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Introduction

DURING A SWING THROUGH the Mountain West in the winter of 1915, a nearly exhausted Eugene Debs demanded to know how Socialist party staff workers could have expected him to make it from Tooele, Utah, in time for his next engagement in Burley, Idaho. Debs complained: “The place is almost inaccessible—no earthly way to get from there to Burley and the latter is lost to us, notwithstanding I have been up all night and am about half dead in the vain struggle to get there. . . . I can’t go out of a hot hall, covered with sweat, and climb into an open buggy on a bitter cold, raw night and ride 17 miles over half-frozen roads and then stand waiting for a train until I’m frozen numb—nor can anyone else.”¹ Debs did not make it to Burley, no doubt disappointing hundreds who saw the notices of his visit that were prominently displayed in local newspapers. At the time—February 1915—Debs was on one of his many educational tours, which he described as “lecturing my way into insanity.” He much preferred rushing into some strike where he could take a direct

part in the class struggle, something he had frequently done in the Mountain West.²

The region—encompassing the states of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming—from 1890 to 1920 was a hotbed of radical activity on both the political and industrial (economic) fronts. The radicals wanted not to simply reform the capitalistic system but to replace it with something they felt was better, be it a cooperative commonwealth or a system of industrial democracy built around one big union.³ Radical thought was, for some, based directly or indirectly on a Marxian analysis of the capitalist system. Perhaps more often, though, it simply reflected the thoughts and experiences of the people who had only a vague awareness, if any, of Marx. Mountain West Socialists were a somewhat unsophisticated bunch who, as eastern Socialists liked to point out, “did not know surplus value from long division and did not care to know.”⁴ As a miner in Kingman, Arizona, told a comrade from New York, being a Socialist had nothing to do with reading or going to lectures—all one had to know is that he or she “is being robbed.”⁵

Radicals were far from a monolithic group. Indeed, much of the story of the movement in the Mountain West as it unfolds in these pages is one of tension and destructive conflict among radicals and radical groups.⁶ Radicals differed in the extent to which they focused on the end objective of fundamental change and in the intensity of their beliefs and commitment. They differed in basic approaches or attitudinal tendencies, for example, over whether to work primarily through the political system or directly at the point of production on the industrial level, whether to press for immediate and complete revolutionary change or focus on ameliorative reforms and wait for fundamental change to set in gradually, and whether to use violent or unlawful methods to advance the cause.

Within the Socialist party, members leaning to the right had a hunger for respectability, an inclination to work for the utopian objective gradually through the political process, and a willingness to make alliances with or work through craft unions and go to the voters with platforms featuring immediate reforms. Those on the left wanted to emphasize the messages of class conflict, worker solidarity, and the need for revolutionary action. They wanted to abandon the capitalist-accepting craft-union-loving American Federation of Labor and the focus on reform—the latter in part out of fear that making reforms would improve conditions and make developing a revolutionary spirit more difficult. The left wing of the Socialist party and the radical labor organization, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), had much in common, although the IWW had its own particular guiding radical ideology. The IWW was not entirely opposed

to political activity (realizing, for example, that a friendly sheriff came in handy) but channeled its energies directly on the industrial front.

Previous studies have suggested that the radical movement in the United States varied from region to region.⁷ Yet our knowledge of the movement in the Mountain West as a whole and how it compared to the movement elsewhere is very limited. Fragments of the story told here are found in the vast literature on Populism and labor conditions in the various states and territories in the region and in a relatively small number of studies on Socialist activity in those places.⁸ This work constitutes the first attempt to focus on radical activities in the region as a whole. The broader goal is to increase our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the radical movement not only in the region but across the nation. Scholars have advanced numerous reasons for the Socialist party's failure to become a major party in this country. Indeed, a recent study noted, "Explanations of socialism's weakness in America are as numerous as socialists were few."⁹ Here I work to isolate some of the more salient forces that both strengthened and weakened the movement. More generally, this book focuses on a series of questions: What were the characteristics of the Socialist movement in the region? In particular, how did it relate to the Populist movement and the union movement that took place in mining areas? What were its strengths and limitations compared with the movement elsewhere in the country? Why was it not more successful?

