

DOWNLOAD PDF WHY IS THERE NO SOCIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES?

Chapter 1 : Is socialism in the United States having a moment? | PBS NewsHour

Taken together, it is no wonder the United States is plummeting in the Index of Economic Freedom. As Europe flees from social democracy and its ailments, America runs towards it at full speed.

Site Manager Page tags It seems you have no tags attached to pages. To attach a tag simply click on the tags button at the bottom of any page. Add a new page edit this panel No Socialism Here: It focuses on the American Socialist Party and the explanations for its eventual electoral irrelevance. Capitalism had not yet fully developed and many believed its inherent structure promoted inequality and class division. Indianapolis, Indiana of marked the birthplace of the Socialist Party. Behind the leadership of the dynamic Eugene Debs, the S. In just over a decade, the Socialist Party increased its electoral presence ten-fold 95, in to , in The Socialist Party heightened class-consciousness among workers, elected officials to office, and aided the fledgling labor movement of early twentieth century America. However, by most historical accounts the Socialist Party by would no longer pose a legitimate political threat to the more established Democratic and Republican Parties. Even during the Great Depression , when capitalism lay sick and enfeebled, the Socialist Party failed to establish inroads in American political culture. How do historians explain this rapid decline? How have views changed over the course of the past twentieth century? Literature and histories concerning the Socialist Party of America S. As historians have placed distance between themselves and the S. Relationships to the S. First, the lack of a feudal past left citizens of the United States rather ignorant on issues of labor and class. The right to vote encompassed so many women excluded , that only two lines for class determination were left, economic and social. As a result, class lines were severely blurred, making Socialist insurgency difficult. One might argue Sombart incorrectly assumes that class division is a natural manifestation of societal growth, however, considering the persistence of class structure upon societies from the Egyptians to the modern United States, Sombart might well be on solid ground. Second, the overall material prosperity in the United States and its ensuing economic expansion undermined Socialist arguments of the moment. Two myths combined for the third and fourth tenets of Sombart five part outline, the myth of social mobility and the open frontier. Finally, Sombart argued the two party system embedded itself so deeply in American political culture, that third parties had difficulties in even establishing themselves on the ballot. In his text, Perlman asserts many of the same points that Sombart articulated, although, Perlman contributes two important conclusions of his own. First, immigration waves i. Secondly, the lack of a socially and physically settled wage earning class blunted class-consciousness. Interestingly, both Perlman and Sombart, concluded that while Socialism had not yet established itself within U. Cold War tensions played no small part in this renewed interest. While some historians focused on the internal matters that led to the S. Such an approach has an obvious appeal for more optimistic left oriented historians. For if essentially, unchanging aspects of American society are responsible for the failure of Socialism there appears to be little reason to hope for a future revival of socialist fortunes. Descriptions of unchanging American ideology, or timeless aspects of the American social order such as mobility, leave little room for understanding the powerful American radical tradition based upon cross-class movements and appeals to moral sentiment rather than economic interest. Nor can they explain those periods when socialist politics did attract widespread support. However, internal writers are forced to historicize the moment because they must identify forces acting on the Socialist Party. The actors in internal histories have motivations based on historical contingencies which do well to explain the direction and shape of the movement at that moment. However, with the above noted, many historians have come to similar conclusions as to when the S. Moreover, most of the historical investigation of this period found similar external and internal forces to be at fault for the S. Therefore, despite nearly years of historical inquiry, historians seem to be mired in the same spot as Sombart in According to Kipnis, the Socialist Party formed in behind the leadership of American Marxists who believed capitalism eroded economic equality and corrupted democracy. Kipnis argues that the S. It [the Socialist Party] elected well over two thousand of its members to

