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## Socialists vs. Socialites: The Class and Ideological Dispute During the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909

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SOCIALISTS VS. SOCIALITES:  
THE CLASS AND IDEOLOGICAL DISPUTE DURING  
THE SHIRTWAIST MAKERS' STRIKE OF 1909

■  
BY VICTORIA BANDA

In the Fall of 1909, 20,000 working women stood on the brink of one of the largest strikes in New York garment district history. They grew tired of the horrible factory conditions and of unfair wages and hours. Factory owners took advantage of them for cheap labor, and most unions in the garment district were male-dominated and did not support the idea of women's labor reform. On November 22, 1909, with the backing of the Socialist Party of New York and the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), the 20,000 shirtwaist makers, representative of hundreds of companies, joined together to fight until their demands were met. The unfortunate timing of the strike meant that many spent their holiday season with less income and no results. However, in cooperation with the Socialist Party, the Women's Trade Union League, and an unlikely supporter — New York's upper-class women — the shirtwaist makers settled with factory owners the following February.

Historians have studied the relationship of New York's upper-class women and the Socialist Party in the past, but most have argued that class and ideological differences were set aside for solidarity in the cause. Other historians often side with the Socialist supporters of the strike, discrediting the upper class for their involvement. This dynamic is what first attracted my attention to the topic, however, after extensive research I developed a view of these two groups that was different from anything I had read. Although some historians have argued that it was the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 that broke down class and ideological differences for a common goal, the strike brought the underlying class tensions to the surface through the dispute between the Socialists and the upper class. The magnitude of media coverage and public spectacle of the strike brought ideologically opposite supporters, Anne Morgan and the Socialist Party, face

to face. Despite Socialists' negative attitudes toward her, Anne Morgan continued to help the Shirtwaist Strikers until the very end. Her unceasing support proves that she cared more about the strikers and their efforts than she did about others' opinions of her.

The Industrial Revolution in the United States (roughly 1820-1870) brought new innovation to almost every industry starting with agricultural innovations and eventually reaching large cities in terms of textiles and other personal luxuries. Prior to the vast availability of factory jobs in the early 1900s, the most common job for young women who wished to postpone or decline their family claim was domestic service.<sup>1</sup> However, as cities continued to grow and as young women left home without being married, their interest in factory work spiked. Factories opened a new door for young women who did not want to start a family or work as a servant in someone else's home. With the turn of the twentieth century also came large waves of immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe.<sup>2</sup> New York's garment district flourished during this time period. However, as the textile factories grew, so did the crowded tenement housing in poor areas of the city. Conditions worsened and many middle-class young women who wished to pursue occupations outside of domestic work followed in the footsteps of Jane Addams, one of the first women to start and run a settlement house in the slums of Chicago.<sup>3</sup> The Settlement House Movement that arose from her example began an era of charity houses run by unmarried women seeking to help those who lived in the poorest and most unsanitary areas of the largest cities in the United States. But the longer the settlement women stayed with these poor communities, they came to the realization that they must initiate structural changes on a larger scale to help them. From the settlement houses came the first attempts at labor reform. Some changes saw success, some did not, but nonetheless their goals demonstrated progressive ideas.

The Progressive Era, which spanned from the 1890s through

World War I in 1914, began as a response to the political and economic corruption that had come with industrialization. Businesses no longer reflected what was once regarded as family owned and operated in the past, but had grown into monstrous machines of cheap labor and corporate profit. In April of 1901 the world witnessed the creation of the largest corporate entity on Earth; the first billion-dollar corporation, United States Steel.<sup>4</sup> Many other companies rapidly grew with the turn of the twentieth century, but the conditions in which their employees worked and lived remained the same or declined. The motives of the Progressive Era encompassed ideals such as fair wages, fair hours, and the right to unionize in pursuit of such goals. Many of the women who dedicated their time to settlement houses in the late 1800s and through the beginning of the twentieth century followed the Progressive Era into the public sphere. The New York Shirtwaist Makers' Strike took place in 1909, at the height of the Progressive Era, and brought together two groups that differed greatly in ideologies.

The most interesting aspect of the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike, and the focus of my paper, lies in the relationship between the Socialist Party and the wealthy upper-class supporters. The very definition of Socialism set the stage for class struggle in the impending strike. Socialist writer H. Quelch of *The New York Call* described Socialism in his 1910 article "What is Socialism," stating, "Socialism means that the land, the railways, the shipping, the mines, the factories and all such things as are necessary for the production of the necessities and comfort of life should be public property."<sup>5</sup> Socialists, in this context, believed in cooperation and equal work and reward for everyone in terms of the production of a product from start to finish. By contrast, Capitalism promoted the idea of private ownership in order to gain wealth. Nineteenth-century Capitalism encountered almost no government intervention. By the turn of the twentieth century, only a handful of wealthy families in the United States owned an

overwhelming majority of existing companies.<sup>6</sup> Socialism, as a general ideology, resulted as a response to the inequities of the expanding Capitalist society and the subsequent growing gap between the very rich and the very poor.<sup>7</sup> Socialist thought responded to these problems through the belief that the government should own all means of production and distribution. Ideally, public possession of companies would allow for fair wages and fair hours because employees would be under government regulation instead of private possession and control. These ideas stood in stark contrast to the lifestyles of the upper-class women who joined in the efforts of the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike. One woman in particular, Anne Morgan, joined the Women's Trade Union League to lend her support early in the strike. However, to the majority of the Socialist Party, Anne Morgan epitomized Capitalism and its corruption.

