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MINNEAPOLIS SETTLEMENT HOUSES IN THE  
"NOT SO ROARING 20'S"  
AMERICANIZATION, MORALITY, AND THE  
REVOLT AGAINST POPULAR CULTURE

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*The article traces the theoretical and ideological development of the Minneapolis settlement house community during the 1920's. As such, the article examines the social control function of Minneapolis settlements through their emphasis on Americanization, morality, the concepts of neighborhood and democracy, and the role of domestic politics within the settlement community. The article also explores the dialectical relationship between the social control function of Minneapolis settlement houses and the altruistic motives of settlement workers.*

The majority of literature on American social settlements focus on the larger houses (i.e., Hull House, Chicago Commons, University Settlement, South End House, etc.) located in highly populated metropolitan areas. Moreover, the bulk of the literature also emphasizes the "golden epoch of settlements," the progressive era from 1905 to 1919 (Davis, 1967; Bremner, 1956; Trattner, 1979). Consequently, little attention has been paid to the smaller settlements that were less flamboyant, but nevertheless formed the backbone of the settlement movement that spanned the distance from New York to California.

This article examines the Minneapolis settlement house community from 1920 to 1929. The Minneapolis settlement houses existed in a somewhat typical, middle-range, middle-western city. Unlike some of the larger settlement

houses, Minneapolis settlements were far from being bastions of progressivism, nor were they populated with noted personalities such as Jane Addams, Robert Woods, Graham Taylor, or Mary Simkhovitch. Like the vast majority of settlement houses, Minneapolis settlements existed outside of the national limelight<sup>1</sup>

#### A BRIEF NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this article is historical sociology. Consequently, the intent of this article is interpretative rather than purely historical. The point of this paper is not to concisely record the development of the Minneapolis settlement house community of the 1920's, but instead, to examine the role of ideology and social control as they impacted upon the settlement milieu. As part of that examination, emphasis will be placed on the role of social control within the Minneapolis settlements and the translation of that social control function into Americanization programs, and later, into an almost messianic emphasis on morality.

The complementarity between history and sociology is evident. However, like all methodologies it suffers from inherent traps. Primary among those traps is sociological reductionism, that is, the subordination of important variables for other, less important variables. For example, there exists the danger of distorting the altruistic motives of settlement leaders by subordinating those motives to ideological concerns. This would suggest that settlement leaders were merely an arm of capital rather than willful actors who were acted upon as well as acted upon the system in which they existed.

The definition of social control used in this paper will follow Coser and Rosenberg's (1957;97) explication which states that social control is "those mechanisms by which society exercises dominion over component individuals and enforces conformity to its norms".

The use of ideology in this article corresponds to Althusser's (1971:152) notion that it is "a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence". In that sense, "men represent their real condi-

tions of existence to themselves in an imaginary form" (Althusser, 1971:153). Moreover, ideologies are not a static and hegemonous series of suppositions about the world, but instead, they represent ongoing social processes.

## THE BACKGROUND OF THE EARLY SETTLEMENT MOVEMENT

The early settlement house movement in the United States was marked by a benign form of paternalism characteristic of progressive era thinking (Rothman, 1980). By the early 1920's, at least in Minneapolis, that paternalism gave way to a more strident view of the role of settlement houses in meeting societal goals. The genesis of that shift lay in the social and political milieu of post World War I America.

The triumph of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia, the spread of communist ideology into Germany, Hungary, and other parts of Europe, and especially the founding of the Third International (created in Moscow to stimulate worldwide proletarian revolution), set off an unprecedented wave of anti-red hysteria in the United States.

According to Clarke Chambers, (1967:117) the Red Scare "hurt the settlements more than other reform associations or welfare agencies because they had been so long associated with an open-forum policy hospitable to the expression of all kinds of economic and political theories by all sorts and conditions of social dissenters". Jane Addams noted that "any proposed change was suspect, even those efforts that had been considered praiseworthy before the war". Minnesota and Minneapolis were not immune from the political schisms that marked the 1920's. Long controlled by the large grain companies, Minneapolis was known as an anti-union and "open shop" town well into the 1930's (Stipanovich, 1982:165).

The nativistic and racial supremacy theories of the 1920's was also evident in Minneapolis. In 1923, historian Theodore C. Blegen (Stipanovich, 1982:24) estimated that there were over ten Klu Klux Klan chapters in Minneapolis.

