

Between God and Marx

The Catholic Worker under the Era of FDR
and the Enigma of Socialism in the United States



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Abstract

Beside their prevailing capitalistic system, the United States have been known for their two-party system which is ruled by the republicans on one side and the democrats on the other side. Their overarching prevalence presented a grand difficulty for third-party members to gain a significant political share.¹ Socialism is therefore not the first notion one would associate with America. As scholars like Werner Sombart started to publish theories about a failing socialist movement in the United States, debates and discussions regarding this topic have been conducted for over a century. This thesis concludes that the two main reasons why the assumption of a failing socialism prevails is firstly, that the two-party system obstructed the socialist political success, and the fact that socialism was often automatically equalized with communism and thus inherited a bad reputation within the United States. This thesis furthermore detected that socialism was not absent in the United States. To demonstrate the socialist impact on the U.S.A., the thesis introduces various scholarly works as well as the socialist journal, called *The Catholic Worker*. *The Catholic Worker's* peculiarity was its combination of socialist ideas and its Catholic convictions. It was founded in 1933 and therefore established during the Great Depression and the first term of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The research goal is to present *The Catholic Worker* as an individual socialist stream and to examine views of *The Catholic Worker* on Roosevelt's legislations, and its stance on the situation of African-Americans in the 1930s. Roosevelt's New Deal was initially well received but its implementations were soon criticized by the journal. Contrary to other opinions, the movement did not see the legislations as socialist. Regarding the Civil Rights Movement, *The Catholic Worker* was in full support of providing equal rights to African-Americans, opposed racism and campaigned against the rising lynchings in the 1930's. Because of the journal's distinctive direction in the socialist realm, its effort to join catholic and socialist philosophies and its nation-wide recognition in publications and newspapers, *The Catholic Worker* sets itself apart from other socialist movements and can be regarded as its own stream.

Keywords: Socialism, United States, Great Depression, FDR, Catholicism, The Catholic Worker, Capitalism, Civil Rights, Communism, American Worker

¹Wolff, Christian, *Amerikanischer Sozialismus? Die Geistesgeschichtlichen Und Gesellschaftlichen Voraussetzungen Des Revolutionären Sozialismus In Den Vereinigten Staaten Von Nordamerika*. (München, Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1936), 39.

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Introduction

The Great Depression caused a big disturbance in the United States. The country that established itself as the largest and most prosperous world economy, experienced a deep recession with severe consequences. The trust in the government was tarnished and the need for a substantial change was apparent. This shift appeared with the democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt, as he undertook the American president in 1933. His recovery programme, called the New Deal, presented several reforms that were opposing the traditional American values, with several critiques even denominating the legislations as socialist. But what exactly were those American values and was there even a place for something like socialism in the United States - the embodiment of capitalism? Although several scholars, the most prominent being Werner Sombart², denied the existence of any socialist traits in America, this thesis not only demonstrates several arguments in favour of an American socialism, but also focuses on a specific socialist movement based in New York, called *The Catholic Worker*.

The Catholic Worker was a journal founded in 1933 in New York by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin and emerged in the context of the Great Depression which was paralleled by Roosevelt's first term in the White House. The peculiarity of this certain movement is its combination of socialist ideas and its Catholic convictions, which was revealed in its monthly periodical, *The Catholic Worker*. Even though, there are already publications about the movement's history, the journals had not been analysed according to certain categories yet. Such a, perhaps, uncommon blend of values leads the thesis to its main research question which tries to ascertain how *The Catholic Worker* integrated socialist ideas and catholic beliefs into their movement and the journal's analysis regarding the Roosevelt administration and the Civil Rights movement.

To give context to the term socialism and its history in the United States during the early twentieth century, the first chapter is dedicated to this topic and includes a scholarly debate regarding the presence of socialism in America. The other two themes that guide this thesis and the analysis of the journal, is Roosevelt's New Deal and the Civil Rights Movement. The research goal is to examine the articles and to understand how *The Catholic Worker* viewed Roosevelt's legislations, which were often criticized by Republicans as being too socialist, and to showcase the stance of *The Catholic Worker* towards the situation of African-Americans in the 1930s. As the Catholic Church and the Socialist Party were both only marginally acknowledging the black minority, the thesis will show the journal's active support for the African-American community. The thesis choses to analyse those topics

² Sombart, Werner. *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten keinen Sozialismus?*. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906)

because of their wide coverage in the journals, as well as their political and economic importance at that time.

The last research goal of the thesis is the attempt to present *The Catholic Worker* as an important stream in American socialism, where the book of Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation*³ sets the groundwork for this proposition. In his book, Kazin introduces three different socialist streams in the United States, that he regards as the most influential ones in the so-called Progressive Era, of 1890-1920. This thesis will extend Kazin's construct and add *The Catholic Worker* as a fourth important socialist group, in America.

In order to adequately prepare the analysis, a corpus of secondary literature was gathered, regarding the history of American socialism, the New Deal reforms and the situation of African-Americans, especially in the southern states. This was followed by the analysis of *The Catholic Worker* journals, which were provided by the Roosevelt Institute of American Studies. Besides the disposal of the periodicals, the RIAS also added several publications about New Deal reforms, as well as lynching documents to the research literature. The analysis of the journals allows a past contemporary view on the years after the Great Depression and adds an innovative aspect to the thesis due to the fact that many articles have not been analysed before. It also leads to a further exploration of socialism in the United States while contributing a new socialist movement as an argumentative point. The biggest challenge of this research was to conduct and to choose the articles and journals, relevant for the thesis and to be constantly aware of the journals subjectivity.

At the end of this thesis, the conclusions summarize the research findings, adding general remarks on the journal and eventually confront the research questions.

³Kazin, Michael. *American Dreamers: How the Left changed the Nation*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2012).

1 Socialism in America

By many, the United States of America is seen as the embodiment of capitalism and individualism. Its “American Dream” is based on the belief that anyone can create his or her own destiny, as long as they are willing to work hard. Hence, the American society ascribes the main responsibility to wealth and happiness to the individuals themselves. The American ideal of the free market and aspiration for economic dominance provides the country with a prosperous ground for capitalistic ideas. The transition from an agricultural country to one that was mainly based on service workers was rapid. Especially between 1870 to 1914, no other nation was able to surpass America’s growth.⁴ Within the established “American culture”, which was soon considered as materialistic, certain idealized stereotypes, like the confident American businessmen, had developed. During the Coolidge Administration (1923-1929), *The Wall Street Journal* described an unprecedented fusion between the government and the country’s economic interests. The president affirmed that statement in 1924, as he proclaimed that the United States would be a business country where the people would demand a business- oriented government.⁵

Beside their idealization of capitalism, the United States have also been known for their two-party system, which is ruled by the Republicans on one side and the Democrats on the other. Both support the “American ideals”, which encounter little to no opposition. Their overarching prevalence presented a strong difficulty for third-party competitors to gain a significant political share.⁶

Socialism is therefore not the first notion one would associate with the United States. As scholars like Werner Sombart started to publish theories about a failing socialist movement in the United States, debates and discussions regarding this topic have been conducted for over a century now. Even if the socialist movement was not able to compete with the two main parties politically, this thesis aims to show that it cannot be simply disregarded as a failing movement. There were several streams, groups and people that

⁴Herring, George C. ‘The Great Transformation: Depression, Isolationism, and War, 1931–1941’, in *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*, ed. David M. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 287-290.

⁵Prindle, David F. 2006. *The Paradox of Democratic Capitalism: Politics and Economics in American Thought*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 142.

⁶Wolff, Christian, *Amerikanischer Sozialismus? Die Geistesgeschichtlichen Und Gesellschaftlichen Voraussetzungen Des Revolutionären Sozialismus in Den Vereinigten Staaten Von Nordamerika*. (München, Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1936), 39.

supported and stood behind the idea of American socialism, not least *The Catholic Worker Movement*.

But what exactly is socialism and what does it stand for? First of all, the term socialism can be used as an economic or ideological term. Used in an economic context, it supports the idea of public ownership of national resources, agriculture and means of production. As people work in a collaborative environment and do not produce goods for themselves, the results are seen as social products.⁷ The emergence of the term can be dated back to the mid-nineteenth century, when it was first used in Britain and France.⁸ At this stage the main characteristic of the ideology was its opposition to individualism and private profit. Britain, at that time, was the flagship of industrialization where, besides all its accomplishments, the dark sides of the new ways of production and work process in the factories were soon revealed. Those were responsible for the division of wealth among some groups and the immense poverty among the majority of workers, which did not only lead to a major imbalance in society but also caused economic misery for the little paid workers. The author and poet, William Blake used the words “Satanic mills” in describing the situation in London.⁹ With reference to this term, he showcased the ruthlessness of the free market and saw the exploitation of workers as the main cause for the poor population in London. Socialism posed a position that envisaged about the ethical and moral grievances, being the oppressed worker, who, for example, was forced to work overtime while only earning minimal wages and without any insurance.

As the twentieth century is regarded the century of ideologies¹⁰, confusions with other streams like communism or Marxism appeared. Therefore, it is important to shortly go into the other ideologies, in order for them to be delineated from socialism. Firstly, a common mistake is the equalization of socialism and communism. Although they indeed show similar tendencies, there are certain differences to be recognized. Communism stems from the Latin word “communis” and aims for a general removal of private property in order to establish public goods. This differs from the socialist idea, which supports a more equal distribution of wealth, but not the repeal of private property. In general, the concept of communism is more

⁷Dagger, Richard, and Terence Ball. "Socialism." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. October 18, 2017. (accessed April 12, 2018). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/socialism>.

⁸Logie Barrow, ‘Socialism: Historical Aspects A2 - Wright, James D.’, in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), 4.6.

⁹Blake, William. *Jerusalem*, (London: Press, 1950), 159.

¹⁰Floyd, David. ‘What is the difference between Communism and Socialism?’ *Investopedia*. January 05, 2018. Accessed January 12, 2018. <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/100214/what-difference-between-communism-and-socialism.asp>.

politicised than socialism and seen as a more radical movement.¹¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are regarded as the most influential figures of communism and are responsible for several books, the most known of which are *Das Kapital*, written in the year 1867 and *Das kommunistische Manifest*, which was written in 1848.¹² Marx and Karl Kautsky, a Czech-Austrian philosopher and Marxist theoretician, made clear distinctions between socialism and communism, as the latter was seen as the ultimate end goal of a socialist society. It encompasses a teleological theory where capitalism will eventually always result in a proletarian revolution and consequently lead to a communist system where the people will be responsible for the distribution of resources and means of production.

In the Soviet Union, Lenin popularised the term communism, when he and his Bolshevik party announced that their movement would call themselves communists and took power over Russia in 1917.¹³ Eric Hobsbawm argues that Marxism in the twentieth century is not based on Marx' ideas, but rather on posthumous interpretations.¹⁴ Lenin took the Marxist theories and adjusted those to his leadership. The three principles of his state ideology, today known as Marxism-Leninism, included firstly, the basis of dialectical materialism for the proletarian revolution, secondly the communist party as leading figure and lastly, a planned industrialization and agricultural collectivization. Different to Lenin, Marx never called for one ruling centralised communist party.¹⁵ Another important aspect was the "Class Scenario", meaning that only the worker himself could start the revolution, therewith the Bolshevik endorsed violence against the oppressing bourgeoisie and welcomed the October revolution in 1917.¹⁶

The Catholic Worker Movement defined communism in one of their articles, as a combination of political, economic and philosophical views. It regarded the communists aim to abolish capitalism and to replace it with a system of common shared means of production, that get used accordingly to a predesigned plan, as a wrong approach. To change the system, a political movement by the working class had to be initiated, assuming that the capitalistic system would never change itself and the situation would therefore stay insufferable for the

¹¹,Kommunismus.' *Enzyklopädie Philosophie Und Wissenschaftstheorie*. 2nd ed. Vol. 4. (Stuttgart: Jürgen Mittelstraß, 2010), 267-68.

¹²Smith, S. A, ed. 2014. *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*. Oxford Handbooks. (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013), 37.

¹³Mitcham, Carl. 'Socialism' in *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, ed. Carl Mitcham. Vol. 4. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2005), 1812.

¹⁴Hobsbawm, Eric. *How To Change The World: Tales of Marx and Marxism*. (London: Little Brown Book, 2011), 3.

¹⁵Hanson, S.E. 'Marxism/Leninism.' *In International Encyclopedia of Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed.. Neil J. Smelser and Paul. B. Baltes (Elsevier: 2001) 298-302.

¹⁶Lih, Lars T., "Bolshevik Roots of International Communism" in *The Cambridge History of Communism*, ed. Pons, Silvio and Smith, Steven A. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 149-152.

workers.¹⁷ *The Catholic Worker* movement differentiated itself from the Communist Party in a statement where it claimed that its socialist beliefs would not include any kind of proletarian revolution or dictatorship, but a moral personalist leadership that would eventually lead to a system change.¹⁸ These ideas are in line with European social democrats, who preferred a societal change through parliamentary means and endorsed the political landscape to remain diverse, which is also known as ‘reform socialism’ and thus opposed the communist one-party system. Another main criticism of the communist movement was its assumption of an unchangeable human nature. These crucial differences, among others, led the majority of social democrats to assure the avoidance of being called communists and vice versa while both sides, however, claimed to follow the ideas of socialism.¹⁹

Lastly, given that both socialism and communism oppose the capitalistic system and that capitalism was the driving factor for the socialist formation, this term will be shortly examined as well. In a theoretical view, capitalism is based on three production factors, i.e. labour, land and capital goods, where the latter implies only the production but not yet the consumption. The term capital alone could refer either to financial capital, which includes financial assets like money or bonds, as well as human capital, which indicates the skills brought by workers to enhance the production process. One of the prime figures in neoclassical economy and capitalistic thinking was Adam Smith. He proposed that the most beneficial results can be achieved, only if everyone would act in its own interest, as such suggesting an egoistic and individual mindset, as this would lead the market to be equally balanced between supply and demand. Smith sees this egoistic mindset as an invisible hand which guides each individual in the free market.²⁰ This individual would be ultimately called a capitalist. In Marx’ publication *Das Kapital*, he states that all the capitalist would want is the labourer’s consumption to be at a minimum, as he regards consumption for mere pleasure, an unproductive form of consumption. Therefore, Marx concludes that any worker would portray just another resource in the process to gather money.²¹

The term “capitalism” in general describes an economic system, based on free markets, private enterprise and ownership. The distribution of the word “capitalism” increased with its use by socialists and communists, in the late 19th century. It continued to be a popular

¹⁷“Definitions”, *The Catholic Worker* 2, no.9, (1934): 2.

¹⁸“Communist Party vs. the Catholic Worker,” *The Catholic Worker* 3, no. 9 (1935): 1.

¹⁹Delavan, Willard, and Carl Mitcham. "Capitalism." In *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, edited by Carl Mitcham (MacMillan Reference USA: 2005), 288-291.

²⁰Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, (Petersfield: Harriman House Pub., 2007), 187.

²¹Marx, Karl, and Engels, Friedrich. *Das Kapital: Kritik Der Politischen Ökonomie: 1. Buch 1. Der Produktionsprozess Des Kapitals*. (Hamburg: Meissner 1921), 585-586.

term in the 20th century, as well as a rhetorical tool which contrasted socialist and communist beliefs. In Marxist theory, the capitalist system is self-reproducing and consists of two adversarial classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.²² The former is the ruling class in the capitalistic system, which owns the means of production and decides about the economic process and thus also inherits societal power. Those advantages enable the bourgeoisie class to use and exploit the proletariat, which is defined as immoral by Marxists, communists and socialists.²³ *The Catholic Worker* stated that capitalism would be the pursuit of self-interest. In its view, the system dominates the economic life and imposes self-interest as the law of life. When proposing a solution, the periodical took a Catholic twist by claiming that a common, guiding God and the removal of capitalism, would not only remove the oppressive system but would also diminish the justifying element of communism.²⁴

The differing factor between capitalism and the free market, being that those terms are not to equate, is that capitalism is an economic system that includes large scale enterprises, and a legal system that transcends nation borders. Furthermore, capitalism gives corporations the legal status of a person, which consequently separates corporate from private wealth. The free market is mainly designed for a smaller scale scenario and seen as a system that only functions under ideal conditions, which are unlikely to be fully found in the real world.²⁵

Lastly, the corporative movement will be elaborated as it is relevant for the socialism part as well as the catholic part of this thesis. Corporatism recognized the innate inequality among people and therefore supports more security by the government. Consequently, pacts between state and interest groups that are sparked by economic interest are arranged.²⁶ Each corporation was led by a board that included government officials, and representatives of the corporations. The church could lessen levels of competitions which was spiritually demeaning, by cooperation between state, business and labour.²⁷

Corporatism was especially popular among catholic members in the United States after the Crash in 1929, since it showed an alternative to socialism. Nevertheless, corporatism also found wide approval among the fascist countries like Italy and Germany as well as

²²Marx, Engels, *Das Kapital*, 591.

