
Historical Sketch of *The New Age*, Founded, June 1912: 10 Years of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Masses

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Published in *The New Age* [Buffalo], vol. 11, whole no. 516 (July 13, 1922), pp. 1, 10.

As we pause on the threshold of our eleventh year, after having passed successfully through ten hard years of struggle, it is fitting that we should review the trials and tribulations through which we have passed in attaining such remarkable success.

The New Age has always been an inspired paper. *The Buffalo Socialist*, a pioneer newspaper whose interests were devoted to spreading the doctrines of Socialism, was an inspired paper. Without an inspiration this paper would never have lived through the difficulties that beset us. Without the big idea ever ahead of us we never could have braved defeat after defeat only to achieve VICTORY AT LAST.



To those who devoted their time and efforts in the early days we are especially indebted. Those loyal comrades whose broad vision made possible this paper are indeed to be congratulated.

The first issue of the *Buffalo Socialist*, as our paper was then called, appeared June 6th, 1912, and if you will refer to your files you will see the names of those who were farsighted enough to pledge themselves to the successful operation of such an enterprise. The Buffalo Socialist Publishing Company was organized with the following

officers: president, Martin B. Heisler; treasurer, Frank Ehrenfried; secretary and editor, Henry Tutthill; business manager, Stephen J. Mahoney.

It is to Stephen J. Mahoney that we owe a never ending debt. Steve was the first business manager of Buffalo's Socialist paper. It was he who first attempted to secure advertising for our paper. It was he who had to overcome the hardest obstacles.

And through the efforts of Stephen J. Mahoney we have reached the point where we are now celebrating our Anniversary of Triumph. But where is Steve Mahoney? Steve, who was beloved by all, has passed away.¹ Steve gave his life so that you and I and all the rest might have a Socialist paper; that we might enjoy a few of the liberties that every man is entitled to.

As our new enterprise progressed it became evident that we would need more than the small amount of money secured from subscribers and advertisers to carry on this great work. What should we do? Where could we go for money? No one seemed to know. Then, as from out of the sky, came the good news. The Woman's Club of Local Buffalo, Socialist Party, would hold a fair to raise money for the *Buffalo Socialist*. Was it a success? Ask anyone who was there. It was the successful beginning of a series of annual fairs that contributed so much to the income and enabled us to tide over those lean years.

Such women as Mrs. Martha Klein, Mrs. Charles Ball, Sr., Mrs. Theresa Colburn, Mrs. Henry Tutthill, Mrs. Dora B. Foster, Mrs. Leonard Perry, Mrs. Malloy, Mrs. Tom Pholman, Mrs. Henry Bangert, Mrs. Frank Hill, Mrs. A. Conn, and Mrs. Ed Simons and many other loyal comrades were the bulwarks of our paper at that time.

Much credit is also due to the first Board of Directors of the Buffalo Socialist Publishing Company for their untiring efforts in behalf of the paper.

During the National Lyceum Lecture Courses that were held during the winter months of those first years the *Buffalo Socialist* was a wonderful help in keeping folks posted on what was going on.

The year of 1913 saw the young people of Buffalo more and more anxious to do something for the Socialist movement and with the help of the *Buffalo Socialist* and the local organization of the Socialist Party a Young People's Socialist League was formed.

The part played by the Socialist paper in the first street car strike of Buffalo will long be remembered. It was at the Fred D. Warren

¹ Stephen J. Mahoney died in February 1920.

meeting on April 5th, 1913, that the strike was announced and on Sunday, April 6th, 1913, not a car was running in this great city of Buffalo.

At that time Frank Cattell was business manager of the *Buffalo Socialist* and it is well known by all that it was due to the efforts of Cattell and the local comrades that William B. Fitzgerald of the Amalgamated was able to effect an organization in the city of Buffalo. Four daily papers were issued by the *Buffalo Socialist* during the street car strike and the public was kept informed at all times of the truth in the matter.

Following hot upon the street car strike was the big mass meeting held by the department store clerks of Buffalo. The *Buffalo Socialist* had exposed the inhuman treatment accorded these workers and they had determined to call a meeting. The meeting was a huge success. The strike of the department store clerks was a fact. May 1st to 10th [1913] the strike continued and the *Buffalo Socialist* issued a daily paper every day during that time. The machinists' and teamsters' strikes were also called at that time and the *Buffalo Socialist* loyally supported those protests against intolerable conditions and low wages.

It was in August 1913 that two tired, dusty men with a covered wagon and a team of horses pulled up in front of Socialist headquarters. To look at them, and forget the surroundings, would have brought you back to the olden days when men traveled by caravan — and a caravan it was. Herbst and Edward Lindgren of New York City were en route from coast to coast and stopped off at Buffalo to cheer us up and be cheered themselves. What a time we gave them. Rousing meetings every night. We gave them a chance to rest themselves and their animals and start on their journey fresh and filled with new enthusiasm.