Anne Morgan, born in 1873 in Manhattan, was the daughter of wealthy financier J.P. Morgan and his wife, Frances Tracy. Known as the founder of J.P. Morgan Chase Bank, J.P. Morgan made the majority of his wealth through financing the consolidation of the United States' largest steel and electric companies.<sup>8</sup> Anne Morgan, educated privately at home in New York with her sister, was greatly shielded from the outside world. From an early age she disagreed with her father on many topics including the division of parishioners in their church by class.<sup>9</sup> As a young woman she admired the lives and work of the settlement house women. For Anne's place and time, the example that these women set gave a refreshingly new view on class and gender roles. However, due to her family's wishes and status she took a more hands off approach to philanthropy. Like many other wealthy young women, the majority of her help was monetary. The fortune of her successful Capitalist father acted as both her safeguard and hindrance. Although intrigued by a fully philanthropic lifestyle, never marrying meant that Anne Morgan depended on her father's financial support. Subsequently, her actions reflected on the Morgan

family as a whole, greatly influencing her words and actions. Anne Morgan's involvement in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike revealed the conflict of her family's Capitalistic lifestyle with her own philanthropic values as well as with the Socialist Party.

The Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 was a significant event within the Progressive Era, however the works that have been written about the strike often provide the same general theses. As one of the better-known historians focusing on the Progressive Era, Nancy Schrom Dye wrote many books discussing the roles of race, gender, and class within the reforms of the era. However, like many of her colleagues, Dye's work *As Equals and As Sisters* analyzes the roles of the working class, the upper-class women, and their solidarity.<sup>10</sup> Dye makes compelling arguments about this dynamic in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909, but her work left me questioning the role of the Socialist Party. Though her notes indicate some use of Socialist sources, she uses them without questioning or acknowledging the bias in such sources. Her analysis demonstrates a good understanding of two of the major groups involved in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike, but begs the question of the role of the Socialist Party.

Mari Jo Buhle, another well-known Women's Historian, focused on the role of Socialism within the Progressive Era in her book *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920*.<sup>11</sup> However, because Buhle covers a fifty-year span in her book, the amount of analysis dedicated to the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike is small. She paints a picture of the Socialist Party as a servant to the strike rather than a leader.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Buhle *does* offer a Socialist point of view. Her analysis uses a majority of Socialist sources, including *The New York Call*, but similar to Dye's book, she does not consider the bias of Socialist sources. Both books offer interesting ideas about the Progressive Era and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike, but left me asking about the roles of *both* the Socialist Party and the upper class as well as how each was depicted during the strike.

The Women's Trade Union League not only contributed greatly to the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 through generous investment of time and money, but it also encouraged and invited the upper-class women of New York to join the cause. On a national level, the Women's Trade Union League was founded in Boston in 1903.<sup>13</sup> Men dominated most industries and women's labor reform interests were discriminated against and seen as unimportant. The necessity for women's labor reform invoked the inception of the Women's Trade Union League. The women who founded the Women's Trade Union League were all too familiar with the disadvantages women faced. The women in charge of the creation of the league encompassed those who had been involved in the Settlement House Movement, middle and upper-class advocates of social justice, and working union women.<sup>14</sup> This previous alliance carried into the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909. By February of 1904, the Women's Trade Union League established the New York branch. Only five years after its establishment, New York's WTUL became a driving force behind the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike.

Although the Women's Trade Union League of New York experienced many leaders in its fifty-year run, Mary Dreier led the league through the landmark Shirtwaist Makers' Strike and set the tone for the WTUL's success. Her sister, Margaret Dreier Robins, assumed the role of president for the New York branch from its inception until 1906, when she relocated to Chicago and became president of both the Chicago branch and the National Women's Trade Union League.<sup>15</sup> Mary Dreier took over the responsibility of president for the New York branch in 1906 and held that title until 1914. Before she filled the position, Mary Dreier participated in a number of philanthropic activities, but never gave herself fully to one cause. In 1904 she enrolled as student at the New York School of Philanthropy and two years later she took over her sister's role as president of the Women's Trade Union League of New York.<sup>16</sup> Her time as president envelopes

one of the most important labor reform efforts of the early twentieth century, the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909. Her role in the strike was crucial. Among other things, Mary Dreier collected donations for the cause, escorted girl strikers to special events, and organized arbitration meetings. She played a key role in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike and her presence during that crucial year cannot be overstated because she committed herself whole-heartedly to one cause for the first time in her philanthropic career.

Unlike Mary Dreier, Leonora O'Reilly played a dual role in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike. She brought preexisting Socialist ideals to her role as vice president of New York's WTUL. She served with Mary Dreier throughout the strike, but was only elected months before the pickets began. Once a shirtwaist maker herself, she fell victim to long 10-hour workdays and longed for changes in factory wages and conditions.<sup>17</sup> In her early pursuit of labor reform, O'Reilly turned to the Henry Street Settlement, a settlement house in Manhattan run by middle-class women and nurses with financial support from wealthy benefactors. It was in that settlement that O'Reilly began to make connections with and befriend middle and upper-class social reformers. They paid for her to receive an education and when O'Reilly graduated in 1900, she was equipped with both the passion for change and the education necessary to continue in labor reform.<sup>18</sup> She assumed the role of vice president of New York's WTUL in 1909 and remained in that position until 1914.<sup>19</sup> Her motivation and enthusiasm while vice president was not subtle. A great orator in her own right, she attended and spoke at nearly forty events on behalf of the New York's WTUL in less than a year.<sup>20</sup> Leonora O'Reilly became one of the more interesting characters of the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike in that her past had led her concurrently to Socialism and to alliance with the women of higher socio-economic standing. The Shirtwaist Makers' Strike challenged the coming together of O'Reilly's ideals and past mentors. Although in O'Reilly's

past, Socialist ideals and upper-class benefactors worked together in her favor, the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 and overall progressive climate brought underlying tensions to the surface.

The Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 began with a single incident of unrest. No worker or employee imagined that a small division in the Triangle Shirtwaist Company would lead to the first successful uprising of women's labor reform in New York. Women within the shop were most divided by union women and women in the company's "Employee Association for Loyal Workers."<sup>21</sup> The union women, however, posed no large threat. Most belonged to the Local 25, a local division of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, but the small union division "had never really gotten off the ground among New York shirtwaist makers."<sup>22</sup> Shortly after a disagreement between the Employee Association and the Triangle Shirtwaist owners, the women were told that the company would like to cooperate with the union and asked which women belonged.<sup>23</sup> About 150 women came forward and were subsequently fired, but told that the industry demand had dropped and they were no longer needed. Soon after, however, help wanted ads were placed in search of new shirtwaist makers and the women knew their positions had been wrongfully terminated based on their union membership.<sup>24</sup> Similar situations began happening at other factories in the city and small pickets became commonplace outside many factories. An opportunity presented itself to bring all shirtwaist makers together in a common goal, but the support offered by a wide array of the public was unprecedented.

New York's Women's Trade Union League stepped in to help during the crucial point between small pickets and full strike. Not only did the WTUL women offer their own money and support, but also their appeal to upper-class society garnered more money and resources for the strikers. They immediately became a valuable resource for the strikers. On November 22, 1909, all those who had

already picketed and those who had since joined the Local 25 gathered at Cooper Union meeting hall. After many hours of anticipation on the part of union members, Clara Lemlich, a 19-year-old shirt-waist maker, “asked for the floor and called for a strike vote.”<sup>25</sup> This event, nicknamed the Uprising of the 20,000, began on November 24, 1909.<sup>26</sup> The walkout and subsequent strike resulted from a culmination of dissatisfaction with long hours, poor wages, and anti-unionism of factory owners. New York’s WTUL became the lead organization in support of the Shirtwaist Makers’ strike due in large part to the membership and funds of Anne Morgan as well as other wealthy society women.

Although the WTUL emerged as the head of the strike, the Socialist Party proved to be another key entity in the effort. However, unlike the WTUL, the Socialist Party disagreed greatly with upper-class involvement because they believed the working class alone must accomplish labor reform. The Socialist Party, though heavily involved in labor reform did not have a public voice until 1909. *The New York Call*, which had been in business for only about one year before the strike, published many articles similar to those in *The New York Times*, *The New York Tribune*, and *The New York Sun*, but with an appeal to Socialists and the working class. Vital to Socialist ideals, *The New York Call* thrived during the Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike. However, the newspaper’s motto alone set the stage for class and ideological dispute. On the front page of every *New York Call* newspaper read: “The emancipation of the Working Class must be accomplished by the workers themselves.”<sup>27</sup> This statement alluded to the idea that if the working class wanted success, they would have to work together, but only within their own class. The general tone of *The New York Call* did not favor upper-class involvement and their articles reflect disdain and distrust, but that did not stop Anne Morgan from entering the strike through her membership in the WTUL.

*The New York Call*’s coverage of the Cooper Union Meeting ex-

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pressed a stronger Socialist tone than that of the newspapers more readily available to the public. Though their general information was the same, certain tactics were used to appeal to Socialist interest and public sympathy. During the strike, *The Call* was sold by strikers on the street as a way of raising money for the cause. By selling the paper on the street, *The Call* was subjecting itself to public and not just Socialist eyes. The result was a newspaper that published both factual and heart-pulling accounts of events. The *Call's* first widely publicized article, "The Cooper Union Meeting," started like many of the other New York papers' articles, but took a turn for public sympathy in the end with comments on Clara Lemlich.<sup>28</sup> She was described as a "frail little girl" with a "tremulous voice" who had to be lifted onto the stage.<sup>29</sup> This was a far cry from the *New York Sun's* article, in which Lemlich was described as a 19-year-old young woman who stood up and asked that a vote be taken immediately. The *Call's* appeal to sympathy was at play in their carefully worded passages. If they could get at least some portion of the general public to read their paper, then the likelihood of public opinion being in favor of the strike would be drastically heightened by how their articles were phrased. If they portrayed the strikers as strong women, readers would perceive them as less innocent and able to fend for themselves. Portrayed as children, Socialists grasped a larger audience willing to support the strike. *The New York Call* used its powerful messages not only to paint the strikers as desperate children, but also to fight against the upper-class women involved.

Socialist presence within the strike became clearer as the picket lines continued. Within the first three weeks of the strike, the first arbitration meeting took place between representatives of the manufacturers and of the strikers. Morris Hillquit, a prominent member of the Socialist Party and labor lawyer, was chosen as one of the men to represent the strikers in their arbitration.<sup>30</sup> Immediately, the Women's Trade Union League was offering what they could, includ-

ing “giving up its entire building for the use of the uptown strikers.”<sup>31</sup> While working class shirtwaist makers picketed, members of the middle and upper class mustered money and sympathy from the general public. Anne Morgan first entered the Shirtwaist Makers’ strike when she and other upper-class society women of New York invited strikers to come to the Colony Club and give first-hand accounts of their experiences.<sup>32</sup> Though the initial arbitration did not accomplish anything, the first public meeting of all those involved in the strike took place on December 13, 1909 at the Grand Central Palace.<sup>33</sup> In the few days between the initial arbitration meeting and this larger meeting, more than \$1,500 had been collected for the strike, mostly large donations from the wealthy. With the meeting at the Colony Club scheduled for December 15 and donations of wealthy benefactors on the rise, Anne Morgan’s importance had yet to be defined, but the public would soon witness her desire to help.

