerable to attack (just or unjust) when the state feels threatened. Certainly their institutions of learning which remain visible and stationary are even more vulnerable. This historical reality made it difficult to maintain the close connection between revolution and schooling and to keep the unity of both polarities going for long periods of time.

The harassment which led to the formation of the Ferrer Colony and the subsequent move to the country occurred after the July 4, 1914 bomb explosion on Lexington Avenue, which killed three men: Arthur
Caron, Carl Hansen and Charles Berg. The bomb explosion caused a great deal of excitement in the establishment press because the police claimed that the bomb was to have been used at Rockefeller's home in Tarrytown in retaliation for the death of thirteen striking miners at Ludlow. The striking miners were living in tents when Rockefeller police looted, shot and burnt to the ground several of the tents. This resulted in the death of thirteen persons and caused radicals and labor to organize in protest all over the United States. In New York in June 1914 a speak-in was organized at Tarrytown to explain to the community the murderous nature of their neighbor Rockefeller. Alexander Berkman, Upton Sinclair and the three men who had died in the bomb explosion were among the many present at the speak-in. The police arrested everyone and a free speech trial ensued. Against this backdrop the police proceeded to harass individual radicals and after the July 4 bomb explosion, added fifty deputies to the free speech trial and twenty guards to the Rockefeller estate.

The turmoil, apparent paranoia and ensuing attacks on anarchists came against the backdrop of intense labor struggle and an intense

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99 "To the Public," The Modern School 1 (1 August 1914): 1. Additional details of the bomb explosion can be found in two news articles of the New York Call's Sunday edition, July 5, 1914. They are entitled "Dynamite Explosion Kills Four, Wounds Eight and Wrecks Six Story Tenement; Tragedy Occurs in Room of Anarchists," pp. 1-3; also "Mother, Wife, Child Work Lost Caron Loses Heart," p. 3.

100 "Dynamite Explosion Kills Four," p. 1.

fear of labor by the business interests of the country. In fact one historian, Graham Adams, calls this period "The Age of Industrial Violence." What he means is that entire areas of the country reached almost war-like proportions as armed battles ensued between labor and armed company police, National Guardsmen and company scabs. Whole areas of the country were put out of commission during the violent conflicts beginning with the Ohio Harriman strike, 1911, and including the Lawrence strike, 1912, the Patterson silk factory strike, 1913, and ending in the Ludlow Massacre of 1914 at the Colorado mines of Rockefeller.  

These historical conditions put added pressure on the New York establishment and the New York police to insure that the business community would be safeguarded against radical attack. This resulted in an intensification of the search for information on the three dead men, the bomb explosion and their political and social connections.

The questioning began with two women peripherally connected to the dead men. One, Ella Fitzgerald, had been a member of an anarchist publication and a teacher at the Ferrer Association. In fact, the association's name reappeared several times in connection with the investigation, and the dead men were reported to have been members of the Ferrer Association. Berkman released a statement to the press insisting that a funeral be held for the dead members of the

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102 Adams, Labor's Violent Years, pp. 77-100, 156-161.
103 "Public Funeral May Be Held for Caron," New York Call, 6 July 1914, p. 4.
Ferrer Association. Even though the New York City officialdom refused to allow a public funeral, Berkman said that the association would hold a memorial service where the cremated bodies would be presented in an urn to the Ferrer School at 107th Street. He said, "The dead were connected with the Ferrer school and the anarchist movement and as such were entitled to what respects their friends may offer."104

The links between the Ferrer Association and militant activity grew as the investigation proceeded. In the next weeks police hunted down a man called Murphy who was said to be out to kill Mayor Mitchell. The only lead they had claimed that in his first weeks in New York Murphy had visited and spent time at the Ferrer School. While many people believed the police made up the information on the Murphy plot, nonetheless the Ferrer School was once again implicated in heavy radical activity. The Ferrer School's connection to the dead men became more visible as the association became deeply involved in funeral preparations for the three men. On July 8, 1914, the New York Call reported that the greatest gathering of anarchists the city and possibly this country has ever known was to be held at the Ferrer Center. They said there would be representatives of every radical society in the eastern cities in order to plan the demonstration and memorial which was being organized by Alexander Berkman and the Anti-Militarist League

104"Tarrytown Trial Put Off Until July 20," New York Call, 7 July 1914, p. 3.
Committee. The uproar by the city establishment was intense. The mayor wanted the city to have a more defined policy toward anarchists.

The demonstration for the three men was held on July 12, 1914. There was a great deal of surveillance by the police department. One report on the funeral claimed 6,000 people and 1,000 police filled the square. The Ferrer School was represented at the demonstration by a banner which was clearly visible to all and which had the inscription "Friends of Art and Education." Leonard Abbott, one of the chief organizers of the Ferrer Association, spoke at the memorial service. He said,

I have come not to eulogize but to explain them and to analyze their social significance... On one side I see a young working man, the champion of the exploited and the disinherited pouring out his life blood for the emancipation of his class.

Leonard Abbott went on to describe the historical struggle of the exploited. He placed the bomb explosion in a context which mitigated against seeing the dead men as foolhardy terrorists. The association's predominant position in the memorial service accentuated the close connection between the school, the center and the militant revolutionary factions of the city. The school became connected with violence and

105 "Anarchists to Mourn Dead," New York Call, 8 July 1914, p. 4.
106 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., p. 3.
bombings, causing them to be harassed by spies and agent provocateurs who began to infiltrate the association. The harassment which occurred on several levels made it difficult to keep things running at the school and center.

The association, deeply upset by this harassment, placed an official response to the accusations levelled against the school in *The Modern School*. Their statement, entitled "To the Public," explained that though the three dead men were not members of the association they did participate actively in the life of the association. They further explained that they believed the men were not even guilty because the whole incident was probably a plot perpetuated by henchmen of Rockefeller to discredit the association. The article went on to describe the historical involvement of the association in liberation struggles. It concluded by reaffirming their intentions as an institution that was not directly responsible for the bomb explosion as they were educators and not bomb throwers.

No aspiration based on liberty and solidarity is too lofty for us to embrace and no act of tyranny or aggression too insignificant to bring forth our condemnation. Many of our members, are revolutionists, are libertarians limited only by the vision of the individual. Our organization is one of education and not one of action.\(^{110}\)

Yet while the association maintained a unified position on the incident, internal crevices began to appear in the association. The main split developed over the relationship between the school, the association

\(^{110}\)"To the Public," *The Modern School* 1 (1 August 1914): 2.
and militant political activity. The splits which had always existed deepened and became more apparent.

The members decided to work to clear the school of the stigma of political agitation by giving it a more clearly defined educational image. They believed this new emphasis on educational concerns would save the school from the harassment and confusion now plaguing the school and the association.

The idea of creating a colony attached to the school in the country provided the perfect vehicle for dealing with the situation the school found itself in. By October 1915, Leonard Abbott and Alexander Berkman, who each represent the two distinct interests within the association, came to an agreement. Berkman agreed that the Militarist League would no longer meet at the school. At the same time Leonard Abbott announced that there would not be any more meetings of political agitators at the Ferrer Center. He said, "Personally I intend to see that the Ferrer School is through with propagandist work. We are going to be a real school, a genuine school."

This statement began the separation between the association and the school, which culminated in the school's moving to the Stelton Colony and the Ferrer Association remaining in New York City. While there would be a great deal of interchange between the association and the colony, the crevices which had grown into a decided fault

112 Ibid.
altered the structure of anarchist education in America.

The school's decision to move to the country was an historic moment in anarchist education and all association members were not in agreement with the decision. Several members realized that the move to the country could remove the spark that gave fire and intensity to the New York years. These members felt that there was real danger in loosening the established ties between the movement and the school. The other members believed that the only way to deal with the problems they presently encountered was to leave the city. These individuals believed that the ties between the movement and the school could be maintained through visits, meetings, conventions and so on, and the school would not be forced to suffer the serious repercussions of being housed with militant political agitators. These members saw the move as a way to remove the children from the direct repercussions of adult political activity. They believed that the physical separation would allow militant activists to continue revolutionary activities in New York while at the same time the children carried on serious education.

Harry Kelly, one of the original founders of the association and editor of *The Modern School*, expressed this attitude when he stated,

It is unfair to the children and harmful to their development as free spirits, to grow up in an atmosphere of violent partisanship and fierce revolutionary ardor inevitable with men and women engaged in daily struggle with power and darkness. We were not then and not now neutral where liberty is violated and
economic injustice prevails, but where children are concerned less passion and calmer judgment should prevail.\textsuperscript{113}

The Ferrer Association resolved the contradictions by removing the children to the country. In March 1915 the Ferrer Modern Day School left New York City. Leonard Abbott in the Afterword in The Modern School of Stelton stated, "The association finally dissolved so far as New York City was concerned, in a blaze of sensation connected with the unemployed agitation and the anti-Rockefeller demonstrations."\textsuperscript{114}

The first phase in the school's history, "The New York Years," ended and with it, a vital period in the history of anarchist education, a period that had a great deal to teach radical educators about the relationship between radical schooling, freedom and education. The separation of the school and the community from the association, the separation of the Ferrer Center from the school was to have serious implications for revolutionary education in and around New York City.


\textsuperscript{114}Cohen and Ferm, The Modern School of Stelton, p. 121.
CHAPTER V

ANARCHIST SCHOOLING: THE MODERN SCHOOL AT STELTON

And be it understood that our activities at Stelton are not only confined to tilling the soil and breeding chickens. In the words of Emerson at Stelton "We are not farmers, but men on farms." 1

For many a year, since my older child was born, I have been dreaming about a libertarian school in the country where the children would be perfectly safe from the dangers surrounding childhood in our large cities and removed from the evil influences and temptation of an artificial life. 2

In the spring of 1915, the romantic dream to leave the city and begin a new life became a reality for the immigrant workers of the Ferrer Association. Yet for many of these radicals, there was conflict in the realization of this dream. The conflict grew out of their need to remain close to their fellow workers in working-class communities and their desire to escape the dirt and grime of city living by creating a new life in the country, close to nature. These settlers were torn between the dream that grew out of their experience in the European countryside, the promise of living close to the land as described by Tolstoy and Emerson, and their belief in workers' struggles originating in urban centers. Their conflict between a rural and urban living was intensified in 1914 when the difficulties of maintaining

1 A Steltonite, "Life in Stelton," The Modern School 2 (June 1915): 76.

a school attached to a militant political movement became clearer and clearer. While many in the Ferrer Association opted for the move to the country, they realized that this move would create difficulties in maintaining the close ties between the school and the movement whose lack of support and activities centered in the city. To these members, the ties between the school and the movement were necessary if the school was to remain a radical working class endeavor.

In reality their apprehensions were well founded, and their struggles to maintain the close ties between an urban based movement and a rural school were intensely difficult. One can in fact make an analogy between the problems encountered by the school's move to the country and those encountered when first generation immigrants moved to the suburbs. In both instances the group was torn by the desire to maintain a cultural value system that was bound to loosen and become altered in the new environment. For the first generation immigrants, the struggle centered around maintaining ethnic, cultural and familial traditions in a suburban environment that was not in tune with their own peculiar cultural traditions. For the Stelton Colony and The Modern School, the problem became how to maintain revolutionary spirit in a rural setting remote from the daily lives of working people. For both, "creating a better life for the children" meant leaving behind or altering the culture that was based in the urban centers of their parents or their comrades. Yet each worked to maintain cultural ties. For the immigrants' children in suburbia this was done through frequent familial get-togethers and holiday celebrations; for The Modern School
at Stelton, this was done through institutionalizing or formalizing ties to the working class in the creation of The Modern School Association (1916), and through annual conventions involving labor and radical organization. The connections between the first generation suburbanites and the immigrant communities, or between the Stelton colony and the urban working class became ritualized, i.e., relegated to holidays or specified meetings. The connections were no longer spontaneous and natural. The suburban synagogue became other than the urban shule and family life in suburbia was different from family life on the Lower East Side. In the same way the Stelton Modern School of New Jersey became other than the Modern School of New York. The revolutionary spirit of the school became less directly visible to the observer or to the reader of The Modern School. There was less direct involvement by the children in working class politics or working class ideology, even though support was sent to revolutionary causes. In both, the ties to the old culture in the form of daily life and cultural institutions and values were altered to fit the new circumstances of the new community and the changing historical times. In both instances, the move created another consciousness, another world view; the notion of a "better life" came into conflict with old world heritage and working class political struggle.

The new living conditions and the changing historical times created another consciousness for the immigrant in suburbia and for The Modern School at Stelton, and the subtle changes in values and culture became more apparent over time. In The Modern School, the first
ten years in the country, 1915 to 1925, revealed the stages in the changing relationship between radical politics and schooling and the variety of ways the founders sought to institutionalize and sustain this relationship. The philosophical basis of the school as defined by the historical conditions of the New York years was altered, and the unity between class and personal freedom which had existed during these years was no longer possible. In fact, one can discern three distinct stages in terms of changing relationships between the political movement and the school, between class-conscious education and an educational theory focused on creativity, personal freedoms and artistic endeavors.

The three phases of the early years at Stelton included: 1915-1917, when the ties to the movement and working class politics remained strong; 1917-1919, when the educational philosophy became more clearly articulated through the Modern School Association of North America and the ties to politics are clearly loosening; 1919-1925, when the ties are at a minimum and the school became anchored in libertarian traditions of inner freedom, creativity, artistic self-expression, etc. While the school continued for another twenty-eight years, the direction established by 1925 was maintained; the models for the school became most clearly those of Tolstoy and Emerson. Our purpose in this section is to examine the shifts in philosophy and the significance and implication of these shifts for The Modern School and the Anarchist Movement.

The change in direction, however imperceptibly small, began with the formation on September 24, 1914 of the Ferrer Colony Association. It was created as a separate committee within the Ferrer Center as a
result of the political pressures of the summer of 1914 and as an attempt to fulfill the lifelong dream of many of the parents. The Association was assigned the specific function of acquiring land in the country to house a school and set up a colony. *The Modern School* explained the reasons for the formation of the Ferrer Colony Association by saying that it would fulfill: (1) the inherent desire of radicals to live close to nature and to be near the soil, if not part of it; (2) the original and fundamental principle of trying to make free men and women of the children; (3) the desire to establish the Ferrer School in the country. The Association further stipulated that the acquired land they would purchase must be in close proximity to the city, within thirty miles. It was obvious from the very beginning that the founders intended to insure a close connection between the new community in the country and the political activities of the Anarchist Movement in the city. The Association further stipulated that the land would be sold at no more than $150 to $200 per acre. The fee included enough funds to cover the cost of the land and building to be set aside for the

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3 Though the Lexington Avenue bomb explosion and its aftermath was never given as the official reason for the school's move to the country, it became obvious that the circumstances surrounding the explosion had pushed the Association to look for land outside the city. In fact, the Ferrer Colony Association was formed in the summer of 1914—a month after the explosion and continued meeting until land for the colony was purchased. Harry Kelly, "A Ferrer Colony," *The Modern School* 1 (1 October 1914): 13; Harry Kelly, "The Ferrer Colony," *The Modern School* 2 (April 1915): 33-34.


new school. Those who purchased the land were to become members of the Ferrer Colony Association, but need not necessarily send their children to The Modern School. On the other hand, it was made clear that the school would be the central concern of the community and the primary purpose of the colony would be to fund the school. In this sense, the Stelton Colony had its origins in a different set of presuppositions than most communes or communal living situations that had been set up in this country. In fact, during these pre-planning sessions there seemed to be no real attempt to define radical living arrangements, communal dining or an "Anarchist Colony."^6

Land to be used for the colony and the school was found in the winter 1915. The land which would become the site of the school was presented to the Ferrer Association in February by Harry Kelly. This land comprised 15 percent of the total acreage purchased, as well as some buildings: a barn, a chicken coop and a farmhouse. As The Modern School magazine stated, "As soon as the land was selected and title taken, the building on the land and 15% of the total acreage would be deeded to the Ferrer Association for the establishment and maintenance of a Day School for the children."^7 It was clear that the primary purpose of the formation of the colony and the move to the country was to redefine the education of the children.