In addressing these questions, the book deals only tangentially with the national Populist and Socialist movements in this period and does not attempt to offer anything close to a comprehensive political history of the region at the time or of labor conditions and the everyday lives of workers in the region. I join what is now a long line of scholars who see Populism in the region as a whole as far more than a free-silver cause.¹⁰ I also join those who emphasize the radical streak in the Populism movement and how that movement fed into the Socialist movement.¹¹ When it comes to mine labor, this work is in the tradition of Vernon Jensen in highlighting labor tensions and wars in which unions were pitted against mine owners.¹² This is not to suggest that conflict generally characterized labor-management relations in the region. The focus is placed on these events because they help illuminate the activities of the radicals or the environment in which they functioned. Still, a broader theme in this study is the importance of violence—including labor and land wars and sometimes overlapping ethnic and racial physical clashes and murders—in shaping the character of radical activity in the region.

The Mountain West provides a particularly useful laboratory for examining the rise and fall of American radicalism. The region in the late 1890s and early

1900s offered several advantages to the radically inclined. They had an opportunity to build upon widespread anti-corporate sentiment, which was all the more intense because it was coupled with resentment based on anti-colonial, anti-eastern feelings. The Mountain West too was a place where industrialization was just beginning and working conditions were in some respects among the worst in the country—the type of conditions out of which one might expect revolutions to be made. On the political level, Populists and Socialists working in the Mountain West had a head start over their counterparts in other parts of the country in picking up votes because their movements came to life in an environment that for various reasons, such as its newness and small population, was relatively receptive to third-party activity.

The newness of the region gave parties on the left another advantage because there was less tradition and fewer entrenched institutions and, thus, fewer barriers to new ideas, such as what appeared to some to be “radical” notions of woman suffrage, open primaries, and direct democracy. To offset corporate control of the political system, Mountain westerners were in a mood to experiment with political reform. By adding the initiative and opening up party primaries, Mountain West states gave political radicals additional tools; and by adopting woman suffrage and, thus, doubling the size of the electorate, they gave the struggling new parties an opportunity to dramatically expand their bases. For Mountain West Socialists, another benefit was having a relatively strong left-leaning and labor-centered Populist movement to build upon. Further supportive of the cause were the inclinations and activities of the industrial mining unions, the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) and the United Mine Workers (UMW). The former played an especially strong role in promoting Socialism in the area.

Given all they had going for them, one is not surprised to find that compared with Socialist parties elsewhere in the country, Socialist parties in the region generally did better when it came to gaining membership, picking up votes, and winning elections (albeit mostly at the local level). However, not all the factors they presumed or hoped would be working in their favor actually gave them much of an advantage. Looking at the related question of why they did not do even better gives us an opportunity to identify forces—some of which confounded the movement nationally and some of which were relatively unique to the area—that stunted the growth of the movement.

In telling the story of what happened in the region in regard to radical activity, why, and with what effect from roughly 1890 to 1920, I offer an analysis of events—elections, strikes, trials, deportations—and, relying on archival material,

the thoughts and actions of individuals caught up in these events. We see radicals as political candidates, campaign workers, party and union organizers, sidewalk orators, preachers, and people coming to the aid of other radicals, be they schoolteachers or miners, who were about to lose their jobs or were in trouble with the law.

Along the way we encounter several fascinating characters, some well-known, others whose place in radical history thus far has been largely neglected. Some of the radicals or near radicals were national agitators who came into the region only periodically to stir things up. Others made homes in the region but moved from state to state, city to city, or mining camp to mining camp. Many radicals, though, were well-established members of their communities rather than transients.¹³ They found a home in the party system, especially the Populist and Socialist parties but also the Non-Partisan League and various labor parties. Some wound up in Communist organizations. Within the labor movement, radicals were found in the Knights of Labor, many unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and, especially important in this study, the WFM, UMW, and IWW. Radicals operated on two fronts, the political and the industrial, and spent a great deal of time debating which of the two was the most worthwhile.