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public office. It secured passage of hundreds of reforms, and contributed to the adoption of many times more. It won position and influence in the American Federation of Labor and led in the organization of a small but militant revolutionary union IWW. Clearly, whatever may have been the objective difficulties in advocating socialism in the wealthiest and most democratic capitalistic country in the world, the Socialist Party had achieved some notable success. Briefly, Kipnis attributed the S. Of these four central issues, the factionalism of the S. Kipnis argues that factionalism was an under current within the S. While workers and union leaders made up the left wing, the right wing, according to Kipnis, consisted of middle class lawyers, professionals, and small businessmen. Subsequently, each held different social and economic interests; the left fought for a complete restructuring of the economic and political system, while the right wing believed it could transform the structural form through elected office. Instead, it had been corrupted by them. Considered by most historians, as one of the standard histories concerning the Socialist Party, Shannon also focuses on the internal issues that brought American Socialism to its grave. Although his historical inquiry revolves around internal factors, Shannon does acknowledge the difficulty the S. According to Shannon, the S. The party seemed unsure of whether it was a pressure group, revolutionary sect, political forum, or an electoral political party. This deficiency along with a lack of interest in local issues, the failure in courting organized labor, the seemingly inherent factionalism, the poor system of communication between the public and the party, and its negative attitude toward political organizing all helped to undermine the S. According to Bell, a distinct feature of modernity is the separation of ethics and politics: But that faithful entry into politics â€ becomes a far reaching goal which demands a radical commitment that necessarily transforms politics into an all-or-none battle. An organization that fails to vigorously promote its agenda and actively organize politically can not hope to attain or establish itself permanently in the confines of mainstream society. Moreover, Bell argues that by opposing the capitalist system, the S. While similarities and differences abound in each work, what themes or arguments surface repeatedly throughout the period? First, all three authors note the intense factionalism of the S. Shannon and Bell both see the S. Kipnis and Shannon both mark as the watershed year for American Socialism, with every year following it a gradual decline in the S. As will be discussed shortly, historians hotly contest this view. Each author, including Bell, notes that Socialism lost many adherents to Wilsonian Liberalism and later, as only Shannon discusses because of his more expansive periodization , to Franklin D. Bell even goes so far as to label the S. As will be discussed, many current historians do not see as the S. Instead, Weinstein suggests that the movement sustained itself and even built support. While many of the historians of the Consensus period argued that World War I greatly damaged the party it took an isolationist i. I actually delivered new constituencies to the Party. Kipnis argued that racism, predominantly from the center and right within the Party, undermined the movement. This, however, should not be too surprising since the thesis of rapid decline is itself invalid, as we shall see. Bell, Weinstein points out, approaches the topic from a rigidly ideological standpoint. Within the text, Weinstein disputes the rapid decline model, instead arguing that the S. However, Weinstein argues that even the period from the S. Weinstein focuses on the Socialist Movement rather than the Socialist Party, thus his emphasis lay in Socialism and not the political relevance of the S. The Party had reached the peak of its strength just halfway to As we have seen, its decline was not a simple or steady process of disintegration. From until the United States entered the war, the Socialist Party remained a vital radical force in America. Unlike Kipnis, who blames the S. Much like Weinstein, Harrington argues that while the Party contracted post, it remained a vital political presence. Moreover, while many of the older historians Shannon, Kipnis and Weinstein argue that the S. Organized labor had thrown its support behind Roosevelt and the New Deal, leaving the Socialist Party with middle class leftism. Ironically, Harrington agrees with Shannon, Kipnis, and Bell regarding the factionalism that constantly shook up the party. Unlike any of the other authors, Harrington does not assert that the S. Instead of asking why Socialism failed, he asks: Why should it have succeeded? Rather, he discusses the issue in a manner most similar to Bell. While he places blame on the S. And even after both kinds of reasons â€ the socioeconomic and the cultural â€ are taken into account, there remains an important margin with regard to intelligence or obtuseness,

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correct or mistaken strategies, which helped to determine whether American Socialism was to be a measurable force or an isolated sect. That the American socialist movement must take upon itself a considerable portion of the responsibility for its failure, I have tried to show in three earlier chapters. Many historians view Socialism as an American impossibility. According to these historians, external factors prevented socialism from gaining a foothold in American political and social culture. Thus, such historians argue that problems like factionalism or the inability to compromise undermined the Socialist Movement. Which proves more accurate? Arguments based on external factors such as American exceptionalism some historians might suggest the belief in such exceptionalism deserves to be identified as a weakness suffer from broad generalization. External arguments frequently make broad generalizations and fail to historicize historical moments. Also, these arguments often cut both ways. Social mobility is offered as an external factor defeating socialism, yet as Eric Foner points out:

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Chapter 2 : Why is there no socialism in the United States? | League for the Fifth International

Why Is There No Socialism In the United States is the title of an essay written in serial form in the late s by Werner Sombart, the most prominent European socialist of his time, and compiled into a book with that title in Sombart had come to the United States to determine why American workers had rejected socialist remedies that had.