The winter of 1915 was an active one, and while the Association acquired land and set up the Ferrer Colony, other members of the Association were engaged in trying to set up Modern Schools in various cities in the United States. Alexander Berkman went on tour. In St. Louis he worked to establish a school and soon after his arrival, he wrote the Ferrer Association explaining and describing his plans to begin a second Ferrer Day School in that city. At the same time, another member of the Ferrer Association, W. T. Brown, was in Chicago attempting to form a Modern School League. In his letter to the New York Association he described his plans to establish a libertarian Modern School. It was clear that the Association was trying to establish anarchist schools throughout the urban areas of the United States and in this sense their efforts were much like those of the syndicalists of Spain.

Back in New York, the Ferrer Colony Association, at the signing of the deed for the land at Stelton, declared their pedagogical goals and made clear that the school in the country would maintain the same methods of teaching that had existed in New York. "The methods pursued by the Ferrer School in New York will be followed at the country school with such improvements as a country school will permit and as experience suggests." They also reaffirmed the need to maintain close ties between


Yet while the intention to maintain the original political and educational goals of the school was clearly articulated, historical circumstances as well as the changed environment of country living did in fact alter these goals. The Association in the signing of the deed while reaffirming the goals of Ferrer and the New York experience saw the move to the country as a new chapter in the life of the Association. Part of this expanded vision was a new focus on the schools of Tolstoy and Faurer, whose schools were based in the land. In referring to the move to Stelton, the founders stated,

>This experiment in our judgment is more fundamental and more firmly rooted in the soil than any of the three great efforts at libertarian education from which we have derived inspiration. The experiments of Tolstoy in Russia, Ferrer in Spain and Sebastian in France . . . .

What this addition of educational models based in the land would mean in terms of the actual educational practice of the Modern School or in terms of the radical political activity or consciousness of the children was as yet unclear. What was clear, however, was that the Association, realizing the possible consequences of their move to the country, reaffirmed the need to maintain close ties between the school based in the land, and the political movement based in the city. "The Stelton School is being built on the desire and needs of the colonists, with the idealism of the Ferrer Association which would remain in the

city and act in political issues as the fulcrum, the driving force." The relationship between the movement, politics and schooling was clearly articulated. The Ferrer Association, the politically active wing of the Modern School, was expected to continue political activity in New York, providing the spiritual guidance or leadership for the school in the country.

The actual move to the country took place on a gloomy, rainy day in May 1915. Prior to leaving their home in New York City, The Modern School and the Ferrer Association held a celebration in conjunction with the Yorkville Sunday School at the Harlem Casino. The children of both schools sang and performed dances in honor of their forthcoming move to the country. In addition, there was further celebration at Stelton, New Jersey, when the teachers and children arrived to set up the school. At this celebration, 200 to 300 comrades came from New York, Philadelphia, Patterson, and Scranton, representing the anarchist groups within these cities. There were a series of welcoming speeches by Leonard Abbott, Will Durant, Harry Kelly and Joseph Cohen. Behind the speakers' podium hung posters of Ferrer and the Escuela Modern of Barcelona reaffirming the connection between


12 The Yorkville Sunday school was part of a network of socialist Sunday schools in New York that were involved in radical politics. The description of the celebration appears in "School Notes," The Modern School 2 (June 1915): 71.
the Stelton Modern School and the Escuela Modern of Barcelona.\textsuperscript{13}

The individuals and families that bought land in the colony consisted of men and women from all walks of life, poets, musicians, thinkers, carpenters, furriers, etc., most of whom were from Jewish working class backgrounds.\textsuperscript{14} The children at the school came from families who lived full time at the colony, families who lived and worked in New York and came to the colony on weekends and students who came from the nearby socialist fellowship farm. When the school opened there were twenty-nine children, four caretakers and four teachers. The school itself consisted of a barn, an old farmhouse and chicken coops. The farmhouse consisted of twelve rooms and became the children's school and dining hall.\textsuperscript{15} The barn was too old to make do as a dormitory, so a new site was selected and a makeshift dormitory was constructed. It was hoped the new construction would be sufficient to house the children until the weather became cooler. The school itself began to operate and soon it acquired cows and chickens.\textsuperscript{16} Mr. Reich, who had been the last occupant of the farm, helped to develop a vegetable garden which was to be tended by the children and used to feed the members of the school community.\textsuperscript{17}

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\textsuperscript{13}"Formal Opening of the Country School," \textit{The Modern School} 2 (June 1915): 70.

\textsuperscript{14}Ackerman, interview.


\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
in the country now included a variety of new experiences: gardening, farming, and tending animals. This meant that on the most basic level, there would be shifts in educational practice to deal with the twenty-four hour experience of the school in the country.

The Ferrer Association, as the political arm of the school, remained in New York and continued its political work. Here parents of the children at the Stelton School held meetings where they addressed the question of living expenses for the children and adults and talked about building furniture and equipment for the school. In these initial stages the links between the country school and the urban center were maintained through parent meetings held in the city and through the parents who worked in New York during the week and commuted to the colony to be with their children on the weekends. The frequency of travel between the Colony and New York insured that news of city activities and working class struggles would be available to the colonists.

Yet life in the colony and life at the school remained distinctly different from the New York experience of the Modern School. In the first place, there was a closeness to nature that had been lacking at the New York School even when the school was located on 112th Street and the children played a good deal of the time in Central Park. Now the children spent a good part of their school day romping in the woods, planting, gardening and tending to farm animals. But even more

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importantly, the children at Stelton were together on a twenty-four hour basis. As a result, new issues in educational theory needed to be worked out. Parents, teachers and caretakers had to re-define issues like community, freedom, cooperation and individuation to fit a twenty-four hour living arrangement rather than a five-hour school day. Children were now responsible for the cooking and cleaning, and it became really important to work out methods of group cooperation as well as ways to preserve individuality. While this caused many problems, it also created a unique situation in that libertarian principles of education, childrearing and radical politics could be treated in a holistic way without the daily interference and pressures of the children's home life. In other words, at Stelton, a real community of children existed, though the shape, form and culture of that community needed to be worked out.

At the Stelton Modern School the day began at eight o'clock. Breakfast was prepared by two children and a caretaker. The children ate breakfast together. After breakfast the children did traditional school work: reading, writing and math. At around twelve o'clock they ate lunch, which they and a caretaker had prepared. After lunch the children spent most of the time playing out of doors down by the brook. The children were organized as one large group with five adults as supervisors, and at other times the children worked in small groups.

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of eight with one adult in charge of each group. Yet in either case children were held responsible for care of their buildings and preparation of food.  

The Modern School magazine began publishing again soon after the move to the country under the editorship of Harry Kelly. Now it included a monthly children's column where poetry and stories written by children were published. In reading these columns one can sense the consciousness and concerns of the children as country and city issues intermingled in the essays and poetry. In one of the first issues of the magazine, the political concerns were clearly visible as the children's poetry described the hardships of the lives of working people. One particular poem by Joseph Ostrow, age fourteen, went as follows:

The Toilers
I
They toil by night
They toil by day
Until they toil
Their lives away
That is the life of the toiler. . . .

IV
You must toil and I must toil
For fate has willed it so,
Of the toiling masses we came
And with them we most go
For we are children of toilers.

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Political concerns were further encouraged at the colony when a series of open air discussions on William Morris, anarchism, and colony life were established. The colonists seemed to be trying to recapture the intellectual life that had been a regular feature of the Ferrer Center in New York. In fact, an article in The Modern School suggests that "one of the prime causes of the failure of colonies and such social experiments as we are making at Stelton, has been the lack of intellectual life among the members." For this reason the discussion and lecture series was established. The first discussions were held in the open air on June 12 and the topic was "William Morris." This was followed by a talk on Henry David Thoreau as well as a series of discussions about life in the colony. In these early months, the essential educational concerns that had been part of the Modern School in New York remained and the connection between the political movement and the school was clearly visible.

Problems developed which were specifically connected to implementing libertarian ideals in a communal setting on a twenty-four hour basis. According to Mr. Hutchinson, head of the school, the caretakers in the children's house were not really implementing a libertarian philosophy. They were forcing the children to brush their teeth before bedtime, etc. By mid-June Mr. Hutchinson left the school to start his own school at Stoneyford precisely because he felt there was too great a

23 Ibid.
discrepancy between the educational philosophy of the school and the philosophy of childrearing practiced in the children's house. Because of these differences, he believed that a truly libertarian philosophy could not be worked out at Stelton. He stated, "The condition of things as I tried to show is the last bulletin in which children are only in the hands of the teacher a short time, makes it impossible to carry libertarian education to the degree that we believe."24

After Mr. Hutchinson left, the children shifted for themselves for most of July and August. Several caretakers returned to the city. There was a demoralized atmosphere at the school because of a lack of teachers, funds and tools to install the needed plumbing.25

That these early months at Stelton were difficult and troubled times for the Modern School was evidenced by the fact that several parents withdrew their children from the school and The Modern School magazine stopped publication in August 1915. "The weak foundation of the school was tottering and yet the many obstacles that had been met provoked heroic struggles in those who had to meet them."26

The living and educational situation at the school remained precarious throughout the fall of 1915, even after the new director, Dr. Schnitkindt, took charge. The problems inherent in creating a new

24 R. Hutchinson, "Mr. and Mrs. Hutchinson's Resignation as Teachers of the Modern School," The Modern School 2 (July-August 1915): 87.


community had often been underestimated by the pioneers of the colony. As a result, there were tremendous physical problems to be overcome; the boarding house had no heat for the winter and the fee of three dollars per week per child did not supply sufficient funds for converting the house to a winter dormitory. In fact, in early fall the cold weather forced the children to heat the place by bonfires which resulted in actual fires in the boarding house. In addition, wells for water and roads running through the property had to be completed. The difficulties in creating a working community often seemed insurmountable. During these months, when the school operated under the direction of the new principal, Dr. Schnitdkindt, classroom activities continued and the children often took spirited walks to the nearest town of New Brunswick. On the way, the children and leaders would tell fairy tales to each other, particularly workingmen's fairy tales. Most probably these stories included heroes and heroines of working class origin. Perhaps they were similar to the NoNo stories used at the Ferrer School in Barcelona. They could have been obtained out of the textbooks that had been in use at the Modern School of Barcelona and which had been translated by the Association in the spring of 1915, or else they could have been made up by the teachers and students themselves, or gotten from the working class fairy tales found in the children's

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27 Cohen and Ferm, The Modern School of Stelton, p. 28.

28 Ibid., p. 15.

magazine published by the Socialist Sunday Schools. In either case it was clear that the curriculum at the Stelton School continued to develop the class identification of the students.

Though classes continued throughout these autumn months and the children were held responsible for the garden and the work to maintain the boarding house, the school remained in difficult straits. By mid-autumn 1915, Dr. Schnitkindt resigned and volunteers from New York and the colony ran the school. A parent-formed collective maintained the boarding school. While the confusion of the first six months made it difficult to develop a coherent educational program, various events and learning activities did take place at the school. By the winter of 1915, the children began to publish a magazine called The Flower of Truth where the stories and articles they had written were put into magazine form. An actual printing press was acquired soon afterward and Joseph Ishill, a craftsman and printer, set up the printing plant and started classes for the children and colonists. In addition, at Christmas time the children went to New York and Philadelphia to present an anti-war play called Shambles. The play itself was specifically chosen to commemorate the execution of Ferrer. The introduction to the play stated, "There is often a call in the radical movement for effective dramas to be acted at entertainments and gatherings. Here


31Ibid.; also see Cohen and Ferm, The Modern School of Stelton, p. 28.

is a play that meets the requirements both of propaganda and art."\(^{33}\)

Obviously there was a clearly defined political purpose to the writing and presentation of the play. While the specific educational achievements of the school during the first six months at Stelton were precarious, it was clear from the magazine articles and plays the children performed that they had managed during this first year in the country to maintain their political perspective as well as their ties to the New York movement. Yet it was also clear that the school needed strong educational leadership and direction. In the spring of 1916 the members were able to persuade W. T. Brown to come to Stelton.

Mr. Brown's involvement in radical education and radical politics differentiated him from the previous head teachers of the school. Unlike his predecessors Hutchinson, Durant, and Schnitkindt, Brown came out of a radical political tradition as well as a libertarian education tradition. In 1910 Brown had already been involved in trying to

\(^{33}\)Schnitkindt, Shambles, p. 1. The play Shambles was not only presented by the children of Stelton, but was also dramatized by the children in the Socialist Sunday schools in and around Boston as well as by a Socialist drama league in New York City. The title of the play comes from the statement "Why should we have to send our sons away to war, like cattle to the shambles." Mr. Abbott, in the introduction to the play, stated, "and I hope the time is not far distant when every workingman in the world will have enough of the spirit of class solidarity to be able to fill out without a moment's hesitation the last enigmatic sentence of the play." Here the grandfather says, "He too like his father will be dragged away to the shambles of war when he grows to be a man. War will always be waiting for the strongest and best unless ________________." The play suggests that until workers unite and refuse to fight capitalist wars they will continue to suffer and lose their loved ones. The plot of the play centers around a boy who loses both parents in war.
establish the first Modern School Association in Salt Lake City.\textsuperscript{34}

Since that time he had been involved in working class politics as well as socialist and anarchist activity.

Brown's background had significance for the ways in which he defined both the Ferrer Colony, the philosophical basis of the Modern School at Stelton, and the daily curriculum of the school. In a pamphlet written by Brown and published at the Modern School Association of North America, he stated,

\begin{quote}
The colony is not a commune but is made up of working people who believe and practice principles of freedom and have discarded religious and political superstitions. Thus the school has about it a social environment free from prejudice.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

As head of the Modern School of Stelton, Brown tried to create a new sense of community among the children, a new set of cultural values based on principles of cooperation, mutual respect, justice, patience, honesty, truthfulness and responsibility. The significance of living and working together on a twenty-four hour a day basis meant that education could be continuous and that in fact a new culture could be developed among the students. Brown worked to define this new culture through the creation of a familial atmosphere where teachers, children and caretakers worked cooperatively. He believed that community and mutual trust would develop in the school and the boarding houses not from rules laid down in a book, or from the authority

\textsuperscript{34}"Notes and Comments by the Editor," \textit{The Modern School} 3 (July 1916): 45.

\textsuperscript{35}Brown, \textit{The Most Important Experiment in America}, p. 25.
exercised by a master, but simply from the experience of learning to live together. He believed that "The ideal of the school is that children's life shall be their education." In other words, life, learning and education were entwined when a school operated on a twenty-four hour a day basis.

Brown's emphasis in the classroom was heavily academic and socially oriented. In many ways his educational goals set down in his pamphlet *The Most Important Experiment in America* are similar to those expressed over and over again by the children's parents at their parent meetings in New York. Brown clearly laid out the purpose of education at the Modern School:

1. a vigorous bodily health and symmetrical physical development;

2. minds free from superstition and having the point of view of science;

3. the power of intellectual concentration and personal initiative and capacity for fruitful cooperation;

4. a systematic and vital knowledge of at least the elements of those subjects a knowledge of which is necessary for success in the struggle for existence;

5. an ethical consciousness which may be described in the phrase of Ferrer: No rights without duties and no duties without rights;

6. such sense of creative arts and idealism as they are capable of;

7. accurate and dynamic knowledge of the origin and value of existing institutions and of those movements in behalf of social improvement which give greatest significance to human life.  

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37 Ibid., p. 27.
Brown's program, while acknowledging the importance of self-expression and creativity, clearly emphasized social and political concerns in much the same way that Francisco Ferrer defined rational libertarian education. In another pamphlet Brown clearly stated that radical education must include training students to become a significant force for social change. He said,

> You can't train children for chaos and you have no right to train them for reaction. I would train them definitely and specifically. We are doing that now at the Ferrer School, for social and political change in the direction of greater freedom and wider opportunities and full equality for all human beings.  

Brown's expressly social and political orientation, which distinguished him from previous leaders at the school, most clearly approximated the goals set forth by Ferrer and the Spanish Syndicalists. Perhaps this was precisely what was needed to maintain the political vision set forth by the founders once the school had moved to the country. Brown's vitality, academic emphasis and political concerns coupled with the constant interchange between the New York Association and Stelton, kept the unity between the romantic libertarianism and a class-conscious education for workers' children which had characterized the New York years. However, small differences between the New York and the Stelton experience had begun to emerge.

In May 1916, Memorial Day weekend, a year after the school had moved to Stelton and a few months after Brown became head teacher, the New York Ferrer Association celebrated the sixth anniversary of its 

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foundering. This time the celebration took place at the Stelton Colony instead of New York. The celebration honored both the sixth anniversary of the founding of the Modern School and the establishment of the Ferrer Colony at Stelton.\(^{39}\) The event was significant for two reasons: (1) it brought to the colony many radicals including Emma Goldman, who had not yet visited Stelton; (2) it provided the basis for the convention in mid-June which would launch the significant Modern School Association of North America.

