

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Ideology, Strategy, and Organization: Dyer Lum and the American Anarchist Movement

Frank H. Brooks

Winter 1993

Frank H. Brooks
Ideology, Strategy, and Organization: Dyer Lum and the
American Anarchist Movement
Winter 1993

Retrieved on September 29, 2022 from <https://azinelibrary.org>
This article originally appeared in *Labor History*, Volume 34,
Number 1, Winter 1993, pp. 57–83.

theanarchistlibrary.org

The mid-1880s, like the mid-1870s, were a time of considerable turmoil for American workers. Unemployment and wage cuts were widespread and workers responded with strikes, boycotts, union organizing, local labor tickets, and a bewildering variety of reform schemes and ideologies. Perhaps the central event of the 1880s was the Haymarket incident. The bomb and subsequent trial had a broad historical impact, sparking a red scare, blunting the eight-hour movement, establishing the stereotype of anarchists as wild-eyed, foreign bombthrowers, and intensifying calls for immigration restriction.

Haymarket, of course, had a profound impact on the American anarchist movement. The trial and executions deprived the movement of several capable leaders, drove away rank and file sympathizers, and changed sporadic public curiosity into widespread an-

imosity. Yet Haymarket's effects should not be overstated or simplified. Although American anarchism was a growing movement in the early 1880s, it already suffered from ideological, strategic, and ethnic divisions. Such divisions were hardly unique to anarchism, however. Most movements, particularly those that grew dramatically during periods of unrest, faced similar problems. Indeed, many also faced some form of repression and its long-term impact: exacerbating their internal divisions. Post-Haymarket repression solidified anarchism's divisions, establishing two opposing camps: the "Boston anarchists," predominantly native-born, evolutionary and individualist, and the "Chicago anarchists," predominantly immigrant, revolutionary and collectivist. Yet both before and after Haymarket, several radicals sought to unite the movement around a common strategy and ideology.

The most interesting and well-qualified person to attempt such unification of anarchists was Dyer D. Lum. He could bridge ethnic differences, for despite being native-born, he had substantial contacts with immigrant radicals. He was also inclined to link anarchism firmly to the labor movement, in which he had been active for many years. Lum was widely known in radical and labor circles, as some of his obituaries attest: "well-known to the working men throughout the country as a thinker and writer on the labor question ... a journalist of no mean ability ... one of America's leading and most aggressive anarchists ... the brightest scholar, the profoundest thinker of the American Revolutionary movement."¹ Historians of American anarchism have also recognized Lum as an important and interesting figure in the 1880s and 1890s. For the most part, however, Lum has been considered as a comrade

¹ "Dyer D. Lum," *The Bakers' Journal* [New York], April 22, 1893, 3; G.W.R., "Death of Dyer D. Lum," *Commonweal* [London], May 13, 1893; "Anarchist Lum Is Dead," *Daily Hampshire Gazette* [Northampton, Mass.], April 10, 1893; Voltairine de Cleyre, "Dyer D. Lum," *Freedom* [London], June 1893, 38. See also *The Carpenter*, April 1893, 4; *Solidarity*, April 22, 1893; *Freiheit*, April 15, 1893, 2; *Twentieth Century*, c. Apr. 1893.

of other more famous anarchists such as Albert Parsons, Voltairine de Cleyre, or Benjamin Tucker, or as one individual in a general survey of American anarchists.²

More generally, historians of American anarchism have usually focused on one camp or the other, thus exaggerating their differences. Labor and leftist historians have naturally focused on the collectivist anarchists, as have those interested in immigrant cultures and social history. Bruce Nelson's detailed study of the Chicago movement "beyond the martyrs" addresses such concerns admirably but, not surprisingly, downplays the significance of the scattered, primarily native, and multi-class individualist camp. Neither have the two major accounts of the Haymarket events paid much attention to the individualists, in part because they focus on just a few years in the development of American anarchism. On the other hand, accounts of the individualist camp often come from intellectual or economic historians and have stressed the Americanism, reformism, and radicalized liberal tendencies of

² The two exceptions to this are John S. McCormick, "An Anarchist Defends the Mormons: The Case of Dyer D. Lum," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 44 (1976), 156–169 and Frank H. Brooks, "Anarchism, Revolution and Labor in the Thought of Dyer D. Lum: 'Events Are the True Schoolmasters,'" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1988). The major works dealing with Lum in relation to other anarchists are Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton, 1984); Paul Avrich, *An American Anarchist: The Life of Voltairine de Cleyre* (Princeton, 1978); Henry David, *The History of the Haymarket Affair: A Study in the American Social-Revolutionary and Labor Movements* (New York, 1963, originally published 1936); James J. Martin, *Men against the State: The Expositors of Individualist Anarchism in America, 1827–1908* (1953, 1970). The more general works on American anarchism that deal substantially with Lum include William O. Reichert, *Partisans of Freedom: A Study in American Anarchism* (Bowling Green, OH, 1976), 236–244; William Gary Kline, *The Individualist Anarchists: A Critique of Liberalism*, (Lanham, MD, 1987); Blaine McKinley, "Anarchist Jeremiads: American Anarchists and American History," *Journal of American Culture*, Summer 1983, 75–84; Billie Jeanne Hackley Stevenson, "The Ideology of American Anarchism, 1880–1910," (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Iowa, 1972); Matthew J. Mancini, "The Covert Themes of American Anarchism 1881–1908: Time, Space, and Consciousness as Anarchist Myth," (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Emory Univ., 1974).

anarchism. While historians of collectivist anarchism emphasize the irrelevance and anachronism of the individualists, historians of individualist anarchism, focus on the violence and alienness of the collectivists.³

Focusing on Dyer Lum and his attempt to bridge the differences can bring to light connections and similarities between the camps that have been obscured by previous one-sided analyses. A suggestive example of this is Lum's attitude toward unions. Whereas individualists such as Tucker were usually unenthusiastic about unions, and collectivists' preferences ran the gamut from no unions to craft unionism, industrial unionism, or protosyndicalism, Lum developed a "mutualist" theory of unions that led him first to activity within the Knights of Labor and then to promotion of antipolitical strategies in the American Federation of Labor. Actually, Lum was one of several anarchist labor activists that helped to shape the AFL's shift toward "voluntarism," an unlikely trajectory. Ironically, then, the narrowness of studies focusing on one or the other of anarchism's camps can be transcended by studying an individual radical like Dyer Lum. As a radical in several movements, in several towns and cities, and over a period of 25 years, Lum can act as a lens, magnifying the impact of factors usually associated exclusively with one camp or the other, factors such as ethnicity, religion, liberal ideology, and republicanism.

To fully appreciate Lum's significance in bridging this gap in anarchist historiography, it is useful to consider his evolution to anarchism, his mature vision of anarchism, and how he applied and modified that vision as an anarchist activist between 1885 and 1893. Lum moved toward anarchism because of frustration with abolitionism, spiritualism, and labor reform. While anarchism could develop out of such indigenous movements, it also arose out of immi-

³ Bruce C. Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870–1900* (New Brunswick, 1988); David, *The History of the Haymarket Affair*; Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*; Martin, *Men Against the State*; Kline, *The Individualist Anarchists*.

Leon Fink's or Richard Oestreicher's,⁷⁴ insist that such electoral experiences were critical in creating and shaping anarchism, and worker consciousness generally.

Ultimately, Lum's ideological and strategic concerns, and his native and immigrant connections, came together in his anarchist alloy, his program for creating a unified anarchist movement. This alloy brought together individualist ideology and revolutionary strategy under the organizational umbrella of a labor-oriented IWPA. Within this organization, immigrant workers who tended to share Lum's revolutionary anti-statist strategy could have cooperated with radicalized, native-born labor reformers. In a sense, Lum's anarchist alloy returns us to the organizational focus of the "old labor history" (appropriately enough, given Lum's ties to the AFL). Creating a stable organization to combine strategy and ideology is the necessary task of any successful social movement. Guiding that organization between the Scylla of co-optation and the Charybdis of repression is the peculiar task of any radical social movement. Lum's attempts, and his failure, provide an insight into these tasks.

Could anarchists ever have united as a radical labor movement? Lum's experiences suggest that the odds were stacked against them, because the unique features of anarchist ideology and organization, as well as the specific dynamics of the 1880s, exaggerated the generic difficulties of building a radical social movement in times of crisis. The IWPA was still in its infancy, the ideological bridges were still being built, and various strategies were still being debated, when the Haymarket bomb shattered anarchism's prospects. Nevertheless, Lum's hopes, efforts, and ideas indicate that there were committed revolutionaries who understood the dilemmas of radical movements and who were determined to take those dilemmas by the horns.

