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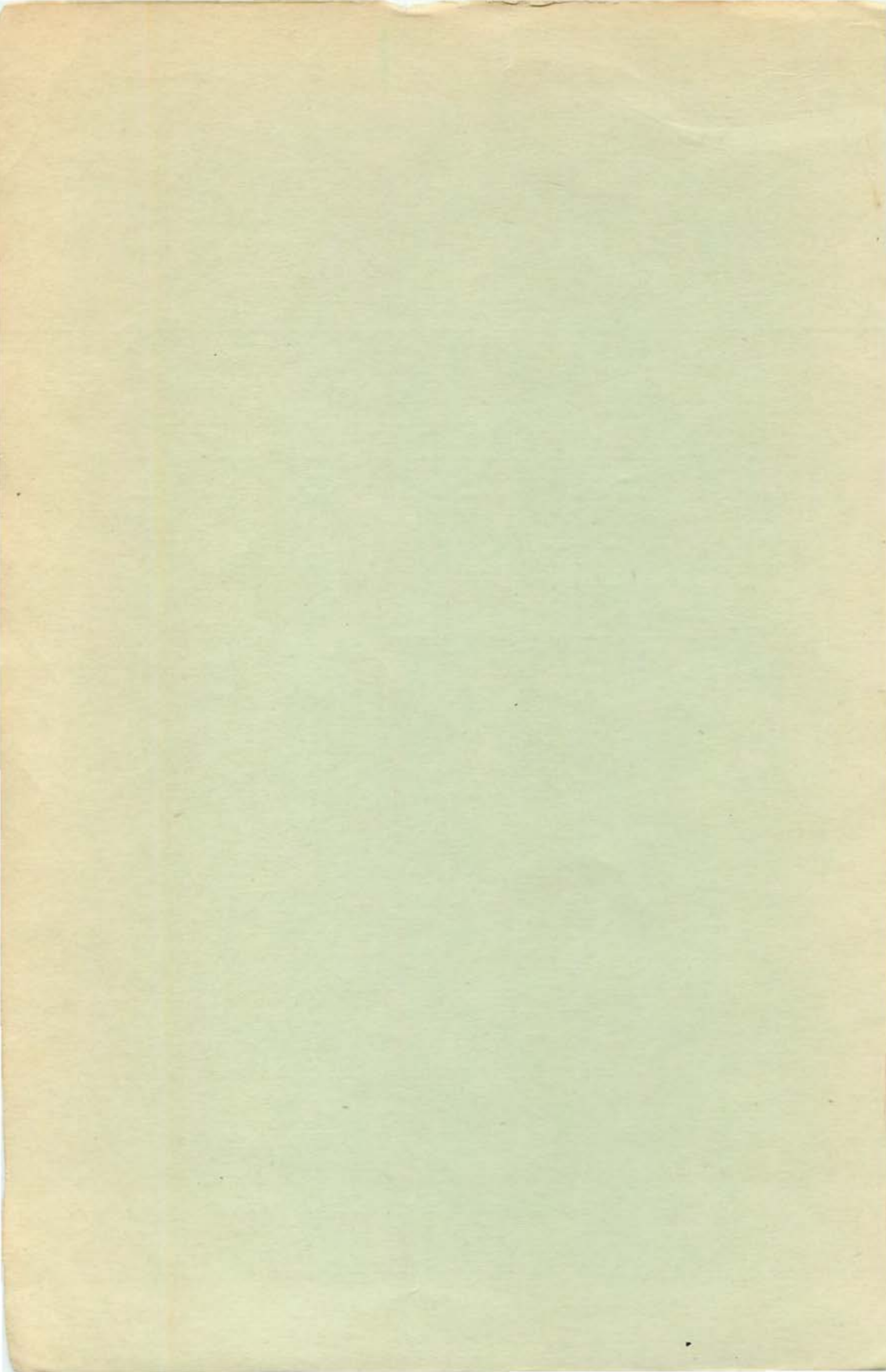
**INDUSTRIAL  
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**INTERPRETING THE  
LABOR  
MOVEMENT**

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**DECEMBER, 1952**



# INTERPRETING THE LABOR MOVEMENT



# **INTERPRETING THE LABOR MOVEMENT**

**Industrial Relations Research Association**

***Editorial Board:***

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**MILTON DERBER**

**DAVID A. McCABE**

**PHILIP TAFT**

**1952**

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## INTRODUCTION

IN DECEMBER, 1950, the Industrial Relations Research Association devoted a major session of its annual meeting to the topic "Theory of the Labor Movement—a Reappraisal." The enthusiastic discussions which characterized and followed this session sparked a realization that the time had come for a "new look" at this vital institution of American life. The works of John R. Commons, Robert Hoxie, Selig Perlman, and others which had dealt with the labor movement of the pre-New Deal era still provided important insights into the nature of the labor movement that emerged out of the New Deal. But a revolution had occurred. It was not only that organized labor had expanded more than five-fold, that collective bargaining determined the conditions of employment in most of the major industries of the nation outside of agriculture and trade, and that the right of free organization was firmly established in the law. Underlying all of these was the fact that the labor movement had become engrained in the basic fabric of American culture, had become a major force in the political and social as well as economic life of America.

The growth of organized labor, of course, has not been ignored by students of contemporary American history. On the contrary, a vast and steadily growing volume of books, pamphlets, and articles have described and analyzed numerous phases of organized labor's relations with management, government, and the local community. But few studies of a theoretical character have been produced to illuminate the nature of the labor movement as a whole. The gaps and inadequacies of the older theories have remained largely unchallenged. It was this fact which prompted the executive board of the IRRA first to institute a formal discussion of the Commons-Perlman theories and then to direct the preparation of a brief series of essays on various aspects of American labor from the point of view of general theory.

The present volume was designed to stimulate new thinking about labor theory, not to provide a definitive and integrated theoretical structure. The size of the volume was deliberately limited in advance to approximately 200 pages. This immediately imposed a limitation on the number of topics to be covered and the comprehensiveness of the treatment of any topic. Many important topics had to be omitted and none could be dealt with exhaustively. Each author was given a free hand to approach his subject in any way that he wished, with the sole understanding that the emphasis should be on theory and analysis,

not description. Descriptive data were to be used to illustrate theoretical points.

Considering the variety of the topics and the diverse experiences and interests of the authors, perhaps the most striking feature of the volume is the extent of fundamental agreement to be found in the ten essays. Differences exist of course, and not all points of view are represented. The editors, differing on many ideas among themselves, made suggestions but never attempted to impose their own thinking upon the authors. Nonetheless, throughout the essays certain themes stand out: (a) the pragmatic nature of the American labor movement, continually experimenting with a changing environment to survive and grow, (b) the diverse, multi-form character of the movement attacking its problems and seeking its goals through the use of many different structures, policies, and techniques, and (c) the increasing complexity of its activities as it moves beyond the plant and industry into the community, state, national, and international arenas.

The opening essay by Philip Taft analyzes the theories of the labor movement which have struggled for primacy up to the present time—those of Brentano, the Webbs, Marx-Lenin, selected Catholic writers, Hoxie, Commons, and Perlman. Taft distinguishes between the theories of the *origin* of the labor movement (which are largely of historical interest for the United States) and the theories of the *behavior* of the labor movement. He concludes, with Perlman, that “American unionism has a philosophy of simple pragmatism” and that while it may not rank high for philosophy, it deserves high score as a means of protecting workers against arbitrary rule and raising their standard of living. He agrees with critics of the “job conscious” approach that labor has shown a growing political consciousness but notes that in the matter of sponsoring the “new” society, labor today is less enthusiastic than it was a half-century ago.

Ben Stephansky concurs with Taft that labor’s “will to job control” is superior to any developing will to political power. By examining the realm of trade union structure he finds “the labor movement’s stubborn rootage in its industrial job terrain.” Stephansky notes that the two dominant features of the structural development of the American labor movement have been “a persistent diversity of structural form coupled with a noticeable trend toward amalgamation.” He emphasizes that “development of broader structural forms has not signified an ideological transformation from a will to job control to a will



to political power, but has meant the fulfillment of job-conscious unionism in an altered industrial environment." In explaining the factors which have shaped the structure of the American labor movement, he selects seven for special analysis—ideology, labor's internal government, the federal government's approach, economic forces, the organization of industry, ethnic groups, and the unevenness of unionization.

The influence of ethnic groups on the development of the American labor movement is given more detailed consideration by Jack Barbash. As Barbash states, systematic studies of this subject are few despite the fact that there is "scarcely a union of consequence in the United States which in one form or other does not show the impact of ethnic strains." The sharp curtailment of immigration since the early 1920's is undoubtedly the main reason for the neglect. Barbash concludes that the major impact of the ethnic factor seems to have been on union government, administration, and politics rather than on the substance of union policy (i.e., wages, hours, seniority, etc.) in specific situations. He finds no evidence that unions "have been used to further goals of particular ethnic groups at the expense of the union's integrity as a union." He recognizes that the diversity of ethnic strains has complicated union organizational work but believes that "on balance the ethnic diversity has been a source of strength" because the union has been able to serve as a powerful "Americanizing" force.