Over 100 radicals from all over the Eastern Seaboard attended the event. Emma Goldman was the first speaker of the day, and she spoke on birth control.\(^{40}\) The excitement of the day made it clear to the members of the Colony that there was a real need to harness the school in a permanent way to a wider radical community. Perhaps this feeling was most acute because the country school was not directly connected to the New York Ferrer Association and formal ties were needed to revitalize the connection between the school and the anarchist movement. Certainly the fact that Miss Goldman had not been to the Colony or the school the entire year distinguished the Stelton School's relationship to the movement from that of the New York years. Even though close ties had been maintained, the spontaneity that had existed when children walked to the Mother Earth office and saw Mr. Berkman and Miss Goldman regularly on an informal basis was no longer possible. Now ritualized


\(^{40}\)Cohen and Ferm, The Modern School of Stelton, p. 31.
meetings were needed to insure the institutionalization of what had once been an informal connection. At the same time, the removal of the school to a neutral community and the gradual expansion of the school and the Colony made the members of the Colony wish to relate to a wider radical community than that which existed in the New York area. An editorial in The Modern School expressed this feeling: "The members of the association and the colony felt that the school had grown and there was a real need to appeal to a wider constituency than had been necessary in the New York area."41

In actuality, radical anarchist communities existed in Paterson, New Jersey, New York, and Philadelphia, and in the hopes of uniting these groups around radical concerns and educational issues, the Ferrer Association planned a conference for mid-June. The convention, which was held at Stelton on June 25, included delegates from New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia.42 The outgrowth of the convention was the birth of the Modern School Association of North America, an educational association devoted to perpetuating the ideals of the Modern School and radical education. An editorial in the Modern School explained the birth of the Association.

It is the feeling of libertarians in Patterson, Newark, Philadelphia, as well as New York, that everything possible should be done to insure the success of the school at Stelton. The formation of the Modern School Association of North America

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41 "Notes and Comments by the Editor," The Modern School 3 (July 1916): 44.
42 Ibid.
with headquarters at Stelton is a logical imperative step in the development of this work.\footnote{\textit{"Notes and Comments by the Editor,"} p. 46.}

At the June convention, guidelines for the Association were established. It was stated that individual membership would be open to all at one dollar per year and organizational membership would be at a minimum fee of ten dollars per year.\footnote{Ibid.} It was further agreed that an annual convention would be held at Stelton on the Sunday preceding Labor Day. The first of these annual conventions was scheduled for Labor Day weekend, 1915. The primary task of this convention would be to select a board of twelve managers, a secretary and treasurer. The Association was seen as having a dual purpose, to help the growth of the school itself as well as to disseminate libertarian ideals. It was believed that

with the location of the management at Stelton and the distribution of membership and interest all over the continent, it is our belief that a new era in the progress of libertarian education has opened.\footnote{Cohen and Ferm, \textit{The Modern School of Stelton}, p. 31.} Comrades who really share the profound convictions for which Ferrer lived and died—convictions to which scores of us have given verbal expression over and over in hundreds of addresses and activities, should now give proof of their sincerity and good faith by forming branches of the Association in larger cities.

With the commitment to create the Modern School Association of North America, a new phase in the history of the Modern School began. This phase emphasized developing libertarian educational theory and spreading that theory to other cities in the United States. While these goals were similar to those of the Ferrer Association, they remained
distinct in that the new association focused primarily on educational issues.

On September 3, 1916, the First Annual Convention was held at Stelton. Harry Kelly gave the opening address in which he stated the purpose of the convention. He said, "They were laying the foundation of an institution that had the most profound significance for the future of the human race, an institution that rejects lesser allegiance only to concentrate on building a free society." The Association went on to define their goals, which were primarily educational, and to choose a board of twelve members.

The twelve members who were chosen and whose duties involved defining the educational policy of the Modern School, exhibited a wide range of ideals. In response to two questions asked of the board members: "In your opinion in what does libertarian education consist?" and "What definite things must the Modern School at Stelton do to justify its existence?" the two dominant strains of libertarian education, a romantic individualism and a class-conscious spirit were visible. Depending on which member was interviewed, a different philosophical bias became dominant. One member, William Schulman, emphasized the need for education to help children realize their inner selves, their dreams, desires, and needs. Yet his ideas also suggested that the isolation of a radical school in the country be remedied by frequent visits to urban centers. He believed that "to acquaint them

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with broader human life and activities, occasional excursions should be made to large cities, visiting industrial plants and historical and scientific and art museums." Apparently members of the board recognized what had been a concern of the Ferrer Association, that students living in the country become acquainted with an industrial urban environment. Other board members responded by reaffirming the ties between the Association and Francisco Ferrer and by emphasizing the social concerns and class base of libertarian education. Many of these individuals had similar ideals to the founding fathers and envisioned the end result of the Modern School to be the development of socially conscious individuals who will struggle against injustice.

Louise Timonsky, one such member, stated,

We must create the environment in which the child shall learn to look upon his fellow men not as objects for exploitation but as coworkers and comrades. He will then go into the world ready to struggle with evils which for ages pressed upon humanity.

Harry Kelly, one of the original founders of the school in New York, reaffirmed the commitment of the Modern School Association of North America to libertarian and class-conscious education. He stated,

If we cannot instill in our children a feeling of social consciousness or oneness with the rest of mankind, as well as a desire to resist exploitation and the attempt to curb their freedoms as they grow older, a wish to extend and develop the principles of the Modern School at Stelton, I will have failed to justify its existence.

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48 Ibid., p. 103.

49 Ibid., p. 104.
Leonard Abbott, another member, discussed individual freedoms and the origins of the school’s philosophy in radical politics: "Libertarian education as I understand it, aims to encourage individuality. While its tone is radical, while its background is Anarchism, Syndicalism, Free Thought, it does not teach a set of doctrines authoritatively." Mr. Abbott reaffirmed the radical connections of the school but insisted that these connections need not be directly taught. While some members wished to teach about social issues others clearly did not. However, all were concerned with the creation of socially conscious individuals.

In either case, it is clear that the first Board of the Modern School Association of North America had a class consciousness as well as an individualistic notion of freedom and that the push at the school would be to develop both. The charter of incorporation while signed in 1918 still expressed the goals of the new association. The charter reaffirmed the ties between the Modern School and the Escuela Moderna in Spain and stated,

The purposes for which the corporation is formed are to establish and maintain a school for the purpose of study and demonstration of the problems of Modern Education and especially to work the educational ideas of Francisco Ferrer. The school will be conducted in a manner to appeal to the children’s personality and energies by allowing free play to their natural tendencies.


51 "Articles of Incorporation of the Modern School Association of North America." Papers of the Modern School Association of North America, Special Collection Department, Rutgers University Library.
The formation of the Modern School Association of North America with a board of twelve members was clearly an historic moment in the school's development. In one sense the formation of the Association with its commitment to develop libertarian schools throughout the United States distinctly separated the educational wing of anarchism from the political wing of the movement. While this separation had begun with the move to the country and the separation of the Modern School from the Ferrer Association, the formation of the Modern School Association of North America clearly institutionalized it. This did not mean there were not overlapping concerns or even a great deal of communication between both the educational and political wings of anarchism, but it did mean there was a clear separation of interests. While this was accepted practice in Spain where Ferrer formed the League for Rational Education, it would have different repercussions in the United States. In the absence of a strong anarchist or syndicalist movement the separation between politics and education could present real problems for radical education and the Modern School Association of North America.

At Stelton itself, Brown worked to stabilize the school and as a result, in the winter 1916-1917, the school functioned on a more even keel than at any time in the past year. Brown's educational practices and the formation of the Modern School Association of North America had a positive effect on the practices of the school. However, by February 1917 this began to change. External events such as the Russian Revolution of February 1917 and United States entry into World War I in Spring 1917 disrupted the temporary equilibrium because it directly affected United States radical activity and indirectly
affected life and education at Stelton. These events intensified the colony's separation from radical politics because they effectively served to dismantle the radical movement and to create conflict among the members of the colony. In effect, historical conditions exacerbated the separation begun by the move to the country and led to what we will term the second phase in the changing relationship between the school's ideals and radical political activity.

The United States entry into the war gave rise to forced conscription; anarchists and socialists who had since 1914 preached that war was a tool of the capitalist classes to divide and kill off the working classes, who fought the capitalists' wars, became split over the war effort. Many upheld United States entry into the war and forced conscription. Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Leonard Abbott formed an anti-conscription league in May of 1917 which issued a manifesto against the war and conscription. Members of the League spoke against the war in many cities across the United States as did socialists and members of the IWW. As a result, in the fall and winter of 1917-1918, there were mass arrests of radicals speaking out against the war. A new espionage law was used against all who spoke out against the war and it served to create a climate of intense repression. "A new espionage law turned the country into a lunatic asylum. . . . Disruption of public meetings and wholesale arrests, sentences of incredible severity, suppression of radical publications, etc. . . ." The

53 Ibid., p. 640.
oppressive climate not only affected free speech but served to suppress all anti-war articles, magazines or newspapers.

The assault on life and on free speech were supplanted by the suppression of the printed word. Under the espionage law and similar statutes passed in the war fever, the postmaster general had been constituted absolute dictator over the press. Even private distributions became impossible for any paper to oppose the war. . . . Mother Earth became the first victim. . . .

The repressive situation of 1917 was further exacerbated by the impact of the February and October Russian Revolution. The success of the revolution rejuvenated the movement and caused many anarchists and socialists to look toward Russia for direction. However the rejuvenation was accompanied by splits with the movement over the revolution in Russia: Many anarchists and socialists repudiated the Bolsheviks, while others turned toward them for inspiration. At the same time the revolution caused the United States government to become even more suspicious of all radical activity and to enact a series of severely repressive measures against radical activists and radical publications.

By 1918-1919 the repressive conditions in the United States reached new proportions. Many radicals were in jail or awaiting sentencing for speaking out against conscription and United States participation in the war; these included Emma Goldman, Big Bill Haywood, Kate O'Hare, Eugene Debs, etc. In addition, deportation hearings were begun against radicals of foreign birth. In October 1918 Emma Goldman had her deportation hearing, which resulted in her being deported to

55 Ibid., p. 666.
Russia in December 1919. Miss Goldman describes the aura of this period, "Each day scores of candidates are brought for deportation. From various states they came, most of them without clothes or money." Even though the war had ended, the United States continued viciously in its attacks against radicals. By 1919, under the auspices of Attorney General Mitchell Palmer, the Palmer Raids began.

There was hardly an activity where workers known as Russians or suspected of sympathy with radical ideas were not being picked up, taken at their work benches or on the street. Behind these raids stood Attorney General Mitchell Palmer panicky at the thought of a radical. Many of the arrests were accompanied by brutal manhandling of the victims. The climate of hysteria prevalent throughout the United States was intensified in New York with the formation in 1919 of the Lusk Commission. The Commission was designed to investigate subversive activities in New York institutions and proceeded to harass, investigate and denounce the Modern School of Stelton. In essence the repressive climate split the radical movement and dismantled their institutions by removing leaders and prohibiting publication of magazines and newspapers with radical social content. By 1919 radical political movements, most specifically the anarchist movement, were greatly

57 Ibid., p. 713. 58 Ibid., p. 708.
These historical events as well as the ensuing climate of 1918-1919 had several net effects on the Colony and the School. Some of these were directly observable through memoirs, reports and school histories; others had to be inferred from the general tone of The Modern School. In either case, a reading of the school's history and most particularly a careful reading of The Modern School showed that the school's self image, as well as its educational direction, shifted by the summer of 1917. Both the Russian Revolution and the war caused members to leave the Colony: the war, because some members of the Colony wished to participate in the war effort and were at odds with the dominant anti-war forces in the Colony; the Revolution, because members of the colony wanted to go to Russia to actively participate in the building of a new society.  

The gradual shift in membership must have affected life at the Colony and the pedagogy of the school. Often the new colonists were not a part of the original pioneering effort and many had not even heard of Ferrer. Kelly, in an answer to the Lusk report of 1919, described the colonists: "And possibly even half of the members or denizens of the Ferrer Colony knew very little of Ferrer's teaching and are in no sense whatever his followers." While this was said of the members in 1919, the change in the colonists began with the 1917

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shift in membership. The fact that the martyr who had inspired the original founders was unknown to half the colonists meant that neither his ideals nor his pedagogy would be their source for inspiration or guidance and certainly this fact alone affected the pedagogy of the school.

The friction that developed between the old and new members intensified after the October Revolution. The new conflict in the colony centered on the Russian Revolution and occurred between those who favored Bolshevism and those who believed a centralized state threatened individual freedoms. Outside the colony, the same argument split the entire radical community, sharpening the lines between the various political perspectives. The polarization of radical perspectives would ultimately affect school policy and school issues.

Within the school, the change in student population and the fact that a great number of the children lived outside the boarding house while attending the school caused many problems. The problems seemed to result from the disparity between life style in the home and the philosophy of the school. It is in fact possible to conceive of the specific kinds of problems that could have developed between students who lived in the boarding house and those who came from outside; between students who came from homes with philosophies that differ from that of the school and the teachers committed to libertarian educational theories; between parents and school. However, even amidst

62Cohen and Ferm, The Modern School of Stelton, p. 34.
this turmoil, the school and the colony managed to continue with summer activities that included discussions, lectures, and bonfires.

Further changes took place. In the summer of 1917 Carl Zigrosser took over the editorship of the magazine and in the fall 1917 W. T. Brown left to tour the United States for the Modern School Association of North America. Ostensibly Mr. Brown remained head of the school though he was not readily available to manage the affairs of the school. While it is hard to tell the net effect this had on the workings of the school, as there are no real descriptions in the available papers, it is possible to surmise from the philosophy of Mr. Zigrosser, The Modern School and the annual meeting of the Modern School Association of North America that subtle changes had begun to take place. At the annual convention of the Association in 1917, we can see some of these changes. At a time of intense political activity, both the arrest of Emma Goldman, a leader in the movement and one of the founders of


64Some of these changes were clearly stated by Mr. Zigrosser in an editorial statement in Editorial Notes and Comments, The Modern School 4 (June-July 1917): 30. Here Mr. Zigrosser stated, "New brooms sweep clean" and proceeded to outline the new direction the magazine would take. He stated that the magazine would now include: (1) articles on experimental schools, loosely termed "modern schools," which embody some aspect of libertarian education (Mr. Zigrosser seems to use the term modern school to incorporate a wide variety of innovative pedagogy; he does not use it to specifically denote Ferrer's modern school); (2) articles on Greek, Russian and Chinese education; (3) articles on methods of teaching history and math; (4) articles discussing the failure of traditional schooling. The magazine now seemed to want to focus on educational experiments rather than political or movement education.
the Modern School, and the Russian Revolution were only briefly discussed and the emphasis of the entire convention remained educational. This seemed to show that the separation between political concerns and radical education had sharpened.

However, the changes taking place were deep rooted and were not only a result of the historical conditions, but they also grew out of the splits in anarchist educational theory already discussed. Mr. Zigrosser, who was to be the new head of the Modern School, was less politically oriented than Brown and more like Mr. Hutchinson or Mr. Durant. His philosophy fit most accurately with what we have termed the Native American Libertarian tradition. As the new editor of *The Modern School*, his philosophies would have both a direct and indirect effect on the workings of the school. Mr. Zigrosser's philosophy was most clearly spelled out in a pamphlet published at the Modern School. While Mr. Zigrosser believed social issues were significant to a child's education, he was primarily concerned with individual growth and development through creative self-expression. He believed a person who was highly creative would become a leader in social transformation. Zigrosser emphasized that it is the individual, rather than a social class or a particular social group, who will become instrumental in the process of social change. He stated,

> It is the individual organism that takes a separate step, the variation from the norm, that has contributed most to the progress of the world. So in the cultivation of
distinctness and individualism the Modern School sees a potent spring for the enhancement of life.\textsuperscript{65}

At the same time that Mr. Zigrosser took over as editor, Mr. Ishill left and the printing of the magazine was put into the hands of a New York firm that was also responsible for the editing. These changes further affected the policy of the magazine as well as its content. An article reflecting back on the magazine during these years stated, "Editorially as well as mechanically, the magazine becomes divorced from the life of the school."\textsuperscript{66}

While the new editors and new printers were partially responsible for a shift in educational goals they do not completely explain this shift. They do not explain the readiness with which the shift in emphasis exhibited by the magazine under Mr. Zigrosser's editorship was accepted by the school community. One can only surmise that a combination of events, including the intensely repressive political climate in the United States, the dismantling of radical magazines,

\textsuperscript{65}Zigrosser, Unpublished Memoirs, p. 11. It is also interesting to note that Mr. Zigrosser's interest in the school was distinctly different from that of the radical immigrant worker in the Ferrer Association. In the Memoirs, Mr. Zigrosser described the way he first became a part of the Ferrer Association. He stated, "I was not temporarily destined to be a social reformer or revolutionary. . . . What actually were the impulses that led me to spend so much time for a year or so in the slums of the upper east side? One impulse was altruistic, a desire to help those who were less fortunate than myself. . . . I wanted to discover how the other half lives." Zigrosser, Unpublished Memoirs, p. 14. It seems that this basic attitude would certainly have a distinct affect on the new direction of the magazine and would probably affect the school as well.

