

By Wm. Z. Foster

FOR me to become a rebel was an easy, natural course. My father was an Irishman and an ardent patriot. He was driven from Ireland in the latter '60's, because he was implicated in a plot to overthrow all the English garrisons in the country. Upon its exposure he had to flee post haste to escape jail. In later years, as his



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family grew up in the United States, he fed us on hatred for the oppressor England. It was the intellectual meat and drink of our early lives. I was raised with the burning ambition of one day taking an active part in the liberation of Ireland. As I grew older and began to notice what was going on about me I was quick to realize that

everything was not as it should be. The wrongs of the workers made a ready appeal to me. It seemed as natural to hate capitalistic tyranny in the United States as English Tyranny in Ireland. From my earliest recollection I was militantly partial to striking workers. Particularly was I impressed by the many strikes in the nearby anthracite coal fields—I was raised in Philadelphia. To my boyish conception the coal operators were inhuman monsters, and after all, I was not far



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wrong. The free silver agitation in the the '90's attracted me greatly.

But I never got by bearings until one Saturday night in the summer of 1900, when I was 19 years old. Walking along South street I ran into a Socialist soap boxer at the corner of Broad street. He was the first Socialist I had ever heard speak and I listened amazed. The whole thing was a revelation. Whatever prejudice I had been taught to have against Socialism melted away like snow before a summer sun. The thing was clear at last. My rebellious spirit saw the broad way to its goal. Though I said nothing to the men conducting the meeting—I have often wondered since who they were—I left a convinced Socialist. After that the rest was easy. I plunged head over heels into revolutionary literature, reading everything indiscriminately and gradually swinging from right to left in my conception. I was “made” that Saturday night in Philadelphia. That’s how I became a rebel.