THE ISS ON CAMPUS:
The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905-1921

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"Student activism" is a commonly used—and somewhat loaded—phrase. In the mind of the modern observer, the phrase inspires images of peace signs, love beads, sit-ins, and Kent State. Student activism, however, has not always been true to this imagery. The tradition of student groups devoted to political, ideological ends extends back to the early years of the twentieth century. The group that established this tradition also forms the subject of this study: the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS).

The ISS was founded in 1905. It led no rallies or sit-ins; nor were any of its members martyred at the hands of the national guard. Its tactics were peaceful—in fact, they can hardly be called "tactics." Far from occupying college presidents' offices, the ISS sponsored lectures, organized study groups, and published reading lists. However, the group must not be dismissed as trivial simply because it does not tap the romantic aura of "The Sixties." The ISS began a twentieth-century practice of student awareness of and concern for the political world outside the walls of the "ivory tower" that is still very much alive—the rhetoric of cynics and disappointed radicals notwithstanding.

Far from being inevitable, or even very logical, the proliferation of the ISS was rather unlikely and puzzling. The
group was dedicated to promoting an interest in an imported, working-class ideology (socialism) among a native-born, middle-class constituency (college students). Whereas the group's program entailed reading, study, and discussion, the pervading student mood was one of giddy anti-intellectualism. Football and fraternities, much more than debates and discourse, inspired undergraduate enthusiasm. Despite these impediments, however, the ISS, during its first decade, grew in size, reputation, and influence. This study will examine factors that facilitated the growth of the ISS, as well as factors that motivated historical actors to contribute to that growth.

The ISS, of course, did not exist in a vacuum. The chronology of the group, from its 1905 birth during the Progressive Era until its 1921 death amidst the Red Scare that followed the First World War, serves as an accurate barometer for the mood of society at large. Besides illuminating issues specific to the student society, a study of the ISS casts light on many features of early twentieth-century America: the nature of the university, and the dynamics of its relationship to the rest of the country; the character and chronology of the Progressive Era; the nature of American socialism; World War I and its effect on the three aforementioned areas; the situation faced by women; the role played by religion in shaping patterns of thought; and many others.

Just as the actions of the ISS did not occur in a vacuum, neither did mine. Many people contributed directly or indirectly to this study. My sincere gratitude extends to Professor Clayton
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J.W.
The popular imagination conceives of a romantic scenario for "bottom-up" historical movements. During the spontaneous births of such movements, groundswells of historical energy arise and seek consciousness and form. Would-be leaders attempt to harness, direct and shape the energy released by the movements. Some lead the movements down unfortunate, destructive or suicidal paths; some lead them through rocky passes to new and fruitful frontiers; some are unable to control their fury and are thrown and left behind or crushed. Whatever their final form or direction, all bottom-up movements share a common trait: they leave the world a different place than they found it.

This image, though glamorous, rarely provides an accurate framework for the interpretation of history. The subject of this paper, the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS), resists being forced into such a mold. The ISS, this country's "first nationally organized student group that had a distinct ideological and political orientation," was decidedly top-down in origin. Unlike the form-seeking mass of a nascent bottom-up movement, the ISS began as a bare skeleton. That there was substance sufficient to fill and animate this empty structure is demonstrated by the considerable bulk, scope, and longevity of the group once mature. However, had the form of the ISS not been
designed in advance, it is doubtful that the content—the American student population—would have amassed itself into any, much less into a similar, shape.

The story of the ISS begins in 1904 in the town of Princeton, New Jersey, with the person of Upton Sinclair. The fact that the collegiate group was founded in a college town, Princeton, is mere coincidence. The fact that it was founded by a man who was not a college student, Upton Sinclair, is less so. Upton Sinclair was an energetic young writer who had recently embraced socialism. In 1904, after discussions with some like-minded friends, Sinclair formulated the idea of a national collegiate group aimed at the study of socialism and related movements. Toward this end, Sinclair, who was far from idle, took it upon himself to assure that his vision would become a reality. In September of the next year, 1905, the Intercollegiate Socialist Society was founded.

This paper is devoted primarily to the exploration of the growth and strength of the ISS. At issue is what attracted and motivated college students to join and work for the society, and what fostered or impeded their actions. Because Upton Sinclair graduated from college years before the ISS came into existence, his story would seem unrelated to this investigation. However, insofar as his childhood and collegiate experiences led him to found the society, his story proves illuminating. His personal traits foreshadowed those of future students who would find the call of the ISS to be compelling. Furthermore, his collegiate experiences suggest what it was about American higher education that inspired the formation, and influenced the development, of
the ISS.

Upton Sinclair was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1878. His family had its roots in the aristocracy of the Old South. Many wealthy relatives exposed young Upton to luxury and snobbery. Upton's father, Upton Beall Sinclair, Sr., was a salesman and an alcoholic. Sinclair's immediate family lived in relative poverty. Thus Upton was exposed at an early age to the contrast between rich and poor. The exposure led the child to "think and ask questions" about the fairness of his world. 

The Sinclairs moved to New York when Upton was nine. Even at this young age, Upton was an incessant reader. Although he did not enter school until he was ten years old, his habit of reading, along with his native intellect, enabled him to complete the eight primary grades in less than two years' time. All the while, Upton was combing the pages of literature in search of answers to questions posed by the world. Experiences with his unpredictable, alcoholic father had caused the youth to become "prematurely serious." His ravenous reading widened the chasm between the son and his father, and reinforced Upton's need to look to the world of ideas for meaning and solace.

As a child, Sinclair also had looked to religion for security and spirituality. "I really took the words of Jesus seriously," he commented later. Organized religion, in the form of the Episcopal Church to which his family belonged, however, seemed increasingly to be "a sham." Sinclair's minister, understanding the idealistic questioning of the youth, gave Upton volumes of Christian apologetics to read. The effect
was to complete Sinclair’s break with the church, for he found the church’s own defenses to be intellectually feeble.  

This was the youth who attended the City College of New York (CCNY) beginning in 1892. He was bright, serious, inquisitive, and idealistic. CCNY, to his dismay, proved infertile ground for his searching mind:

I took six or eight courses each half year at the college, and as I recall them, my principal impression is of their incredible dullness. We learned by rote what our bored instructors laid out for us.  

When Sinclair asked questions about points that he was meant to accept unthinkingly, instructors would answer, "Mr. Sinclair, it is so because I say it is so!"  

Sinclair’s considerable intellectual tools lay dormant. He graduated without distinction in the middle of his class. Years later he commented: “Such talents as I had were not valued by my alma mater, nor would they have been by any other alma mater then existing in America so far as I could learn.”  

Had Upton Sinclair ended his collegiate career after earning his bachelor’s degree, his story would have been less interesting to the current study. CCNY was a free public school which served partly as a high school and partly as a college. Most of the instructors there were Tammany appointees who were not necessarily committed to scholarship. As will become clear below, the ISS was to prosper most consistently in a different class of school—in liberal arts colleges and universities which boasted of high quality students and faculties. It was to such an
institutions, Columbia University, that Sinclair next turned.

Upton Sinclair registered at Columbia in the fall of 1897. He paid a fee of one hundred and fifty dollars in advance to cover the tuition for the master's degree program. As long as he did not pass the exams needed to complete the requirement of one major and two minors, he was "at liberty to go on taking courses and dropping them with no extra expense." By skipping exams, Sinclair was able to obtain reading lists and be exposed to professors' points of view for more than forty courses. This unusual practice indicates that Sinclair's quest was for knowledge rather than merely a degree.

After four years at Columbia, having twice dipped his cup into the wells of higher education, Sinclair was still thirsty. As had happened at CCNY, the courses at Columbia for the most part struck Sinclair as tiresome: "I had tried forty of them, and knew that nine-tenths of them were dull." There were a few professors, such as the brilliant Edward MacDowell, head of the department of music, who inspired Sinclair's attention and admiration. However, overall, Sinclair felt that "the great institution was a hollow shell, a body without a soul, a mass of brick and stone held together by red tape." 10

Nine years of higher education had left Upton Sinclair ripe for conversion to socialism. He displayed many characteristics that would later be shared by students who became active in the ISS. These traits deserve mention here. Sinclair was, first of all, quite bright and inquisitive. An exciting professor, such as Professor MacDowell, could tap his searching mind and inspire creative thought.
Second, Sinclair was, in his own words, "prematurely serious." Popular collegiate practices such as athletics, fraternities and secret societies did not appeal to him. He declined an offer to join a fraternity as an undergraduate. Classmates' efforts at "college spirit" struck him as "silly."11

In addition, although Sinclair had rebelled against organized religion, he nevertheless possessed a religious nature. This was important for two reasons. First, because of his fundamental belief in the teachings of Christ, Sinclair wanted to improve a world that included too much inequality and suffering. Furthermore, Sinclair's rejection of Christian dogma had left a void. Sinclair was searching for an ideology that would be spiritually soothing and morally acceptable, in addition to being intellectually defensible.

Finally, Sinclair was very idealistic. He often passed men playing the newly popular game of golf, and it stirred and angered him. "I saw able-bodied men driving a little white ball about a field all day, and it seemed to me more than ever necessary that they should have a new ideal." He also commented on the immorality of businessmen: "I thought that the tired businessman ought to be an idealist like myself, reading Shakespeare and Goethe all day." Idealists such as Sinclair often found the ideas offered by the ISS to be fresh, exciting, and powerful.12

These four traits—an eager intellect, seriousness beyond his years, a searching spirituality, and unyielding idealism—the very traits that made him so receptive to socialism, combined to
render Sinclair’s experience with higher education dry, lifeless, and unsatisfying. Because socialism was not mentioned at all during his formal education, it was not until 1902, after nine years of college and university study, that he was first introduced to it. In that year, Sinclair met Leonard D. Abbott, a socialist, who gave him a talk and some literature concerning socialism. Sinclair was quick to adopt the new ideology. He described the conversion experience: "It was like the falling down of prison walls about my mind."13

Sinclair set off on a writing career which was to yeild nearly eighty books including The Jungle, perhaps the most famous product of the muckraking era of the early twentieth century. Shortly before completing The Jungle, a powerful literary assault on the American meat packing industry, Sinclair set to work founding the ISS. He felt that merely becoming aware of the existence of the socialist movement and philosophy had been the most important factor leading to his own "conversion." The absence of socialism from American college and university curricula struck him as conspicuous and unfortunate, but not irreplaceable:

I had reflected much upon my education in college and university, and made sure that my ignorance of the modern revolutionary movement had not been an accident. Since the professors refused to teach students about modern life, it was up to the students to teach themselves.14

So it was that a man seven years a college graduate started to build the structure that would become the Intercollegiate Socialist Society.
In December of 1904, having recently returned from Chicago, where he had been collecting material for *The Jungle*, Sinclair began to take action. From his home in Princeton, he wrote to a number of prominent people:

I wish to set on foot a movement to organize an Intercollegiate Socialist Society, for the purpose of stimulating an interest in socialism among college men, graduate and undergraduate, organizing study clubs in the colleges, and assisting them with information and literature. I wish to get a few men of influence whom I know to be interested in Socialism, to sign a call, asking those who care to assist me to send in their names. Such a call, if signed by names which command attention, would no doubt be published by newspapers which reach college men. Would you be willing to sign it and lend your influence to such a movement?15

The diverse responses to Sinclair’s letter provide an intriguing testimony to the ambiguity and potency of socialism as popularly perceived during the years prior to the First World War. During these years socialism held the promise, as well as the alarm, of an unknown, untested entity.

Although some recipients agreed to sign their names to the call, many refused. William Lloyd Garrison, who at the time was secretary of the American Free Trade League, made his position quite clear. Referring to himself as "an avowed disbeliever in Socialism," Garrison informed Sinclair that his name would be inappropriate among the other names on the call. Garrison’s subsequent reference to socialism as "the coming slavery" typifies two views which many Americans shared: that socialism was distasteful, and that socialism was, if not inevitable, then at least on its way.
Whereas Garrison declined to sign Sinclair's call because it implied socialism at all, Frederick I. Bamford, a radical socialist who addressed his reply to "Comrade Sinclair," declined to sign because the proposal was not socialistic enough. Bamford objected to the fact that Sinclair had sent his letter to many non-socialists. Bamford would not sign unless the movement could be founded upon "men tingling al (sic) over with the glory and greatness of our cause." From the outset, thus, the ISS, far from being pure in its socialism either in terms of personnel or ideology, was viewed with suspicion and reservations by hard-line socialists. This suspicion from the left added to suspicion, such as Garrison's, which came from the right.

In an effort to endow the proposed collegiate society with credibility, and in order to appeal to college students, Sinclair sent his letter to a number of prominent university professors. Their responses must have made even the optimistic Sinclair entertain second thoughts about the tenability of his scheme. Some professors responded that, given the current mood on their campuses, a fledgling socialist group would have trouble inspiring and attracting student interest. Professor G.R. Carpenter of Columbia University responded regretfully, "Though I have much sympathy with your general views, I do not think that the time is propitious for starting the movement you mention." From the University of Chicago, Thorstein Veblen similarly warned that the proposed society "would probably not come to anything." He added that he had "very little faith in the spread of socialism, or even of a lively interest in it, among college
In addition to assuming a lack of student interest, the responses of college professors indicated another potential obstacle in the path of the ISS. The issue of academic freedom was alive and far from resolved in these years. The 1890's had seen a number of cases in which professors with controversial opinions had been fired or demoted. The most famous of these involved the forced resignation of Edward A. Ross, "one of the best teachers at Stanford University," after he had advocated views concerning economic and social issues which were contrary to those of a conservative benefactress of the school.

Instances such as the Ross resignation made many professors wary of stepping out of line. In letters to Sinclair declining the invitation to sign the call to organize the ISS, two University of Wisconsin professors reveal their reluctance to be associated with radicalism. Professor Richard T. Ely, though he had himself engaged in a considerable amount of scholarship concerning socialism, and "objected strongly" to a misrepresentation of socialism, would not endorse the formation of a group to study socialism. He explained that his name on such an endorsement would "strengthen a misunderstanding which exists in some quarters." Ely was careful to note that he had himself never been able to embrace socialism.

Ely's co-worker at Madison, John R. Commons, was less clear about his politics, but was just as clear about his refusal to sign. Commons explained that he did not think that he was enough of a socialist to take part. He added cautiously that, "while of course I am interested in seeing college men
study the subject, I do not care to identify myself with the socialist movement as such."  

It is not surprising that Ely and Commons, two reform-minded professors, should be so careful about guarding their reputations. In the mid-nineties Ely faced trial at Wisconsin for his controversial views on boycotts and strikes. In 1896, Commons was subjected to similar pressure when he was forced to resign from Indiana University because of his opinions concerning economic matters.  

Although none of the professors who had been contacted would allow his name to be associated with the proposed society, Sinclair did receive many letters from people who agreed to add their names to the call. These replies show that there were people in America--prominent people--who believed that the study of socialism was worth a try, and were not afraid to say so. Clarence Darrow, who was the most prominent labor lawyer of his day, replied that he was in sympathy with the movement. If his name could do the organization any good, Darrow added, Sinclair should feel free to use it. B. O. Flower, the editor of The Arena, took pleasure in signing his name to the circular, for he was heartily in favor of the idea. Author and journalist Oscar L. Triggs signed his name because he felt that, "a little study of current movements might stir things up a bit."  

Sinclair selected the names of nine favorable respondents to add, along with his own, to the call. Besides the three mentioned above--Darrow, Flower, and
Triggs--Sinclair chose: Jack London, the famous author; Leonard D. Abbott, the editor of Current Literature, who had provided Sinclair with his initial introduction to socialism; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, feminist author and lecturer; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the eighty-one year old Harvard man who had worked with such thinkers as Emerson and Thoreau at the utopian Brook Farm colony, had been a fervent abolitionist, and, during the Civil War, had been the colonel of the first regiment composed of former slaves; William English Walling, a resident of the University Settlement in New York whose grandfather was William English, Democratic candidate for vice president in 1880; and James Graham Phelps Stokes, the "millionaire socialist" who came from a wealthy and prominent New York banking family, and whose marriage to an immigrant cigar worker had been the subject of many a scandalous newspaper article. Collectively, these relatively well-known people displayed several characteristics that in future years would be shared by the group that formed the backbone of the ISS. First, fewer than half of the signers were actually socialists. Also, the overwhelming majority of the signers were native-born Americans who were either of middle- or upper-class origin.

In the spring of 1905, Sinclair sent his call to many periodicals which he believed would be read by college students. The call appeared in socialist papers such as The Worker, as well as in nonsocialist papers such as the New York Times. The text of the call read:

In the opinion of the undersigned, the recent remarkable increase of the Socialist vote in
America should serve as an indication to the educated men and women of the country that socialism is a thing concerning which it is no longer wise to be indifferent. The undersigned, regarding its aims and fundamental principles with sympathy, and believing that in them will ultimately be found the remedy for many far-reaching evils, propose organizing an association, to be known as the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, for the purpose of promoting an intelligent interest in socialism among college men and women, graduate and undergraduate, through the formation of study clubs in the colleges and universities, and the encouragement of all legitimate endeavors to awaken an interest in socialism among the educated men and women of the country. 24

This text, accompanied by the signatures of Sinclair and the nine people listed above, appeared in newspapers across the country in the spring of 1905. Because he was attempting to organize students, Sinclair had to plan his actions according to the academic calendar. When the call was issued, the 1904-1905 academic year was coming to an end. Sinclair, reasoning that any organizational efforts during the remainder of the spring would be obsolete, decided to wait until the beginning of the next academic year to begin his organizational efforts. As Sinclair waited—tending his vegetable patch, being a "jack of all trades" on his newly acquired sixty-acre farm, and putting the finishing touches on The Jungle--letters poured in regarding the call. Most of the letters came from socialists who expressed their support for the proposed group. The encouragement provided by these letters, however, was tempered by the fact that hardly any of the letters came from students--the very group at which Sinclair had aimed his call.

At the end of the summer, Sinclair distributed notices inviting people to a meeting which was officially to spawn the
Intercollegiate Socialist Society. The meeting was set for two o'clock in the afternoon on Tuesday, September 12, 1905, and was to be held on the top floor of Peck's Restaurant on Fulton Street in lower Manhattan. When the time came, an "enthusiastic" group of about a hundred assembled in the restaurant's meeting room. The ensemble included a number of socialists, as well as "many persons unattached to the organized socialist movement."

Present, among other notables, were: Morris Hillquit, one of the most prominent men in American Socialism; Gaylord Wilshire, the editor of Wilshire's Magazine; Mary Beard, who, along with her husband Charles, was a writer and an historian; and a number of the signers of the original call to organize.25

Rather than run the entire meeting by himself, Sinclair, after issuing a call to order, facilitated the election of a person to chair the meeting. The crowd agreed upon W.J. Ghent, an author, to serve in this capacity. Ghent's first act as chairman was to introduce to the crowd one Upton Sinclair. The latter explained to the audience his reasons for wanting to launch the proposed society. He spoke of the absence of socialism and related movements from his collegiate experience, and of the potential benefits to education to be gained from the study of socialism. He also suggested that, "if the professors didn't teach the students, perhaps it was time to form an organization which would enable the students to teach the professors!"26 A motion then carried to organize immediately.

A tentative plan outlining the structure of the new
society was offered subsequently by none other than Upton Sinclair. His provisional constitution named the society; outlined the rules for membership in the group; established an executive committee; and defined a number of officers' positions. Sinclair's constitution was accepted with no significant alterations.