\textsuperscript{66}John Edleman, "Our Magazine Now Published at the School," The Modern School, November-December 1920, p. 198.
the jailing of movement leaders such as Emma Goldman, caused The Modern School magazine to turn away from expressly political issues. Now the magazine began to emphasize a particular form of libertarian educational philosophy which was intent on developing creativity and artistic self-expression, and which saw itself as connecting to many different kinds of educational experiments in the United States. As a result the magazine focused on educational issues and ignored the vital political issues of the day. When we examine the magazine between 1917 and 1919 we find that there were few articles dealing with the closing of Mother Earth, Earth, the deportation of Emma Goldman, or the deportation of prominent radicals, and there were in fact few mentions of revolutionaries like Francisco Ferrer. A minimum of space was devoted to the Russian Revolution, yet a good portion of that space was concerned with education in Russia. In the educational articles, the model of schooling most frequently evoked was that of Tolstoy's Yasna Polyana. The other articles in the magazine concerned educational theory, and dealt with creativity in the arts--music, art, drama. Still others focused on educational experiments in Europe and America. Perhaps the repressive climate pushed the magazine to narrow its connections to larger political and social issues and to turn inward and deal primarily with educational issues.

With a shift in the magazine's focus came a shift in the school's self-image. In the earlier years, the magazine wrote about the school in revolutionary terms, emphasizing its working class allegiance and allegiance to revolutionary movements like that of Francisco Ferrer
in Spain. The school was never referred to as an educational experiment or as a place to develop innovative pedagogy. Rather the innovative pedagogy was seen as integral to revolution, and the early founders clearly distinguished between themselves and liberal progressives who experimented with educational techniques, but remained uncommitted to revolutionary change. Now the educational philosophy of pedagogy was more divorced from political goals and the romantic ideal of Tolstoy became clearly dominant. By 1918 The Modern School magazine referred to the Stelton Modern School as an "educational experiment" and links were established to non-political experimental schools around New York, the United States and Europe. An editorial in The Modern School magazine announcing a series of lectures on educational experiments defined the new direction when it stated,

The course has been arranged by people interested in the Modern School with a view to directing attention to educational experiments at Stelton and elsewhere. Emphasis will be placed on the practical problems of experimental schools, in as much as four of the speakers are actively engaged in progressive educational enterprises.

A lecture series was set up to discuss educational experiments and the articles in The Modern School began to be devoted to such school experiments as the Gary Plan, the Organic School and A. S. Neill's educational theories or experiences. Characteristically, these experiments were working to redefine individuality and freedom in education, yet none were affiliated with revolutionary activity. The

founders' disdain for educational experiments that lacked a socio-political emphasis was clearly gone and the separation between education and radical political concerns seemed almost complete.

As the self-image shifted, the school's activities changed. By winter 1918, the Modern School participated in a series of discussions on education. These were held in New York City at the Sunrise Turin Bookstore. The invited lecturers were involved in experimental education projects on schools that emphasized personal liberation and creativity rather than revolutionary or class freedoms, and none except W. T. Brown were involved specifically in educating the children of the working class. The speakers included: Prince Hapenk, who was to speak on his work at his experimental school in Santa Barbara and schools he had visited in France and England; Marietta Johnson, who would speak on organic education as practiced in her school at Fairhope, Alabama; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who would speak on children; Robert Hutchinson, who would speak on the methods of education at Stonyford, and finally on March 22, 1918, W. T. Brown was scheduled to speak on the methods in use at the Modern School of Stelton. 68

The magazine encouraged the school's connection to experimental education through articles on a variety of libertarian progressive experiments. In September 1917, there was an article in The Modern

School magazine which praised A. S. Neill. The article on Neill's first book, Dominee, was euphoric and stated, "I wish that unique school master A. S. Neill were here in America within walking distance. I should like very much to make his acquaintance." In December of 1917 The Modern School interviewed Marietta Johnson on organic education. Miss Johnson, while a real innovator in education and famous for her views on the natural development of children, did not have any affiliation with working class movements or radical politics. Another article in the same magazine praised the formation of the Bureau of Experimental Schools in New York City because of its professional attitude toward educational experiments. The Bureau, which had been a creation of the progressive education movement in the New York area, was also not affiliated with radical politics. The majority of the remaining articles in the Modern School 1917-1919 focused on the arts,

69A. S. Neill's educational theories became the foundation for the Free School movement of the sixties. His model of education was highly individualistic and emphasized creativity, self expression, the emotional world of childhood. It did not have either an explicit theory of political economic change or working class orientation. It was probably more like the romantic tradition in education rather than the tradition of Ferrer in the ways it emphasized changing the consciousness and the emotional world of children.


drama, music and dance and their relationship to fostering individuality, spontaneity and creativity in children. In one such article, Elise Dunbar explained how the rhythm of dance could become the starting point for the new education.

When rhythmic dancing is studied for performing it is not so interesting. Living beautifully is the greatest art of all and when one dances to live, an art form grows of itself out of the heart of reality more beautiful than art for art's sake can ever be.73

These statements, not so different from those made in the past by the Ferrer Association, took on a different educational significance when the focus of the Modern School turned to self-expression and creativity. Another article in a 1917 issue of the magazine talked about children as the perfect artists and explained the ways in which they uniquely united hand and heart. This view of children closely resembled that of the romantic anarchists. The article went on to discuss the ways in which these artistic qualities must be further developed through schooling.74 Still other articles discussed the ways in which schools develop creativity and self-expression through drama and music. The overriding emphasis of the magazine on self-expression techniques for developing creativity in students shows the particular shift of concerns that had begun to take place in the magazine. One cannot help but believe that the shift in the magazine's emphasis must


74Rockwell Kent, "Art and the Child," The Modern School, January 1918, pp. 3-5.
have affected or reflected the policies of the school to which it was closely linked.

When the magazine was not dealing with educational issues, it was devoted to literary and artistic questions. In 1919, an entire issue of The Modern School was devoted to Walt Whitman; other issues contained articles on art as well as prints of paintings by Blake and Cezanne. The focus was the revolutionary nature of art forms that broke with conventionality. Yet the focus remained on cultural change rather than political and economic revolution. Though the magazine and school's interest in educational issues concerned with self-expression through art and music was not that different from the concerns and efforts of the New York years, what was different was the emphasis these subjects received to the exclusion of other concerns, and the fact that the emphasis on creativity no longer took place in the radical political context that had characterized the New York years. Now cultural concerns became unhinged and isolated from revolutionary politics. Without ongoing and intense political activities, this artistic and cultural focus often made the school and the community take on the ambience of a counterculture experiment in personal freedom and communal living rather than an institution connected to revolutionary politics.

The separation begun in the spring of 1915 with the move to the country became intensified in the period between 1917 and 1919. This was probably due to the repression of radical activities and the internal conflict within the movement. As a result, political concerns
were not only unhinged from educational concerns, they began to develop as separate entities with separate goals, which were distinguished by different definitions of freedom: the creative artist, the rebel leader, versus the revolutionary who struggled for changes in class relationships. The two threads which had managed to remain entwined in New York began to unravel by 1919, ultimately causing the educational goals to lack revolutionary focus. Yet by 1919 the unravelling process was not complete; a class-conscious politics remained in the school and the community, though it now existed in a less dominant position and in a somewhat different form.

In 1919 the outside world identified the colony and school as "subversive," "radical," "revolutionary," and "anarchistic." The Lusk Commission which had been set up in New York State to investigate radical activity, identified the Modern School in its report of 1919 as a deeply dangerous and subversive school. The report went on to explain that its danger lay in its emphasis on sexuality, group showering, lack of respect for all laws and its clearly articulated anarchist philosophy. The agent who investigated the school had this to say: "One of the prime objects of the colony seems to be to gather in the fold immature boys and girls, to inculcate in their minds that law is something that has no existence, must not be obeyed and must be done away with."

Stripped of its verbiage, the above examination includes but one thing; and that is that in the Ferrer or Modern

School, run by anarchists, until a recent date in the city of New York, children at the most impressionable ages were taught an utter disregard for our laws and imbued with the ideas that a state of anarchy was the true blissful state and that this should be the aim and purpose of the little children who in all innocence believe what their elders tell them.  

The surrounding communities feared both the cultural and political radicalism of the colony. The local community of New Brunswick sent an investigator to the school. Several of his questions concerned the kinds of political teachings that went on in the school. He asked, "Do you teach our government should be overthrown? Is it true you flaunt the Red flag here?" In general, whether communism or socialism was actually taught at the school, the school remained under constant attack for its "radical politics." As Kelly stated, "Much has been written about the school and we have much misrepresentation from the capitalist press. We have also had visits on several occasions from government officials."  

In Actuality, the radical politics of the school and the magazine were muted; the articles that did appear in the magazine were oriented toward education. Some articles continued to appear on the Russian Revolution, which was clearly identified with the revolutionary spirit of the masses. Leonard Abbott congratulated this spirit in Russia when he stated, "Whatever the ultimate fate of Bolshevism may prove to be, 

78 Ibid.
the pageant of the rising Russian masses will live forever in the
imagination of mankind."79 Though this revolutionary spirit was
applauded, the actual political orientation of the Modern School
Association of North America and the magazine remained less than
revolutionary.

This is most clearly visible in the kinds of political connection
made by the organizers of the Modern School Association of North America
and the ideological orientation of the articles of the magazine. Both
were now more directly oriented toward organized or skilled labor rather
than, as had been the case in 1913-1914, the unemployed. The association
consciously set out to establish ties to the organized labor movement,
and in June of 1919 the connection to the working people of New
Brunswick, Elizabeth, Trenton and Newark was made through a picnic
held by the Workmen's Circle at the Stelton Colony. Over 1,500 working
people gathered at the picnic. As Joseph Cohen stated, "The day was
voted a real success on all sides and it is hoped will bring the Colony
and the School into closer working relations with the working-class
movement in New Jersey."80 Yet there were many strata to the working
class, and the workers represented in the labor movement of 1919 and
the Workmen's Circle were different from the unemployed or unskilled
workers that had been represented in or made the concern of the Ferrer

79 Leonard Abbott, "The Pageant of the Rising Russian Masses,”
80 “Editorial Notes and Comments,” The Modern School, June–July
1919, p. 207.
Association in New York.

In the fall of 1919 the subtle ideological shifts were clearer. The philosophy of William Morris, a guild socialist, was explored. While Morris' political philosophy exhibited many of the elements of Kropotkin's social theory, the conception of change through revolutionary upheaval was muted, as cooperative communities and a parliament of producers and consumers was advocated. A book from the Kropotkin Library at Stelton on William Morris stated: "Morris believed less in a violent revolution than he did think that workman's socialism and labor unions form a kind of means between brute force on the one hand and parliamentary policy on the other."\footnote{Francis Watts Lee, ed., \textit{William Morris: Poet, Artist, Socialist} (New York: Humboldt Publishers, 1891), p. 18.} Another statement about Morris claimed, "It is singular that Morris, anarchist as he is, owes his new birth to one who is the great apostle of obedience and lawful rule; to his friend John Ruskin."\footnote{Ibid., p. 5.} Guild socialism had much in common with syndicalism in that it posited the control of industry by the workers of that industry through elections similar to that in unions. However, unlike syndicalism it posited a coordinating body of consumers and producers, and it remained unclear as to the process by which social transformation would occur. Yet this philosophy which emphasized workers organizations, plus the climate of the times, directed the political orientation of the colony and the school toward the trade unions.
Winter 1919-1920 was a transition period for the school as well as the magazine. In the spring of 1919 W. T. Brown left to begin a modern school on the West Coast and the school's philosophy and organization were in transition. While this created problems common to all transitory periods, the number of children became stabilized at around sixty, and Edleman, a teacher at the school, became temporary head. Unfortunately, now 2½ teachers were forced to work with 60 children. As a result of the understaffing the children were taught in shifts of three-hour sessions wherein one teacher worked with eight children. However difficult this was, it was made more difficult because of the poor equipment. As a result, the manual training program was virtually nonexistent, the children's garden was neglected and the music program was inadequate, as the teacher came only on the weekends. On Sunday, August 31, 1919, the fourth annual convention of the Modern School Association was held and ground was broken for the new school building and four new teachers joined the staff. A new educational policy which broke the traditional divisions between manual and intellectual workers was discussed and established. As a result, it was decided that teachers and caretakers exchange jobs and caretakers would also become involved in the teaching of certain subjects. In

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84 Ibid., p. 392.
85 It was in June 1919 that the cornerstone of the new building was laid. Cohen and Ferm, The Modern School of Stelton, p. 40.
the past caretakers had not been able to participate in teaching. Edleman maintained charge of the school in this interim period, fall 1919 till spring 1920, when Alex and Elizabeth Ferm came to Stelton to head the Modern School.

The coming of the Ferms ended this transitional period and marked the new and crucial period in the development of the Modern School's educational and political goals. Not only was the educational policy changed, the political and ideological direction of the school was more clearly defined and stabilized. While The Modern School began once again to publish at the school rather than in New York, the educational problems of the school and the particular educational programs became more clearly articulated in the reports and articles published in each issue of The Modern School. An article explained why the magazine was now being published and edited back at the school: "To meet the practical demands of the situation created by the new methods now practiced at the school at Stelton and the physical manufacture of the magazine at the school, it has been decided to edit it from the school."

This new era, which we will call "The Ferm Years," brought exciting and interesting changes. These changes were an outgrowth of


87 John Edleman, "Our Magazine Now Published at the School," The Modern School, November-December 1920, p. 199.

the direction the school had begun to take in the period 1917 to 1919, yet the threads picked up were somewhat altered and solidified into a slightly new form during the next five years. Under the direction of the Ferms, education at the Modern School was stabilized. While further changes would occur in the thirties and forties, the basic orientation that had been established during these years defined the boundaries within which all further change would occur.

The Ferms arrived in the spring of 1920. They had had a long history of involvement in libertarian education and had worked with both middle class and working class immigrant children in and around New York City. Often articles they had written on libertarian education had appeared in The Modern School. The colony was really excited that both Elizabeth and Alex Ferm had come to head the school. The editorial in the spring issue of The Modern School welcomed the Ferms to the school and summarized their history as pioneers in the field of radical and libertarian education, their involvement in New Rochelle school, Dyker Heights, and the East Side of New York. The editorial went on to talk about their goals:

The object of the Ferms' endeavor is to create not a school in the ordinary sense but a playhouse in which the child can express itself and have its neighborhood experiences . . . where he is free to act but also free to get the full reaction, reflection and consequences of his act.

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90 Ibid., p. 131.
On May 2, 1920 Elizabeth and Alex Ferm met with the members of the colony, parents, and teachers at the Stelton Schoolhouse. They discussed some of Mr. Ferm's concerns since coming to the school and he described his educational philosophy:

Alex Ferm declared that he was very little interested in the academic side of the school. What he wanted to know was, have children acquired responsibility in their household work and in other activities? Judging from what he had seen since his arrival in Stelton, the children were somewhat deficient in responsibility. He also raised the question, why no shop and manual training? He wanted to see the whole capacity of the child developed. He thought too much emphasis had been laid on book work and too little attention had been given to the home, the manual training shop.