²³Jürgen Kocka, 'Capitalism: The History of the Concept A2 - Wright, James D.', in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), 105–10.

²⁴Capitalism Makes War Out Of Economic Life", *The Catholic Worker* 2, no. 11, (1934): 5.

²⁵Delavan, Willard, and Carl Mitcham. "Capitalism." In *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, edited by Carl Mitcham, Social Institutions, 288-291.

²⁶Meade, Rose, O'Donovan Orla, "Corporatism and the ongoing debate about the relationship between the state and community development", in *Community Development Journal* 37, no.2, (Oxford University Press: 2002): 1-2.

²⁷Morck, Randall K. K., and Bernard Yeung. "Corporatism and the Ghost of the Third Way." In *Capitalism and Society* 5, no. 3 (2010), 1-2.

several Scandinavian states.²⁸ The first officially recognized corporatist economy was implemented in Italy, by B. Mussolini while gaining the pope's support. Under the rising fascist regime in Austria, the church could implement their teachings into the corporatist governing.

Catholic Corporatism has the additional factor that it emphasizes the people's duty to God and the Church, whereas Corporatism in a secular sense demands the moral duty to a nation.²⁹

1.1 A Debate- Was there ever Socialism in the America

Even though this thesis will go through historical aspects and different movements in the realm of American socialism, several scholars have claimed that the left ideology has never had any impact on the American society. The oldest and probably best-known publication that denies the effects of socialism in the United States is the book *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten keinen Sozialismus*, by Werner Sombart, which was published in 1906, in Germany. In his publication, Sombart writes against the axiom that growing capitalism automatically entails the growth of socialism by arguing that socialist movements in the United States had failed to organize. The author himself was neither a socialist nor a social democrat. However, he never opposed those ideas neither until he sympathised with the Nazi regime. In 1906, he was employed as a professor at the Commercial University in Berlin.³⁰ Even though his book is rather old and therefore at risk to be outdated, it is frequently referenced and will therefore present the starting point of the socialist debate in this thesis.

Like most of the scholarly work which supports the idea of a failed socialist movement, it is written in the notion of "American exceptionalism". This term is used in many political and cultural narratives and dates back to the times of Alexis de Tocqueville and his description of the American people as being "different" when comparing them to the English. In later centuries, the term was continuously used in a political context in order to enhance the American identity or to justify the purposes of the government's political actions.³¹ John Whintrop, a British protestant in the seventeenth century, regarded American exceptionalism in the sense of having a mission. This mission was given by God and

²⁸"The Economic System of Corporatism." *Performing Companies*, San Jose State University, www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/corporatism.htm. (15.07.2018)

²⁹Morck, Yeung. "Corporatism and the Ghost", 3.

³⁰Husbands, C.T. "Introductory Essay", In *Why is there no Socialism in the United States*, (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1976).

³¹Oana- Andrea Pirnuta, "American Exceptionalism," *Journal of Defence Resources Management* 8, no. 2 (2017): 121-128.

consequently provided the country with a conception of predestination. Whintrop was frequently quoted by Ronald Reagan, who used the term exceptionalism, to emphasize the uniqueness of America due to its democracy and progressiveness.³² In the nineteenth century, the expression was usually used to justify the expansion of the American borders. Nowadays, American exceptionalism often refers to its inherit values and cultural characteristics, which brings it back to Sombart and other scholars writing about socialism in the United States.

The mere fact that no major socialist party ever existed in the United States, led Sombart to list his explanations why the ideology allegedly failed. He divides his reasoning into a political and an economic section. One of the political obstacles is the Two-Party system, an argument used by many scholars. According to Sombart, the amount of financial support, power and influence, derived from big capitalistic companies, like the *Standard Oil Company*, providing subsidies to both major parties, could not be matched by outside contenders and resulted in the neglect of the third parties.³³ Additionally to the American affinity to seek for the great and thus leans to trust the majority, Sombart wrote that the two major parties propagated that voting neither for Democrats nor Republicans but a minor third party would be “utopian” or “unamerican”.³⁴ American mannerism would draw the voters to the big parties, in order to feel part of a larger whole and to experience political triumphs.

As for economic reasons, Sombart collected a rather big amount of data to showcase wage comparisons between the average American worker and a German worker during 1900 and 1902. The result was that the wages in the United states were at least two times higher than those in Germany. Sombart presents these findings as the basis for his proposition, namely that the overall living standards in America were higher.³⁵ Not only was the wage bigger but the cost of dwells and furniture were almost the same or even cheaper than in Germany.³⁶ While the American worker spend the extra money on better housing facilities and better clothes, the German worker most likely spent the surplus on alcoholic beverages.³⁷ Therefore Sombart’s prosperity thesis concludes that Americans did not live under poor circumstances but were rather satisfied with their living standard and hence had no strong incentives to revolt.

³²Hodgson, Godfrey. *The Myth of American Exceptionalism*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 3.

³³Sombart, Werner, *Warum gibts es in den Vereinigten Staaten keinen Sozialismus?* (Tübingen: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 33.

³⁴Sombart, *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten*, 43.

³⁵Sombart, *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten*, 74.

³⁶Ibid., 84-85.

³⁷Sombart, *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten*, 103.

Of course, this book was written in the year 1906, before the big economic crisis which nevertheless did not lead to a powerful socialist party. Sombart's presentation of the working-class conditions constitutes a large portion of his arguments, even though the extracted data only showcases a time frame of two years. Therefore, this concise study can be easily falsified by short time economic deviances. Only a long-time observation would be capable to proof a fundamental difference in matters of wage and living conditions.

Robin Archer, an Australian professor of Political Sociology, revealed in his publication *Why is there no Labour Party in the United States*³⁸, several problematic aspects in Sombart's studies. Beside the insufficient time frame of Sombart's prosperity thesis, Archer criticizes that a moderate wage does not automatically conclude the workers contentment. He argues that the unequal distribution of wealth among society, which was higher in America than e.g. in Great Britain or Australia, plays an at least equally important part. Furthermore, expectations of the American workers, which were enforced by myths like the American Dream, were higher than in European countries. This created a gap between the ideal and the real scenario. As Archer compared the American with the Australian workers he concluded that the level of dissatisfaction was at least on the same level, if not bigger in the United States due to false expectations. Since Australia still managed to develop a significant labour movement, the argument of higher living standards in the United States consequently falls flat to the author.³⁹

A similar approach in a more recent attribution to Sombart's ideas is presented by Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks in their publication *It didn't happen here: Why Socialism failed in the United States*.⁴⁰ Lipset was a political scientist as well as American sociologist and wrote previous publications in the fields of comparative politics, labour unions and public opinion.⁴¹ His co-author Marks was professor in political science while his main research themes were also comparative politics, as well as multilevel government and measurement.⁴² The four key reasons why socialism, according to them, had no chance to flourish in America, are the unique American values, the political structure which includes the plurality in the electoral system, as well as the ideological flexible major parties, a

³⁸ Archer, Robin. *Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

³⁹ Archer, Robin, *Why Is There No Labor Party*, 25-30.

⁴⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York, NY: Norton, 2001).

⁴¹ "Seymour Martin Lipset," Encyclopædia Britannica, March 11, 2018, accessed July 17, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Seymour-Martin-Lipset>.

⁴² "Home" Gary Marks, (accessed July 17), 2018, <http://garymarks.web.unc.edu/>.

heterogeneous working class and lastly, the party/union split. The following paragraphs will shortly elaborate on the given reasons.

Firstly, Marks and Lipset explain the importance of American values, as they assert that individuals rarely assess their cultural norms unless their situation changes dramatically in a negative way. Consequently, those values put constraints on the national institutions. But what exactly are the typical American values according to the authors? They describe the country to be typically anti-statist, *laissez-faire*, individualistic, populist and egalitarian. Hence, because the American ideal already encompasses a democratic, anti-elitist and classless society, socialist requests would lose part of their severity.⁴³ The second introduced major hindrance, is the unique political system. Marx once criticized the strategy of American socialists to isolate themselves from the main parties in order to build their own. At first glance, there would be nothing wrong with establishing a separate party to give their movement a political voice, but for the peculiarity of the American two-party system. Over the last century, Democrats and Republicans gained about 95% of the total votes. As both parties rivalled for voters and therefore strived for a programme that could satisfy the masses, the competition of them actually benefited the proletariat. Furthermore, their overarching power resulted in the general assumption that a vote for a third-party candidate was a lost vote. Both parties have been very flexible in their programme and able to locally change their tones according to the audience. Therefore, Republicans as well as Democrats could provide certain adaptability to demands, which was counter-productive to the Socialist Party.⁴⁴ However, as opposed to the United States, socialism was able to develop in the United Kingdom and to establish a strong labour movement which leads their arguments to possibly lack in consistency.⁴⁵

An obstacle that Lipset and Marks found within the American socialist movement itself is its heterogeneity, caused by the federalist structure of the American system and the huge influx of immigrants. The political varieties, depending from state to state, caused different political experiences, which resulted in a wider support of the worker's local trade unions rather than the national parties. The issue of the American immigrants is seen as a double-edged sword, as it did not merely bring negative effects to the movement. The biggest perk of the new immigrants was their contribution of European socialist ideas and their significant support for the Socialist Party, which would later result in several candidates and

⁴³Lipset, Seymour and Marks, Gary. *It Didn't Happen Here: Why socialism failed in the United States*, (New York: Norton, 2000), 35.

⁴⁴Ibid., 34-37.

⁴⁵Jupp, James, *The Radical Left in Britain 1931-1941* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2005), 7-8.

leading personalities, being from different descents. On the other hand, the immigrant worker was often less skilled and faced with worse working and living conditions than his American counterpart. Therefore, they often did not share the same social circles or problems, which led to a lack of a united class consciousness. This could already be seen as a hint to the conclusion, that there were in fact many socialist ideas throughout the United States, influencing society, but due to the socialist movement's inability to collaborate as one big political power, the socialist side of America was given minor attention and eventually became neglected.

Aligned with the argument of a weak class consciousness, Karl Kautsky, argued in his publication *The American Worker* that the drive of Americans to change the institutional setup was far weaker, because the country was missing an exploited working class. Therefore, he concludes that the individual in the United States was stronger, while the class was weaker. He saw a connection between American capitalists and proletarians, as many of the workers were able to enter the fields of politics, journalism or legal professions. Additionally, Kautsky puts part of the blame why socialist thoughts were not spreading within the society, on the American intellectuals. In Europe, intellectuals served as transmission organs of liberating and socialist ideas, whereas in the United States they were driven by the desire to get rich.⁴⁶

The members of the Socialist Party were also divided in their opinion about immigration. Many socialists supported certain restrictions due to the fact that the massive immigration streams, which mainly consisted of unskilled and poor foreigners, lowered the overall living standard and posed a strong competition for the local workers. Others, on the other hand, welcomed the new immigrants. In the end, the Socialist Party's resolution took a stance against mass importation of foreign workers, but at the same time opposed any discrimination and exclusion of party prospects based on racial or ethnical grounds and exclaimed that the US government was still responsible to grant immigrants, who were persecuted by their own government, asylum.⁴⁷

For the final significant argument, Lipset and Marks look at the time around the New Deal reforms of the 1930's. The economic crisis was probably the biggest opportunity for the Socialist Party to spread their critique on capitalism and the optimal environment to build a larger votership. The explanation by the authors why this scenario did not come to fruition, is basically due to the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his strategic skills that won the majority of the socialist votes. Roosevelt gained those leftist votes mainly due to their

⁴⁶Kautsky, Karl. "The American Worker." *Historical Materialism* 11, no. 4 (1906): 39-41.

⁴⁷Lipset, Marks, *It didn't happen here*, 154-162.

concern, as mentioned prior, of wasting their vote on a third party and consequently risking Roosevelt's defeat in the presidential elections against the republican candidate Herbert Hoover. Even though left voices and movements increased during the Great Depression, Roosevelt was able to include a large part of the left-wing intellectuals and politicians in his New Deal coalition. Furthermore, he made use of many socialist demands, like shorter working hours and also absorbed the leaders of outgroups in his following. Lastly, he voiced the idea of potentially equalizing the distribution of wealth by advancing tax reforms and showing a stronger support for the trade unions.⁴⁸ The Great Depression politicised American labour, but neither the Socialist nor the Communist Party could counter the appeal of the FDR administration.⁴⁹

Of course, there are also counter positions to the critical discourses of Sombart or Lipset and Marks. One of them was the Scottish historian Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones. In his book *The American Left: Its Impact on Politics and Society since 1900*, he blames scholars to base their arguments merely on the political outcome, since the Socialist Party never came close to achieving a majority in Congress. As such, not the explanation of failure, but the understanding about the reputation of success is valuable.⁵⁰ Jeffreys-Jones, however, sees the significant impact of socialism in providing the main parties with its ideas. Several left inclined politicians went into denial due to the liability of being marked as a socialist or leftist due to their bad reputation in the United States, as American ideals did not want to conform to socialist ideas. If they wanted to successfully enforce reforms, they needed to deny any socialist traits. Along with this, Jeffreys-Jones mentions the example of Selig Perlman, an economic historian who formulated a plan of an American welfare state, but later called himself an anti-socialist.⁵¹ According to the author, there is a chronic underestimation of socialism in America. Socialist citizens influenced anti-militarism and social security beyond Congress.⁵²

Kim Moody, an American author who specializes in labour movements, points to a missing theoretical framework in Lipset and Marks book, to embed their argumentation. As he argues in favour of a strong American working class, his review criticises how determinant and static the American values were portrayed in their work, while using them as one of the main reasons of socialist failure. Lipset and Marks seemed to expect those values to remain

⁴⁸Lipset, Marks, *It didn't happen here*, 70-75.

⁴⁹Ibid., 163-165.

⁵⁰Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The American Left: Its Impact on Politics and Society since 1900* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 1.

⁵¹Jeffreys-Jones, *The American Left*, 48.

⁵²Ibid., 41.

unaltered throughout the years, despite all the various immigrant influxes. Hence, they would deny any of their influence on the American culture. Moody also considers the omission of slavery as a fatal lack in their argumentation, as it generated a large part of national income while creating class divisions between “black slave labour” and “white free labour”. Furthermore, he suggests that the more backward southern American half, affected the American culture and the working class.⁵³ On this, the third chapter of this thesis will go into more detail about African-American workers, as well as the labour situation in the South.

The second main disagreement Moody describes is the underestimation of the American class consciousness, which was argued by Lipset and Marks as well as Sombart. The fast economic growth created railroad magnates, speculators, financiers and their industrial empires. Due to their recklessness in dealing with the workers there was indeed an increase of class consciousness.⁵⁴ Richard B. Morris, a historian and professor in American history, explains that even if the labour movement was indeed weak in the 1920s, the Great Depression brought enough reasons for the workers to complain.⁵⁵

Another important work for this thesis, supporting the proposition of a valid social movement in the United States, is written by the author Michael Kazin, which will be further elaborated in the next section.

1.2 History of American Socialism

After explaining the notion of socialism, its different opposing ideologies, and the scholarly debate surrounding the existence of Socialism in the United States, this chapter goes further in depth with the socialist streams in the United States. Even though there were signs of socialism in the United States during the nineteenth century, due to relevancy, the examination will set the starting point to the early twentieth century. A big name that is associated with early American socialism is Eugene Debs. He was a spokesman and candidate of the Socialist Party and posed as its leading figure. The party had its first peak counting almost 901,000 votes at the 1912 elections, 6% of the total votes of 15,046,540.⁵⁶ Even though it was no mass movement, the party was able to move away from its initial isolation. The success of 1912 in combination with the charisma of Debs, created an atmosphere of hope and anticipation.