Joseph Kovner is concerned with the problem of union democracy. He finds democratic procedure inherent in the structure and function of the local union, in the close tie between the informal shop society and the formal organization. By contrast the strong national union is a center of power remote from the membership and not easily susceptible to membership participation. "Special action must be taken to suppress local democracy; in the national, it takes special action to preserve it." Kovner perceives the major problem of democracy in the national union (or the centralized district organization) to result from the fact that the officers in control can only be dealt with on equal terms by a group of locals. But "counter-organization of a group of locals requires political skill and cash resources that are usually not available to an opposition group." The extent to which locals can deal with national affairs is hampered by their ignorance of technical legislative and economic questions and by the increasing role of the national union in collective bargaining. The remedy is not to be found in mechanics of government or forms of organization. It lies, says

Kovner, in an historical cycle of "democratic action and dormancy and regeneration" made possible by the democratic society within which American unions operate.

Our authors are generally agreed that the major concern of organized labor is its role in industry. The extent and limits of this role are analyzed by L. Reed Tripp. Tripp holds that the paramount function of unions is "the advancement of the well-being and aims of employee membership." In carrying out this function unions may serve as a stabilizing device in industry, as a communication mechanism within the plant, and as a reflection of the psychological drives of industrial workers. The most controversial issue concerning the union's role in industry is the matter of participation of the union in formulating and administering the rules of conduct governing the employment relationship. Tripp finds that the concepts of "industrial jurisprudence," "industrial democracy," and "industrial government" have stressed different aspects of the union's participation role without pinpointing the problem of limits. He concludes that the extent and limit of the union's role is not precisely measurable in a mathematical or legalistic sense and will vary from one bargaining situation to another. Employer strength, the public's concept of reasonableness, and the union's role as protector and advocate of worker job interests all serve as checks on the extent of union participation in managerial functions.

Another highly controversial question regarding the role of organized labor in industry is the geographic area of collective bargaining. David A. McCabe also emphasizes the pragmatic character of the American labor movement in examining this question. He concludes that "there is no one area of bargaining that is a matter of union principle. The area of bargaining is but an instrument for the attainment of the particular objectives of the particular union." McCabe finds that the two outstanding areas of bargaining are the locality-wide and the company-wide areas. Each represents "a convenient unit for the exertion of union pressure (in the absence of conflicting unionism) combined with little employer resistance to the area 'on principle'." Union pressure for industry-wide bargaining appears "not very insistent in the absence of the necessity of repelling employer charges that employers in other localities are receiving lower terms that enable them to take away the business."

Albert Rees deals with union wage policies. Rees postulates that American trade unions are "organizations whose objectives are primarily economic, and whose decisions are reached through a political

process." Neither set of factors is paramount in his judgment. "Political rivalry within and between unions helps shape policy within a framework set by economic conditions. This framework at times provides wide latitude for the operation of political forces—at other times it restricts them severely." To survive, union leaders must pursue a wage policy which takes into account both sets of factors. Rees concludes that on the whole American union wage policy has been "economically realistic," that is, it has not been responsible for "any serious malfunctioning of the labor market."

Much of labor's rise to power since 1933 must be attributed to governmental support. It is therefore not surprising that the attitude of the labor movement toward the modern state has undergone change. Reverend George G. Higgins analyzes the nature and history of voluntarism as developed by Gompers and sums up the most important arguments, pro and con, which have arisen regarding it. He concludes that the policy of voluntarism or "pure and simple" trade unionism was "drastically revised, if not completely abandoned, during the decade of the thirties," and that the essential difference between the attitude of the AFL and the CIO toward social and labor legislation has been one "chiefly of degree." But the American labor movement has not turned to socialism as a substitute for voluntarism. According to Higgins, there is a "*tertium quid* as an alternative to 'pure and simple' trade unionism and/or various types of socialism" and this alternative (which he calls the philosophy of the Industry Council Plan) is "gradually being accepted, however unconsciously and inarticulately, as the prevailing philosophy of the American labor movement." Higgins contends that the students of labor who make collective bargaining "the central core of trade unionism in this country" are reasonably accurate as far as they go but they simply have not gone far enough.

Max M. Kampelman explores labor's role in politics. He agrees that "the main stimulus for operating within a trade union remains for the worker his job interest." But, collective bargaining alone is no longer adequate to achieve labor's objectives of "protection against the hazards of industrial life and the attainment of a higher standard of living for the workers." As in its earliest days, American labor has been compelled by environmental forces to turn to extensive political action. Kampelman perceives the story of the past twenty years in terms of "labor's search for a political ally." He notes that the CIO, in the flush of its initial success, momentarily tended to a "more radical concept of political action based on a growing class consciousness."

However, third party sentiment was largely nullified by Roosevelt's effort to bring labor into the ranks of the Democratic Party, by the formation of the Communist-influenced Progressive Party in 1948, and by Republican sponsorship of the Taft-Hartley Law. "It is still too early," Kampelman concludes, "to tell whether the coalition developing between the Democratic Party and the American labor movement will be a lasting one." But in his opinion, strong evidence suggests that "the Democratic Party is irrevocably committed to a liberal program and to presenting the liberal alternatives to the American electorate."

The American labor movement has had international ties and interests for many decades but only since the end of World War II have its involvement and influence in world affairs been so great. David C. Williams analyzes some of the major problems in this development, particularly the problem faced by the Western labor movements in achieving mutual understanding and unity in the face of Communist maneuvering. Williams notes that the ideological gap between the American and European labor movements has "very much narrowed in everything except language"—i.e., the use of terms like "socialism" and "free enterprise." He argues that the American labor movement can best fulfill the world role which American wealth and power have given it by recognizing that unionism abroad cannot avoid government intervention, that increased productivity of itself is not a universal panacea, that foreign labor cannot divorce itself from politics, and that drastic social reform is essential in much of the world today.

Whether or not one agrees with the conclusions of our authors, these ten essays provide ample food for thought about the evolving nature of the American labor movement. The movement's growing importance at home and abroad makes the understanding of its basic theory more essential than ever before.

THE EDITORS.

## CONTENTS

Introduction. GEORGE W. BROOKS, MILTON DERBER, DAVID A. McCABE, PHILIP TAFT	
	PAGE
Theories of the Labor Movement. PHILIP TAFT	1
The Structure of the American Labor Movement.	
BEN STEPHANSKY	39
Ethnic Factors in the Development of the American Labor Movement. JACK BARBASH	70
Union Democracy. JOSEPH KOVNER	83
The Union Role in Industry—Its Extent and Limits	
L. REED TRIPP	89
Union Policies As to the Area of Collective Bargaining	
DAVID A. McCABE	110
Union Wage Policies. ALBERT REES	130
Union Attitudes Toward Economic and Social Roles of the Modern State. FATHER GEORGE G. HIGGINS	149
Labor in Politics. MAX M. KAMPELMAN	171
International Labor Relations. DAVID C. WILLIAMS	192



# THEORIES OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

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GENERALIZATIONS TO EXPLAIN the origin and nature of the trade union movement have been developed by a variety of writers. Even a superficial observation of the labor movement reveals a multitude of facts, some of them isolated and some contradictory. A theory is an attempt to give an ordered explanation, to account for the origin and behavior of labor unionism. It may also serve as a basis for predicting the conduct and policies that may be followed by the labor movement in the future. Policies in this connection must be regarded in a broad sense rather than the operations on a day-to-day basis. The first part of the discussion examines the theories which seek to explain the origin of the labor movement. It is followed by an analysis of theories dealing with the behavior of the labor movement, and a section which attempts to discuss the various views in the light of contemporary developments.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

### *Brentano*

One of the earliest attempts by a non-socialist writer to deal with this question was made by the German economist and historian, Lujo Brentano. Writing in the third quarter of the 19th century, Brentano was convinced that "Trade-Unionis are the successors of the old Gilds."<sup>2</sup> Brentano, unlike the contemporary critics who see trade unions as a "gild type" of monopoly, was not opposed to organizations of workers. On the contrary, he believed they were both necessary and desirable as offsets to the power of the employer. Unions, in Brentano's opinion, arose under "the breaking up of an old system, and among the men suffering from this disorganization, in order that they may maintain independence and order."<sup>3</sup>

Brentano was a welfarist and reformer and an intellectual opponent of socialism. He therefore emphasized the aspects of trade unionism

<sup>1</sup> I am greatly indebted to Professors Milton Derber and David McCabe and to my colleague, Professor Caleb Smith, for a number of helpful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Lujo Brentano, "On the History and Development of Gilds," *English Gilds*. Edited by Toulmin Smith (London: Early English Text Society, 1870), p. clxv.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xlvi.

which harmonize with traditional rather than with revolutionary conduct. What the trade union sought was not class war, but the restoration of the old order which had been upset by innovating businessmen. This point was illustrated by conditions in the woolen industry in the first years of the 19th century. The industry was made up mainly of small masters, each employing an average of ten journeymen and apprentices; work was carried on in the master's house, whose wife and children usually assisted. Apprentices could, after completing their course of training, set up on their own. The essence of this situation was stability. "There were journeymen who had continually for twenty years and more worked with the same masters."<sup>4</sup> The introduction of machinery, according to Brentano, introduced a variety of changes. Mills employing machinery and workers who had served no apprenticeship became popular. Employment became uncertain, and the journeyman became unsure of his job. Whereas formerly employment was for a year, now an adverse change in business would lead to the idling of many workers. Unions arose, and, to avoid prosecution, "the workmen combined under the cloak of Friendly-Societies."<sup>5</sup> These unions were formed as a defense against the aggressions of the rising manufacturing class who were intent upon eliminating the protection and the customary usages of the workers.