About this time the *Buffalo Socialist* devoted a great deal of space to showing up the fake charitable institutions of Buffalo. The Husted mill disaster relief fund was but one of these affairs where the workers were duped into giving money to local newspapers. Where the money went was never known, but it is a fact that a careful checking up of all money spent for charity among the sufferers proved that someone in connection with the fund was not spending the money for purposes that it was intended. Our attention was then called to the rottenness that existed in the Central Labor Council of Buffalo. Coleman and his gang of leeches were bleeding the workers to death. Time after

time the organized workers had their cause lost by this man's doubtful leadership and tactics and his greedy henchmen. They were labor fakirs in every sense of the word. But their days were numbered. The *Buffalo Socialist* started after them. We put up a good fight and the charter was withdrawn by the American Federation of Labor and a new council was organized with clean, honest workers as officials.

Hand in hand with these victories came the determination of the capitalists that free speech would not be allowed in Buffalo. Local Socialists were equally as determined that free speech should live. The crisis was on Friday, October 3rd [1913]. The free speech fight of our dreams became a fact. The mounted cops were called out and the patrol wagons backed up at Lafayette Square. Old-time Russia in America was a reality. The despotism of the Tsar was no worse than the attempted tyranny of the Buffalo capitalists and their henchmen, the chief of police and the mayor. Our comrades were determined that they would go to jail rather than submit to the will of tyrants, and go to jail they did....²

But listen! What do we hear? It is the beat of drums and the music of bands. The war is on us. The wars that we dreamed could never come had finally enveloped us in their midst. What were we going to do? We knew. We were determined. We remained loyal Socialists and kept up the publication of our weekly paper. We flayed the war lords throughout the year of 1914 but to no avail. The war was on us.

In June 1914 we were fortunate in securing the services of Max Sherover as editor and business manager and at his suggestion decided to change the name of the paper to *The New Age*. In February 1915 the name was changed and has remained to this day.

It was at this time that the business management of the *Buffalo Socialist* was turned over to Ernest C. Bautz. Ernest was a product of the Young People's Socialist League and until he left Buffalo was very successful as business manager of our paper.

Back in the days when gasoline sold for fifteen cents a gallon (yes, it did) we were fighting for woman suffrage and our paper was instrumental in changing the opinions of many Buffalo people.

² An accompanying photo notes that those arrested in the free speech fight included William Francis Barnard, Frank Cattell, Marie Gness, Samuel Leary, G. Lesch, Stephen J. Mahoney, Daniel A. Niel, Patrick O'Brien, Joseph Pelton, Mr. and Mrs. Max Sherover, and Caroline Welte.

In 1916 we were again confronted by a machinists' strike but we loyally stuck to the machinists and aided them to get what they were after.

Then came Billy Sunday — Billy Blatant, Billy the Chosen One, Billy the Apostle. What fun we had. They were the happy days. From December 1916 to February 1917 we were amused daily. We were called everything from a pink-eyed tortoise to a spineless jellyfish by Billy. But we are here, and where is Billy? We stuck. Billy drifted. Billy talks and then beats it to another city. We talk and stick to face the music. We make sure we are right and then go ahead. Billy knows he's wrong, that's why he runs away.

How we fought against conscription is known to all. But it availed us nothing. The old men of America wanted to see how well their sons could fight, so June 5th, 1917, called them to the colors. Many of them left, never to return. Many fathers who were proud of their loyal sons are now mourning for sons who will never help them again. Fighting by proxy does not pay.

The year of 1917 was a busy one. With the revolution in Russia, the Franklin P. Brill campaign in Buffalo, and Hattie Krueger, Socialist and suffrage worker, languishing in a cell in Washington, we had news for our readers every week. In 1918 came the coal shortage that had been predicted by *The New Age*. At that time Franklin P. Brill was editor of the paper and pointed out time after time that there was no real shortage but that coal was being gambled in so that the rich might grow warmer and richer and the poor might get colder and poorer.

It was at this time that we purchased a complete printing plant and under the able management of Charles Wilhelm have since been able to maintain a more independent position.

Our Greatest Battle.

Then came the days of oppression. Brill and Milliken were editing *The New Age*. Our second-class mail privileges were withdrawn. Brill made a trip to Washington to protest but to no avail. The authorities had decided to crush us. They were firm in this decision, but they did not succeed. Instead of crushing us they only made us stick together more strongly than ever. Debs was arrested and sentenced to prison for 10 years and Kate Richards O'Hare went down for 5 years. *The New Age* took up the fight and was among those who

succeeded in finally securing the release of our beloved Gene and Kate.

Another street car strike occurred in 1918 and again *The New Age* was on the job backing up the men in their demands and keeping Buffalo citizens informed of the truth of the situation. The kept press of Buffalo was filling the people with lies. *The New Age* alone fought the battles of the workers and kept Buffalo alive and awake to the real truth in the matter.