Debs was among the most prominent and effective of the radicals frequently visiting the area. Born in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1855, one of ten children, he began organizing railroad workers in his twenties and came to national prominence after the 1894 Pullman railroad strike. He traveled to the region on several occasions in the early 1900s, lecturing on behalf of Socialism and encouraging striking workers. Debs had also frequently visited the area as a presidential candidate of the Socialist Party of America (aka Socialist party) and, before that, the Social Democratic party. Debs, though, was hardly the conventional presidential candidate. In 1908 he told the muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens: "I am not fitted either by temperament or by taste for the office, and if there were any chance of my election I wouldn't run. . . . I am running for president to serve a very humble purpose: to teach social consciousness and to ask men to sacrifice the present for the future, to 'throw away their votes' to mark the rising tide of protest and build up a party that will represent them. When Socialism is on the verge of success, the party will nominate an able executive and a clear-headed administrator; not—not Debs."¹⁴ Still, many voters in the Mountain West took him seriously in his various campaigns. He often did much better as a presidential candidate in this region than anywhere else in the country.

Davis H. Waite, who became not altogether affectionately known as "Bloody Bridles Waite," stood out among the earlier set of "calamity-howling"

Populists. Born in Jamestown, New York, in 1825, Waite began his political life as a Democrat, turned to the new Republican party in 1856, and served in the state legislatures in Wisconsin and Kansas before being lured west by the silver boom. He arrived in Colorado in the late 1870s, settling first in Leadville and later in the silver mining camp of Aspen. Waite held a variety of jobs, prospector, lawyer, and newspaper editor among them. In 1892, to the horror of many, he became governor of Colorado on the Populist ticket. Waite found the existing economic and political system corrupt—a situation he blamed on monopolies, be they of the land, transportation, money, or any other variety. He also stood for the rights of labor and used the power of his office as governor on behalf of striking miners. Waite, to say the least, was a colorful character. Historian John Hicks described him as “headstrong and obstinate. His whole personal appearance as well as the occasional frenzy of his rhetoric suggested the narrow-minded fanatic.”¹⁵ Others looked at Waite as a sharp-tongued “moral absolutist” who “saw the world in terms of a cleavage between the robbers and the robbed.”¹⁶ To some extent his speech-making style worked against him. As historian Karel Bicha noted: “On a podium he thrived on the response of audiences and his utterances were more extreme than his intentions. Enemies regarded him as a madman, and he often played into their hands.”¹⁷ Waite aroused unskilled workers and furthered the cause of the WFM but was also used by those eager to brand Populists as wild-eyed and crankish.

William Owen O’Neill, commonly known as Buckey O’Neill, also gained considerable prominence among the plain-speaking Populist politicians. O’Neill, born in 1860—historians are uncertain whether in Saint Louis, Missouri, or Washington, D.C.—came into the Arizona territory about the same time Waite was heading for Colorado. O’Neill also engaged in newspaper work before running for office. Settling down in Prescott, he won office as tax assessor and collector, county sheriff, and mayor of Prescott. As a Populist, he made two unsuccessful bids for the office of territorial delegate to Congress on a platform condemning the “moneyed aristocracy” running the country. He later gained fame as a founder of Troop A, First Territorial Volunteer Calvary, later to become famous as Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders. Described by those who knew him as a wild and reckless fellow, he died while commanding Troop A in combat in Cuba in 1898, at age thirty-eight.

While Waite governed, or tried to govern, in Colorado and O’Neill contended in Arizona, rebels like Henry W. Lawrence, 1835–1924, a Mormon who broke with the church, and Warren Foster, a newspaper editor fresh from Kansas, were trying to round up Populists in Utah. Both, like many other Populists, went on to become Socialists. Foster, like other radicals, called them as he saw them.