Lipset, a former president of the American Political Science Association and the American Sociological Association, has dealt with this issue for much of his long professional career, beginning with *Agrarian Socialism*: University of California Press, From the present book, we learn a great deal about socialist party activity from to , but almost nothing about socialist party organization and movements after Moreover, the authors devote little attention to the influence of socialist public policy both before and after this sixty-year period. The question might be put: What difference does it make that socialist parties in the United States failed by the middle of the twentieth century if socialist policy, state regulation, and state enterprise flourished in the United States both before and after ? Let us review the basics of the book. Lipset and Marks identify three aspects dependent variables of the failure of socialism: Although most analysts would concede the first two points, the latter point is problematical because a reasonable argument and substantial evidence much of it provided by Lipset and Marks themselves indicate that the national Democratic Party adopted a socialist agenda in the s and that socialist ideals influenced many Democrats from the s through to the s. Even today, the left wing of the national Democratic Party, led by Senators Ted Kennedy, Paul Wellstone, and Hillary Clinton, regularly resorts to socialist nostrums such as state regulation, state participation in the economy, and the expansion of the welfare state. Throughout the book, the authors explore the determinants independent variables of the failure of socialism through comparative and historical analysis. They point to four interacting factors: They regard the first factor as the leading influence and the next two as sufficient in causing the absence of entrenched socialist partyism. The last factor they find to have had limited influence. Lipset and Marks provide little evidence, despite its importance for their explanation, regarding the role of individualism and antistatism in undoing socialist and labor parties. Unlike other aspects of their analysis, this one receives no chapter-length comparative consideration. Egalitarianism and statism, however, have actively countervailed against commercial values in U. From colonial times to the turn of the twenty-first century, as Jonathan R. Princeton University Press, , redistributed wealth, state control, and constrained commerce, as opposed to political party developments, have been the real fruits of socialism in America. Another determinant putatively encouraging the decline of socialism is the heterogeneity of the American working class. American workers do not exhibit working-class solidarity or consciousness because they are attracted to the benefits of material prosperity and upward social mobility, and they correctly understand class solidarity to be an impediment to their prosperity and mobility. Lipset and Marks also cite the failure of socialist party leaders to compromise with union leaders to form a viable labor party. This argument and the evidence brought to bear on it are more convincing. Federalism also assisted the dominance of the two-party system, although, as the authors point out, access to elective offices at the state and municipal levels actually helped socialist candidates at the turn of the twentieth century. As noted, Lipset and Marks give short shrift to the socialist policy aspects of the national Democratic Party starting in the s. Moreover, they overlook the Republican appropriation of Keynesian policy nostrums during the s and s: Indeed, socialism is alive and well in America. Consider the consolidation of the welfare state by the Social Security Act; the undermining of free-labor markets by an ongoing series of statutes; the provision of health care for welfare recipients and the elderly through Medicaid and Medicare; the microregulation of business activity through the antitrust laws; the intrusive and costly environmental laws; and the massive spending on health, education, and various forms of welfare. The idea that socialism has failed in America clearly defies empirical observation.

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Chapter 3 : History of the socialist movement in the United States - Wikipedia

there no socialism in the United States" seeks to understand, four underlying questions must be answered. First, why has there been little expressly socialist presence in American politics and.

Politics Mar 27, 4: But on the other end of the political spectrum, socialist organizations across the country are quietly experiencing a surge in popularity of their own, driven in part by Vermont Sen. Socialism has long been at the fringe of center-left politics in the United States. Xu said he first encountered socialist politics on trips to Europe in the past few years. After the election, Xu and a friend founded the Cal Tech chapter of the Young Democratic Socialists, the student arm of the national Democratic Socialist of America organization. What the moment represents, though, is not yet entirely clear. In , Democrats were crushed in state races. Now, only five states have Democratic-controlled state legislatures and Democratic governors; 25 states have complete Republican control. Democrats lost a presidential election that many thought was in the bag, and Republicans maintained control of Congress. The losses sparked a period of soul-searching in Democratic Party establishment circles. The Democratic Socialists of America endorsed Sanders, and many of its members worked on his campaign. More than 6, people joined the organization after Sanders jumped into the race, Schwartz said. In , voters from Milwaukee elected Victor Berger to the U. House of Representatives, making him the first socialist to serve in Congress. Eugene Debs, who formed the Socialist Party with Berger and other activists, represented the movement on a national level, becoming a household name thanks to his five presidential bids between and For his campaign, Debs received nearly a million votes in the general election, despite being in jail for violating the Espionage Act. At the time, the Socialist Party was a diverse voting bloc that included immigrants, Southern farmers, Christian socialists, urban intellectuals, and writers and activists like Upton Sinclair and Helen Keller, Barrett said. Socialist Party and Russian-style socialism that never entirely went away, Barrett said. Activists add rose emojis to their Twitter profiles, instead of wearing the black armbands that were popular when Debs was a perennial White House contender. But 21st century socialist groups in the U. Bernie Sanders, a self-described Democratic socialist, speaks at a campaign rally in Stockton, California on May 10, His presidential campaign helped spark new interest in socialism in the U. Perez won in a close vote, but named Ellison as DNC vice-chairman, giving the progressive wing of the party a top leadership slot. It now has 30, subscribers, a nearly percent increase in just four months. He compared it to libertarian think tanks that have helped drive conservative policy on the right in recent decades. But the movement still faces plenty of opposition from the right. Schwartz, of the Democratic Socialists of America, argued that socialism was poised to become an important part of the American left. Bernie Sanders supporters prepare for a march at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia last year. Socialist groups are experiencing a surge in popularity, underscoring divisions within the Democratic Party.