March 1919 brought unemployment and misery to many. Thousands were out of work and it was Martin B. Heisler, then organizer of the local Socialist Party, who organized an unemployed parade and marched to the City Hall demanding a hearing. Heisler was later arrested on trumped up charges and sentenced to a year in jail. Local attorneys who were prominent defended Heisler and had the case set aside. This year gave us our first sight of sawed-off shotguns. Buffalo police were getting ready for real murder. They couldn't shoot enough unemployed with revolvers so they were given sawed-off shotguns. Chief Higgins and his Sawed-off Squad were on the job. This was the beginning of days of fun. The city-owned halls were then denied us. Time after time when we could have brought a first-class speaker of national repute to this city we were unable to get any of the large halls owned by the city of Buffalo. Buffalo officials were firm. They had received orders from the Chamber of Commerce and they must abide by such order. Those who elected them, financially, must be served — and they were.

Following after this action came the ban on street meetings. The mayor was sorry but he could not give us the street corners for our meetings. Spineless Buck hemmed and hawed but was firm in his decision that a bunch of "disloyal persons" like the Socialists could not use the streets for meetings. *The New Age* took up the fight. "Six Thousand Dollars for Free Speech and a Free Press" was our slogan and we went out after money with which to fight the grafters of our Buffalo Steal Plant.

Then came dissension within our ranks. The Lefts insisted on splitting the party so we split. *The New Age* remained loyal to the organization. *The New Age* remained true to the principles upon which it was founded and stood by the party that had made its life possible and its years of victories a fact. The outcome can be seen. The Lefts have again split into a dozen different factions.

We were able, at this time, to secure the services of Robert Steiner as editor of our paper. Steiner is known and loved by all. As a writer of Socialist philosophy he was unequalled. He gave his services to our paper and for some time was able to remain with us as editor.

Through the hard days of reorganization *The New Age* remained loyal and in the campaign of 1919 was successful in electing to the City Council an alleged Socialist by the name of Frank C. Perkins. It was at this time that John H. Gibbons was elected Socialist Mayor of the city of Lackawanna against the combined efforts of both parties, who were backed by the Steel Trust.

In February 1920 Frank C. Perkins betrayed the Socialists and openly denounced them. In spite of all that had been done by the local organization and *The New Age* to give him publicity in what we believed to be his sincere efforts to help the people, he decided against us and for the Chamber of Commerce. What made Perkins decide against the workers has never been made public but it is well known in local political circles.

It was *The New Age* that pointed out the graft in the Park Department in Buffalo. Year after year we have been fighting organized graft of all kinds and you have but to look through the back issues of our papers to find evidence that we have always maintained that Buffalo was suffering from a bunch of grafters who were bleeding the city to death.

Victory.

And now we are celebrating our victory.

Ten years is a long time, but to us who have fought it seems but a day. We have kept at it day after day. Our only reward is the joy we get out of doing what we know to be right.

Among those who have been keeping their shoulders to the wheel and helping keep *The New Age* going by loyal, sincere efforts are: Ida Francis King, Maud Keddy, E.O. Baum, Harvey Davidson, Charles S. Leary, Sam Leary, John J. Maier, B. Pumplieu, H. Booth, J.N. Kohler, Fred Becker, Adam Schembs, Louis F. Rexin, R. Reid, A.C. Voss, Jacob Wasser, Maurice Winegard, C. Kreuger, John Zabadeck, G. Staebler, the Yokoms, Kohlers, Kolkman, Heisler, Wilhelm, Weiss, Reynolds, Zella, Ball, Kelly, O'Brien, and our former comrades who have since passed away, Tom Keddy, Bert Maxim, Mahoney.

Such locals as Rochester, Jamestown, Dunkirk, Lockport, Syracuse, Niagara Falls, Tonawanda, and all the branches of Buffalo were constantly supporting *The New Age* and its forerunner, the *Buffalo Socialist*.

For several weeks James Battistroni, a veteran in the Socialist movement, voluntarily edited *The New Age*. To him it was a labor of love and all appreciated the sacrifice of time and money he made until the board was able to secure the full-time services of Patrick Quinlan, the present editor. Because of his unique experience in the movement at home and abroad, Quinlan has proved himself an excellent editor, understanding fully the industrial and political situation from the viewpoint of the worker. The fact that daily and weekly newspapers all over the country are clipping articles appearing in *The New Age* is proof that our editorship is in good hands.

The business management of the paper is under the direction of Martin B. Heisler, who has shown by his untiring efforts the results that can be obtained by a sincere belief in the ideals for which we stand. A glance through the pages of any issue of *The New Age* will testify to the ability of our present business manager.

And now we have achieved success. We have built up a circulation of which we are proud. We are recognized as the best made-up Socialist weekly in America. We have grown slowly but surely. The fight is still on. The battles before us will be just as hard as those through which we have passed. We will keep up the fight. Our day is coming and until it comes we will keep up our work of editing a paper that is published in the interests of the working class, first, last, and all the time.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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