Socialist fears about the strike began on December 14, 1909 when the first newspaper article to feature Anne Morgan as an involved member in the strike was published in *The New York Times*. Entitled “Miss Morgan Aids Girl Waist Strikers,” the media focused on her contribution and support.<sup>34</sup> This was Anne Morgan’s big ‘coming out’ as a supporter of both the strike and the WTUL. Many other wealthy supporters had given their donations and were publicly recognized in *The New York Tribune* along with the amount of their donations. Very generous donors, including Mrs. C.P. Huntington, who gave \$1,000 to the cause within its first few weeks, never seemed to be involved or mentioned except in small publicities of their donations.<sup>35</sup> Anne Morgan, however, stood out among her peers when it was publicized that she had become “a recent applicant for membership in the Women’s Trade Union League.”<sup>36</sup> Before the strikers had an opportunity to speak at the Colony Club, Anne Morgan gave herself to the cause. Public opinion of her would have been swayed through the publication of this article. The article continues to praise Anne

Morgan, stating “[her] application for membership means that Miss Morgan is interested in the attempt these girls are making for their own betterment.”<sup>37</sup> From a Socialist point of view, this was not ideal. Anne Morgan, a Capitalist by blood and a public philanthropist, was getting the first and most noticeable credit for being in support of the strike. As a collective group, the Socialist party would have to be careful how they related to Anne Morgan. If they made public sentiments of disdain, it could sway wealthy sympathizers to stop contributing. Because Anne Morgan was being viewed by the public as a ‘first responder’ to the strike, members of the Socialist Party had to keep their potential negative sentiments out of the hands of the general public, those who would be reading *The Times*, *The Tribune*, or *The Sun*. However, the general public would have seen this article, its praise of Morgan, and Anne Morgan’s own words regarding the strike:

I have only known something of this strike for a short time and I find other people to whose attention it has not been brought do not know anything about it. If we come to recognize these conditions we can’t live our lives without doing something to help them, bringing them at least the support of public opinion.<sup>38</sup>

As the daughter of a wealthy and successful banker, Anne Morgan knew the power of public opinion. She was mentioned in countless newspaper articles throughout her life even if just to mention her attendance at a play or public event. Where she went and what she did seemed to matter to the general public and publication of “Miss Morgan Aids Girl Waist Strikers” fed readers the entertaining information they desired with the added plug of sympathy for the Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike.

Anne Morgan continued her crusade for strike sympathy by inviting girl strikers to come to the Colony Club and tell members first-hand accounts of their treatment in both factory and picket line settings. The goal was to gain more upper-class support for the Shirt-

waist Makers' Strike and ultimately bring in more donations. Anne Morgan was all too familiar with the mindset of wealthy women. She knew that if they could be convinced that the strike was a just cause, their donations would be very generous.<sup>39</sup> After all, the women of the Colony Club were some of the richest women in the country. The Colony Club opened in March of 1907 as a women's socialite club, replicating the many gentlemen's clubs that had come before it. When it opened, it drew much attention from the press. *The New York Times* went so far as to describe the detailed interior features, the meal that was prepared for the opening, and the dues expected of members — \$150 initiation fee and \$100 annual dues.<sup>40</sup> In the two years that the Colony Club existed before the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike began, the knowledge of its members and their socio-economic statuses would have been commonplace. When the girl strikers were invited to the Colony Club to share their experiences, the gesture would not have been seen as small. New York newspapers had already written about the invitation itself in many articles. The Colony Club, the Women's Trade Union League, strikers, and onlookers had waited in anticipation for the event and the afternoon had finally arrived.

On December 15, 1909, WTUL President Mary Dreier did what was considered unthinkable to the Socialist Party; she personally escorted twelve strikers to the exclusive Colony Club. During the strike, public perception was crucial. The various groups involved in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike were co-dependent whether it was realized or not. If Socialists were too harsh towards the upper class, the loss in funding could cause the strike effort to fail. If the upper class was not careful, their words or actions against Socialists could deter many strikers in favor of Socialism, tarnishing their philanthropic images. Media presentation and public opinion affected how these groups related to the strikers. When the strikers arrived at the Colony Club gymnasium, which was set up for the event, they were

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ushered to the front row where special seats had been reserved for them.<sup>41</sup> General public opinion would have viewed this as a sign of solidarity between the classes, but Socialists would have seen right through it; in any other setting, the strikers would have been considered second class citizens to these types of women, but because of the circumstances and public eye on the event, solidarity and union was the best message to send. Once seated and introduced by strike arbitrator John Mitchell, Mary Dreier nudged a girl striker sitting next to her. It was Clara Lemlich, the same young woman who had stood up at the Cooper Union Meeting to call for a vote for the strike.<sup>42</sup> A stout, younger girl, who made a short and concise statement about her wage, followed. The others followed suit and each story, regardless of length or detail, was heard. After they had finished speaking, a collection was taken by passing around baskets. Before the strikers left the Colony Club that day, they had raised \$1,300 just from the women present at the event, proving, at least monetarily, that the strike had support from the upper class.<sup>43</sup>

In the opinion of popular newspapers, the meeting of upper-class society women and working-class women at the prestigious Colony Club had gone off without a hitch. The women were cordial and ideological class differences did not seem to matter. To the Socialists, however, they made a world of difference. New York's Socialist newspaper, *The Call*, also published an article about the events at the Colony Club. Their article offers a different view of the event on December 15. Within the first line of the article, the meeting is deemed as having been "one that was as peculiar as it was interesting, and as unique as it was pathetic."<sup>44</sup> This line sets the tone for the remainder of the article. They mention four socialite women by name, including Anne Morgan, but as a whole the group was referred to as "the cream of the 400," referring to those in the upper reaches of the 400 most wealthy families in America.<sup>45</sup> Compared to the descriptions of the event given by general interest newspapers,