Prohibition also had a significant impact on Minneapolis. Long a central distribution center for commerce in

the upper midwest, Minneapolis provided the perfect distribution point for illegal whiskey bound for Kansas City and Chicago. The illegal trade resulted in an increase in corruption and gangland activities (Stipanovich, 1982:170).

Minneapolis history is replete with its own set of contradictions. Settled by New Englanders in the 1869's and 1870's, the National Grange of the Patrons of Industry had a branch in Minnesota. In the 1880's the Farmers Alliance, later to become the People's Party, was established in Minnesota. The ire of the farmers was directed against the railroads, grain millers, the grain exchange, and the banks (Stipanovich, 1982:157-8). Since Minneapolis was the seat of commerce for the upper midwest, much of the protest focused on the city.

Minneapolis also fell sway to the anti-red hysteria of World War I. The Minneapolis Committees on Public Safety arrested leaders of the International Workers of the World (IWW) and the socialist party. In fact, the Minneapolis activities against the IWW spurred on the national campaign against the organization (Stipanovich, 1982:165). The Committees also attacked the Non-Partisan League, an organization founded in North Dakota in 1915 by Arthur Townley. The Non-Partisan League later became the Farmer-Labor Party, and in 1930, successfully ran Floyd B. Olson as governor of Minnesota.

In the midst of the political confusion that marked national and state politics, Minneapolis settlement houses were asked to ply their trade. The settlements responded with programs intended to protect the immigrant against injustice and to uphold the order of American society. Both of these goals could be incorporated under the umbrella of Americanization.

#### THE "AMERICANIZATION" MOVEMENT WITHIN THE MINNEAPOLIS SETTLEMENT HOUSE COMMUNITY

The Americanization movement that characterized Minneapolis settlement activities through the middle 1920's was

not a specific set of programs, but rather emphasized particular theoretical perspectives and ideologies. Americanization encompassed policies for education, financial aid, and oftentimes merely a sympathetic understanding of the difficulties faced by the immigrant family.

The Americanization movement, spearheaded by the settlement houses, spanned the years from the 1890's to the middle 1920's. Though originated as a humanitarian impulse motivated by charity and Social Christianity, Americanization later developed into a "100% American" crusade driven by nativism, racism and fear; and by the early 1920's Americanization meant conforming for the sake of social unity (Bolin, 1969:2). The primary thrust of the Americanization movement was on developing a sense of patriotism and loyalty. These themes were stressed repeatedly from the onset of World War I to the middle 1920's. An example of the intolerance and nativism that characterized the core of the Americanization movement can be found in a correspondence between Margaret Chapman, head resident of Wells Memorial House and Mrs. Belousoff, a former infant welfare nurse who returned to Petrograd after the Russian Revolution of 1917 (*St. Mark's Outlook*, Dec. 22 1917:2). Mrs. Belousoff wrote:

The Country is going to economical destruction in full meaning of these words. Every day brings troubles. Country is all lighten up with murders, robbing and many other things of the same type. But we are Russian—still talking. Our leaders do not feel, or probably do not want to see, what will happen with Russia if things will go longer this way. Sometimes I think our Allies will take care of us . . .

In responding to Mrs. Belousoff's letter, Chapman (*St. Mark's Outlook*, March 19, 1917:45) wrote:

The most offensive and dangerous thing with which this nation is confronted, is the wicked disloyalty of those who have come from foreign parts, only to abuse our institutions and to seek to disrupt our national family life . . . The best possible

is not to interne them, or to place limitations upon their movements but, to ship them back to the countries from whence they came . . . We have been altogether too lenient, too soft and gentle, in dealing with the traitor within our gates. We shall do so no more we hope.

The Americanization movement did not reflect Jane Addams' view of tolerance of sharing, but rather, a militant pro-Americanism tinged with anti-internationalism and a virulent distrust of "foreign ideas". The goal of Americanization is summed by a brief article in *St. Mark's Outlook* (March 10, 1917:5).

Some time ago Mrs. T.B. Wells gave us a great table talk on "Nationalism". The next week when a young woman came register for gym and was asked her nationality, she said: "I used to say I was a Scandinavian, but since hearing Mrs. Wells I know I am an American."