Responding to J. D. Rockefeller's claim that "God gave me my money," he contended that this had to be "the meanest thing that we have ever heard charged up against God. We have read a great deal of the writings of avowed infidels against the Lord; but we search in vain for one that has ever accused Him of going into partnership with a thief and using His powers to rob the poor and give it to the rich."¹⁸ When Foster died in 1909, a radical paper noted: "He was a man of fine ability who might have won distinction, but who gave himself to what he conceived to be the cause of the people and died poor. . . . There is an element of heroism in such a life as his, and he really accomplished more than he seemed to have done. Honor to Warren Foster."¹⁹

On the labor side, one of the leading radicals during the 1880s—a time when unions were struggling for recognition in the area—was Joseph R. Buchanan of Denver (1851–1924), known as the "Riproarer of the Rockies." Born in Hannibal, Missouri, in 1851, Buchanan moved to Colorado in the late 1870s where he became editor of a labor paper, the *Labor Enquirer*, and tried to organize workers in the Rocky Mountain region into trade unions and Knights of Labor assemblies. He led a Socialist group, the Rocky Mountain Social League, and moved in and out of various political parties, including the Socialist Labor party (from which he was eventually expelled), the Democrats, and the Populists. Like countless other radicals, Buchanan had many disappointments along the way, especially with the workers' voting habits. In his autobiography he noted: "It will not surprise the thoughtful reader, especially if he be a student of human nature, to be told that disappointment and discouragement reduced me at times to a very pessimistic frame of mind. More than once I lost hope that the wrongs of labor would ever be righted by peaceable means. The workingmen could not be made to appreciate the power the ballot gave them; they were, it seemed to me, slow to take advantage of the opportunities opened to them by the labor organizations, and I sometimes thought the majority of them were not only too stupid to raise themselves, but too weak to stand if raised by others."²⁰ When it came to elections, Buchanan noted, "I have always observed that only a slight fog was necessary to obscure the political vision of the average workingman."²¹ Deeply disappointed with the outcomes of elections, many other radicals also frequently blamed the workers, although one might contend that much of the fault rested with the radicals themselves.

Ed Boyce stands as a leading figure in the history of labor and political reform in the Mountain West through the 1890s to the early 1900s. Born in Ireland in 1862 and migrating to the United States in 1882, he became an underground miner and an active member of the Knights of Labor. After being imprisoned for his participation in the labor conflicts in the Coeur d'Alene district in 1892,

he went on to help organize the WFM and became a successful Populist politician in Idaho. Like many of his fellow Populists, he later became a Socialist and tried to move the WFM in that direction. This effort frightened mine owners in the region badly enough that they came after both the union and the Socialists with full force. Boyce was one of the radicals who dropped out in time: by 1909 he had moved into the world of prosperity as a manager of an exclusive hotel in Portland, Oregon.

Frequently traveling to the area in the early 1900s and having an almost uncanny ability to find her way into the middle of the most violent labor mining strikes—confrontations out of which she would wind up in jail, deported, or both—was Mary Harris Jones, better known as Mother Jones. Born in Cork, Ireland (best guess is 1836), she came to the United States as a child. After losing her husband and four children in a yellow fever epidemic, she spent sixty years roaming the country as a labor agitator, mostly for the UMW. Over the years she went from strike to strike being arrested, deported, and hunted by the police and state militia. Jones was also a Socialist and a campaigner for that cause. Her fame, however, rests on her labor activities and, on occasion, gaining sympathy for workers by playing the role of John D. Rockefeller's victim. Although she did not look the part, Jones was a fearless agitator and dramatic speaker and something of a pioneer in enlisting women, especially immigrant women, into protest activity. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, another radical, first heard Mother Jones at a Bronx open-air meeting in the summer of 1908, giving the city slickers hell for, among other things, not helping western miners. In her autobiography Flynn noted that Jones's "description of the bull-pen, where the miners were herded by federal troops during a Western miner's strike, and of the bloodshed and suffering was so vivid that, being slightly dizzy from standing so long, I fainted. She stopped in the middle of a fiery appeal. 'Get the poor child some water!' she said, and went on with her speech. I was terribly embarrassed."²²