The next order of business entailed filling the positions created by the new constitution. When the time to elect a president came, the crowd turned to the man personally responsible for the group's existence, Upton Sinclair. Sinclair declined the invitation, and nominated in his stead Jack London. London--a charismatic young author of international renown--was, at the time of his nomination, on the other side of the country in Glen Ellen, California. The crowd capitulated and elected London the first president of the ISS. It was not until eight days later that London wired his response: "All right I accept the office."27

The remaining offices then were filled. Upton Sinclair was elected first vice president; J. G. Phelps Stokes was chosen second vice president; the Reverend Owen R. Lovejoy, the assistant secretary of the National Child Labor Committee, became the treasurer; and M. R. Holbrook, the secretary of the Collectivist Society, was elected secretary. These officers were included automatically on the roster of the group's executive committee. The additional committee members were: Morris Hillquit, the Reverend George W. Cooke, Robert Hunter, George Strobell, Katherine M. Meserole, and Harry W. Laidler.

With the acceptance of the constitution and the election of
officers and executive committee members, the ISS began its official existence. At this early date the society was no more than a bare frame. However, it was a frame designed to be filled in. The process by which the structure was animated, the extent to which the resulting unit grew, and the nature of this growth will be the primary subjects of the remainder of this paper. There are, however, two points concerning the society's organizational stage which merit consideration before leaving Peck's Restaurant.

First, the people who founded the ISS were far from unified in their ideologies. The initial officers and executive committee members, for example, represented a wide range of opinions. Jack London, the society's fiery first president, was a revolutionary socialist. Morris Hillquit, whose tenure on the executive committee was to extend over the next decade, seven years of which saw Hillquit serve in the additional role of the group's treasure, was a right-wing "evolutionary" socialist. George Strobell, also a member of the original executive committee, was a Christian socialist. Many of the founders were not socialists at all, but rather were progressive reformers of one stripe or another. Had this diverse group attempted to formulate a coherent platform for the organization of society, or a systematic plan of action outlining the means by which to achieve that organization, a great cacophony of opinion would have erupted. This did not occur, however, and the fault lines which existed among the founders of the ISS were not tested.
The second feature of the organizational meeting that warrants comment concerns its extreme top-down qualities. Most obviously, Upton Sinclair, it is fair to say, played mother, father, and doctor in the birth of the ISS. He authored, obtained signatures for, and distributed the call to organize; he arranged the organizational meeting; he composed the group's constitution; and, had he not declined the offer, he would have been chosen president. Instead, Sinclair, by his mere suggestion, assured the election to that position of a man--Jack London--who was not even aware that the meeting was taking place. The vote for London was unanimous.

In addition to Sinclair's overwhelming dominance, there was another way in which the meeting was top-down. Despite the fact that the society was concerned with college students, students played virtually no part in its founding. As previously noted, Sinclair was well out of college when he issued the call for the organization of the ISS. Of the nine other signers of the call, none at that time were college students or professors. William English Walling, at twenty-eight years, was "one of the youngest signers of the call." Furthermore, only an insignificant minority of the letters written in response to the call came from students.

The organizational meeting by no means broke this pattern of student uninvolve ment. Unfortunately, there are no records documenting the relative numbers of students and nonstudents who attended the meeting. (Judging from existing accounts written by participants, it would be a safe bet that the nonstudents in the crowd far outnumbered the students.) Regardless of the numbers,
however, there is no doubt that students played a negligible role in the proceedings of the meeting. No students were considered for officerial positions. One student, it is true was elected to the executive committee. This was Harry W. Laidler, who was at that time an undergraduate at Wesleyan University. His election, which surprised everyone including himself, was solely attributable to a comment made by William Feigenbaum, a junior at Columbia University. Feigenbaum pointed out that as the ISS was planning to work with students, it made sense to have at least one student on its decision-making body.\textsuperscript{29} Aside from this one incidental and superficial case of student involvement, however, the first nationally organized student group of political, ideological orientation came into being untouched by student influence.
Chapter 2
"A Nonexistent Orchestra"

When the excitement of the enthusiastic first meeting subsided, the leaders of the ISS looked up and found themselves conductors of a nonexistent orchestra. Their group had a purpose—to promote an intelligent interest in the study of socialism among college men and women. Their group had officers who were to be elected by the membership to serve terms lasting one year. The group had an executive committee, consisting of the five officers plus six others, which was to be elected by the membership each April. Despite its complete organizational and decision-making structures, however, the group had virtually no members, and virtually no money. The executive committee of the new society set itself to the task of procuring these two valuable resources.

During its first months the ISS existed "on a shoe string." The group had two potential sources of income: membership dues, and individual contributions. While trying to build its membership, the ISS relied upon contributions for financial sustenance. Letters requesting donations were sent to prominent socialists as well as college graduates thought likely to be sympathetic to the aims of the ISS. In addition, many people who had been involved in the group's founding became benefactors.
The society's second vice president, J.G. Phelps Stokes, putatively a "millionaire socialist," was one such source of financial gifts. Rufus W. Weeks, the vice president of the New York Life Insurance Company, was another.

The contributions could not be expected to generate much revenue. In order to assure a healthy treasury, the ISS executive committee moved that "all services to the society that were not purely clerical should be donated." The only paid employee was to be Miss M.R. Holbrook, the group's secretary, who would receive seventy-five cents per hour for her part-time secretarial work. Despite these efforts to generate and conserve money, however, the early years of the ISS were of necessity marked by a spirit of self-sacrifice and volunteerism.

Upton Sinclair exhibited this spirit:

We had no income, of course, and everything was done by volunteer labor. Many times I sat up until two or three in the morning, wrapping packages of literature, to be mailed to persons who did not always want them, and sometimes wrote to say so.

In addition to its quest for funds, the executive committee was engaged in an effort to establish ISS chapters on college campuses. The first step toward this end was to advertise the existence of the new society. The committee pursued this task through a variety of means. Copies of Sinclair's organizational call were sent to colleges and universities across the country. Also, letters were sent to sympathetic college graduates requesting that they deliver the message of the ISS to their alma maters. As an added publicity measure, London, Sinclair and J. G. Phelps Stokes signed an article which appeared on the front
page of The Worker, a well known socialist paper, requesting the names of current students who might be interested in the work of the ISS. These names, the executive committee reasoned, might represent seeds from which full campus chapters could grow.

The executive committee, concerned with spreading the name of the ISS and stimulating an interest in modern problems and solutions, entertained the thought of sponsoring a national collegiate essay contest. William Strobell, who was a close friend to Upton Sinclair, proposed that the ISS offer prizes of fifty, thirty, and twenty dollars to the authors of the three best undergraduate essays of the 1905-06 academic year. In order to be eligible for consideration, the essays had to be "prepared and used as regular college exercises." This stipulation, it was reasoned, would encourage students to incorporate socialism, or related concepts, into their schoolwork.

The most dramatic advertising effort during the first months of the group's existence was the lecture tour of Jack London, president of the ISS. Upton Sinclair had nominated Jack London for the presidency of the ISS, for the most part, in anticipation of the publicity the well-known author might bring the flegling group. Sinclair sought to take advantage of the growing fame of the charismatic writer by arranging for London to deliver a number of speeches in the East. London spoke to large audiences throughout his tour. A full house at the Harvard Union gave London a standing ovation, and an impressive crowd of close to four thousand--albeit students composed a small minority of this number--gathered to hear London's speech in New York's Grand Central Palace. One week after the latter event, London headed
north to New Haven, Connecticut, to speak at Yale University.4

The speech was set for January 26, 1906. Posters portraying London in a bright red sweater in front of an inferno of flames--creating a turbulent, revolutionary image--were used to publicize the event. The provocative posters, along with the title of the talk, "Revolution," and London's reputation as an outspoken socialist, led some conservative members of the faculty and administration to launch an attempt to prevent the speech. The attempt was foiled by some of the younger, more open-minded professors: most notably Charles Foster Kent and William Lyon Phelps. Phelps argued in favor of the lecture by posing the rhetorical question, "is Yale a monastery?" He punctuated his argument by pointing out that London was "one of the most distinguished men in the world."5

London delivered his speech in Yale's historic Woolsey Hall. In the audience, which totaled close to 2800, were Yale students and faculty members, as well as many residents of New Haven. Before talking energetically about "the uprising of the working class," and before proclaiming that "the Revolution is here, stop it who can!" London explained why he was speaking at Yale. London's undergraduate experiences at the University of California at Berkeley, experiences totaling one semester, had left him feeling that American universities were not alive. College students, for the most part, ignored the evils of society and were too often found "sitting quietly in their cool libraries turning the pages of lifeless books." London objected to the university ideal of "the passionless pursuit of passionless
intelligence." He also was disturbed by students who manifested that ideal by displaying "conservatism and unconcern toward those who are suffering, who are in want." London had been inspired to attempt the arousal of student interest in the study of socialism. His goal was not necessarily to convert students to socialism, but rather to combat the ignorance and apathy that surrounded the ideology on campus: "If collegians do not fight for us, we want them to fight against us... Raise your voices one way or the other; be alive!" 6

London proceeded to talk in vivid colors about the injustices and suffering caused by the capitalistic economic order. Although at least part of the crowd was impressed by London's "passionate sincerity" and "football physique," the overall response of the audience is somewhat unclear. By one account, the students were quite disruptive, laughing and booing as London spoke. A different observer remembered the students awarding London a standing ovation, followed by a triumphant ride off of the stage on their shoulders. Perhaps more reliable are the words of Alexander Irving, who had made most of the arrangements for London's visit. Irving reported that "there was some applause at the beginning and some at the close, but at neither end was it intense or prolonged." 7

Jack London's indictment of American universities as sterile, lifeless places was, in essence, identical to Upton Sinclair's. This indicates that the state of higher education in America was such that certain types of people were likely to find university training to be unfulfilling. The characteristics that contributed to Upton Sinclair's malaise are discussed above.
Jack London shared some of the same characteristics. Like Sinclair, London was an "omnivorous reader" as a youth. This habit stimulated in both men an interest in the world of ideas. Sinclair described himself as prematurely serious; similarly, London proclaimed that he "never had a childhood." Sinclair emphasized the spiritual, ethical ideals of socialism; London was described as possessing a socialism of sentimental or romantic nature. Both men were literary, and viewed the world, at least to a certain extent, artistically.⁸

One of the "few Yale undergraduates sympathetic to London and socialism" who attended London's speech shared some of these traits. This was Sinclair Lewis, a gangling redheaded undergraduate who, it is suspected, had helped to organize London's visit. When some students in the audience began hooting and being disruptive during the talk, Lewis became outraged. This response is consistent with the description of Lewis as serious and "generally contemptuous of his fellow students." Upton Sinclair had similarly found immaturity on the part of classmates to be intolerable. Sinclair Lewis, furthermore, had a literary, artistic mind which proved receptive to London's imagery. When Lewis met Jack London on the morning following London's talk in Woolsey Hall, the two began a relationship that was to last for years.⁹

Despite the earnest efforts of ISS leaders, the first years following the founding of the group saw little growth. Morris Hillquit, a prominent socialist who played an active role in the
ISS during the group's first decade, described the early years: "During the first two or three years of its existence the ISS remained an idea and symbol rather than an active factor." That the ISS experienced difficulties is hardly surprising. There were many aspects of college students and socialism which made the combination of the two seem unlikely. The fact that the society lasted through the lean years following its birth can be attributed to the optimism and persistence of its leaders rather than to the promise of its prospects.

One potential obstacle in the path of the ISS was the apparent logical incompatibility of its two major components—college students and socialism. Upton Sinclair, who engaged in a good deal of organizing on behalf of the young ISS, recalled a conversation he once had with a college secretary from whom Sinclair sought to obtain a list of student names. Sinclair attempted to explain the "strange name" of his organization. The response of the baffled secretary highlights the alleged internal inconsistency of the ISS: "Intercollegiate Socialist Society, you say? The Catholic Anarchist League, The Royal Communist Club!"

It is impossible to identify precisely what was meant by "socialism." The word was defined quite differently by different people during the years in question. However, there was a basic agreement that socialism was a movement of the working class which was based, directly or indirectly, on the work of the nineteenth-century German theorist Karl Marx. In general, socialists believed that the organization of society was determined economically. They held that modern society, which was
organized capitalistically, was divided into two classes: the capitalist class, which owned the means of production, and the working class. It was believed that economic forces were at work that, in time, would expose the inherent contradictions of capitalism. By way of revolution or evolution, socialists looked forward to the emancipation of the proletariat and to a more rational organization of society.

Whereas socialist theory was concerned with "the masses," a college education was a privilege enjoyed only by an elite portion of society. In 1900 a select four percent of the college-aged population attended college. The overwhelming majority of this group was of middle-class or upper-class origin. Furthermore, although the collegiate population had diversified since the mid-nineteenth century, it still was noteworthy for its homogeneity: the typical college yearbook contained "a parade of Anglo-Saxon names and pale, freshly scrubbed faces."

Often, a person's attraction to and adoption of an ideology can be explained and understood readily by way of the common-sense concept of "interest." A farmer who supports a platform that includes farm subsidies poses no great mystery. A domestic manufacturer whose market share is threatened by competition from imports who presses for a protective tariff is an immediately intelligible political actor. Given the face value of socialist theory, and the socioeconomic composition of the American collegiate population of the early twentieth century, the concept of "interest" as employed in the preceding examples would make student socialists seem an unlikely breed. Had the ISS prospered
primarily in vocational or trade schools, or among working class students, the apparent paradox would not have been as pronounced. However, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, the greatest ISS strength was to be found among middle-class students at prestigious and relatively homogeneous liberal arts schools.

The fact that socialism was theoretically not in the class interests of students was one factor that seemed to be in the way of ISS prosperity. The disposition of students and the mood on college campuses were others. The American university had undergone considerable transformation since the Civil War. The most dramatic changes occurred during the decade of the 1890s. There were three main causes of the transformation: a troubled state of affairs in existing colleges; the influx of advanced academic theories from European—especially German—universities; and the availability of surplus capital, both public and private, capable of funding the growth of higher education. As a result of these factors, by the turn of the century, universities had increased in size, number, and prestige.

The-turn-of-the-century university was composed of three internal parts: the administration, the faculty, and the student body. Great structural and ideological gulfs separated each from the other two. The administration had recently emerged as a powerful unit on campus. The need to organize increasingly large and complex institutions, along with technological advances such as the typewriter, had resulted in a dramatic increase in the importance and power of college administrators. This group was concerned with maximizing the reputations of their particular institutions so as to attract students and financial support.
Whereas administrators were interested in impressing and appeasing the "real world" outside of the schools, some professors, in choosing their profession, were opting to remove themselves from the materialism of the American mainstream. Faculty members were interested primarily in adhering to three academic ideals which had been imported from Europe: pursuing absolute reality through pure research; combating the boorishness of materialism with the liberal humanities; and using the university as a progenitor of civic virtue. Administrators, who mediated among fragmented parts of the university and attempted to attract financial support from the American mainstream, often appeared to make compromising decisions concerning issues on which faculty idealists, who considered absolute principles to be at stake, saw no potential for compromise. The issue of academic freedom resulted from the tension existing between administrators and faculty members.13

The third component of the American university was the student body. If a rift existed between administration and faculty, an "awful chasm" separated teachers from students.14 Many editorials in college publications were devoted to the problem of teacher-student alienation. In 1908, Charles Van Hise, the president of the University of Wisconsin, spoke of the "more or less antagonism between a considerable portion of the students and the faculty," and urged the cooperation of both sides in an attempt to achieve "closer relations."15 The *Yale Alumni Weekly* contained a reference to the "universal undergraduate desire to shun the professor in all walks of
University life outside the classroom.\textsuperscript{16} Even at Oberlin College, a small school that did not share the devotion to research displayed by the large universities, the problem existed. An article in the Forum section of the \textit{Oberlin Review} described the situation between the faculty and student body as a "great chasm of disinterestedness [sic]."\textsuperscript{17} Introduction of the "advisor system" was one attempt at encouraging better faculty-student relations.

The great distance between students and faculty can be explained, at least in part, by the different ways in which each group viewed the university experience. To many professors, the university meant the pursuit of ultimate truth and reality through research and learning. Students, on the whole, were unable to comprehend the commitment to the abstract which the faculty displayed. Most students were quite committed to academic passivity. Intellectual curiosity and academic achievement were discouraged by peer pressure. Students who showed interest either by asking questions or by answering them were reportedly laughed at by their classmates. George P. Baker, a Harvard professor, was aware of such a situation at his institution. In his article "Mind of the Undergraduate," he discussed the many academically passive students he had taught in courses:

\begin{quote}
It seems to me that the student of this sort approaches more nearly to the delicious state of Nirvana than anybody outside of the East, perhaps than anybody in the East: his mind is not somewhere else, but simply nowhere; it is taking an absolute rest.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

To combat the lack of student interest, American colleges adopted
the practice of frequent examinations in order to motivate students to stay abreast of the course material. This practice differed from the European convention of infrequent examinations.

After Upton Sinclair had achieved fame as writer, his collegiate writing instructor asked him to suggest ways in which teachers might improve writing courses. Sinclair, who had found this particular instructor's classes to be quite dull, suggested that writing themes, instead of being prescribed by the professor, should be selected by the students themselves. The instructor retorted that, unfortunately, student initiation of subject matter would not work: all of the essays so conceived would concern either football or fraternities. The instructor's quip indicates the extent to which students channeled energy not used for academics into extracurricular interests. An editorial in The Independent lamented this condition, pointing out that "the student prominent in University life is not often the one doing good classwork from day to day, but is a member of one of the many athletic teams or is prominent in fraternity circles for some reason entirely apart from good scholarship." Football, class pride, fraternities, and school spirit were characteristic of the generation of college students between the turn of the century and America's entry into the First World War.

The extent to which attention was given to collegiate athletics during these years is difficult to convey. School publications of all sorts gave athletic teams prominent, and at times even dominant, billing. Sports stars and successful coaches were awarded hero's status. Faculty members were dismayed when they realized that their school's reputations
usually depended more upon the fate of the varsity on the field than upon the quality of their own work. Collegiate athletics began rising in popularity in the 1880s. By the turn of the century, contributions from enthusiastic alumni had funded large stadia, athletic scholarships, and salaried coaches. Students who were bored or repelled by the alien abstractions of the classroom could find excitement and meaning in the unmistakably material, physical, comprehensible game of football. The game’s physical nature was demonstrated emphatically during the 1905 season, when players wore no protective gear. During this season, eighteen college men were killed playing intercollegiate football.

Group spirit and social conformity were endemic to campuses. During the 1890s, a University of Wisconsin student was shot in the foot by some of his classmates. The unfortunate victim had unwisely chosen not to support his school’s football team. This type of group-oriented atmosphere was favorable to the prosperity of fraternities. In addition to providing entertainment and camaraderie, frats “formed a defensive rampart behind which the seeker of good fun might ignore the official values of the institution.”