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*The Call*, was not afraid to use theatrical language in order to get their point across, calling the strikers “enslaved by Capitalism.”<sup>46</sup> This phrase referenced the idea of wage slavery, which described the working class as quasi-slaves in their livelihoods due to poor wages. After comparing the plainness of WTUL president Mary Dreier to the embellished audience of the Colony Club, wage slavery is mentioned again, but more directly in the context of the working class girls being “wage slaves” of the current system.<sup>47</sup> Surprisingly, *The Call* article does not mention Clara Lemlich’s presence and participation as did *The New York Sun* article did. What was the purpose of omitting her name? Had she made such a name for herself in the strike that if she had been mentioned as having attended the meeting at the Colony Club, it would have made the event less easy to mock? Socialists were clearly skeptical of upper-class women’s intent. While the women of the Colony Club and Anne Morgan herself were trying to portray themselves as transcending class boundaries for the cause, the Socialists at *The Call* made it a point of their article to emphasize the “struggle between the classes,” including differences in general appearance.<sup>48</sup> However, the biggest statement made by the article came in the form of a simple sentence: “After the meeting the girls and the women of the league were taken down to tea.”<sup>49</sup> Though seemingly uncomplicated, this statement at the end of their article is the most subliminal accusatory sentence. Both *The New York Times* and *The New York Sun* printed their articles on the same day as *The Call*, but each of the general interest papers mentioned that \$1,300 was collected at the Colony Club meeting to benefit the strikers.<sup>50</sup> *The Call*, however, mentions no baskets filled to the brim or open purses. Socialists disdained the upper class and thus publishing the generous donations of the Colony Club women would not only praise the upper class, but would also make the members of the Socialist Party out to be critics of good people. Omitting the Colony Club’s large donation was one of the ways in which Socialists

could influence public opinion against the women. Published propaganda was the most powerful tool for the Socialists since New York's WTUL was the dominant figure in all other newspapers, but they also had to be somewhat censored. They, as well as the general public, knew that a large portion of donations came from the upper class. Regardless of class differences, if *The Call* were to chastise them for their donations, then the Socialist Party would have been viewed in a negative light. The admission that strikers had been invited to the Colony Club was enough. By omitting the donations given, the Socialists at *The Call* began to form an idea of the upper-class women as generous to a point, but given the chance, they would rather give strikers tea than money.

The Socialist Party simultaneously helped the Shirtwaist Makers' efforts and discredited Anne Morgan's involvement through their newspaper publication, *The New York Call*. While many general interest papers such as *The Times*, *Sun*, or *Tribune* portrayed more neutral views of strike events, *The Call* appealed to Socialists and potential Socialist sympathizers alike. Arguably the best source of Socialists' negative sentiments toward Anne Morgan, Theresa Malkiel's *Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* details the everyday events of the strike in a propagandized fashion.<sup>51</sup> Until recent decades, Malkiel's diary was dismissed as nothing more than propaganda, but as it remains in the public eye of many historians, its underlying Socialist message and meaning has become more clear.

Theresa Malkiel possessed particular resentment toward upper-class Capitalists. Prior to her days as a Socialist leader and propagandist, Malkiel worked in a textile factory.<sup>52</sup> She fulfilled what I consider a Socialist American dream: she rose from the factory to become a Socialist leader able to help those still under the plight of Capitalism. During the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 Malkiel was not a factory worker, nor was she on the picket line. However, in *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker*, she takes on the persona of a young, dis-

advantaged factory worker. Originally published in the daily editions of *The Call*, these diary entries pulled at the heartstrings of those who read them.<sup>53</sup> Malkiel's striker persona spoke of hardships faced during the strike with Socialist messages throughout, some more subtle than others. Nevertheless, *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* held powerful messages that, if not read with caution, could easily misinform both Socialists and strike sympathizers.

Although the strike had only been called on November 22, 1909, evidence from the diary entry on November 26 shows that already many Socialists were uneasy about initial publicity, but ultimately had no qualms about the upper class. In the first half of the entry, Theresa Malkiel's striker persona questions the presence of college-educated and wealthy women on the picket line. However, in stark contrast to later months, her comments are not entirely negative. She asserts that the women came out to help because "their conscience pricks them a bit" and they feel bad for having money while others are less fortunate.<sup>54</sup> From these first sentiments of allied help, there appears to be no recognition or resentment of women who are pompous or unwelcome in the strike effort. However, only four days into the strike, alliance with the most wealthy, including Anne Morgan was not yet established. *The New York Times* publicly recognized Anne Morgan's involvement on December 14 with the article entitled "Miss Morgan Aids Girl Waist Strikers."<sup>55</sup> With almost three weeks standing between Malkiel's initial reaction and the announcement of Anne Morgan's support, what is written seems rather subdued. On November 26, the biggest problem according to the diary entry was that general New York newspapers were not reporting the picket line events correctly and that was most likely because the owners of the newspapers wanted to remain on the "good side" of factory owners and bosses.<sup>56</sup> Despite Socialist views of the upper class, no evidence appears in this early entry from *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* that supports that educated and wealthy women

were unwanted.

Although not perceived as unwelcome to the strike effort in the first week, the following weeks seemed to weigh heavily on Theresa Malkiel's striker persona, and Anne Morgan's emergence into the strike does not sit well with her. On December 17, an entry appeared in which the fictional striker had attended the meeting at the Colony Club. Immediately, the entry shows discontent with the idea of having even been there. The entry mentions tables of food and Anne Morgan by name (a first occurrence), stating that her presence did not add anything special to the event.<sup>57</sup> Depending on the readership of *The Call* at the time, this statement had two possible objectives. First, for a Socialist audience, this statement appears as a cautionary tale. For strikers compelled by Socialist ideals, but awed by the funding of the wealthy, the statement offers a "first hand" view of the upper class. Essentially, the message that the Socialist Party wanted to get across to its members was that the upper class had nothing of lasting value to offer the strike. For those who were not members of the Socialist Party, but were buying the paper in support of the strikers, the message is also cautionary, but in a different way. To those simultaneously reading *The Call* and *The Times* for example, *The Call's* underlying message was to avoid being fooled by the other newspaper's portrayal of the upper class; in reality, they were nothing special.