Flynn herself went West in quest of justice for workers. In the summer of 1909, while agitating for the IWW, or Wobblies, she appeared in Butte, Montana, a place where mines were in the heart of the city and the city was blighted because the practice of burning the sulfur out of the copper had produced poisonous fumes that destroyed all vegetation. Butte, she said, was "a sprawly, ugly place, with dusty shacks for the miners," which, because life was cheap in this great copper camp, had an ever-expanding cemetery.²³ Moving on, she helped organize an IWW free-speech fight in Missoula, Montana, directed against an ordinance banning street speaking. Working alongside her was Frank Little, later lynched in Butte. As part of her tour she also tried to rally miners in Colorado, Idaho, and Utah. In Utah she visited Joe Hill, a Wobbly awaiting execution for

a crime many claimed he had not committed. Flynn later wrote that by 1914: "I had been in daily contact with workers and their struggles for eight years. I saw their honesty, modesty, decency, their devotion to their families and their unions, their helpfulness to fellows, their courage, their willingness to sacrifice. I hated those who exploited them, patronized them, lied to them, cheated them and betrayed them. I hated those who lived in idleness and luxury on *their* sweat and toil."²⁴

When one thinks of radicals who roamed the Mountain West, the first name that comes to many historians' minds is someone born and raised in the area: William D. ("Big Bill") Haywood. Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1869, Haywood was a big man, more than six feet tall, who had a slightly sinister appearance because of the loss of sight in one eye as the result of a childhood accident. From a poor family, he went to work in Nevada mines at age fifteen, joined the WFM when he was twenty-five, and became secretary-treasurer of the union at age thirty-one. He presided over the founding of the IWW and not long after was kidnapped along with two others by Idaho authorities, who placed him on trial for murdering a former governor of that state. Acquitted of that charge, Haywood for a time became a celebrity, touring the country on speaking engagements; but as an IWW leader he also became an advocate of general strikes, boycotts, and even sabotage to achieve labor's objectives. The IWW under Haywood spread fear throughout the Mountain West. During the early 1900s Haywood helped shape the image of the Mountain West as home to some of the most dangerous radicals in the country—people who believed in making revolutionary change through sabotage and industrial violence rather than achieving gradual change through political means. Haywood wound up fleeing the country.

Rivaling Haywood in ferocity, if not notoriety, were Thomas J. Hagerty and Vincent St. John. In 1902 Hagerty, a Catholic priest, abandoned his church duties in Las Vegas, New Mexico, so he could try to win over to Socialism miners who were meeting in Denver. Later, he toured Colorado mining camps with Debs on behalf of the American Labor Union and the Socialist ticket. In Telluride he told his audience: "That railroad is yours; the trains are yours; those large businesses blocks and office buildings down-town that bring in big rents are yours; the mercantile stocks of goods are yours; the banks and the moneys there on deposit are yours; if you want them, go and take them."²⁵ For such utterances, he was suspended by his archbishop. Later, he showed up at the founding of the IWW. He literally vanished from the radical scene in 1905.

Capitalists, especially mine owners, equally feared and detested Kentucky-born Vincent St. John, known as "The Saint." Saint John went to work in 1895 as

a seventeen-year-old miner for the Bisbee Copper Company in Arizona and proceeded to build his labor career in Colorado, Nevada, and Idaho. Saint John, like Father Hagerty, saw little value in political action. According to a report of an operative working undercover for mine owners in January 1906, he told a small group of colleagues at a union meeting that “if the working men waited until they got relief through the ballot box they would never get it.”²⁶ Continuing, he reportedly warned that “the day is not far distant when they will have to enforce their wishes by the torch and the bomb as they are now doing in Russia.”²⁷ He organized for the IWW and became the organization’s general secretary in 1908, a position he held until 1915. St. John retired to work a small copper claim in New Mexico but was sought out by federal officials, arrested, tried, convicted, and sent to prison.