⁵³Moody, Kim. "On Seymour Martin Lipset's and Gary Mark's It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States." *Historical Materialism* 11, no. 4 (2003), 348-349.

⁵⁴Moody, On Seymour Martin Lipset, 351-353.

⁵⁵Morris, Richard B., *A History of the American Worker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 156.

⁵⁶Leip, David. "1912 Presidential General Election Results." 1974 Gubernatorial General Election Results. Accessed June 19, 2018. <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=1912>.

But the party constantly struggled with the strong inner heterogeneity. Additionally, the size of the country attributed to different mindsets, goals and effects of the movement throughout different areas. This regionalism often prevented the Socialist Party to pursue national goals, hindered the building of a united front and was therefore not able to build a threatening political power. To maintain his level of popularity, Debs distanced himself from organizational or general party disputes, which added to the lack of direction among the different socialist groups. The author and literary critic, Irving Howe, described the Socialist Party under Debs as being close to ‘a confederation of regional baronies’.⁵⁷

Kazin also sees different characteristics to American socialism and depicts three different types or streams that were coexisting in the Progressive Era. In his book *American Dreamers. How the left changed a nation*, he showcases the ideas of the different movements and their cultural impact. Kazin was a professor of history and is the author of several books on American politics and social movements. Like Jeffreys-Jones, he criticizes the fixation of scholars on the political results of the Socialist Party, in order to demonstrate the failure of the whole movement. But by looking at various aspects, it is possible to demonstrate the effects of socialism on American lives.

The first group Kazin describes which is also the largest, could be found in the mid-western region and was also known, because of their back-to-basics mindset, as “Sewer Socialists”. Many were skilled workers or white protestants and responsible for the majority of votes that went to the Socialist Party. Their most popular outlet was *The Appeal to Reason*, a weekly magazine that reached almost one million readers. It is significant to note, that despite this group wanting to diminish class division, it nonetheless wanted to keep racial and gender-based distinctions.⁵⁸ The more radical western socialists were, the more likely they sympathised with the Industrial Worker of the World (IWW) or short, the Wobblies. It was an organization that consisted of worker groups within the lowest ranks of the labour force, for example nonferrous metal workers, lumber workers or immigrant industrial workers. The Wobblies were known to be rather idealistic and emotive with phrases like ‘an injury to one is an injury to all’.⁵⁹ In the end, however, due to its radical views which did not coincide with the majority of American workers and the fact that the Wobblies were not able to build lasting unions, obstructed the organization to establish itself in the long run.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Irving Howe, *Socialism and America* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 3-7.

⁵⁸Howe, *Socialism and America*, 113.

⁵⁹Tamony, Peter. "The Wobblies." *Western Folklore* 30, no. 1 (1971): 49.

⁶⁰Howe, *Socialism and America*, 13

The second group were the Jewish socialists, immigrants with a mostly Eastern-European background. Due to overpopulation, poverty and most of all the outbreak of anti-semitism in Eastern Europe, two million Jews fled from their European home countries to America between the years 1880-1920.⁶¹ As an exception to other, bigger, immigrant groups, they were willing to learn aspects of culture and politics from the left. Jewish immigrants tended to be literate and familiar with the task of trading or bookkeeping. Even though they brought more skills than other immigrants at that time, they nonetheless experienced treatment by Americans that was characterized by indignity. Therefore, Jewish immigrants experienced a lot of frustration and discontent.⁶²

Different to the first group, the Jewish socialists put a lot of emphasis on the ethical aspects, which led to the establishment of several self-help institutions or periodicals.⁶³ A leading figure of the Jewish Socialists, who were mainly based in New York, was Morris Hillquit, one of the founders of the Socialist Party. He saw himself as a Marxist as well as in the lines of German social democrats.⁶⁴ Own institutions and especially their unions enhanced the confidence of the movement. They also established and directed unions (e.g. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union), summer schools and camps, choirs, bookstores, restaurants and newspapers read by Yiddish speakers.⁶⁵ The Yiddish culture displayed a lot of value to the American Jews, as it cultivated Jewish nationalism.⁶⁶ Kazin regards the Jewish as the only immigrant group that possessed a continuous history of radicalism. Numerous Jewish immigrants were involved in marches, strikes or consumer boycotts. These radicals were responsible for the need of the movement to reformulate new ways of thinking and to question their traditional institutions. So why did this socialist idea only mainly resonate with the Jewish immigrants? Kazin explains this phenomenon pointing out the similarities between the messianic and idealistic facets of their religion and the socialist ideas.⁶⁷

The third and last group is called the Modernist Left or Modernist Radicals. They saw themselves as a new kind of movement, which built a bridge between social change and personal liberation. In their mindset, only massive actions on a wide scale were the key to get a successful revolution under way, which furthermore could eventually change the system. The distinction between this movement and the two prior groups is the modernist aim of not

⁶¹Ibid, 134.

⁶²Ibid., 131-134.

⁶³Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 113.

⁶⁴Howe, *Socialism and America*, 8.

⁶⁵Michels, Tony. *Jewish radicals: a documentary history*. (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 3.

⁶⁶Michels, *Jewish radicals*, 2-5.

⁶⁷Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 131.

only practicing socialism, but also to emphasize personal matters and the liberation of the individual from societal restrictions. Especially the feminist and gay rights movement were able to grow within their realm.⁶⁸ The most important journal of the movement was *The Masses*, which spread its ideals of cultural diversities while speaking out against the attempt to Americanise new immigrants in a typical western superior manner.⁶⁹

These different social streams will set the groundwork for the intent of the thesis to present *The Catholic Worker* as the fourth movement.

1.3 *The Catholic Worker*

The Catholic Worker was a magazine founded in 1933 in New York by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin and emerged during the Great Depression when Roosevelt had just entered office. Day was part of several left-wing organizations and did not have contact with many catholic figures even though she had followed a deeply religious path. She met Peter Maurin in 1932 in New York. Maurin was a Frenchman who had studied with De La Salle Christian brothers, a catholic teaching congregation, for almost a decade before he met Day. As secularization started to spread over France, he intensified his efforts to reintroduce his religious beliefs into the modern world. The movement overcame the common notion of Catholicism and socialism contradicting each other by addressing this issue in their first publication, asking the reader why it shouldn't be possible to protest, expose abuse, be radical, request reforms and at the same time be religious. To underline its reasoning, the paper tried to show the church's intentions to practice social justice.

The Catholic Worker included articles about national issues such as the situation of the working class or the administrative actions by Roosevelt, as well as international concerns, as for example the U.S. involvement in Central American countries at that time. It made readers not only realise how severe the situation of the poor was, but also displayed the relevancy of social justice and Catholicism. Day was at the heart of this paper and by being so, she influenced and inspired people nationwide as well as abroad to revalue their ideas of social justice. The other founding figure, Maurin, declared that *The Catholic Worker* was not only a journal, but a movement.⁷⁰ He also formulated an essay about the philosophy of *The Catholic Worker* which he proclaimed as pacifism, communitarian Christianity, social justice activism

⁶⁸Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 137-140.

⁶⁹Ibid., 143-144.

⁷⁰Jodziewicz, Thomas W.. "Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day: Friends." *Logos: A Journal Of Catholic Thought & Culture* 13, no. 3 (2010): 164-177.

and living in voluntary poverty.⁷¹ In opposition to the movements principles, Marxism, nationalism and capitalism were denounced as dehumanizing systems, promoting a decentralized and cooperative society based on Christian principles.⁷² By Maurin, Communitarian Christianity is understood as the necessity to live in a community and to use individual action in order to participate in social justice.⁷³ Furthermore, it encapsulates all humans as members in one family where the mystical body of Christ is the heading figure.⁷⁴ This communal nature can become problematic in a secular world as the focus is primarily placed on the church community.

A difficulty that could occur is the questioning of duties or obligations towards the secular world by a secular government. In order to manage those discrepancies, Christian communities either try to balance their beliefs with the mundane world or to distance themselves completely from dealing with state affairs.⁷⁵ *The Catholic Worker* regarded themselves as pacifist communitarians which presents a middle ground among Christian realms but could still be deterrent for a non-religious worker. The journal points to the commitment of each individual to their community. The communitarian aspect goes quite well with the catholic belief, as both stand behind the idea of a common good.⁷⁶

One of its most successful communitarian programs was the establishment of the “House of Hospitality”, which had over a hundred locations throughout the nation and abroad, where the last ones were operated until the 1980s. Members lived in these houses in voluntary poverty, while providing food and shelter to homeless people.⁷⁷ This, however, came with a lot of dangers, as the Catholic workers were also confronted with mentally unstable people, alcoholics or drug addicts. Facing these threats, the members still refused to wear precautionary weapons, which gave the movement integrity, as they put their principles into action.⁷⁸

The demand for decentralisation by *The Catholic Worker* is an interesting aspect regarding the establishment of the New Deal shortly after, which included increasingly more decentralized institutions and administrations. The journal, however, did not primarily meant

⁷¹Jodziewicz, Thomas, "Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day: Friends.", 164-177.

⁷²Roberts, Nancy L. *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 9.

⁷³Roberts. *Dorothy Day*, 7.

⁷⁴Ibid., 9.

⁷⁵Gray, Phillip W. "Peace, Peace, but There Is No Peace": A Critique of Christian Pacifist Communitarianism." *Politics and Religion* 1, no.3 (2008): 411-413.

⁷⁶ Borden, Sandra L. "Communitarian Journalism and the Common Good: Lessons from the Catholic Worker." *Sage Journals*, (2014).

⁷⁷ Roberts, *Dorothy Day*, 3-8.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 12- 13

the decentralisation of state representatives but rather the creation of family farms, rural and urban land trusts, small factories or food cooperatives. The goal, according to the journal, was to use money merely as an exchange good, not a possibility to earn profit, and to prevent the use of a human being as a commodity.⁷⁹

Besides all the volunteer work, another important trait was the requirement of the members to engage in intellectual readings. According to Day, it was not sufficient to merely help the poor, but vital to question the reasons behind those social injustices in order to fight them. This is the foundation of the movement, whose ideas were transmitted through the journal, *The Catholic Worker*. Additional to their primary publishing location in New York, *The Catholic Worker* also produced high quality local editions throughout the United States and even published in parts of Australia and Canada.⁸⁰ It grew from merely 2500 copies in the founding year 1933 to 190.000 in 1938.⁸¹

The Catholic Worker is often mentioned in the same breath as Day, which points to the importance of her leading figure. She is often described as vested with incomparable charisma and being highly inspirational. Even though Day was devoted to her religious convictions, she disliked the complacency of the institution itself. She was eager to oppose those Catholic norms and joined many protests and demonstrations, which led to several arrests. As members of *The Catholic Worker* started to join meetings where communist parties were also involved, the Catholic Church quickly became more attentive to the movement as well as increasingly critical.⁸² Some bishops even banned her from their churches or detained Day from speaking to religious groups. This combination of religious modesty and radical action was one of the several things that distinguished this movement from others. It did not merely preach, but also became active. Day and many sympathizers of the movement chose to live under poor conditions until the end of their lives, which contributed to their approachability and authenticity.⁸³

Several newspapers showed their appreciation when Day died in 1980 due to a heart attack. *The New York Times* emphasized her seminal role in social thinking and *The Washington Post* described her as a “towering figure”.⁸⁴ Her death was also acknowledged

⁷⁹“The Aims and Means of *the Catholic Worker*.” *Catholic Worker Movement*, www.catholicworker.org/cw-aims-and-means.html. (accessed 14.07.2018)

⁸⁰Roberts, *Dorothy Day*, 15.

⁸¹Ibid, 48.

⁸²Parrish, Marilyn McKinley, and Edward W. Taylor. 2007. "Seeking Authenticity: Women and Learning in the Catholic Worker Movement." *Adult Education Quarterly* 57, no. 3: 221-247.

⁸³Ellsberg, Robert. "Dorothy Day: A Saint for Our Time." *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 16, no. 1 (2016), 11.

⁸⁴"Dorothy Day Dies," *The Washington Post*, Dec. 1, (1980), 1.

abroad when the leader of the German Green Party honoured her by comparing Day to Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr.⁸⁵

1.4 *The Catholic Worker Journal and its stance on Socialism*

For the practical part of this thesis, articles from *the Catholic Worker* during 1933 until 1937 were examined with regards to the New Deal and the Roosevelt administration, the conditions of the American worker and the Civil Rights Movement.

With twenty-two years old, Dorothy Day decided to go into journalism. Her genuine passion in writing provided an optimal platform for her socialist and Catholic ideas. Days' aim in producing the journal, was to be socially significant and inspiring, as well as providing people with an understanding about Catholic teachings.⁸⁶ The uncommon aspect of the paper's combination of radical socialism and its Catholic background was not hidden from *The Catholic Worker*, which was thematized in a statement regarding its values, in the journal's first issue of May 1933. Social justice could and should be practiced by everyone regardless of their confession. In the journal's third anniversary issue, *The Catholic Worker* reminded the reader of its standpoints and values with a short self-description. In doing so, *The Catholic Worker* declared that it would write as Americans and Catholics. They were neither communists nor fascists, even though they got accused of being part of both radical ideologies at some point. Furthermore, they stood in opposition to an industrial system, but supported widespread private property, individual owning and the de-proletarianizing of the American society, which contradicted communist believes.

The Catholic Worker did not want to promote socialism through class war, but through useful propaganda, individual work of mercy, farmer communes and in taking leadership. The movement's description also proclaimed that all men are their brothers, may they be white, black or of any other ethnicity. It did not believe that legislating alone was the key to get the American citizens out of their economic or social misery. The movement rather invoked their readers to create a new social order in accordance with their Christian morals. These morals include the works of mercy, e.g. sharing with the poor, manual labor, emphasising the use of human hands and fighting big business, or voluntary poverty, where members lived in poor condition by choice.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Nancy Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker* (Albany, 1984), 5.

⁸⁶Roberts, *Dorothy Day*, 67.

⁸⁷“The Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker.” Catholic Worker Movement, www.catholicworker.org/cw-aims-and-means.html. Accessed 20.07.2018.

Overall *The Catholic Worker* tried to remain its values and also relied on the same publishing format throughout the years. Therefore, an issue from 1969 looked and cost the same as one in 1933; only the *New York Times* has a longer typographical tradition.

1.5 *The Catholic Worker on the Church and Socialism*

The editor of *The Catholic Worker*, Peter Maurin, wrote an article in September 1934, where he juxtaposed Catholicism and socialism. He saw himself as a socialist in the economic realm and a catholic in the religious. He clearly saw a common cause between the two ideas, as both were fighting against injustice and the robbery of the poor, as well as a natural brotherhood. Overall, socialism would be a natural process with organically grown social organization which would also fit to the catholic belief, where society is seen as part of an organic body, a living organism. It was further pointed out that the socialist programme is used to reform society for the better and to fight tyranny. The article predicted that a lot of people would want socialist implementations like the socialization of banks, natural resources, or public utilities without even considering it to be socialist.⁸⁸

TCW described the opposition of the church against workers strikes, which in the journals eyes is however, an essential right. The article proclaimed that the church's attitude against class war and violence would hinder them to see the perks and possible positive outcomes of them. Furthermore, those mass formations against factories and exploitative employers are mostly their only way to express their grievances.⁸⁹

One article where the Catholic idea might had influenced the writers but was not literally stated, is "Relief and Birth Control". In this coverage, the provision of the birth control pill to families under the relief program by the Public Work Administration (PWA) got highly criticized. *TCW* understood their action, as a statement that the reproduction of the working class would be undesirable. As the article mirrors the frustration of *TCW*, it called those measures as an act against human rights. Even though their religious belief was not mentioned, it is clear that the Catholic idea stood strictly against any kind of birth control. Thus, their religious influence guided this article's perspective.⁹⁰

The Catholic Worker's biggest criticism towards the church was their passiveness regarding social problems, which consequently led to too little action against different

⁸⁸"Catholic Worker celebrates 3rd birthday; a restatement of C.W. aims and ideals," *The Catholic Worker* 4, no. 1 (1936): 1.

⁸⁹"Catholic Worker celebrates 3rd birthday; a restatement of C.W. aims and ideals," *The Catholic Worker* 4, no. 1 (1936): 1.