Brentano emphasized that the objectives of the trade unions as of the craft guilds "was the maintenance of an entire system of order," or of a standard of life which was being undermined by the growing factory owners. Instead of being a revolutionary mass bent on destroying the system of private property, Brentano emphasized the conservative aspects of trade unionism in its desire to return to an earlier time. In this view, the trade union arose as a result of the breakdown of the customary rights enjoyed by the worker, and it was an attempt to create a new equilibrium by elaborating a system of rules to govern industry. The view that the trade unions were descended from the guilds has been challenged by the Webbs. Nevertheless, the notion that the trade unions arose because of the disturbance of an established custom shows that Brentano well understood one of the essential causes for the origin of trade unionism. An attempt to change a rule or a rate has frequently led to organization. Considering that his essay was written in the 1860's, when

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. clxx.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. clxxiv.



most of the English unions were groupings of skilled men, the insistence upon their resemblance to craft guilds is perhaps better understood.

Moreover, the scarcity consciousness which is a characteristic of the skilled unions, in the United States as well as elsewhere, shown in the restrictive rules and the limitation upon admission, is certainly an attitude found in the guilds. Even where no direct connection exists, the spirit is not different. However, Brentano neglected the difference between the "mercantile" attitude of a guildsman and the wage consciousness of a worker. Yet, his emphasis upon the conservative traditional nature of unions, their insistence upon protecting their job territory by restrictions upon free entry and technological change, caught a significant aspect of early trade unionism.

### *Webbs*

The Webbs, who followed Brentano chronologically, refused to accept the latter's interpretation of the origin of the labor movement, although they admired many of his insights. To the Webbs, the origin of trade unionism depended upon the separation of classes. The Webbs defined a trade union as "a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives."<sup>6</sup> They, therefore, dated the beginning of English trade unionism in the latter part of the 17th century with the appearance of a property-less wage earner. The journeymen's revolts of earlier times were interpreted largely as movements against the authority of the guild, and the "bachelors' companies" they find to have been a subordinate branch of the masters' guild. It was only when the skilled journeyman found his prospect for advancement into the ranks of the masters greatly diminished that stable combinations among the handicraftsmen arose. It was only when "the changing conditions of industry had reduced to an infinitesimal chance the journeyman's prospect of himself becoming a master, that we find the passage of ephemeral combinations into permanent trade societies."<sup>7</sup>

The basic cause for the origin of trade unions, according to the Webbs, was "in the separation of classes, or in the separation of the worker from the means of production. This is itself due to an economic revolution which took place in certain industries." Unions

<sup>6</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London: Printed by the Authors for the Students of the Workers Educational Association, 1919), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

arose as soon as "the great bulk of the workers had ceased to be independent producers, themselves controlling the processes and owning the materials and product of their labour, and had passed into the conditions of lifelong wage-earners, possessing neither the instruments of production nor the commodity in its finished state."<sup>8</sup> This separation of classes or the separation of the worker from the means of production preceded, to some extent, the development of the factory system. The reduction of the worker to a mere wage-earner, dependent upon others for employment, may have come about as a result of one or many of several causes. In the tailoring trade, the masters came from a small segment—the journeymen who had acquired the highest level of skills. The great majority of the workers were poor, employed as sewers who prepared the material for their more skilled brethren. Increasing capital requirements accentuated the class divisions within the trade. It was possible

to start a business in a back street as an independent master tailor with no more capital or skill than the average journeyman could command, yet the making of fine clothes worn by the Court and the gentry demanded then, as now, a capital and a skill which put the extensive and lucrative trade altogether out of the reach of the thousands of journeymen whom it employed.<sup>9</sup>

In the woolen industry, class differentiation with its mass of permanent wage-earners followed the rise of the "rich clothiers," who provided the raw materials, and encouraged the division of labor so that a different set of workers would be employed at each stage of manufacturing. The merchant capitalists or clothiers purchased the wool, had it carded and spun into yarn by one group of workers, had it changed into cloth by another group, the weavers, and finally turned the product over to a new set of workers to be dressed. While the workers still retained the tools of their trade, they could acquire, as a rule, neither the capital nor the knowledge to enter business. Consequently, a class of permanent wage-earners who had scant hopes of ever becoming capitalists arose, with the result that permanent organizations of labor were devised to protect the standard of life.

The universal cause which accounts for the origin of trade unionism is the separation of the worker from the means of production with the consequent rise of a permanent class of workers dependent upon an employer. While other conditions may tend to create a permanent

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

class of wage-earners, the rise of the factory system was the most pervasive cause of the separation of the worker from the means of production. For the Webbs, it had

become a commonplace of modern Trade Unionism that only in those industries in which the worker has ceased to be concerned in the profits of buying and selling—that inseparable characteristic of the ownership and management of the means of production—can effective and stable trade organization be established.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, this explanation raises a problem, for there had always existed in English industry a large class of unskilled and low-paid workers virtually debarred from rising to independent craftsmen. The ill-paid farm laborer, and others of low skill, however, had not been the pioneers of trade unionism. On the contrary, it was the highly skilled journeyman who for years had been the object of government protection who was the first to form labor unions. It was not the worker who had the lowest bargaining power but the one with the greatest sense of independence who pioneered the trade union movement. This was inevitable, for only the worker with a great sense of independence was willing to challenge the authority of the employer in the early days of organization, and it required some threat to existing customs and standards to initiate organization. Therefore, it was not the property-less proletariat of Marx but the labor aristocrat who was the pioneer of trade unionism. The Webbs and Brentano agreed that a threat to established relations is likely to stimulate organization of labor in defense of the old conditions or in an effort to establish a new equilibrium. The Webbs, however, placed emphasis upon the class nature of a union; that it arose when the possibilities of class mobility had been reduced and when the worker felt that he had nothing but his labor to sell. The Webbs' view underlines the special character of the trade union which, despite many attitudes of the old guild, was a new type of organization.

What light does the hypothesis of the Webbs throw upon the origin of the American trade union movement? In the United States, as in England, trade unions were first organized when class differentiation had taken place. This differentiation was evidenced by the exclusion of masters from the union. Unions were pioneered by the printers, cordwainers, and tailors, at the time highly skilled trades, and only much later did the unskilled and the factory workers form organizations of labor. Moreover, the Webbs' emphasis upon the defensive

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

aspects of trade unionism also received confirmation from the American experience. The introduction of the McKay stitcher in the post-Civil War period stimulated organization among the skilled shoemakers who sought to protect their established positions then undermined by an influx of green hands. This is one example of the conditions the Webbs had in mind.

### *Marxism*

Marxist ideas on trade unions are intimately and inextricably related to the general Marxist assumptions and conclusions on social institutions and the directions of their development. In common with the Webbs, Marx and his followers explained the origin of trade unions by the rise of a working class bereft of control over the instruments of production. While the Webbs regarded labor unions as a means used by workers to maintain or improve their traditional standards of life, Marx regarded them as only one—and by no means the most important—weapon in labor's armory for waging the class war. Marx assumed the existence of an inherent tendency, but a tendency that must be reinforced by class-conscious groups, for the economy to drift from its capitalist to socialist form. The rate of movement depended upon the level of economic development, the political consciousness of labor, and the tenacity and intelligence of the opposition. Nevertheless, as capitalism developed, it was increasingly faced by internal contradictions which arose as a result of the tendency towards a falling rate of profit. Marx argued that in the development of capitalism changes take place in the relations between constant and variable capital which produce a tendency for the profit rate to decline. To overcome this tendency, the capitalist resorted to increasing exploitation of labor, consisting of attempts by employers to prolong the work day, reduce wages, or speed up work. Labor was consequently forced to resist these attacks, but no possibility of permanently mitigating the pressure of the capitalist upon the wage-earner existed. Trade unions were desirable and necessary, but could only conduct what was, in the long run, a losing rearguard action. In the end, labor would be forced to rebel against capitalism and, eventually, to displace it by a socialist economy. Therefore, it was inevitable that all the institutions created by labor, including the trade unions, should be oriented in that direction.

At best, trade unions could only deal with short-run, day-to-day problems. They were a response to the need of labor to protect its

day-to-day interests. They were spontaneous efforts by workers to restrict the effects of competition in the labor market.<sup>11</sup> Unions were class organizations, which came into existence to protect the worker against the employer. It was the pressure of the employer which drove the worker to revolt. Soon, however, labor established

permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. . . . Now and then the workers are victorious but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies not in the immediate result but in the expanding union of workers. The union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle.<sup>12</sup>

This statement, although it was written in 1847, expressed the essentials of the Marxist view of trade unionism, even though Marx continued to write for 35 years and Engels for almost 50 years after these words appeared. Union organizations were an attempt to support the revolts made inevitable by the exploitation by the capitalist. Labor might have been able to gain temporary concessions but not permanent relief. Therefore, the isolated revolts had to be continually enlarged until they became the living embodiment of the struggle between classes. In line with his views on the origin and nature of trade unionism, Marx inspired a resolution at the first congress of the International Workingmen's Association (First International) which advised the trade unions to seek actively the abolition of the wage system. The trade unions<sup>13</sup> were more than institutions for the daily struggle with employers. They were a means of mobilizing the strength of labor against the capitalist class. "While, however, the trade unions are absolutely indispensable in the daily struggle between labour and capital, still more important is their other aspect, as instruments for transforming the system of wage labour and for overthrowing the dictatorship of capital."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> A. Lozovsky, *Marx and the Trade Unions* (New York: International Publishers, 1942), p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Company, no date), p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Oscar Testut, *L'Internationale* (Paris: E. Lachaud, 1871), p. 126. Lozovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> G. M. Stekloff, *History of the First International* (London: Martin Lawrence, Ltd., 1928), p. 84. Italics in source.