David Coates and Guy E. Miller were other radicals who popped up in Mountain West states in various capacities. Coates, born in England in 1868, immigrated as a teenager with his family to Pueblo, Colorado, where he worked for a time in the steel mills. He later became active in Colorado and Idaho as a hard-nosed left-winger who divided his time among being a newspaper editor, a union official, and a Socialist party organizer. Technically speaking, he was the nation’s first Socialist governor. The highly effective writer, speaker, and organizer Guy E. Miller, born in Iowa in 1870, came to Colorado where he took a variety of jobs—schoolteacher, farmer, newspaper editor, and mine worker among them. He represented the WFM and joined the Socialist party in 1902 after hearing Debs speak. Also spending much of his time among the miners and Socialists, particularly in Arizona, was the articulate and forceful Joseph D. Cannon, organizer for the WFM. Debs described him as “a thoroughly fine fellow, clear headed and sound to the core.”²⁸ At one time, though, many Arizona Socialist party leaders saw him as a traitor to the cause.

In surveying the cast of radical characters in the region over the period, on the political side one needs also to note the elegant lawyer and former minister Lewis Duncan, the “Eugene Debs of Montana,” who delighted the Socialist world by becoming mayor of Butte. Like Cannon and many of his fellow radicals, however, Duncan also got caught up in bitter internal squabbling, and some especially vitriolic supporters in the labor movement turned against him. In Montana one also finds party builder James D. Graham. Born in Scotland, he came to America as a teenager in 1886 and settled in Livingston, Montana, working as a machinist. He moved from Populism to Socialism, becoming Socialist party secretary, although a controversial one. He also was an organizer for the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees and a member of the executive committee of the Montana Federation of Labor.

Colorado, meanwhile, had Socialist A. H. Floaten who, like many of his co-workers, spent much of his time getting arrested, beaten up, jailed, or deported. Nevada had A. Grant Miller who almost made Socialism respectable, as did Herman V. Groesbeck in Wyoming who, before turning Socialist, had been elected as a Republican to the Wyoming Supreme Court and served as chief justice. Also among the Wyoming Socialists was the mysterious German-born F. W. Ott who, among other things, got on the bad side of the law by running off with the instruments and receipts from a children's band concert he had organized and, on another occasion, for trying to blackmail a political opponent. Equally filled with fire but less erratic was A. B. Elder, a Salt Lake attorney who coupled being a Utah Socialist leader with being an American Labor Union organizer, a reporter for *Appeal to Reason*, and legal counsel for the UMW.

One, finally, has to make special mention of Ida Crouch Hazlett, born on a farm near Kirkwood, Illinois, who was one of the most active radicals in the region. Over her career, Hazlett served the cause of reform as a member of the Knights of Labor, an organizer for the Woman Suffrage Association, and a newspaper reporter who covered the labor wars throughout the region and the Haywood trial. As a Socialist she served as a traveling organizer and agitator, party candidate, and newspaper reporter/editor in Utah, Colorado, and Montana, especially the latter. The skills Hazlett developed as a suffrage agitator helped her advance in the ranks of the Socialist movement. As a Socialist agitator, moreover, she made good use of the network of women sympathizers she had created during her suffrage years.²⁹ As editor of the Montana party's newspaper, the *Montana News*, she traveled around the region, writing reports on the Socialist movement in neighboring states. She was one of the most persistent critics of the radical movement's failure to make progress on political and economic fronts.

Some radicals, including Lewis Duncan, identified themselves as full-time agitators. On a paying basis, the job of agitator was often coupled with the job of being a party or union official or a publisher, editor, or journalist. People in these positions were the "brainworkers," the articulate leaders of the movement.³⁰ Several radicals at one time or another had been priests or ministers. In some cases their radicalism cost them their positions. The region also had its share of Christian Socialists. These included Congregationalist minister Myron Reed, a friend of Debs, who, working out of Denver in the 1880s and 1890s, spoke out against injustice and exploitation. He saw the West as open to new ideas and providing an opportunity to build an ideal community worthy of the kingdom of God.³¹ Franklin Spencer Spalding, Episcopal bishop of Utah, also believed the aims of Socialism were embraced in Christianity's message, although this had