⁹⁰"Relief and Birth Control", *The Catholic Worker* 2, no. 8 (1935): 3.

grievances. The journal had the manner to speak directly to its readers and kept suggesting certain actions the public could pursue in order to help the movement. As such, each publication dedicated at least one page to the reader's comments and thoughts, which sometimes also included international readers from Europe, especially England.

1.6 *The Catholic Worker on Communism*

Supporting all those socialist ideas, *The Catholic Worker* was never inclined to the communist movement. In the article "Fighting Communism" one of the editors stated that *The Catholic Worker* would fight communist ideas. The main issue was that *the Catholic Worker* regarded the communist party and its members as too aggressive and as instigators for societal unrest.

In comparing Communism and Catholicism, a big source of friction was the communist condition of atheism and thus the denial of religious freedom. Also, *the Catholic Worker* sees the goal of communism in pushing group antagonism and the subordination to a brutal totalitarian regime.⁹¹

One of the rare articles where communism was put into a more positive light, could be found in 1936, with the headline, "Why I like the Communist". The article is not as much a praise for communists but more so a description why communism should earn more respect than capitalists, due to their less hypocritical nature. Aspects about communists that the article appreciated was their spirit of self-sacrifice and their intellectual honesty, deduced from their postulates in believing in class-warfare and the will to fight for their cause. The author even saw parallels in their common belief that the right of private property was an established one and not a natural given. However, different from the communist movement, socialists do see the purpose of private property in serving a common good.⁹²

In the next chapters the thesis relates the articles in *The Catholic Worker* to the Roosevelt Administration and the New Deal, as well as to the conditions of the American worker and the Civil Rights Movement.

⁹¹"The Communist party vs. *The Worker*", *The Catholic Worker* 3, No.5 (1936): 1.

⁹²"Why I like the Communist", *The Catholic Worker* 4, No.1: 5.

2 The New Deal Era under Franklin D. Roosevelt

2.1 A call for a new strategy after the Great Depression

The Great Depression describes the economic crash in 1929 in the United States and the devastating consequences in the following years. The crash led people to seriously question the current dominating Republican Party under Hoover's presidency. In 1931, 60.000 Americans were registered at the municipal Free Employment Bureau, where they lined up at the agency in hope to get a job or at least the chance to apply for one. But the search for jobs was dispirited by the rare open positions that were very poorly payed and only short- term. Before the government made the effort to establish reforms, private charity had tried to provide jobs, which was, however, not sufficient.⁹³ In 1932, the number of unemployed amounted to about thirteen to fifteen million people resulting in the reoccurrence of preindustrial conditions, where the citizens had to fear famine again. Many households lost their electricity and gas or sold their clothes and furniture. Children were even forced to stay home from school, as they had nothing to wear.⁹⁴ There was no difference between business men and working class anymore, skilled or unskilled. The struggle for food hit the people throughout social classes.⁹⁵ Neither county nor the private relief funds were equipped for a disaster like this.

At the meantime, Hoover had the reputation of a lavish spender and dropped severely in popularity. For the 1932 elections, the Democratic Party decided to support the candidacy of the New York governor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As a governor he already created a system of unemployment relief and industrial welfare. His campaign speeches already hinted to his intent to reform in a more experimental way, but concrete plans how to fight the economic disaster, were kept rather vague. However, even without a concrete plan, his perceived charm und mellow voice, partnered with a warm smile, could infatuate the masses and set him apart from his Republican opponent, who could not seem to publicly convey empathy to the worker's grievances.⁹⁶ His opponent Hoover was a supporter of the opinion that the economy would not benefit from any state intervention. Therefore, he stood against

⁹³Blumberg, Barbara *The New Deal and the Unemployed: The View from New York City* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1979), 18-19.

⁹⁴Leuchtenburg, William *Franklin D. Roosevelt And The New Deal* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963),1-2.

⁹⁵.Hamen, Susan E, *The New Deal* (Edina, MN: ABDO Pub., 2011), 26.

setting up fixed prices, or providing direct aid to citizens.⁹⁷ Further, Hoover got himself under major controversy during the campaigning period, when he decided to brutally break down a veterans' protest, which made his re-election nearly impossible. In the end Roosevelt managed to win the election with about 22,800,000 votes to Hoover's 15,750,000 votes. This marked an ample defeat in the Republican history.⁹⁸

2.2 The American worker

The crisis prior to the Great Depression in the 1890's increased the relevancy of unions in the United States among Americans and resulted in a rise of union membership which climbed from 447,000 in 1897 to over 2 million people in 1907. It was also the founding period of the American Federation of Labour (A.F.L.), which was established in the 1880s. The A.F.L. was the biggest trade union and saw its purpose in maximizing the price of labour through collective bargaining. Its initial demands were higher wages and better working conditions.⁹⁹ The A.F.L. was not against worker strikes if they were found to be necessary. Samuel Gompers, the first president of the A.F.L., saw the organization as a voluntary, loose association of autonomous internationals. As he believed in a self-governing industry, Gompers did not trust the government as a mediator in the American economy. He opposed the idea of government financed health- or unemployment insurance, as well as old age pensions. Therefore, stood in strong opposition to communism, but also disliked socialism. Due to his death in 1924, Gompers was not able to experience the New Deal.¹⁰⁰

After the Civil War (1861-1865), a rise of living conditions among the American workers occurred, especially after the economic boom in 1880. Even though Gompers supported immigrant restrictions, the flourishing economy in the United States drew millions of immigrants to the country, e.g. French Canadians in the shoe industry. Between the years 1865-1900, about twelve million people made oversea journeys to America, which resulted in a mix of various cultures in the New World. However, there was little interaction between the different nationalities, as each national group preferred to keep to themselves.¹⁰¹

There was still a constant fear of unemployment due to changing seasons of intensive work and low demand. Furthermore, sickness caused by industrial labour, and the exhaustion

⁹⁷ "Herbert Hoover on the Great Depression and New Deal, 1931–1933." *Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*. Accessed July 18, 2018. <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/content/herbert-hoover-great-depression-and-new-deal-1931-1933>.

⁹⁸Ibid., 16-17.

⁹⁹Morris, *A History of the American Worker*, 115.

¹⁰⁰Bernstein, Irving *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2010), 91-93.

¹⁰¹Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 86.

of relentless work made some Americans unable to proceed in their jobs.¹⁰² Even though many American households struggled, and the conditions of workers were far from optimal, there has never been a strong labour movement that aimed for change. A big bulk of the blame was put on the A.F.L. when its craft organizations and their conservative outlooks, started to dominate the organization and guided its policy. Membership of unions fell by about 1,5 million people from 1920 to 1923 and did not regain a significant number in the following years. In the United States, many organizations were managed from a small group of industries like coal, railways or construction. Unions tended to be stronger in industries that worked with local markets and small units, whereas the mechanized industries like the automobile sector, was far less organized.¹⁰³ This also meant that other big industries like steel or manufacturing were not seriously unionizing.¹⁰⁴ Irving Bernstein, a labour historian and professor in political sciences, mentions several factors why unionism did not work in the United States in the early twentieth century. He sees the contemporary social climate as one major factor. The dominating business philosophy, especially under president Coolidge, and the ideal of individualism left little to no space for unions. As one had to fight for his or her own destiny, being part of a collective force did not carry much appeal.

Another obstacle was the fact that anti-unionism was especially apparent in the major mechanized industries like automobiles, or chemicals, giving employees no chance to formally unionize. As mechanization created new jobs and transformed old ones, the unions were widely unable to adapt to those changes, which made the old-fashioned unions consequently obsolete for the new workers. Among many American workers there was also simply not enough interest to join unions, as the cost of living remained stable and due to the rise of real wages, people could still afford cars and other leisure products like movies and radios, which Bernstein presents as diverting factors.¹⁰⁵ Although this development evolved in the 1920's, this could still have had repercussions in the 1930's, in the sense that labour unions had inhabited an adverse status and were therefore given less attention as well as less efficacy.

After the weak unionizations during the 1920s, however, prevailing economic troubles in later years, led several labour unions to popularity in 1933, where the biggest one was the *United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)* with its leader John L. Lewis. His goal was to unionize workers of the mass production industries, who were generally ignored by the

¹⁰²Ibid., 88-90.

¹⁰³David E., Nye, *Americas Assembly Line* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 103.

¹⁰⁴Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 84-87.

¹⁰⁵Bernstein, *The Lean Years*, 88-89.

American Federation of Labour.¹⁰⁶ After steel companies that disapproved of unions, refused to bargain with the UMWA, several more strikes arose. Uprisings were not only seen at the steel and mining industry but also among clothing workers who demanded higher wages. Rising tensions between unions and the industry pushed Roosevelt to take action which led to the establishment of certain industry boards to deal with the labour issues, e.g. the board for steel.¹⁰⁷

Another factor that changed the life of the American workers immensely was the assembly line in 1913. It was less an intentional invention by one person, but rather the outcome of collaborative knowledge exchange from different industries. Precursors had different forms in different factories but the first properly working assembly line was installed in the Ford factories.¹⁰⁸ Fords goal to reduce inefficiencies in the production process led him to integrate the assemble line into the automobile industry, where it received increased recognition. Other sectors used the innovation in pursuit of different goals; the paper industry aimed for a higher productivity level, the arms industry for a higher level of precision while manufacturing industries like steel or automobile had the main objective to speed up the production process and to replace skilled workers with machines.¹⁰⁹ The United States were the perfect base for this invention, since speed, innovation, uniformity or production of scale had already been valued in the work sphere. Decades before, innovations regarding labour-reducing devices or improving the precision of machine tools were already circulating in industries.¹¹⁰

It was the start of a mass production industry and proved to be very profitable to several companies, as it reduced manufacturing costs and accelerated the production process.¹¹¹ Demand was pushed by the results of lower prices and higher wages. In a period of twenty years, wages could rise twenty percent and the production per factory almost thirty percent.¹¹² But while the industry profited from the new form of production, it caused a deterioration of the working conditions as it served as a tool for increased exploitation.¹¹³ Because of the enthusiasm regarding the rising wages to \$5 a day, socialists initially supported the invention and overall critique was rather remote. First negative comments targeted the working environment of increased speed and repetitiveness which led to an

¹⁰⁶Morris, *A History of the American Worker*, 154-156.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁰⁸Nye, *Americas Assembly Line*, 13.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 14-16.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹¹Henderson, Bill *Pushcart Prize. Best of the Small Presses* (Wainscott, NY: Pushcart Press, 2013), 1-2.

¹¹²Nye, *Americas Assembly Line*, 42.

¹¹³Nye, *Assembly Line*, 8-10.

increased dissatisfaction among workers. Sociologists started to worry that the new way of production would furthermore result in technological unemployment and, since only Ford was able to pay the daily wage of \$5, workers in other companies would be increasingly dissatisfied and in unrest.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, those \$5 came with the price of monotony, an elevated level of control by the management and sluggishness. Besides their fifteen-minute lunch break, workers were not allowed to talk or leave their post which made the atmosphere dull and monotonous. Complaints were getting loud and workers could often not even stay as long as the six-month probation period. Even though the Ford Company tried to appease its workers with welfare schemes like employee pensions, medical staff at the factory or educational programs, it was still difficult for the company to hold its employees.¹¹⁵

In the 1930's there was no hiding of the miserable situation of the workers anymore. The communist paper *Daily Worker* pointed to the many accidents in the Ford Company and claimed that its workers were not even able to digest their food due to the constant stress and espionage. Soon the assembly line had the reputation of oppression, unstable employment and overproduction.¹¹⁶ When the Great Depression hit the American people, unemployment especially affected the automobile industry. Due to the unskilled working force in the assembly line factories, workers could be replaced very easily. Ford workers were terminated while they had no savings or insurance and as a result, often lost their homes. In consequence, several protests arose, like the "Dearborn Massacre" where unemployed workers threw stones against police officers who in turn used tear gas. After the tensions between the police and the protesters did not decrease, the protest resulted in four workers getting shot by police men and many others being wounded. There were also sit- down strikes organized, with the most famous ones targeting General Motors. The strikers were quite well organized with a unified front and long endurance, like the forty-four days at the GM factory in Michigan. FDR never publicly condemned those strikes and was allegedly, unofficially siding with labour. Open support came from local merchants, who often provided food to the strikers, the National Guard where some of them wore union buttons, or American Universities like Yale who released a book about the exploitative regime of the Ford Automobile Company.¹¹⁷ With the tool of the assembly line, Ford managed to reduce the production time from 12,5 hours to 1,5 hours while the net price fell from 950 Dollars to 260 Dollars.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴Nye, *Assembly Line*, 96-98.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 102-103.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 114.

¹¹⁷Nye, *The Assembly line*, 116-119.

¹¹⁸Altena, Bert and Van. Lente, Dick, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte Der Neuzeit: 1750-1989* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 290-291.

The Catholic Worker also covered reports about Ford workers, in which it actually accused the company of poisoning its employees. According to an investigation in Detroit, Ford workers were diagnosed with serious mental disturbances, which also included acute mania or blindness.¹¹⁹

The problem of unemployment was however not only apparent in the automobile industry but dominated the American society in 1933. The Bureau of Labour Statistics estimated the number of unemployment amounting to over twelve million people. Another issue was the effect of the implementation of work-sharing by the Hoover administration, which resulted in a shrinking number of full time working contracts until they dropped to zero in 1933. This situation affected the American workers and their families emotionally and socially. At first, private charities and local governments tried to sooth the people's grievances, but they quickly came to exhaustion.¹²⁰ The ongoing moving streams from land to city stopped, as well as the immigration from abroad.

The strikes in 1934 resulted in new labour policies which resulted in the National Labour Relations Act one year later. It was part of the second New Deal and provided protection to employers and employees, from harmful practices by the private sector and management practices.¹²¹ The assumption, that caused Roosevelt to install this policy, was the inequality of bargaining power between employees with full freedom of association and those who were integrated in an ownership association.¹²²

2.3 The New Deal

After the collapse of the American banking system, Roosevelt was faced with the challenge to regain the trust of the U.S. citizens. He fully blamed the former republican president, Hoover, for the depression as Roosevelt saw the origins of the crisis in the stock market speculations, the overbuilding of the American industries or the big stream of loans abroad. It was a mutual antipathy between Hoover and Roosevelt which strained the American government.¹²³ In 1933, Roosevelt became the new president of the United States and immediately started working on his economic reforms, resulting in the New Deal. Roosevelt's first hundred days were a milestone in presidential history, as no president before had performed as many

¹¹⁹“Ford poisoning his workers,”*The Catholic Worker* 3 , no. 5 (1935): 6.

¹²⁰Morris, *A History of the American Worker*, 151-152.

¹²¹ "NLRB.gov." NLRB. Accessed May 24, 2018. <https://www.nlr.gov/resources/national-labor-relations-act-nlra>

¹²²Morris, *A History of the American Worker*, 160.

¹²³Kindleberger, Charles. “The World in Depression, 1929-1939”. *History of the World Economy in the Twentieth Century* 4. (1973), 192.

legislative actions. In this short period of time, FDR completed fifteen emergency acts.¹²⁴ Even though primary themes like Roosevelt's focus on the working class and main objective to fight the big problem of unemployment can be recognized, there was no coherent plan behind this first period, but more so improvisation and experimentation.¹²⁵

Even though many critiques wondered how the president was able to construct all these reforms under a new suddenly formed philosophy, signs of FDR's visions can already be detected in his speeches during his campaign. He continuously demanded that Congress would change the current working condition, e.g. minimum wages, in order to implement insurance as well as providing unemployment relief by the means of public works.¹²⁶ There was no time to lose for the new president as the national income of the country had reduced by more than half, caused by the crash of five thousand banks which erased nine thousand saving accounts between 1929 and his inauguration. Another essential component of Roosevelt's vision was the interdependence of the population between the city and the farm.¹²⁷

The New Deal is commonly divided into the First New Deal and the Second New Deal, the former implemented between 1933 and 1934 and the latter between 1935 and 1938. It acted accordingly to the three key words of relief, which meant immediate aid, recovery, responsible for the stimulation of economy, and reform, which was supposed to bring permanent changes/improvements to the country.¹²⁸ The New Deal is considered as the most socialist leaning reform in American history. Roosevelt sought to recover the economy with domestic instead of international measures. Looking back, this decision was not overly peculiar, since the Depression did not only hit the United States, but a big part of the world, hence increased exports could not be expected.¹²⁹ The New Deal was initially more a psychological tool to give people hope that there would be a solution, a countermeasure, to overcome those terrible times. Roosevelt understood the significant role the wage workers, farmers and the small merchants played in the American economy and the maintenance of American democracy.¹³⁰

One of the biggest challenges was the bureaucracy surrounding the implementation of the New Deal regulations and the provision of enough qualified administrators. The

¹²⁴Hamen, *The New Deal*, 27-31

¹²⁵Venn, Fiona., *The New Deal* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 36.