⁷⁴ Nelson, Beyond; Fink; Richard J. Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit 1875–1900* (Urbana, 1986).

grant socialism. As these two strains of anarchism converged in the 1880s, Lum concentrated on how to unite them into an anarchist movement. Drawing upon the economic reforms of the "Boston anarchists" and the revolutionary strategy of the "Chicago anarchists," Lum offered a more holistic anarchism than most of his comrades. He realized that anarchism, like any movement aiming at radical social change, had to combine an organization that could lead and coordinate action, an effective strategy, and an ideology that was convincing, inspiring and relevant to American culture. This holistic vision was also a dynamic one, for Lum responded not only to the heady days of labor unrest between 1885 and 1887, but also to the disintegration of the anarchist and labor movements from 1888 to 1890, and to the slow rebuilding of radical movements between 1890 and 1893. Lum's experiences reveal just how difficult it can be to maintain a revolutionary movement in the aftermath of repression.

Dyer Lum was a prime example of the indigenous character of American anarchism. Born in Geneva, New York in 1839, his paternal ancestors had settled in New Jersey in 1642, and his maternal ancestors included a Massachusetts Minuteman and Lewis and Arthur Tappan, prominent abolitionists. Like several other anarchists of his generation, he fought in the Civil War, volunteering in 1862 for the 121st New York Infantry. He was captured twice by Confederate troops, held in Libby prison, and eventually fought with the 14th New York Cavalry in the Red River Campaign in Louisiana, distinguishing himself as a hero in several skirmishes. In a little more than two years, he rose in rank from sergeant to captain and was honorably discharged in 1865 in New Orleans. After the war, Lum settled in New England, practicing his trade, bookbinding, in a number of cities before settling in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1873. As a skilled worker, Lum was again within the American mainstream, and even the mainstream of anarchism. Lum's well-known comrade, Albert Parsons, was also a Civil War veteran and a printer by trade. In fact, nearly half of Chicago's anar-

chist movement in 1886 was composed of skilled workers and two prominent anarchists, the notorious Johann Most and the Haymarket defendant, Michael Schwab, were bookbinders like Lum.⁴

Lum's post-war involvement with spiritualism, while less typical of both Americans generally and anarchists specifically, was nevertheless important in his radicalization. Indeed, the "new labor history" insists that religion be taken seriously in considering working-class culture. For radicals, religion was sometimes an obstacle and sometimes an avenue to radicalism. For Lum, it was something of both. Raised as an orthodox Presbyterian, Lum became a skeptic in childhood, when he discovered that God did not strike him down for yelling "Damn!" while playing on a Sunday. Like many others in western New York in mid-century, Lum turned to spiritualism for direct, individual, and "scientific" knowledge of the afterlife. For at least five years after the Civil War, he wrote on science and evolution for major spiritualist papers such as *Banner of Light*. In 1873, disillusioned with the gullibility and unscientific approach of many mediums and spiritualists, he published a denunciation of the movement, *The "Spiritual" Delusion*. For the next few years, the *Free Religious Association's Index* was the major outlet for his skeptical inquiries into organized religion.⁵ Lum's skepticism culminated in 1875,

⁴ Edward H. Lum, *Genealogy of the Lum Family* (Somerville, NJ 1927), 22, 68; Dyer D. Lum, autobiographical sketch, May 13, 1892, Ishill Papers, Univ. of Florida; Document #379461 in Lum's pension records, Record and Pension Office, Department of War; Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865*, 3rd ed. (Albany, 1912), 342, 989, 995; Thomas S. Townsend, *The Honors of the Empire State in the War of the Rebellion* (New York, 1889), 186. Avrich, *Haymarket*, 62, chaps. 1-4; Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 88; Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, eds., *Haymarket Scrapbook* (Chicago, 1986), 65.

⁵ In 1871 and 1872, he wrote several articles criticizing spiritualism ("The Need of Personal Development," April 29, 1871, 135; "Mental Health vs. Mediumship," Dec. 21, 1872, 410). After his break with *Banner of Light*, he published several poems in *Index* ("The Needlewoman. A Vision of Prayer in the Nineteenth Century of Christian Civilization," April 2, 1874, 164; "The Evolution of Deity,"

To a considerable extent, the movements in which Lum was involved, particularly the Greenback-Labor party and the Knights of Labor, were part of "worker republicanism." Yet even in the 1870s, Lum interpreted republicanism quite radically, calling for a "Social Democracy." Consequently, he developed contacts and sympathy with radical immigrant "republicans," notably Irish radicals and the Socialist Labor party. Despite their differences, the gap between American "worker republicanism" and European republicanism could be bridged, as the career of Lum (and of others such as Patrick Ford and Albert Parsons) demonstrates. Indeed, bridging that gap was probably essential in transforming a native-born labor reformer like Lum into a libertarian socialist and revolutionary. Unlike immigrant socialists, Lum did not carry over skepticism of electoral methods from the British repression of Ireland or Bismarck's repression of German socialists, but the impatience of immigrant comrades probably hastened Lum's own disillusionment with the Greenback-Labor party and his transformation into an anarchist.

Yet, Lum's mature *ideology* was individualist anarchism, not American "worker republicanism" or even Marxian socialism. This suggests that Lum's ideology was grounded firmly in American political culture, specifically in labor reform and *laissez-faire*. As most intellectual histories of American anarchism insist, anarchism was not an exotic import from Germany or Russia, but an indigenous ideology. Despite Lum's substantial contacts with immigrant radicals, most of his concepts were native and Lum consciously attempted to link anarchism to native intellectual traditions (for example, by quoting Thomas Paine and calling anarchism the "American idea"). Even Lum's revolutionary strategy and focus on labor organization can be seen as indigenous, for it was grounded in sincere attempts to take advantage of American workers' unique privilege: the vote. Community-based studies of anarchism, such as Bruce Nelson's, and similar studies of worker politics, such as

City.⁷² His comments were revealing: “the lesson for capitalists to learn is that workingmen are now growing so desperate that they not only make up their minds to die, but decide to take such men as Frick to St. Peter’s gate with them.”⁷³ Eight months later, Lum himself had grown so desperate that he made up his mind to die. Tragically for such a revolutionary activist, Lum took no one with him, dying alone in his room in the Bowery from a drug overdose.

The mid-1890s did seem to Lum to be another in the series of revolutionary upheavals that cyclically rocked American society, but the possibility that anarchism could take advantage of this new upheaval seemed slim indeed. The movement’s organization was decimated, its anti-electoral strategy paled beside the resurgence of the SLP and the emergence of the People’s Party, and its anti-statist ideology did not square with political reforms such as antitrust legislation. Disheartened, exhausted, and desperate, Lum was a late casualty of the Haymarket repression.

Lum’s path to anarchism, although unique, had some parallels and, more importantly, reveals several of the directions to radicalism among late nineteenth-century workers. His strategic evolution, from lobbying efforts to local third-party politics, to national third-party politics, and eventually to a revolutionary anti-political strategy spanned the range of political activities that activists and ordinary workers in their communities tried in the late nineteenth century. His ideological evolution, from abolitionist to Greenbacker, to socialist, and finally to individualist anarchist was similarly broad in its parallels. Considering the cultural roots of Lum’s ideology was essential to understanding what appear to be a rather eclectic set of ideas, as social historians and the new labor history would insist.

⁷² Lum, letters to de Cleyre, July 16, 1892, July 25, 1892, Ishill Papers, Harvard Univ.

⁷³ “Wild Anarchist Talk,” *New York Times*, Aug. 2, 1892, 2.

when he turned to Buddhism, which he saw as anti-institutional, antidogmatic, egalitarian and humanistic. In a sense, he had whittled away religion to its psychological core, devotion to something outside self. Having accomplished that, he wrote virtually nothing about religion for the rest of his life. Nevertheless, the humanism of Buddha’s writings influenced Lum’s socialism and his theory of history. The Buddhist concept of nirvana, with its indifference to death and the individual soul, provided a quasi-religious sanction for Lum’s occasionally reckless devotion to revolution. Eventually, Lum’s cold, revolutionary selflessness led him to urge his Haymarket comrades’ martyrdom and ultimately to take his own life when the prospects for revolution seemed dim.⁶

and “The Supreme Being — Humanity,” Jan. 27, 1876, 41) as well as a couple of important articles (“Prognostications,” Sept. 9, 1875, 428; “Theism,” Nov. 2, 1876, 518–520).