Rivalries between classes also were a part of the giddy college scene. Each year on “Bloody Monday” evening, the sophomores at Harvard attempted to “instill into the Freshmen the proper deferential attitude towards the upperclassmen.” In front of the entire campus, the freshmen were humiliated by events such as the “Freshman Pajama Parade,” which walked the
streets "at the pleasure of the hilarious Sophomores." Bloody Monday of 1913, which included a pajama parade, was noteworthy in that "nothing violent occurred."20

Molds for student behavior were very influential on campuses during the early twentieth century. Arthur T. Hadley, President of Yale, commented on this point:

Fundamentally the character of the Yale student body does not vary very greatly from year to year. It is the great and distinctive advantage of the old institution that it has its traditions as to student life.21

Students entering college during the years under review were confronted with a powerful and well-established social system. One observer described the situation by noting the existence of:

"forces in every side of the student's college career to which irresistibly, subtly, he would have to conform." These forces: "threatened to level all the originality and imagination he had brought with him."22 Although this analysis seems a bit exaggerated, the message is clear. Students seeking to act in new ways, as ISS membership required, would have to forge through thick walls of conformity to establish new modes of behavior.

Thus, the social mood on campus, like the intellectual mood discussed previously, did not appear to be favorable to the formation of socialism study groups. The political mood did not upset this trend. In the words of Laurence Veysey, a student of American university history: "As the Progressive Era dawned, the eclipse [among students] of political concerns by personal ones may even have become more pronounced...The mention of a variety of 'isms' still brought bored looks to students' faces." The majority of students accepted passively an affiliation with "the
political party that would mesh with ambitions for a business or professional career." Conventional national patriotism was "all but universal."23 John Macy, a graduate of Harvard who became a socialist, might have overstated the point, but his quote is nonetheless indicative of the general political climate among students: "Nothing," Macy wrote, "could be more solidly conservative than American undergraduate youth."24

Related to the conservatism of students is the argument that the university itself was a conservatizing, socializing force. Schools were dependent upon the approval of capitalist benefactors for financial reasons. Constantly in need of money, educational institutions almost always accepted donations, even when they came with academic strings attached. Evans Clark of Princeton University conducted a study of the financial interests of the largest American universities, and concluded that the education of college students was in the control of the business class, which had "enormous economic and business stakes in what kind of education it shall be."25

In addition to their role as donors, businessmen and other nonacademics had largely replaced educators and members of the clergy on boards of trustees. The contemporary historians Charles and Mary Beard reported that at the turn of the century, "the roster of American trustees of higher learning read like a corporation dictionary." An informal nationwide poll conducted during these years supported this view, and found further that the majority of trustees held conservative political views, and "expected professors to reflect a similar outlook."26
In addition to these external influences, the internal structures of universities contributed to the "businesslike tone" on campuses. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, larger and more complex schools had created the need for efficient administrations. Administrators had to control large budgets, vast student bodies, and increasingly disjunct and specialized faculties. Administrators adopted many of the practices and structures developed by big businesses to handle their own organizational needs. The university echoed the business practice of dividing into multiple architectonic levels. At the top were the trustees. Next came the president and the rest of the administration, including various deans. The faculty itself had its own newly-formed hierarchy which included department chairs, professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and, in some schools, "adjunct professors." The influence of the business culture on universities led to more subtle changes as well. For instance, faculty "studies," in order to demonstrate the increased bureaucratic responsibilities of professors, were renamed "offices."27

The result of these developments was that, again in the words of Laurence Veysey: "The American University had become largely an agency for social control," whose primary responsibility was the "custodianship of popular values." Many students were sent to college in order to maintain, or acquire, their pieces of the establishment pie. The university did not foster the desire to "break free from existing forms, whether literary or economic."28

One component of the university which worked to stem the
tide of business influence was the faculty. Many faculty members had been attracted to teaching as a way of escaping the business grind of the "real world." Although the periodic wrath of indignant benefactors could cause an administrator to intrude upon the private world of a professor, the walls of the "ivory tower" were generally comfortable. The different goals and viewpoints of administration, faculty, and students provided universities with a dynamic tension.

The social and political climate among students made colleges seem to be barren soil for ISS seeds. Letters sent to the ISS by college professors support this view. As noted previously, G. R. Carpenter of Columbia University had opined that the time was not "propitious" for starting a socialist study movement among students. Vida Scudder, a professor of English at Wellesley College, was more direct in her pessimism: "I regret to say that interest in social matters is at a low ebb among our students and the situation is discouraging." Professor Scudder continued, "I think there is very little chance that a Socialist Study group could be formed among them...."29

Student apathy extended across the entire political spectrum. However, the side of the spectrum containing socialism often inspired student paranoia as well. In 1905, Vida Scudder of Wellesley cautioned the ISS about the potential dangers of including the word "socialist" in its name: "I should hardly think it expedient to use a title which would be misunderstood and would repel many of the [students]."30

Harry W. Laidler, the sole student member of the original
executive committee, encountered the fear of socialism predicted by Scudder when he returned from the ISS organizing meeting to his junior year at Wesleyan University and attempted to form an ISS chapter. Due in part to Laidler's assessment that it was "exceedingly difficult to persuade students to associate with any organization identified with socialism," the group was named the "Social Study Club."31

While Laidler remained at Wesleyan he was able to assure the continued existence of the Social Study Club. He was the president, and many of the other responsible positions were held by his friends. For instance, the club's secretary, the literary George H. Hamilton, was Laidler's roommate. With a strong power nucleus, the Wesleyan chapter was able to survive from January of 1906 through the spring of Laidler's senior year, 1907. The pending graduation of Laidler and his colleagues was, however, cause for concern. Laidler considered the possibility of the Social Study Club merging with the Intercollegiate Civic League, a nonpartisan club organized to promote good government and inspire student interest in the duties of citizenship. In a letter to the ISS explaining his strategy, Laidler wrote that the Intercollegiate Civic League was not tainted with socialism, and thus "cooperation with it might be advantageous." Laidler's fear was that the ISS affiliate, the Social Study Club, left to fend for itself, would not be able to attract enough student interest to prevent disintegration once he and his classmates graduated. "I hope that I am wrong," he wrote, "but knowing something of the college student... I cannot think otherwise."
After the correspondence between Laidler and the ISS, the decision was made not to merge with the other student group. Laidler's premonitions about the fate of the emasculated Social Study Club proved to be on target. The Wesleyan chapter of the ISS ceased to function after the class of 1907 graduated. It was not until 1911 that the ISS again had a chapter at Wesleyan. A major impetus for regenerating the club came from none other than Harry Laidler, who, after graduating from Wesleyan, had become the national organizing secretary of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society.32

The Wesleyan Social Study Club was the nation's second ISS chapter. The first chapter was formed late in 1905 at Columbia University by William Feigenbaum. Feigenbaum was the student whose remark at the ISS organizing meeting concerning the need for undergraduate representation had led to the election to the executive committee of Harry Laidler. Like Laidler, Feigenbaum returned to his campus from Peck's Restaurant excited about the possibility of forming an ISS chapter. His efforts resulted in a group of five students which, after a few months of meager activity, withered. Unsuccessful attempts to rekindle the Columbia ISS chapter occurred in 1906 and 1908, but not until 1909 was the group established successfully. Fear of socialism among students was one of the problems contributing to the Columbia group's lack of vitality. In 1906, the Columbia Socialist Club demonstrated its awareness of this problem when it contemplated changing its name to the innocuous title of the "Political Science Club."33

Students were hardly the only group to reveal discomfort
concerning socialism. College administrators, who were consistently courting donors, often objected to the formation and actions of ISS chapters. In some instances, their objections led to official actions intended to impede ISS progress. In 1907, John Spargo, a well-known socialist and a future ISS executive committee member, was scheduled to speak at the University of Pennsylvania under the auspices of the school's Socialist Study Chapter. The university administration intervened and refused the group's request for permission to use the university hall where the speech was to be delivered. The following year, a scheduled appearance of the Christian socialist Alexander Irvine --the man who had arranged for Jack London to speak at Yale--was also prevented. The ISS noted the hypocrisy demonstrated by the "maladroitness of terrified bigotry...in the school that boasts the fearless Benjamin Franklin as its founder."34

Many factors contributed to the initial difficulties experienced by the ISS. Students, for the most part, displayed an antiintellectualism which discouraged academic curiosity and commitment. Politically, most students either were thoroughly ignorant of current issues, or reflexively accepted the political values of society at large. Students were committed to established social roles that were not conducive to the type of behavior required by ISS membership. Furthermore, in many ways the universities themselves were socializing forces which imbued students with mainstream and business values. Finally, to the ears of many students, professors, and administrators, the word
"socialism" was, in the words of Professor Vida Scudder, "simply a bogey." 35

For the first few years of its existence, the ISS struggled to surmount these obstacles. The ISS concentrated its efforts on mailing literature to interested students, and arranging for lecturers, who delivered their services free of charge, to speak on campuses. The small scale of ISS operations, and the emphasis placed on literature, is demonstrated by the ISS budget. During the first two years of its existence the ISS spent a grand total barely in excess of seven hundred dollars. Slightly more than two hundred of these were used to pay for clerical services, and the remaining majority of the total was used to pay for publications. Even by the modest standards of the ISS, spending during the first years was light; almost to the point of being trivial. After a decade of growth, ISS spending over a comparable time period was to be more than twenty times its first years' expenditures. 36

The early leaders of the ISS realized that their course of action needed modification. Distribution of literature alone had not succeeded in building successful ISS chapters. By the beginning of 1908, two and one half years after its founding, the ISS had made very little headway. The group identified one major factor standing in the way of ISS progress, and took steps to correct the problem. Students who were receptive to the ideas of the ISS often did not know how to go about organizing or maintaining a socialist study chapter. They needed guidance if they were to succeed. The problems of the ISS might be solved if the group could provide students with a constant supply of
In the infancy of the ISS, Upton Sinclair had taken primary responsibility for the direction of the group. However, he was not able to maintain his high level of commitment to the ISS after the 1906 publication of *The Jungle*. A tide of celebrity resulted from the book's popularity which carried Sinclair all the way to the White House for a personal interview with the conspicuously indignant Teddy Roosevelt. As a result of Sinclair's busy schedule, which included an ill-fated attempt to form a utopian community, he had little time to devote to the ISS. He was aware of the needs of his brainchild, however, and had for some time been in search of an organizer. Sinclair conceived of a full-time, salaried position to be filled by a "wide awake man." This man would perform the organizational duties that, according to Sinclair, were "not being attended to properly, for there is no one who has the time." In early 1908 the ISS hired an enthusiastic young man named Frederick Merrick to fill to position of full-time organizer temporarily. From this point forward, ISS prospects began to improve.37

The inability of students to organize and sustain chapters in a large number of colleges without the assistance of an ISS organizer can be attributed to many factors. Each of the points outlined above concerning students, socialism, and colleges contributed to the phenomenon. Also, the new group needed money to become recognized and established, just as it needed recognition and establishment in order to acquire significant amounts of money. In other words, it needed time in which to
develop boot straps by which to pick itself up. However, that
the vitalization of the ISS coincided so directly with the
appointment of a field organizer indicates that, aside from all
of the other obstacles, students needed help organizing.

Students lacked organizational experience. The field
organizer served as a point of contact between the campuses and
the national office, located in New York. The organizer was able
to help chapters initiate and maintain organizational strength.
Chapters requested of the organizer advice concerning specifics,
such as what name to choose, as well as generalities, such as
what aim to adopt.

Besides lacking technical organizational skills, students
attempting to form ISS chapter faced intangible barriers. The
role of radical social critic was one which had no precedent
among American undergraduates. Many students in the past, it is
ture, had displayed rebelliousness. Student protests and riots
concerning internal institutional issues—bad food, inadequate
housing, uncomfortable social restrictions, distasteful exam
policies—had been a part of the American collegiate scene since
the eighteenth century. However, membership in the ISS required
a different sort of rebellious initiative. ISS membership
encouraged students to play the role of the intellectually-
unsatisfied, socially-conscious, politically-aware, visionary
social critic. There was no such paradigm in existence to
instruct students as to how to act in such a role. The mold of
this character type had to be constructed.

It took varying amounts of time for the new social roles to
become established. On some campuses they never caught on. In
other schools, ISS chapters grew to such an extent that they themselves became powerful, even slightly oppressive, social forces on campus. Overall, it is fair to say that the ISS institutionalized the left-wing, socially-conscious, politically-aware, critical student, and the national ideologically-based group composed thereof. In many ways this is the achievement of the ISS that was to have the greatest long-term significance.

Prior to the 1908 hiring of a full-time organizer, the prospects of the group had been dim. Only a few chapters existed. These sputtered along, at times disappearing for long periods. The ISS indeed was an "idea and a symbol" rather than an "active factor." The "idea" of the ISS existed primarily in the minds of nonstudents. Only a negligible proportion of the operating budget was supplied by the membership. The rest was donated by contributors who believed that the cause of the ISS was worthwhile. The group's labor, with the exception of clerical services, was performed free of charge. The survival of the ISS was due to the conviction behind the "idea," much more than it was to the immediate popular reception awarded thereto.

There was no popular mandate for a socialist study organization emanating from college campuses. In many ways the top-down--almost "spoon-fed"--nature of the ISS would continue throughout its existence. Student membership fees, for instance, would never amount to more than a slight fraction of the total revenue collected by the ISS. However, after the initial barren years, a growth in the number and strength of ISS chapters occurred which was to be complemented by an increasingly active
student role in ISS affairs.
Having survived a slow start, the ISS did grow to be an active factor in American colleges and universities. During its sixteen-year existence, the ISS had chapters, at one time or another, on more than one-hundred campuses nationwide. In addition, seventeen "alumni chapters," composed of college graduates, were formed in as many American cities. ISS lecturers were heard by hundreds of thousands of people. The society published and distributed pamphlets, periodicals, essays, and books. Overall, the ISS became an influential group which played an undeniably significant role in sculpting the intellectual landscape of early twentieth-century America.

To most ISS leaders, the society was but one of many concerns. The ISS was low on their lists of priorities. The bulk of the responsibility for maintaining the integrity and vitality of the society, therefore, fell to a core group of steady supporters. A few of these, such as Upton Sinclair, Morris Hillquit, Jessie Wallace Hughan, Harry Laidler, Earnest Poole, and J. G. Phelps Stokes, remained with the group for a decade or more. The richness and extent of the ISS program is a tribute to their dedication and vision.

The majority of the executive committee, however, was transient. Jack London, the society’s well-known first
president, epitomized the figure of the uncommitted executive committee member. Following his sensational lecture tour during the fall of 1905 and winter of 1906, London returned home to Glen Ellen, California. Although there may have been some truth to Harry Laidler's statement that "the name of Jack London, as president, was, to many, a magical one," London had no further tangible effect on the course of the organization. Minutes from executive committee meetings during his presidency document his absence. The meetings, which were held on the East Coast, were presided over by J. G. Phelps Stokes, the group's second vice president.

Just as London's body was not with the ISS, neither was his mind. Soon after he returned to California, London began preparing for a proposed seven-year sea voyage around the globe. His thoughts were occupied not with how best to organize college students, but with how best to organize construction of the Snark, his homemade ship. On April 23, 1907, London, his small crew—which included his wife—and the Snark departed from San Francisco Bay. Any thoughts London might have had concerning the young collegiate society he was abandoning were submerged beneath the romantic zeal—and the very unromantic conditions—of his adventure. One month after the Snark set sail, by which time London had reached Hawaii, the ISS executive committee met and decided that the society deserved a president who would be in the country for the next seven years. On June 4, 1907, the committee sent a letter to ISS members announcing Jack London's de facto resignation from the ISS. The committee explained that
with "Jack London having sailed for a seven year's absence from the country, it was decided to elect Mr. [J. G. Phelps] Stokes in his place." London, ill and exhausted—a tropical disease had caused his hands to swell to twice their normal size—was forced to return from his trying odyssey in 1909. There is no indication that he ever gave the ISS another thought.

By choosing Stokes president, the executive committee endowed the ISS with a rich source of support. In addition to competent and consistent leadership, the wealthy Stokes provided the society with valuable financial backing. He retained the presidency until 1918.

The other major leadership position filled during the group's early years was that of organizing secretary. The success or failure of the group hinged largely upon the quality of service provided by this most important of officers. Frederick Merrick was assigned temporarily to the task in January of 1908. That same autumn, George R. Kirkpatrick, a former college political science teacher, assumed the position of organizer. After two years, the overextended Kirkpatrick resigned. The executive committee approached Harry W. Laidler, executive committee member and former president of the Wesleyan Social Study Club, to offer him the position of organizer. His "profound belief in the importance of the educational work of the society," much more than the modest annual salary of $866.84, prompted Laidler to accept the offer. Laidler's subsequent devotion to the promotion of the study of socialism is beyond question: he would serve the ISS and its successor, the League for Industrial Democracy, in an executive capacity for the next
forty-seven years.4

The ISS realized substantial returns on its investment in Harry Laidler. The energetic organizer administered the society’s affairs from the ISS national office in New York, serving as the primary link between the central office and local chapters; he orchestrated the organization of undergraduate chapters and alumni chapters; he lectured, and arranged for others to lecture, on college campuses; he organized the publication and distribution of a vast amount of literature, much of which he wrote himself; and he performed the countless miscellaneous tasks generated spontaneously by organizations such as the ISS.5

The year in which Laidler became organizing secretary, 1910, was a watershed year in the life of the ISS. In the same year, the group established itself as an autonomous organization by moving into an office of its own. In 1905 the ISS had begun its operations in Princeton, New Jersey, with Upton Sinclair’s cottage serving as the group’s headquarters. Due to the great popularity awarded Sinclair in the wake of the 1906 publication of The Jungle, Sinclair’s energies were distracted, and the ISS had to move out. The society, in response to an offer to share some office space, moved to New York City. The offer had come from the recently formed Rand School of Social Science, which had been organized to foster the study of labor, socialism, and other such topics. The Rand School charged the ISS a token rent of two dollars per week. Given the precarious financial situation of the ISS, the generosity of the Rand School was as fortuitous as
By 1910, however, the ISS was ready to end what Laidler later termed the "years of parasitism," and move out of the Rand School. An increase in funds available to the ISS, and an increase in the functions provided by the group were two factors contributing to the decision to move. During its first year, the ISS had had about three hundred dollars with which to cover all of its expenses. By 1910, revenues had increased to the point that expenditures could exceed two thousand dollars. Thus, the group could afford to move out. The functions of the national office had increased proportionally. By 1910 the Rand School facilities were not large enough to accommodate the expanding group. In addition, the ISS was wary of becoming the pawn of any other institution; be it the Socialist Party, or the Rand School. The need to establish ISS autonomy contributed to the decision to relocate. In late 1910, the ISS left the Rand School on East 19th Street and moved across Manhattan to an office in the Tilden Building on West 40th Street.

It is difficult to chart precisely the growth of the ISS. The records of the early years are very sparse. Harry Laidler, who became organizing secretary in 1910, was the first officer to keep relatively thorough accounts of ISS progress. In addition to the scarcity of records, some of the documentation that exists is internally inconsistent. For instance, four sources give as many different figures for the total number of ISS chapters during 1910. These totals are as low as eleven, and as high as seventeen.