¹²⁶Major, *The New Deal*, 73.

¹²⁷Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 18.

¹²⁸Hamen, *The New Deal*, 50.

¹²⁹Venn, *The New Deal*, 33.

¹³⁰Major, *The New Deal*. 67-69.

administration quickly realised that it would not have enough experts to create the NRA board. Therefore, several businessmen were asked to join and control the fairness of competition.¹³¹ In the following paragraphs, the most relevant New Deal reforms are described.

The NIRA (National Industry Recovery Act) was introduced on June 16th in 1933. It was created by the National Recovery agency (NRA), which was the main New Deal agency, and aimed at the unemployment rate, the disorganization of industry which among others affected the public welfare and American living standards.¹³² It mainly concerned the industrial self-regulation and should supervise the cooperative effort between business and labour, leading to several code agreements with the major industries. This gave government more control over the nationwide businesses. Among others, wage and price controls were introduced to limit competition. Hugh Johnson, the head of the National Recovery Administration, emphasized the importance of providing public works in order to make the act a success.¹³³ The established NIRA plan led to an association that, in collaboration with the government, decided about prices, the number of products to be sold, or wages. Furthermore, unions gained increased importance in labour negotiations.¹³⁴ In order to provide jobs, the NIRA invested in enhancing the infrastructure and provided 3,3 billion dollars in public works.¹³⁵

The NRA gained a lot of support, but also brought strong opponents. Companies complained that it stood against free enterprise and anti-trust laws. Conservatives objected the character of economic planning, as well as the immense power that the act would give to the federal government. In 1934, housewives complained about the high prices and factory owners about limited production and the nature of the government's cooperation with big factories and the subsequent exclusion of smaller businesses.¹³⁶

Despite the notable amount of criticism, the NIRA was able to provide jobs for two million people, set a stop to the ongoing deflation and enhanced working conditions as well as ethics within the factories, as they determined a more humane competition with fixed working hours and minimum wages.¹³⁷ In May 1935, the Supreme Court decided that the NRA was not

¹³¹Venn, *The New Deal*, 37.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 69.

¹³³ Schwarz, Jordan A. *New Deal Economic Policies: FDR and the Congress, 1933 to 1938 User Guide* (Bethesda, MD: UPA, 1990), 6.

¹³⁴ Hamen, *The New Deal*, 45-46.

¹³⁵ June Hopkins, 'The New Deal', in *A Companion to Franklin D. Roosevelt*, ed. William D. Pederson (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 244.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 65-67.

¹³⁷ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 68-69.

“interstate” and therefore not able to regulate national commerce resulting in the verdict that the agency was considered unconstitutional. Therefore, the legislation was ruled invalid and dismissed.¹³⁸

Together with the NIRA, the AAA (Agricultural Adjustment Act) was the most interventive political act and the second pillar of the First New Deal. The AAA was highly relevant, as agriculture at that time was a huge part of the American economy and half of the population depended on farm prosperity. This act addressed the problem of overproduction and dealt with seven farm products, i.e. corn, wheat, cotton, rice, peanuts, tobacco and milk. Roosevelt saw the key to industrial improvement in raising the purchase power.¹³⁹ The output thus needed to be reduced in order to limit supply which would raise market prices. Farmers who agreed to limit their production would get benefits of compensation. Unfortunately, the pay of compensation went straight to the landowners who had full responsibility to further distribute the money to tenants or sharecroppers, which was often not pursued.¹⁴⁰

This radical solution naturally also sparked criticism. It seemed cynical to destroy potential food while the majority of the population was hungry or to eliminate cotton while Americans were in need of clothes. This, even though the New Deal was often regarded as a socialist plan, displayed the capitalist side of the reform, namely, working according to market forces. Also, there was a big discrepancy between the producer’s interests, who pursued higher prices and those of the consumers, who wanted their products to be cheaper.¹⁴¹ The AAA especially affected the southern states of America where special schemes had been developed to help the rural poor.¹⁴²

The Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) was enacted on the 12th of May 1933, with a budget of one billion dollar grants, not loans, for the relief payments. The act was focusing on decentralisation as it was coordinated between the state agencies and federal administration. Harry Hopkins, a former social worker and lead of the New York relief program, was the head of the FERA administration. He believed that Americans did not only need capital and material support but also respect and a push in their self-esteem. Due to the federal character of the FERA, Hopkins views however could not always influence decisions. Nevertheless, the FERA managed to get million people employed in work projects improving American roads, schools, parks etc. Opposer of the New Deal, came from the conservative

¹³⁸Roger Biles and Roger Biles, *The South and the New Deal* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 62.

¹³⁹Venn, *The New Deal.*, 30.

¹⁴⁰Schwarz, *New Deal* 6.

¹⁴¹Venn, *The New Deal*, 37-38.

¹⁴²Venn, *The New Deal*, 77.

side who found the reforms to be too socialist but also from the left side, where the common opinion was that the reforms would not go far enough.¹⁴³

After the period of the First New Deal, the responsibility of the work relief was transferred to the Work Progress Administration (WPA), which was introduced in May 1935 as part of the Second New Deal. It was the replacement of the FERA and had a fund of five billion dollars. Only one family member was allowed to join the WPA programme and its aid was supposed to provide enough earnings, so the workers could at least support their families. Spaces were limited, but if a worker was given the opportunity to receive public work, the WPA provided twice as much wage than the FERA did.¹⁴⁴

Over its six-year existence, the programme was able to bring 8.5 million people back to work and also provided several jobs in creative projects in the fields of theatre, music or art. The main occupation was, however, works in construction projects that should not compete with private industry. In a critical view, the WPA was incriminated to divert labour from private business as the workers challenged private rates.¹⁴⁵ And as the rural south experienced extreme poverty, the New Deal could not provide enough support to properly confront the problem.

Another controversy regarded the women workers, to whom the relief programmes paid lower wages than their male colleagues and since the main goal of the relief was to help workers to provide for their families, jobs were mostly distributed to men.¹⁴⁶ An estimation by conservatives showed that in 1934, a fifth of all rural relief families had a female WPA worker. So theoretically relief was given to the women workers, but not in relation to their need.¹⁴⁷

After the first New Deal where the main goals were recovery and relief, the Second New Deal aimed for long term reforms. One of the most important and most far reaching acts in this was the Social Security Act. It aimed for the financial assurance of people who could not manage to steady their income. The act included, for example, old age insurance or unemployed insurance and further broadened the grants to poor blind, needy mothers and handicapped people. The act furthermore aimed to lessen the risk of sickness, directing grants to state's officials to extend the public health services and to create aid systems.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 48-49

¹⁴⁴Venn, *The New Deal*, 76.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴⁶Gordon, Linda. *Pitied but Not Entitled. Single Mothers and the History of Welfare; 1890 - 1935*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) 191-193.

¹⁴⁷Venn, *New Deal*, 79.

¹⁴⁸Freidel, Frank. *The New Deal and the American People* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 84.

There had been old age insurance already in the nineteenth century, but only for certain government employees or loyal employees of the Pennsylvania Railroad company, which was the third largest railroad in the United States, where a pension system was established in 1900. Unemployed Insurance was first mentioned in the beginning of the twentieth century, and further discussed from the 1920s onwards, derived from the experience of the unemployment situation in Europe.¹⁴⁹

The New Deal's unemployment compensation was a financial support for the period in which workers were searching for jobs and it started to put the effect of business fluctuation rather on the industry itself than on the workers. Even though it was not obligatory for the states to take on the unemployment compensation law, forty-two states decided to enact it.¹⁵⁰ Until that point in time, the U.S. had not had a social program that would deal with unemployed, the elderly or the disabled. In prior years, people that were too old to work, had to be supported by their families or charity.

Conservatives opposed this Act as they saw inherent socialist features, like the interventive governmental actions in the AAA or several welfare schemes. They argued that Americans themselves were solely responsible to pay for their retirement instead of relying on the government.¹⁵¹ Labour leaders often opposed insurance plans as they did not want the government to be involved or dominate businesses. They preferred insurance confrontations to be sorted via court instead of interventions by the administration. Another point of critique was that the Security Act lacked coverage to domestic or agricultural workers.

The number of advisors and head of offices, required by Roosevelt to conduct the New Deal, suddenly saw themselves in a tangle, which historians have called "competitive administration", meaning the limitation of the individual freedom of action. Roosevelt did not try to reduce the competition among his advisors but actually pushed it in order to arrive at the best results. Further administering problems included the staffing of qualified people. Those challenges were found in the agricultural as well as in the industrial sector.¹⁵² Especially the placement of liberals in spending departments caused differing opinions. Difficulties at this, were found in the construction of the New Deal and especially in the monitoring process as well. Due to the dispersed agencies which were spread across the American states, Roosevelt assigned Lorena Hickock, a dear friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, to examine the amount of relief that was actually forwarded to the most in need. The construction of the U.S. politic realm

¹⁴⁹ G. William Domhoff and Eli Ginzberg, "New Deal Days: 1933-1934," *Contemporary Sociology* 27, no. 4 (1998): 143.

¹⁵⁰Freidel, *The New Deal*, 82-83.

¹⁵¹Hamen, *the New Deal*, 75-77

¹⁵²Venn, *The New Deal*, 81.

allowed each state government to have its own set of policies and political forces. Their own administrators often carried local prejudices. This was particularly visible in the southern states, where relief could bring African-American workers on the same level of salary, which led to outrage among white southerners.

Besides the challenge of finding qualified administrators, another factor that was highly important was the popular support. The New Deal had a direct effect on the American lives, as it changed the working conditions. Therefore, the chance to successfully implement a new reform was always bigger when the electorate approved it. This meant that the New Deal also had to be “sold” to the American people, where the charisma of Roosevelt and his speeches played a key role. He also held conferences twice a week and cooperated with the White House Press Corps to ensure that the right information would get to the people.¹⁵³

2.4 *The Catholic Worker journals*

The Catholic Worker (TCW) journal naturally reported about the New Deal reforms, especially the National Recovery Act. This thesis will furthermore touch on articles about the working conditions of the American worker and *The Catholic Worker's* support for them.

Since the New Deal influenced workers and households all over the United States, the conducted research estimated a wide coverage about the several legislations in *The Catholic Worker publications*. Surprisingly, in general the number of articles about the New Deal legislations was lower than expected. The most frequently mentioned aspect of the New Deal was the National Industry Recovery Act (N.I.R.A.), starting with an article that gave an overview of the reform.

The guarantee of the legislation to gain the right to organize in groups led *The Catholic Worker* movement to an initial positive response. Its catholic ideals quickly showed, as the journal claimed that the administration was following the lines, laid by Pope Pius XI, as he always taught his followers to make a cooperative effort instead of competing with one another and practising individualism.¹⁵⁴ This fits into the framework of corporatism, mentioned earlier in this thesis. Interest groups could therefore be far more influential and have more power in negotiations with the government, when affiliating. Never before had *TCW* seen such a regard for the workers by the government and never had the government

¹⁵³Venn, *The New Deal*, 74.

¹⁵⁴“The NRA,” *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 4 (1933): 6.

intervened on behalf of the workers. Therefore, the journal prayed that the administration would be successful.¹⁵⁵

In another article, the N.I.R.A. was described as the most intelligent, forward-looking effort, with the aim to generate prosperity, in years. However, according to *TCW*, the programme had to go far enough in its reforms instead of making any compromises, as it would be the only way to avoid its failure. In a more critical consideration, the journal saw a possible danger of power exploitation during the application process of the N.I.R.A., which leads the movement to three suggestions regarding the implementation.

Firstly, *The Catholic Worker* proposed a fixed regulation of fair wages, prices, and a fair return on capital and management, in each industry. Secondly, the article urged the government to take over natural monopolies and public service corporations, in order to diminish imbalances. Lastly, the paper emphasized the increase in the value of lands. In the view of *The Catholic Worker*, the government was responsible for setting minimum wages and to regulate profits. Otherwise, monopolies like railroad lords, who were seen as the main culprits of the economic depression, would cause the exploitation of workers by giving in to their manner of accumulating profits. The American land owners were portrayed as the second group of exploiters who would only subtract profits, while contributing nothing.¹⁵⁶ In general, *TCW* appreciated these governmental efforts and suggested that if people wanted to criticise it, it should be done in a constructive manner.¹⁵⁷

Another program, *TCW* supported, was the Social Welfare Program, which dealt with homeless, unemployed men. At the centre of the programme, the men were divided in three different groups; the old and crippled, the habitual vagrants and men who were unemployed simply because of the depressive economic situation, which was the largest group. The division was created to deal with the homeless individually and gave priority to the last group, as they were the most promising one. At their own request, men between 21 to 60 were sent to the *Camp Greycourt* to work for 1\$ per day, paid by the Work Division of the Public Welfare Department. This money helped the newly employed to pay their accommodation and food. Reports have shown that through the camp, men were transformed into healthy and happy workers. *TCW* appreciated the humanized and dignified treatment of the former homeless people.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵“The NRA,” *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 4 (1933): 6

¹⁵⁶“The NRA and profits,” *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 5 (1933): 6

¹⁵⁷“The NRA”, 6.

¹⁵⁸“Department of Welfare Describes It’s Program”, *The Catholic Worker* 2, no.11 (1934): 6

Critical articles on the N.I.R.A. exposed the bad conditions, e.g. in the lace making industry. The goals of the NRA providing a wage of 15\$ a day and a maximum of 40 working hours a week could not be found in these shops- on the contrary, reports of actual child labour occurred. About 35% of the families earned not more than 2 dollars a week. Even though *TCW* explained that it would love to provide harsh commentary, the facts already spoke for themselves.¹⁵⁹

From the articles analysed by the thesis research, it is visible that it was important to the journal that its readers would think for themselves, educate themselves and participate in activism. So even though *TCW* voiced its religious stance, political views and values throughout the papers, it also emphasized the readers' ability to have their own opinion. Hence, criticism on the journal itself was not neglected. *TCW* printed letters from readers, several of which voiced rather strong criticism towards *TCW* articles and its opinions. One example was the intense debate whether *TCW* would divide the worker movement as the word "catholic" would impose an excluding/including factor. *TCW* responded that this alleged division was not its intention. It explained that *TCW* would regard every human equally, derived from the belief that all of them would be part of the mystical body of Christ.¹⁶⁰ Even though this is a very religious based answer, it does, however, display that the *TCW* movement wanted everyone to be regarded in an equal way and thus did not intent any exclusion.

Further criticism stated that the journal would merely report about the workers' grievances but neglected the workers' duties. As *TCW* replied to that criticism, it also touched upon another topic, the unions. The journal faced the fact that there was a certain aristocracy in the American labour movement. When union men were receiving higher wages, they started to forget about their poorer colleagues. The corruption, especially in the older unions and the loss of pride in craftsmanship due to the mechanization in industry would impact the workers position towards labour and even though *TCW* did not excuse the misbehaviour, the article "The Dignity of Labour" seemed to convey a certain understanding for their frustrating situation.¹⁶¹

It was evident to *TCW* that not all the workers were equally protected by the government, when reports of discrimination against mill workers or others that belonged to a union, were published. But this shouldn't stop any worker to organize, because even though *TCW* recognized the function of the National Labour Board and its relatively positive impact,

¹⁵⁹"NRA fails to help Sweated Lace Makers, Says Labour Board", *The Catholic Worker* 2, no. 4 (1934): 8.

¹⁶⁰„Dividing the Workers”, *The Catholic Worker* 2, no. 6 (1934): 4.