*Selected Catholic Writers on Trade Unionism*

The attitude of Catholic clergymen and writers on trade unionism was extremely important in the United States because members of the faith were heavily represented among industrial workers. The question before Catholic students was whether the unions arose to defend the worker against superior economic force or were a section of a movement challenging religion and existing governments. In the United States, the answers given were, in part, influenced by the social and economic background of many of the hierarchy. "Irish priests and theologians rose from the ranks of the people, surrounded by popular influences which inevitably affected their work."<sup>15</sup> The conditions under which the Irish immigrant labored have been graphically described by Professor Handlin.

An employed laborer could not earn enough to maintain a family of four. And as long as the head of the Irish household obtained nothing but sporadic employment, his dependents lived in jeopardy of exchanging poverty for starvation. Supplementary earnings—no matter how small—became crucial for subsistence. . . . To keep the family fed, clothed, and sheltered, the women were also recruited. In Ireland they had occupied a clearly defined and important position in the cottiers' economy. That place being gone, they went off to serve at the table of strangers and bring home the bitter bread of banishment.<sup>16</sup>

The Irish clergy came from the ranks of the people, many of whom had been the victims of ruthless exploitation and brutal prejudice. While there were prelates who regarded unions with suspicion, some very eminent ones considered labor organizations as inevitable in a modern industrial society, and a necessary defense against economic oppression, and a means for attaining social justice. Archbishop Martin J. Spalding, of the Baltimore diocese, in a letter written before 1872,<sup>17</sup> maintained: "In our country, capital is tyrant and labor is its slave. I have no desire to interfere with the poor in their efforts to protect themselves unless it is proved that these societies are plotting against the state or the Church."<sup>18</sup> The origin of unions was attributed to a desire of labor to protect itself against superior economic power, and while this was a simple description, it did not deviate from

<sup>15</sup> Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1780-1865* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 132.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>17</sup> No date is given. It was published in 1872, after his death. He was Archbishop from 1864 to 1872.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Henry J. Browne, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949), p. 18.

the essence of the explanation given by the Webbs and the Marxists. The view that the trade unions arose as a defense against the exploitation of labor was more explicitly recognized by many members of the Catholic hierarchy in the controversy over the Knights of Labor during the 1880's. In his letter to the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, James Cardinal Gibbons, then the ranking Catholic prelate of the United States, told that a "committee of archbishops held a meeting towards the end of last October, at which the association of the Knights of Labor was specially considered. . . . I must add that, among all the bishops, we know of but two or three who desire the condemnation."<sup>19</sup> Explaining that the initiation and the obligations of members did not violate religious principles, the letter called attention to the

grave and threatening social evils, public injustices which call for a strong resistance and legal remedy . . . that the heartless avarice which, through greed of gain, pitilessly grinds not only the men, but even women and children in various employments, makes it clear to all who love humanity and justice that it is not only the right of the laboring classes to protect themselves, but the duty of the whole people to aid them in finding a remedy against the dangers with which both civilization and social order are menaced by avarice, oppression and corruption. It would be vain to dispute the existence of the evils, or the right of legitimate resistance, or the necessity of a remedy.<sup>20</sup>

The letter defended the right of workers to organize upon their need to protect themselves from the oppression of employers, and held that Catholics should join such organizations even if "exposed to the evil influences of the most dangerous associates, even of atheists, communists and anarchists."<sup>21</sup> It was clear that organization of labor was due to avarice and oppression, and were it easy for the worker to escape from such conditions, a remedy so drastic might not be justifiable. While there was no explicit statement on the separation of classes, the statements did imply the existence of oppressors and oppressed, with the need of the latter banding together for their protection.

American prelates explained the formation and existence of trade unions by the workers' need to defend themselves because of their inferior bargaining position. The right of association was a positive

<sup>19</sup> Letter in Allen S. Will, *Life of James Cardinal Gibbons* (Baltimore: John Murphy Co., 1911), p. 153.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154; *James Cardinal Gibbons, A Retrospect of Fifty Years*, (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1916), contains the same letter.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

right, and an obligation of social justice. This view was reinforced and broadened by the work of Catholic prelates abroad. Catholic laymen and theologians had been watching the evolution of modern industrialism, with its accompanying evils, with growing concern. Not only was modern industry threatening to undermine established institutions, but the excesses of some businessmen and their inordinate lust for gain were encouraging the spread of radical social doctrines. The Bishop of Mainz, Wilhelm Emanuel von Ketteler, insisted that the church take the lead in eradicating the industrial evils of his time. Von Ketteler<sup>22</sup> opposed the solutions that followed from the unhampered working of market. Nor would he accept the then-popular doctrine that nothing could be done to mitigate the evils attributable to the system of capitalist enterprise. Von Ketteler was the most eminent, but not the only Catholic prelate or writer who raised his voice against the capitalistic order. In France, DeMun and La Tour du Pin, among others, protested against the evils of capitalism.<sup>23</sup>

The writings and works of these reformers culminated in Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, a document which addressed itself to the social problems of the time. At the outset, the Pope attacked the doctrines of materialistic socialism then making considerable headway on the continent. He, however, fully endorsed the trade unions seeking the protection of the worker in industry. Trade unions arose, according to Pope Leo, to redress the advantages held by the employer and to form voluntary associations as was the natural right of man.

### *Robert Hoxie*

Robert Hoxie was impressed by the diversity in the structural arrangements and in the functioning of unions. He found "that unionism has not a single genesis, but that it has made its appearance time after time, independently, wherever in the modern industrial era a group of workers, large or small, developed a strong internal consciousness of common interests."<sup>24</sup> He was convinced, moreover, that unions, over time, responded to changes in conditions, needs and attitudes. He found that unionists "are prone to act and to formulate theories afterward,"<sup>25</sup> and that they attempted to meet whatever

<sup>22</sup> *Die Arbeiterfrage und das Christentum* (Mainz: Franz Kirheim, 1864).

<sup>23</sup> Vito Galati, *La Democrazia Cristiana in Europa* (Rome: Seli, 1950).

<sup>24</sup> Robert Hoxie, *Trade Unionism in the United States* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1928), p. 34. The first edition was published by D. Appleton & Co., 1919.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



problems events had placed before them. Unions arose out of group needs and as they were not uniform, a single theory will not suffice. The

union program, taking with it all its mutations and contradictions, comprehends nothing less than all the various economic, political, ethical and social viewpoints and modes of action of a vast and heterogeneous complex of working class groups, molded by diverse environments and actuated by diverse motives; it expresses nothing less than ideals, aspirations, hopes, and fears, modes of thinking and action of all these working groups. In short, if we can think of unionism as such, it must be as one of the most complex, heterogeneous and protean of modern social phenomena.<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, a single unitary explanation would not suffice, as unionism had, according to Hoxie, revolutionary and conservative aspects; there were both boss-ridden and democratic unions, those which favored efficiency and those which opposed technical progress. An enumeration of the economic aims of unions would not be a complete catalogue of all of their objectives. Nor could answers be obtained by "a mere resort to economic theory."<sup>27</sup> Workers exposed to the same general experience were likely "to develop a common interpretation of the social situation and a common solution of the problem of living."<sup>28</sup> This came about suddenly or slowly over time. It might be a response to an effort by the employer to modify adversely customary standards. Once an attitude took form, a leader from without or within might be the catalyst who could transform the feeling of the group into active organization bent upon carrying through a remedial program. This, according to Hoxie, explained the genesis of the union which

arises immediately out of the consciousness of the common or group character of those needs and problems; it exists for common action looking to the betterment of living conditions; it appears primarily as a group interpretation of the social situation in which the workers find themselves, and a remedial program in the form of aims, policies, and methods; the organization and the specific form or structure which it takes are merely instruments which the group adopts for propagating its viewpoint and putting its viewpoint and program into effect.<sup>29</sup>

The needs and attitudes of a group of workers were expressed primarily by the functional type of union. As the social viewpoints and

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> Hoxie, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

remedial program of workers are not the same, it is to be expected that unions will arise to give expression to these differences.<sup>30</sup>

Hoxie refused to accept explanations of the origin of trade unionism which stressed economic forces, either technical or market. He argued that a simple universal explanation of the origin of trade unionism, couched mainly in industrial or economic terms, obscured the non-unitary character of these organizations. Only by regarding unionism as the outgrowth of pluralistic forces could we, according to Hoxie, account for its existence. Union organization was the resultant of many independent variables, and the combination they took in any instance was dependent upon the weight exercised by each in a particular situation.