The inconsistencies resulted largely because communication
with chapters on college campuses was slow and unreliable. The central office, when counting its chapters, could not be sure of the current status of each of its chapters. Laidler, upon assuming the position of organizer, attempted to combat this problem by improving communication with local chapters, clarifying records of chapter personnel, and, in general, making the group's organization "less nebulous." This was no easy task. The organizational progress of chapters was very difficult to gauge, for they were constantly forming and dissolving. For example, in 1912 an attempt was made to form an ISS chapter at Oberlin College. Although no lasting chapter materialized, Oberlin was listed as a college containing an ISS chapter in the ISS Annual Statement of 1912. It was not until May of 1913, in its "Summary of Activity," that the ISS reported that Oberlin had been crossed off its list.8

By any gauge, however, the overall upward trend of ISS development was clearly visible. During its first decade, the ISS blazed an unwavering path of expansion. The figures corresponding to the group's membership, budget, chapters, publications, and general level of activity during its first decade all cohere to a proudly ascending curve. When the first ISS organizer, Frederick Merrick, was hired in 1908, a total of seven chapters existed. By 1910, when Harry Laidler was hired, that number had doubled. After one year on the job, Laidler was able to increase the number of chapters to thirty-two. By 1913, there were ISS chapters on sixty-two campuses across the country.9
The rate of increase in the number of ISS affiliates was related closely to the amount of money available to the group. During the fiscal year 1905-06, the income of the ISS was under three hundred dollars. The need to pay a full-time organizer prompted a special drive for funds. The drive was a success. In 1910-11, Laidler’s first year, receipts increased to more than two thousand dollars. By 1912-13, the income of the ISS reached nearly six thousand dollars.10

The number and extent of services provided by the ISS grew at a rate proportional to both the health of the ISS treasury, and the size of the ISS roster. More money meant a greater ISS capacity to supply; more members created a greater demand for ISS goods and services. ISS “goods” consisted primarily of literature. ISS “services” included lectures, conferences, conventions, dinners, and meetings. In the course of its first ten years, the ISS increased its output in each of these areas.

The ISS began as a very top-heavy organization. In later years individual chapters gained a substantial amount of independence and strength. The nucleus of the ISS, however, never left the national office in New York City. From its headquarters the ISS leadership administered a national organization of substantial proportions.

The distribution of literature, the primary tactic employed during the group’s first years, always remained a high priority. The importance of the ISS as a clearinghouse for socialist literature is demonstrated by a 1910 letter to the ISS from E.H. Downey, a professor of economics at the University of Missouri. In preparation for a course, Downey placed an order for eighteen
copies of Value, Price, and Profit by Marx, and the same number of copies of the Socialist Party's national platform. In addition, the professor ordered two books for personal use: W.J. Ghent's Our Benevolent Feudalism, and Jack London's War of the Classes. (It is interesting that the latter two books were both written by ISS officers--London was president from 1905 until 1907; and Ghent was secretary from 1907 until 1910.)

In addition to advertising and selling books, the ISS published short essays to be sent to campus chapters. Such works included: "Socialism and the College Student," "Why Study Socialism," "The Educated Proletariat," and "Socialism and Present Day Politics." Works such as these were intended to stimulate student interest in—and increase student knowledge of—socialism. Other ISS literature was more blatantly functional. The society published and distributed leaflets instructing students on topics such as how to run a meeting, how to organize a chapter, and what books to include in study courses. Literature distribution constituted a major part of the ISS program; in 1912 the group distributed more than fifty thousand items of literature among college men and women.11

In 1913 the ISS began publishing its own periodical, called the Intercollegiate Socialist, which appeared bimonthly during the school year. The journal was of professional quality. At its height, the Intercollegiate Socialist was printed in two sections. The first section contained the following: a brief ISS progress report; summaries of ISS functions; articles by officers, professors, and students pertaining to socialist
theory, campus activities, organizing techniques, or other similar topics; five or six reviews of current books; letters to the editor; a brief summary of the progress of individual chapters across the country; and a list of books available for purchase through the mail from "The ISS Bookstore." The second section, or "special supplement," was devoted to an in-depth report on some aspect of public affairs. Topics included, "Municipal Ownership in the United States," "Who Gets America's Wealth," and "Income and Inheritance Taxes for the U.S." Together, the two sections ran forty or fifty pages. In the Intercollegiate Socialist, editor Harry Laidler and the rest of the staff provided chapter members with a rich source of theoretical and factual knowledge, as well as a lively national forum for discussion.

In addition to its efforts to spread the written word, the ISS was committed to spreading the spoken word. The central office enlisted the volunteer services of many lecturers and arranged for them to speak to college audiences. ISS speakers travelled to campuses where they addressed assemblies, discussion meetings, and chapels. In addition, they lectured in economics, history and sociology classes. Between 1910 and 1917, more than two hundred politicians, civic leaders, social reformers, members of the clergy, authors, and members of the executive committee spoke under ISS auspices. The ISS list included: Charles A. Beard, the highly acclaimed historian; Norman Angell, Nobel Peace Prize-winning author; Victor Berger, the first socialist congressman; Eugene V. Debs, five time socialist candidate for president; John Dewey, the pragmatist philosopher; W.E.B. Dubois,
black author, educator, and editor; Charles W. Eliot, the innovative president of Harvard University; Daniel Hoan, socialist mayor of Milwaukee; John Reed, war correspondent; Helen Keller, author and counselor to the American Foundation for the Blind; Graham Wallas, English Fabian theorist; Thorstein Veblen, economist and author; Upton Sinclair, author and founder of the ISS; and many other well-known figures.12

In addition to on-campus lectures, the ISS organized many off-campus activities. Each winter, beginning in 1910, the ISS held a convention. Chapter members acted as delegates. Students from schools without chapters were invited to serve as "fraternal delegates." In addition to fostering discussion of ISS policies, aims, and organizing strategies, the annual meetings provided a forum for speeches concerning socialist theory, collegiate issues such as academic freedom, and public issues regarding U.S. foreign and domestic policy.

The annual winter convention was balanced during the summer months by an annual conference. Each year the ISS chose a different topic—as well as a different picturesque location—for its one-week conference. Prominent thinkers and speakers were invited to address conference sessions throughout the week. When not contemplating matters of international significance, conference participants could rub elbows with intellectual notables during the daily recreation activity of tennis, canoeing, swimming, or walking; during one of the meals served in the "co-operative dining halls;" or during one of the "open discussion and group singing" sessions. The conferences were
attended by students as well as nonstudents. Theresa Wolfson, an undergraduate at Adelphi College, captured the thrill of the summer conference in a speech delivered to the following winter's convention: "No undergraduate who was present could help but feel the inspiration of the conference and the fact that the college youth of the country was in part responsible for carrying forth social ideals which would lead to the reconstruction of present-day society."13

Besides the annual summer and winter events, the ISS organized public functions such as dinner meetings and speeches. The most monumental ISS events took place in Carnegie Hall in New York City. In 1912, the ISS arranged a "Carnegie Hall Debate" on the topic, "Resolved: That Socialism is the only Solution of the Trust Problem." Morris Hillquit, socialist organizer and author, argued the affirmative, and Samuel Untermyer, counsel to a number of large corporations, upheld the negative. Another Carnegie Hall event introduced Victor Berger of Milwaukee, the first socialist congressman, to the people of New York. For Berger’s speech, an effort was made "to group together, as far as desirable, the students and alumni of the various colleges." During both of these events, Carnegie Hall, which seated three thousand, was "filled to overflowing."14

Literature, lectures, and public events were all important means employed by the ISS in its national program. The proposed end of the program was the proliferation of the various autonomous study chapters. Of these there were two sorts: graduate chapters, and college chapters. The former were
composed of college graduates, and were organized according to metropolitan districts rather than college campuses. That is, whereas a college chapter might exist, for instance, at Columbia University, a graduate chapter would service all of New York City. Thus, there were fewer graduate than undergraduate chapters, but graduate chapters usually contained more members. Graduate chapters enabled their members to continue the study of socialism in a friendly environment. It was assumed that members of alumni chapters were likely to be relatively committed to socialism. Because the same assumption was not be applied to undergraduate members, graduate chapters tended to be more action-oriented than their undergraduate counterparts. Between twelve and seventeen alumni chapters existed during most of the mature life of the ISS. Chapters were found in cities such as Seattle, St. Louis, Schenectady, Cleveland, and, of course, New York.

Of far greater significance than the graduate chapter was the college chapter. Supporters gauged their hopes, and antagonists their fears, to the success of the ISS on campus. The college chapter, after all, manifested the underlying purpose of the group: to promote an intelligent interest in socialism among college men and women. The top priority assigned to undergraduate chapters is revealed in the following quote from a 1913 Summary of Activity: "The organization of a number of graduate chapters is encouraging, as these chapters can be instrumental in keeping alive a number of undergraduate organizations in their vicinities."15

For a variety of reasons, ISS seeds were most likely to
prosper when sown in high quality schools, be they private liberal arts colleges, or prestigious public universities. First, the theoretical nature of the study of socialism as pursued by the group meshed smoothly with the type of thinking encouraged by the liberal arts curriculum. Students at technical and vocational schools were concerned primarily with learning a set of skills, rather than a set of ideas. In addition, these students did not have as much time to devote to forming study chapters as liberal arts students did. Also, technical schools usually lacked the "campus environment" that facilitated group formation at liberal arts schools. Technical and vocational schools, thus, proved to be less fertile soil. One notable exception was the theological seminary, at which ISS chapters prospered. This phenomenon, which will be discussed and analyzed later, indicates that the ISS program was appealing to the Christian mind. In general, however, it is sufficient to state that a high quality liberal arts environment was the one in which healthy ISS chapters were engendered most consistently.

A factor that often catalyzed the formation of strong study chapters was the existence of inspirational professors. An exciting teacher was able to imbue some of his or her students with a respect for ideas, a thirst for knowledge and justice, and a sense of urgency and potential. Instructors in the social sciences such as economics and sociology were the most likely to become mentors to ISS converts. The ISS, aware of the benefits of faculty allies, courted the support of professors. ISS brochures and leaflets often listed proudly the names of those
college professors who subscribed to the purpose of the society.

At times, the influence of professors on ISS chapters was very direct. When confronting the problem of chapters dying due to the high turnover rate of students, the ISS suggested that professors take responsibility for the continuity of chapters:

Each Chapter should, furthermore, aim to interest in its activities some influential professor of the college so that, if need be, this professor can take the initiative in reorganizing the group in the fall of the year.16

There were even cases in which the initial impetus to organize a campus chapter came not from undergraduates, but from professors who were inspired by the concept and the work of the ISS. Often such professors were awarded honorary ISS membership by campus chapters.

Although ISS chapters existed in most parts of the country, they were most prevalent in New England, the Middle Atlantic states, and the Midwest. The South was the most barren region for the ISS, while the far West, because of its great distance from the center of ISS activity, proved to be very cumbersome organizing territory--it was not until 1915 that an ISS organizer traveled to the West Coast.17

There was no uniform structure for ISS undergraduate clubs. Most chapters were sustained by one to four officers who did most of the group's organizational work. Membership varied greatly from campus to campus, but usually totaled between ten and thirty students. Some chapters were much larger than average. In 1915 the club at Vassar, with the aid of a massive membership drive, collected ninety-four dues-paying members. Large chapters such as Vassar's were treasured by the ISS, not merely because of the
revenue to be gained—one dollar per member each year—but also because of the increased credibility to be derived from a large ISS membership total.

In the aftermath of the turmoil that existed on college campuses during the 1960s and early 1970s, it is a matter of reflex for the modern observer, upon hearing the label "college radical," to visualize images of turbulent counter-cultural activism. The ISS, though founded upon a radical political ideology, did not foster radical activism as that term has come to be known. In theory, the group was founded for the nonrevolutionary purpose of encouraging interest in the study of socialism. It is not insignificant that, in practice, the ISS worked to do just that. The group's motto, "Light, More Light," was respected. "Heat" was not a part of the ISS program.

In 1904, Frederick I. Bamford, a California socialist, had declined to sign Upton Sinclair's call to organize the ISS because some of the other signers were not committed socialists. Assuming that socialistic purity was his highest criterion, had Bamford been able to see into the future, he would not have changed his mind. As diluted as the signers of the original call were, the ISS undergraduate membership was even more so. Of the ninety-four members of the unusually large Vassar chapter, for example, only six had declared their belief in socialism. The majority of the ISS membership was composed of nonsocialists. Furthermore, a "handful" of the 1915 ISS members considered themselves, interestingly, to be "anti-socialists."18

The prominence of nonsocialists in the ISS was not out of
line with the wishes of the group's leaders. As far as the executive committee was concerned, exposing socialism to as many students as possible was the primary function of the undergraduate chapter. The tactics employed by the ISS were antithetical to those of the purist Bamford. The "Organizing Secretary's Report" of 1915, which was delivered to the seventh annual ISS convention, included a plea requesting that college chapters "eternally try to obtain among their members non-Socialists and anti-Socialists."19

The open spirit that characterized the ISS membership policy permeated all aspects of the group's undergraduate strategy. It has been mentioned that in 1912, the ISS sponsored a debate between the socialist Morris Hillquit and the nonsocialist Samuel Untermyer in Carnegie Hall. The nature of the event itself indicates that the goal of the ISS was not to disseminate propaganda, but, rather, to increase public awareness of current problems and proposed solutions. The ISS account of the debate confirmed that the debate had been intended to be instructive rather than propagandistic. After an even-handed summary, the ISS concluded that both Hillquit and Untermyer had "ably defended his position."20

The debate was an accurate manifestation of the spirit of the ISS. College chapters were encouraged to adopt a debate-like tone. Harry Laidler, organizing secretary, conveyed explicitly the vision of the undergraduate chapter maintained by the ISS. Laidler urged individual chapters to "assist [the organizer's efforts] by observing the spirit of the organization by making it primarily a study and discussion group and not a propagandist
The ISS conceived of a general outline for its chapters. For the most part, however, individual chapters operated with a great deal of autonomy. Campuses varied to such a degree that to develop a single model for the undergraduate chapter would have been detrimental to the success of all chapters. The ISS urged that "each group study the psychology of the college body and so adapt its activities so that it will be most effective in that particular environment."\(^{22}\)

The study meeting formed the foundation of the ISS undergraduate program. Most chapters met two times each month during the academic year. In general, meetings were attended by between five and twenty-five students. There was no standardized ISS format, but a typical meeting might include one or more of the following: 1) a discussion of current events in light of the socialist philosophy; 2) a review of a relevant book; 3) a systematic discussion of a chapter in a socialist text; 4) a discussion of the life of a noted socialist; 5) a debate concerning some phase of socialism; and, 6) a discussion of the pending business of the chapter itself. In accordance with its debate-like orientation, the ISS recommended that nonsocialists as well as socialists be encouraged to attend meetings, and that no one person or viewpoint be allowed to dominate the discussions.

Some chapters conducted very systematic studies of socialism. Such groups could take advantage of the various "Study Courses in Socialism" compiled by the ISS, which outlined
thorough courses in socialist theory and history. The recommended texts for the course could be ordered through the mail from the "ISS Bookstore." By providing guidance and literature, the ISS facilitated a situation wherein students were indeed teaching themselves what most colleges would not teach.

The main chapter function besides the study meeting was the campus lecture. The ISS provided chapters with an extensive list of speakers from which to choose. The central office orchestrated lecture tours that sent energetic speakers to many campuses in a particular area. In 1915, John Spargo undertook a tour of the Midwest that included appearances at twenty-five colleges. He spoke before assemblies and college chapels, and in economics and sociology classes. At Otterbein College in Ohio, the faculty passed a special resolution of appreciation--the first such resolution passed in fifteen years at Otterbein--commending Spargo for his "clear representation of socialism."23

The functional approach characteristic of the ISS program can be witnessed further in the group's position on lecturers. The aim of the ISS was to cast as much light as possible on socialism. The group was wary of scaring away timid students; excessively radical tactics, it was feared, might work against the chapters' membership interests. In terms of choosing campus speakers, the ISS counseled: "A Chapter must be careful...to secure speakers who will assist rather than antagonize." The society also encouraged chapters to secure lecturers representing nonsocialist and antisocialist viewpoints.24

The reserved, nonpropagandistic tone of the society's undergraduate policy might appear to be inconsistent with the
intensity of conviction exhibited by the dedicated and enthusiastic ISS leaders. Repeatedly the ISS stressed that it was in the business of teaching students about socialism, and not in the business of converting them to socialism. The proposed ISS goal was noble, but was it one to which serious socialists, such as most members of the executive committee were, could commit themselves? Almost all of the ISS leadership favored for society some form of radical reorganization. Why did it choose such innocuous means?

In answering these questions it must be noted that the ISS did not consider the limits of the undergraduate experience to be coterminous with the limits of ISS chapter influence. Students, while in college, would be exposed to the history and theory of socialism by the ISS. After graduating, ISS members who had embraced socialism would be likely to turn their beliefs into actions by joining, and participating in the activities of, ISS alumni chapters, and, possibly, the Socialist Party. Students who did not convert to socialism would nevertheless be aware of the ideology, and would therefore be less likely to become paranoid opponents. Because of their firm belief in socialism, however, the majority of the executive committee was confident that student exposure to socialism would, in most cases, lead to adoption of the ideology.

The ISS faith in the self-evidence of socialism explains why chapters were urged "to obtain as many members as possible and to see that every group in college is represented." Active, radical propagandist activity on the part of campus chapters, the ISS
feared, would alienate many students who otherwise might be willing to learn about, and possibly embrace, socialism. At root, the ISS envisioned that its chapters would be places in which students "of all political parties" could study socialism "systematically, cooperatively, and pleasantly."25

Besides helping to draw a substantial number of nonsocialist students into the ISS fold, the cool temper of the group also served to ease its path onto campuses in the first place. Nonpropagandistic as it was, the ISS still experienced a certain amount of opposition from college administrations. By adopting a purpose and an agenda that were purely educational, the ISS made itself rather difficult to oppose. A college administration that prevented a group of students from engaging in study would undoubtedly be open to charges of hypocrisy. In addition, college professors were more willing to pledge their support for an ISS devoted solely to the study of socialism than they would have been had the tone of the group been more propagandistic. The ISS understood the value of a clean image. In 1915, the "Organizing Secretary's Report" addressed this point: "The ISS has already an enviable reputation in hundreds of colleges of the country... With proper tact on the part of the membership, the possibilities for future growth are tremendous."26

Such was the ISS vision for its campus affiliates. Often, however, we find that offshoots do not manifest the wishes of their progenitors. An investigation of individual chapters will reveal the extent to which campus groups adhered to the ISS vision.
Two of the strongest and most thoroughly documented ISS chapters existed at the University of Wisconsin and Harvard University. Both of these institutions were on the cutting edge of higher education. Wisconsin, by all accounts, was the leader among midwestern state universities, while Harvard, under the enlightened direction of President Charles Eliot (whose grandson later became the secretary of the Harvard Socialist Club), had enhanced its reputation as a national educational leader. It is consistent with the analysis outlined above that ISS chapters would prosper in prestigious, high quality schools such as Wisconsin and Harvard.

The state university was a relatively recent phenomenon in the early twentieth century. Its rise began with the 1862 passage of the Morrill Act. This piece of legislation offered federal money to states that supported colleges providing agricultural and mechanical instruction. By the turn of the century, state schools, most notably those west of the Allegheny Mountains, had become prominent factors in American higher education: with Wisconsin leading the way.

The dome of the state capital building is visible from the edge of the University of Wisconsin's Madison campus. Around the turn of the century, when "Battlin' Bob" La Follette was the governor, the connection between the state institutions of education and government was more than a visual one. The services of academic experts were harnessed by the state. Many professors became government advisors. This interconnection
between the state university and the state government was known as the "Wisconsin Idea," and brought fame to La Follette's progressive administration, as well as to the University of Wisconsin. The public-minded atmosphere that accompanied the "Wisconsin Idea" created a campus environment conducive to the growth of socialist study chapters.