⁶ Herbert G. Gutman, “Protestantism and the American Labor Movement: The Christian Spirit in the Gilded Age,” *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America. Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York, 1976), 79–117; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York, 1984); Kenneth Fones-Wolf, “Religion and Trade Union Politics in the U.S. 1880–1920,” *International Labor and Working Class History*, 34 (1988), 39–55; Jama Lazerow, “Religion and Labor Reform in Antebellum America: The World of William Field Young,” *American Quarterly*, 38 (1986), 265–286. Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs, Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana, 1982) esp. chapt. 1; James R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism, Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895–1943* (Baton Rouge, 1978) esp. chapt. 4; Blaine McKinley, “‘A Religion of the New Time’: Anarchist Memorials to the Haymarket Martyrs, 1888–1917,” *Labor History*, 27 (1987), 386–400; Donald E. Winters, Jr., *The Soul of the Wobblies. The I.W.W., Religion, and American Culture in the Progressive Era, 1905–1917* (Westport, CT, 1985); Bruce C. Nelson, “Freethinkers, Atheists, and Communists: Irreligion and Chicago’s Social-Revolutionary Movement, 1870–1886,” paper presented at Organization of American Historians annual meeting, St. Louis, April 1989. “Daniel L. Lum,” (obituary), *Geneva Gazette* (Geneva, NY), Mar. 20, 1874; Voltairine de Cleyre, “Dyer D. Lum,” *Freethinkers’ Magazine*, Aug. 1893, 498. Lum’s most significant contribution to *Banner of Light* was a 13-part exercise in comparative religion, “The Natural History of Religion,” appearing from June 5, to Aug. 28, 1869. Lum, *The “Spiritual” Delusion; Its Methods, Teachings, and Effects. The Philosophy and Phenomena Critically Examined*

Although Lum's rejection of religion was primarily the result of sustained research and investigation, he also drifted away because social matters began to capture his attention. Within the spiritualist movement, Lum had found a wide variety of reformers and liberal opinions, for spiritualism was one of a "sisterhood of reforms" that included women's suffrage, abolitionism, socialism, and even free love.⁷ By the early 1870s, Lum began to be active in reform. In 1872, he signed the call for the Equal Rights party convention that nominated Victoria Woodhull for President. He also collected signatures for a petition opposing a Constitutional amendment that would have declared the United States a Christian nation.⁸

The economic depression that began in 1873 was even more influential on Lum, for it brought the "labor problem" to the fore. In 1876, Lum attended the Massachusetts state convention of the Labor Reform party. In February 1877, he helped form a Greenback club in Northampton and in the summer and fall he spoke at several labor rallies. He also wrote a column on labor for a newly-launched Northampton weekly sympathetic to the Greenback cause and was eventually nominated for County Representative by the local labor party. In October, his efforts were recognized at the state level when he was nominated for Lieutenant Governor on a fusion Greenback-Labor Reform ticket headed by Wendell Phillips.⁹

(Philadelphia, 1873). Lum, "Buddhism Notwithstanding: An Attempt to Interpret Buddha from a Buddhist Standpoint," *Index*, Apr. 29, 1875, 194–196 and May 6, 1875, 206–208. Lum, "Nirvana" and "The Modern Nirvana," *The Radical Review*, Aug. 1877, 260–262; Voltairine de Cleyre, "Dyer D. Lum, *Alexander Berkman*, ed. *Selected Works of Voltairine de Cleyre* (New York:, 1914), 289–90.

⁷ R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture* (New York, 1977); Geoffrey K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (London, 1969).

⁸ *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, April 13, 1872; *Index*, Feb. 17, April 13, and April 27, 1872.

⁹ *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 12, 1876, 8; Nov. 8, 1876, 8. *Hampshire County Journal* [Northampton, MA] Feb. 24, 1877, 8, May 19, 1877, 5; "Declaration of Principles," *Hampshire County Journal*, July 7, 1877, 4; Dyer Lum, "Notes on Labor

By 1892, then, Lum seemed committed to a long-term strategy of inoculating trade unions with anarchist principles. Yet this was ultimately unsatisfying to a revolutionary like Lum. Frustrated by his own poverty, his long-distance relationship with Voltairine de Cleyre, and continuing struggles with publishers, he sought consolation in alcohol and opium as well as in the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer and Buddha.⁶⁹ Like many of the individualists after the mid-1880s, Lum came to reject Spencer's natural-rights justification for anarchism, but unlike them, he did not turn to the philosophic egoism of the German anarchist, Max Stirner. Instead, he developed an anarchist ethics based on evolutionary theory, one that anticipated Peter Kropotkin's similar approach by many years.⁷⁰ These philosophical studies were poor substitutes for action, and Lum tried to stir things up by speaking to groups of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, getting involved in several bomb plots, and even organizing among black miners in southwest Virginia.⁷¹ This surge in revolutionary activism was a response to the beginning of a new protest cycle in 1892, heralded by strikes among miners in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and eastern Tennessee, and the steel strike in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Lum was especially enthusiastic when Alexander Berkman attempted to assassinate Henry Frick, the anti-union manager of the Homestead plant and he spoke up for Berkman at a public defense meeting in New York

⁶⁹ Lum, letters to de Cleyre, Feb. 4, 1892, Feb. 7, 1892, Oct. 17, 1892, Ishill Papers, Harvard Univ.

⁷⁰ Martin, chap. 9; Lum, "The Fiction of Natural Rights," *Egoism*, May 1890: 5–6; Lum, "The Basis of Morals," *The Monist*, July 1897, 554–570. Lum's writings were contemporary with the series of articles that eventually formed Kropotkin's book, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. It was not until twenty-five years later, however, that Kropotkin began an explicit account of ethics (the uncompleted *Ethics*).

⁷¹ Lum, letters to de Cleyre, Nov. 13, 1889, Dec. 17, 1890, Jan. 9, 1891, Ishill Papers, Harvard Univ.; Lum, letter to de Cleyre, Mar. 1, 1891, Ishill Papers, Univ. of Florida; Lum, letter to de Cleyre, Sept. 17, 1892, Sept. 27 1892, Oct. 17, 1892, Ishill Papers, Harvard Univ.

struggle, Lum focused on the anti-political strategies, the emerging “voluntarism,” of the AFL unions. In particular, the 1890 eight-hour strike, led by the carpenters’ union and supported by other AFL unions, seemed to Lum an encouraging sign of voluntary co-operation.⁶⁶ In 1892, Lum developed this theme into a series of articles, “The Philosophy of Trade Unions,” for the *Bakers’ Journal*, which was edited by an anarchist, Henry Weismann. This series was quickly issued by the AFL as a pamphlet and continued to be reprinted as late as 1914.⁶⁷ Indeed, the role of anarchism in influencing the early AFL has consistently been underestimated. August McCraith and Joseph Labadie are two other labor activists with individualist anarchist leanings; Labadie contributed a column to *Liberty* called “Cranky Notions” and McCraith several articles on unions. Although it cannot be convincingly documented, it is possible that Lum himself wrote speeches for Samuel Gompers in the early 1890s. A few scholars have documented the role of anarchists in the early AFL. J.F. Finn, for example, claims that Weismann’s individualist anarchism was the ideological lightning rod for opponents of the collectivist Plank 10 at the 1894 Denver AFL convention. George Cotkin has argued that Frank K. Foster and Hugh McGregor brought Spencerian and Comtian ideas to bear in the development of AFL “voluntarism.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Lum, “A Milestone in Social Progress,” *Carpenter*, Sept. 1889, 5; “Progress and Eight Hours,” *Carpenter*, Mar. 1890, 2.

⁶⁷ Lum, “The Philosophy of Trade Unions,” *Bakers’ Journal*, April 9, 1892 to July 2, 1892 (reprinted by the AFL in 1914).

⁶⁸ J.F. Finn, “AF of L Leaders and the Question of Politics in the Early 1890s,” *American Studies* [England], 7 (Fall 1973), 243–265; George B. Cotkin, “The Spencerian and Comtian Nexus in Gompers’ Labor Philosophy: The Impact of Non-Marxian Evolutionary Thought,” *Labor History*, 20 (Fall 1979), 510–523; August McCraith, “Why I Am a Trade Unionist,” *Liberty*, XI:22 (#334), Mar. 7, 1896, 6; Eunice Minette Schuster, *Native American Anarchism. A Study of Left-Wing American Individualism, Smith College Studies in History* (Oct. 1931–July 1932), 84; Lum to de Cleyre, Sept. 22, 1890 and Jan. 13, 1892, Ishill Papers, Harvard Univ.