Americanization was also the principle focus for Robbins Gilman, head resident of North East Neighborhood House (2). Within the community of northeast Minneapolis, Americanization, at least until the middle 1920's, was an omnipresent force. Nearly every activity at the house including social clubs, the employment bureau, the day nursery and kindergarten, the health programs, and the war time activities, were considered as adjustment programs for the immigrant. Gilman's (Headworkers Report, January, 1919, North East Neighborhood House (hereafter NENH) Papers:4) statement that "all the work done at North East Neighborhood House was Americanization work", was well founded.

In 1919, Robbins Gilman founded the North East Americanization Committee, an organization composed of social workers, public school principals, and other leaders of the First Ward (Headworkers Report, May 1919, NENH:1).

The principle activities of the North East Americanization Committee consisted of a series of weekly lectures held at the St. Anthony Commercial Club, as well as various folk dance festivals and choral presentations. The objective of the committee was to help Americans understand their immig-

rant neighbors by teaching them about old world customs, national heroes, and other aspects of immigrant life. An additional purpose of the committee was to show native Americans that the foreigner was not a bolshevist, but a person with something to offer American culture (Gilman:831).

Despite Gilman's pronouncements that the North East Americanization Committee had as its guiding principle the "contributions theory of immigration", a la Jane Addams, (1911a: 39-41; 64-66), this progressive view was not centrally shared. A northeast Minneapolis paper, the *North East Argus*, (NENH, February 1, 1919) editorialized that the "Americanization Movement, which will soon be in Full Swing all over this fair land of ours, will promptly take care of sporadic attempts to 'pull off' any Bolsheviki nonsense in this country, or in this city".

Gilman saw his main role as being that of an interpreter of American values and institutions to the foreign born. Anna Quayle, assistant head resident of Wells House, agreed with Gilman (*St. Mark's Outlook* June 12, 1920:9) when she maintained that the main goal of the settlements was to perform the "rare function of a minister of understanding or as if often said, interpreter".

#### THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND DEMOCRACY: SHAPING IDEOLOGY THROUGH MANUFACTURING A WORLD VIEW

The unification of disparate neighborhood elements was a chief component in the Americanization plan of the Minneapolis settlement houses. For example, above the door at North East Settlement House was a sign which read: "Organized to weld a cosmopolitan neighborhood into an Americanized civic and social unit".

The "neighborhood movement" was an attempt to remediate the social evils that came on the heels of urban industrialization. These social evils included autonomy (i.e. extreme individualism and the license to break group norms), immorality, and the sense of anomie that characterized urban life. Settlement work was an attempt to



make the anonymous city dweller into a franchised citizen.

Group life was seen as the cure for excessive individualism and social instability. Strong groups could control individualistic impulses and encourage people to value their ties with each other.

The creation of group life was based on strengthening the family, the school, the playground gang, the club, the vocational or labor group, the ethnic group, and the neighborhood group. A major goal of that strategy was the creation of a strong and unified neighborhood system which could be called into service to enforce social order. This unified neighborhood could thus meliorate the twin features of autonomy; license (the inability of the group to exert restraint on its members), and selfishness (the weakening of people's devotion to their reference group).

The creation of a tightly woven social organism also serves another social control function. Namely, when a neighborhood is tightly organized, social control is more easily applied by an extant force. The solidification of a community insures that the social entity that wishes to control the community has a viable leadership to negotiate with, and ultimately, to use in its service. Without unity, a community becomes harder to control, with disparate elements running amok under no one's reins. By stressing neighborhood unity, the settlements struggled to create a social organism that was tightly structured and well organized, and hence, a neighborhood that could be more easily managed by the forces of the state. Thus a tightly organized neighborhood was a crucial strategy in the Americanization program of the Minneapolis settlement houses. The relationship between the concepts of "neighborhood" and "democracy" was another crucial part of the settlements' Americanization program.

#### DEMOCRACY AND IDEOLOGY

The notion of democracy, or the idea that liberty and law go together, was a mainstay of the settlement house

movement. The belief in the value of democracy was a quintessential element in the program of Americanization.

Neighborhood involvement was a lesson in civics: when neighborhood problems were successfully resolved, immigrants learned that change could occur through voting or other political activity. Apart from the obvious social function of "policing the community", civic involvement also ensured that neighborhood people would focus on the political rather than the economic arena. By focusing on community problems, there was less propensity for neighborhood residents to concentrate on the economic inequities and, thereby, less chance of them becoming affiliated with radical organizations. The focus on community problems allowed the immigrant to vent his or her economic frustration on relatively safe targets: corrupt city officials or inept municipal administrations.