The Ferms had found the old established living and learning patterns inadequate and quickly set about to change these through meetings, discussions, and a well-developed manual arts program. They spent the first few months of the spring 1920 changing the life style in the boarding house. They had decided that here they would have the most complete charge of the children and would therefore be able to best implement their philosophy. Once this philosophy was instituted, the children would be less torn between the ideologies of their home and those of the school, thus making for a smoother-running school community.

There was obviously a great deal of work to be done. When they had arrived, the boarding house was in total disarray; the house was strewn with rubbish, an old ice box stood in the dining room next to the kitchen, and old socks and caps were lying all about. Mr. Ferm exclaimed,

It had not occurred to the caretakers or the children to make chairs or benches from old boxes in order to have some comfort. . . . There was no creative activity or initiative except in the way the marauding peach and apple orchards and civic consciousness had not been awakened.92

The Ferms began by changing the name of the boarding house to "The Living House" and setting up weekly meetings where the children could decide on the tasks to be done and who should do them. New rules were established and the children were given a good deal more responsibility for their sleeping space while the group was held responsible for collective work such as dishes, sweeping, setting the table, etc. A more communal atmosphere began to evolve, as the older children washed the younger children, told them stories and put them to bed.

Gradually they began to express and develop their educational pedagogy. In the school house they began to work to create an atmosphere where children would be freed from the traditional academic emphasis of schooling, an emphasis which had characterized the public as well as the Modern School. Instead they worked to develop creativity in children through a program which integrated manual arts such as wood working, weaving, painting, dance and the more traditional academic subjects. In this way they believed children would be allowed more freedom to develop their whole personality.

At the fifth annual convention of the Modern School Association of North America in September 1920, the educational philosophy developed by the Ferms at the Modern School became a part of the official

The Board of the Association came to the unanimous conclusion that "too much stress had been laid on the academic side of education and that striving to enter high school had stimulated a spirit in the children contrary to what they believed to be libertarian education." They went on to redefine the educational philosophy of the Modern School by suggesting that the children be taught to use their hands as well as their heads and to show that the academic subjects could be taught in conjunction with practical experience, e.g., chemistry in connection with agriculture, grammar and spelling through printing, etc. While the distinctly new emphasis on manual arts grew out of the Modern School Association of North America acceptance of the Ferms' philosophy, it must have also been influenced by the educational philosophy of "the whole child" and "learning by doing" that prevailed among the progressives of that period. However, for the Modern School Association of North America, the uniting of manual and intellectual work in the school was reinforced by a particular political vision of society wherein the separation between manual worker and intellectual

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94 It was during this period that the progressive movement in education became strongest. In 1919 the Progressive Educational Association was formed. Up until this time, 1900-1919, John Dewey's educational writings, Democracy and Education, School and Society and Schools of Tomorrow, were published and greatly influenced the educational thinking of the era in the direction of a combined curriculum of manual arts and academics. The prevailing philosophy of education which included the "integrated day," a manual arts program, and learning by doing had many commonalities with Ferm's proposals.
worker would not exist. As one of the members stated,

As the society dreamed of by those interested in this school would be one of workers, they felt it indispensable that children be taught that every healthy normal person should be a producer as well as a consumer. This is the only way to develop character and uproot the feelings so prevalent in modern life that some work is menial and some superior.\textsuperscript{95}

The new educational emphasis advocated by the Board and the Ferms met with resistance by some parents and some members of the Modern School Association. While on the surface the differences appeared to be over pedagogical issues, they often reflected deeper political, social and economic differences. Comrade Isaacson, who voiced some opposition to the new emphasis on the manual arts, hinted at the political implications involved in choosing a manual approach to knowledge. He felt that even though a manual arts program would obliter ate the differences between manual and intellectual worker, it would not provide the kinds of disciplined knowledge revolutionaries needed in order to be effective leaders. He believed,

All those who have been in the vanguard have understood many exacting sciences. The basic origins to be known only by thorough-going research work, and have had a definite vision of a free society obtained in the same way.\textsuperscript{96}

He felt that while manual training was an important part of all education it could only be important as a primary way to educate children if the children already had disciplined knowledge. He also believed that college training and preparation for college was an

\textsuperscript{95}Kelly, "Fifth Annual Convention of the Modern School Association of North America," p. 169.

\textsuperscript{96}Ibid.
important part of children's education, for it was here that disciplined knowledge in economics, politics, etc., could be acquired.  

The Ferms addressed these concerns in several ways. At first they explained that they did not believe in forcing children to learn. They implied that most often, disciplined book knowledge came out of forced learning and that in a libertarian classroom one neither makes revolutionists or carpenters. They stated, "Revolutions fail because they are too often carried on by spouters; the world does business in the same old way because the ruling classes are doers." In a sense, they were trying to say that the school would not force the child to do either manual work or intellectual work but would instead create an atmosphere of freedom where the child could willingly define and choose those areas that interested him. Whatever the intention of Ferm's pedagogy, the consequences were often different than anticipated and certainly different than the more political orientation of men like W. T. Brown. Several members agreed with the Ferms and at the convention of 1920, explained that they did not necessarily see the school as part of the radical movement, but they also saw it as an educational experiment. They believed that what was really needed at Stelton was a stable educational philosophy. One member clearly reaffirms the separation between the children's freedoms in education and the needs of radical movement. He stated,

98Ibid., p. 170.
Workers hate the world as now constituted but do not know the way out and therefore place their hope in their children; that some people have been interested in the school as a branch of the radical movement and not as an educational experiment; that the thing we need is to believe sufficiently in one theory, then we will find a technique to match it.

This workers' search for a stabilized educational philosophy advocating freedom represented the search of many of the other colonists.

Alex Ferm addressed the concerns about a manual work program and radical politics by explaining that real knowledge grew out of concrete work experiences. He went on to show that workers gained knowledge from the work they actually performed and if that was true, then it becomes self-evident that knowledge acquired through manual work is both authentic and revolutionary. Therefore he claimed, "This system of education holds good for him who is to be a revolutionist, for he will know what will be practicable." Whether Ferm's assertions that manual labor would help train revolutionaries was true, or whether comrade Isaacson's concerns concerning academics were real, remained to be seen.

The shift in educational focus was accompanied by a more clearly discernable shift in political orientation. The convention reflected this shift in both its membership and in its ideological orientation. Of the people who attended the September 1920 convention, most came from the ranks of organized labor. Such groups had never really


100Ibid., p. 173.
participated in the Modern School Association of North America, and it was clear that Harry Kelly, who had been chosen the year before as organizer for the Association, had been successful. An article in The Modern School stated,

But it is worthy of note that for the first time in the history of the school duly elected and authorized delegates came from labor organizations to a convention of the organization behind the school, the Joint Board of the Cloak Makers, Waterproof Garment Workers, Fancy Leather Goods Workers, International Federation of Hotel Workers and the Joint Board of the Shirt Makers. All of New York City had delegates at the Convention and they assured us afterwards that they were more than pleased with it and the work done. 101

The connections between the school and the organized labor movement established at the convention became the dominant way in which the Modern School and the Modern School Association of North America would link up with working class politics throughout the thirties and forties.

However, the link to working class politics was now constituted on a different basis. It was no longer in terms of a commitment by the Stelton Colony to workers' struggles. It was rather that the workers movement would provide the emotional as well as the monetary support for the school. In fact the linkage which appeared almost apolitical in nature was rooted in educational concerns for working people rather than in revolutionary theories. Yet revolutionary concerns were not entirely dismissed. There remained a clear attempt by many members to understand their connection to revolutionary social movements, yet the linkage made seemed less direct and less ardent

than it had been in the past. One member expressed the connection of the Modern School to anarchism: "While the Modern School Association of North America is not expressly an anarchist organization, we are closely connected with and served by these groups." The affiliation was less direct. The Association remained an educational organization served by the anarchist movement.

The new politics and programs set down by the Ferms and the Board of the Modern School Association of North America took effect in the autumn of 1920 when the new school building opened:

The new regime at the school finally opened October 1, 1920. Elizabeth Ferm moved her kindergarten class from the old barn near the living house to the auditorium of the new building and Alex Ferm began work with the teaching staff.

In terms of daily activities, the Ferms' philosophy was translated into practice in a variety of ways. The day opened in the auditorium with a general assembly in which children and teachers participated in group singing. Many members looked back at the ritualization of the group process with great fondness. One member in particular believed that it had become a genuine daily celebration, full of spirit and character. After the group sing in the assembly, children could choose to attend a variety of activities. The Kropotkin Library was

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104 Ackerman, interview.

set aside for academic work, but it was clear that this kind of work did not receive the same approbation as it had in the past. Students who chose to work in the library on the academics were referred to as "not yet weaned" from the old methods of development. Others could choose from a wide variety of handicraft activities which included printing in the Printing Shop under the auspices of Paul Scott, woodworking with Alex Ferm, art classes with Hugo Gellert, basket weaving with Kate Van Eaton and John Edleman. There were also a series of special projects which included the building of a small wooden shack. Children would work jointly on these projects with members of the staff and in the case of the building of the shack, the children and Mr. Dick measured, sawed and hammered the shack together. These projects were seen as excellent learning devices because through practical manual work the children could develop math skills, reading skill, etc. This epitomized much of the new learning theories implemented by the Ferms as it combined creativity with manual labor and basic skills, and became known as "learning by doing."

Both parents and teachers felt the change that had been instituted at the school and several were reluctant to accept the new philosophy, yet gradually many began to feel the stability that was being created at the school, while others began to realize the

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107 Mr. Gellert became a member of the Communist Party and an active radical artist.
limitations of the notions of freedom that either forced children to choose between academic curriculum or doing nothing all day. With the wide range of activities instituted by the Ferms, children were more apt to find those areas that interested and involved their talents and were less likely to roam and play all day. The acceptance was gradual, as one commentator stated,

The children and parents, although parents much more closely and unwillingly than the children, are rapidly coming to understand that everything that the child schooled in the regulation way knows, can be found out a great deal more easily and attractively through some form of manual work.\(^{109}\)

Even with the basic acceptance of the new regime, parents were still concerned that their children would neither acquire basic skills nor good literary taste if they spent the entire day in a woodworking or printing shop.\(^{110}\) Even though there was questioning of the general pedagogical orientation, the fact that the education of the Modern School had become stabilized caused many parents to applaud the practices of the Ferms.

During these first years many new projects were organized. In 1921 a new children's magazine, *Voice of the Children*, began publication. The magazine, published from 1922 to 1925 under the direction of Paul Scott, stopped for a while and then continued publication again in 1925 and again in 1928 through the late 1930s. It was written, edited, printed and proofread by the children

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themselves and oftentimes articles were printed with grammatical errors and spelling errors.¹¹¹ The articles in the children's magazine were radically different in style and content from those found in the magazine published during the New York years under the direction of Hutchinson. While Voice of the Children also contained articles and drawings made by the children, none were political in content; none dealt with revolution, exploitation, factory life, social justice or free speech. Instead the articles, poetry, and woodcuts depicted scenes from nature and the traditional fairy tales that appeared were of a different genre than the working class fairy tales that had characterized the early days at Stelton. The children's magazine did not show political or revolutionary concerns. Instead it reflected the new emphasis on creative self-expression that now characterized the pedagogy of the school. In fact, the magazine became the litmus paper of the children's consciousness and cultural concerns. As Paul Scott, the editor of the magazine explained, "An expressive magazine, as this happens to be, should be a sort of index to the development of the children who conduct it, and no doubt it is, in so far as the children have been continuous contributors."¹¹² The magazine served to tell the public what the children were thinking about as well as the kinds of subjects, ideas or interests emphasized at the school.


¹¹² Paul Scott, Voice of the Children (Children of Stelton), no. 6 (1924), n.p.
What was clear from looking at the magazine throughout the twenties and thirties was the overall concern with creativity as expressed through children's stories and woodcuts about nature, trees, woods and animals.

In an early issue of the magazine, Mr. Scott discussed the interconnection between creativity, self-expression and freedom:

If they but continue life in this spirit, making play of their work and finding joy and adventure in all their activities, they will be possessed of an education which alone can free man of his fears and enable him to understand and prize the only freedom worth striving for. For to be self-active is to be joyfully adventurously active. The factories withering touch can never besmirch a soul that has known the joy of self-activity.  

While concern for working people's lives was still evident, the nature of this concern had shifted. Shaping consciousness to withstand all situations, including the world of work, was now defined as freedom, and the old notion of changing society to alter working and power relationships was lost sight of. Both the children's poems and woodcuts reflected this new attitude. One poem, called "The Fairy Song," is a good indication of the general tone of the magazine. It went as follows:

The Fairy Song  
by Rose and Gerda  
See the moon is shining bright  
Bringing forth its fairy light  
Little children seem to hear  
Fairy music far and near  
As you look up to the moon

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Another essay in the magazine by Anna Cohen, age fifteen, entitled "Some Thoughts on Child Education," described the conflict between the parental concern that children be taught directly and the children's more spontaneous way of learning and developing. Anna was highly critical of the parents when she stated, "The thing is the parents were brought up with the idea that you must be taught in order to know anything and they want to bring their children up the same way." She claimed that great artists need not be taught because they learn through self exploration.\footnote{Anna Cohen, "Some Thoughts on Child Education," \textit{Voice of the Children}, no. 4 (1922), n.p.} Anna Cohen's article expressed the general emphasis by the school and the magazine on creativity and artistic self expression. This was evidenced in the wide range of creative and expressive stories. The magazine contained original folk tales and fairy tales such as "The Gold Bird," "The Lion and the Wolf," as well as selections on nature.\footnote{\textit{Voice of the Children}, no. 4 (1922), passim.} On the cover of \textit{Voice of the Children} was a linoleum cut which had been made and printed by the children and often depicted a scene from nature such as a child running after a butterfly, sheep and other animals against a sunset, etc.

The tone established in 1922 remained when the magazine resumed publication briefly in 1925 and again in 1928-1929, the era of Sacco
and Vanzetti, and still again in the thirties.

In 1925 the new advisor and printer of the magazine, Joseph Ishill, reiterated in his own words the tone that had been established by the children and Paul Scott in 1922. However, Mr. Ishill now felt the children's enthusiasm for publishing the magazine had waned and so, in keeping with the traditions of freedom established by the school, he felt the magazine should no longer be published. He stated, "In so far as I can see the new Voice of the Children is directed toward inward expression—whereby the child finds its own illusion and aspirations."\textsuperscript{117} Even in the periods of extreme political activity the magazine maintained an apolitical emphasis on the personal and creative.

The magazine was interesting from an educational point of view because the children themselves wrote, edited and printed the entire magazine. Before actual work on the magazine began, the children held a meeting to discuss all the particulars connected with production; size of pages, color of pages, ink, number of pages, etc. The children chose the stories that should be printed and participated in the actual printing of their own stories. When the sheets came off the press they then proceeded to proofread and make their own corrections. They were involved in the entire process from beginning to end and had the

final decision-making powers on all aspects of the magazine.  

Personal freedom, creativity and artistic self-expression became the dominant ideology of the Modern School at Stelton. This was openly justified in the emerging new self-image which openly accepted the school goals of creativity and self-exploration, and clarified the purposes of the colony in terms of communal living. The new image attempted, in its limited goals, to redress the grievances that had begun to be levied against the school by members who were angered at the school's abandonment of a revolutionary perspective. At the seventh annual convention of the Modern School Association a board member answered the criticisms levied against the school by restating the new image. He said,

... denounced by those who consider themselves ultra radical for deserting the labor movement by moving to the country, we make no claim to be saving the world; we are but trying to save our own souls. As a community we have solved the problem of making children happy and finding joy for ourselves in doing it. If we have not reached the promised land, we have at least stumbled into one of the by-paths. That is something.  

The Association replaced the notion that had been prevalent in New York of a radical school as part of a revolutionary movement, with a more limited goal of personal happiness in the form of changed consciousness

118 For details on how the children organized themselves to produce the magazine see Paul Scott, "The Last Word," Voice of the Children, no. 4 (1922), n.p. While there were a variety of printers in charge between 1922 and the 1930s and each had a different style, the magazine during this period continued to be written, published and printed by the children themselves.

119 "The Seventh Anniversary of the Stelton School," The Modern School, Summer 1921, p. 25.
in an alternative community. The result was that the educational goals became more limited; the struggle for freedom was detached from the larger notion of revolution and class freedoms, and relegated to educational issues of self-expression.