Lum lost both the local and state campaign and his prominence in the campaigns cost him his job. In early 1878, he moved to Washington, D.C. and resumed work as a bookbinder. He also began to expand his career as a labor journalist, writing for the *Irish World*, the liberal monthly *Evolution*, and Benjamin Tucker’s *Radical Review*. In 1879 Lum became “Gurth,” the Washington correspondent for the *Irish World*. In March of that year, he was appointed clerk to the House of Representatives’ Select Committee on the Depression of Labor. Lum’s connections and his experience with national labor politics brought him positions in 1880 on the Executive Committee of the National Greenback-Labor party and on the Greenback-organized National Eight-Hour Delegation. From these various forums, Lum promulgated his views on labor reform, monetary reform, land reform, and third-party politics. The two years he spent in the nation’s capital gave him an important opportunity to develop and apply both lobbying and electoral approaches to labor reform. Thus his eventual rejection of politics was no intellectual conclusion drawn from afar but the result of a sustained and concentrated effort to effect political reform in the nation’s capital.¹⁰

Lum’s activities and disillusionment are clearly revealed in his articles in the *Irish World*. As “Gurth,” Lum addressed an audience of American and Irish-American workers and was also able to develop contacts with land reformers, unionists, and Irish revolutionaries. Under the editorship of Patrick Ford, the *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator* (its full title) tried to make connections between the Irish liberation struggle and that of American

Topics,” *Hampshire County Journal*, Oct. 13, 20, 27, 1877; *Daily Hampshire Gazette* [Northampton] Nov. 6, 1877, 2. *Irish World*, Nov. 10, 1877, 8, Nov. 17, 1877, 5, 8. Despite oft-repeated accounts, Lum did not run for Lt. Governor in 1876, but in 1877. This error probably originated with Lum’s obituary in the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* (a Northampton paper that covered Lum’s campaign in the 1870s) and was soon repeated by Voltairine de Cleyre.

¹⁰ *Irish World*, May 25, 1878, 8. *Annual Report of the Clerk of the House of Representatives* (1879–1881: serial no. 1928, misc. doc. #6; serial no. 1981, misc. doc. #18; and serial no. 2035, misc. doc. #6)

“wage slaves.”¹¹ Lum also learned a great deal from his travels with the House Special Committee which, in 1879, took testimony in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. On this trip, Lum met socialists in Chicago (including Albert Parsons), Mormons in Utah, and Denis Kearney in California, and reported his impressions back to his *Irish World* readers. The breadth of his contacts, as well as the editorial and movement strategy of Ford, influenced Lum’s later strategy as an anarchist activist and journalist.

More importantly, Lum began to develop an ideology that centered on the labor reformers’ demand: “The Wage System must go!”¹² Post-war labor reform inherited much of the moral fervor of abolitionism, as well as its connections to republican theory. For Radical Republicans and labor reformers, this legacy came together in the concept of “wage slavery.”¹³ While widely used, the concept was also variously interpreted. Ira Steward, for example, focused on long working hours and urged adoption of the eight-hour day. Henry George, on the other hand, criticized the private appropriation of rising rents and advocated the “single tax.” In part because of the breadth of his contacts, Lum interpreted “wage slavery” broadly, advocating reforms such as the Greenbackers’ demand for the retention of paper money as legal tender, a land-loan bill, eight-hour legislation, and restriction of Chinese immigration.¹⁴ He saw these as interrelated reforms. Land, monetary, and labor reform were all necessary because “rent, interest, profit

¹¹ James Paul Rodechko, *Patrick Ford and His Search for America: A Case Study of Irish-American Journalism, 1870–1913* (New York, 1976); Eric Foner, “Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League and Irish-America,” *Marxist Perspectives 2* (1978), 6–55; Thomas N. Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism, 1870–1920* (Philadelphia, 1966).

¹² Gurth, “The Industrial Revolution,” *Irish World*, Feb. 21, 1880, 5.

¹³ David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862–1872* (New York, 1967).

¹⁴ Gurth, “Our Congressmen,” *Irish World*, April 26, 1879, 1; Gurth, “Land and Liberty,” *Irish World*, Jan. 17, 1880, 5; Gurth, “Our Aristocratic Appendages,” *Irish World*, July 10, 1880, 5; Gurth, “California,” *Irish World*, Sep. 13, 1879, 1.

ating the few individualists who continued to read the paper. In February of 1889, the *Alarm*, heavily in debt, ceased publishing altogether. Unable to get much of anything published in *Liberty*, Lum was forced to write for very small anarchist publications like the *Individualist* and for independent radical papers like *Twentieth Century*. Despite his many efforts to revive anarchism, repression had taken its toll in defections, factionalism, and the hesitancy of workers to consider any explicit discussion of anarchist principles, much less to contemplate an anarchist revolution. At this nadir of his career as an activist, Lum discovered in Voltairine de Cleyre a young, intelligent, and attractive anarchist convert who was sincerely interested in and impressed by Lum and his views. By the end of 1889, they were frequently writing and occasionally meeting each other. In 1890, they began to collaborate on a utopian novel called *Hesperia* that was never published.⁶⁵ They kept up a lively correspondence that, for a time at least, revived Lum’s flagging hopes for the future of anarchy and inspired him to re-examine his individualist ideology and even his revolutionary strategy.

The third phase of Lum’s career began in 1890, as Lum began to see the craft unions of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) as organizational vehicles for hastening anarchy. Like the Knights of Labor in the late 1880s, the AFL unions seemed to Lum to be moving in the same general direction as anarchism. In 1890, Lum published a pamphlet, *The Economics of Anarchy*, designed to be read in workers’ study groups, as a way of hastening that movement. Once again, he promoted the reforms of mutual banks, free access to land, and producer cooperation. On the other hand, he softened his revolutionary strategy. He continued to assert that revolution was inevitable, but acknowledged that strategic and principled objections could be made. Instead of an active revolutionary

⁶⁵ See the set of letters from Dyer Lum to Voltairine de Cleyre (Lum destroyed de Cleyre’s letters to him) in the Ishill Papers, both in Harvard Univ. and the Univ. of Florida.

anarchists of various stripes, while, as editor, promoting his own version of anarchism.

At the same time, Lum focused more and more on the importance of labor to anarchism. In the *Alarm*, he pointed out the similarities between the Knights' labor reform ideology and his own mutualist anarchism. He argued that the Knights, by pursuing their goal of producer cooperation outside of the electoral realm, might serve as the vehicle for accomplishing a nonstatist revolution of the economy.⁶¹ Lum also drew upon his connections to Chicago's Knights and organized a "Plumb Line Club" in District Assembly 24. This secret club explored the symbolism of the Knights' seal and, with Lum as its "teacher," conveniently discovered that the Knights, to be true to their own principles, should focus on producer cooperation and avoid political action.⁶²

In the middle of 1888, however, state harassment and movement factionalism forced Lum to cease publishing the *Alarm* in Chicago. The immediate cause was Lum's decision in the spring of 1888 to print more strident articles; this quickly got him into trouble with postal authorities.⁶³ In June of 1888, he moved the *Alarm* to New York, where he relied on the support of German anarchists sympathetic to Johann Most. In New York, Lum continued to print revolutionary rhetoric and make connections between the Knights and anarchism. He even suggested that the IWPA should be revived.⁶⁴ Because of this focus on labor and anarchist organization, Lum had less space for articles on economics and anarchist principles, alien-

⁶¹ Lum, "The Polity of Knighthood," *Alarm*, Feb. 11, 1888, 2; Lum, "The Shield of Knighthood," *Alarm*, Mar. 10, 1888, 2.

⁶² Lum, letter to Joseph Labadie, Feb. 29, 1888, Labadie Collection, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

⁶³ Lum, "To All My Readers," *Alarm*, April 28, 1888, 2; Lum, "Greeting," *Alarm*, June 16, 1888, 2; "Belz on The Alarm," *Alarm*, June 16, 1888, 2; Lum, "Correspondenzen," *Freiheit*, May 12, 1888, 3; *Alarm*, Mar. 10, 1888, 2.

⁶⁴ Lum, "The I.W.P.A.," *Alarm*, July 14, 1888, 2; Lum, "Trade Unions and Knights," *Alarm*, July 14, 1888, 2; Lum, "Powderly's Allies," *Alarm*, Oct. 13, 1888, 2.

are the triple heads of the monster against which modern civilization is waging war."¹⁵

This inclusive and radical economic analysis led Lum to lay some of the blame for wage slavery at the feet of American national government. For example, instead of opening land up to settlers through a land-loan bill, the federal government offered huge grants of land to the railroads. Lum, echoing republican ideology, saw this as "class legislation," subordinating the public interest to the private interests of "soulless" corporations. An even more egregious example of "class legislation" was a bill in Congress suggesting the establishment of rifle competitions under the auspices of the Secretary of War. Lum was incensed: "Has the American Republic no higher duty than in teaching men proficiency in aim ... giving its diploma, as it were, to the men who can, in case of emergency, kill the most human beings, slaughter fellow citizens with the least expenditure of powder and shot?"¹⁶ Lum was so indignant about such legislation that he several times hinted that armed resistance, or even revolution, might be justifiable.¹⁷

Yet this was not a serious strategic suggestion, for Lum placed his hopes on third-party politics. Given his positions within the Greenback party, it is hardly surprising that Lum was critical of the two major parties. He was somewhat sympathetic to the Republicans' roots in abolitionism, but felt that they had become "the party of a nascent imperialism .. [which represented] the change of sentiment from the democratic institutions of our youth toward a 'strong Government.'"¹⁸ Lum sought a more radical

¹⁵ Gurth, "Washington Letter," *Irish World*, April 10, 1880, 8.