Political choices have always been relatively limited in American Political life. Except in rare instances, few viable non-mainstream political candidates have emerged. Thus, by socializing the immigrant into accepting the available political choices, settlement workers promulgated the desired ideology of democracy. Through their actions, settlement workers helped manufacture the social reality of the immigrant, a reality that was to be bounded by the conventions of the American economic system.

Socializing the immigrant into the democratic mode of thought was done not only through the informal mechanism of neighborhood involvement, but also through more formal means of political education. Pillsbury House maintained a "well-attended class in political education" (*Minneapolis Tribune*, February 13, 1921), and North East House sponsored a citizenship class where "the men of foreign birth learned English and the principles of the American government" (*Minneapolis Journal* Circa 1923). Unity House contributed to the democratic socialization of the immigrant by providing a social evening in which "Mr. Emmanuel Cohen and Mr. J.C. Haynes . . . Spoke in such a way as to enlist

the attention of working men on such topics as 'Good Citizenship' and 'City government' " (*Minneapolis Tribune*, February 13, 1921).

The combination of neighborhood involvement and formal political education ensured the immigrant would be well exposed to the precepts of democracy and civic responsibility.

Many citizens of the 1920's saw a strong relationship between Americanization and morality. As nativism became tinged with racism, there was a strong tendency to associate Americanism with morality. This proclivity was fueled by the belief that assimilation was weakening the genetic stock of Americans, and thus, any signs of social weakness, e.g. crime or immorality, was interpreted as being "unAmerican" (Grant, 1916). It therefore became important for settlement houses to protect the immigrants from moral temptation.

Though the shift in emphasis from Americanization to moralism should not be exaggerated—both programs continued throughout the 1920's and well into the 1930's—there was indeed a marked change in the focus of settlement activity. In fact, the emphasis on virtue would accelerate, until by the end of the decade, it would reach almost the proportion of a moral crusade.

#### MORALITY, WOMEN, AND THE REVOLT AGAINST POPULAR CULTURE

World War I ushered in a re-examination of the evil of alcohol. Unity House, under Henry Burt, "organized the local communities for suppression of vice and stimulate(d) public officials in making effective the restrictions of the War Department on the social evil and the sale of liquor" (*Minneapolis Tribune*, September 11, 1917). Wells Memorial House had the same concern as Unity House when Margaret Chapman (*St. Mark's Outlook*, October 20, 1917:6) wrote that the hygienic atmosphere surrounding our soldiers and sailors may be morally looked after by educational propaganda of local organizations in relation to both the social

evil and the sale of liquor". When prohibition was finally enacted after World War I, every settlement house in Minneapolis endorsed it (*Minneapolis Tribune*, February 19, 1919).

After prohibition the moral concerns of settlement houses shifted to other areas. Destructive social influences were enumerated by a Women's Cooperative Alliance report on north Minneapolis. This 1925 report listed destructive social influences as "pool halls, dance halls, soft drink parlors, motion picture theatres, gangs (with possible causes of delinquency being small stores, hangouts, sale of cigarettes), lumber yards, vacant lots, dumps, prostitution, and sale and manufacture of intoxicating liquor" (Pratt, 1925:1).

Although the Women's Cooperative Alliance was not officially connected to the settlement movement, Minneapolis settlement houses were also investigating the same issues (3).

The moral concerns of the Minneapolis settlements were, in part, a reaction to the materialism and popular culture of the 1920's. Margaret Chapman, head resident of Wells Memorial House, (*St. Mark's Outlook*, January 3, 1925:9) wrote:

Yes, I know, my dear Materialist, the newspapers have recorded, daily, the doings of the wicked world and its sinning mortals—thefts, disloyalties, hypocrisies, villainies, murders. It has been a tragic review of God's children gone away from him.

The post World War I decade had ushered in a moral revolution. Young men and women from all social classes triumphantly celebrated the liberation of sex from its Victorian constraints. This liberation took the form of a new mass culture of movies, dance halls, amusement centers, cafes and clubs. The sexual familiarity bred by this new cultural perspective frightened the upright and moral guardians of social order. Popular culture encouraged romantic courting, and especially, cross-class mixing. It removed sex from its reproductive and familial context. Moreover, doctors, psy-

chologists, and popular advice literature advocated open sexuality between husband and wife and the value of loving companionship. While pre-marital intercourse was still taboo, there emerged a greater tolerance toward general sexual activity so long as it was based on the prospect of marriage. It was these social forces acting in concert with each other, that from the perspective of class based reformers, threatened the social order and American society.