¹⁶¹„The Dignity Of Labour”, *The Catholic Worker* 2, no. 6 (1934): 4.

worker organizations would be the most effective instruments to voice abuses and to enforce their rights.¹⁶²

Although the New Deal was by many regarded as left leaning, *The Catholic Worker* refused to call the New Deal legislations socialist. It explained that as long as there was private ownership in industry and production driven by profit, capitalist structures were still present. The regulations therefore had to take an increasingly left turn, otherwise it would be just another approach to spread injustice. Steps that needed to be taken to create a just society would firstly offer occupational labour organizations to every industry, as well as a parent organization with one representative per industry, and one from the government. Their main function would be the regulation of production and to stabilize prices, as well as funds like pensions. Experts, hired by the government, would plan the economical process of production and distribution, according to the nation's need. The article "Whither the NRA" stated that this would still cause divisions between the owning and the working class but admitted, that their main goal was not to eliminate those classes, but rather to adjust their interests and soften their struggle. Furthermore, to achieve an alignment between the two classes, workers would have to gain a share in the ownership and management sphere. At the end of the same article *TCW* announced its support of the textile workers, as well as their planned strike in spring 1934.¹⁶³

In February 1935, a correspondent of *TCW* reported about the very low wages in the manufacturing industry. Labour statistics showed that the manufacturing industry was the lowest paid, with wages even decreasing from 1933 to 1934. With an average wage of 700\$ per year, *TCW* declared this situation as not sufficient, since workers could not afford their subsistence and that the name "living wage" would be adjacent to a mockery. *TCW* proceeded its harsh criticism, as it accused the Administration of not properly handling the violation of N.I.R.A. legislations and of neglecting the workers' situation. The increased pressure and decreasing wages led the *TCW* to lose faith in the governmental lead.¹⁶⁴ Later in the same year, *TCW* stated that FDR had been turning increasingly to the right and that initial New Deal ideals were now seen as futile. Further accusations described the tendency of the Administration, to surrender to industrial self-regulation, thus the domination of labour by the management.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶²"Government not fair in Labour Disputes", *The Catholic Worker* 2, no. 7 (1934): 2.

¹⁶³„Whither the NRA?“ *The Catholic Worker* 2, no.8 (1934): 7.

¹⁶⁴"Higher Wages for Textile Workers are False Propaganda", *The Catholic Worker* 2, no. 11 (1935): 1.

¹⁶⁵NRA Board exposes Injustices in Auto Industry; Industrial Efficiency and Technical Progress in Sharp Contrast to the Human Relations Policy", *The Catholic Worker* 2, no.10 (1935):3.

This led to an article where the author Jane Marra, also a member of the “International Ladies Garment Worker Union”, one of the largest labour unions at that time, was quite unsure about the ideological stance of the NRA and if the legislation was still aiming for the goals it was created for. Even though Marra believed that Roosevelt’s motives were humanitarian and that the NRA had noble intentions, she pointed out that the capitalist leaders of the country still exploited the workers. As a solution, she proposed an organization of workers, where the members would seek a societal reconstruction, led by *the Catholic Worker*. The term reconstruction and what it comprised was not mentioned but it can be assumed that it was meant to transform the prevailing capitalist norms.¹⁶⁶

Reports about the massive amount of cabbage given to unemployed citizens under relief and canned meat gone bad, led *TCW* to insert a snarky comment about the AAA legislation regarding their restricted production in order to raise the price. As they reported about the provision of 9 million pounds of cabbage instead of the announced 300.000 pounds, *TCW* admitted that this would be surely one way to get rid of the surplus crop.¹⁶⁷

Eventually, in June 1935, *TCW* reported about the Supreme Court decision that made the NRA unconstitutional and hence deactivated 557 New Deal legislations. *TCW* described a celebrating Communist Party as well as jubilant big businesses, as they had never been supportive of the NRA. But when several companies reinstated the seven-days-weeks and longer working hours, many opponents of the legislations were actually mourning their removal.¹⁶⁸

2.5 *The Catholic Worker and the American worker*

As Socialists, *The Catholic Worker* supported the poor worker and reported intensely about their grievances like the several wage cuts that were imposed by different industries, for example for railroad workers.¹⁶⁹ The exploitation in the automobile industry was also frequently covered.

In 1935, *TCW* published an article of the injustices within the industry, which were exposed by the NRA board. It explained the major problems that were found in the automobile companies. Firstly, the fast-technical progress made a lot of workers ‘unnecessary’. Secondly, the new high-speed way of production was exceeding most of the labourer’s endurance, especially of those who were over forty years. Lastly, the workers were

¹⁶⁶“For what does the NRA stand?”, *The Catholic Worker* 2, no.9 (1934): 5.

¹⁶⁷“Just enough Food for Life, says ‘Welfare Man’”, *The Catholic Worker* 2, no.9 (1934): 5.

¹⁶⁸“Supreme Court kills New Deal; Strikes and Violence imminent”, *The Catholic Worker* 3, no.3 (1935): 1.

¹⁶⁹“Another Wage Cut For Railroad Employees”, *The Catholic Worker* 1, no.9 (1934): 6.

stressed by the system of espionage that prevailed in the auto industry. The significance for *TCW* lay in the fact that the report was by the NRA board itself, providing strong evidence for the need of governmental intervention.¹⁷⁰

Another industry that implemented new technology causing negative consequences for the workers, was the mining industry. Self-dumping cages, mechanical loaders, drills and motors were responsible for the withdrawal of many occupations. This modernization led not only to less jobs but also to a higher coal price which eventually led to an emerging poverty among the coal workers. Even though the article did not take a strong opinionated stance, it is clear that *The Catholic Worker* did not support the mechanizing of the industry merely on the grounds of progress while the worker was to suffer.¹⁷¹

In addition to the mistreating's and exploitations of the working class, the counter measures in forms of protests or strikes happened on a frequent basis and were covered by the *TCW*, not least to spark the spirit of activism which the journal stood for. Articles about the strikes in the automobile industry explained their historical importance, as it was the first time that a whole industry was able to unite as a front against their exploiter. *TCW* was generally supportive of strikes, even though they saw it as a last resort measure to protest and only a legitimated option if the anticipated gain would outweigh the sufferings which the strikes would inflict on themselves. The article further displayed the past history of failing strikes. Even though the worker should be careful in using them as a tool, the state should in no case have the power to prevent this privilege, assuming that the nature of a strike would not result in harm or disrupt the overall peace.¹⁷²

The *TCW's* stance on the A.F.L. was a conflicted one. Even though the A.F.L. was the biggest federation of national unions, *TCW* accused it of being almost as objectionable as the employers that tried to prevent their workers from joining a union. This was derived from the *TCW's* observations of attempts by the A.F.L. to achieve the sole control over the industry workers.¹⁷³ Another accusation by the *TCW* was "Anti-Negro" sentiments by the A.F.L., because of a report from New Orleans which claimed that a sub organization, the International Longhorseman Association (I.L.A.), had to be divided into a "white" and a "coloured" branch, while the latter experienced mainly disappointment by the I.L.A.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰"NRA Board exposes Injustices in Auto Industry; Industrial Efficiency and Technical Progress in Sharp Contrast to the Human Relations Policy", *The Catholic Worker* 2, no.10 (1935):3.

¹⁷¹Greed of Operators and Lack of Safety Scored by Miners, *The Catholic Worker* 3, no. 9 (1936): 6.

¹⁷² Strikes", *The Catholic Worker* 3, no. 5 (1935): 5.

¹⁷³„Domination of Minority Groups by A.F. of L.; Corruption in Old Union Fought by New", *The Catholic Worker* 1, no.10 (1934): 1.

¹⁷⁴A.F.L. is Anti- Negro, *The Catholic Worker* 3, no. 9 (1936): 3.

Unionization was only marked as legal and therefore possible through the section 7a in the New Deal legislation, which was the “collective bargaining clause”. This was installed to establish communication between the companies and unionized groups of workers instead of individuals.¹⁷⁵ *TCW* hereby described the government’s difficulty in fully releasing this clause. The main reason the government did not fully support the clause was the possible pressure by unions to coerce workers into joining them or the fear of a labour monopoly. *TCW* carried on explaining that it was not unusual, especially for older unions, to act in corruptive ways.¹⁷⁶ *The Catholic Worker* saw company unions as a big obstacle to the movement as, according to the journal, one of the most important rights of the workers, was the right to organize. It would simply be unjust to invade those rights, either by the state or industries. Labour unions were the only way to protect workers from aggressive capital driven ones.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵Hamen Susan, *The New Deal*, 47.

¹⁷⁶„Domination of Minority Groups by A.F. of L.; Corruption in Old Union Fought by New”, *The Catholic Worker* 1, no.10 (1934): 2.

¹⁷⁷„Workers’ rights”, *The Catholic Worker* 3, no. 4 (1935): 1, 6.

3 Situation of African- Americans during the New Deal Era

3.1 Racism, Lynchings and Scottsboro

In the early 20th century, racism in the United States was still highly prevalent, predominantly in the southern states, where most of the region was characterized by the mindset of white superiority, racial segregation and fundamentalist religion.¹⁷⁸ The oppression of African-Americans was not only created by discrimination, but also by class exploitation.¹⁷⁹ The issue of racism had not been high on the political agenda, until F.D.R. undertook the Oval Office. However, during Roosevelt's presidential campaign in the beginning of the 1930s, African-Americans were still loyal to the Republican Party, which was due to the fact that it was also the party of Abraham Lincoln, who accomplished the official abandonment of slavery, in his emancipation proclamation in 1862. His legacy was responsible for the loyalty of the African Americans to the conservatives, even though the Republican Party ignored the majority of their issues. During the presidential campaign in 1932, it was the Democratic Party that made an effort in winning the African- American voters over, while most of the African- Americans still supported Hoover and the Republicans.¹⁸⁰

There were many problems, the Roosevelt administration could had fought against, to improve the conditions of the African- American citizens. Out of nine million African-Americans, six million lived in the southern states, where new occurring cases of lynching and the ongoing Jim Crow system, were dominating everyday life. Most of the black citizens lived around the "Black Belt", which contained the plantations where African-Americans had worked, until further industrialization arrived in the southern parts. The rapid innovations in the industry drove many workers from the land into the southern cities, but the conditions did not improve among industrial workers.¹⁸¹

After the American Civil War, 1861-1865, slavery had been officially abandoned which especially affected the economic system of the south, since its economy was mainly supported by free slave labour, which was the main fuel for its wealth. Even though slavery had not been legal anymore, racism did not vanish. During the late nineteenth century, the Jim Crow system was established, which was responsible for several codified laws that forced racial segregation, for example in schools, parks or buses. It affected almost every aspect of

¹⁷⁸ Sklaroff, Lauren Rebecca, *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 15.

¹⁷⁹ Philip Sheldon Foner and Herbert Shapiro, *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History, 1930-1934* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 2.

¹⁸⁰ Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal*, 15-17.

¹⁸¹ Foner and Shapiro, *American Communism*, 3-5.

the citizen's daily lives and indicates the hegemonic power of the racial ideology at that time.¹⁸² Black reformers tried to diminish the disfranchisement of African- Americans by showing white Americans that the black citizens would obey to the same moral and behavioural codes as they did, since racial stereotypes were the main legitimation of their subordination. But due to the fact that not every black American wanted to conform to those white ideals, 'black elites' developed, who saw themselves as superior.¹⁸³

An important organization that stood up for African- Americans was the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)*. It was founded in 1905 and fought for the diminishment of racial stereotypes, segregation, and discrimination while providing a representational agency.¹⁸⁴ It had considerable ideological influence and was often quoted by *The Catholic Worker* in regards to Civil Rights. Nonetheless, the organization often had the reputation of being bourgeois, whereas the main part of African- Americans was workers, which opened the door for the Communist Party to display a representation for the working- class.¹⁸⁵

In the North of the United States, increased migration from the South commenced after the Civil War. For example, in the state Ohio, the black population rose from around 65.000. inhabitants to 284.000., in 1920. In New York the number ascended from 52.000. to over 198.000. The biggest motivation of the South- North migration, was the escape of the exploitative and highly racist atmosphere in the southern states, as well as the open terrorism and selfdom. But because the northern states were also not blind to colour, the situation of African- American workers was only marginally better and made the black community, a social outcast again. Instead of the enslavement on farms, African- Americans were bound to basic industries like coal, steel, automobile or iron. As the A.F. L. was not willing to include semi- or unskilled workers, most of the black workers were not organized.¹⁸⁶ Exceptions were occupations, where they numerically outnumbered their white co-workers, and thus made a stronger influence by African-Americans possible, e.g. in the railroad yards union.¹⁸⁷

Back in the south and the Jim Crow system, new cases of lynchings appeared, which was also due to the deteriorated economic situation. The term 'Lynching' refers to an extra-

¹⁸²"Jim Crow Laws" PBS, accessed: 25.05.2018. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/freedom-riders-jim-crow-laws/>.

¹⁸³Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal*, 4-5.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸⁵Kevern Verney. "Every Man Should Try: John L. LeFlore and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Alabama, 1919-1956." *Alabama Review* 66, no. 3 (2013): 187.

¹⁸⁶Foner and Shapiro, *American Communism*, 6-7.

¹⁸⁷Douglas L. Smith, *The New Deal in the Urban South* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 53.

legal punishment in the lines of vigilantism and was mostly the result of the broad assumption that the legal justice system would not operate in the citizen's needs or that it would be too weak and inefficient. Supporters of lynching acts regarded the crimes as a "higher law", conducted in the interest of the whole community.

The evident majority of the lynchings were committed in the southern states, while the main victims during the early 20th century, were African- Americans. The violent killings were supposed to secure the white supremacy in the South.¹⁸⁸ The lynching victims were often accused of homicide or rape against white Americans, but due to the dominating racism during the Jim Crow period, African- Americans had little chance to obtain a fair trial.¹⁸⁹ Often, accusations of black citizens were also used to cover up the crimes of whites.¹⁹⁰ A study of lynching records from 1931- 1935, reported 84 lynching incidents, where most of the victims had never been pled guilty. While the courts only rarely persecuted the lynching offenders and almost never charged any accessory, local officers in the southern states looked away or even helped the perpetrators.¹⁹¹ Those lynchings were executed by either small mobs which were groups amounting up to five people, or bigger mobs which could result in a group up to three dozen people. The former often acted in a more cautious manner, due to the fact that they did not have the assured support like the bigger mobs did.

Even though President Roosevelt gained more popularity among the black community throughout the years, he never mentioned any intentions of making a serious structural change. So even if the party was more progressive than its predecessors, the New Deal era could not meet the expectations of the black political leaders, which is also visible in the big debate about the anti-lynching law. Roosevelt condemned those brutal actions, but also didn't try to prevent them, due to his concern to upset southern congress members. This resulted in many black politicians and civil right supporters to point out his hypocrisy. Especially Walter White, the leading figure of the N.A.A.C.P., continuously tried to sway him into signing the Costigan-Wagner bill, which was an anti-lynching bill drafted by the senators Robert F. Wagner and Edward Costigan.¹⁹² Besides the legislation that lynchers would be persecuted as murderers, the bill also proposed to add more responsibility on the law enforcement officers

¹⁸⁸Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 10.

¹⁸⁹Berg, *Popular Justice*, 99.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁹¹G.T. McJimsey, "Documentary History of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency: FDR and Protection from Lynching, 1934-1945", *Documentary History of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency*, Bd. 11 (University Publications of America, 2001), 269.

¹⁹²Berg, *Popular Justice*, 26-27.

by putting them up for trial, in case they would have not taken any action after a lynching incident.

The Catholic Worker actively covered the path of the Costigan- Wagner bill. In its eyes, it was the first serious attempt against those brutal crimes. Walter White, the leading figure of the N.A.A.C.P. was quoted that victims of lynchings were friendless and penniless, without any political influence. This implied that other people who did have the power, had to be the voice for them.¹⁹³ One of the fails of the Costigan-Wagner bill to pass Congress was reported in September 1935 while the lynching rate in the United States was on the rise again. The article denounced the reasoning of the opposition by southern governors to the anti-lynching bill, who argued that white women had to be protected. According to the statistics, only one out of twelve lynchings actually involved a female victim in their allegations.¹⁹⁴ In an activist manner, *TCW* also printed a form in the first publication of 1936, to spur its readers to participate in the anti- lynching movement and to send the filled-out statement to the senates/representatives of their counties, in order to show their support.¹⁹⁵

Over the years the bill continuously failed to pass Congress which led to huge criticism towards FDR.¹⁹⁶ One of Walter White's letters to the president was written on the 1st of May 1934, where White indicates that there would be enough potential votes in Congress to approve the bill and if this would not happen, the number of lynchings would only increase.¹⁹⁷ A study counted that eighty-four lynchings took place in the time period from 1931 until 1935. Courts most of the time did not indict the lynchers which was one of the main purposes the Costigan-Wagner bill was created.¹⁹⁸ Even though, Congress did not implement the bill, it casted further light on the abuses of African- Americans.