¹⁶ Gurth, "'Land and Liberty,'" *Irish World*, Jan. 17, 1880, 5; Gurth, "Washington Letter," *Irish World*, Jan. 3, 1880, 5.

¹⁷ Gurth, "'Land and Liberty,'" *Irish World*, Jan. 17, 1880, 5; Gurth, "National Outlook!" *Irish World*, April 12, 1879, 5; Gurth, "Doings in Congress," *Irish World*, May 17, 1879, 5; Gurth, "Washington Letter," *Irish World*, May 1, 1880, 5.

¹⁸ Gurth, "The Republican Party," *Irish World*, June 19, 1880, 5; Gurth, "Co-Operative Democracy," *Irish World*, Jan. 10, 1880, 5.

republicanism than the Republican party could contemplate.¹⁹ The Democrats, on the other hand, could not be counted on to promote Social Democracy, for they were “without principle, without leadership, without aim, save in the all-absorbing one of the spoils.”²⁰ Consequently, Lum hoped for a realignment of political parties in America, in which a reform party driven by the principles of labor reform would supplant the Democratic party. Yet even the Greenback-Labor party seemed unwilling to play such a role in the election of 1880, as many party leaders urged fusion with the Democrats or alliance with farm interests.²¹ That summer, the Greenback-Labor party’s convention nominated General James Weaver of Iowa for President. The Socialist Labor party also nominated Weaver, having sent some delegates to the Greenbackers’ convention. In fact, Lum, as secretary of the credentials committee, fought hard to have the socialists admitted as delegates. Despite the support of the socialists for Weaver, Lum was disappointed by the nomination, interpreting it as an attempt to court the farm vote. He concluded that electoral success, rather than promotion of principles, was paramount in Greenbackers’ strategy. Seeking a more radical alternative, he joined the SLP later that summer.²² This was somewhat ironic, given his future association with the Chicago anarchists. Many of them broke away from the SLP in 1880 for the same reason that Lum had joined it: dissatisfaction with Weaver’s nomination.

On October 2, 1880, he broke publicly with the Greenbackers, charging that Weaver had accepted campaign donations from the Republican party. Nothing much came of the charge, except that

¹⁹ Gurth, “Washington Letter,” *Irish World*, Jan. 3, 1880, 5.

²⁰ Gurth, “The Lost Democracy,” *Irish World*, April 3, 1880, 1.

²¹ Gurth, “Folly of Fusion,” *Irish World*, Sep. 11, 1880, 1; Gurth, “Our Standard-Bearer,” *Irish World*, April 24, 1880, 1.

²² Gurth, “The Convention,” *Irish World*, July 3, 1880, 4; “Gurth’ on the Convention,” *Irish World*, June 26k 1880, 8; Dyer Lum, letter to Terence Powderly, Sept. 15, 1880, *Powderly Papers*, Catholic Univ., Washington, DC.

more quickly along the path of making their anarchism a philosophical critique rather than a revolutionary movement.

Among the collectivists, the anarchist movement had two other problems. First of all, many rank-and-file members of the Chicago anarchist movement became active in labor politics in the municipal elections of 1886 and 1887. Although Lum criticized this defection from anarchist strategy, as a newcomer to Chicago he was powerless to stop it.⁵⁹ Secondly, the major organization of the American anarchist movement, the IWPA, was destroyed by repression, particularly in its center of strength, Chicago. By the end of 1887, then, American anarchism was deprived of what little organization it had in 1886, had retreated to a purely defensive strategy, and was increasingly divided along ideological lines. The modest revival of interest in anarchism sparked by the celebrated case and the martyrdom of five of its best organizers was small consolation for the desolation wreaked by state repression.

Despite such a desperate situation, Lum hoped to regroup anarchists for a renewed attempt to guide the labor movement. As the new editor of the *Alarm* and as an official of the Knights’ District Assembly 24, Lum had acquired positions of influence, but these were Pyrrhic victories, for the audience of the *Alarm* and the power of the Knights had shrunk considerably by late 1887. Lum sensed that it would be imprudent and perhaps futile to agitate revolution in post-Haymarket Chicago, yet he did not condemn or even criticize the violent strategy of the martyrs, as many in the labor and radical movements had. Instead, he continued to insist that revolution was inevitable, but that perhaps it would be best for the time being to focus on spreading the principles of “anarchist socialism.”⁶⁰ Modelling the *Alarm* on *Liberty*, Lum opened its columns to

⁵⁹ Nelson, *Beyond*, 206–211; Lum, “Anarchists Listen to the Siren Song,” *Liberty*, April 23, 1887, 1.

⁶⁰ “The Ballot,” *Alarm*, Feb. 25, 1888, 2; [editorial comment on] A. Warren, “Voting Anarchists,” *Alarm*, April 7, 1888, 1; *Alarm*, Nov. 5, 1887, 2.

IWPA and the Socialist Labor Party in an “American Socialist Federation.” This group was allegedly planning to foment revolution in America in 1889, the hundredth anniversary of the French revolution.⁵⁵ After this was exposed, Lum’s strategy became narrower and defensive, particularly when he helped Louis Lingg, the youngest and most fiery of the Haymarket defendants, to commit suicide.⁵⁶ Lum’s acceptance of his comrades’ imminent deaths symbolized his strategic desperation.

The Haymarket bomb had been an almost unmitigated disaster for American anarchism as a movement. It had not sparked an anarchist revolution and this helped to discredit the revolutionary strategy to which Lum had so fiercely clung. Individualists already had reservations about the strategy before the bomb and the red scare afterwards made them extremely wary of identifying with “Chicago” anarchism. Typically, Tucker’s strategic reservations made him focus even more on the ideological differences between his radical laissez-faire anarchism and the revolutionary socialism of the Haymarket defendants.⁵⁷ Although Lum at first tried to defend the ideological credentials of the defendants, he eventually challenged Tucker directly on the strategic question of violence. A bitter exchange ensued, resulting in permanent alienation between the two anarchists,⁵⁸ symbolizing the wider rift between the individualists and the collectivists. Despite Lum’s efforts, Haymarket had permanently alienated most of the individualists from a revolutionary strategy. In effect, it propelled them even

⁵⁵ “Revolution of 1889,” *Knights of Labor* [Chicago], April 30, 1887, 4–5; “The True Republic. A Directory of the Thinking Workers of the American Continent,” *Labor Enquirer* [Denver], Aug. 20, 1887, 2 (Lum is listed as one of three members of the “Plan of Action Committee.”)

⁵⁶ Avrich, *Haymarket*, 376–377.

⁵⁷ Liberty, Mar. 27, 1886, 8; Benjamin Tucker, “Liberty and Violence,” *Liberty*, May 22, 1886, 4.

⁵⁸ “A Chicago Anarchist on Anarchy,” *Liberty*, Feb. 26, 1887, 6; “Mr. Lum Finds Liberty Wanting,” *Liberty*, June 19, 1886, 5; Lum, “Theoretical Methods,” *Liberty*, July 16, 1887, 5; Lum, “Still in the Doleful Dumps,” *Liberty*, July 30, 1887, 5.

Lum lost his position on the Executive Committee of the party, as well as his post as “Gurth” on the *Irish World*. The Greenback-Labor party and, for that matter, the SLP, fared miserably in the election of 1880. By the end of 1881, both parties had all but disintegrated. This failure of third-party strategies to advance socialism or even labor reform led Lum the Greenbacker, as well as many socialists in the SLP, to take seriously the alternative of armed revolt. In 1881, SLP radicals established the Revolutionary Socialist party and in 1883, the International Working People’s Association (the IWPA) was formed. Lum seems not to have been involved in this process, but he drew the same strategic conclusions. By 1885, he had become an active member of the IWPA.²³ Despite the similarity between the evolution of Lum’s strategy and that of the revolutionary anti-statist socialists in the IWPA, his analysis of “wage slavery” was considerably more individualistic. While Lum’s analysis was a radicalized form of laissez-faire economics, most members of the IWPA were collectivists and many were influenced by Marx’s economics. How did an advocate of “Social Democracy” and SLP member make the transition to individualist economics? Unfortunately, the answer to this question must be primarily retrospective, for Lum published only one work between 1880 and 1885, an 1882 pamphlet on the Mormons, *Utah and Its People*. Lum’s explanation of repression against the Mormons led him beyond an antielectoral strategy to an anti-statist one. He argued that federal interference had hindered the cooperative and voluntary efforts of Mormons to settle Utah and that the real aim of repression was not to suppress polygamy, but to extend the control of Eastern mining interests over Utah’s resources.²⁴

²³ “The Greenback-Labor Party,” *New York Herald*, Oct. 2 1880, 4–5; “Mr. Lum’s Great Discovery,” *New York Tribune*, Oct. 2, 1880, 1. Nelson, *Beyond*, chapt. 3; Avrich, *Haymarket*, chapt. 4.