*The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* also contains messages of guilt for those who actually attended the meeting at the Colony Club or those who remained unbothered by the presence of the upper class in the strike. Malkiel's striker persona admits, "I couldn't forgive myself for sitting at this rich board; my place was with the girls who can't even afford a bit of butter to moisten their bread."<sup>58</sup> This message directly speaks to those who attended the lunch. Holding tight to Socialist ideals, Malkiel believed in working class solidarity against the capitalist mentality of the United States. To associate with the upper

class, according to the entry's statements, threatened strikers' Socialist credentials, even doing more harm than good toward the effort. In fact, she goes on to say that the gap between the strikers and the upper-class women cannot be filled with their pathetic donations *and* that if the girls were to refuse the donations, then the upper class would leave the strikers to their own devices. However, her thoughts on the matter never became reality. Many wealthy women, including Anne Morgan, continued to donate money, the strikers continued to accept it, and the pressure between the Socialist Party and Anne Morgan continued to build.

Tension grew between the Socialist Party and Anne Morgan most rapidly after January 3, 1910 when a large strike meeting occurred at Carnegie Hall. According to Mary Jo Buhle, the pageantry of the occasion was the manifestation of Socialists' fears.<sup>59</sup> Though Buhle mentions that the upper-class women forbade Socialists to speak at the event, I have found no evidence within *The New York Sun*, *The New York Times*, or *The New York Tribune* to prove that was the case. Her information on the events of the Carnegie Hall meeting is cited from Socialist newspapers and *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker*, which contains highly propagandized information. On January 4, the morning after the meeting, *The New York Sun* published an article giving some of the first direct and widely published upper-class displeasure. "Miss Morgan Is Displeased with the Socialistic Ideas of Strikers" subtitles the main title of the article, "Still Talk of Ending Strike."<sup>60</sup> The article continues to say that no arbitration had been reached prior to the Carnegie Hall meeting, but clarifications regarding strike requests had. Anne Morgan was present at the meeting along with some of her peers, but unlike the information given in *The Call*, there is no report of Socialists being forbidden to speak. If they were silenced, how was that fact unknown to reporters of three major newspapers? Despite the lack of factual consensus, Anne Morgan accused Morris Hillquit and Leonora O'Reilly of indoctrination.

As quoted in *The New York Sun*, Anne Morgan stated:

I am heartily in favor of the strikers and I believe they have been very badly treated by the courts. A protest along sane and reasonable lines was justifiable, but I deplore the appeals of Morris Hillquit, Leonora O'Reilly and others. It is necessary to appeal to reason and sound judgment, but it was dangerous to allow this socialistic appeal to emotionalism and it is reprehensible for the Socialists to take advantage at this time to preach their fanatical doctrines.<sup>61</sup>

Anne Morgan's beliefs rushed to the surface after the meeting at Carnegie Hall. For months the Socialist Party not only preached Socialist ideals, but also made specific allegations against Anne Morgan's presence. The culmination of tension between the two came to a head after that meeting. Anne Morgan's statement publicly shamed the Socialist Party. Readers of the newspaper were aware, at least in some small part, of the events surrounding the strike. To use words such as "sane" and "reasonable" to describe the strike without Socialist ideas infers that Socialism was "insane," "unreasonable," and "unjustifiable." However, Anne Morgan makes these statements against the strike and its Socialist leaders, not the Women's Trade Union League or the strikers themselves. In contrast, Socialist leader Theresa Malkiel made it a point of her persona-written diary entries to attack Anne Morgan and her peers directly with little consideration for the fact that they had been born into that type of lifestyle and had not created it for themselves. Anne Morgan's statement concluded *The New York Sun* article. There was not initial reaction to what she said, it was simply stated. Her reaction to the meeting at Carnegie Hall left the floor open for dissent and upset among the Socialist Party. In the following days, Anne Morgan's statements against Socialist leaders were countered with equal fervor.

Morris Hillquit's long-winded response, printed the next day, expressed his pent-up frustration throughout the strike. Unlike many previous reports given by the differing newspapers, Hillquit's re-

sponse is a quoted statement and does not allow for creative changes to be made in favor of either party. As a result, *The New York Times* and *The New York Call* reports are almost identical. In his response, Morris Hillquit accused Anne Morgan of several things including being “ill informed on the doctrine of Socialism” and “being to recent to the labor movement to qualify her as a judge.”<sup>62</sup> However, Hillquit continued to tell Anne Morgan:

In this strike all supporters and sympathizers of the struggling shirtwaist makers, Socialists, trade unionists, settlement workers, suffragists, suffragettes, and good people generally, have been working harmoniously with the sole aim in view — to help the striking girls to victory. The movement has been entirely free from partisan politics or controversies, and the attempt to introduce such controversies while the struggle is still in progress is, to the least, rather injudicious.<sup>63</sup>

These last two sentences of Hillquit's response give great insight into a Socialist mind. He first alluded to the fact that *all* the supporters of the strike had worked harmoniously until this point when Anne Morgan spoke her mind. However, considering that ‘harmonious’ in this context means free from disagreement or dissent, Hillquit's statement denied both the natural tension between Socialism and Capitalism that permeated the general labor movement and the propaganda previously released by fellow Socialist leader Theresa Malkiel that disdained even the slightest notion of upper-class involvement. Secondly, Hillquit stated that the movement had been *entirely* free of partisan politics until Anne Morgan made her statements. As long as Socialist supporters of the strike continued to hold their beliefs while involved in it, it is not likely that their beliefs were separated from their labor reform opinions. The phrasing of Hillquit's last sentence also alluded to Anne Morgan as introducing controversial ideas into the strike before it was finished. The statement is presented in such a way that puts Anne Morgan aside as a possible scapegoat if the strike effort should fail. Although Hillquit's state-

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ments are in error, they provide a look at the release of mounting Socialist frustration during the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike.