A highly publicised case that also highlighted the unequal treating between black and white Americans was the Scottsboro case. *The Catholic Worker* reported about the Scottsboro case from the beginning on and updated its readers throughout the trials. It emphasized the bi-standards of judges, the government and condemned their public racism.

In the year 1931, nine black male teenagers from the age of 13 to 19, also referred to as Scottsboro Boys, were accused of raping two white women on a train, that went through Alabama. The atmosphere on the freight train was hostile from the outset on, as white

¹⁹³“Anti-Lynch Bill up before Senate,” *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 8 (1934): 6.

¹⁹⁴“More Lynchings”, *The Catholic Worker* 3, no. 4 (1935): 2.

¹⁹⁵“Investigations of 1935 Lynchings approved”, *The Catholic Worker* 3, no.94 (1935): 1-2

¹⁹⁶Biles, Roger. *The New Deal and the South*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993: 112-114

¹⁹⁷George T. McJimsey, *Documentary History of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 2001), 23.

¹⁹⁸McJimsey, *Documentary History*, 269.

passengers did not agree with the fact that they had to share the train with African-Americans. The Scottsboro Boys started to get harassed by a group of white males. After the white passengers eventually lost the fight and were thrown out of the train, they pressed charges right away, resulting in the arrest of the Scottsboro Boys right after they left the train. The main accusation was the alleged rape of the two girlfriends belonging to the white males. In front of the jail where the boys were held in custody, several hundred southern inhabitants were waiting, equipped with guns and knives, demanding its own justice via lynching.¹⁹⁹

In trial, the state was demanding the death penalty. Medical examinations of the two women rose doubts about their stories. Furthermore, their testimonies were inconsistent, and varied, for example, regarding details whether they had conversations with the Scottsboro boys beforehand or not. It was later revealed that the white males and the two girls were illegally travelling with the freight train and as the girls were afraid to get charged, they invented the rape story to shift attention.²⁰⁰ But even after one girl confessed to the false accusation of rape, eight of the boys were sentenced with the death penalty while the youngest experienced a mistrial due to disagreements within the jury and was eventually convicted with life imprisonment. As the trial made it into the third round, *TCW* accused judge Callahan, who led the third trial, of ignoring evidence that exposed the sketchy statements by the two women who accused the boys of rape. *TCW* furthermore reported that Callahan did not inform the jury how to present their verdict, except for the case that it would confirm the boy's guilt.²⁰¹

While the N.A.A.C.P. was not instantly reacting to those dubious trials, the Communist Party sought the publicity of the court case and provided their legal instrument, the I.L.D., to represent the Scottsboro boys. As those two organizations were quite hostile towards each other, the case was also characterized by their rivalry regarding the defence of the boys.²⁰² The rivalry between the I.L.D. and the N.A.A.C.P. was also portrayed in the *TCW* who followed not only the trials, but also the background stories. It was clear that the journal stood behind the N.A.A.C.P. as they frequently voiced its dislike towards the Communist Party, thus the I.L.D.

TCW saw the initial support by the N.A.A.C.P., who stood beside the boys during the first trials until the I.L.D. supposedly disseized the case from the organization, neglected. One thing that stood out from those articles was that *TCW* often put the word "communist" in brackets after mentioning the I.L.D., almost as they wanted to constantly remind the readers

¹⁹⁹Cates, David. *The Scottsboro Boys*. (Minneapolis: ABDO Pub. Co., 2012), 10-17.

²⁰⁰"Scottsboro Again", *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 1 (1933): 3.

²⁰¹"Scottsboro"" *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 8 (1934): 7.

²⁰²Michael J. Klarman, "Scottsboro", 93 *Marq. L. Rev.* 379 (2009), 380-388.

that the organization was highly influenced by the Communist Party and thus not to be trusted.

At the end of the article “Communists, Beside Noise, Are Not Only Offenders of Scottsboro Case”, the journal added a statement by the Scottsboro boys, who said that they did not ask for the help of the I.L.D., but accused the organization’s attorneys to have signed the necessary authorization papers themselves, after the boys refused to do so. The I.L.D. would allegedly manage to defend the Scottsboro case, by convincing the mothers of the boys that its defence would be the last resort to help their children. Besides the I.L.D.’s big support for the Scottsboro boys, *TCW* showcased that there had not been any former outrages on their behalf regarding African- American grievances, previous to the Scottsboro case, for example, about the exploitative work camps in Mississippi that were widely covered in *The Catholic Worker*.²⁰³

Nevertheless, through large demonstrations, organized by the communists who gathered black workers and sharecroppers to fight for their rights, the case gained global attention in 1931. Many letters from all around the world, condemning the unfair trials as well as the lynching problems in the U.S., reached the governor of Alabama. The Scottsboro Case thus did not only represent the misdoing of the dubious penal procedure itself, but also shed a light on the Jim Crow system which sparked huge waves of criticism from foreign countries.²⁰⁴ Demonstrations in Riga, Hamburg, Sydney, parts of France, Scandinavia, or Panama, marked the beginning of the end of Jim Crow.²⁰⁵ Even very well-known personalities like Thomas Mann, Albert Einstein or Charly Chaplin voiced their support for the Scottsboro boys and their opposition towards the racist system.²⁰⁶

The Catholic Worker, however, still saw the communist efforts as a pure publicity stunt for their communist cause, which was repeated several times throughout the periodicals. For example, in “Scottsboro Again”, *The Catholic Worker* accused the I.L.D. of using this case merely to spread their communist propaganda while only being marginally interested in the future of the Scottsboro boys. *TCW* did not see any possible improvements for the African- American community, if they would actually join the communists. Instead of the promoted class antagonism by the communist movement, *TCW* found a mutual understanding

²⁰³“Communists, Beside Noise, Are Not Only Offenders of Scottsboro Case”, *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 1 (1933): 3.

²⁰⁴Klarman, “Scottsboro”, *Marq. L. Rev.* 389-390.

²⁰⁵Gerald Horne, *Black Revolutionary William Patterson and the Globalization of the African- American Freedom Struggle* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 42.

²⁰⁶ Horne, *Black Revolutionary*, 41-43.

and interracial cooperation as the most important remedy against racist sentiments in the United States.²⁰⁷

After the I.L.D. exposed the systematic exclusion of African-Americans from southern juries, the case eventually arrived at the Supreme Court. Even though the Supreme Court commanded new lawsuits after the jury unanimously agreed that the Scottsboro Boys had not obtained fair trials, it took twenty more years until the last ones were freed from jail.²⁰⁸

Although the N.A.A.C.P. initially kept on the side-lines, the organization eventually realised the paradigmatic nature of the trials and how much global publicity this case received, which led to their efforts to make amends. Later on, the N.A.A.C.P. voiced their support for the Scottsboro boys as well as for the representation by the I.L.D., even though their contestation was still present.²⁰⁹

One shocking result that came along with the publicity of the Scottsboro trials, was the revival of the Klu Klux Klan. The purpose of the recurrence after its near dissolution seven years prior was its opposition to the new incentives to reform the rights for African-Americans, which were raised along the trials. *TCW* suggested that instead of fighting the Klu Klux Klan's radical views with terrorism, it would be more effective to use social justice, since riots were only in favour of the communist agenda and their idea to disturb the system.²¹⁰

3.2 African-Americans experiencing the Great Depression and the New Deal

The Great Depression also brought poverty to the majority of the African-Americans. It had soon been visible that the effects of unemployment and wage reductions, were more severe among black workers. White workers were suddenly undertaking jobs that were traditionally operated by African-Americans, for example, porters. While black workers were the first ones to be released in most industrial companies, resulting in an unemployment rate within the African-American society that was double the rate of white Americans. In Atlanta the unemployment rates increased by 95% while the rate among whites only increased by 25%.²¹¹

New Deal establishments like the NRA or the AAA improved many of their living conditions and reinstated citizens' faith in the government. The efforts of the democratic administration to improve the workers' lives, caused the dismissal of the past dominant

²⁰⁷“Communism and the Negro”, *The Catholic Worker* 3, no.6 (1935): 3.

²⁰⁸Foner and Shapiro, *American Communism and Black Americans*, xxi.

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 47-49.

²¹⁰„Klan Revival of South Result of Scottsboro Case”, *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 2 (1933): 1,6.

²¹¹Smith, *The New Deal*, 20.

republican support.²¹² There was also a lot of critique towards the government, mostly by black political organizations, who recognized discriminatory traits in the New Deal legislations. The fact that many of the relief programs were federally organized caused black workers who were mainly residing in the southern states, to experience further discriminations.²¹³ So even if the New Deal was acknowledging the African- American population, the white citizens still received preferential treatment.²¹⁴ Those actions hindered the full effectiveness of the NRA from the outset and throughout. Even though the relief programs, particularly the FERA and the WPA, had tried, reactive to the critique by the press and former FERA associates, to provide better opportunities for the African- Americans, most of them were still left with jobs that only payed them minimum wage and mainly required unskilled labourers. The New Orleans office, for example, denied any office jobs to black workers. Another big issue was the public housing situation, where the community was often concentrated in certain areas, separated from the white living areas, with many black citizens even living in southern slum properties.²¹⁵

²¹²Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal*, 17-18

²¹³*Ibid.*, 19.

²¹⁴Smith, *The New Deal*, 233.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, 233-235.

4 The New Deal in the South

4.1 The Great Depression in the South

The Great Depression seemed to be especially harmful to the southern parts of the United States. While unemployment rose, and industry decreased sharply, southern cities initially still grew right before the Depression. Memphis in the 1920s, for example, more than doubled in growth and also Atlanta's population grew by 50%. This was due to the land-to-city movement, in the hope of finding jobs, especially in the manufacturing industry. Before the economic crisis truly hit the United States, the south was growing their steel, iron and coal production which led to an overall economic development, especially in Atlanta.²¹⁶ However, while the south was experiencing rapid growth in their industry as well as in their cities, two thirds of the southerners remained on the countryside while 42% still worked in the agricultural sector. For some southern citizens, the 1920s were able to bring prosperity; others experienced the signs of the Great Depression already before the stock market crashed in 1929.²¹⁷

Eventually in 1930, after initially downplaying the crisis, urban manufacturers were facing the severe effects of the Great Depression which included less production, the release of workers, and the general overall closing of mills. Major industries in Memphis or Atlanta were forced to reduce their workforce.²¹⁸ The situation turned out to be even more dramatic for the agricultural sector. Different to the southern industry, the farmers did not experience prosperity in the previous century. In a period of only three years, 1929-1931, cotton sales went down from \$1,5 billion to \$45 million. Furthermore, the still suffered from the great Mississippi flood in 1929 as well as a draught in 1930. Many sharecroppers lost their jobs on the fields and found no other possibilities to support their living anymore and with yet, no established relief program, many families had to starve throughout the depressed years.²¹⁹

The general unemployment rate in the southern states reached 30% by 1933, while the African-American citizens were especially affected. In some cases, their unemployment rate resulted in 70%. Certain informal rules added to the employers' frustration, so that e.g. schools only employed men or single women, in order to guarantee the prioritised hiring of the heads of households.²²⁰ In the big cities of Atlanta, Memphis, Birmingham or New

²¹⁶Ibid., 13.

²¹⁷Joann D. Carpenter and Roger Biles, "The South and the New Deal.," *The Journal of Southern History* 61, no. 4 (1995): 2.

²¹⁸Smith, *The New Deal*, 16.

²¹⁹Carpenter, Biles, *The South and the New Deal*, 16-18.

²²⁰Ibid., 19.

Orleans, school systems were experiencing major cut downs, which included overcrowded class rooms, the termination of programs like vision correction or adult night classes.²²¹

In 1930, Birmingham, which was the most industrialised city among southern states, could only produce a third of the coal they put out in 1926. Pay cuts from 50%-75% and reduced working schedules followed so that no worker could work full-time anymore. Later, Roosevelt proclaimed that Birmingham would be the city where the depression hit the most.²²²

4.2 The New Deal regulations in the South

The NRA was initially supported by southern governments, and soon after the announcement, many southern workers signed up for relief.

The biggest impact of the New Deal in the South, regarded the agricultural industry, being that about 63% of the nation's farmers were located in the southern states and made up 30% of the American work force. In the southern states, factors like the lack of improved transportation, or too little storage facilities was hindering a sufficient sale of agricultural products and diversification. Evictions started to become more and more frequent.²²³

The AAA, as previously mentioned in the first chapter, received more critique than other legislations in Roosevelt's first New Deal. The reform required far more intervention by the government than southern Americans were initially willing to accept. As the farmer's situation was still highly depressed, the AAA eventually received support and got signed on May 12, 1933. Different to other reforms, it acted independently and included direct reports to the president. In the first year of enactment, 22.000 Farmers signed agreements to limit their production and to frequently report to the White House.²²⁴ But it was soon clear that the New Deal could not change the socioeconomic hierarchy in the southern states. Tenants and sharecroppers were basically powerless in front of the southern landowners which resulted in the AAA mostly benefitting the latter and rather hurting the former group. Even though some delegates of the New Deal condemned this inequality, they had no real influence in changing the structure. Only in the late 1930's, some efforts to support the small farmers, like rehabilitation loans, were installed, but at this stage of the New Deal, it's funding's had been already in decline.²²⁵ Besides the unequal hierarchy in the agricultural industry, codes like the Cotton Reduction Agreement, also hurt the farmer. This agreement withdrew a share of the

²²¹Ibid., 23.

²²²Ibid., 20.

²²³Carpenter, Biles, *The South and the New Deal*, 36-38.

²²⁴Ibid., 40.

²²⁵Ibid., 54-56.

landlord's field from production. Even though the contract of the AAA was protecting the sharecropper, and the release of them was by contract prohibited, the sudden implementation of the cotton reductions, nonetheless, led farmers to reduce the working hours or replace their farmers. Furthermore, benefit payments sent to the landlord by the AAA, were often not completely distributed to the sharecroppers. Unfortunately, protective measures for small tenant farmers in the South were nearly non-existent.²²⁶

The Catholic Worker also elaborated on the farming problems in various articles. In 1935 the journal covered a case in Arkansas, where a white and a black sharecropper conveyed their horrible situation which was only worsened by the governmental cotton reductions program. People had no other way of earning money after they got evicted, which led some households to even eat their dogs in order to prevent starvation. Other reports described farmers manufacturing clothes out of flour and sugar sacks in order to sell it for ten cents per piece. The only positive note to detract was that the sharecroppers at least overcame their racial differences and were eager to fight for their right as a team.²²⁷ In order to highlight the grievances of sharecroppers, *The Catholic Worker* reported about the denial of the sharecropper's right to own rent-free acres in order to harvest for self-consumption, to obtain free wood, or their omission from local agricultural boards.²²⁸

The New Deal entailed the overall reduction of southern farmers and the extension of the urban work force. The decrease of farmers was also due to the compensation payments, given by the AAA, which were used to buy new machinery that made human labour force redundant. The New Deal also managed to stimulate hope among unions regarding better working conditions and the removal of sweatshops as well as the abolition of child labour. But, the first wave of enthusiasm was also supported by false reports that claimed a re-employment number of 66.000. workers within the first fifty days of relief, while ignoring the fact that many of them were only part-time employed and suffering under numerous violations of NRA codes. Local chambers that were responsible of dealing with those violation, soon turned out to be incapable of dealing with the volume of incoming complaints. Even after the instalment of a separate bureau; from about 351 violation cases, only 71 defendants were represented in 1935.²²⁹

Results of the NRA regarding Organized Labour was rather disappointing, especially in the manufacturing sector. As general strikes occurred in 1934, which were directed against

²²⁶Depew, Briggs, Price V. Fishback, and Paul W. Rhode. "New Deal or No Deal in the Cotton South: The Effect of the AAA on the Agricultural Labor Structure." *Explorations in Economic History* 50, no. 4 (2013): 466-86.

²²⁷"Arkansas Sharecroppers Misery", *The Catholic Worker* 2, no. 11 (1935): 6.