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Chapter 4 : Why Is There No Socialism In The United States? by Werner Sombart

Socialism, so some purists would say, has never really happened anywhere - or else has failed everywhere. What the authors mean, though, is that the US, uniquely among major industrial states.

Reuters At the turn of the 20th century, German sociologist Werner Sombart asked: Why is there no socialism in the United States? I believe the answer is simple: It is an attitude and outlook that has been safeguarded from the beginning, one that has only been maintained through constant vigilance Through an explosion of federal spending, encroachment on the private sector and expansion of the public sector, President Barack Obama is threatening our the laissez-faire capitalist system so many have attempted to emulate, which leaves me dumbfounded. They measure 10 freedoms and average those into one overall economic freedom score , signifying the most free. It received a score of In less than four years, the United States has dropped to 10th freest, obtaining a score of Regulations, Federal Spending and Taxation First, there have been unprecedented levels of federal spending accompanied by a transfer of wealth from citizens to the government. According to the U. How has Obama attempted to ameliorate his skyrocketing debt? Not through cutting spending, but raising taxes. Each of his budgets proposes giant tax hikes. Business is hamstrung and, along with it, our economy. Expansion of the Welfare State Second, as the private sector contracts through this transfer of wealth, the public sector expands. Perhaps most telling is that 47 percent of Americans now receive one or more federal benefit payments, the highest ever recorded in American history. Some would say this is a result of economic hardship -- welfare payments are up along with the unemployment rate. Even so, if Obama was concerned with reducing the welfare state rather than expanding it, he would have embraced something along the lines of H. Instead of promising to reduce the welfare state, Obama seeks to expand it through the invasive vehicle of Obamacare. By , the federal government must develop two national health insurance plans through the Office of Personnel Management, or OPM. The OPM plans will compete with private plans in health insurance exchanges and will have standards separate from those of the private sector, thereby giving them an unfair advantage. Moffit of the Heritage Foundation noted that proponents of the public option view it as an ideal vehicle to undercut private health plans and ensure a rapid evolution toward a single-payer system. Once again, the public sector grows. As Europe flees from social democracy and its ailments, America runs towards it at full speed. Though we certainly have not reached the point of socialism or even social democracy, I cannot help but wonder if Werner Sombart would so readily ask about the absence of socialism in America today. She is the founder of www. She writes every Tuesday for the International Business Times.

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Chapter 5 : Revival: Why is there no Socialism in the United States? () - CRC Press Book

