

given a clean administration', and as a matter of fact the Socialists had not, so far, introduced any reform that could be held to be out of harmony with the *professions* of the Progressive Party. Yet the Progressive Party was making common cause with the old reactionaries to secure the Socialists' defeat.

The defeat, which followed surely, was numerically overwhelming, but this much had been gained, – for the first time in the history of Milwaukee's Municipal politics, the Socialist administrators had set a high standard of integrity and endeavour, and once having known a genuinely honest and efficient administration, Milwaukee will expect more of its City Council in the future than it ever did before. It will not be long before the Socialists are given another chance.\*

Meanwhile the Socialists elected to govern Schenectady in New York State, were able to carry on the work which their comrades of Milwaukee had been obliged, for the time being, to lay aside. Mayor Lunn and his colleagues on the Schenectady Council early discovered a means of surmounting the obstacles to municipal trading which had proved so formidable a handicap in Milwaukee.<sup>†</sup> When, during the summer of 1912, the price of ice was forced up by a Trust, until the poor could not afford to buy it, the Municipality began selling ice to the citizens on its own account and found that it could do so, without loss, at one third of the prevailing price. The Ice Trust of course obtained an injunction to restrain the Town Council's operations, but the Mayor and Councillors then formed themselves into a co-operative society and carried on their business as before. They afterwards commenced trading in both coal and groceries and whereas private companies were selling coal at 14 dollars, (£2-16-0), a ton, the Council was able to sell it, without loss, at 5 dollars (£1-0-0).

\* Sylvia's prediction proved correct. The socialists were re-elected in 1916 with Daniel Hoan (1881-1961), the former City Attorney, becoming the city's second socialist mayor, a post he held until 1940. Frank P. Zeidler (1912-2006) became Milwaukee's third socialist mayor, holding the post from 1948 to 1960.

† George R. Lunn (1873-1948), socialist mayor of Schenectady, elected in 1911. Sylvia spoke in Schenectady's Red Men's Hall on 27 March 1912 as part of the WPU's tour of upstate New York. Her comments here on events in the summer of 1912 testify to her continued interest in socialism in America.

## 6. A Red Indian College

### EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Sylvia's identity as an artist is most apparent in this chapter on Native Americans. The beginning of the chapter is drawn from another letter written to Keir Hardie from a train, this time the Union Pacific, which Sylvia took from Los Angeles in California to Lawrence in Kansas in mid-March 1911. As the train sped through New Mexico, Sylvia tried to capture the atmosphere, the colours and the figures as they sped past: 'We are going through [New] Mexico. Oh the strangest and most desolate country. What indeed possessed any body of people to settle here? The ground is all sandy a dull redish [*sic*] brown with faded shrubs some grey and dead looking.'<sup>1</sup>

These words, and those that followed, were then adapted for the descriptive opening of this chapter in which the flashes of colour and changes in tone suggest an artist craving her brushes. It is as an artist that Sylvia identifies with the Native Americans. Influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, she is evidently impressed by the craftsmanship of Native American artists. The letter to Hardie informs us that at the railway station, where Sylvia admired Native American wares, she bought Hardie a gift: 'the blue stones that my Darling likes and so I found something for him.'<sup>2</sup> Sylvia was, however, acutely aware of the destructive effect of the commercialisation of Native American culture and writes passionately against the exploitation that she sees businessmen, and not Native Americans themselves, profiting from. She mourns the way that the forcing of Native Americans into the labour market, and their low wages, results in a cultural impoverishment, as they can only afford to purchase 'cheap machine-made things'.

Sylvia demonstrated a sophisticated and multifaceted understanding of the relationship between the ideology of the modern American nation and the racism experienced by Native Americans. In this chapter, she notes the ubiquitous state representations of Native Americans among the wild beasts forced aside by white settlers. The dispossession of the Native Americans from their land runs throughout the chapter. In her