Morris Hillquit provided the official response to Anne Morgan's accusations, but six days later, Theresa Malkiel published an even harsher critique of Anne Morgan. Entitled "The Danger of Socialism," Malkiel wrote the article in a rather sarcastic tone. Having first explained how Anne Morgan saw Socialism, she continued on to say that "the real danger to the working girls lies in the pretend friendship of the Miss Morgans, who come down from the height of their pedestals to preach their own interests and sham sympathy."<sup>64</sup> Malkiel's statement further exhibited the frustrations of the Socialist Party. However, unlike Hillquit, Theresa Malkiel had been writing anti-upper-class propaganda from the beginning of the strike. She personally wrote with great contempt for Anne Morgan and the rest of the upper class. Morris Hillquit's statements were in response to Anne Morgan, but Theresa Malkiel's writing was extremely emotional for someone who was not directly accused. She concluded her article stating, "Miss Morgan's condescending entrance as the champion of the working woman was not met with brass bands. Her bombastic exit is not seasoned by tears of regret."<sup>65</sup> This strongly worded sentiment summed up Malkiel's opinion of Anne Morgan. She strongly opposed her entrance in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike and the sooner she left, the better. Malkiel's statement alluded to the fact that Anne Morgan exited the strike effort before it concluded. It is unknown if Anne Morgan ever saw this article, but there is no record of a public response to it. Both Morris Hillquit's and Theresa Malkiel's statements served as a caution for the upper class, the Socialist Party did not hold enough power and influence to truly tarnish reputations. At first glance of New York primary sources, it seemed as though Anne Morgan *did* exit the strike movement altogether, but a further search proved that false.

Anne Morgan's last stand for the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike ap-

peared in the form of two very small news blurbs, one in *The New York Call* and one in *The New York Sun*. First, in *The Call*, a small and untitled article appeared preceded by “Wellesley, Mass., Jan. 19.”<sup>66</sup> Within the two paragraphs emerged the evidence I needed. Although Anne Morgan’s name nearly vanished from all newspapers after the Carnegie Hall meeting controversy, two weeks later her support continued. As the article stated, Anne Morgan agreed to “build, equip and finance a shirtwaist shop” contingent on an order of 1,000 shirtwaists placed.<sup>67</sup> Although I found no specific article on the fulfillment of her agreement, articles published later that year evidenced her building a new all girls’ high school in New York. This evidence does not speak to her specific role in the Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike, but it does acknowledge her unwavering support behind the success of young women. Anne Morgan’s persistence in the Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike identifies her as a strong supporter of the cause. Although union recognition played a key part in the Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike of 1909, many supporters including Anne Morgan never publicly claimed to have a stance in favor of or against trade unions. Many upper-class supporters of the strike did not understand the importance of union recognition and therefore many did not support it. Although I did not encounter any evidence of Anne Morgan’s opinion in sources written during the strike, I was able to find a later statement in her own words. In 1915 Anne Morgan published a book entitled *The American Girl* in which she gives advice about the education, responsibility, recreation, and future of young American women. When discussing the future responsibility of women in a more public arena, she addressed trade unionism in the following way:

To accomplish what the twentieth century should produce in womanhood we must cultivate every side of group activity that is possible under present social and industrial conditions. That modern trade-unionism is developing into a mistaken attitude of class war and class consciousness, in no sense does away with the funda-

mental truths inherent in the principles of collective bargaining and organized effort.<sup>68</sup>

She published this statement in her book only five years after the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 had ended. Undoubtedly, her experiences from the strike influenced her writing. First, she *did* acknowledge the twentieth century and that it should produce a new type of woman different from those in the nineteenth century. She argued that in order to produce this new ideal of womanhood, group activities are encouraged. By this point in time, Anne Morgan had experienced many different types of groups including her own Colony Club, the Women's Trade Union League, the Local 25 division of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, and witnessed the rise of the NAWSA.<sup>69</sup> Between the dawn of the Progressive Era and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, Anne Morgan saw the necessity of group activity. According to her, trade unions were also necessary for twentieth-century industrial conditions. From her experiences in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909, she saw the advantages of such a collective effort, but her statement also offers some critique. Her statement alluded to the climate of "class war and class consciousness" in twentieth-century trade unions. Undoubtedly, these reservations resulted from her experiences with the Socialist Party during the strike. As she saw it, collective bargaining and organized effort were simple qualities of trade unionism that resisted the influence of class-consciousness, but other qualities existed that could not. These types of opinions never appeared in publications during the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike, but retrospectively, Anne Morgan made her opinion known with clear reference to the class dispute that had taken place.

The Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 saw partial victory on February 15, 1910. Shirtwaist Makers from across New York's garment district came together for "better conditions, a shorter work day and the recognition of the union," but not all shirtwaist companies were will-

ing to fulfill these needs for their employees.<sup>70</sup> The coverage of the strike's end differed greatly among New York newspapers. *The Call* published nearly a two-page spread detailing what they claimed to be an immense success. According to *The Call*, all shops settled with the Local 25 division of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union with the exception of thirteen companies. As a result, each of the remaining shops would be further pursued in hope of settlement.<sup>71</sup> However, the other newspapers' reports, and lack thereof, provided a different view of how the strike ended. After much time spent in search of similar articles, I came to the realization that *The Call* stood alone in its interpretation of the strike's victory. *The New York Tribune's* article, entitled "Miss Dreier Tells About Shirtwaist Strikers," had a less enthusiastic tone compared to *The Call*. Mary Dreier discussed the consumer power of buying union-made clothing and how their decisions can have a positive influence in the factories.<sup>72</sup> Without going into any detail, she mentioned that the strike accomplished many things, but her overall tone showed less enthusiasm compared to what was written in *The Call*. Any victory in the strike proved important for both the shirtwaist makers and their supporters. Success, in any amount, took pressure off the Socialist Party and the Women's Trade Union League, both of which committed large amounts of time and money to the cause. In turn, Anne Morgan and other upper-class women were able to say that their involvement and funds helped the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike to a successful outcome.