Hoxie was a shrewd and careful observer, but he overstressed the importance of the differences he noticed between unions. Significant differences in the structure and function of unions existed, but these differences may have reflected the differences in the industrial environment or in the make-up of the membership. If unions are a response to differing group psychology, it is difficult to explain why, despite differences, unions always perform certain basic functions for their members. While one may find Hoxie's explanation of the origin of unions incomplete, his stress on diverse causes did highlight the differences in the structure and the functioning of unions, both with respect to their internal affairs and with respect to collective bargaining. These differences have always existed within American trade unionism, and the attitudes of the workers composing the union have undoubtedly played some role in determining the quality of a particular labor organization. It is difficult to give weight to specific factors, but the make-up of the membership and its response to the problems of industry obviously contribute to determining a union's form and attitudes. Hoxie's emphasis upon variety of origin called attention to a facet in the origin of labor organizations unstressed by other writers.

#### *John R. Commons*

John R. Commons was one of the pioneer investigators of labor. In explaining the origin of labor unions, Commons, similarly to the Webbs in England, based his conclusions upon an examination of records rather than upon an *a priori* theory. Commons attributed the rise of labor organizations to the differentiation of classes, which was

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

in turn due to the expansion of the market. The artisan who embodied within himself the mercantile, manufacturing, and labor functions is, over a period of time, metamorphosed on one side into a capitalist merchant; on the other, into a manufacturer buying labor, and a wage-earner selling his labor power. The differentiation in function was accompanied by increasing competition—both due to the widening of the market. Facing increasingly severe competition, the merchant capitalist attempted to impose the burdens upon labor by depressing wages. Labor responded by forming labor unions, which sought “the practical remedy . . . the elimination of the competitive menace through a protective organization or protective legislation.”<sup>31</sup>

Commons maintained that unions arose to overcome the workers' inferior bargaining position. Moreover, he saw in labor organizations the culmination of an age-long process of extending freedom.

The restraints which laborers place on free competition, in the interests of fair competition, begin to be taken over by employers and administered by their own labor managers. Even organized labor achieves participation with management in the protection of the job, just as the barons and the capitalists achieved participation with the King in the protection of property and business. A common law of labor is constructed by selecting the reasonable practices and rejecting the bad practices of labor, and by depriving both unions and management of arbitrary power over the job.<sup>32</sup>

#### THE BEHAVIOR OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

Writers who have dealt with the behavior of the labor movement might be broadly divided into two groups. In the first group are those who have observed the policies and conduct of labor unions in their day-to-day affairs and have drawn generalizations from these observations. The other group of writers are inclined to attribute to labor organizations certain historical functions and have explained the union largely in these terms. A distinction of this kind is seldom completely accurate, for writers overlap in their views. They believe that unions have certain social and historical functions and yet base many of their opinions on these questions from observing the actions of these organizations. Nevertheless, writers tend to fall into one of these classes in the sense that they emphasize one rather than the other approach.

<sup>31</sup> John R. Commons, *Labor and Administration* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1913), p. 261.

<sup>32</sup> John R. Commons, *Legal Foundations of Capitalism* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924), pp. 311-312.

*The Webbs*

The Webb's theory or theories of union behavior were based upon an exhaustive examination of the practices of labor organization, and they concluded: "For the improvement of the conditions of employment, whether in respect to wages, hours, health, safety, or comfort, the Trade Unionists have, with all their multiplicity of Regulations, really only two expedients, which we term, respectively, *the Device of the Common Rule* and the *Device of the Restrictions of Numbers*."<sup>33</sup> The principle of the common rule included all terms of employment which uniformly apply to entire groups of workers. Having observed the operation of the principle of the common rule, the Webbs attempted to explain its pervasiveness throughout the trade union movement. The alternative to standardized wage rates and working conditions is free competitive bargaining, by individuals of unequal bargaining power, over the terms of employment. "Such a settlement, it is asserted, inevitably tends, for the mass of workers, towards the worst possible conditions of labor."<sup>34</sup> Consequently, the "Device of the Common Rule is a universal feature of Trade Unionism, and the Assumption on which it is based is held from one end of the Trade Union world to the other."<sup>35</sup> The common rule was a universal principle of trade union policy, which had been devised to equalize the bargaining power of the parties. The enforcement of this policy depended upon conditions in the industry and trade, and the standardizing of wages and hours; the enforcement of sanitary and safety rules and the multitude of other regulations governing the conditions of work were all manifestations of the principle of the common rule. The other principle, restriction of numbers, expressed itself usually through limitation on apprenticeship and entrance into the union. Through these devices the supply of labor in the trade was restricted and the bargaining position of the particular group enhanced.

The Device of the Common Rule, first stated by the Webbs, summarized union policy and practice in the United States as well as in other democratic countries. From the beginning of their existence, the unions in the United States aimed at standardizing wages and working conditions, and the principle enunciated by the Webbs was

<sup>33</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1911), p. 560. Italics supplied.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 561.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 561.

useful in that it drew attention to a universal policy of trade unionism. On the other hand, the policy of restricting numbers, practiced by both British and American unions of skilled craftsmen, was not as universally practiced as the Device of the Common Rule. Yet they called attention to a policy which the American unions have enforced through apprentice regulations, high initiation fees, and closed books.

While the Webbs believed that unions arose as a result of the separation of classes, they did not emphasize class struggle concepts in the formation of policies by trade unions. Unions in working out their attitudes towards wages and other conditions of employment have been guided by one of several assumptions, described by the Webbs as the "Doctrine of Vested Interests, the Doctrine of Supply and Demand, the Doctrine of the Living Wage."<sup>36</sup> The first principle was used to justify opposition to technological change or other innovations which affected adversely the position of a craft. In addition, the Webbs showed that this principle explained the attitude of unions that established conditions must never be lowered. American unions have often resisted technological changes which diminish jobs of the group, and the difficulty of reducing standards in organized plants is widely recognized. The Webbs' observation that the Doctrine of Vested Interests had been weakened among English trade unionists is also true in the United States. It is only in the older artisan-type of union that resistance to technological change is very great. Yet, the doctrine still explains much about the attitude of the older craft union and of some present ones.

The Doctrine of Supply and Demand was, for the Webbs, a summation of the policies practiced by the English unions to place themselves in a strategic position in their dealings with their employers. Rules that regulated the ratio of helpers to journeymen were examples of the application of this principle. Emphasis upon this principle led unions to follow a more aggressive wage policy in periods when business was brisk. "Middle-class public opinion, which had accepted as inevitable the starvation wages caused by Supply and Demand in the lean years, was shocked . . . at the nerve of coalminers and ironworkers . . . demanding ten shillings or even a pound a day."<sup>37</sup> But the policy of governing the union's demand for concessions by conditions in the labor market was widespread in the United States as well as England. This principle explains the conduct of the building

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 562.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 575.

trades and coal miners' unions in the United States which insist upon wages as high as possible at the moment. The Webbs showed that the pursuit of the supply and demand principle might at times lead to strong organization at both sides of the bargaining table, and eventually to collusive arrangements whereby the public pays a higher price for the product or service than it otherwise would. The collusive bargains in the building trades in American cities whereby the primary interest is in stable prices of labor, as long as the higher costs can be shifted to the consumer, is a good example of the principle.

Supply and demand has not adequately served the unions in all circumstances. Sometimes the unions fell back upon the doctrine of the living wage which manifested itself in the view that the conditions of the labor market should never be allowed to push the standards of living below a given level. In contrast to the supply and demand view, the doctrine of the living wage stressed the rights of the individual to a "civilized" even if indefinite standard. This view was developed later in time both in England and in the United States. It has been especially attractive in both countries to those organized workers who lacked the monopoly position due to special skill and years of training.

In carrying out their policies, unions have not, according to the Webbs, followed a single road. Circumstances have frequently influenced the adoption of one or more of the following methods: the method of mutual insurance, the method of collective bargaining, and the method of legal enactment. One or all methods were used by trade unions everywhere, irrespective of their origin or even official ideologies.

Mutual insurance was widely established in England, the United States and other countries. It provided the worker with protection against wage loss, not then available from the government.

Collective bargaining has been an essential characteristic of trade unionism in all countries with democratic governments.<sup>88</sup> Its purpose has been to prevent either the greater need or the superior skill of particular workers from determining the wage bargain. The Webbs argued that one whose need was great was likely to be more willing to accept a wage even when it was below the level regarded as adequate. Similarly, a superior workman might have been willing to accept a lower piece rate, for he believed that he would be able to

<sup>88</sup> The term "collective bargaining" was first used by Beatrice Potter, (Mrs. Sidney Webb) in *The Cooperative Movement in Great Britain* (London: 1891), p. 217.

offset the lower rate by his superior ability. Collective bargaining was therefore designed to prevent the employer from using such individuals as a means of beating down the earnings of other and more average workers. "The starving man gets his job at the same piecework rate as the workman who could afford to stand out for his usual earnings. The superior craftsman retains all his advantages over his fellows, but without allowing his superiority to be made the means of reducing the weekly wage of the ordinary worker."<sup>39</sup>

The method of legal enactment was the third road which the trade unions, according to the Webbs, followed in seeking adjustment of their grievances. The use of legal enactment for achieving trade union objectives was more popular at certain times than at others. In the United States, it was the policy of many craft unions, and of Gompers, to eschew legal enactment except in behalf of the weaker bargaining groups. This policy has changed in recent years, and even the highest skilled workers favor laws which improve their bargaining position and strengthen their organizations.