Although Upton Sinclair and the other founders of the ISS were not aware of it, the Wisconsin Socialist Club was already four years old by the time the ISS was founded. In 1901 a group of Wisconsin students had formed a club which met off campus in downtown Madison. The club was "open only to avowed socialists," and was dedicated exclusively to "the furthering of the socialistic propaganda." Its restrictive membership policy and propagandistic tone limited the club's membership to six students and one professor. The professor, Roswell Johnson, presided over the club. Soon after the group's 1901 founding, Johnson resigned from the faculty. It was suspected by many that his resignation was requested, at least in part, due to his activity in the club.27

The club's membership policy that excluded all but avowed socialists from the club differed with the open policy later adopted by the ISS. The disadvantages of a restrictive policy soon became apparent to the Wisconsin club. In 1904, the group's existence was threatened by the pending graduation of the entire membership. In order to attract new students, the club decided to accept as members all upperclass students who were interested in studying socialism, regardless of their convictions or
affiliations. The new policy attracted enough students to allow the group to continue operations. When, at the end of the next year, the entire club again faced graduation, the ranks of the membership were thrown open to the entire student body. The subsequent stability of the club indicates the prudence of the ISS-style open membership policy. Having adopted the policy, the Wisconsin club grew, achieving a steady membership of between twenty and thirty.

With the change in membership policy came a change in tone. A club such as the Wisconsin 1908 club, which contained only four socialists, could no longer be devoted to socialist propaganda. Instead, the group set for itself the goal of fostering the study and discussion of socialism and "kindred subjects." The heading "kindred subjects" covered many diffuse areas. In addition to the four proponents of socialism, the 1908 club contained some students who were "devoted to the single tax theory, others who preach nationalism for each race, and still others who possess peculiar and original ideas of what modern religion should be." One member quipped that instead of "Socialist Club," because of the sorts of students who filled its ranks, "the club might rather be called a crank club."

The Wisconsin Socialist Club had a very simple structure. The secretary was the only permanent officer. The club met every Sunday evening at eight o'clock in the Red Room of Association Hall on campus. Each week, a different club member was chosen to chair the meeting. The chairperson, for forty-five minutes, presented his or her point of view concerning socialism or a "kindred subject." Following the presentation, the group engaged
in open discussion—either about the presentation itself, or about a related book, paper, or theory. One member described the meetings as providing "a sort of mental gymnastics for the members."

The club was very careful to point out that it was concerned only with the study of socialism: "It is not the object of the club to do any proselyting [sic] for the socialist cause. The socialists of the organization have made no attempt to make converts." This 1908 passage by a member of the Wisconsin Socialist Club is reminiscent of the ethic promulgated repeatedly by the ISS.28

In addition to discussion meetings, the club arranged for speakers to lecture on campus. In 1908 Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist Party’s presidential candidate, spoke under the club’s auspices. On the afternoon of October 30, Debs’ famous "Red Special" pulled into the Madison train station. Debs, who was slightly hoarse because of his rigorous campaigning, spoke in front of a large audience in the school’s gymnasium. The charismatic socialist praised the existence of socialist study chapters: "I believe in all student socialist clubs. They reach a class of men who are out for the truth." Debs added, "I am glad to be here this afternoon. But more than that, I am pleased that you have such active socialist clubs. They shall have mine and every other socialists’s hearty encouragement." Debs’ enthusiastic statements about campus socialist clubs reveal more about his own political savvy than they do about the attitude of the party he led toward the ISS. The extensive records of the
Socialist Party of America contain no mention of the student society.29

In 1910 Madison hosted the famous anarchist Emma Goldman. The Wisconsin Socialist Club invited Goldman to attend a round table discussion so that they might hear her views on current problems and solutions. The local daily paper, the Verity, arraigned the club for its involvement with the anarchist. The group’s secretary, Carl Hookstadt, wrote a letter to the student paper, the Daily Cardinal, defending the position of the socialist club: "It should be understood that the Socialist Club is diametrically opposed to the views of Emma Goldman on anarchism." Regardless of their political ideologies, Hookstadt continued, members of the socialist club supported Goldman in her "courageous fight for free speech and her denunciation of all forms of tyranny and oppression."30

On the surface, Hookstadt’s letter was written in response to the Verity article. Underneath, however, it also might well have been a statement in favor of academic freedom. Emma Goldman’s visit to Madison had sparked a heated incident. Professor Edward A. Ross, who had made national headlines in the 1890s when he was forced to resign from Stanford University because of his controversial economic views, had announced to two of his classes that Goldman was scheduled to speak in a hall in Madison. When it became known that Ross had mentioned Goldman’s lecture to his classes, President Charles Van Hise, a former Wisconsin professor, wrote a letter to Ross condemning Ross’s actions. "It seems to me," the letter read, "that you should have appreciated that the announcement by you of Miss Goldman’s
lecture would be taken, by some people at least, to imply that you sympathize with her doctrines. I cannot but think that you made a serious mistake in judgement in making any allusion to Miss Goldman's lecture in your classes." Ross, whose experience at Stanford had taught him that his position on the faculty was far from secure, responded obsequiously that he agreed entirely with Van Hise's view of the matter, and added, "You can rest assured that that sort of mistake I shall not commit again."31

As absurd as this interchange seems, given that Ross had done nothing more than announce the time and place of Goldman's talk, the ordeal was far from over. A special committee of the Board of Visitors was appointed to investigate "The Goldman Incident." Its report, which was submitted to the Board of Regents, not only outlined the facts surrounding Ross's announcement of the Goldman lecture, but also contained an investigation of "teaching in the university along socialistic and anarchistic lines." Fortunately for the professors of the university, the investigation "disclosed nothing that would warrant the charge that anarchistic, socialistic, or other dangerous doctrines are being taught in the university."32

It is quite likely that President Van Hise, who was a former professor, feigning outrage, pursued the "Goldman Incident" as a token gesture to placate the paranoia of conservative trustees alumni, and benefactors. Nevertheless, professors were aware that their actions and views were subject to this sort of scrutiny. They could not afford to take their academic freedom for granted.
The article written by the Wisconsin Socialist Club in favor of free expression might well have been written in Professor Ross's defense as well as in its own. ISS chapters often sided with professors in the fight for academic freedom. The ISS understood that its own security was linked to the security of controversial professors. "Your first task," the ISS counseled its chapters, "is to resist all attempts to muzzle professors and to provide a forum in the college for all who have a real message to give."33

Another important ISS chapter was the one which thrived at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Harvard, the oldest institution of higher learning in America, had a tradition of student agitation dating to the eighteenth century. In the spring of 1766, an incident of student unrest erupted over a batch of spoiled butter served to students. The Harvard men rallied around their leader, Asa Dunbar, and were inspired by his passionate cry, "Behold, our butter stinketh!" Coincidentally, Dunbar, who has been called the first American student leader, was the grandfather of another Harvard trained agitator: Henry David Thoreau.34

The first contact between the ISS and Harvard occurred in 1905 when Upton Sinclair, in the course of his ISS organizing, sought to acquire a list of Harvard students' names. With a touch of good humor Sinclair recalled his initial encounter with Cambridge snobbery: "Never have I forgotten the tone of voice in which the secretary answered me when I asked if I could obtain a list of Harvard students in order to send them a circular about
the proposed Intercollegiate Socialist Society. 'Socialist!' he exclaimed incredulously; and I got the list elsewhere." Sinclair would not have been surprised to find that, "in the eyes of many, Harvard College stood as the conservative bulwark of the established industrial order." 35

Despite its snobbery and its financial ties to "the established industrial order," Harvard possessed a long tradition of liberal thought which included abolitionists, such as Thomas W. Higginson; transcendentalists, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau; and even revolutionaries, such as Samuel Adams. The tradition, of which Harvard was proud, would help to minimize administrative opposition to the Harvard Socialist Club.

In March of 1908, the Harvard Socialist Club was founded by a group of students which included Walter Lippmann. Lippmann, by devoting his considerable energy and intelligence to the group, became its leader and assured its prosperity. By 1910, the year of Lippmann's graduation, the Harvard Socialist Club was a thriving organization, boasting a membership of close to fifty.

The club held "regular meetings," which occurred in Lippmann's dormitory room in Weld Hall, as well as public lectures. During the 1908-09 school year, the club invited seven lecturers to speak on campus. Among these were muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens, who spoke on "Present Day Opportunities for Radicals;" ISS president J.G. Phelps Stokes, who spoke on socialism and the student; and Dr Stanton Coit, who, after being introduced by Professor William James, delivered a lecture entitled, "The Awakening of Democracy in England." Each of these lectures drew crowds of at least two hundred to
Harvard's Emerson Hall. In addition to organizing studies and lectures related to national and international matters, the Harvard club was concerned with campus issues. In the eyes of one Harvard student, the club contained "the men who write, and who do not write but enjoy seeing published, the articles in the [Harvard] Monthly against current evils" on campus. The club wrote articles attacking campus "evils" ranging from the poor working conditions suffered by Harvard employees to the "bad English, bad type, suppression of news, mercenary motives, and garbling of facts," displayed by the Harvard Crimson.

The Harvard Socialist Club also published its own materials addressing issues. In 1911 it printed and distributed a leaflet entitled "What Harvard Teaches," which condemned Harvard for firing twenty scrub women rather than complying with the State Minimum Wage Commission's mandate requesting the University to raise the workers' wages by two cents an hour. The Harvard club, in an act reminiscent of the Wisconsin club's defense of Professor Ross, turned its discussion of the scrub women toward a statement in favor of academic freedom. "If women are fired to save a few cents," the leaflet asked rhetorically, "what would happen to a Professor...who dared to advocate the social ownership of public utilities?"

The Harvard Socialist Club advocated academic freedom for reform-minded members of the Harvard faculty. The support displayed by the club was reciprocated by the professors. John Reed, a member of the club, recalled the interest in the club
displayed by many professors. "The Socialist Club," Reed wrote, "received the warm sympathy and support of the great William James, of Professor [C.F.] Adams, of Professor S.B. Johnson." James was listed consistently by the ISS as one of the professors who sympathized with the aims of the society.38

In accordance with ISS recommendations, membership in the Harvard club was open to nonsocialists as well as to socialists. According to the wishes of its leader, Walter Lippmann, the club was interested in influencing all types of students--be they reactionary, conservative, liberal, or radical. Lippmann explained the group's reasoning: "We preferred to have the whole mass move a little to having a few move altogether out of sight."39

The Harvard Socialist Club was quite active. The club arranged with the Union Library Committee to have about one hundred of the club's books on socialism placed in the Harvard Union on a special shelf. Its active commitment to the study of socialism was demonstrated further in 1910 when the club wrote a petition, which was signed by three hundred students, requesting that "a general course on Socialism be offered" by Harvard.40 During the 1911-12 academic year the administration complied with the club's request by including a course on socialism in the regular curriculum.

The ISS reported periodically that its chapters contained the intellectual cream of the campus crop. The case of the Harvard club seems to support this claim. In 1911, a Harvard student, Francis Thwing, who was not a club member, described the socialist club for the Harvard Graduates' Magazine: "Among the
Radicals are some of the most brilliant men in college; indeed, the Socialist Club cultivates brilliancy. The result was a powerful intellectual phalanx. The chapter was, as few groups at Harvard were, "united on a common intellectual ground." This unity, according to Thwing, gave the club strength: "The Radicals have learned with good reason to consider themselves the intellectual back-bone of the College." 41

The response of other students to the Harvard Socialist Club was mixed. Some students, especially those in the most elite social societies, were amused by what they perceived as the group's ranting and raving. Other students, however, were intimidated by the club. According to Francis Thwing, the group was able to make "the rest of the college--even that part which shows an interest in things of greater moment than baseball and billiards--feel the lowliness of its position and the comparative uselessness of its work." 42

The Wisconsin Socialist Club and the Harvard Socialist Club were two chapters on an ISS roster which included over one hundred. Other chapters undoubtedly were different: few were as strong. However, the characteristics displayed by the two chapters are instructive. The Wisconsin and Harvard ISS chapters: were open to socialists and nonsocialists; were nonpropagandistic in tone and technique; were committed primarily to studies and lectures pertaining to socialism and related topics; were supported, and at times motivated, by select professors; were attractive to bright students who possessed a dose of intellectual curiosity; and were concerned with campus
issues, such as academic freedom, as well as national and international issues.

Another characteristic of ISS chapters was an unusually great propensity to produce influential public figures. The Wisconsin and Harvard clubs followed this trend. Members of the Wisconsin Socialist Club included: William Leiserson, who became chairman of the National Mediation Board; David Hoan, a socialist, who became the mayor of Milwaukee; and Edwin E. Witte, the author of the Social Security Act. The ranks of the Harvard club were flush with future notables such as: R.W. Chubb, Special Counsel to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation; Gerald C. Henderson, General Counsel, War Finance Board; Nicholas Kelley, Vice President and General Counsel of Chrysler Corporation, and Assistant Secretary of the Treasury; John Reed, well known radical journalist; and Walter Lippmann, who was, according to his biographer Richard Steel, "without a doubt the nation's greatest journalist."43

In part, the proliferation of public notables emerging from the rosters of ISS chapters can be attributed to the quality of the colleges themselves. Any group of Wisconsin and Harvard graduates was bound to contain influential figures. However, a student who joined the ISS was likely to be bright, inquisitive, motivated, and concerned with public affairs. It is probable that such a student would have an interest in and an aptitude for influential posts. It is also reasonable to assume that membership in the ISS, in itself, stimulated in students an increased interest in matters of public weight. Thus, the ISS
played a part in molding, or at least in opening, the minds of a generation of future leaders.

By 1916, the ISS had come a long way. In the six years that Harry Laidler had served as organizing secretary, the number of college chapters had grown from fifteen to seventy-one. The ISS budget, during the same years, increased from twenty-three hundred dollars to more than ten thousand dollars. The ISS published a quarterly newspaper of very high quality; organized annual summer conferences and winter conventions, as well as periodic public meetings and dinners; and sent lecturers to campuses nation-wide.

On many campuses the ISS chapters became fixtures. Chapters influenced students who were members, students who were not members, and the intellectual climate of the campus as a whole. These influences would long outlive the ISS itself. In the late 1960s Seymour Martin Lipset commented on the long-term impact of the ISS. "Once socialism entered the university," Lipset wrote, "student protest enunciated a set of ideological themes and action concerns which have continued down to the present." 44

In 1905, the turf on which the ISS would attempt to sow its seeds, the college campus, appeared to be barren: students were wealthy Anglo Saxons who had little academic curiosity, and who were apt to conform to dominant social and political models; the university itself was intertwined intimately with business culture; and the calling card of the ISS, socialism, often inspired paranoia and opposition from various components within the university—including students. However, the ISS prospered
and became a prominent entity on college campuses across the country. The incongruity of these two observations cannot be ignored. Two questions arise from this incongruity: 1) Given the bleak campus outlook in 1905, how can the growth and strength of the ISS be explained? and, 2) What types of students were most active in the ISS, and what attracted and motivated them? The answers to these questions are basic to an understanding of the ISS.
Chapter 4

"Facilitating and Motivating Factors Contributing to ISS Growth"

In the year of its founding, 1905, the ISS appeared to face a dim future. Professors—even those who supported the aims of the group—advised the founders that the society’s time had not yet come. By 1916, after a decade of existence, the ISS had grown to considerable proportions. The great changes in the terrain of the ISS path, having been charted, must now be explained.

If a change such as the one under discussion is to occur, it must be both facilitated and motivated. Historical structures must be aligned favorably enough to allow the change to take place (facilitation), and historical figures must for some reason be disposed to take advantage of the situation (motivation). The success of the ISS not only implies the existence of an environment at least somewhat conducive to ISS growth, but also indicates the existence of a group of people who were motivated to cause that growth.

It has been established that changes, such as the one that transformed the fortunes of the ISS, are unlikely in the absence of facilitating historical structures. What does this mean? The term "historical structure" is a broad one. The tangible, the
intangible, the physical, the psychological, the manifest and the latent all contribute to historical environment. The particular components relevant to the possibility of change are different for each historical phenomenon. The nature of the event determines which historical structures affect its prospects. The ISS, which existed during the first decades of the twentieth century, was a group with a distinct organizational format dedicated to promoting an intelligent interest in the study of socialism among college men and women. Therefore, an exploration of the historical environment of the ISS might include an examination of the early 1900s, socialism, colleges, and the group itself. Such an examination will reveal factors which facilitated the society's growth.

The ISS flourished during the historical epoch known as the Progressive Era, during which the pendulum of public mood swung toward societal concern and action. Muckraking journalists found audiences ravenous for their exposures of the nation's defects. Many different sectors of society became conscious of, and often outraged by, the current state of affairs. The concentration of economic power in the great and greedy trusts; the concentration of political power in the corrupt and selfish political machines; the pitiful plight of the immigrant inhabitants of exponentially expanding urban centers; the callous treatment and horrid conditions offered workers by business and industry, and the radical potential of the working class that resulted therefrom; the perils faced by businesses themselves in an economy that was not rationalized--these and other concerns came sharply into
focus for an entire generation.

Public awareness and concern led to public action. The action was unified neither in course nor direction. Many different groups—the Protestant middle class, urban immigrants, the working class, organized religion, big business—contributed to attempts to control society's destiny. At its core the Progressive Era was a politically charged era during which a variety of groups attempted to control a collective effort to reshape society.

The historical period during which the ISS existed, the Progressive Era, facilitated its growth. Most directly, there can be little doubt that the objective conditions of the day warranted remedial attention. Two percent of the nation's population controlled sixty percent of its wealth. Political corruption was both shocking and widespread. Living and working conditions were, in many cases, inhumane; in some cases, inhuman. Seymour Martin Lipset notes the way in which the state of society affected observers: "The rapid growth of the industrial cities with their teeming immigrant slums, their corruption and high crime rate, shocked the sentiments of many middle-class Americans, including a large proportion of their children away at college."¹ Students thus shocked had reason to search for solutions, such as those proposed by the ISS.

More important than the objective conditions of society, however, was the subjective mood of the age. The generation of college students that preceded the ISS had seen evils comparable in severity to those witnessed by ISS students, yet no group similar to the ISS resulted. In part, this was because students
during the Progressive years were able to see corruption through eyes sharpened by the muckrakers, hear of evils through ears tingling with the impassioned rhetoric of Progressive politicians, and sympathize with the downtrodden with souls inspired by the social gospel. Although the student body as a whole did not display the awareness and concern characteristic of Progressivism, the ISS was in step with the socially aware and politically active cadence of the day. Seymour M. Lipset takes this point to the extreme by subsuming the ISS entirely under the wings of Progressivism: "The ISS... was a campus expression of the same tendencies which inspired mass support for reform and radicalism in the population as a whole." 2

One strand of Progressivism was inspired by a revived social conscience on the part of an increasingly activist Protestant Church. Clergymen preaching the "social gospel" and favoring the liberal reform of society marched in the front ranks of the Progressive brigade. The active, reform-minded religious outlook characteristic of Progressivism helps to account for the stunning success experienced by the ISS in theological seminaries. More than one-half of the students of the Meadville Theological Seminary were members of the ISS. This impressive proportion was the highest in the ISS until 1915. In that year, the ISS chapter at the Berkeley Divinity school counted among its membership the entire student body. 3

In a speech delivered to an ISS summer conference, Christian theorist Walter Rauschenbusch explained the appeal of socialism to the progressive Christian mind. Socialism, according to
Rauschenbusch, was a movement of the common people, as Christianity had been in its infancy. The socialist demand for justice was in sympathy with the moral instincts of the Christian. In addition, both doctrines were concerned with uplifting the lowly of society, and with creating solidarity and brotherhood. 4

The activist tone of some members of the clergy during the Progressive Era, including Rauschenbusch and other proponents of the social gospel, was quite a change from the conservative outlook of the Guilded Age clergy of the latter nineteenth century. The growth and strength of the ISS, both in theological seminaries and in schools, such as Oberlin College, in which religion still played an important role, was aided by the activist nature of religion during the Progressive Era. The case of Oberlin is particularly interesting in that the first president of the ISS affiliate, the Oberlin Socialism Roundtable, was Winifred Rauschenbusch, daughter of the famous theologian. 5

There can be no doubt that the ISS was influenced greatly by the Progressive Age which housed it. In the words of Max Horn, the concerns of the ISS "encompassed most of the issues agitating a rapidly changing society during the first two decades of this century." 6 Given the relationship between Progressivism and the ISS, the life cycle of the student group can be understood. The Progressive Era, which began around the turn of the century, reached its full flowering after the epochal presidential election of 1912, during the early years of Woodrow Wilson's presidency. Beginning with the ISS founding in 1905, the path of the society ran parallel to that of Progressivism, reaching its
zenith just before America's entry into World War I. The linkage between the historical period and the student group is demonstrated even more clearly by their simultaneous declines following "the war to end all wars."