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New Harmony as envisioned by Owen Utopian socialism was the American first socialist movement. Utopians attempted to develop model socialist societies to demonstrate the virtues of their brand of beliefs. Most utopian socialist ideas originated in Europe, but the United States was most often the site for the experiments themselves. Robert Owen, a wealthy Welsh industrialist, turned to social reform and socialism and in founded a communitarian colony called New Harmony in southwestern Indiana. The group fell apart in , mostly due to conflict between utopian ideologues and non-ideological pioneers. All hope for its survival was lost when the expensive, Fourier-inspired main building burnt down while under construction. The community dissolved in The community had already begun to decline after an ideological schism in He became the most popular socialist advocate of his day, with a special appeal to English artisans were being undercut by factories. In the s, Cabet led groups of emigrants to found utopian communities in Texas and Illinois. However, his work was undercut by his many feuds with his own followers. The book sold millions of copies and became one of the best-selling American books of the nineteenth century. The book is still widely referred to today as one of the most influential works of literature in modern history. Josiah Warren is widely regarded as the first American anarchist [16] and the four-page weekly paper he edited during , The Peaceful Revolutionist, was the first anarchist periodical published. He coined the phrase " Cost the limit of price ", with "cost" here referring not to monetary price paid but the labor one exerted to produce an item. They could exchange the notes at local time stores for goods that took the same amount of time to produce". The store proved successful and operated for three years, after which it was closed so that Warren could pursue establishing colonies based on mutualism. These included " Utopia " and " Modern Times ". Greene presented this Proudhonian Mutualism in its purest and most systematic form". The economic principles of Modern Socialism are a logical deduction from the principle laid down by Adam Smith in the early chapters of his Wealth of Nations,â€”namely, that labor is the true measure of price. Half a century or more after Smith enunciated the principle above stated, Socialism picked it up where he had dropped it, and in following it to its logical conclusions, made it the basis of a new economic philosophy This seems to have been done independently by three different men, of three different nationalities, in three different languages: Josiah Warren , an American; Pierre J. That the work of this interesting trio should have been done so nearly simultaneously would seem to indicate that Socialism was in the air, and that the time was ripe and the conditions favorable for the appearance of this new school of thought. So far as priority of time is concerned, the credit seems to belong to Warren, the American,â€”a fact which should be noted by the stump orators who are so fond of declaiming against Socialism as an imported article. By , there were 22 sections, which held a convention in New York. Lasalle regarded state aid through political action as the road to revolution and opposed trade unionism, which he saw as futile, believing that according to the iron law of wages employers would only pay subsistence wages. However, many socialists abandoned political action altogether and moved to trade unionism. The party was made up overwhelmingly of German immigrants, who had brought Marxist ideals with them to North America. So strong was the heritage that the official party language was German for the first three years. In its nascent years, the party encompassed a broad range of various socialist philosophies, with differing concepts of how to achieve their goals. Nevertheless, there was a militia â€”the Lehr und Wehr Verein â€”affiliated to the party. When the SLP reorganised as a Marxist party in , its philosophy solidified and its influence quickly grew and by around the start of the 20th century the SLP was the foremost American socialist party. He also adamantly supported unions , but criticized the collective bargaining movement within the United States at the time, favoring a slightly different approach. As a leader within the socialist movement, Debs movement quickly gained national recognition as a charismatic orator.

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He was often inflammatory and controversial, but also strikingly modest and inspiring. You must use your heads as well as your hands, and get yourself out of your present condition". Debs lent a great and powerful air to the revolution with his speaking: It included "scores of former Populists, militant miners, and blacklisted railroad workers, who were Haack, the owner of a shoe store in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Haack was elected to the city council in as a member of the Populist Party, but soon became a socialist following the organization of Social Democrats in Sheboygan. He was re-elected alderman in on the Socialist ticket, along with August L. Mohr, a local baseball manager. Haack served on the city council for sixteen years, advocating for the building of schools and public ownership of utilities. He was recognized as the first socialist officeholder in the United States at the national Socialist Party convention held in Milwaukee. Louis general strike grew out of the Great Railroad Strike of When the railroad strike reached East St. Louis, Illinois in July, the St. Please expand the article to include this information. Further details may exist on the talk page. In an attempt to rebel against the abuses of corporations, workers had found a solution—or so they thought—in a technique of collective bargaining. By banding together into "unions" and by refusing to work, or "striking", workers would halt production at a plant or in a mine, forcing management to meet their demands. They shared as one major ideal the spirit of collectivism—both in the socialist platform and in the idea of collective bargaining. In or, Uriah S. Stephens founded the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor, employing secrecy and fostering a semireligious aura to "create a sense of solidarity". The socialist movement was able to gain strength from its ties to labor. They hired strikebreakers and pressured government to call in the national militia when workers refused to do their jobs. A number of strikes dissolved into violent confrontations. When police arrived, an unknown person threw a bomb into the crowd, killing one person and injuring several others. In early, a dispute broke out between George Pullman and his employees. Debs, then leader of the American Railway Union, organized a strike. United States Attorney General Olney and President Grover Cleveland took the matter to court and were granted several injunctions preventing railroad workers from "interfering with interstate commerce and the mails". Said one judge, "[neither] the weapon of the insurrectionist, nor the inflamed tongue of him who incites fire and sword is the instrument to bring about reforms". In, one of the most bitter labor conflicts in American history took place at a mining colony in Colorado called Ludlow. After workers went on strike in September with grievances ranging from requests for an eight-hour day to allegations of subjugation, Colorado governor Elias Ammons called in the National Guard in October That winter, Guardsmen made arrests. Twenty-six people, including two women and eleven children, were killed. The military, which saw strikers as dangerous insurgents, intimidated and threatened them. These attitudes compounded with a public backlash against anarchists and radicals. As public opinion of strikes and of unions soured, the socialists often appeared guilty by association. They were lumped together[by whom? Early American anarchism[edit] Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, prominent anarcho-communists photo circa — The American anarchist Benjamin Tucker — focused on economics, advocating "Anarchistic-Socialism" [37] and adhering to the mutualist economics of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Josiah Warren while publishing his eclectic influential publication Liberty. Lysander Spooner —, besides his individualist anarchist activism, was also an important anti-slavery activist and became a member of the First International. Joseph Labadie was an American labor organizer, individualist anarchist, social activist, printer, publisher, essayist and poet. Without the oppression of the state, Labadie believed, humans would choose to harmonize with "the great natural laws However, he supported community cooperation as he supported community control of water utilities, streets and railroads. In, Labadie organized the Michigan Federation of Labor, became its first president and forged an alliance with Samuel Gompers. He developed a "mutualist" theory of unions and as such was active within the Knights of Labor and later promoted anti-political strategies in the American Federation of Labor. Frustration with abolitionism, spiritualism and labor reform caused Lum to embrace anarchism and to radicalize workers, as he came to believe that revolution would inevitably involve a violent struggle between the working class and the employing class. Most anarchist publications in the United States were in Yiddish, German, or Russian, but Free Society was