Northeast Minneapolis had the unseemly distinction of having the second highest juvenile delinquency rate in Minneapolis (Gilman papers, Box 50, NENH, 1925:39-49). In Gilman's view this crime wave was largely due to the destructive influences of motion picture theaters, bowling alleys, pool halls, soft drink parlors, and dance halls. This commercialized recreation, according to Gilman, accounted for 90-95% of the anti-social actions of youth (Headworkers Report, November 1930, NENH).

At the root of the settlements' revolt against popular culture lay the notion of "domestic politics" (Chapman, 1984). The development of domestic ideology—or the "cult of domesticity", "true womanhood", and "women's sphere", as this ideology was alternatively labeled in nineteenth century American—served as a basis for "sisterhood" and for women's perception of their moral imperative to reform society and challenge the assumptions of male political and social culture (Cott, 1977; Epstein, 1981).

According to Richard Chapman (1984:2), the settlement houses were built on a tradition that connected "domesticity" to women's reform activities. Chapman (1984:2) maintained that:

. . . the settlement house movement—which emerged in late nineteenth century American cities—provided an institutional outlet and an organizational base whereby middle-class women expressed an urbanized form of domestic politics seeking social and political change.

That the settlement movement was heavily influenced by intellectual women reformers appears to be indisputable. John Rousmaniere (1970:45-66) maintains that the settlement

movement provided a socially approved philanthropic avenue for educated women who wanted to pursue a career rather than marriage. He further suggests that the settlements created a colony for the reconstruction of familiar ideological ties as well as a social home for young college women confused by a hostile social world. This colony provided a haven, in many ways, similar to the safe haven provided by the women's colleges from which they graduated.

The "calling" that was a part of the attraction of women reformers to the settlement movement encouraged a special concern for women's problems. Gilman showed a sensitivity to mothers' problems when he described the matron of the day nursery. He wrote (Headworkers Report, 7th Annual Report, NENH, 1921:2) that "her larger function is a deep human, sympathetic understanding of the causes back of the needs in the lives of the mothers". Unity house showed a similar sensitivity to women's problems when its headworker maintained that women often "break down when they are obliged to carry the load of day work and the care of the home and of the children" (*Year Book of the Church of the Redemer*, 1913, First Universalist Church:44).

It was this definition of the problems of women that gave rise to the day nurseries, kindergarten, day care, well baby clinics, mother's clubs, and the various other settlement activities geared to women's concerns.

Another aspect of domestic politics was that of scientific home-making; the natural, efficient, well-ordered and nurturing modern household. In effect, this movement was in part designed to create the ideal working class woman. An article in the *Minneapolis Tribune* (December 26, 1916) exemplified the perfect woman:

She washes and irons and does housecleaning for daily wages . . . Between these 9-hour working days, she scrubs and keeps clean her little home; she mends rips in Helen's and Gena's dresses and sews patches on Tony's and Paul's and Johnny's pants. She is our ideal . . . because she refuses charity. It is this that makes her great. She epitomizes the Spirit of America: Independence, Self-Help.

Domestic science was in itself class based: Middle class women taught working women how to run efficient and well-managed homes. It was perhaps this kind of irony that led Alice Kessler-Harris (1982:119) to write (in relation to women reformers) that: "Released from the home by their privileged class position . . . (they) . . . spent their best efforts trying to convince less privileged women to perform housework more productively and child care more efficiently."

The settlement's emphasis on domestic politics was tied to its perceived responsibility to family life. In Minneapolis, F.A. Gross, Director of the German American Bank (*St. Mark's Outlook*, January 26, 1924:12), observed that "you cannot legislate people into being moral or temperate . . . the home is the place where character is made . . . (Wells Memorial House) in all enterprises is immediately related to homemaking and family life".