The character of the Progressive Era sheds light on the nature of the ISS; the chronology of the historical period enables the observer to understand both the group's life cycle and its placement in history. The years that saw the rise of Progressivism and the growth of the ISS also were important ones in the history of American socialism. As the ISS was committed to promoting an awareness of socialism, an investigation of the radical ideology is in order. Such an examination will explore which aspects of early twentieth-century socialism facilitated the proliferation of the collegiate group devoted to its study.

It has been noted that the student population was composed predominantly of native-born Americans. Until the turn of the century, socialism in America had been an ideology supported primarily by immigrants. Marxism was first imported to America in the 1850s along with German immigrants. The early socialist parties were composed almost entirely of recently arrived Germans, Poles, and Italians, and Jews of various nationalities. By the time of the founding of the ISS, however, socialism was no longer under the exclusive control of immigrants. It has been estimated that "at no time during the nineteenth century did native[-born] Americans make up more than 10 percent of the [socialist] party membership." After the turn of the century, this situation changed dramatically. Of the delegates who
attended a Socialist Party convention early in the twentieth century, eighty percent were American-born. Increased adoption of the socialist ideology by Americans facilitated the growth of the ISS.7

The growth of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society paralleled the growth of the Socialist Party. In 1904, the year in which Upton Sinclair sent out his call to organize the ISS, the Socialist Party of America contained twenty thousand dues-paying members. By 1912 party membership had increased by a factor of five to more than one hundred thousand.8 Votes cast for Socialist presidential candidates also reflect the growing popularity of socialism during these years of ISS prosperity. In 1900, the Socialist ticket received ninety-six thousand votes. Four years later, the total was over four hundred thousand. By 1912, when the Socialist candidate, Eugene V. Debs, ran against three major opponents—Wilson, the Democrat; Taft, the Republican; and Roosevelt, the Progressive—the Socialist vote tally was over nine hundred thousand.9 The rising popularity of socialism undoubtedly contributed to the increasing popularity of the ISS during the same years.

The mere fact that the Socialist Party grew added to the likelihood of ISS success. The direction taken by the party’s growth intensified its contribution. Like so many leftist movements, turn-of-the-century American socialism was plagued by factionalism. During the late 1890s, two rival Socialist factions, while competing for control of the party apparatus, resorted to fisticuffs when one faction stormed the party headquarters into which the other faction had barricaded itself.
A large scale brawl ensued. Although this violent type of internal conflict subsided by the turn of the century, the Socialist Party of America during the Progressive era was far from unified. The party was divided into left and right wings. During the first years of the century, the Socialist Party was controlled by its left wing. The Left was revolutionary in tone, and favored an undiluted working class socialist movement. The faction "rejected having a party 'broad' enough to gain capitalist support."11

In 1906 when the first ISS chapters were being formed, control of the Socialist Party swung to the right wing. The Right advocated a brand of socialism which was less revolutionary than the socialism of the Left. The evolutionary Right, in its attempt to attract votes, stressed aspects of socialist ideology that would appeal to middle class reformers. Potential ISS student members were much more likely to be attracted to socialism as conceived by the Right than by the Left. Thus, the fact that the society's first year saw the Right take control of the direction of the Socialist Party was fortuitous for the growth of the ISS.

Besides being influenced by the dynamics of Progressivism and socialism, the path of the ISS was sensitive to its immediate environment: the American university. Seymour Martin Lipset, who has engaged in extensive research concerning student activism, has identified several aspects of the university that can facilitate student activism. In Passion and Politics: Student Activism in America, Lipset argues that the university setting is
inherently amenable to student political concern and involvement. According to Lipset, students, because they are young, are not yet committed to existing political ideologies or institutions. In addition, students are free of the responsibilities imposed by occupations and families. Lipset concludes that because students are bound neither by years of affiliation with the political status quo nor by traditional societal roles and demands, they have the intellectual and logistical freedom to investigate, adopt, and advocate new and controversial ideologies.12

Lipset suggests further that the physical structure of the university contributes to the likelihood of student political groups such as the ISS. Students live in close proximity to each other. Few environments offer such ease of communication and mobilization. Furthermore, because of the high concentration of students on campuses, the politically active portion of the student body, even if it accounts only for a small percentage of the whole, can organize itself easily into a visible and powerful unit.13

The characteristics outlined by Lipset contributed to the possibility of ISS success. However, although the factors are descriptive of schools during the years of ISS proliferation, they also apply to schools of earlier generations, during which no group comparable to the ISS existed. Thus, though Lipset’s points are accurate, an analysis based solely upon them would be decidedly ahistorical. A more "historical" perspective requires an examination of the situation of universities during the early 1900s.

American higher education underwent major transformations
after the Civil War. Many of the changes, described in detail above, derived from an increased faculty interest in research. The resulting situation in colleges and universities was beneficial to the ISS in a number of ways. First, college professors, with their dedication to research and their newly kindled professional pride, were no longer willing to act as disciplinarians. The old doctrine of *in loco parentis*, which cast colleges in the role of substitute parents, was eroded by the reform ethos of late nineteenth-century educators. Laurence Veysey, in *The Emergence of the American University*, notes that, under the reforms instituted during these years, "the college student had to be treated as a man (stable and internally motivated), rather than as an immature boy. There was in fact," Veysey continues, "a pronounced tendency away from paternalism in reformed institutions."\(^{14}\)

The trend away from the practice of *in loco parentis* was beneficial to the prospects of a successful ISS. Students were allowed freer reign. ISS chapters were able to engage in activities and invite controversial speakers in ways which, according to Max Horn, "would have been unthinkable a decade earlier."\(^{15}\) Given greater independence and responsibility, the more mature members of the student body were able to act independently and display initiative. Independence and initiative on behalf of students were essential to ISS prosperity.

The increased emphasis on faculty research contributed to the likelihood of ISS prosperity in other ways as well. Greater
professorial interest in research was accompanied by an increase in reform-mindedness among certain faculty members. Lipset describes the emergence of the "controversial academic" around the turn of the century: "Insofar as research, innovation, frontier knowledge began to gain status within academe, faculty members were occupationally motivated to reject the values and lore of the past...."16 The rejection of traditional values was far from universal among college instructors, but it was widespread among younger professors, and among professors in the social sciences--most notably economics and sociology. The success of many ISS chapters resulted from the direct or indirect influence of reform-minded professors.

The change in the professoriate created a situation favorable to ISS prosperity. In previous generations, faculty members, acting in loco parentis, would have been disposed to discourage or prevent students from organizing independently around an ideology, such as socialism, which challenged the status quo. They had an interest in preventing such challenges which might rebound to undermine their own authority. The new generation of reformist professors had different interests. They were often rebuked by administrations for their own unconventional views. The years of ISS growth saw an attempt by American faculty members to gain professional status, academic freedom, and job security. The movement led to the formation of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in 1915. The creed upon which the AAUP was based favored freedom of inquiry, freedom of discussion, and freedom of advocacy. Given the controversial nature of socialism, such a mood was
appreciated by the budding ISS.

In many ways the situation during the first two decades of the twentieth century was favorable to the development of a national student political group. However, the particular characteristics of the ISS led to a successful growth that might not have been shared by a student socialist study group of different composition. From its founding forward, the ISS was organized, administered, and championed by people who were not college students. Because of its nonstudent leadership, the group was able to circumvent a problem endemic to collegiate organizing: the high turnover rate of the collegiate population. The campus student community is uniquely transient. Each year one quarter of the student body is replaced. In theory, there is no overlap between student populations set more than four years apart. Had the power center of the ISS been based on campus and staffed by students—as logic would have had it—the chances of the society thriving would have been diminished greatly. The inner core of the ISS leadership stayed with the group much longer than the span of even the longest student career.

The consistency of its nonstudent leadership enabled the ISS to maintain its integrity and withstand a number of lean years. As campus chapters struggled with and fell prey to the annual plague of graduation, the ISS national organization remained relatively constant, stable, and strong. The ISS was able to revive many college chapters after years of dormancy, and survive the extinctions of other chapters. The roster of ISS affiliates during the eight years from 1910 until 1917 reveals the high
turnover rate among chapters. Of the ninety-eight ISS chapters existing on as many campuses during these years, only nine lasted the entire eight years. The duration sustained by the largest number of chapters was a scant, two years.\textsuperscript{17} The steady leadership of nonstudents was essential to the longevity of the group.

The nonstudent nature of the ISS central structure also helped the group financially. Even during the years when student membership was at its apex, the revenue generated on campuses comprised only a small fraction of the group's total operating budget. In 1916, for example, when student membership achieved its highest mark, membership dues accounted for less than twelve percent of the total ISS revenue. The great bulk of the society's finances was provided by individual contributors, many of whom served on the ISS executive committee. Had the group been forced to rely solely upon its campus revenues, it would not have been able to afford such a wide range of services.

The executive committee's \textit{laissez-faire} treatment of campus chapters also facilitated healthy ISS growth. Had the leaders prescribed what the policies and beliefs of their constituents should be, the growth of the group would have been far less likely. By casting its net widely, the ISS was able to count among its ranks chapters and members representing virtually the entire political spectrum.

Another factor that contributed to the success of the ISS was the high quality of its leaders and lecture staff. As ISS students played supporting rather than leading roles in the group, committed and energetic leaders were needed. As most
students were unfamiliar with the socialist ideology, articulate and inspirational lecturers were essential to promote an intelligent interest in the subject. ISS leaders and lecturers filled these criteria. A scholar of student political movements remarked that the ISS benefited from the services of: "a corps of the ablest young speakers and writers who have ever been enlisted in an American movement."18

Through an investigation into the nature of the historical structures relevant to the ISS--Progressivism, socialism, higher education, and the ISS itself--the life cycle of the group has been rationalized and fixed in history. Many structural factors facilitated the growth of the ISS: the socially conscious and politically active mood of the Progressive Era sensitized many ISS members; the increase in the appeal of socialism to native-born Americans, and the less militant tone of the Socialist Party after 1906 attracted reform-minded students to the study of socialism; the trend away from the doctrine of in loco parentis and toward faculty research allowed students greater freedom of action, as it produced reformist professors who served to inspire and, at times, direct ISS organizational efforts; the fight for academic freedom provided the ISS with allies on faculties; the high quality nonstudent leadership of the group, besides bearing the brunt of the society's financial burdens, enabled the group to stay its course, even as individual chapters appeared and dissolved; and the hands-off policy of the executive committee assured that the relative scarcity of student socialists would not prevent the emergence of prosperous campus chapters.
The factors outlined above contributed to a situation favorable to ISS organizing efforts. A favorable situation alone, however, is meaningless if no historical actors take advantage of it. Thousands of students across the country were motivated to join and champion the cause of the ISS. Who these students were and what inspired them to become active in the ISS will be the next subjects of discussion.
When investigating who the ISS student members were, it is instructive to begin with who they were not. They were neither of immigrant stock nor of working-class origin. Although some ISS members were born outside of America, and a few were the children of workers, the great majority of the ISS membership was similar in composition to the greater student population. ISS members were likely to be middle class or upper class native Americans.

Earlier it was shown that ISS founders tended to be characterized by high levels of maturity, seriousness, intellectual capacity and intellectual curiosity. Similar traits were displayed by student ISS members over the years. According to the society’s Bulletin of 1912, the students who were flocking into the ranks of the ISS were “serious-minded young men and women.” In 1911, Francis B. Thwing, a Harvard student, commented on the intellectual prowess and appetite of the members of his school’s ISS chapter: “[The Harvard Socialist Club] tries to draw into its fold all the men of intellectual power who show the least interest in the commonweal.” Max Horn supports Thwing’s assessment, by noting that the ISS “attracted some of the best minds on campus.” Clearly the ISS did not possess a monopoly on bright and serious students. There is little doubt that numerous bright students did not join the group, just as it is sure that many chapters contained dim-witted members. However, as study formed the foundation of the group’s activities, the ISS tended to attract students with academic
interests and skills.

When the question of motivation is addressed, an investigation into the needs or desires satisfied by the action in question is in order. In the case of the ISS, membership satisfied two types of student needs or desires: intellectual and social. Both categories deserve examination.

To many serious students interested in public affairs, the offer to study socialism, a subject not included in the majority of America's curricula, was a compelling one. Most contemporary analysts of society, whether they agreed with or opposed the radical ideology, recognized the growing importance of socialism. College students—who were thought of, by themselves and by others, as the future leaders of society—were advised of the importance of understanding socialism. Lincoln Steffens, when asked if he thought that college students should study the subject, replied in clear tones: "What a question! One way or the other, the students in college now will have to deal in their day with Socialism. Whether to beat it or accept it, an understanding of Socialism might be a help; not a necessity, but of some little assistance." Walter Lippmann, answering the same question, was even more emphatic: "Not to know about Socialism is to be plainly illiterate and totally incompetent. You cannot put it too strongly."22

Many undergraduates, convinced by the line of argument employed by Steffens and Lippmann, turned to the ISS. While an undergraduate at Yale, C. R. Walker Jr. wrote that people who wanted to understand society must know about socialism: "If a man
with the desire for this knowledge (of the spirit of the times) happens to live in America, he will in all probability make the word "socialism" the name for one of the tendencies of the age that he feels he must master." Walker followed his own advice by joining the ISS. 23

The intellectual motivation outlined by Steffens, Lippmann, Walker and others was persuasive because of its virtual self-evidence: students, though currently in college, would one day become leaders of the nation; socialism was a growing force in public life; socialism was not taught in most colleges; therefore, students should learn about socialism by joining the ISS. The dispassionate logic of this line of thought enabled cautious—even skeptical—students who were not activists to justify ISS membership. Other students who were less skeptical based their ISS membership on another intellectual motivation. These students, along with many socialists, intellectuals, and ISS leaders, believed that socialism was not merely a political factor of increasing importance, but rather was the inevitable destination of society as a whole.

The thought that the trend toward socialism was unstoppable, a thought reminiscent of nineteenth-century determinism, found expression in many ISS publications. The cover of an early issue of the group's periodical, The Intercollegiate Socialist, provides an excellent example. The cover bears a drawing of a soldier in imperial Roman uniform standing on a summit. The sword-wielding warrior, who bears the label "Capitalism" on his cape, gestures desperately toward the heavens, where the sun shines proudly. The sun, of course, is labeled "Socialism."
Beneath the drawing lies the caption, "Commanding the Sun to Stand Still."

The message on the cover is unmistakable. The soldier is portrayed with powerful muscles but a balding scalp, symbolizing the once great but clearly aging and weakening stature of capitalism. The Roman outfit draws an analogy between a faltering capitalism and a crumbling Roman Empire. The presentation of socialism as the radiant and powerful sun seems to imbue the ideology with a divine endorsement, as it implies that socialism is as irresistible as it is life-providing. Not even the thick clouds of smoke emitted from the smokestacks—which represent the industrial organization of capitalist society—in the background can obscure the glory of the sun's rays. Capitalism, despite swords and smokestacks, is powerless in its attempt to halt the advance of socialism.24

The apocalyptic view expressed by the cover illustration was echoed in many other ISS publications. In a paper entitled "What the Intercollegiate Socialist Society Stands For," Harry Laidler, the group's organizing secretary, explained that "the founders of the Society were of the opinion...that Socialism in some form is absolutely certain to be the chief politics of the future."

Laidler further proclaimed that "the cooperative commonwealth is no longer regarded as a idle dream of a few visionaries, but as a probable reality of the not distant future."25 Students who accepted the inevitability of socialism as described by Laidler and others were motivated to participate in ISS activities not only to learn about socialism, but also to become part of the
vital and irresistible socialist movement.

The socialism studied by the ISS was multi-faceted. A large portion of chapter study was devoted to the economic and political aspects of socialism. A desire to learn about important theories and a wish to participate in a sweeping historical movement attracted students to these aspects of socialist study. Early twentieth-century socialism, however, had idealistic, moral, and spiritual aspects which carried with them other attractions to ISS members.

Socialism was very popular in literary, intellectual, and artistic circles during the years under study. As conceived by members of such circles, socialism was often less concerned with class conflict, wage slavery, and the dirty mechanics of political organizing than it was with abstract views of morality and the future social order. The author H. G. Wells, writing in 1906, displayed an abstract conception of socialism typical of some artists and intellectuals. Wells admitted: "For some years the whole organized Socialist movement seemed to me so unimportant, so irrelevant to that progressive development and realization of a great system of ideas which is Socialism, that, like no end of other Socialists, I did not trouble to connect myself with any section of it."26 As far as Wells was concerned, political activity was hardly relevant to socialism.

The ISS achieved its greatest popularity in liberal arts colleges. Students studying a liberal arts curriculum were likely to be receptive to a conception, such as the one offered by Wells, based largely on grand philosophies. The picture of future socialist society as painted by Wells and others was quite
appealing. The "great system of ideas" that comprised "abstract socialism" conceived of the replacement of all types of competition by cooperation. Fighting would cease and humanity would live as one family. "The Collective Commonwealth" and "the brotherhood of man" were two terms used to describe the harmonious life which was anticipated by abstract socialists.