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published in English, permitting the dissemination of anarchist communist thought to English-speaking populations in the United States. Debs and vice presidential candidate Emil Seidel Victor L. Berger gained national publicity for his old-age pension bill, the first of its kind introduced into Congress. Less than two weeks after the Titanic.

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Chapter 6 : OccupyForum presents . . . Why There is No Socialism In the United States with George Wright

Abstract. The gap between rich and poor in the United States yawns wider than in any other first-wave industrialized country. Why? One influential explanation points to the historic failure of American workers to build a class-wide movement for economic redistribution and social welfare protections.

Why is there no socialism in the United States? The eye-watering amounts of money thrown at Obama and McCain by the American rich testify to the simple fact that both the Democrats and Republicans are capitalist parties – neither has ever represented the independent interests of American workers. Sombart, however, was the first to relate the discourse on American exceptionalism to the prevalent political ideas across the working class and his work has been continually re-examined since. In Europe, a militant trade union movement and mass strikes went alongside the development of mass parties of the working class that were organised as part of the Second International. Like Europe, the United States had gone through a series of mass strike waves from till the end of the century, and had developed a national trade union federation, the American Federation of Labour AFL in . However, unlike Europe, repeated attempts at standing labour candidates or forming labour parties to fight elections had not led to the formation of a national labour party. Within a decade it turned to supporting the Democrats. The Socialist Party, which had over , members and a thousand local and state officials at one point, was the closest the US working class ever came to developing a mass working class party, but it never broke through to become the party of the working class like the European Social Democratic and Labour Parties and, from its peak in , it went into decline. The next major upsurge of strikes and industrial unionism of the s created renewed agitation for a labour party but this was ultimately channelled into support for Roosevelt. Since Sombart, academics have puzzled over this idea of American exceptionalism – what is it about American society that has hindered the development of mass class-based politics? Their status as imperialist powers had consequences for domestic class relations too, as it led to the development of a large middle class and a privileged upper stratum of the working class. These similarities were of practical importance in the Marxist tradition because of the barriers they erected in the imperialist countries to revolutionary socialist change. The American working class was particularly notable for the degree of inequality and stratification within its ranks. The consequent lack of class-consciousness has been a particular problem; even trade unions have been known on occasion to identify their members as middle class, something that may be unique to the United States. Amongst American radicals, populism, as opposed to class-based socialist values, has often prevailed. To this can be added the role of violence and repression from armed gangs of strikebreakers in the 19th century to the anti-communist witch-hunts of the McCarthy years. Too often, however, debates around American exceptionalism essentially become arguments over which one of these sociological factors is of the most fundamental significance. The danger with such reductionism is that the politics of the matter become lost and history is presented, not as being subject to change and contingency, but as a linear, teleological process that could not have happened any other way. Wrong conclusions, which imply the immunity of American workers to socialist thinking, are often drawn, but these are impossible to square with the radicalism and fierce class struggles that have actually shaped American labour movement history. In short, just as Lenin did not see the labour aristocracy as an insurmountable barrier to winning workers in the imperialist countries to communism, neither can we explain the historic failure to build a working class party in the United States by such objective conditions alone. That this potential was not realised has to be explained, ultimately, by the politics of those who did not grasp the opportunities presented. The question of an independent, working class party The need for independent working class political organisation is based on the simple fact that workers need representation not only by unions in the workplaces but also at the political level. In the 19th century, trade unions quickly confronted this problem when they realised that they needed to fight for the state to legislate and enforce even the bare minimum of health and safety standards in industry. The working class as a whole, both inside and outside the