²²⁸"Ills from AAA Spur Sharecroppers to Organize", *The Catholic Worker* 3, no. 3 (1935): 7.

²²⁹Smith, *The New Deal in the Urban South*, 47-50.

their brutal employers, the United Textile Workers union under the A.F.L. stopped the strike immediately. Efforts by the NRA to help the workers were limited and its administrators merely persuaded employers to formulate promises of improvement. Organized labour groups also condemned the NRA's contribution to wage differences among sections. While the wage of manufacturing workers in the South was even higher than outside the southern states, other workers were left with far less.²³⁰

There was also no improvement of the unequal pay to black workers. Some employers hired them only as part-time workers, while some only pretended to follow wage increases without putting it to practice. Due to the racist environment, black workers rarely won violation cases, but often faced prejudice and the deprivation of just decisions by officials. Therefore, some African-American workers came to realise that companies following the NRA were rather bringing them further disadvantages in unemployment, than actual security.²³¹

The Catholic Worker voiced their disappointment regarding the constant violations of the legislations and furthermore addressed FDR by urging him to enforce the emergency reforms more strictly. The journal exposed that even though the farm prices dropped by 60% of pre-war levels, farmers had to pay a 266% rate of their previous taxes. This is one of the articles that display the overall accordance of *The Catholic Worker* with the general ideas of the president, but critiqued the implementation of legislations, as they had rarely been put to practice rigorously enough.²³²

Similar to other parts in America, most employers in the southern states were joyful about the Supreme Court's decision to dissolve the NRA. Even though the NRA was able to bring a level of hope, code violations and exemptions obstructed the reform's effects. Recovery was rather slow, and unemployment stayed rather high in the mid- 1930's. However, it also resulted in several positive outcomes like the abandonment of child labour and the improvement of working conditions. It also boosted wages in the southern parts, hence the gap to the north could get progressively smaller. Those positive results were especially visible in the low-paid industries.²³³

The FERA, or later WPA, was able to help thousands of southern workers to find occupations. Besides the provision of jobs, it was also able to distribute food to needy households and renovate facilities like several hospitals or the Atlanta airport. The chief

²³⁰Ibid., 55-56.

²³¹Smith, *The New Deal in the Urban South*, 57

²³²“Strike Methods of Farmers Hastening Relief Legislations” *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 2 (1933): 1-2.

²³³Ibid., 59.

administrator Harry Hopkins, nevertheless, was hindered by different federal officials as most of the southern governors still strongly believed in the American values of individualism and worried about the increasing intervening character of the relief program, which resulted in the deprivation of relief by the majority of the southern governments. As the WPA provided \$15 monthly funds for one relief family, the state of Mississippi presented the lowest distribution, where the federal government merely passed on \$3,96. But Hopkins did not give up providing proper relief distributions and intervened in several states like Georgia or Louisiana, installed new administrators or confronted the state legislature in person.²³⁴ *The Catholic Worker* recognised the efforts of Harry Hopkins and supported his eagerness to face southern governors, as they wrote “Now we’d say, this gentleman from New York has ideas.”²³⁵

As it became apparent that the volume of FERA would not continue to be sufficient, the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act established the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935. This meant that a greater number of workers were employed, while the wage was increased. The WPA worked independently and continued to be under the administration of Hopkins, who still experienced the pushback by the southern governors. Therefore, Hopkins had to continue to fight for the federal sponsoring of WPA projects. Still, the administration managed to provide several jobs and organized construction projects, where 78% of those projects were used to distribute unskilled labour jobs.²³⁶

Even though, relief work was often given to the “head” of households, the WPA was also able to employ several women and had a separate section that was organized by the department called *Women’s and Professional Projects*. The downside in this was that most women were seen as unskilled and therefore received the lowest wage-rate. Public opinion in southern states were quite conservative and saw women’s main profession in the household and as not fitting into the workforce. This meant that most of the women workers were employed in sewing occupations, school cafeterias, canneries or libraries.²³⁷

The Catholic Worker wrote that the most detrimental position under the N.R.A. was possessed by the African- American woman- as they were triple exploited because of race, sex and class. Grievances included the longest working hours, the lowest wages and the biggest insecurities. Added to this was the fact that the security bill by the NRA provided nearly no protection to the African- American women. It was estimated that 90% of the black

²³⁴Carpenter, Biles, *The South and the New Deal*, 62-64.

²³⁵“Child Victims,” *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 8 (1934): 3.

²³⁶Carpenter, Biles, *The South and the New Deal*., 73-76.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, 77.

female workers were occupied in domestic and agricultural work. In Mississippi, wages in domestic services would not surpass 2\$ per week while they worked 70-80 hours.²³⁸

4.3 *The Catholic Worker* reporting on Civil Rights

In an early article in 1933, *The Catholic Worker* reprinted a statement by a reverend called John T. Gillard, who admitted that members of the Catholic Church were not excluded when carrying the misbelief that black and white citizens would be inherently different and could be treated differently. He connected the origin of this fallacy not with religion, but with their American descent. The Church itself was seen by Gillard as the greatest moral force, but as Americans, they would think provincial. The article goes on to list several grievances the African- American had to face in the United States, like the denial to vote in southern states, to receive lower wages, to be prohibited to attend the same schools, parks or other facilities as white citizens as well as the denial of white church or union membership.²³⁹ Similar words can be found in another article where *TCW* wrote that Christianity itself sees no colour line, even though some individual Christians do. This would not be in the interest of god, as they quote Father Gilles: “The black man and the white man are by God’s creation brethren, children by the same Father one earth and same father in heaven, redeemed alike by Jesus Christ and having the same rights.”²⁴⁰

Interesting was an article that described reports on conducted intelligence tests among white and black citizens, which had shown that the group of white Americans were generally performing better than the other group. However, *TCW* deducted that these results could not be seen as an outcome of racial difference, but that the major diverting factor was the unequal opportunities given to the two groups . The journalists reinforced the fact that there was no reality to an objective superiority with neither of the two ethnic groups- this assumption would just simply be unscientific.²⁴¹

Ambitions from the church were mentioned though an article by Reverend Muentsch, who declared that race equality is manifested in catholic principles. One example given was a church in Missouri, where their sodalities built several committees, that are devoted to religious and social work.

²³⁸“Is the Problem Black or White?”, *The Catholic Worker* 3, no. 4 (1935): 2.

²³⁹“Is the Problem Black or White?”, *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 1 (1933): 3.

²⁴⁰“Negro Fellow- Workers”, *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 5 (1933): 4.

²⁴¹“Religion and the Race Problem, *The Catholic Worker* 3, no. 4 (1935): 5.

At the front page of the first publication, *The Catholic Worker* exposed the mistreating of five thousand African-American workers in a Mississippi flood project, sponsored by the War Department. Two private Investigation, conducted by the A.F.L., had shown, that workers in those camps had to cope with shifts that varied from twelve to sometimes sixteen-hours, seven days a week, without any additional pay. Besides the pay being as little as ten cents an hour, many African-American workers were also charged for water, or overpriced products at their company, where they were obligated to buy at. Therefore, the work did not provide any more profit to the workers than to support their subsistence. In addition to the article, the journal also published an excerpt of the report by the N.A.A.C.P., which described horrible conditions like the unbearable temperature of 120 degrees Fahrenheit which would equal 48 degrees Celsius, or the serious lack of hygiene.²⁴² In a follow up article in summer 1933, the *TCW* reported the success of the N.A.A.C.P. as the contractors admitted the exploitative conditions. After the N.A.C.C.P. voiced several charges against the contractors, a new code, with the purpose to shorten the working weeks and to raise the salary of the black workers, was planned to be implemented by the N.R.A..²⁴³

The low salaries of African-American teachers had already been covered in the earlier editions of *TCW*, like the issue of October 1933. The unequal salary, compared to white teachers, was attacked by the N.A.C.C.P. It also planned to go against other discriminatory installation among the education sector in the south, like the unequal distribution of equipment in schools which depended upon the fact if it was an “all-white” or “all-black” school, the unequal provision of school funds and the possibility for African-Americans to also be educated in medicine, dentistry, law or other high-skilled professions.²⁴⁴

As the articles by *The Catholic Worker* never alluded to an overwhelming sympathy towards the A.F.L., the journal hinted to racist acts by the union against black workers. The claim pointed to a deliberate blocking of black workers, to get employed in the Federal Housing projects. A.F.L. southern locals were accused for constant discrimination as well as intimidation.

In regards to the NRA, *The Catholic Worker* reported about a radio extract that included three opinions by James Hoey, collector of the Internal Review, Elmer A. Carter, a journalist that covered the lives of black citizens and Father LaFarge, a priest and activist, on the unequal treating of black workers under the NRA. Among other things, the high

²⁴²“Negro Labour on Levees exploited by U.S. War Dept.??”, *The Catholic Worker 1*, no. 1 (1933): 1.

²⁴³“N.A.A.C.P. Wins Fight on Negro Exploitation By Levees Contractors”, *The Catholic Worker 1*, no. 4 (1933): 10.

²⁴⁴“To Attack Low Salaries of Negro Teachers”, *The Catholic Worker 1*, no. 5 (1933): 8.

unemployment rates among African- Americans as well as the fact that black workers would be the first one to be released from companies, were discussed. Minimum wages implemented by the NRA would further hurt the African- American workers as employers would rather pay the full amount to a white worker than a black worker. Therefore, after the establishment of the minimum wage clausal, many black workers got replaced by white Americans. Among others, the article restated the comments from Elmer A. Carter, that professional fields would be understaffed and therefore African- Americans should not only be allowed but supported to enter higher education fields of medicine or teaching. The opinion by activist priest Father Lafarge was that black children must already be properly prepared in elementary school, since their level of competitiveness would rise with better basic education and the job market would be opening up to them by itself. *TCW* sees LaFarges view as too optimistic, due to the fact that he was neglecting the prevailing racism in the United States. However, the journal agreed with the priest, that the community would need a “Negro leader”. At the end of the article, *TCW* reinforced, that Catholic opinion should include the equality among workers of all colours and ethnicities. In god’s word “love thy neighbour as thyself”, there would be no loophole for colour-blindness.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵“The Plight of Negro under NRA stressed in Radio Forum Talks,” *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 9 (1934): 1.

5 Conclusion

Socialism was not fully absent in American history. There were several manifestations, shown by Kazin, that tried to spread socialist ideas around the United States. The book of Sombart did not deny America to have any trait of socialism, contrary to its title, but aimed to display several reasons why it was never strong enough to establish itself as a political force in a country that was known for its capitalist structures. The absence of a strong socialist movement throughout all parts of the United States, did not align with Marx' dialectic.

Sombart's book set the groundwork for the debate of socialism in America, leading authors like Lipset and Marks to carry the discussion forward. Even though, Sombart presents interesting and convincing points, for example that the socialist party was obstructed by the American two-party system, some of his arguments fall short. The time frame used for his studies to proof his thesis of a high living standard among Americans, was far too short in order to arrive at a convincing conclusion. Furthermore, the author concentrates on the political results of the socialist movement but overlooks any traits in the societal realm. To that, he rarely mentions European immigrants and their possible effect on socialist groups.

Looking at Kazin's book, his presentation of the different social streams, which include the Jewish socialists who actually were a group made up of immigrants, Sombart's book has to have several amendments. The thesis concludes from its analysis that the two main reasons why the assumption of a failing socialism prevails is firstly, that the two-party system obstructed the socialist political success, and the fact that socialism was often automatically equalized with communism and thus inherited a bad reputation in the United States. It furthermore detected that socialism was not absent in the United States. This is not merely derived from books by Irving Howe or Michael Kazin but also from the analysis of *The Catholic Worker*, who constantly sold their journal to Americans, interested in its socialist ideas and who have been publishing since 1933 until today.

The analysis of the journals showed that the movement had strong opinions that were voiced uncensored in its periodicals while it also stayed away from forcing certain opinions onto its readers. Therefore, they did not always defend the church's position and were not always in opposition to the communists, even though the latter did receive mainly criticism throughout the publications. Furthermore, it became clear that *The Catholic Worker* movement was made up of activists and encouraged its readers to take action, in order to promote social justice. One example can be taken from an article, that informed their readers

about several ongoing strikes hence advised them not to use certain laundries or buy cheap pocketbooks since the pocketbook makers were on strike.²⁴⁶

Further analysis showed that Catholicism and socialist ideas do have certain accordances, like the corporatist element or the idea of communal support. *The Catholic Worker* saw themselves as socialists, activists and Catholics. Going back to the first chapter, the journal did not see why the protest of abuse and the request for reforms determined the exclusion of any religious belief. In their mind, social justice should be practiced by everyone regardless of their confession. Furthermore, it did not only see compatibility between Catholicism and socialism but also similarities. Both supported more cooperation, a friendly communal life of brothers and sisters and condemned exploitation. *The Catholic Worker* stood strongly against the communist goal of class war. Socialism itself should be forwarded by acts of mercy and the church should take leadership to promote social justice.

When Roosevelt's New Deal was introduced, *The Catholic Worker* voiced their overall support for the new legislations. According to the journal, the administration showed innovative aspects of cooperation between the government, the industry and work-force, that the United States had not experienced prior. Also, the support of organized labour and unions was highly appreciated by *The Catholic Worker*. It positively recognized a new direction under Roosevelt, which they voiced in an open letter to the president, in 1936. The editors of the journal commended the president for his efforts to enhance the overall cooperation, and to take a step away from the stern value of individualism. His actions would be an indication of his honest interest in the 'forgotten man', meaning the worker.²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the New Deal was highly criticized regarding the poor implementations of the legislations, especially in the southern states, as well as the administration's tolerance towards violations against the reforms. Reports about starving sharecroppers, inhumane conditions in automobile factories or racist landlords had shown that the New Deal was considerably flawed and that implementations had to be controlled more diligently.

Regarding the situation of African- Americans, *The Catholic Worker* took a strong stance against the inequalities and their mis-treating. To convince catholic readers to lay down their racist agenda, it often argued by citing the bible. According to the journal, everyone was regarded equal under God and Jesus' redemptions were not limited by ethnicity. *The Catholic Worker* issued several aspects to showcase the bad situation of the African- American as they

²⁴⁶ „What you can do for Social Justice”, *The Catholic Worker* 1, no. 3 (1933): 1.

²⁴⁷ “Open Letter to President”, *The Catholic Worker* 4, no. 3 (1936): 1.

covered rising lynching incidents, the trials of the Scottsboro Case, racist New Deal violations and discriminatory actions against workers by southern employers.

The Catholic Worker had something very distinctive from other socialist streams, which was their catholic believe. Since the journal was highly influenced by its believes and the publications were dominated by religious articles, the movement provided a new perspective on social issues and political events. Catholic morals were leading their opinions and defined the requirements to join the movement. *The Catholic Worker* also distributed influence with their establishments like *The Catholic Worker School*, which provided lectures of socialist and catholic teachings by diverse groups of speakers which included professors, priests or journalists.²⁴⁸ Another establishment that benefitted the society and spread the name of the movement were the prior mentioned “House of Hospitality” instalments, which had over a hundred locations throughout the nation and abroad. Those locations had a rather long endurance with the last ones closing in 1980, which gave them an operation time of about fifty years.²⁴⁹

Defining for the movement is also its founding during the Great Depression and Roosevelts first term, which provides *The Catholic Worker* with a very peculiar context in American history. Set in a time, where capitalism lost its power and new strategies had to be found that contested the capitalist regime and where sentiments in the United States became unclear and therefore open for new approaches like those of the journal.

The validity and the scope of *The Catholic Worker* can by derived from acknowledgements in books like *Socialism and America* by Irving Howe or *American Dreamers. How the Left Changed a Nation* by Kazin, as well as from the article by *The New York Times* remembering Dorothy Day after her Death in 1980, when the paper accredited her by describing Day as a “seminal role in developing the social and economic thinking of a generation of American priests and laymen”.²⁵⁰

Therefore, the analysis concludes, because of its distinctive direction in the socialist realm, its effort to join catholic and socialist philosophies and its nation- wide recognition in publications and newspapers, that *The Catholic Worker* sets itself apart from other socialist movements and can be regarded as its own stream.

²⁴⁸ „The Catholic Worker School“, *The Catholic Worker* 2, no. 7 (1934): 8.

²⁴⁹ Roberts, Nancy L. *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, 1984, 3-8.

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