The abstract, idealistic approach to socialism taken by some students was noted by Winifred Smith, professor of English at Vassar College. Smith commented on a lecture on socialism delivered to the Vassar Socialist Club: "The young people in the room were eager and sincere sympathizers with the cause they were gathered to study, that was quite evident, yet they were as much in the clouds about their subject as medieval schoolmen meditating upon Heaven." Each time the lecturer attempted to address specifics, "the queries with few exceptions reverted to the skies and to that far-off Utopian tomorrow which may dawn under Socialism." 27

Many ISS members were motivated by the conviction that to advocate socialism was to advocate the emancipation of the human spirit. This view attached moral weight to ISS membership. The president of the Stanford chapter, Bruce Bliven, gave voice to the moral dimension of the society: "I think that the ISS is one of the cleanest, highest-minded and worthwhile of the influences which can enter the student's life while at college." 28 Bliven and others were surely inspired by statements such as Helen Keller's: "May the work of the [Intercollegiate Socialist] Society continue to grow. May it be among the great forces that
shall transform the bondage, the misery, the cruelty of past ages into the glorious freedom, strength and brotherhood of all men." Students whose social consciences had been sensitized by Progressivism, by inspirational professors, or by the social gospel, found ISS membership to be a way to pursue "what was right."29

Socialism, in addition to its moral and idealistic aspects, contained spiritual elements. John Spargo, a prominent Socialist who lectured frequently on behalf of the ISS, described socialism as "the greatest spiritual force in the world." Many students, including a large number in divinity schools, used socialism as a spiritual complement to organized religion. Aspects of socialist thinking, including the brotherhood of man in the cooperative commonwealth, the demand for justice, and the concern for the poor and lowly, meshed smoothly with the Christian pattern of thought. The freshness and vitality of socialism added spice to the stale spirituality of traditional Christianity. Speaking at a Summer Conference of the ISS, Christian Socialist Walter Rauschenbusch voiced his belief that socialism was emerging "under a divine compulsion." He continued by acknowledging the malleability of socialism:

Socialism is many sided. It has a special appeal to artists and educators.... It appeals to Christians on a moral and spiritual grounds, and to me that appeal is irresistible.30

The parents and grandparents of many ISS members were products of the evangelical tradition that included abolitionism. Their children inherited their systems of values and morals, but expressed them differently. Overt theology manifested in the
traditional way seemed to lack vitality. Members of the generation that matured during the early twentieth century often expressed their religious sentiments in a secular vernacular. Robert M. Crunden characterizes figures who fit this mold as "Ministers of Reform" in his book of the same name. He writes of Progressive figures who decided against careers in the ministry, but "found that settlement work, higher education, law, and journalism all offered possibilities for preaching without pulpits." Crunden might correctly add ISS membership to his list of secular pursuits with the potential for religious underpinnings. In 1911, Randolph S. Bourne, a member of the Columbia Socialist Club, revealed how some students were motivated to study socialism by latent religious concerns: "Not personal salvation but social; not our own salvation but the character of society, is our interest and concern. We feel social injustice as our fathers felt personal sin."31

Harry Wellington Laidler was a "Minister of Reform " as that term is defined by Crunden. His maternal grandfather, John Heary, was a major in the Civil War who fought for the Union. His paternal grandfather, Stephen Laidler, whose father had been a missionary in India, was a Congregational minister. A confirmed opponent of slavery, Stephen Laidler, after the Civil War, travelled to the South "to help the freedmen, to expose wholesale graft among the Northern carpetbaggers, and barely to escape assassination in doing so." The spirit of the family was not lost on Harry. The young Laidler, who, more than any other person, became the central force of the ISS, recognized that he
had "inherited something of a missionary spirit" from his grandfather. Harry, however, was not satisfied with the stale dogma of the Church. The ISS provided a "pulpit" from which Laidler could preach. He devoted his life to his secular preaching, serving the ISS and its successor, the League for Industrial Democracy, for forty-seven years. 32

Devere Allen was very religious as a youth, and later as an undergraduate at Oberlin College. When first at Oberlin, Allen was active in the YMCA, under whose auspices he engaged in evangelical tours of northeastern Ohio. Increasingly, however, Allen "thirsted for more knowledge of society." After studying sociology with the inspirational Professor Herbert A. Miller, the founder of the Oberlin Socialism Roundtable, Allen decided to join that ISS chapter. Religion, though quite important to Allen, was unable to satisfy completely his spiritual needs. The ISS helped supplement traditional religious belief and activity. Allen rose to become the president of the Oberlin club, and a member of the national ISS student council. 33

Students who approached socialism from an idealistic, moral, or Christian perspective found both that the ISS was broad enough to include them, and fresh, alive, and righteous enough to attract them. As has been noted previously, the ISS had no set ideology. Students of many outlooks felt comfortable being members. Because of its national scope, its impressive roster of thinkers and leaders, its moral tone, and its potent momentum, the society inspired in its members a sense of purpose, importance, and moral certitude. Even if their personal beliefs were only mildly compatible with socialism, certain serious
students found that the ISS was one place on campus where the
flame of modern life and thought seemed to burn brightly.
Morality, idealism, spirituality, and a desire to act with historical importance and momentum attracted students to the ISS. These may be grouped under the heading of "intellectual motivations." That students of higher learning would be compelled by such motivations is understandable and reasonable. The collegiate environment, however, in addition to being intellectual, is highly social. Student decisions, such as the one to join and champion the ISS, were based both on intellectual motivations—such as those outlined above—and social motivations.

An investigation of social motivations calls for a reexamination of the campus social environment. Fraternities, athletics, class pride, secret social clubs, conformity, and camaraderie were characteristic of the dominant campus atmosphere. Calvin B. T. Lee, in a book on undergraduate life, supports this view: "From the turn of the century until World War I, the grandeur of college life reflected, for the elite, the fun of fraternity life, the rise of collegiate football, and the alumni reference point of the 'good old days.'"34 The prevalent attitude toward academic work was epitomized by the disinterested pursuit of the "gentleman's C," in accordance with the popular motto, "don't let your studies interfere with your education." Laurence Veysey summarizes the dominant mood of the college student: "The undergraduate temperament was marked by a strong resistance to abstract thinking and to the work of the classroom in general... and by passive acceptance of moral, political, and
religious values taken from the nonacademic society at large."35

The contrast between the typical ISS member and the typical college student could not have been more pronounced. If the only motivations considered were intellectual motivations, the fact that the dominant campus outlook and the ISS outlook were antithetical to each other would be problematic. The observer would be forced either to disregard the campus mood and assume that ISS students acted in a vacuum, or to conclude that ISS members possessed such will and vision that they were able to transcend the their environment. The former analysis would be simplistic and ahistorical: the latter, romantic aggrandizement. A thorough analysis obviates both of these potential pitfalls by incorporating the concept of social motivation. By utilizing this concept, the observer can understand that students joined the ISS, in part, as a response to the situation that dominated the campus.

After Upton Sinclair left the world of higher education, he was searching for an ideology to give his life more meaning. Socialism would be that ideology. Sinclair's years in the university had whetted his appetite, for he had found the campus environment to be unsatisfying. Anticipating that other students would share his undergraduate thirst for something more than football, fraternities, and class spirit, Sinclair organized the Intercollegiate Socialist Society. His premonitions were justified. The ISS grew to be an organization to which students who were not interested in the campus scene might turn. The very immaturity and irrationality of class pranks and football cheers which made them seem irrelevant and superficial served to make
the ISS, by comparison, seem alive, real, and almost imperative to a minority of students. A student joining the ISS was able to feel that, in contrast to the rest of the student body, he or she had a finger on the pulse of the world.

To a student unimpressed with existing campus values and patterns, the ISS provided more than a link to a "larger reality"—it also provided an alternate means of attaining social status and acceptance. The years during which the group existed were prolific ones for fraternities, secret societies, and other social clubs. Status and acceptance often derived from group membership. The ISS offered some of the camaraderie and security of group membership to students who were not interested in the more traditional campus scene. Membership in the Harvard Socialist Club, in addition to its intellectual aspects, had social overtones. The club was described by a Harvard nonmember as a "coterie" whose members "speak of 'our movement' in a way which is meant to induce a certain amount of humbleness in 'the lesser breeds without the law.'"36 This description indicates the extent to which club members were a visible and recognized social unit. John Reed, a member of the Harvard chapter, revealed that the club was indeed a reaction against the dominant campus social system: "Students [in the club] attacked the sacred institution of collegiate athletics, [and] sneered at undergraduate clubs so holy that no one dared mention their names...."37

Not every club was as successful as Harvard's at forging a recognized and respected status alternative. The Amherst chapter
was known as the "home of the egg heads" among certain social sultans in campus fraternities. The Amherst situation indicates another social motivation that stirred ISS members. In addition to students who were not interested in the dominant social order, students who were not accepted by that order turned to the ISS. Chapter membership offered a social niche, a sense of purpose, and a vital and morally defensible ideology with which outcast students could thumb their noses at the superficiality of a social system that excluded them. The fact that the critics in the Amherst fraternities labeled the ISS chapter the "home of the egg heads" is telling, but no less telling was their acknowledgement that it was a home.

Intellectual and social motivating factors, combined with structural facilitating factors, led to the healthy prosperity of the ISS. Many of the motivating elements discussed heretofore can be observed operating in the example of Walter Lippmann, founding member and president of the Harvard Socialist Club. Like most ISS members, Lippmann was raised in a secure middle-class environment. The wealthy Lippmanns lived in a comfortable home on Lexington Avenue in New York City. The Lippmanns were Jewish, but were not members of the recently immigrated central and eastern European Jews who populated New York’s Lower East Side. The Lippmanns were uptown assimilationist Jews of German descent. Walter grew up to believe that "acceptance lay in identification with the values and style of the white Protestant majority." Even as a child Walter exhibited many of the traits which
would make him compatible with the ISS. He was a sharp, hard
working boy whose cosmopolitan outlook was unusually broad. His
interests set him apart from his peers. In the words of Ronald
Steel, one of Lippmann’s biographers: "While some boys filled
their rooms with baseball bats and pictures of athletes, he
[Lippmann] decorated his with a bust of Napoleon and an engraving
of the emperor’s retreat from Moscow--and, as an aesthetic touch,
the prow of a gondola and a reproduction of a fresco in the
Sistine Chapel." As a youth, Walter’s ambition was not to become
a ballplayer, but to become an art historian.40

Lippmann entered Harvard in the fall of 1906. He was an
"intellectually curious" student who exhibited "quick
intelligence" and "passionate idealism." These traits, the same
ones displayed by other ISS figures in this study, made Lippmann
a prime candidate for ISS intellectual motivation. His
"conversion" to the ISS, like those of so many others, was
facilitated by the influence of inspirational reformist
professors. Lippmann, for example, developed a close
relationship with Professor William James. The student and the
pragmatist philosopher enjoyed tea together each week. James
influenced the undergraduate in ways which heightened Lippmann’s
interest in the ISS. From James, Walter learned to be more open­
minded with regard to new ideas. Lippmann also was inspired by
the professor’s profound code of personal morality, as well as
his passionate views concerning social reform.41

Lippmann, like many ISS figures, showed himself to be a
child of the Progressive Era. In 1908, during the spring of his
sophomore year at Harvard, Lippmann volunteered to help the
homeless victims of a fire that had charred the nearby community of Chelsea. The experience pricked his conscience as it raised his consciousness. For the first time in his life, Lippmann witnessed poverty and suffering in a direct and powerful way. Like many social reformers, Lippmann was led by his provocative personal experience to "question the system that produced such inequality." In Lippmann's case, his questioning steered him toward an interest in socialism.42

Although it is clear that there were many intellectual aspects of Lippmann's attraction to the ISS, a significant amount of his motivation was socially based. Clubs and societies dominated the social landscape at Harvard. As a freshman, Lippmann aspired to become a member of the undergraduate social elite. He knew that success in athletics might well lead to acceptance. Because Walter did not possess an abundance of athletic skill or potential, he chose to apply to manage the freshman track team. He succeeded in becoming the team's second assistant manager. Satisfied with his post, he expectantly awaited invitation to the prestigious social clubs. None came. The clubs, Lippmann realized angrily, did not open their doors to students whose images were tarnished in any way. The fact that Lippmann was Jewish was one strike against him; the fact that he was "obviously intellectual" was another. Three strikes were not necessary--Lippmann was out.

Many factors inspired Walter Lippmann to help found the Harvard Socialist Club in 1908. He had been inspired by professors, and by the distressing problems of the society he
witnessed through progressive eyes. The final impetus to join the ISS ranks, however, resulted in large measure from the bitterness that sprung from social rejection. Ronald Steel makes this point: "Since he could not be an insider at Harvard, he [Lippmann] would become a brilliant outsider. The decision to form the socialist club in the spring of 1908 was a step in that direction."  

In female colleges, in coeducational institutions, and on the executive committee, women were very active in the ISS. Women, who comprised about forty percent of the American student body around the turn of the century, "flocked into the liberal arts." The liberal arts orientation of female students made them prime candidates for ISS membership. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who was a signer of Upton Sinclair's 1904 call to organize the ISS, revealed as much about contemporary attitudes toward women as about the attraction of socialism when she explained to the Barnard Socialist Club that women, being characterized by love, devotion, and self-sacrifice, were well suited to be advocates of socialism. Regardless of the accuracy of Gilman's analysis, women were important contributors to the strength of the ISS. The case of the Oberlin Socialism Roundtable--in which many members, including the original president, Winifred Rauschenbusch, were women--was not exceptional.

The intellectual and social motivations described thus far apply to women as well as men. The experiences of the female college student, however, offered additional reasons to join and
support the cause of the ISS. Although women comprised close to one half of the American collegiate population, they were excluded from many segments of the professional world. With the exception of teaching, few professional careers were very accessible to women, regardless of their academic achievements. Allen F. Davis describes the situation in which women could achieve in the educational world by attending college, but were not able to advance beyond: "This sense of uselessness rested most heavily upon the growing numbers of college-educated women--the first generation of college women--who felt they had to prove their right to a higher education by doing something important."46

The situation described by Davis led many female college graduates to become active in social settlement houses. These houses, which proliferated during the Progressive Era, were established in the immigrant slums of inner cities, and were staffed by native-born middle-class Americans, almost all of whom were college graduates. Women, such as the ubiquitous Jane Addams, founder of Chicago’s Hull House, were motivated by a desire to confront the problems of modern society so that they might understand them, and work toward reform. These women felt the need to do something important and useful. Similar desires on behalf of undergraduate women led them to become active in the ISS.

In addition to postgraduate professional barriers, female students often experienced restrictions of a very direct nature right on campus. Positions on the staff of the University of Wisconsin student newspaper, the Daily Cardinal, were not open to
female students. On February 27, 1909, an article entitled "Fair Sex Will Manage Student Daily" announced that the March 5 edition of the *Cardinal* would be written, edited, managed, and produced by undergraduate women. Although such an event had met with a great deal of success at the universities of Chicago and California, it had never been attempted at Wisconsin. The novelty of the experiment was stressed by the giddy regulars on the *Cardinal* staff: "It is needless to say that this innovation has caused quite a little comment. Some are conjecturing whether the paper will appear two-thirds fashions or two-thirds society. There is, however, ample room for both departments and perhaps for a little, just a little, bit of news." The boldness of the scheme was underscored further by the staff's assurance that the "Coed Cardinal" edition would appear free of censorship, except as prompted by the faculty.47

The experience of the female student was often shaped and confined by university social restrictions. In this area, Wisconsin women could consider themselves lucky. A 1909 *Daily Cardinal* article noted a "tendency in American colleges to curb and restrict the weaker sex." The article cited a number of examples, including that of Wellesley College, which had recently "ordained that her students shall be under the watchful eye of a chaperone on all occasions." The article predicted that similar legislation might soon appear at Wisconsin.48

If *de jure* social limitations were powerful, so too were *de facto* ones. Social convention cast female students in roles which were as restrictive as any tangible code of conduct. In
1913, Suzanne Wilcox, an observer of social customs, wrote of a first year student who, unaccustomed to the ways of her newly adopted sorority, committed the inexcusable social impropriety of engaging in an extensive, serious dialogue with a college man from her native town. When the sorority members learned of the serious nature of the discussion, they reprimanded their naive sister. The defendant was informed that she had a duty to promote the popularity of her club among fraternity men. The latter group, according to the sorority sages, "did not like girls who talked seriously." The accused apologized for embarrassing her sorority, and promised henceforth "to do her utmost always to talk frivolously to fraternity men."49

The written and unwritten restrictions they faced led many college women to pursue an affiliation with the ISS. In contrast to conditions on campuses and in the society at large, the ISS offered a nondiscriminatory meritocracy. Women in the ISS were taken seriously, and treated with respect. They were rewarded for their intelligence, and were allowed to assume positions of responsibility and power. A woman such as Helen Sumner, who, while an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin, would not have been allowed to write for the school paper more often than one day each year, was able to be an important founding member of the Wisconsin Socialist Club.

In addition to the large number of female undergraduate ISS leaders, many women, such as Sumner, became active members of the group's executive committee. These included several officers: Jessica Cosgrave, Jessie Wallace Hughan, Elsie C. Phillips, and Vida Scudder served for varying periods in the role of ISS vice
president; Mary R. Sanford, for four years, was the group's treasurer; Jessica Smith spent five years as the executive secretary; and Florence Kelly, in addition to serving a vice presidency of nine years, was president of the ISS for three. There is no doubt that, despite these cases, men outnumbered women in ISS leadership circles. However, for its day, the society offered women a rather rare opportunity to be taken seriously, to be treated with respect, and to display their leadership capacities.

It is clear that the ISS was not the only outlet for serious and mature undergraduate women. Female students, especially those at women's colleges, had other opportunities to satisfy their intellectual curiosity and gain positions of power and respect. Nevertheless, the ISS combined this opportunity with a program that offered, in addition to all of the intellectual attractions outlined above, special appeal to women. The group was an unwavering supporter of equal suffrage, and was concerned with issues that were generally held to be of special interest to women, such as child labor.

From the group's founding in 1905 until America's entry into the First World War, many factors facilitated and motivated the steady expansion of the ISS. The historical structures that were relevant to the collegiate society--the Progressive Era, Socialism, and college campuses--in addition to the nature of the group itself, enabled the ISS to expand and prosper. The morality, spirituality, idealism, and vitality of socialism attracted the interest of serious students. This intellectual
attraction combined with the social motivation felt by students who were either uninterested in or rejected by the dominant social order on college campuses.

As the great conflict that enveloped Europe threatened to include the United States, ISS leaders were as confident as ever about the prospects of their group. They did not realize that the ISS stood at its apogee. Their vision of a continued and proud ascent for their group soon would dissolve, exposing a humble downward slope.
Chapter 5
"The War to End All Reform"

During the early years of World War I, the ISS was both proud of its past accomplishments and optimistic about the prospects of continued success—and with good reason. The society, having begun modestly, had expanded in size, popularity, influence, and credibility. ISS leaders could be proud of the growth of their group. They also had cause to be proud that their aim, the promotion of an intelligent interest in the study of socialism among college men and women, had made great strides in the nations' colleges and universities. Courses on socialism, though not widespread, were not unheard of, as they were when the ISS was formed. Harry Laidler, ISS organizer and executive secretary, remarked early in 1917 that "the change in sentiment toward Socialism and the Socialist movement during the last decade both among students and professors has been a marked one."¹

The "practical revolution in attitude" regarding socialism that Laidler noted was no product of his imagination. The collegiate climate in which ISS organizers operated had indeed been transformed. In 1906, before the ISS was a significant factor in collegiate America, a student at Syracuse University commented: "I fear that students who came out and said that they had formed a chapter of the ISS would be running a risk which,
perhaps, they would not dare to face."² By 1913, the situation had eased. In that year, William Hinkle, a member of the ISS chapter at Williams College, described the environment at his school: "Two years ago Socialism was tabooed [sic] at Williams. It was not to be mentioned; now it is a theme of common talk and discussion."³ Three years later, in 1916, when the ISS membership was at its height, the observations of Randolph Bourne, a former member of the Columbia Socialist Club, indicate a further change in campus mood. Bourne felt that undergraduate socialism had become commonplace to the point of being passe': "Let the college man or girl...join the Intercollegiate Socialist Society or some similar institution and discover how discouragingly respectable they are."⁴ To the socially-radical Bourne, the popularity and ease of middle-class collegiate radicalism in the form of the ISS was a cause for skepticism and concern. To the executive committee, however, it was cause for satisfaction and optimism.