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unions, as workers or as pensioners, housewives, unemployed or students, will always seek to use its democratic rights to try to better its social and economic position. For Marx and Engels and, later, Lenin and Trotsky, responding to this felt need of workers for political representation, and fighting for immediate improvements in the living conditions of the working class, was essential to linking their day-to-day struggles to the goal of socialist revolution. For reformist trade union leaders, who did not have this method or goal, the preferred tactic regarding political representation was generally to advocate support for one of the bourgeois parties in the hope they could be persuaded to grant limited social reforms. The major parties of the Second International, like the German Social Democratic Party, were founded as Marxist political organisations, committed to revolution and socialism. They developed into mass parties of the working class by the early 20th century. As part of their programme of organising the working class, they often took the initiative in establishing unions themselves. Firstly, why did the Marxists not win the leadership of the working class and found a mass, Marxist party? Secondly, why did the trade unions not found a party to represent their interests as they had done in Britain and Australia? The various large Social Democratic, Socialist, and Labour Parties in Europe and elsewhere all have a working class base but are capitalist parties deeply embedded in state institutions, and committed to defending capitalism. Conversely they have never been parties of the ruling class either, i. In the 19th century, Marx and Engels had made the development of this class independence through a class party the starting point of their struggle. This was a time when the working class began to coalesce, developing out of the petty-bourgeoisie, peasantry, artisans and the dispossessed who were driven into the factories under the hammer blows of early industrial capitalism. In their very first programmatic document, the Communist Manifesto, they famously laid down the necessity of revolutionaries not standing aside from the movements and parties of the working class but intervening into them. The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties. This was an issue that led Marx into conflict with the English trade unionists in the First International. Marx had argued that class struggle unions, open to the mass of lower-paid, brutalised workers, could create the best conditions for revolutionary change because the interests of this stratum were irreconcilable with capitalism. He spelled out his vision for the unions thus: They must aid every social and political movement tending in that direction. Considering themselves and acting as the champions and representatives of the whole working class, they cannot fail to enlist the non-society men into their ranks. They must look carefully after the interests of the worst paid trades, such as the agricultural labourers, rendered incapable of organised resistance by exceptional circumstances. They must convince the broad masses of workers that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions. The struggle against utopianism took place not only in the First International but also in the early beginnings of the German Social Democracy. This included letters, meetings, critiques and polemics in order to try to push the fragile, first organisations of the working class onto the correct road without prematurely splitting them. This was a general principle they adopted in their political activism working, for example, with the conservative English trade union leaders in the First International and in the first German socialist party initiated by Lasalle in the 1840s and it held especially true for the relatively underdeveloped American working class. As Engels put it: And this step has been taken, much more rapidly than we had a right to expect, and that is the main thing. That the first programme of this party is still confused and extremely deficient and that it has raised the banner of Henry George are unavoidable evils but also merely transitory ones. The masses must have time and opportunity to develop, and they have the opportunity only when they have a movement of their own – no matter in what form so long as it is their own movement – in which they are driven further by their own mistakes and learn from their experience. To expect that the Americans will start with the full consciousness of the theory worked out in older industrial countries is to expect the impossible. Lenin stressed that strategy and tactics had to take into account changing historical and social contexts and the specific political and economic conditions found in different countries. From this point on, the context is no longer the era of the first appearance of the working class on the political stage out of inchoate beginnings, free from historical experience and the mistakes and