While parents were divided over the new orientation, they accepted the patterns established by the Ferms because they clearly stabilized the school, which had been traumatized by an inordinate number of shifts in pedagogical style and educational philosophy. The school had gone from punitive head teachers who disciplined children by denying them food, to head teachers who insisted that freedom entailed all forms of self-expression which often included broken pianos, disorderly rooms, broken tools, etc., and which had led to utter chaos. Under the Ferms, freedom, community and individuation, the key concepts of anarchist education, were clearly developed, and as a result a stable pedagogy was instituted that was in keeping with many of the principles of freedom that the founders had expressed but found difficult to implement.

While the changes in the colony and the school had serious effects on the ideology and practice of schooling, both the school and the colony turned inward, became concerned with their own growth and development and lost a good deal of their connection to larger political struggles. Although the old concerns of revolution and class consciousness surfaced periodically they would never again become the dominant strain. On one level, the school maintained an allegiance to its origins in the working class, through its connections to labor unions and through its allegiance to the education of the children of the
working class. In the fall of 1921 an article in The Modern School reminded the school of its unique origins in class-conscious politics:

The school is the first one in the country at least to assert the class principle in education. The founders of the schools and those who maintain it have always differed on the particular form the society will assume, in the future, but they are united in believing it should abolish classes. So long as classes do exist, we assert that if the children of the working class are to become the citizens of a free society, they must be educated by members of the working class, not by those exploiting them. 120

The article went on to defend the right of working people to develop their own schools and to formulate their own educational policy. It further explained that the chief function of the Modern School lay in the fact that it was an educational institution maintained by the working class for the working class. While this particular individual maintained a revolutionary perspective, this was not the dominant trend in the Association or the Colony. However, this image of the Modern School as a working class institution, designed by workers to educate their children, remained dominant, though shorn of its revolutionary spirit by the time the school closed its doors in 1953.

The absence of a revolutionary perspective in the early twenties upset some colonists and caused the Stelton School and community to be criticized by radicals within and outside the community. An article in the fall of 1922 by one of the original founders of the school, Harry Kelly, answered the criticisms which had been leveled against the school.

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His answer reflected the redefinition of both the purpose of the school and its connection to revolutionary social change that had characterized earlier statements made by the Modern School Association of North America. He claimed that Stelton was a radical community, but in a different sense than defined by traditional radical politics. It was a place where people grew and learned skills like hygiene, water systems, and road building, and developed a life based in the land rather than a life based in the city. He believed that the freedom to grow and develop was greater in a community that created its own institutions and was therefore not under the influence of capitalist institutions. In comparing the difference between the two approaches he stated, "The majority of men and women, and women more than men, engaged in the spread of radical ideas, must spend a lot of time in factories, offices, tenement houses and are forever at the mercy of capitalist landlords, printers and newspapers."\(^{121}\) He went on to show how the people in the Stelton community can work things through for themselves without such interference. Mr. Kelly defended the Stelton community against the attack that they had deserted the revolution. He stated,

\[...\] neither are they deserting the revolutionary movement as they are so often accused of doing. They are doing their bit as best they know how and trying to extract a few drops of joy out of life while doing it. Most revolutionists are city-bred people and think in terms of factories and tenement houses, so they

He went on to talk about the revolutionary potential of the Stelton Colony and he did so in much more limited terms than in the New York days. He stated,

We have never pretended that colonies such as the one evolved at Stelton will abolish capitalism or change the system; the men and women there do, however, learn from actual daily life experience to raise children into strong healthy men and women. . . .

The new definition of minimal revolutionary involvement needed justification and Mr. Kelly in his justification explained the choices made by the school and the colony:

In its broadest sense, life is a question of relative value and measuring 20 odd years of incessant propaganda against 2-1/2 years spent here at Stelton helping to make a hundred and twenty children and 100 odd adults happy while adding to my own development in doing it, I have no hesitation in deciding which has been the most useful and worthwhile activity.

Yet there was a bittersweet sadness as well as incredible foresight in Kelly's statements, particularly when he said: "Perhaps we will eventually crumble and pass away as so many other colonizing experiments have done, or do worse, grow to be smug self-satisfied citizens owning their own homes and having a 'stake in the country.' Who knows."

In either case the choices made by the modern school in 1922 would follow for the next eighteen years of its existence, and this had serious consequences for the school and radical education. Out

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of this perspective a new ideology developed that supported the
direction the school was taking and reaffirmed the romantic anarchist
tradition in education. While the community spoke of radical social
change, it did not do so in terms of violent revolution or the overthrow
of government. Instead, cultural transformation was emphasized, as was
the belief that changes in the social relationship of people would be
brought about through a revolution in values and beliefs. For those
who adhered to the dominant perspective, libertarian education and the
community of Stelton were primary ways to alter children's values and
create a culture of freedom. This world view that dominated the Stelton
community in the early twenties is most clearly expressed in The Modern
School of 1922:

It is not the violent rising of that surge called the masses
nor the downfall of tyrants, that brings the accomplishments
of revolution, but it is that entirely new values are introduced
and fulfilled on earth through men. The possibility of
realizing this truth can only be won through true education. 126

This perspective which was to dominate the school till its closing
in 1953 had a greater affinity to the ideas of freedom expressed in
the counterculture than it did to the anarcho-syndicalism of the
founders of the school.

Nothing remains static, and so too with the Modern School.
Though the world view established in the Ferra era would dominate,
opposition and challenge would arise. Yet the ways in which the
challenges were met suggested that the revolutionary fervor of the

126 Hans Koch, "Self Education and Human destiny," The Modern
School, October-December 1921, p. 21.
syndicalist perspective was no longer feasible, and the individualistic romantic answers of libertarian anarchism would prevail. Our historical investigation of the Modern School has suggested several reasons for this, the most significant of which were the demise of the movement because of historical repression, splits within the movement, and the isolation of the school in the country. The response by anarchists was to address the new historical period differently than their predecessors had. What this meant in terms of the culture and consciousness of the new generation remained to be seen.

Opposition to the Ferms' educational philosophy arose even though the Ferms met every Monday with parents to discuss and explain the shift in emphasis to creativity and a manual arts program. The conflict between a craft-oriented school program and a more academic program became so strong that at the September convention of 1925 a resolution was passed to make academic rather than manual work paramount but to treat this academic work creatively. The Ferms themselves found the criticism of their work too severe and so in that same year of 1925 they refused reelection to the principalship. They claimed, "We had enough criticism." In the Stelton Appendix, a magazine published by the children themselves in 1927, they explained in their own terms why the Ferms left and why they and their parents had become so disgruntled with a manual or craft oriented program. They claimed

\[128\] Ibid.
the Ferms had ruled them with an "iron hand" and implied that there had been no room for criticisms made by parents or children.\textsuperscript{129} These students also claimed that opposition arose to the manual or craft orientation of the school because they believed that while the children were young this worked, but that it hampered them in their daily dealings with the outside world as they grew older. The article described the problems inherent in a curriculum that was manual and craft oriented as opposed to one that was academically oriented. The article claimed, "He could have been a good carpenter but he knew nothing about academics. He was too old to stay at Stelton and he was too ignorant practically to mix with the people of the city."\textsuperscript{130} Most of these children and parents seemed to feel that the kind of creativity and freedom defined by the Ferms actually limited the children who learned little of history or philosophy from sawing a piece of wood.

The argument over an academic versus a craft curriculum orientation within a libertarian framework had political overtones. Over the next few years it became clearer that the Communists in the community wanted a more academic orientation, while the anarchists sought a more Tolstoyan libertarianism. In many ways the educational philosophy of the Communists more clearly resembled the revolutionary syndicalists: They wished to see children exposed to economic history or philosophical understandings that would help them in the socio-political world they

\textsuperscript{129}The Children of the Modern School, "Our School and Why Children Leave It," Stelton Appendix, 14 May 1921, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{130}\textit{Ibid.}
lived in. This perspective became most clearly identified in the early thirties. Those who emphasized inner creativity and self-expression were opposed to what seemed to them the authoritarian values inherent in the Revolution and in Russian Communism. The Sacco and Vanzetti case was the major political event of the late twenties to involve anarchists. Yet in the magazines published during these years by the Modern School and the Ferrer Colony, The Stelton Appendix and Voice of the Children, only a few articles appeared on the case. Several more did appear in Road to Freedom, an anarchist monthly magazine which began publication in November 1924 at Stelton. The magazine, which carried a weekly column on education written by Alex Ferm and a series of reports on the Modern School Association of North America, suggested several things about the school, in the late twenties, the era of Sacco and Vanzetti: (1) the school's educational philosophy was highly individualistic and libertarian, (2) the consciousness of the children

131The magazine "was considered an exotic product even within the anarchist community for its origin lay in experimental education, utopian anarchism and even working class anarchist propaganda of the deed. Its immediate parent was the Stelton, New Jersey settlement." Paul Bhule, Road to Freedom (New York: Greenwood Reprints, 1970), p. 1. The magazine gave both an indication of events at the colony the Modern School Association of North America as well as an indication of the climate of anarchist thought. However, because it was not "an organ of a social movement," but rather the product of a group of men and women, the contents reflected the ideas of luminaries within anarchism who wrote about social evils. Alex Ferm had a column on Education beginning October 1929 which continued on a fairly regular basis through 1933 when the magazine became known as Freedom Magazine. I also included reports on the annual convention of the Ferrer Modern School. As such, the magazine between 1924 and 1933 provides an excellent source for information on anarchist activity, decisions of the Modern School Association of North America and discussions of educational theory by Alex Ferm.
reflected in the magazines showed that little attention was being paid to political issues, and (3) the political tensions between anarchists and communists were beginning to surface.

While the event had a minimal effect on the Modern School children, it did seriously affect the radical left and life in the colony. In the late twenties the existing antagonisms between the anarchists and communists sharpened. For the most part the anarchists severely criticized the way in which the communists participated and used the Sacco and Vanzetti protest to further their own gains.¹³² *Road to Freedom* came down heavily on the communists, and it was severely criticized by the other members of the left for its anti-communist bias. Yet it was not only the Sacco and Vanzetti case or the attitude toward the Russian Revolution which shaped the ways in which the split among radicals occurred. Closely connected were the distinctly different world views embedded in each political philosophy. These distinctions had become clear with the emerging communist rule in 1919 in Russia. The centralization of the government sanctioned by the communists versus the notion of individuation and community applauded by the anarchists became one of the main bones of contention in the left.

At the same time, the contradictions within the libertarian definition of freedom established by the Ferms in the twenties became clearer and more problematic. In the education column of *Road to Freedom*, Ferm articulates the problem when he criticizes the notion

Anarchist schools have been mentioned as possibilities of the anarchist movement. So then we are to follow in the footsteps of the church, the communists and all the reactionaries. We are to teach the young how to be communists. . . . The moment you label a children's school anarchist it no longer stands for freedom. Just think it over.

Yet it is obvious that the nature of freedom remains confused because Ferm did have a clearly articulated set of values children were expected to imbibe. He stated in another earlier education column: "How shall we help children to grow in such a way that they will not become a part of a howling mob, merely a member of a political party, a religious sect or a 'painted lady.'" Yet the debate between "propaganda in education" and "freedom in education" continued in the columns of the Road to Freedom, even as Ferm himself was caught in the dilemma posed by the twenties pedagogy: How does one create self-expressive children while insuring that the freedom's particular value system is not lost sight of. The problem only minimally stated by the Ferms is much more clearly defined in the thirties when politically active communists insist that the Modern School not only provide the conditions for creative self-expression, but also provide the conditions for class-conscious workers' children. The tensions are most clearly articulated in the thirties when the entire political climate of the United States and Stelton changed.

133 Alex Ferm, "Education," Freedom Magazine 1 (June 1933): 3.

134 Alex Ferm, "Educational Section," Road to Freedom 8 (April 1932): 7.
The depression, the number of unemployed, the Spanish Civil War and the general political ambience of the Roosevelt years made the thirties an era of more intense political activity. The CIO was formed, youth groups were formed and workers' projects were organized throughout the country. This increased activity, as well as the depression, affected life at Stelton in several ways. The school itself, hit by the depression, was in dire need of funds and therefore boarded many children who were state wards or from poverty-stricken families. As a result, neither the children nor their families were necessarily politically conscious. On the other hand, the Colony itself became more politically active than it had been in the twenties. Funds were sent to aid the Spanish Civil War effort and a cooperative needle industry workshop was established at Stelton. Here, garment workers who did not have a job could share the work of the co-op for one dollar membership fee. "Here at Stelton, anyone who wanted to work could work." \(^\text{135}\) Much of the money made through the cooperative was used to sustain the workers, and the profits were sent to aid the civil war in Spain. At the same time there was real effort by the colonists to form Communist youth groups in the Colony and to reactivate anarchist communist groups around the country. In 1931 a midwest anarchist convention declared that it was of utmost importance to gain a youth following, and it urged the adoption of a youth program which would include study classes, lectures, discussions, dances, and literary groups from

\(^{135}\) Ackerman, interview.
an anarchist point of view.  

Yet the increased political involvement by the colony was somewhat different from what it had been in the early 1900s in New York, and therefore it had a different net effect on the school. In many ways the increased political activity did not radically alter the libertarian patterns established in the twenties. While there was more general political involvement by the colonists, the colony remained somewhat isolated from ongoing city organizing events. In addition, the growing internal splits between the Anarchists and Communists hampered the kinds of commitments the school made to political action, and while the anarchist movement was struggling to reactivate itself, it too never obtained the same kind of leadership and strength it had in the early 1900s. As a result, the school and the Colony aided revolutionary causes and labor struggles, sent money and support to these activities, but did not actively engage in revolutionary struggle or workers' strikes. The actual commitment to class revolution and education was not the same as it had been.

Neither Voice of the Children nor the dance festivals written and performed by the children throughout the thirties show any revolutionary political content. The dance program of 1935 most clearly defined the relationship of the school to working people:

As the public schools were the first concerned in the ranks of workers and the agitation for them was first carried on in the labor unions before being taken up universally, so may freedom in

136 "Midwest Anarchist Conference, Chicago," Road to Freedom 7 (October 1931): 5.
education, self-expression and creative work, now carried on in a workers' school become the universal idea of education.\footnote{137} While class concerns were evident this was hardly a revolutionary political statement.

On the other hand, the increase of radical political activity in the larger society did effect the youth at Stelton and in the thirties an Anarchist Youth Group was formed. For two years the group published a small eight to ten page mimeographed pamphlet entitled \textit{Looking Forward} which was highly political. In the second issue there was a picture entitled "Smash the Chains of Slavery" and several of the articles in this same issue attacked the politics of the Socialists and Communists who were working in a United Front. The group and its magazine had a clearly syndicalist perspective and stated, "Of all organizations who claim to be revolutionary the only one who approaches what they preach are the anarchists and syndicalists."\footnote{138}

In the Stelton School itself, the libertarian apolitical approach established in the Ferm years was not questioned in a more serious way. The next few years brought a great deal of tension over what a libertarian school should teach and the kinds of political youth organizations permitted to become a part of the school. This debate, begun in 1911, continued in more intense form all through the thirties and even after 1935 when Alex and Elizabeth Ferm returned to Stelton

\footnote{137}Annual Daybreak Dance at the Modern School of Stelton (Stelton, N.J.: Modern School of Stelton, 13 December 1935), cover.

\footnote{138}Anarchist Youth at Stelton Colony, "What a United Front Should Be," \textit{Looking Forward} 1 (October 1937): 2-3.
on a permanent basis.

On one level, the controversy took a somewhat indirect form, as the parents, teachers and the Modern School Association continued the argument over an academic-oriented versus a craft-oriented school. Underlying this educational argument were differing political orientations. Many communists insisted that the school teach history, social science, economics, etc., because they believed that through an academic understanding of the social world the children would come to understand radical political concerns. On the other hand, the anarchists often argued for a more libertarian approach, with more emphasis on creativity and the freedom to choose academic subjects only if the child desires to do so. One gentleman clearly explained his favor for a craft-oriented education when he stated,

So I suppose that means that all boys and girls of radicals are supposed to be the kind of intellectuals that were found in Greenwich Village. . . . The intellectuals who were glib with the tongue but were helpless when it came to taking care of themselves physically.\(^{139}\)

Yet in 1941 the dilemma of radical educators remained and the school is again attacked for its lack of political perspective.

