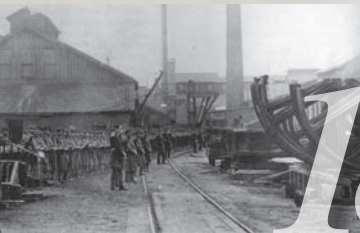


MILWAUKEE'S SOCIALIST HERITAGE



1886

May 1, 1886 – Hundreds of thousands of workers across the nation strike for the 8-hour-workday, among them employees of the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company (later named International Harvester/Navistar). Police kill several McCormick strikers. In Milwaukee, 12,000 workers launch a general strike for the 8-hour-day and union recognition. The next day, nearly 15,000 striking workers march in the largest parade in Milwaukee's history.

May 3, 1886 – Strikers march from plant to plant, calling on the workers to down tools and join them. The strikers soon shut down every major employer in the city, with one exception: the North Chicago Rolling Mills, a massive steel plant in Bay View. Wisconsin Gov. Jeremiah Rusk calls out the state militia.

May 4, 1886 – Protest held in Chicago in response to police repression of McCormick strike, and to demand the 8-hour-workday. Police open fire, a bomb goes off, several strikers and police die. Press sensationalizes the violence. In Milwaukee, 700 Polish laborers gather at St. Stanislaus Church on 5th and Mitchell, and march to the North Chicago Rolling Mills. After a fruitless meeting with company executives, the strikers camp out in nearby fields. The state militia arrives, and spends “an uneasy night” inside the plant.

May 5, 1886 – The strikers, by now numbering at least 1,500 men, women, and children, march towards the plant. At a distance of 200 yards, the commander of the state militia orders the strikers to disperse—a command they probably couldn't even hear. The strikers continued marching, and the militia commander ordered his troops to open fire. At least seven people fell dead or dying,

including a 12-year-old schoolboy and a retired mill worker who was watching the commotion from his backyard.

Nov. 1886 – Galvanized by the bloody repression of the labor movement and backed by the nascent socialists, the People's Party sweeps the elections, winning all Milwaukee county offices, a number of state legislators, and even a Congressman, Henry Smith.



Emil Seidel was Milwaukee's first Socialist mayor (shown here with his personal secretary, Carl Sandburg). Elected in April, 1910 on a tidal wave of voter disgust with the corruption of the two old parties, the 1910 spring election saw the Social-Democrats elect their entire municipal ticket along with two civil judges, a majority of the County Board, and 21 of 35 Common Council seats. In November of that year, the Social-Democrats elected 13 state legislators, all seven County Courthouse officers, and sent Victor L. Berger to Washington as the first Socialist in the U.S. Congress.



Victor L. Berger was first elected to the House of Representatives in November, 1910. Prior to that, he was editor of *The Social Democratic Herald* and a member of Milwaukee's School Board. As America's first Socialist in Congress, he championed labor rights and opposed military intervention abroad (in Mexico's civil war and the First World War). In 1912, the Democrats and Republicans successfully united to defeat him for re-election.

Berger was indicted in March 1918 for “conspiring to violate the Espionage Act.” A month later, he received over 26% of the statewide vote as an anti-war candidate

in a special election for the U.S. Senate. In November 1918, Berger was again elected to Congress, but the House of Representatives refused to seat him and instead called a special election for December 1919. Berger won the special election with an outright majority (55%).

Although defeated for re-election in 1920 by a combination Democrat-Republican, Berger regained his seat in Congress in 1922 and held it until 1926. During that time, he fought for many reforms that would later be enacted as “the New Deal,” including Social Security, unemployment insurance, and workers' rights to unionize.

Berger also fought to change the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles, fearing it would lay the groundwork for another world war.

Berger was defeated for re-election in 1928 and returned to Milwaukee as editor of the Socialist daily newspaper *The Milwaukee Leader*. When he died in 1929, over 75,000 people viewed his body as it laid in state in the Rotunda of Milwaukee's City Hall.

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

The Social-Democratic Party changed its name to the Socialist Party in 1919.



Daniel W. Hoan was Milwaukee's second Socialist mayor (1916-1940). He was City Attorney from 1910-1916, and before that he drafted the first Workers' Compensation bill in North America for the Wisconsin Federation of Labor. Hoan was in office for 24 years, during which he successfully fought for the abolition of the spoils system and its replacement with civil service, cleaning up the corruption that prevailed before the Social-Democratic sweep of 1910, municipal ownership of the harbor (in anticipation of the St. Lawrence Seaway), slum clearance, a “pay as you go” fiscal policy (to reduce and eventually eliminate the city's debt), and quality public housing, parks, playgrounds, hospitals, natatoria, and power stations.



Frank P. Zeidler was Milwaukee's third Socialist mayor (1948-1960). His three terms as mayor were marked by annexations which nearly doubled the city's size, slum clearance, the creation of Milwaukee Public Television, the expansion of the Milwaukee Vocational School into MATC, the expansion of Milwaukee State Teachers' College into a four-year university (UWM), construction of public libraries and fire stations across the city, the allocation of funds for the Milwaukee Public Museum, and the construction of racially-integrated public housing (for which he was both red- and race-baited).