The analogy between the settlement house and the mother was often noted by settlement writers. In almost metaphysical terms, the neighborhood was the family and the settlement house its mother. For example, Gilman wrote that "the Settlement philosophy is based upon the infinite love of the ideal mother with the strength and protection of the ideal father: (Gilman papers, Box 50, NENH, n.d.). This same analogy is in evidence when Pillsbury House described Miss Elizabeth Taylor, its head resident, as "a mother to the men and women, the boys and girls, and the babes; a very young mother, it is true, but the power and strength to carry burdens is not always due to age, is it?" (*Minneapolis Journal*, November 26, 1906:5).

The settlement leaders regarded the family as the quintessential element in positive group life. It was regarded so highly because of all the available institutions, the family alone had the most power to control selfishness and encourage conformity. It could train and control the individual because it had the power to envelope him. However, the settlements realized that the power of the family over the individual was weakened by social forces, among them commercial and popular culture. It was thus hoped that the revival

of strong neighborhood life could strengthen the disintegrating family, and as such, be a useful component in ensuring social stability.

### SOCIAL CONTROL AND ALTRUISM

To see the Minneapolis settlement house involvement in Americanization and morality based activities as pernicious, is to deny a central truth of the settlement phenomena. Namely, social control and altruism were inextricably woven into the complex fabric of the Minneapolis settlement movement of the 1920's.

For example, a statement by Robbins Gilman (Headworkers Report, NENH, December 11, 1918:4), head resident of North East Neighborhood House, exemplifies the altruism of the settlements. Gilman stated that, "those who live in settlements must be endowed with an abundant amount of Christian grace which is built upon the 'substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things no seen' . . . we live in a faith that what we do or what we stand for sometime, somehow, or somewhere may result in social good".

Quotes similar to Gilman's statement are common throughout the Minneapolis settlement house records. Altruism, sacrifice, charity, beneficence, and love are common settlement themes. These claims are by no means disingenuous; they in fact represent the firmly held beliefs and values of the settlement movement.

However, equally prominent was the social control function of the settlements. Although social control was of central concern to the Minneapolis settlement house community, its leaders did not perceive that function as malevolent. Settlement leaders engaged in social control activities not because they were pressured by the elite to perform that function, but instead, because they had a vision of social peace and harmony. In effect, settlement leaders believed that capitalism was reformable and that middle-class values were the backbone of the nation. Therefore, the engine that drove settlement leaders was a belief in social order, but also a strong commitment to selfless service. For settlement workers, the class conflict engendered by capitalism could be



eradicated by the proper application of concern, understanding, and love. Social harmony was perceived to be in everybody's best interests. To the 1920's settlement workers, the settlement mission was deeply rooted in altruism.

Within the Minneapolis settlement movement there existed a dichotomous relationship between social control and altruism. Apart from enforcing social control, Minneapolis settlements also provided positive social functions. For the newly arrived immigrant, settlements functioned as what Berger and Neuhaus (1977) call a "mediating structure". Like churches, voluntary organizations, and civic clubs, social settlement housed mediated between large impersonal institutions and alienated individuals. This mediation included intervening on the part of wronged workers, helping with naturalization, and working toward improved neighborhood services.

Although the conservative ambiance of the 1920's dampened the reform spirit of the Progressive era, it did not entirely overwhelm it. Even Margaret Chapman, the conservative head resident of Wells Memorial House, (*St. Mark's Outlook*, January 26, 1924:12) warned that:

. . . the situation is most serious and until men of your caliber all over the city use your influence and see to it that city officials are clean upright, fearless men, this young generation now growing up in the streets of the city will one day take the reins into their hands.

Moreover, even in the midst of strident declarations touting Americanism, Minneapolis settlement houses were able to maintain some components of Addams' "contributions theory of immigration". Mrs. C.C. Bovey (Box 1, NENH, Circa 1925:1), a longtime member of the Board of Directors of North East House, remarked that she "was so interested in foreigners with their many fine traditions and customs . . . we should absorb what they have to offer, just like they absorb what we have to offer . . .". Chapman (*St. Mark's Outlook*, January 26, 1924:12), in a justification of Americanization programs, maintained that "among the older groups of men and women, old time prejudices and

suspicious are being gradually forgotten in the real friendships that are being formed, thus making it less possible for the reactionary to appeal to sectarian differences”.