That the problem with the Modern School is that it doesn't take responsibility for teaching class struggle but instead leaves it to the family, and it is unclear what children will come away with.\(^{140}\)

\(^{139}\)Principal's Report to the Board of Management, Modern School Association of North America, 1937. Modern School Association Papers, Special Collection Department, Rutgers University Library.

\(^{140}\)Principal's Report to the Modern School Association of North America, Twenty-seventh Annual Convention, 1 September 1941. Modern School Association of North America papers, Special Collection Department, Rutgers University Library.
The question of whether there should be propaganda in the school had been ongoing all through the thirties and into the early forties. As early as 1932 a principal's report from the Modern School showed how this became particularized in curriculum development. One teacher described the showing of a film on the Sacco and Vanzetti case. As a result, several members felt there should be more propaganda in education. One individual wanted to know why the children of the school are not made conscious of "external strife." James Dick, a teacher, responded by saying that since the children were not involved in external strife the teaching of external strife would be unconnected to their daily lives and would result in imposing interests on the children and limiting their freedom of expression.\(^\text{141}\) The problem of how to connect the children at Stelton with the political and social issues erupting all over did not arise in 1910 in the same way it did in the 1930s, precisely because the children were now living in Stelton away from the organizing efforts, the bread lines, the turmoil of working people in urban areas. Because class struggle and strife were not a conscious part of the children's lives, the issues of directly teaching class struggle or propaganda in the school becomes a more heated issue. To many it was clear that without the concerted efforts to teach about social issues, the children at Stelton would probably not become committed to working class struggle or radical social issues.

\(^{141}\) Convention of the Ferrer Modern School Association, Minutes, 1932, p. 1. Modern School Association of North America papers, Special Collection Department, Rutgers University Library.
Several other members concurred and asked the group why they felt it was permissible to show children pictures of milking a cow and not permissible to teach children propaganda songs. He asked, "Are not propaganda songs just as educational?" The question raised was that if everything had an educational value, why not develop political concerns as part of that education. In other words, the individual wanted to know if teaching a political perspective on working miners was not as important or educationally valuable as milking cows. Yet many anarchists refused to see the question in this way and hence continued to argue that class issues and political strife hinder creative development and individual freedom. This position remained most popular and the essential curriculum of the school reflected this perspective. Voice of the Children, published throughout the thirties by the children of the Modern School, showed that the children did in fact continue to write about nature, and this included poetry about kangaroos, the wind, the trees, as well as fables and mythology. The magazine never dealt with the depression or the Spanish Civil War, workers' strikes, unemployment and the incredible bread lines of the thirties.

Yet the effect of the thirties was strong, and while the direct teaching of class consciousness in the school was unacceptable, there

\[142\] Convention of the Ferrer Modern School Association, Minutes, 1932, p. 2.

\[143\] For details about the kind of writing the children at the Modern School were doing, see Voice of the Children, 1930-31, 1931-1936, Stelton, New Jersey.
were several serious attempts to bring a class perspective to the youth of Stelton. As a result, a branch of the Communist youth group, The Pioneer Youth, was formed. However, this caused real conflict in the school community. One principal's report claimed that after the youth group was permitted to hold their meetings at the school they were very negligent and would not clean up the building. This was attributed to the fact that the group had been asked by members of another political persuasion to do the cleanup. Many members believed that the teaching of political values caused conflict among the children and that when propaganda was taught, either in or out of school, it served to divide the student body.

When the young take some propaganda activity, their ignorance of human nature makes it impossible for them to get their ideas over for they are likely to show dislike and even hatred for all who do not agree with them. They do not know that if we want others to see the value in our propaganda we must first get their confidence and not give the impression that our philosophy has turned us to hatred of all with whom we do not agree.

The tension between political groups was great, and as early as 1932 at the Sixteenth Annual Convention of the Ferrer School a resolution was passed which suggested that no outside political organ become involved with the students. Ossip Kenneer, a Communist member of the Board, voiced his disappointment. He felt that the Pioneers should be allowed to remain because "The Pioneers were progressive, cultural

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144 Principal's Report, Twenty-seventh Annual Convention, Modern School Association of North America.

145 Ibid.
and revolutionary."¹⁴⁶ Most present disagreed and voiced the opinion that they were disruptive to the pedagogy of freedom that had been an integral part of the Modern School.¹⁴⁷ The resolution prohibiting outside organizations from becoming involved with students of the school was passed. The Communist push for a class-conscious philosophy was much in keeping with the original tendencies of the revolutionary syndicalist, yet the historical circumstances and the nature of the radical left made the more individualistic philosophy of the Ferms paramount.

The forties brought a somewhat different set of circumstances to Stelton. As a result of the prosperity of the war years, the movement and radical activity weakened while many members of the Colony became more affluent. The school itself became much smaller and by 1947 there were only fifteen children who were mainly nursery age.¹⁴⁸

At this time the colonists exhibited nostalgia for their creative days as a radical community, while the children's magazine exhibited a clearly middle class orientation. In The New Moon, published July 1945, there were cutouts and a doll fashion show. The dolls were dressed in lovely playtime clothes and the children's*

¹⁴⁶ Ferrer Modern School, Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Convention, 1931, p. 1. Modern School Association of North American papers, Special Collection Department, Rutgers University Library.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

captions describe the dresses as "cool, chic, comfortable, dress down." One particular caption for a playdress stated, "For the beach, dancing class or play this piquant practical play outfit." The rest of the stories in the magazine were quite traditional and none exhibited any socio-political concerns. One has the sense that by this time some form of assimilation into mainstream values and culture had taken place.

Yet in terms of the colonists' self-image, connections were still made to the Ferrer Association and the origins of the school in the Ferrer movement. In 1940 the Twenty-fifth Anniversary issue of the magazine is dedicated to Ferrer, and several articles in this issue describe Ferrer's political involvement in Spain. Yet many articles suggest that the school had gone through hard times and become somewhat less than the idealization of the founders in 1911. A statement by the editorial committee of the commemorative 25th anniversary pamphlet Claimed: "To many of us the Ferrer Modern School Served as a harbinger of a new day and were reluctant in spite of this epoch of blackouts and carnage to let the 25th anniversary go unmarked." There was a real sense among the members that time have changed and the school must reflect the changing times. Yet there was also a nostalgia for the old. As one member stated, "These remembrances stirred up many dreams I still cherish, ideas and principles to which I have not ceased to be faithful, more deeply now, although I feel that periodical

149 New Moon, no. 1 (July 1945): 3.
activities must now be adjusted to the present conditions.  

In addition, the forties brought Camp Killmer to the outskirts of the school. This had a profoundly disruptive effect on the community. In fact, Harmony Capolla claimed that the entering of strangers within the boundaries of the community led to their gradual demise. Ferm corroborates this in a letter to a friend written in January 1943: "Then we are next to Kilmer Camp, a very big embarkation camp and that has disturbed our school." This observation on the part of both Mr. Ferm and Ms. Capolla corroborates what the students and parents intuitively knew in the earlier years of Stelton, that the school would face real problems because it was isolated from the ongoing activities of urban life. In a way Camp Kilmer forced the Stelton community out of its utopian existence, out of its insulation and protective environment. The intrusion of the outside world in the form of the soldier population forced the community to deal with the violence and destructiveness of daily urban life. No longer could the Stelton community keep its doors unlocked and no longer could the women in the community walk around freely and unprotected; four houses had been broken into and several women raped. Freedom as defined by the community had to be curtailed when it was intruded upon by the outside


152 Alex Ferm, letter to a friend, January 1943. Modern School Association of North America Papers, Special Collection Department, Rutgers University Library.

world. The Stelton school and community were now forced to face the concerns that had plagued the outside world. This proved that Mr. Kelly's vision of a free community, outside the destructive apparatus of capitalism, proved fallacious, because sooner or later the evils of a capitalist culture intruded and no community would remain untouched.

By 1953 what remained of the Stelton Nursery School folded, thus ending fifty years of anarchist libertarian schooling in America. It was, however, more than an era in anarchist education that had ended. What had ended was one of the few attempts to educate children in freedom that had its origins in a political and socio-revolutionary movement. The ending of a particular radical tradition in American educational history raised serious questions for American educators who envisioned a new world order--be it that of "the greening of America," or that of Paul Goodman's libertarian anarchism, or that of Marxists who look toward Cuba, Tanzania or Russia. Through its successes and failures, its frustrations and problems, its sense of itself and its integrity as a radical approach to education, it raised still unanswered questions about revolution and social change; it raised still unanswered questions about whether education is or can be a radical force in man's quest for freedom.
Anarchism has persistently regarded itself as having revolutionary implications for education. Indeed no other movement whatever has assigned to educational principles, concepts and practices a more significant place in its writings and activities.¹

When the Modern School dissolved in 1953, long after the movement had virtually disintegrated, an epoch in American radical education ended. For the first time in American history, working class children, the children of Russian, Jewish and Italian immigrants—painters, furriers and political revolutionaries—attended a school radically different from the public schools and radically different from the cheder schools of their communities. These workers managed to run and sustain their own school for fifty years, and while there were appreciable changes from the revolutionary vision of the early days in New York to the closing days at Stelton, the school consistently remained a school for workers' children. By the fifties only remnants of the anarchist movement remained and the children of Stelton had grown to become dancers, artisans, teachers, professors and businessmen.² Few of the children had in fact become revolutionaries or involved in working class politics. The dream of the founders had been altered,

²Ackerman, interview.
yet the school had left a legacy and tradition having "revolutionary implications for education" that needed to be understood. This study of the Modern School and anarchist education has undertaken to examine that legacy with specific emphasis on the revolutionary implications for a radical conception of education.

This study contributes to radical educational theory and history a methodology which places pedagogy in a social and historical context by examining libertarian pedagogy in relation to its connection to radical social movements. It remains distinct from other studies of radical education, which emphasize radical pedagogy independent of its connection to a social movement and independent of its impact on social transformation. In addition, the historical perspective of this study on radical education is designed to help understand the crucial questions raised by libertarian radical schools from Summerhill to the Free School Movement of the sixties and specifically, the inherent problems of creating a radical culture for children and the relationship between that culture and social transformation.

The uniqueness of anarchist educational theory lies in the broad basis of its cultural concerns; in the belief that the classroom creates a miniature anarchist society developing cultural forms for the new social order that includes such basic tenets of anarchism as freedom, individuation, community, libertarian social relations and model forms of rebel and revolutionary. One author describes the all-encompassing definition of education when he states:
An explanation of the anarchist stress on education might better be sought in their view that education should ideally function as the focus of intrinsic value, that is as the living center and the clearest model of what is ultimately desirable in human relations. In other words education is not a mere training ground for some future community nor is its foremost aim that of producing a supply of well-trained and dedicated revolutionaries. On the contrary, education must itself manifest, indeed consist of libertarian relations and activities. Education does not lay the ground work for subsequent achievements; at its best it constitutes the most complete and most feasible paradigm of these achievements.¹

For the anarchist, education brings to fruition the cultural relationships of the new society in the present one. As such, all childhood experience comes under its purview: emotion, intellect, experience, culture, social justice, as well as basic skills such as reading and writing.

The legacy of anarchist education lies in the broadness of its educational concerns, in the revolutionary implications of these concerns, and in the ways they provided for a radical childhood culture that encompassed two distinct models: the creative rebel and the class conscious revolutionary. Freedom as the central educational principle was defined in terms of inner and outer freedoms—personal liberation and social justice. Translated into educational terms, this two-pronged notion of freedom meant creating a culture of childhood which worked to liberate the emotional and psychological world of children for creativity and spontaneity, while at the same time developing the child's connection to working people and revolutionary struggle.

³Krimerman and Perry, Patterns of Anarchy, p. 404.
Within this broad definition of freedom, the central conflict and contradiction of anarchist education developed. The all-encompassing freedom of self-expression that characterized Isadora Duncan's dancing came into conflict with the specific needs of a revolutionary movement. Specifically, this meant that within anarchist educational theory there was a central tension between a libertarian school which emphasized personal freedoms, and a school which advocated the direct teaching of anarchist ideals. The conflict raised the following questions: Could personal freedoms flourish if specific ideals and values were directly taught? Could a revolutionary perspective be insured if children had the freedom for creative self expression and exploration of all viewpoints? This central tension between schooling emphasizing personal freedoms, and a schooling concerned with class oppression, has historically characterized radical educational theory from Summerhill to the Free School Movement and the Black Liberation School of the sixties. As models, rebel and revolutionary became the archetype, and historically the schools chose one or the other. Summerhill, the Free Schools and the counterculture emphasized the rebel—personal creativity in rebellion against the imposed domination of a system. Socialist libertarian schools and many of the utopian experiments in education emphasized social concerns, social justice and a revolutionary model which excluded self-expression. Anarchist education at the Modern School worked to unite rebel and revolutionary.
However, revolution and rebellion, historic responses to oppression, when united into an educational model of "the creative revolutionary artist," created contradictions difficult to resolve. In fact, this contradiction between schooling for liberating personal creativity and schooling for revolutionary commitment became the central problematic of anarchist education. One writer on anarchism states,

> We have another motive for the choice of education. It is a subject that promises to raise grave questions about the soundness of anarchist thought. For example, how can anarchist education avoid the dangers of coercing the young especially in the inculcation of correct moral values essential to abolishing the state?[^4]

As a philosophic problem the distinction between rebellion and revolution as historic choices to oppression has been addressed most clearly by Albert Camus in *The Rebel* and again in his *Notebooks 1942-1951*.[^5] For the rebel, oppression is internal and personal, and freedom grows out of the ability to assert the inner voice against outer forms. The rebel believes liberty to be the primary goal of mankind, for only through liberty does he create and express his inner world. The revolutionary, on the other hand, emphasizes social justice as the primary goal of man's actions. Historically the two responses to oppression have been distinct; on the one hand there have been revolutionary figures like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Marx; on the other hand rebels like Socrates, Antigone and Isadora Duncan.


As archetypes the two polarities of revolt and revolution become problematic when they operate in contradiction to each other and the rebel annihilates the revolutionary or vise versa. For Camus who examines the tensions at their deepest level, the rebel and revolutionary are irreconcilable. At the moment of choice the contradiction becomes explicit. The integrity of the rebel lies in his commitment to individuality, to his inner voice as expressed by his creativity, his art, his music, etc. The revolutionary's integrity lies in his commitment to social justice and mankind. Often the commitment of the rebel to art and self becomes antagonistic to the historical concerns for social justice and mankind. As such, the artist might fight the revolutionary to preserve his freedoms while the revolutionary might suppress art to preserve humankind. This does not preclude the revolutionaries' concern with liberty and personal freedoms, nor the rebels' concern with social justice. It merely suggests that at the moment of choice the underlying tensions inherent in each choice become apparent. This tension is clearly expressed in Camus' diary when he states,

Essay on Revolt: All rebels act, however, as if they believed in the completion of history. The contradiction is . . . ."

Id: Only a few really want liberty. The majority want justice and the majority even confuse justice and liberty. But question: is absolute justice the equivalent of absolute happiness? One comes to the idea that it is essential to choose between sacrificing liberty to justice or justice to liberty. For an artist, this amounts in certain circumstances to choosing between one's art and the happiness of mankind. 6

In concrete terms the rebel and revolutionary respond differently to their oppression. The planned nature of revolution requires rational

6Camus, The Notebooks 1942-1951, p. 94.
analysis of the historical conditions. This response must conflict with the unplanned spontaneous response of the rebel whose actions grow directly out of the intolerable conditions of a specific situation. As a result, the planned nature of revolution stifles the spontaneity of the rebel, while the spontaneity of the rebel prevents careful revolutionary planning. At odds, the rebel and revolutionary remain the archtypical models of anarchism that manifested itself in the romanticism of Tolstoy and the syndicalism of Francisco Ferrer. Yet at times anarchism united the two in the spontaneity and revolutionary fervor of the Propaganda by the Deed or the General Strike. Here the drama of inner rebellion acts as a revolutionary catalyst for social justice. However, the unity of the inner world with outer revolutionary activity presented problems for spontaneity and rebellion as the "deed" isolated the revolutionary masses, or the General Strike in its spontaneity could not sustain itself.