²⁴ A Gentile [Dyer Lum], *Utah and Its People: Facts and Statistics Bearing on the “Mormon Problem”* (New York, 1882), 43–45, 23–27.

Lum's critique of the state shifted from radical republican socialism to individualist anarchism under the intellectual influence of Herbert Spencer and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. As the doctrines of laissez-faire gained increasing acceptance in the late nineteenth century, the views of Herbert Spencer came into vogue. He made a triumphal tour of the United States in 1882 and, in 1884, his influential essay "The Man Versus the State" was published.²⁵ Lum was already acquainted with Spencer, having read his works as early as the 1860s. By 1885, he frequently cited Spencer's "law of equal freedom" as the philosophical basis of anarchism. Nor was Lum alone. Many anarchists and trade unionists found in Spencer's scientific analysis cogent arguments for individual liberty and against collectivism, especially as they competed with Marxists within the labor movement. Many, including Lum, were also amenable to a radical interpretation of "laissez-faire," where government would not interfere in the sphere of labor activities, even through "favorable" legislation, for fear that this would undermine organized labor's initiative and independence.

Proudhon's anarchism was even more influential, for its combination of radical liberalism, republican socialism, and commitment to labor was almost identical to Lum's anarchism. Additionally, Proudhon had a widespread impact among American individualists because his writings not only attacked state-oriented socialism, but also offered the mutual bank as a central reform. This could not help but appeal to Americans generally skeptical of the state and often concerned with monetary reform.²⁶ Proudhon's American reputation was given a considerable boost by the promotional efforts of Benjamin Tucker, editor of *Liberty*. This magazine clearly had an impact on Lum. *Liberty* appeared in 1881, precisely as anarchism was beginning to grow. Tucker's paper published such anar-

²⁵ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, rev. ed. (Boston, 1955) chapt. 2.

²⁶ Martin, chaps. 8, 5.

The Haymarket bomb did not dampen Lum's enthusiasm for revolution. His initial reaction to the bomb, published in *Lucifer*, was characteristic. He supported the right of anarchists to throw bombs as a revolutionary act, complaining only that Haymarket was an isolated incident, uncoordinated with other revolutionary acts.⁴⁹ Government repression, however, forced the *Alarm* to shut down and Lum lost his best forum for individualist economics within the IWPA. Yet this obstacle became a personal opportunity for Lum when he was called to Chicago by his old friend Albert Parsons to revive the *Alarm*.⁵⁰ When this proved difficult, he ended up spending much of his time visiting the defendants in the Cook County jail.⁵¹ At their direction, Lum compiled from court records *A Concise History of the Great Trial of the Chicago Anarchists in 1886*, demonstrating that the anarchists were convicted for their beliefs, not for any actual conspiracy.⁵² He also revised the autobiographies of the defendants, which appeared first in the Chicago-based Knights of Labor and then as a pamphlet.⁵³ There was some sympathy among Chicago Knights for the Haymarket anarchists, particularly for Albert Parsons, one of the original Knights in the city and an active member of Local Assembly 1307, the "Sons of Liberty" Assembly. In late 1886, Lum joined this assembly and in November it called on other assemblies to contribute to the legal defense fund.⁵⁴ Lum also got involved in a plot with the West Coast radical Burnette Haskell to join Haskell's International Workingmen's Association to the remnants of the

⁴⁹ Lum, "Inciting to Riot," *Lucifer*, May 21, 1886.

⁵⁰ Voltairine de Cleyre, "Dyer D. Lum," *Freedom*, June 1893, 38.

⁵¹ Lum, "Pen-Pictures of the Prisoners," *Liberty*, Feb. 12, 1887, 1.

⁵² It was published in 1886 or 1887 in Chicago by the Socialistic Publishing Company (publishers of Spies's paper the Chicagoer *Arbeiter-Zeitung*). The book was reprinted in 1969 in New York by Arno Press.

⁵³ Lum, "August Spies," *Twentieth Century*, Sept. 3, 1891, 6. The autobiographies appeared between October 1886 and March 1887.

⁵⁴ Avrich, Haymarket, 348-350; "L.A. 1307," *Knights of Labor*, Nov. 20, 1886, 7.

the fall of 1885, Lum was an occasional speaker on revolution and anarchism in New Haven, Connecticut. By 1886, Lum had joined the Knights of Labor, probably Local Assembly 5956 in Port Jervis, New York, where he had moved in late 1885.⁴⁴ His primary focus, however, was writing for anarchist papers and, as in the late 1870s, he achieved national prominence in radical circles. Between May 1885 and November 1887, Lum contributed 22 articles and 10 poems to Tucker's *Liberty*, eight articles and 22 poems to the free-love paper *Lucifer*, 27 articles and 22 poems to the *Alarm*, five articles and three poems to the *Labor Enquirer* in Denver, and two articles to the *Labor Enquirer* in Chicago. His articles in the *Alarm* were the most important, for not only did he argue for a revolutionary strategy and a labor-oriented anarchist movement, but also for individualist economics. Lum insisted to his collectivist comrades in the IWPA that communal property was not the sine qua non of anarchist economics.⁴⁵ He also tried to link anarchism to American ideology and historical experiences, trying to bring native-born workers into the fold.⁴⁶ In the individualist *Liberty* and the free-love-oriented *Lucifer*, Lum argued that anarchists should offer critical support to the Knights of Labor and should embrace a revolutionary strategy.⁴⁷ Finally, in both poems and articles made the case for a violent overthrow of American government.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ "Correction," *Labor Enquirer* [Denver], July 23, 1887, 8; Jonathan Garlock, *Guide to the Local Assemblies of the Knights of Labor* (Westport, CT, 1982), 342.

⁴⁵ Lum, "Definitions," *Alarm*, Nov. 28, 1885, 2; Lum, "Is the Commune a Finality?" *Alarm*, Mar. 6, 1886, 2.

⁴⁶ Lum, "Decoration Day," *Alarm*, May 30, 1885, 1; Lum, "A Connecticut Village," *Alarm*, Oct. 31, 1885, 4; Lum, "The American Idea," *Alarm*, Jan. 1, 1886, 2; Lum, "Rights of Man," *Alarm*, Feb. 6, 1886, 4.

⁴⁷ Lum, "The Knights of Labor," *Liberty*, June 9, 1886, 7; Lum, "Revolution," *Liberty*, Jan. 23, 1886, 5; Lum, "Evolution or Revolution," *Lucifer*, Mar. 20, 1886, 1.

⁴⁸ Lum, "To Arms!" *Alarm*, June 13, 1885, 1. See also the article Lum, "Drift," *Alarm*, Mar. 20, 1886, 1; and the poems "Harvest," *Alarm*, Aug. 8, 1885, 4; "The Alarm," *Alarm*, Oct. 17, 1885, 4; "Revolution of 1789," *Alarm*, Jan. 23, 1886, 4; "John Brown," *Alarm*, April 3, 1886, 3.

chists as William B. Greene, Joshua Ingalls, Lysander Spooner, and Stephen Pearl Andrews. Many of them had been active in labor reform in the 1870s, primarily under the banner of the New England Labor Reform League, and several, including Tucker, had been contributors to the *Irish World*.²⁷ The currents of labor reform and radicalized laissez-faire came together under Tucker's tutelage to form the individualist camp of anarchism in the mid-1880s. Lum's eventual attraction to this individualist ideology made him an interesting anomaly in 1885, a native-born revolutionary individualist with a strong commitment to labor.

Lum was an anomaly in the sense that he seemed to have followed *both* of the major paths to anarchism in the 1880s, the strategic path of those who rejected electoral socialism for revolutionary anti-statist socialism and the ideological path of labor reformers who turned to a radicalized laissez-faire explanation of wage slavery. This anomaly reveals in microcosm the schizophrenia of the anarchist movement, resulting from the convergence of two movements. While scholars such as Bruce Nelson and James J. Martin have convincingly discussed one or the other of these movements, there has been no sustained and effective analysis of their interaction, or of anarchism as a single movement. A flawed attempt has been made by David DeLeon in *The American as Anarchist*. DeLeon distinguishes between "right libertarians" and "left libertarians" on ideological grounds, but his discussion is too superficial to capture even the ideological development of anarchism. The ideology of both camps was affected by the strategic and organizational problems posed by Haymarket. The individualists deemphasized labor and turned to philosophical egoism, while the collectivists eventually regrouped into syndicalist and anarcho-communist tendencies.

²⁷ Martin, 203–208; *Irish World*, May 10, 1879, 9 (reprint of Greene's mutual bank plan); "Bastiat vs. Proudhon," Benjamin Tucker, trans., *Irish World*, July 12, 1879, 5 (serialized thereafter).