### *Marxism*

The view on trade unions initially propounded by Marx has been accepted by his followers. While they must be promoted and encouraged, it was because of the power of the unions to rally and to discipline large masses of workers, and not because of their capacity to win permanent improvements in the position of labor. The unions could resist the oppression of labor by industry, but ~~they could not permanently solve the problem facing the worker in a capitalistic society.~~ Moreover, Marx and his followers emphasized the political character, open or submerged, of every industrial dispute. The essential significance of a strike lay in its sharpening of class differences, and in whetting the worker's appetite for revolt, rather than in the attempts of the trade unions to gain concessions, although that might have been the obvious or efficient cause of the dispute. This view of trade unionism is common to Marxists everywhere. In France, the leading Marxist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jules Guesde, regarded the trade unions mainly as centers for agitation and he placed little value on their other activities.<sup>40</sup> Similarly the out-

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>40</sup> Jean Montreuil, *Historie du Mouvement ouvrier en France* (Paris: Aubier, no date). "Les guesdistes n'accordent aucune valeur propre a l'action syndicale; ils ne s'y intéressent que parce qu'elle comporte une possibilité d'agitation." p. 149.

standing theorist of Marxist socialism, Karl Kautsky, regarded the trade union as incapable of improving the position of all labor, for it was not possible to organize the unskilled, the women, and the children. The trade unions could raise standards, he argued, by limiting the supply of labor in the skilled occupations, but this was not possible where masses of unemployed, "declassed" hand workers, women, children, and displaced farm workers competed for jobs. Consequently, he regarded the organization of the great mass of workers as a utopian dream. The trade unions can normally contain only the labor elite, the labor aristocracy.<sup>41</sup>

It is obvious that the Marxist considers that the trade unions are only capable of achieving limited and transitory gains. The dynamics of the capitalist system always tends to increase competition for jobs, while the capitalist is normally compelled to increase the pressure upon his labor force. Moreover, success by labor organizations in gaining concessions usually begets greater unity and counter action by employers, with the result that it becomes increasingly difficult for labor to defy the will of the employer. With the progress of capitalism, the Marxists also assume a weakening of the ability of the trade unions to gain concessions, because the capitalistic system and its individual components face increasing difficulty in marketing their products profitably. "Once industrial development has attained its highest possible point and capitalism has entered its descending phase on the world market, the trade union struggle will become doubly difficult."<sup>42</sup> The strike must therefore be a method for the enlightenment of the membership and the raising of its political consciousness rather than of use exclusively as a means for the strengthening of the union and its treasury.<sup>43</sup> The Marxists, believing that unions have arisen as a result of class conflict, regard them as only one of the several weapons in the class war. As long as capitalism exists, the unions

<sup>41</sup> Karl Kautsky, "Die Lehren des Bergarbeiterstreiks," *Die Neue Zeit*, 23 Jahrgang, 1 Band, p. 775. "Die gesamte Masse des Proletariats gewerkschaftlich zu organisieren, ist eine Utopie, ist völlig unmöglich. Die gewerkschaftliche Organisation wird stets nur eine Elite oder Aristokratie der Arbeiterschaft umfassen."

<sup>42</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*. Translated by Integer. (New York: Three Arrows Press, 1937), p. 18. The pamphlet was originally printed in 1899 during the revisionist controversy.

<sup>43</sup> "Der Streik muss vorbereitet werden nicht bloss durch die möglichste Stärkung der Gewerkschaft und ihre Kasse, sondern auch durch politische Aufklärung ihrer Mitglieder und das Streben nach einer möglichst Starken Vertretung des kämpfenden Proletariats in gesetzgebenden Körper." Kautsky, *op. cit.*, p. 780.



can introduce little permanent improvement in the position of labor, although groups favorably situated may be able to gain concessions, which will often be made at the expense of other workers.

The Marxist view on trade unionism sheds considerable light upon the activity of minority groups within the American labor movement. The efforts of the Marxist and Lassallean socialists to impose their views on American unions sprang from the former's convictions that pure trade unionism had only a limited value to the worker, and that permanent relief had to be sought elsewhere, through political action. In the light of the Marxist hypothesis (or of the Lassallean),<sup>44</sup> trade unionism is a weak reed upon which to lean, and the evils of capitalism require other remedies. The refusal of Gompers and his followers to concede this premise, and their refusal to adopt the tactics inherent in this view was regarded as un wisdom bordering on treason. It showed, in the opinion of the Marxists, an obliviousness to historical trends which stamped them as incompetent to lead a workers' movement.

### *Lenin*

Lenin's views on trade unions did not differ essentially from those of other Marxists. More explicitly than others, he tried to define the relation of the union to the political labor movement. He distinguished, first of all, between two types of consciousness, *social democratic consciousness* and *trade union consciousness*. The latter arose spontaneously among workers and its origin was due to the burdens and oppression faced by the worker in a system of capitalism. In contrast, *social democratic consciousness* arose from without, "quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the labor movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the revolutionary Socialist intelligentsia."<sup>45</sup> Trade unionism came into being as a result of spontaneous action by labor to build a defense against the employer. There was nothing particularly novel in this view, except that Lenin was only incidentally concerned with the origin of unionism. Instead, he sought to define the position of the trade unions in relation to the revolutionary party. In this controversy with the economists, he had an opportunity to deal with this question. The economists were members of the Russian Social

<sup>44</sup> Lassallean socialists merged with the Marxists in the 1870's.

<sup>45</sup> Lenin, *What Is To Be Done* (New York: International Publishers, 1929), p. 33.

Democratic Labor Party, who, in 1898, advocated placing the major emphasis upon the economic or trade union gains of labor, such as increased wages and improved factory conditions. Consequently, the economists argued that "strike funds are more valuable for the movement than 100 other organizations" and "that a kopeck added to a ruble was worth more than Socialism and politics."<sup>46</sup> For Lenin,

revolutionary Social-Democracy always included, and now includes, the fight for reforms in its activities. . . . But it utilizes "economic" agitation for the purpose of presenting to the government not only demands for all sorts of measures, but also (and primarily) the demand that it cease to be an autocratic government. Moreover, it considers it to be its duty to present this demand to the government, not on the basis of the economic struggle *alone*, but on the basis of all manifestations of public and political life. In a word, it subordinates the struggle for reforms to the revolutionary struggle for liberty and for Socialism, in the same way as the part is subordinate to the whole.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, trade unionism was simply a method of gaining minor concessions, one which was subordinate to the struggle for socialism. Consequently, he warned against the tendency to exaggerate the importance of strikes.

When strikes spread widely among the workers, then some workers (and some socialists) begin to think that the working class can limit itself solely to strikes and strike funds or societies, and by means of strikes alone the working class can win a significant improvement in its conditions or even win freedom. . . . *But this is a mistaken notion.* Strikes are *one* of the means of struggle of the working class for its freedom, but not the only means.<sup>48</sup>

Strikes were important as they revealed openly the existence of the class struggle. Lenin was not very favorably impressed with trade unions which limit themselves to gaining concessions for their members. For him, this was a manifestation of a state which divided the workers, encouraged "opportunism among them" and caused "temporary decay in the working class movement." Moreover, the

receipt of high monopoly profits by the capitalists in one of the numerous branches of industry, in one of the numerous countries, etc., makes it

<sup>46</sup> The first is a quotation by Lenin from economist literature. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*, p. 38.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted from Lenin, *Socimenija* (3 ed., Moscow, 1932-1937) II, 597 in Thomas T. Hammond, "Lenin on Russian Trade Unions Under Capitalism, 1894-1904," *The American Slavonic and East European Review*, Dec. 1949, p. 277.

economically possible for them to corrupt certain sections of the working class, and for a time a considerable minority, and win them to the side of the bourgeois of a given industry or nation against all others.<sup>49</sup>

The compromises and gains of the trade unions were due at least in part to the capitalist, grown rich from exploiting the economically backward colonies, bringing part of his gain to the organized working class with higher wages.

Lenin's views were in fact the views held by Marx and his followers on this question. All agreed that unions were a spontaneous result of the worker's desire to defend himself against the oppression and exploitation of the employer, but as they did not regard favorably the possibilities of permanent improvement in the conditions of labor under capitalism, they believed that the chief function of the unions was to organize and discipline the masses and to train them to act together. In Western European countries and the United States where organization of labor was permitted, the unions soon achieved a position where they were able to refuse to subordinate their views to those of the Marxists. In Russia where the trade unions were weak, they were unable to develop an independent life or policy before or after the Revolution. The consequence has been that the unions have become subordinate to the Marxist political party, the Communist Party. Unions have been, in the Soviet Union since 1920, transmission belts between the Party and the working masses. The relationship between the unions and the political party delineated in Marxist theory has come to fruition in the Soviet Union.

In the United States, the communists have attempted to subordinate the trade unions to the Party since 1920. As soon as the communists in the United States formally organized, plans were prepared to take over the trade unions through the Trade Union Educational League. Organized caucuses were directed by outsiders against the clothing workers' unions, the miners, machinists, painters and decorators, and carpenters. It was the first attempt to apply the Leninist theory of trade union organization to the American labor movement. It failed completely, and the communists then organized a federation of their own. This was something less than a howling success, but with the split in the labor movement their fortunes in the trade unions changed. Lenin's conception of the subordination of the trade union to the Party was carried out to the letter by the unions under the control of the

<sup>49</sup> Lenin, *Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), pp. 106, 126.