In education the contradictions that existed in a unified model of revolutionary and rebel created concrete problems in terms of curriculum, pedagogical style and classroom orientation, which had ramifications for the social movement. On the one hand, the insistence that the school instill a libertarian pedagogy designed to explore inner consciousness, freedom and creativity, provided no mechanism to insure the children's commitment to the revolutionary ideals of the parents and the Ferrer Association. For many the socially uncommitted creative artist had no real worth. On the other hand the need to insure that the young become revolutionaries implied the direct teaching of
anarchism, revolution, social issues and working class struggle, which in its imposition might stifle the inner creative voice of children. Freedom and self expression remained in open conflict with the direct teaching of social philosophy because of the fear that the structure and discipline needed to teach social theory would stifle freedom. Yet it was clear that without structure and freedom revolutionary goals would be lost sight of. Concretely, the problem concerned anchoring the spontaneity and freedom in the libertarian tradition of Tolstoy to a radical movement whose historical tradition included Joe Hill, the Wobblies, miners' strikes, etc. The hope that the classroom could obliterate the disharmony between the child's inner world and outer struggle for social justice, if the freedom in Isadora's dancing were joined with the struggles of Joe Hill, was realized under specified historic conditions. Under these circumstances rebellion and revolution were both encouraged through the pedagogy of the school.

This was possible when the school was integrally connected to the anarchist community through the adult center and the movement. During these New York years the visibility of ongoing anarchist involvement in the Mexican Revolutionary Committee, the Lawrence strike, the march of the unemployed, the close ties between the school and anarchist leaders such as Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, the proximity of the school to anarchist publications like *Mother Earth* as well as daily contact with factory life provided the libertarian freedoms in the school with revolutionary direction. During this period the Modern School remained distinct from subsequent libertarian
experiments because of its revolutionary orientation. This revolutionary fervor was sustained not through the dogmatic teaching of anarchism, but rather through the ways in which the adult political world was integrated into the school community. Politics, revolution, working class struggle and exploitation were an ongoing reality and a significant part of the children's lives; they did not have to be taught this reality in the classroom. To put it another way and in more generalized form, so long as the surrounding culture supported revolutionary principles, was actively engaged in revolutionary politics, and remained both physically and ideologically connected to the school, rebel and revolutionary coexisted. Emma Goldman's vision of the "revolutionary artist" became realizable. Creativity, artistic goals and working class struggle were integrated into each child's life. Anarchist ideals and working class strikes were a living reality, without which revolution was either a doctrine to be taught or an exotic claim for a future world. Historical precedent in fact shows that there is a reason for insisting that when a school's culture differs from that of the dominant culture of the public schools it requires support from a surrounding adult community to sustain its values. Yiddish cultural schools and Black independent schools were effective when they were integrated into a supportive culture that included cultural evenings, political events, poetry readings and summer camps, and were affiliated to a larger social movement. For Black independent schools the larger movement was the Pan-African Movement, and for Yiddish schools
there was the Labor Zionist movement. In either case it is clear that in both instances, as in the New York days of the Modern School, parents lived the culture of the school and the children were surrounded in their everyday life with the cultural values taught in the school and with clearly defined political and social purpose for their education. When the surrounding culture no longer lived the reality of the school and the purpose embedded in the movement was lost sight of, the schools' activities either became ritualized, as in the suburban Hebrew school where the meaning of the tradition was relegated to the Bar Mitzvah and the High Holy Day services, or entirely lost sight of. This suggests that it becomes increasingly hard to sustain a radical culture for children with revolutionary goals when this culture and purpose is divorced from a vital adult culture.

This became increasingly evident in the Modern School after 1916, as its relationship to the anarchist movement weakened and the children, as evidenced by their written work, turned inward, away from political and social concerns. The decision to move to the country began this process of separating and isolating the school from the radical community of workers' struggles and anarchist politics. This isolation begun in 1916 was exacerbated by the Russian Revolution, the Palmer Raids and World War I, and proved destructive to the unity of rebel and revolutionary. In the isolation the two archetypes disengaged, forming distinct and separate strains in anarchist education. The revolutionary

7Capolla, interview.
strain receded as the vitality of the movement died, and the creative artist, the rebel, emerged as the dominant tendency at the school. With this shift the children of the Modern School were isolated from class struggle and revolutionary politics and the net result was a third generation that no longer understood the political realities or the revolutionary politics of the founders. Even more interesting, this resulted in a third generation of creative, expressive students well-suited to the social institutions their parents rejected. Even though graduates often remained outside the mainstream job market and often became part of the avant garde as members of Martha Graham's Dance Company or students at Mill College, their creativity served mainstream America: Martha Graham played to broad audiences at fifteen to twenty dollars a seat rather than to the garment workers at one dollar per seat. In the absence of an ongoing social movement the rebel often became subdued by the promise of American life and his creativity was harnessed to further this promise. As such, the children entered the professional and artisan classes of American society. They were no longer the factory workers their parents had been but neither were they the revolutionaries the founders had envisioned.

In an interview, Sally Ackerman, a former member of the Ferrer Association, and Harmony Capolla, a former student of the Modern School, discuss the differences in orientation among three generations of Modern School students. Miss Capolla suggests that the revolutionary fervor of the first generation was lessened in each succeeding generation. She states,
The first generation had a common bond in the struggle against oppression in their native homeland and so they began the school as revolutionaries with a common bond of experience. The second generation, their children, shared in that bond though they knew oppression in a less direct way; through their parents' work in union strikes, the IWW and revolutionary activities.

The question that remained was how to perpetuate the common bond and common fight against oppression. Obviously the school found this hard to do. As Miss Capolla states, "The third generation no longer shared the European experience of oppression and perhaps this explains why this generation was less directly involved with fighting oppression."

Miss Capolla went on to explain that she believed these differences in orientation among the generations contributed to the difficulty in maintaining the school.

By the 1940s the revolutionary spark died, and the Steltonites became carpenters, professional teachers and businessmen. None became active union organizers or revolutionary leaders. While their sympathies lay with radical movements, their involvement in radical movements of the sixties was minimal.

All this suggests that revolutionary vitality could be maintained in conjunction with a private and personal conception of freedom only when a supportive community and active political movement coexisted.

It further suggests that any concept of radical education that includes personal and social freedoms must fight like crazy to bring together a structured politics with libertarian classroom freedoms. When the

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8 Capolla, interview.
structure of the movement and the community is lost sight of, the school becomes an exotic enclave, an experiment in new educational forms rather than a significant aspect of revolutionary struggle. As an enclave it remains an exotic experiment that ultimately services the society it is rebelling against. When the isolation is countered by the direct teaching of revolutionary thought, the ideas become ritualized, hardened, and creativity is lost. Only in unity between the school and the community of anarchists could a radical concept of rebel and revolutionary, of personal and social freedom, be established.

Yet even within the context of a radical community, this unity of rebel and revolutionary remains problematic. Historical reality shows that the vitality of the rebel and revolutionary is hard to sustain over several generations. Problems arise in radical schools supported by a radical community—witness the Kibbutz, the collective farms of Israel. Albeit the situation is somewhat different there, the kibbutz still had difficulty on two counts: (1) sustaining revolutionary fervor in their children, and (2) creating the kinds of rebel that had existed within themselves as founders of the movement. By the third generation the ideology of community and revolution froze. This suggests that the tension between rebel and revolutionary needs constant evaluation and reworking, and that any radical theory of education must work like

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crazy to sustain the connection between the politics of the movement and the freedoms of the classroom, in order to prevent the revolutionary ideal from hardening into dogma or the school from losing its contact with political goals.

On still another level further contradictions develop, as rebel and revolutionary are united. Personal exploration, self-expression, creativity, libertarian social relationships, all create cultural values that remain foreign to the cultural forms of the great majority of workers whom the revolutionary movement is trying to reach. Creating rebels who fight traditional values of morality, marriage, sex, and birth control means that the movement and the school become isolated from the community whose support they need. As rebels against traditional religion, the anarchists of the Lower East Side sold tickets to their annual Yom Kippur ball, alienating the majority of the working class Jews in the community who attend synagogue on the high holy days or who, even if they did not attend, saw the ball as a travesty of their world view. On the other hand, socialist groups more concerned with the revolutionary potential of their activities used cultural forms already present in the community. One example is the way Abraham Cahan, editor of the Daily Forward, a socialist newspaper of the period, related to the Jewish worker. As one book states, "Cahan could grasp the way religious emotions slide into secular passions and how necessary it was for anyone trying to organize immigrant Jewish workers not only

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10 Howe, World of Our Fathers, p. 106.
to avoid antagonizing them but positively to draw upon their religious loyalties."11 As rebels, anarchists often forgot this, and so found it hard to maintain contact with the working class people who were needed to create revolution.

Rebel and revolutionary as archetypes of radical education posed problems which as yet remain unresolved and in need of further investigation. Schools run in conjunction with European syndicalism often came closest to resolving some of the problems raised. Perhaps further study of this movement and its educational practice would provide insight into questions concerning personal freedom versus social commitment; direct versus indirect teaching of anarchism; creating a radical culture of childhood that incorporates the culture of the majority of workers and yet maintains libertarian social forms.12 In addition, further study of the socialist Sunday schools at the turn of the century might offer another vantage point from which to view these problems.

While this study suggests the need for a radical movement and community to sustain political perspective and revolutionary goals, it further raises the question of whether in the absence of such a movement, a school can in fact develop the creative rebel. This questions not only the philosophy and ideology of the Modern School after 1920 but also the raison d'etre of schools like Summerhill.

11 Howe, World of Our Fathers, p. 112.

12 For details on libertarian education in Europe and its connection to the syndicalist movement, see Leberstein, "Revolutionary Education."
Put another way, the question being asked is whether a libertarian school can create "The Rebel," the individual who in the romantic tradition of Tolstoy and Thoreau fights for his integrity as he battles the surrounding society for the values in which he believes. More specifically, one wonders if the pedagogy of libertarian schooling, or the free schools of the sixties when detached from a political movement as in the case of the Modern School after 1925, create rebels in any more systematic way than the public schools, the Catholic schools or the Hebrew schools with their rigid pedagogy.

While the answers to these questions probably demand further investigation, one can surmise several things from the Modern School experience about the relationship between libertarian pedagogy and the process of rebellion. Historically, rebels have come from a variety of traditions, including extremely rigid ones. Often they have used these traditions to restructure, rework and rethink the cultural and political world they live in and their relation to it: James Joyce as rebel artist came out of a repressive Catholic school tradition, while Emma Goldman, an anarchist leader, came out of a repressive Jewish orthodox tradition. In each instance, individual rebellion opposed an ongoing tradition, bringing to mind Paul Goodman's criticisms of the free school and counterculture which questioned whether a libertarian rebel changed cultural forms. Goodman believed that the freedom of the counterculture was illusionary in that it remained stuck in its negation of the dominant culture.13 As such it created an enclave

13Graubard, Free the Children, p. 272.
within this culture or else creativity was coopted to service this culture. The creative students of the Modern School became carpenters and dancers and their creativity was often as much a part of the liberal ideal as of the radical vision of the founders of the school.

In actuality the students of the Modern School found that once they entered public school their creativity and rebellion was absorbed or diminished. In the isolation of the specialized environment of the Modern School individual creativity in art work and poetry flourished. Yet it was unclear whether this creativity had radical social consequences. In general, children at the lower school level, leaving the isolation of Stelton, became easily absorbed into the public schools. Often they were bright and exceptional but hardly rebels, hardly someone who was able to utilize his inner resources to transform or fight against the more traditional values of the public schools.

In Alex Ferm's diary there are descriptions of children at the school who after they moved to the city attended regular high school and fit right in with traditional schooling. With a tone of sadness Ferm states, "They went right in for being what the school required, and keeping at the head of the class."\textsuperscript{14} Ferm went on to describe the way in which students adapted to this new environment when in his diary he wrote about Sasha Weinich, "A most creative small boy who, pushed to academics, dropped his drawing and attended Columbia."\textsuperscript{15} Ferm blames traditional schools for stifling the child's creativity. He gives an

\textsuperscript{14}Alex Ferm, Diary entry, November 1951. Modern School Association of North America Papers, Special Collections Department, Rutgers University Library.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 31 March 1952.
example of how another student retained her creativity because she did not attend public school. He states, "June didn't go to high school and so retained her initiative with flying colors." While there is truth in Ferm's suggestion that public schools repress creativity, there is less truth in the implication of his assessment of June and Sasha's educational experience. Ultimately, Ferm's statements suggest that creativity will only flourish in isolation of the public schools in a purified perfect environment of libertarian freedom: hence June's expressiveness and Sasha's repressed creativity. Yet it seems that if the structures of creativity and rebellion had in fact been brought to fruition the child would bring these structures of freedom to bear on his new environment. Sasha Winick, in a stifling environment, could have used his creativity to refuse to conform, to refuse to become a top student through direct confrontation with school authorities or indirectly through poetry writing, daydreaming, etc. Instead he and other students who entered New Brunswick High School were often easily integrated into the repressive conditions of public school education that their parents and teachers had condemned when they formed the Modern School.

However, response to the Modern School experience was varied. Unlike Sascha Winick, Harry Friedman believed that the years spent at the Modern School could not be erased by twelve years of subsequent schooling. He states, "through the development of individualism the

16 Ferm, Diary entry, 31 March 1952.
Modern School protects the pupil from future boredom."\(^{17}\) Still another student, Pearly Goodman, disagreed by claiming the specialized atmosphere of the school with its emphasis on individuality only created arrogance in students, making them feel superior to children who had not attended the school. Pearly claimed, "Pupils of the Modern School feel superior to others and when the necessity for merging came about this superior attitude was a handicap."\(^{18}\) Seymour Gale, another former student of the Modern School, agreed that the school created a feeling of superiority in the students but did not believe this too harmful.

The students' response suggests that for some, the individuality, rebellion and creativity fostered by The Modern School was often confined to specified conditions or else created within them a sense of separateness and superiority that alienated them from other working class children. Perhaps this experience was indicative of the essential problem inherent in creating a specialized alternative school whose model rests on the rebel artist.

In either case we return to our original question: Where have all the children gone? One can answer that the majority of the students at the Modern School had assimilated into American middle class society as architects, folksingers, businessmen and teachers.\(^{19}\) The irony was

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\(^{17}\) "Reunion and Conference of Former Pupils and Teachers of the Modern School," p. 6.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Capolla, interview; and "Stelton Was Pioneer in Progressive Education," The Sunday Times (New Brunswick, N.J.), 17 September 1970. The article describes the success of the students at the Modern School: "One girl became an outstanding dancer with the Martha Graham group,
that a revolutionary school for workers' children had in fact moved the children out of the laboring classes and into the "American Dream," perhaps even more successfully than the public schools.

This conclusion in no way negates the legacy of the Modern School, the first radical libertarian school for workers' children in the United States. It simply suggests that for reasons already discussed, the concern of a radical educational theory and practice are complex and that freedom, creativity and revolutionary social change, all vital concepts of any theory of education, remain problematic. In the absence of visible radical political activity in the seventies, in the wake of the knowledge that the free schools of the sixties were doomed because of the inadequacy of their conception of social change, radical educational theory and practice of the seventies often works in the public schools. Interestingly, *This Magazine Is About Schools* reflects this shift in the fall/winter 1971 issue. Having in the sixties been devoted to alternative schools, particularly Everdale Place in Toronto, the magazine comes to the conclusion that radical social change must go on within public education rather than alternative schooling. An editorial discussed the relationship to public education,

> It wasn't as important to us then as it is now. In the past, much of our energies went into looking at alternative school situations--If there is anything we've learned over the last

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a boy became a prominent architect after training by Frank Lloyd Wright . . . ." An obituary on Alex Ferm in *New York Times*, 18 June 1971, p. 41, had this to say, "Among the students was Edgar Tafel, architect, Ethel Butler, . . . . Others were on the faculties of major universities or in business."
six years, it's that there is no alternative to public schools and that all our energies must go into changing that systems. Perhaps this is one of the legacies of the Modern School experience: that in the absence of a movement to unite rebel and revolutionary, work in the public schools is the only real alternative. In any event, this suggests that further investigation of radical work with public education, rather than alternative schools, would shed light on radical pedagogy and its relationship to social change. It also suggests further research on radical educational experiments in relationship to the Socialist movement. Socialist Sunday schools might help understand the primary tensions within radical education, already discussed. In either case, the question raised by the historic Modern School and the Modern School Association of North America remains a significant contribution to the radical educational tradition in America.

20"Canadian Teachers We Need Your Help in Making This Magazine a Better Magazine for You," This Magazine Is About Schools 5 (Fall-Winter 1971): 1.
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