In order to understand such developments, it is useful to consider Lum's anarchism. Lum was well-acquainted with both individualist ideology and anti-statist socialist strategy and knew firsthand how each had developed out of the experiences of native-born and immigrant workers during industrialization. It was the anomaly of Lum's dual path to anarchism that made it possible for him to see what would be necessary to transform the two anarchisms into a unified anarchist movement that could lead American labor. Yet Lum's anarchist vision has a broader significance for, as an experienced activist in the labor movement, Lum had discerned the basic elements of any successful movement aiming at radical social change: a radical and rooted ideology, an effective and militant strategy, and an organization to promote the former and carry out the latter. More than many of his comrades and most subsequent scholars, Lum appreciated the imperatives in creating a radical social movement; he tried to forge an alloy that would combine the strength of both strands of anarchism.

In forging his alloy, Lum hoped to strike while the iron was hot, for he saw the Great Upheaval of the mid-1880s as a revolutionary moment. He felt that the labor movement needed leadership and that anarchism could provide it. There were several plausible reasons for Lum (and many radicals of the time) to believe this. First of all, there was a vacuum in the leadership of the labor movement in the early and mid-1880s. The decisive defeats of both the Socialist Labor party and the Greenback-Labor party at the beginning of the decade had discouraged electoral activity by labor parties, at least until the upsurge connected with the dramatic growth of the Knights of Labor around 1885.²⁸ Some politically-

²⁸ Ralph W. Scharnau, "Thomas J. Morgan and the United Labor Party of Chicago," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 66 (1973), 41-61; Richard Schneirov, "The Knights of Labor in the Chicago Labor Movement and in Chicago Municipal Politics, 1877-1887," (unpublished PhD diss., Northern Illinois Univ., 1984); Nelson, *Beyond*, 206-211; Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy. The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana, 1983). Allen Nevins, "The Henry George

That is, Lum must be seen as a movement activist responding to a specific set of events that posed ideological, strategic, and organizational dilemmas. Indeed, this was how Lum saw himself; he often stated that "events are the true schoolmasters." The dilemmas Lum faced were endemic to many social movements as they went through cycles of enthusiasm and activity. Applying the insights of social movement theory to the study of anarchism reveals that Lum's experiences were fairly typical and would eventually be repeated by other radical groups within the American labor movement. In particular, Lum seems to have been responding to what Sidney Tarrow calls a "cycle of protest." Protest activity peaked in the mid-1880s and then reached its nadir around the turn of the decade, only to peak again in the mid-1890s with Populist agitation. Lum's career as an anarchist activist follows this cycle quite closely, with a "revolutionary" stage (1885-1887), a "regrouping" stage (1887-1889), and a "movement-building" stage (1890-1893). Clearly, Lum's failure can only be explained by an account of how his anarchist alloy was cast and recast during this cycle of protest. Ultimately, the answer to the question is that, despite Lum's attempts to keep the movement together, post-Haymarket repression destroyed the anarchists' organization while exacerbating their strategic and ideological differences. The force of repression turned convergence into divergence, and Lum, as an individual, could not stop it.⁴³

The first, "revolutionary," stage of Lum's anarchism was for him the most gratifying, because it was the peak of the protest cycle. In

⁴³ The "social movement" literature is quite large and growing. The most influential works include Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA, 1978); William A. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (Homewood, IL, 1975); Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements. Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York, 1979); Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970* (Chicago, 1982); John D. McCarthy and Mayer Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology*, 82 (1977) Sidney Tarrow, *Struggling to Reform* (Ithaca, 1983).

was necessary for anarchist ideology to acknowledge that individuals could only be free by cooperating with others. It was anachronistic to focus on economic freedom for individual workers, for few of them produced anything on their own in an industrial economy. Yet Lum did not conclude, as Marx and Kropotkin did, that industrial production led necessarily to communal ownership. Instead, it was possible and preferable to maintain individual ownership shares in a cooperative production venture. Lum's view of producer cooperation acknowledged the ideological power of individual property ownership in a liberal political culture, while at the same time updating the radicalized liberalism of the individualists by insisting on industrial cooperation.⁴² To a greater extent than either the ideology-driven individualists or the strategy-driven collectivists, Lum recognized that a successful movement for anarchism required both a convincing and culturally-grounded set of analyses and reforms of the political economy (his mutualism) and a way of putting these reforms into effect (proletarian organization and revolutionary strategy).

Lum's evolution toward anarchism demonstrates anarchism's links to America's liberal political culture, the labor reform movement, and worker republicanism. His particular vision, his anarchist "alloy," demonstrates the potential as well as some of the obstacles for uniting anarchists into a movement struggling for social change. Given Lum's roots and the sophistication of his vision, the obvious question is "why did his alloy fail to unite the anarchist movement?" The answer might be general: the labor movement simply could not have been (or cannot still be) "led" by any single organization or ideology. It could also be specific: Lum's anarchism was too radical or obscure to win widespread acceptance. Neither answer is very satisfying. To achieve understanding requires a dynamic answer, considering anarchism generally and Lum specifically.

⁴² Lum, "Tracts for the Times," *Alarm*, Jan. 28, 1888, 3.

oriented workers continued to lobby state legislatures and city machines while others got involved in mainstream electoral politics. On the shop floor, many workers struggled to maintain and establish craft unions while others, under the auspices of the Knights of Labor, were establishing industrial unions. These different kinds of union organization reflected the wide variety of work experiences, as workers in different regions and industries underwent industrialization at different moments and paces. The diversity of workers' lives also found expression in the bewildering number of ideologies and reform schemes that proliferated in the 1880s. Ira Steward's eight hour agitation, Henry George's single tax, Henry D. Lloyd's anti-monopoly agitation, Lawrence Gronlund's Americanization of Marxism, and, at the end of the decade, Edward Bellamy's Nationalism all competed to explain and solve the "labor problem." Although many of these organizations, strategies, and ideologies proved to have some influence, none unified the entire labor movement.

Perhaps the very diversity of workers' experiences made it impossible to unify the labor movement, but anarchism had some potential because of its organizational, strategic, and ideological strengths. In just a few short years, anarchists had built a decentralized organization (the IWPA) with over 5,000 members. Their strength was concentrated in industrial cities such as Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Chicago. In Chicago, the IWPA had about 2,800 members and a vibrant movement culture, with lakefront meetings, picnics, commemorations of the Paris Commune, balls, and five newspapers in three different languages.²⁹ In terms of strategy, both the revolutionary socialists of the IWPA and the individualists of Tucker's camp had converged on an anti-political strategy

Campaign," Charles M. Rehmus and Doris B. McLaughlin, eds. *Labor and American Politics. A Book of Readings* (Ann Arbor, 1967), 79–82.

²⁹ Bruce C. Nelson, "Dancing and Picnicking Anarchists? The Movement Below the Martyred Leadership," Roediger and Rosemont, 76–79; Avrich, *Haymarket*, 81–86.

at a time when much of the labor movement was also skeptical of politics, especially electoral politics. Finally, anarchism had adherents not only among immigrant workers but also among native-born intellectuals and labor reformers. This gave anarchism broad ideological links, through the intellectuals and labor reformers to laissez-faire and radical republicanism and through the immigrant workers to European republicanism and socialism. The connections between the two camps of anarchism in 1886 were latent at best, and strains were beginning to show. This has led Bruce Nelson (and others who focused primarily on the collectivists) to down play the possibility of cooperation. Certainly, significant cooperation never materialized, but this indicates the divisive effects of repression, not the *a priori* impossibility of it.

Beginning in 1885, Lum articulated an anarchist alloy that fused three basic elements from the ores of anarchism: working-class organization, revolutionary strategy, and mutualist economics. In part, he hoped to unify anarchists by promulgating important principles of anarchism. Yet he did not want to establish a party line, but tried instead to acknowledge the potential contributions of each major camp to a pluralistic anarchist coalition.³⁰ From the collectivists, he kept the strategic focus on organizing proletarians as a revolutionary class. From the individualists, he took the ideological focus on an anarchist economics that was theoretically sophisticated and grounded in labor reform and laissez-faire. At the same time, Lum's alloy had an external function, creating a radical labor ideology that could attract enough adherents to become a significant force for revolutionary social change. His appeals to American and European history and thinkers, his commitment to solving the "labor problem," and his advocacy of forcible efforts at social

³⁰ Lum, "An Open Letter to a State Socialist," *Alarm*, Dec. 12, 1885, 2; Lum, "Is the Commune a Finality?" *Alarm*, Mar. 6, 1886, 2; Lum, "Collectivist or Mutualist," *Individualist*, Mar. 31, 1890, 6.

land monopoly had been created when the state granted legal titles to land. The way to destroy it was to abolish these titles and to institute the principle of free access to land. This would make it impossible for landlords to extract rent from the labor product. The money monopoly was the result of the state establishing its monetary notes as the only legal form of currency. Following Proudhon's American disciple, William B. Greene, Lum argued that this monopoly would be ended when mutual banks were set up to issue their own currencies. This would provide enough stable money to supply the needs of a growing economy and thus undercut the ability of moneylenders and bankers to charge interest.³⁹

Yet land and monetary reform were not enough for Lum; they simply laid the groundwork for the ultimate solution to the labor problem, producer cooperation. This idea had a long pedigree in American labor reform, as well as in European socialism. At the same time, it seemed to Lum the only solution that took into account the irreversible results of industrialization: increased use of machines, greater economic centralization, and minute divisions of labor. Many individualists, on the other hand, hoped that artisan methods of production could be revived.⁴⁰ To Lum, such hopes were reactionary and he sided with the socialists and collectivist anarchists who insisted that industrialization would continue to be the direction of progress.⁴¹

The economic goal of cooperation among free workers corresponded to the need for proletarian organization in the present. Just as it was practically necessary in an industrial economy to organize workers into unions, and to identify a radical, progressive movement such as anarchism with those organizations, so it

³⁹ Martin, 139–153, 125–138; Lum, *The Economics of Anarchy* (NY, 1890), 19; Lum, "Labor Economics," *Alarm*, April 28, 1888, 3.