Party. The Marxist-Leninist attitude toward trade unionism casts a revealing light upon this aspect of American labor history.

### *Catholic Views*

The views of John A. Ryan on trade unionism were important in influencing the views of Catholic students of the subject. Quite early in his career, Ryan was convinced that the priest "must give special attention to the condition and aspirations of the wage earners" for "in some of the countries of Europe a large proportion of the workers had become alienated from the Church because the clergy lacked knowledge and interest in their social problems."<sup>50</sup> While he did not think that the American clergy would ever lose their sympathy for the aspirations of the masses, he wanted the action of the clergy to be based upon knowledge as well as sentiment. In an article in the Catholic Encyclopedia in 1910, Ryan defended the aims of unions and justified the use of the strike, the primary boycott and the closed shop, but not violence. Through speech and writing, Ryan educated an entire generation of laymen and prelates in the desirability of trade unionism.

For Ryan and his disciples, trade unions were essentially institutions which defended the weak. Consequently he and other Catholic writers have defended unionism in its design to improve the bargaining position of the worker. This view which had been enunciated by Pope Leo XIII was reiterated by Pius XI in the Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, issued in 1931. The efforts of trade unions to exist and to seek a just return for the worker were commended, and a plea was made "that the earthly goods so abundantly produced in this age of industrialism are far from rightly distributed and equitably shared among the various classes of men." Pope Pius XI was not concerned with the historical origin of unions. Instead he emphasized the union as the protector of the weaker bargaining group, so that the worker would be treated in industry as a human being possessing inherent rights. This view was recently expressed by the pastoral letter of the Archbishop and Bishops of Quebec who declared that in order to "fulfill the role which is theirs in the national economy, to promote their professional interests, to realize their legitimate economic and social claims, the workers ought to unite in solid professional organizations. The Church, since Leo XIII, of immortal

<sup>50</sup> John A. Ryan, *Social Doctrine in Action* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1941), p. 105.

memory, has proclaimed the *right* of the workers to unite in associations for the promotion of their interests.”<sup>51</sup> This “Letter” placed upon every man and woman a duty of joining a union that will protect his interest and “cooperate for the welfare of his fellow-citizens, especially those to whom he is united by common interest.”<sup>52</sup>

The individual was enjoined to cooperate for a more balanced social order by promoting justice in “all the activities of labor, industry and commerce.” Unions were not only endorsed but workers were urged to join and others to support them. The “trade unions arose as a spontaneous and necessary consequence of capitalism, established as an economic system; they came into being in a spirit of defense against the abuses of this system.”<sup>53</sup> The tasks of the union were outlined, and its duties defined: to claim a just wage and protect the human dignity of its members. Unions have arisen as a result of capitalism, but their class nature is not affirmed. The “Letter,” as do other Church pronouncements, saw them rather as protectors of the weak and defenders of human dignity.

Similar views have recently been stated by the American bishops:

In too many instances an undue portion of the income has been claimed by those who have ownership or control of capital, while those on the other hand who have only their labor to invest have been forced to accept working conditions which are unreasonable and wages which are unfair. This condition arises from the fact that labor policies have been dictated by false principles in the interest of the owners or capitalists. Secondly, it arises from the fact that labor frequently has had no voice in the regulation or the adjustment of these problems. Labor can have no effective voice as long as it is unorganized. To protect its rights it must be free to bargain collectively through its own chosen representatives.<sup>54</sup>

The Catholic doctrine of trade unionism regards the organization of labor as a natural right, and the union as a means for defending the just claims of the individual. These views have fitted in neatly with the predominant attitude of American society on these questions. The approval of unionism by the Church has meant much for the American labor movement, as a large number of parishioners were

<sup>51</sup> *The Problem of the Worker in the Light of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Joint Pastoral Letter of Their Excellencies the Archbishop and Bishops of the Civil Province of Quebec (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1950), p. 39.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>54</sup> *The Church and Social Order*. A Statement of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Administrative Board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. (No place or date.)

industrial workers. The Church has also reinforced the bias of American labor against Marxism and other revolutionary doctrines.<sup>55</sup> However, the Catholic Church's influence has been only one in a number which determined the direction of development of the trade union movement. The Church in the United States supports the trade unions, and certainly its opposition to materialistic socialism strengthens the forces that have been fighting the adoption of this philosophy by labor. Catholic trade unionists could not have been expected to accept a doctrine disapproved by the Church. But it must also be realized that the view of the Church on this issue has dovetailed with the attitude of the American worker and leading non-Catholic trade unionists. The emphasis of the Church upon trade unionism as a means for protecting and improving the lot of labor, rather than as one of a group of weapons in a class war, has had an influence on the trade union movement. But, it must be recognized that this view has been held also by influential American unionists who belonged to other churches or to no church.

*Robert Hoxie*

It was noted above that Hoxie rejected a monistic interpretation of unionism. For him, it was a variegated protean phenomenon. Maintaining that workers exposed to the same industrial conditions are likely to develop similar attitudes, he sought to show that differences in structure and function of unions reflect differences in the psychology of their members. Hoxie's structural distinctions were similar to those of other writers. His functional types represented something original, and showed a high level of ingenuity. They were widely accepted and influenced the thinking of many students of the subject. Hoxie divided labor organizations into four principle types—business unionism, uplift unionism, revolutionary unionism and predatory unionism. The last was divided into two sub-classes, hold-up unionism and guerilla unionism.

Each of these groups had differentiating characteristics. Business unionism concentrated upon immediate goals, it concerned itself with the interests of its members rather than with labor as a whole, and its thinking was directed towards higher wages and improved working conditions. The capitalist system was accepted and no concern

<sup>55</sup> Marc Karson, "The Catholic Church and the Political Development of American Trade Unionism (1900-1918)," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1951, 526 ff.

was shown for distant goals. A business union was likely to emphasize discipline in the organization and frequently develops strong leadership.

Uplift unionism was a trade conscious or even class conscious union which tried to raise the cultural and moral level of its members. Stress was placed upon mutual insurance and this type was likely to be democratic in its internal management. It also "drifts easily into political action and the advocacy of cooperative enterprises, profit sharing, and other idealistic plans for social regeneration."<sup>56</sup>

Revolutionary unionism manifested itself in two forms, socialist unions and revolutionary unions. The former aspired to replace capitalism and depended upon political action to achieve its larger aim. This type of union was likely to be critical of present day institutions, and democratic in its internal affairs. The revolutionary union was described as syndicalistic. It emphasized direct action, repudiated political activity, and looked forward to a society of free industrial (producer) cooperatives.

"Predatory unionism is distinguished by a ruthless pursuit of the thing in hand by whatever means seem most appropriate at the time, regardless of ethical and legal codes or effect upon those outside its own membership."<sup>57</sup> This unionism might have been conservative or radical in philosophy, and its distinguishing mark was its ruthless tactics. Predatory unionism was divided: the sub-type, hold-up unionism, might have appeared outwardly as a bargaining type of business unionism, but it was monopolistic, boss-ridden, violent, and corrupt, and frequently combined with the employer to achieve its aims; guerilla unionism had all the attributes of hold-up unionism, except that it would not enter into deals with the employer.

Hoxie's analysis of union types concentrated upon some special characteristic which was then interpreted as the essence of the particular group. Such a method helped to bring out the diversity in the attitudes and policies of unions, but it obscured the even more basic similarities. Moreover, there is a question whether certain of the types described by Hoxie are unions at all. All unions are business unions, in the sense that they bargain with employers. Their other characteristics are likely to be accidental in the sense that they are not essential for the carrying out of the union's main functions. Nevertheless, Hoxie was a keen observer of unionism who under-

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

lined the variety of forms in which unionism expressed itself. His work is a warning against both glib generalizations and the making of hurried distinctions.

### *John R. Commons*

John R. Commons not only developed a theory of union origin, but from the beginning of his professional activity he showed himself a sympathetic student of the labor movement whose activities and objectives he sought to explain. In examining the historical changes undergone by modern society, Commons concluded

we have a much higher idea of the dignity of man than ever before. But the acquisition of liberty has been made at heavy expense in other directions. Though the slave was compelled to work, he never suffered from the terrible evil of the modern labourer, lack of work. . . . The rights of life and liberty are practically denied to labourers in our day, by virtue of the denial of the right to employment.<sup>58</sup>

The right to employment should be accompanied by the "right to security in the tenure of employment against arbitrary discharge as long as one proves efficient and honest."<sup>59</sup> It is obvious that such rights can only be established when labor is organized.