Although some historians have argued that the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 broke down class and ideological differences for a common goal, the strike brought the underlying class tensions to the surface through the dispute between the Socialist Party and Anne Morgan. From the first meeting of strikers with upper-class women at The Colony Club, Socialists simultaneously criticized and undermined the role of the wealthy in the strike with special criticism

given to Anne Morgan. Throughout the beginning of the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike, the criticism was largely one-sided and from the point of view of the Socialist Party. However, the events of the Carnegie Hall meeting resulted in the first public accusation of Socialists by Anne Morgan herself. The Shirtwaist Makers' Strike was unlike any before it. Women's labor reform as a whole suffered from both shop owner oppression and the opposition of male-dominated unions. Not only was the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike the first to be overwhelmingly female driven, but it also remains one of the largest strikes ever to take place in New York. The magnitude of media coverage and public spectacle of the strike and its meetings brought Anne Morgan and the Socialist Party face to face. The tensions that had grown between them throughout the strike culminated in public dispute. Despite Socialist attitudes, however, Anne Morgan dedicated herself to help the Shirtwaist Makers until the strike ended. Her role in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909 is still judged harshly by some historians, but her presence revealed the underlying class struggle and blatant inequality that grew out of industrialization. She was a faithful supporter of the strikers from the beginning, and keeping with the cause, despite Socialist urging to leave, strengthened her ties to the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Rosalind Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Theresa Malkiel, *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1990), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century*, 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> H. Quelch, "What is Socialism?" *The New York Call*, January 4, 1910.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Beaud, *A History of Capitalism, 1500-1980* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century*, 38

<sup>8</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "John Pierpont Morgan."

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Allan Lewis, *Ladies and Not-So-Gentle Women* (New York: Viking, 2000), 58.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Schrom Dye, *As Equals and as Sisters: Feminism, the Labor Movement, and the Women's Trade Union League of New York* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1980).

- <sup>11</sup> Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Edward T. James, ed., *Papers of the Women's Trade Union League and its Principle Leaders: Guide to the Microfilm Edition* (Woodbridge, Connecticut: Research Publication, Inc., 1981), 11.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.
- <sup>16</sup> Dye, *As Equals and as Sisters: Feminism, the Labor Movement, and the Women's Trade Union League of New York*, 37
- <sup>17</sup> Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920*, 189
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> James, *Papers of the Women's Trade Union League and its Principle Leaders: Guide to the Microfilm Edition*, 188.
- <sup>20</sup> The Women's Trade Union League of New York, *Annual Report 1908-1909* (New York: 1909).
- <sup>21</sup> Donna Ippolito, *The Uprising of the 20,000* (Pittsburgh: Motherroot Publications, 1979), 9.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> "40,000 Women Strike Today," *The New York Sun*, November 23, 1909.
- <sup>26</sup> Dye, *As Equals and as Sisters: Feminism, the Labor Movement, and the Women's Trade Union League of New York*, 88
- <sup>27</sup> *The New York Call*, 1909.
- <sup>28</sup> "The Cooper Union Meeting," *The New York Call*, November 23, 1909.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> "Arbitrating the Strike," *The New York Sun*, December 11, 1909.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> "Standing by Union," *The New York Tribune*, December 14, 1909.
- <sup>34</sup> "Miss Morgan Aids Girl Waist Strikers," *The New York Times*, December 14, 1909.
- <sup>35</sup> "Standing by Union."
- <sup>36</sup> "Miss Morgan Aids Girl Waist Strikers."
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> Lewis, *Ladies and Not-So-Gentle Women*, 257
- <sup>40</sup> "Women's New Club, the Colony, Opened," *The New York Times*, March 12, 1907.
- <sup>41</sup> "Colony Club Purses Open," *The New York Sun*, December 16, 1909.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> "Tea at the Colony Club," *The New York Call*, December 16, 1909.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>50</sup> "Girl Strikers Tell the Rich their Woes," *The New York Times*, December 16, 1909.

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<sup>51</sup> Theresa Malkiel, *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker*, ed. Françoise Basch (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1990).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> "Miss Morgan Aids Girl Waist Strikers."

<sup>56</sup> Theresa Malkiel, *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker*.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920*, 200

<sup>60</sup> "Still Talk of Ending Strike," *The New York Sun*, January 4, 1910.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> "Morris Hillquit Issues Reply to Anne Morgan's Criticism of Socialists," *The New York Call*, January 5, 1910.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Theresa Malkiel, "The Danger of Socialism," *The New York Call*, January 11, 1910.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> "WELLESLEY, Mass., Jan. 19," *The New York Call*, January 19, 1910.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Anne Morgan, *The American Girl: Her Education, Her Responsibility, Her Recreation, and Her Future* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1915), 28-29.

<sup>69</sup> NAWSA (The National American Woman Suffrage Association) emerged in 1890 out of two already existing woman suffrage organizations. NAWSA and a group that later split from it, the National Woman's Party, pushed the Nineteenth Amendment for Woman Suffrage until its passage in 1920.

<sup>70</sup> "Shirtwaist Strike Won," *The New York Call*, February 15, 1910.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> "Miss Dreier Tells About Shirtwaist Strike," *The New York Tribune*, February 18, 1910.