

conditions of chronic overcrowding, high rents, and elevated levels of tuberculosis, alcoholism, suicide, and infant mortality. At the same time, these conditions, together with the increasing standardization of work in the modern industrial sector, also provided a new set of shared experiences that lessened divisions within the labor force. In this setting, the emergence of relatively self-sufficient, working class neighborhoods favored the growth of a distinctive class identity and culture with its own sports, leisure time rituals, and social dynamics. This culture of factory and neighborhood created, in turn, unprecedented opportunities for innovative forms of collective action. In the decade leading up to World War I, Turin's new captains of industry would find imposing counterparts in the most disciplined and best organized labor unions in the country.

#### 6. *In the Vanguard of the Italian Labor Movement.*

The beginning of the twentieth century ushered in a new era of remarkable changes not only in Turin's systems of production, but also in the organizational life of the city's working classes. The first local unions had already begun to appear in the previous decade, especially after the founding in 1891 of the Chamber of Labor, which coordinated the new labor organizations on a territorial basis. The headquarters of the Chamber on Corso Siccardi nourished a distinctive form of sociability by providing a gathering place for laborers from all over the city and from diverse sectors of production. Here they enjoyed musical and theatrical events, pursued educational opportunities, and took part in meetings and rallies that extolled the virtues of brotherhood and collective solidarity. As a result, by 1900, Turinese workers had their own unions, newspapers, and cultural circles, circumstances that reflected their relatively high level of education and their intense pride in their professional qualifications.

Political developments at the national level provided a powerful boost to this fledgling labor movement in Turin after 1900. Under the leadership of Giovanni Giolitti, a native of Piedmont and the foremost Italian statesman of the pre-war era, the central government abandoned the repressive labor policies of the previous decades in an attempt to broaden the base of mass support for the liberal parliamentary order. In essence, Giolitti pursued a strategy designed to promote industrial expansion, while simultaneously satisfying popular demands for a higher standard of living through a more tolerant approach to organized labor,