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lessons it contains, as had been the case in the 19th century. A growing national market and production were powered forward by a series of reinforcing, interlocking trends. Population grew in leaps and bounds with massive bursts of European immigration. Alongside the development of the railways, the growth of manufacturing and the factory system in textiles created the beginnings of a working class before the Civil War, but it remained weak and in the shadow of the other, larger layers of farmers, craftsmen and middle classes. Workshops, rather than large factories, remained the norm. Workers had significant mobility in the context of expanding agricultural land and urbanisation, and could become farmers or set up as small employers themselves. A fragile trade union movement went through a cycle of developing local or citywide organisations only to see them destroyed by unemployment whenever crises and recessions erupted. By granting, albeit very limited, suffrage to some citizens at this time, the American state created unusual political conditions for working class activity. If only the capitalists or the state could be convinced to allow the panacea proposed and pay for it then there would be no need to fight. The Civil War boosted the growth of manufacturing and railway construction, with the first transcontinental railway completed in 1869. In the years following the war, industry took off dramatically. To put this in perspective, this was over twice the size of its next largest rival, Britain, and over half the size of all Europe. In the years following the Civil War, the first national unions sprung up. A National Labour Union was organised in 1869, the first national federation with national unions, city centrals and local unions affiliating. Despite opponents shelving this into a national labour committee, the question reappeared year after year with increasing intensity. The NLU was to falter, however, on the political question. Lassalean influences meant that it moved away from organising unions, the number of union delegates fell from conference to conference until all the unions had left it. The contradictions in the working class movement grew to bursting point in the decades after the Civil War. The needs of the working class for independent class organisation and action – strikes, unions and a party – came up against the continued pressure to fall in behind the rising agrarian populism and middle class reformers. The US developed into the biggest industrial power and exporter before World War One, and a major financial power afterwards. The wealth created by the huge development of the productive forces and supplemented by the massive flow of tribute from the semi-colonial world, developed a skewed domestic class structure, with a large middle class and labour aristocracy that had a high standard of living, even compared to other imperialist countries. That the social weight of these middle strata has had a major impact on the class struggle in the US cannot be denied. Related to this, we can also point to the unusually high level of stratification in the US working class compared to other imperialist countries. A minority of skilled, well-paid, mostly white and male workers, with a middle class outlook and standard of living, are, to a degree, separated off from, and sometimes hostile to, a mass of poorer, unskilled, labouring masses, often black, or Latino migrants. Instead they consist primarily of those whose demands for better wages, hours and conditions can be accommodated by American capitalism. Meanwhile, the mass of poorer, more casualised workers, with their more radical demands, are left unorganised and cut off from the power of the unions. The American capitalist class, with the economic power it wielded through its massive monopolies, and the repression it could unleash by its private strikebreaking forces, state militias and Federal troops, was much more powerful relative to the working class movement it faced. This led Kautsky to conclude: In 1890, only white male property owners, around 15 per cent of the population, had the vote, and men with no property, women, slaves, some free black men, Native Americans, apprentices, labourers, felons and those considered incompetent for whatever reason, were all excluded. In stark contrast to this, the enslavement of the Black American population, with no social or political rights at all, let alone suffrage, did not come to an end until following the Civil War and they only gained citizenship and voting rights with the passing of the fifteenth amendment in 1870. As Trotsky put it: The role of anti-immigrant Nativist movements in exacerbating religious differences, equating Americanism with protestantism and anti-catholicism, is also an underlying factor in the continued importance of religious divisions. The proliferation of these ideas is, to a degree, a reflection of immigration and the economic, material divisions it created within the working class. However, this is not the decisive factor in explaining the

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failure to advance on these fronts. Material factors become secondary once industry and the working class have reached their modern form. At such an historical stage, political leadership becomes key to the development of events and the patterns of change and continuity. From the 1880s, the working class engaged in mass mobilisations and new organisations were built. From the mass layers of the unskilled and semi-skilled proletarians, the potential was there to break open the craft-dominated unions, and to build sizeable vanguard parties through a consistent revolutionary struggle. Craft unions versus class organisation In the period 1880-1900, the US underwent a long deflationary crisis and period of stagnation, bracketed by major depressions in 1893 and 1907 that saw declining profit margins and record bankruptcy rates. In this period, industrial growth saw shorter periods of expansion and the growth rate halved. The 1892 Pullman strike had seen railway workers rally thousands of trade unionists and unorganised, impoverished workers across the continent into solidarity strikes, blockades of rail yards and battles with police and even troops. National assemblies of workers in particular industries were encouraged in the effort to organise all workers into one, single organisation. The Knights successfully organised women workers with 50,000 women members at its peak albeit out of a total membership of 1,000,000, and 80 per cent of these in the Massachusetts textile and shoe factories. Tens of thousands of black workers in the South also joined the Knights, up to 60,000 nationally or ten percent of the organisation, though not without a struggle against segregation in the organisation. In assemblies, in strikes, in marches, the Knights achieved an unprecedented level of working class, trans-race unity which was not to be seen again for nearly another century. As a reporter at a Labour Day parade in Baltimore said in 1892, black and white workers were:

Chapter 7 : Why is there no left (Socialist, Communist or Labor) party in the United States?

Werner Sombart was a German economist and sociologist, the head of the "Youngest Historical School" and one of the leading Continental European social scientists during the first quarter of the 20th century.

Chapter 8 : No Socialism Here: The Failure of America's Socialist Party - Videri

In the late nineteenth century, the United States was the most advanced capitalist country. According to a Marxist model, this should result in the rise of socialist movements. The advance of capitalism is considered to eventually produce the means that will bring about its downfall. Why, then, has it not?

Chapter 9 : Why Is There No Socialism In America?

Many theories have been offered to explain the absence of socialism as a significant political force in the United States. Although no theory will satisfactorily explain a "non-happening," this article offers an unusual theory: that federalism is more powerful than any other factor.