⁴⁰ Tucker, 395; *Liberty*, April 14, 1888.

⁴¹ Voltairine de Cleyre, "Economics of Dyer D. Lum," *Twentieth Century*, Dec. 7, 1893, 10–11.

Spencer to give theoretical and rhetorical weight to this project. Paine seemed useful rhetorically as a hero of the American Revolution and a radical liberal. Spencer's contribution was more theoretical: he argued for an expansion of individual liberty and restraint of government action on both natural-rights and evolutionary grounds. Spencer seemed especially useful to Lum as a counterweight to the influence of Marx on the collectivist anarchists. While Spencer and Paine were useful primarily in developing a critique of the state, Lum drew from the French anarchist Proudhon, as mentioned earlier, a radical critique of classical political economy and, perhaps more importantly, a set of positive reforms in land tenure and banking. Proudhon's critique of liberal economics and his considerable influence on and involvement in French socialism made him, at least potentially, a theorist relevant to socialistically-inclined Americans and immigrants. Although Marx's theories already had a significant impact on German-American socialism, and the theories of the communal anarchist Kropotkin were beginning to make their way across the Atlantic, Proudhon paralleled the native labor reform tradition in several ways. Besides suggesting reforms in land and money, Proudhon urged producer cooperation and, in 1848, got involved in electoral politics to promote his bank reform.³⁸

Combining thinkers such as Proudhon, Spencer, and Paine, Dyer Lum produced an anti-statist economics that drew upon liberal economics and labor reform in order to promote the interests of the proletariat. Following individualists such as Tucker, Lum argued that the "labor problem" could be explained by the government's creation of "monopolies," particularly the land and money monopolies. Echoing Joshua K. Ingalls, an anarchist active in the New England Labor Reform League, Lum argued that the

³⁸ Dyer Lum, "The American Idea," *Alarm*, Jan. 1, 1886, 2; J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: The Evolution of a Sociologist* (NY, 1971); Martin, chapt. 8–9, Lum, "Progress without Poverty," *Individualist*, Oct. 5, 1889, 10. K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (NY, 1984).

change were all designed to make anarchism a magnet to radicalized workers.

While most anarchists in the 1880s were wage workers, and many had come out of labor politics and reform, identifying anarchism as a proletarian movement was still controversial. Individualists like Benjamin Tucker were concerned that the sort of discipline and organization needed for successful union struggles would compromise the liberty of individual members.³¹ Arguing that the most logical focus of anarchist theory was individuals, not classes, individualists concluded that they should struggle to abolish class, rather than identify with a class, even the proletariat. Many of the anarchists who had come out of socialism were influenced by the Marxist account of classes, but there was still some division over whether anarchism should be *organized* as a proletarian movement, and even whether it was the proletariat or the "poor" who were revolutionary tinder. Johann Most and his followers favored a conspiratorial, Bakuninist organization not formally tied to any class. Anarchists in Chicago tended to be much more sympathetic to class organization, specifically unions, because they had many contacts to local unions and the Knights of Labor. The issue was not resolved at the founding conference of the IWPA, but the Chicago anarchists did manage to get a resolution passed stating that "we view in trades unions based upon progressive principles — the abolition of the wages-system — the corner-stone of a better society structure than the present one."³²

Lum agreed wholeheartedly with this resolution, particularly the phrase "abolition of the wages-system." This phrase not only confirmed the ideological link between anarchism and labor reform, but also paralleled similar language in the declaration of prin-

³¹ Kline, 78.

³² Nelson, *Beyond*, chapt. 2; David, chaps. 3–7. *Plan of Organization, Method of Propaganda and Resolutions, Adopted by the Pittsburgh Congress of the "International Working-Peoples Association"* (n.p. [Pittsburgh]: n.d. [1883]), Albert Parsons Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 3.

ciples of the Knights of Labor. By 1886, Lum had joined the Knights and he urged other anarchists, particularly individualists, to support their struggles. Lum continued to be involved with organized labor for the next seven years, seeing unions as a practical necessity in the struggle against class politics and state repression.³³

Revolutionary violence was also a practical necessity for Lum in this struggle. At least rhetorically, the followers of Johann Most and the Chicago anarchists were united with Lum on this point. All had experienced firsthand the futility of electoral activism in advancing the cause of labor, Lum in Washington, Parsons and his comrades in Chicago, and Most in Germany. Many of Tucker's followers, however, objected to violence, some because they felt that aggression violated the rights of other individuals, some because they felt that it would be ineffective.³⁴ Despite such objections, Lum supported revolutionary violence on practical and historical grounds. Practically speaking, Lum did not believe that "wage slavery" could be ended by nonviolence because capitalists would surely use force to resist. More typically, he drew historical parallels between the abolition of chattel slavery and the coming abolition of wage slavery. Just as agitation was not enough to end chattel slavery, so Benjamin Tucker's agitation of anarchist principles would not end wage slavery on its own. Lum compared Tucker to William Lloyd Garrison, concluding that although "Garrison lived to see slavery abolished, ... it would exist

³³ Lum, "The Knights of Labor," *Liberty*, June 19, 1886, 7; Lum, *Social Problems of Today; or The Mormon Question in Its Economic Aspects. A Study of Co-operation and Arbitration in Mormonism from the Standpoint of a Wage-Worker* (Port Jervis, NY, 1886) 7.

³⁴ Martin, 225; Wendy McElroy, "Benjamin Tucker, Individualism, and Liberty: Not the Daughter but the Mother of Order," *Literature of Liberty*, 18–19; response by Hugh O. Pentecost to Dyer Lum, *Twentieth Century*, July 31, 1890, 3; Benjamin R. Tucker, *Instead of a Book; By a Man Too Busy to Write One*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1897), 427, 455.

yet had Garrison's quaker policy been pursued."³⁵ Lum went on to argue that the labor movement needed a John Brown, not more Garrisons.³⁶ Pointing out that it took a revolution to establish the United States in the first place, Lum concluded that the demands of revolutionary workers were not just "the vaporings of European revolutionists."³⁷

The final element of Lum's anarchism was his mutualist economics, an analysis of "wage slavery" and a set of reforms that would "abolish the wage system." Once again, this was a divisive issue in the anarchist movement of the mid-1880s. For individualists, the "labor problem" was primarily political. The state had established various economic privileges that allowed bankers and landlords to establish money and land monopolies, and thus to extort most of labor's production. While many labor reformers suggested government regulations to control monopolies, individualists argued that only the abolition of the state and its privileges would effectively undercut the power of monopolists. Collectivists also called for "abolition of the state," but envisioned an economy based on communes or unions, not individual private property. While the individualists had radicalized the political skepticism of laissez-faire, collectivists — when they offered a theoretical grounding for anti-statist economics at all — were typically anti-capitalist as well.

Dyer Lum applied radical laissez-faire economics to union and anarchist organization, hoping to develop a theoretical underpinning that was sophisticated and grounded in American labor reform. He cited liberal thinkers such as Thomas Paine and Herbert

³⁵ Lum, "Militancy," *Alarm*, Sept. 8, 1888, 2; Lum, "Evolution and Revolution," *Alarm*, Nov. 14, 1885, 2; Lum, "Why I Am a Social Revolutionist," *Twentieth Century*, Oct. 30, 1890, 6.

³⁶ Lum, "The Claims of Anarchy," *Individualist*, Oct. 5, 1889, 8; Lum, "Kid-Gloved Reformers," *Alarm*, Dec. 26, 1885, 2; Lum, "John Brown," *Alarm*, April 3, 1886, 3.

³⁷ Lum, "Drift," *Alarm*, Mar. 20, 1886, 2; Lum, "To Arms!" *Alarm*, June 13, 1885, 1.