somehow gotten lost. In 1914 the bishop wrote: "The Christian Church exists for the sole purpose of saving the human race. So far she has failed, but I think that Socialism shows her how she may succeed. It insists that men cannot be made right until the material conditions be made right. Although man cannot live by bread alone, he must have bread. Therefore the Church must destroy a system of society which inevitably creates and perpetuates unequal and unfair conditions of life. These unequal and unfair conditions have been created by competition. Therefore competition must cease and cooperation take its place."³²

Whatever their status in life, many on the left were shocked and outraged by the industrial conditions they saw around them. A young Franklin Spencer Spaulding, who came to Utah in 1905 already committed to Socialism because of working conditions he had seen in Erie, Pennsylvania, became even more committed to Socialism after frequent contact with workers in Utah mining camps.³³ About the same time, a young lawyer named William Brooks had a similar experience in Arizona. Before heading west, he had heard Debs speak about labor conditions. At the time, this made little impression on him, but, according to his correspondence, he later saw the truth in what Debs was saying when he got to Arizona in 1903 and saw firsthand what he found to be the deplorable condition of workers in mining camps.³⁴ In a letter of September 18, 1904, he wrote that the workers got a little pay and nothing else: "They don't get pleasure or happiness out of their work, for they leave it at the first opportunity and it is their greater desire to have their children escape it. . . . Their physical labor is bought and sold in the market just as is any other commodity without regard to the fact that they are human."³⁵ Much of many radicals' focus was on the job. What was the "job" problem? As a Nevada Socialist party candidate put it: "When we have got the job we know not the minute we will be deprived of the job; a job subject to some one man's will, one man's anger. When we are deprived of the job we are denied the right to live."³⁶

Radicals were concerned about what industrialization had done to workers but were not equally concerned about all workers. Radicals often carried the racial and ethnic biases common in the West against Asians and Hispanics. Anti-black sentiments were also often expressed, evident on an everyday basis and during strikes, as in Coeur d'Alene in 1899, when black soldiers came in to restore order. The bias against blacks, though, had a less pronounced impact on shaping the general pattern of the radical movement in the Mountain West than it did in the South simply because of the relatively small size of the black population. At the same time, the movement, both on the labor and political fronts, was conditioned by the "Chinese question" and the "Hispanic question" and, indeed, by the existence of any foreign nationality from which employers

could recruit strikebreakers. Racism and perceived threats to job security proved a powerful combination.

Debs too was guilty of prejudices against blacks and immigrants, although his views mellowed over time.³⁷ Questions of racial equality became important to Debs, as did the subject of women's rights, but, as historian Nick Salvatore has written, his central message was aimed at white workingmen—urging them to stand up and, in fact, to be what men should be and refuse to allow the boss to push them around. Debs would blame the system, but he would also blame the workers for their inability to think for themselves, for being satisfied with miserable, degrading jobs, and for tolerating their treatment as slaves. As Salvatore put it: "At the core of Debs's appeal lay a spirited defense of the dignity of each individual."³⁸ Radicals throughout the Mountain West shared this perspective.

Following a general overview chapter in which the basic context and themes are set forth, the book proceeds largely in chronological order, built around election cycles but shifting back and forth from the political and industrial fronts. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 focus on the broad shape of the Populist movement in the area during the 1890s to portray the political and economic context out of which radicalism emerged. Chapter 2 covers the years 1890–1892, when the Populist movement was coming together in the Mountain West and during which land wars in Wyoming and New Mexico and labor wars elsewhere fed into the movement. Populists' organizations at the time were unstable coalitions of various groups, although in some places the organizations were undergoing a transition from essentially agrarian to more labor-focused parties. By 1893, as Chapter 3 illustrates, events had pushed the Populist movement in a more radical direction.