The optimism of the committee proved to be unfounded. The war was not kind to the ISS. For the first time in history, the group's trend of growth stalled, then reversed. There are several explanations for the decline of the society during World War I. First, the broad historical environment of America that had been so kind to the fledgling and adolescent society soured. Second, the war effort affected the collegiate environment in ways hostile to the interests of the ISS. Finally, the tense mood during the war strained fault lines within the ISS.

The ISS, to a large extent, was a reformist offshoot of the Progressive Era. World War I is accepted widely by historians as
marking the endpoint of Progressivism. The lush and fertile environment for reform turned arid and thorny as a result of the shift in the public mood associated with the war. Insofar as the student society was weaned in a reform-oriented environment, the change in climate that was hostile to Progressivism was also unfriendly to the ISS.

American socialism also felt the pressure of the war. Before the conflict, American socialists had found it easy and beneficial to identify themselves with an international socialist movement. The international socialist platform, American radicals believed, called for an opposition to war, as war was considered to be a direct result of capitalist greed. American radicals were deprived of the strength of internationalism when European socialist parties gave overwhelming backing to the war efforts of their governments. As America's entry into the hostilities became increasingly likely, American Socialists were forced to decide whether or not to support their own country's involvement. The American Socialist Party decided to oppose participation. In doing so, however, it lost those of its members who supported the war effort.

Although the anti-war stance would have devastating effects on the life of the Socialist Party in the long run, it was initially a great asset. In 1917 when America entered the fray, the Socialist Party was one of the groups opposed to American military involvement. As such, the party attracted the interest and support of "millions of Americans who opposed the war." The potential for a massive anti-war movement led by socialists
provoked a wave of anti-Socialist action from the government. Various Socialist publications were banned from the mails. The administration of President Woodrow Wilson took advantage of wartime espionage and sedition acts to indict and convict about two thousand Socialists, including the party's presidential candidate and figurehead, Eugene V. Debs. The government's suppression, the shattered faith in the international socialist movement, the divisive controversy concerning whether to support or oppose the war effort, and the suspicion of all radicals that accompanied wartime hysteria combined to weaken and splinter the American socialist movement.6

As the national environment became hostile toward the Socialist Party, every group or person associated with socialism or radicalism became a subject of suspicion. More than ever before, the ISS was identified with the Socialist Party. Although not subject to the same level of scrutiny imposed on Socialist publications, ISS literature was eyed with suspicion by government officials. The mailing of two issues of the Intercollegiate Socialist was "held up" by the U.S. Post Office. This happened, according to the paper's editor, Harry Laidler, despite "how careful we have been not to offend even the illiberal Post Office." Laidler came to the accurate realization that "the Post Office at the present time...sees conspiracies in every bit of literature containing the word Socialist."7 The level of overt government opposition to the ISS, however, was relatively slight, especially when compared with the treatment of the Socialist Party. Of much greater import was the mood of hysterical patriotism that swept the country during and after the
The ISS knew that the issues of military preparedness and participation were volatile. The group did what it could to avoid unnecessary controversy, and attempted to proceed with its business as usual. The war, however, made that impossible. The immediate environment housing the ISS, the American university, was affected by the war in ways which could not be ignored.

Upon hearing that the United States had entered the conflict, American colleges and universities offered their services to the war effort with little hesitation. There are several explanations for this phenomenon. First, the actions of universities were based on the "Wisconsin Idea" of university service to the state that grew during the Progressive Era. Universities felt a great duty to serve the country during the pressing national emergency posed by the war. An affinity for conspicuous patriotism also influenced the institutions of higher learning in their decisions to dedicate themselves to the war effort. In addition, educators saw in the war an opportunity to impress upon the public and the government the usefulness and importance of higher education. By contributing as much as possible to the campaign, educators sought to gain status and respect for themselves, their disciplines, and their institutions. For these reasons, American professors, as a group, were "among the most enthusiastic supporters of the [war] cause."

Even in the absence of these motivations, American colleges and universities would have been forced to respond to the war.
Huge numbers of students and professors left campus to participate in the campaign. During the 1917-18 academic year, for example, forty percent of Yale's student body left school in order to contribute to the war effort. By turning themselves into de facto subsidiaries of the War Department, universities were able to attract students, along with government subsidies. Thus, a potentially disastrous financial crisis was mitigated. In return, however, institutions of higher learning were forced to make many sacrifices. In the words of Carol Gruber, colleges and universities: "relinquished their function as centers for the higher learning." Almost every aspect of the curriculum was molded to fit war-related functions. The sciences were applicable to and compatible with the needs of war; but even subjects within the social sciences and humanities were conscripted: "English courses were devoted to the writing of military reports, fine arts to military sketching, and modern languages to military terminology."9

In the autumn of 1918, the War Department and American institutions of higher learning collaborated in the formation of the Student Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.). The S.A.T.C. was intended to produce highly trained military personnel from college students. On October 1, 1918, about one hundred forty thousand male students throughout the nation became "student soldiers." Though they remained on campus, these young men were official members of the United States Army. The more than five hundred schools participating in the S.A.T.C. program were converted into military camps. Campus buildings were placed under military guard. Civilians, including faculty members, had
to display passes in order to be admitted. S.A.T.C. students had
to be marched to and from their classes. Teachers and students
were summoned to classes by bugle calls. The college campus,
indeed, was militarized. 10

The ISS, along with almost all extracurricular activities
not associated directly with things military, suffered under
these conditions. Chapter membership withered as an increasing
number of students were drafted, or volunteered, to serve the war
effort. The case of the Beloit College ISS chapter exemplifies
the organizational difficulties faced by campus clubs during the
war. Each spring, the chapter elected officers who were
responsible for leading the group the following year. In the
fall of 1918, because all of the officers elected the previous
spring had joined the army, the Beloit chapter ceased to exist.
The ISS lost many chapters for similar reasons during the hectic
days of the war. The number and size of ISS chapters plummeted;
many clubs suspended activity or dissolved entirely. 11

The ISS problems due to campus depopulation and
militarization were augmented by an increase in administrative
opposition to chapters. College officials across the country
took advantage of the domestic turmoil created by the war to
suppress the activities of socialist clubs. The degree to which
administrations impeded club activities varied. The University
of Michigan chapter lost the permission to hold meetings in
campus buildings. The Columbia Socialist Club was forced to
submit the names of proposed speakers to the administration for
approval. Controversial speakers were unlikely to be allowed to
speak on campus. Some chapters were forced to sever their connections with the ISS. The actions of college officials were motivated largely by paranoia. Administrators were afraid that their institutions would be accused of allowing or encouraging anti-war sentiment. Although the ISS was careful to avoid stating a position on the issue of American involvement in the war, the group's name assured that, during that suspicion-filled time, it would be associated with the anti-war Socialist Party.12

Fervent support of the war and suspicion about the alleged anti-American nature of socialism was not confined to the public officials and college administrations. College faculty members, with few exceptions, were energetic advocates of Wilson's crusade. Students, the majority of whom favored involvement, were as susceptible as any to the bug of overzealous patriotism. An editorial in the Wisconsin Daily Cardinal provides an example. The article was entitled "Leaks in Loyalty!" and began by setting Wisconsin's loyalty record straight: "There is no more patriotic institution; no more loyal group of students collectively to be found anywhere." The author then expressed concern that activities of the Wisconsin Socialist Club had "created mistaken impressions in regard to the work of the university as a whole," and as such, should be "checked within reasonable grounds." The editorial closed with a stirring warning: "Remember, fellow-students, that there are men and papers who are watching with eagle eye for the slightest opportunity to condemn and even vilify our University... We must be on our guard!" That there was widespread support for such sentiment is indicated by the contemporary formation of a student group aimed at promoting
patriotism and combating treasonous behavior. The group was named "The Loyalty Legion." It is hardly surprising that, faced with such pressures, the Wisconsin Socialist Club soon changed its name to the "Social Science Club."13

Suspicion and opposition on behalf of the government, college officials, and college students contributed to a war-time situation that was already in the process of decimating the national network of collegiate chapters built by the ISS. The effects of the war, however, extended beyond factors external to the society. The stress placed on the ISS by the war weakened and cracked the group's internal structure. Although the ISS refrained from stating an official position on the war, the subject was debated passionately by the group's leaders. Beginning at the outset of hostilities in 1914, the issue of the war and American preparedness was divisive. In December of 1914, William English Walling, who favored American military preparedness, lashed out against Morris Hillquit, who held the contrary view. Both men, in addition to being prominent figures in American socialism, were members of the ISS executive committee. Hillquit, who served in the additional capacity of ISS treasurer, felt so insulted by Walling's statements that he resigned his ISS posts. The same war-related issues that divided Hillquit and Walling began to divide ISS conventions and conferences. On occasion, these degenerated into harsh debates during which some delegates were booed and hissed for their unpopular views on the war.

When America entered the conflagration in 1917, the ISS
decided that it would be prudent to announce officially its neutrality on the war issue. The executive committee stated: "The Society's sole function is to promote an intelligent interest in Socialism, and that it therefore does not consider it consistent with the Society's objects for the Committee to take a stand either for or against the war...." It became increasingly clear, however, that the majority of the ISS leaders sided with the Socialist Party in opposition to the war. As the domestic patriotic spirit began to intensify, the pro-war faction of the ISS felt increasingly uncomfortable with their situation. The ongoing debate on the issue, continued in installments at conventions, at conferences, and in print, led to a great deal of internal tension, and, ultimately, to the resignation of a number of prominent ISS leaders.

J.G. Phelps Stokes had been an officer in the ISS since its 1905 birth. He had replaced Jack London as president in 1907, and still held that position at the war's outset. His financial resources had fed the group's coffers throughout its history. Stokes favored American involvement in the European conflict. His discomfort with the unstated but underlying ISS opposition to Wilson's military designs smoldered until November of 1917 when he submitted his resignation to the ISS Executive Committee. His letter included this passage:

I am deeply sorry that I cannot cooperate further with the ISS at this time. I have become convinced that I should stand unequivocally by the President of the United States in the unparalleled crisis that confronts this country as well as the rest of the world. I cannot give or appear to give aid or support to any policy that in my judgement aids even in slight degree at this juncture, the enemies of democratic civilization.

127
The reluctance to be affiliated with a group that had overtones of pacifism capable of inspiring patriotic suspicion infected others in addition to Stokes. The resignation of the ISS president inspired the same action by executive committee members including: Earnest Poole, the second vice president; William English Walling, who had signed the 1904 call to organize the group; and John Spargo, who had also served on the five member national executive committee of the Socialist Party, until the party’s anti-war stance prompted his resignation from that group as well. Besides leading to a loss in ISS leadership, the divisive and tense situation caused by the war also undercut the financial base of the ISS. The wealthy Stokes and others of similar outlook were no longer willing to contribute money to a group associated in any way with an anti-war stance.

The student exodus from campuses, the barriers to chapter activities erected by college administrations, and the public and private suspicion of radicalism that accompanied the strained atmosphere of war had taken its toll on the ISS. It was with relief that the group greeted the termination of hostilities in November of 1918. Just two weeks after the armistice, Harry Laidler sent a letter to representatives of former ISS chapters. The letter, which opened by asking whether the addressees were still in college—a question that in itself evidences the chaotic state of ISS organizational affairs—voiced the ISS war-time problems: "During the last few months it has been difficult in most colleges to interest the students in discussion groups."

Laidler proceeded, however, to articulate a hopeful outlook for
the future of the society. The ISS organizing secretary noted that, in the wake of the war, the socialist influence was spreading rapidly "in every civilized country of the world." ISS chapters, by assisting in the understanding of the world-wide movement, "are bound to fill a great need in the days ahead."16

The optimism of Laidler and the rest of the executive committee was understandable. The end of the war precipitated a regeneration of the depleted student populations, resulting in unprecedented enrollment levels.17 Socialism, true to Laidler's pronouncements, was indeed making an impact on the post-war world-most notably in the newly-formed Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, but also in countries such as Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Sweden, and France. The expected ISS resurgence, however, never occurred. Despite the repopulation of colleges, most of the problems that had arisen during the war continued to plague the group's efforts.

The greatest obstacle to campus chapters was the widespread mood of aggressive patriotism, xenophobia, and suspicion that lingered in the wake of the war. The same climate that spawned the "Red Scare" weighed upon the ISS. In 1919, the executive committee surveyed the nation's colleges and universities. The results led the disappointed committee to conclude that:

College students, faculties, and trustees have, in alarming number of instances, absorbed the general hysteria prevailing at present, and exert a pressure against organizations that consider unorthodox economic views.18

The decreasing number of students interested in ISS activity faced increased opposition. Intimidation and harassment by
college students and officials discouraged, frustrated, and punished ISS organizing efforts. Administrative obstacles constructed during the war were maintained and, in some cases, fortified. The chapter at the University of Illinois was denied access to college facilities. At Hunter College, the club was not permitted to affiliate with the ISS. Many groups were not allowed to present controversial speakers to the campus, while the organization of some chapters was prohibited altogether.\textsuperscript{19} To this overt opposition was added the more subtle but no less potent effect of a national student body that regarded radical ideologies with the same suspicion, fear, and hostility felt by the country at large.

The suspicious climate that characterized the years following World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, years during which "millions of Americans seriously thought that a Red revolution might begin in the United States,"\textsuperscript{20} spawned numerous attacks on suspected radicals. The National Association for Constitutional Government, in its \textit{Bulletin} of December, 1920, launched one such attack against the ISS. The edition of the recently established publication was entitled "Socialism in American Colleges," and was intended to invoke suspicion and urgent fear in the minds of readers regarding the ISS. The author, in an unfounded and misleading twist of logic, reasoned that:

It is fair to say that the ISS must favor and support the principles and platform of the Socialist Party, or else it would candidly disavow them, or take some other name, omitting the word 'Socialist' from its title, to show the divergence of its views.
The article proceeded to warn readers that the ISS had succeeded in infiltrating "many of our most honored and influential institutions," and was aimed at "the subversion of our constitutional system of government." In a passage that bordered on absurdity, the Bulletin misinformed readers that "nothing less than Marxian revolutionary communism is what the Intercollegiate Socialist Society aims to inculcate." A call to arms followed:

Do we want [college students’] minds to be poisoned by the insidious virus of socialism? Shall we complacently watch the growth among them of un-American ideas? . . . Unless we are totally indifferent to the outcome, the time is even now at hand when we must give serious heed to the means of counteracting the work of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society. 21

Just as the exposure of society’s problems by the muckrakers had done during the Progressive Era, anti-radical attacks, such as "Socialism in American Colleges," spoke to the ears of a generation. In the words of Max Horn: "The insistent attacks by influential persons and organizations--the self-appointed guardians of 100 percent Americanism--succeeded in painting the ISS as a clear and present danger to the republic." 22 The ISS was swimming against the tide of history, and the exertion showed. In 1916, the ISS had counted more than seventy college chapters among its ranks. At the outset of 1920, there were but eleven chapters affiliated with the society. 23

Aware of the dire circumstances faced by the ISS, the executive committee, in the spring of 1921, devised a plan for reorganization. The plan was approved, signaling the end of the ISS. A new group named the "League for Industrial Democracy,"
however, was founded during the same proceedings. The league's program, though, like that of the ISS, committed to promoting interest in socialism and related topics, was not aimed at college men and women—the group that had been the primary focus of the ISS program. The "death" of the ISS, which, like its birth, was achieved with minimal student input, resulted in a successor organization that was not directed at students. It also punctuated the end of an era of student awareness of, interest in, and concern for societal problems and proposed solutions.

The League for Industrial Democracy (LID) that emerged out of the ISS still exists. During the 1930s, the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), a campus extension of the LID, rekindled the tradition of politically-oriented student activity begun by the ISS. In 1959, the SLID, though remaining affiliated with its parent organization, renamed itself "Students for a Democratic Society." Six years later, in 1965, when the SDS severed its connections with the LID, a new and important phase in American student activism commenced.24
Notes: Chapter 1


3Ibid.


5Ibid., pp.38-40.


8Ibid., p.48.

9Ibid., p.57.

10Sinclair, The Goose Step, p.15.

11Ibid., p.4.

12Ibid., pp.65,73.


15Upton Sinclair to W. D. Howells, esq., 12 December 1904, Intercollegiate Socialist Society Papers, Tamiment Library Institute of New York University, New York. Henceforth, documents from this collection will be cited using the abbreviation "ISSP."

16William Lloyd Garrison to Upton Sinclair, 6 January 1905, ISSP; G. R. Carpenter to Upton Sinclair, 3 January 1905, ISSP.

17Thorstein Veblen to Upton Sinclair, 21 December 1904, ISSP.


19Richard T. Ely to Upton Sinclair, 23 December 1904, ISSP.
20 John R. Commons to Upton Sinclair, 20 December 1904, ISSP.


22 Clarence Darrow to Upton Sinclair, 21 December 1904; Benjamin O. Flower to Upton Sinclair, 15 February 1905, Oscar L. Triggs to Upton Sinclair, 16 January 1905, ISSP.

23 Horn, pp. 4-6.


26 Horn, p. 9; Laidler, "The History of the L.I.D.," p. 11.

27 Jack London to M. R. Holbrook, 20 September 1905, ISSP.

28 Horn, p. 5.


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3 M. R. Holbrook to Harry Laidler, 26 October 1905, ISSP.

4 Horn, pp. 11-12.


8 O'Connor, pp. 384, 42.

10Hillquit, p.61.


13Ibid., pp.305-317.


20Harvard Graduates' Magazine 22 (December 1913): 308.


23Veysey, p.279.


27Veysey, pp.319,352.

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32Ibid., p.198.
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2Ibid., p.29.
30’Connor, pp.251-273.
5Horn, p.61.
8"Summary of Activity," 26 May 1913, ISSP.
9Horn, p.85.
10"Finance of the ISS," 1917, ISSP.
11"Summary of Activity," 26 May 1913, ISSP.
13The Intercollegiate Socialist (February/ March 1917):17.
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15"Summary of Activity," 26 May 1913, ISSP.
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17Ibid.
18Ibid.
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20 Annual Statement of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, September 1912, ISSP.

21 "The Organizing Secretary's Report," December 1915, ISSP.

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23 Ibid.

24 Horn, p. 66; "The Organizing Secretary's Report," December 1915, ISSP.

25 "The Vitality of the Socialist Movement," ISSP.

26 "The Organizing Secretary's Report," December 1915, ISSP.


28 Ibid., pp. 18-20.


32 Ibid., pp. 293-294.

33 Horn, p. 121.


39 Walter Lippmann to Harry Laidler, 18 August 1910, ISSP.

40 "Petition for a Course on Socialism (1910)," A. Laurence Lowell Papers, Harvard University Archives.

41 Frances B. Thwing. "Radicalism at Harvard," The Harvard
Graduates' Magazine 20 (December 1911):260.

42Ibid.


44Lipset and Schaflander, p.149.

Notes: Chapter 4

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2Ibid.

3"The Organizing Secretary's Report," December 1915, ISSP.


6Horn, p.xii.


8Ibid., p.247.


10Kipnis, p.32.

11Ibid., p.170.

12Lipset and Schaflander, p.35.

13Ibid., p.36.

14Veysey, p.67.

15Horn, p.28.

16Lipset and Schaflander, p.147.


18Feuer, p.135.

43Ibid., p.28.
44Veysey, p.272.
45Horn, p.110.
50Horn, pp.235-236.

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1Laidler, "What the ISS Stands for."
3The Intercollegiate Socialist (October/ November 1913):25.
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12Ibid., p.154.
13Daily Cardinal, 1 December 1917, p.4.
14 Harry Laidler to ISS Membership, 7 May 1917, Helen Sumner Woodbury Papers.

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