The complexity of the “moral crusades” and the Americanization programs is apparent. These settlement concerns were based on the protection of the social order, as well as the desire to protect the immigrant. If they were reactionary—as they obviously appear to be—they were undoubtedly less strident than the general sentiment of the native American population. By the 1920’s, Minneapolis settlement leaders were less shapers of their times than they were products of them. Though a bit more enlightened, settlement leaders were no different than the rest of the population. To judge the actions of settlement leaders in the 1920’s, apart from the general *Zeitgeist* of the period, is to pass judgment on them by our standards rather than theirs. In a decade characterized by the lynchings of blacks, intolerance for anything not wholly American, and a generally reactionary style that permeated all aspects of American life, the actions of the Minneapolis settlement movement, despite its blandness, might well be considered a triumph.

#### SUMMARY

The benign paternalism that marked Progressive era settlement work gave way to more strident techniques of social control in the 1920’s. As the article illustrates, the xenophobic and nativistic tendencies of America surfaced as a response to World War I and the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Fearful of an internal revolution, American society became less tolerant of foreign ideas and cultures, and consequently, demanded an uncompromising allegiance to what was perceived as Americanism. Settlement houses—in many ways a mirror of their times—responded to this challenge by working to create “100% Americans” out of their immigrant neighbors. The Americanization emphasis, while always present within settlement work, reached a new zenith from roughly 1919-1929.

The Americanization emphasis reached into every program and event sponsored by Minneapolis settlement

houses. This Americanization program was overarching, thorough, and almost punitive in its emphasis. Devoid of the tolerance that characterized Progressive era paternalism, Americanization programs were uncompromising in their demand for assimilation.

By the middle 1920's, Americanization activities of the settlements gave way to a mission designed to foster morality. The settlement's concern with morality was in part fueled by the rise of popular culture. The introduction of the automobile (with its concomitant opportunities for mobility), the advent of the motion picture and its portrayal of pre-marital romantic love, and the introduction of contemporary dancing and the physical familiarity that it bred, fundamentally challenged the religious and moral precepts upon which the settlement movement rested. The settlement's dedication to inculcating morality was, in effect, a response against the intrusion of popular culture into the life of the neighborhood.

Lastly, this article ties in early 20th century feminism to the fabric of the Minneapolis settlement community. This brand of feminism had its roots in the conservative view of domestic politics and was embedded within the belief in the sanctity of family life.

The genius of the settlement house movement was based on a 'marriage of conscience and convenience' (Rothman, 1980). On the one hand it met the real needs of the immigrant group. On the other hand, settlements met the needs of capital by helping to insure a stable social and economic climate. Essentially, the settlement movement was a bridge between the classes, and as such, was a way to help diminish the class conflict that was at the root of an unjust economic system.

This article has attempted to critically examine the general belief in the social justice function of the settlement movement. Through an emphasis on Americanization and morality, Minneapolis settlement houses exhibited a strong allegiance to the social control function of settlement work.

This allegiance to social control existed in a dialectical relationship with the altruistic motives of settlement workers. Specifically, Minneapolis settlement houses in the 1920's were not only servants of the immigrants, but also social control agents who enforced a social conformity, and engendered within the immigrant a belief in the American social, political, and economic system. In that sense, the mission of the settlement houses was to promulgate the ideological perspective of capitalism and to serve the plutocracy by working toward social harmony through minimizing both social conflict and the injustices of the American class-based economic system. Consequently, Minneapolis settlement leaders operated in the service of the plutocracy whose views they shared, and by whose charity they were able to maintain their organization. Despite their role as social control agents, Minneapolis settlement leaders were inspired by a motivation which was rooted in charity, altruism, and a love for the constituents that they served.

The settlement house movement is indeed a complex form of social service organization. It is replete with contradictions in both purpose and function. In short, a study of the Minneapolis settlement house movement defies a single answer in contrast to the complex questions that it poses.

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- 1) Throughout this article, quotes using incorrect grammar and punctuation were left as they appeared in the original sources.
  - 2) References to North East Neighborhood House have been used extensively through this article. Apart from its excellent records, there is reason to suggest that it was one of the most respected settlement houses in the country. Albert Kenedy, in a report to the Council on Social Agencies (Report to the Survey Committee, 1923, United Way of Minneapolis Files, Box 1, General History Social Welfare History

Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis hereafter SWHA), stated that: "the work of the North East Neighborhood House, on the side of participation in the public life of the district ranks high. It is indeed in this respect, one of the best settlements in the country."

3) Throughout the 1920's, Catheryne Cooke Gilman (wife of Robbins Gilman, head resident of North East Neighborhood House) was the paid director of the Women's Cooperative Alliance.

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