Unemployment, tramps, and strikes raised the specter of revolution, with the Populists in the forefront. Movement to the left came to a halt, however, with the decision of the national party and Populist parties in the area in 1896 to focus on free silver and to fuse with the Democratic party. With the collapse of the Populist parties, many radicals switched to Socialist parties in the region. Chapter 4 focuses on the fusion debate and the exodus of radicals and others out of the Populist party.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 look at the early years of Socialist party building in the area and how this was related to the miners' agenda, radical tendencies in the WFM, labor wars (especially in Colorado), and the emergence of the IWW. Chapter 5 examines Socialist party building and electoral progress in the early 1900s, years characterized by considerable enthusiasm and confidence in the triumph of the cause in the not too distant future. The early 1900s, though, also showed the range and depth of disagreement among Socialists and indicated the

type of resistance they could expect. Chapter 6 switches the focus to the WFM, which, under Ed Boyce, was a major force driving radicalism in the late 1890s and early 1900s. On the political field WFM leaders had backed the Populists, and, when that party failed, they turned to the Socialists. At the same time, the union became more confrontational with mine owners. The most important labor wars involving the WFM took place in Colorado. As Chapter 7 indicates, the Colorado Socialist party was severely weakened as a result of these conflicts. It had been abandoned by the WFM, and other unions and party members spent much of their energy fighting among themselves. The party, though, was doing relatively well in other parts of the region. At the same time, the WFM set out to strengthen its labor ties through the creation of the IWW. This organization and the emergence of Big Bill Haywood dominate Chapter 8. Here again, though, the full force of state power was directed against the radicals. For Haywood this meant being kidnapped and put on trial for murder. For Wobblies in Nevada it meant military repression.

While the obstacles Socialists encountered in the early years of the movement served as a harbinger of the future, in the short run the party continued to make progress in the region as a whole, building up to a peak of electoral success in 1912. Chapters 9, 10, 11, and 12 look at the strength and character of the movement from roughly 1908–1914. Chapter 9 follows Debs's Red Special as it chugs through the region and also examines the activities of Mountain West Socialists centering around the 1908 elections. We also find the IWW successfully engaging in nonviolent free-speech campaigns. Chapter 10 makes the point that in contrast to the growing image of Socialists in the area as left-wing extremists—an image fed in part by press coverage of conflict in mining areas—party leaders in much of the region were trying to build respectable reform-minded parties that would appeal to the middle class as well as the working class. Many were shooting for mainstream status and trying to separate the party from those on the extreme left. Socialists, though, were also aware that their parties were perceived to be radical. In violation of party rules, some found it necessary to work outside the party organization or through organizations with a less radical image. Going the latter route, Socialists had a significant impact on the Arizona constitution. In Chapter 11 we find Socialists presenting broad municipal reform programs and settling down to do the day-to-day tasks necessary to run cities—doing the best job they could to prove they could be trusted to run the government. There was considerable dispute within the party, however, as to whether this was the best way to spend limited resources. The party nationally and in a good many states, including those in the Mountain West, made a leap in 1912; but, as Chapter 12 indicates, shortly thereafter party leaders began worrying

about the loss of momentum and became bogged down in disputes concerning whether to build a mass party or to focus on political or direct action on the industrial field.

While Socialists did not lose all hope after the 1912 election, this event was followed by more setbacks on the industrial front, fallout among radical forces, and poor performances at the polls. Chapter 13 covers the relevant events, including the Ludlow Massacre in Colorado; a miners' riot in Butte, Montana, that helped topple Mayor Duncan; the execution of Joe Hill in Utah; and, on the bright side for radicals, the actions of a heroic governor in Arizona. Chapter 14 accounts the diminishing effectiveness of the campaign on the political front, in part because of the Socialists' inability to attract women voters, and offers an account of the activities and problems of the few Socialists who served as state legislators. Finally, in Chapter 15 we arrive at the period following the entry of the United States into World War I and the harsh environment this created for Socialist parties, the IWW, and the newly emerging Non-Partisan League. The concluding section extends the discussion into the 1920s and offers final observations on the rise and fall of the party and its legacy in the region.