Commons sought to explain some of the unique features of the American labor movement, and his ideas are still very useful for understanding this subject. He noted a wide difference between European and American political conditions which influenced the shaping of American unionism. An important reason for the difference was related to the establishment of universal suffrage early in American history. Political parties have therefore been forced to contend for the labor vote, which "has tended at all times to break up the solidarity of the labor movement."<sup>60</sup> The American labor movement, according to Commons, was also affected by the variety of racial groups that came to the United States. Many union meetings at the beginning were conducted in English and another language. Commons believed that the differences in race and language "underlie the strenuous demand of American unions for the closed shop, as compared with the relative indifference of English unionists on this subject."<sup>61</sup> The "advantage of common race and a common class

<sup>58</sup> John R. Commons, *The Distribution of Wealth* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1893), p. 80.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>60</sup> Commons, *Labor and Administration*, p. 149.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.



feeling, particularly among British and German wage-earners, has made it possible for unions to hold their ground without serious menace from non-unionists.”<sup>62</sup> Commons observed that even though employers had used immigrant labor as a club to beat down the standards of the native worker, there was what he regarded a “remarkable” growth of unions made up of many diverse nationalities. Commons linked the demand for the closed shop not only to the absence of class feeling caused by the constant flow of immigration, but to the breakdown of skill caused by the introduction of automatic labor-saving devices. He concluded that

the American unions have very little industrial or racial protection. Apprenticeship is gone, except as enforced by them, the unions, against the protests of employers. In order to enforce this and other measures needed to keep wages above the market rate, the unions found themselves compelled to enforce the rule that no one should enter the shop except through the union.<sup>63</sup>

Our federal system of government has also, according to Commons, shaped the labor movement. Because of the power of numerous state legislatures over legislation and their varied responsiveness to pressure, uniform standards over a wide area were likely to be lacking. Unions have consequently sought to fill that void and establish uniform conditions through their own rules. Commons studied the working rules of labor unions, and he found that unions through collective action can create rights and liberties for their members not found in the more dictatorial non-union shop.<sup>64</sup> Commons, who started his working life as a printer in a union shop, “knew from experience that I had more liberty in a union shop and therefore earned more wages steadily, and enjoyed more equality . . . than my brother enjoyed across the street in his non-union shop.”<sup>65</sup> Commons was convinced that the union offered the worker needed protection, that in general it produced equality of treatment in society. Commons also regarded the unions as a means for expanding individual freedom; he emphasized the union’s limitation of the arbitrary action of the employer and its installation of the rule of law in the place of work. As a libertarian, Commons saw the union as a means of expanding liberty without the intervention of the state. He rejected

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>64</sup> John R. Commons, *The Economics of Collective Action* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), pp. 26-27.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

the monopoly argument, even then the chief rationalization for the anti-union economists, and he called attention to a facet of union activity usually neglected by economic theorists, who blithely assume that a worker can as lightly surrender a job as an employer can dismiss a worker.

*Selig Perlman*

Professor Perlman's theory is related to the views developed by Commons. Professor Perlman attempts to devise a general theory of the labor movement, one which will apply to all areas and times, although he notes the specific and peculiar characteristics of the labor movements of different countries. Professor Perlman attempts to deduce a philosophy of labor from the conduct of the worker and from the nature of the institutions labor has created. He contrasts this approach with the one developed by the intellectuals—"the main characteristic of the intellectual" is to regard "labor as an 'abstract' mass in the grip of an abstract force." By the intellectual is meant, of course, the educated non-manualist, who has established a contact with the labor movement, either through influence acquired over trade union bodies, or else as a leader of labor in his own right, as Lassalle was in Germany and as the leading Communists are in Russia today."<sup>66</sup> Intellectuals are divided into three groups: the Marxian or "determinist-revolutionary" who sees the material forces and the technical changes they engender as the vital element in influencing labor's conduct; the ethical intellectual who wishes labor to strive for its self-realization in a cooperative society assuring the worker maximum freedom; and the efficiency intellectual, who admonishes labor to acquire greater zeal for social efficiency and long-run planning. Each of these types visualizes, according to Professor Perlman, labor as an abstract entity which differs from the rank and file worker of everyday life.

The term "intellectual" as used has a special meaning, although it may be used to convey other meanings. This is explicitly stated: "as long as the intellectual is investigating specific subjects, which have definite and calculable bearings upon the workers' welfare—for instance, industrial accidents, unemployment, wage trends, and the like—his tendency to reduce labor in the concrete ~~and~~ abstraction is

<sup>66</sup> Selig Perlman, *A Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York: Augustus Kelley, 1949), pp. 280-283. The first edition was published by Macmillan, in 1928.

restrained.”<sup>67</sup> The importance of the distinction has nothing to do with literary style or the handling of ideas<sup>68</sup> as Professor Sturmthal seems to imply. If “intellectual” referred to the degree of literacy found in the working population or even in the capacity of an individual to handle ideas, there would be no point in the discussion. If that were the issue, one could point to Professor Perlman’s books and his acquaintance with history and the social disciplines, and end the matter by simply declaring: “You too are an intellectual.” What is attempted is a distinction between two approaches to the labor movement. Does labor concern itself through its organizations with the day-to-day problems in a pragmatic experimental manner or does it devote itself primarily to building a new type of economy.

The difference between these two approaches has long been recognized, as can be seen from the statement of a committee that organized the French labor congress of 1876. Emphasizing the need for protection against low wages and unemployment, sickness, and old age insurance, the report pointed out that many social systems presented in the name of labor have been introduced by well-intentioned members of the bourgeois.<sup>69</sup> The question whether the labor movement should follow a pragmatic, experimental policy or should concern itself with distant goals faced every labor movement, and not alone the Russian. Kautsky, the leading theoretician of socialism in the period from the death of Frederick Engels in 1895 to World War I, made the following observations in criticism of a statement in the Austrian Social-Democratic Party platform,<sup>70</sup>

In this connection Socialist consciousness is represented as a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. . . . Modern Socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281.

<sup>68</sup> Adolf Sturmthal, “Comments on Selig Perlman’s *A Theory of the Labor Movement*,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1951, p. 486.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Fernand Pelloutier, *Historie des Bourses du Travail* (Paris: Schleicher Frères, 1902), “Il ne faut pas l’oublier, tous les systèmes, toutes les utopies qu’on a reprochés aux travailleurs ne sont jamais venue d’eux; tous émanant de bourgeois, bien intentionnés sans doute, mais qui allaient chercher les remèdes a nos maux dans des idées et des élucubrations, au lieu de prendre conseil de nos besoins et de la réalité.” p. 39.

<sup>70</sup> The statement read as follows: “The more capitalist development increases the numbers of the proletariat, the more the proletariat is compelled, and obtains the opportunity, to fight against capitalism.”

The quote appears in Karl Kautsky, “Das Programm der Sozial-demokratie in Osterreich,” *Die Neuse Zeit* XX, I, 1901-1902, p. 79. A long quotation from this source appears in Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*, p. 40. The quotation can be found in the Russian edition of Lenin. See “Shto D’Lat,” *Sochineniya* (Moscow, Partizdat Tsk, VKP, 1935), pp. 390-391.

of profound scientific knowledge. . . . The vehicles of science are not the proletariat but *bourgeois intelligentsia*. (Italics in source.) It was out of the heads of members of this stratum that modern Socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more developed proletarians, who, in their turn, introduced it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow it to be done. Thus, Socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class from without, and not something that arose spontaneously.<sup>71</sup>

~~The term "intellectual," it must be repeated here, describes an attitude towards labor organization and not one's ability to read, write, and calculate. The problem arose because the "intellectuals,"~~ through their political organizations, attempted to subordinate the trade unions to their own political ends. Undoubtedly, their attitude was based upon the highest motives, but the Marxists,<sup>72</sup> the most influential among European socialists, placed a low value upon trade unionism. This is true of Daniel De Leon and the American impossibilists as well as of the continental followers of Marxism. This follows from their theory of the declining rate of profit and increasing misery of labor. It expressed itself in observations that "the efforts of trade unions were a labor of Sisyphus" and that all "economic struggles were political struggles." Lenin may have exaggerated his position, but the subordination of the trade union to the Communist Party, at present as in Lenin's day, fully illustrates his thinking on this subject.

~~Professor Perlman contrasts the aspirations of the "intellectual" with those of organic labor groups which visualize the world as one of scarcity of opportunity. A consciousness of the scarcity of opportunity leads the union to regulate the distribution of jobs among the members under a common rule. The International Typographical Union, with its extensive and detailed control of the job, is an example of the communizing of opportunity.~~

Control in each instance is the vigorous claim of common "ownership of the totality" of the economic opportunity open to the membership (which is considered scarce and limited and therefore needing to be controlled), and the "common rule," that is, the commonly devised "rules of occupancy and tenure" of that opportunity obligatory upon the individual occupant.<sup>73</sup>

Similar to Commons, Professor Perlman stresses the union's parceling out of opportunities and the industrial government in the

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> See above.

<sup>73</sup> Perlman, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

shop, which demands subordination of individual advantage to the needs of the group. Unions have an idealism, for

unionism, even "business unionism," shows idealism both in aim and method: ~~only it does so in the thoroughly unsophisticated way of 'Tom, Dick, and Harry idealism.'~~ All unions sooner or later stress 'shop rights,' which to the workingman at the bench are identical with 'liberty' itself, since thanks to them, he has no need to kowtow to foreman or boss as the price of holding his job. And, after all, is not this sort of liberty the only sort which reaches the workman directly and with certainty and that can never get lost *en route* like the 'broader' liberty promised by socialism.<sup>74</sup>

Control of the job is "inextricably dependent upon numerous wide relationships." Professor Perlman argues that the "very consciousness of scarcity of opportunity" may engender in individual unions "a wish for mutual cohesion, a common class-consciousness, and eventually a readiness to subordinate the interests of the individual cell, union, to the aspirations of the whole labor organism."<sup>75</sup> It is not that labor is incapable of a wide solidarity, but the "sympathetic strike or joint political action will only be likely to evoke the response which is desired if the objective of the proposed common undertaking be kept so close to the core substance of union aspiration that Tom, Dick, and Harry could not fail to identify it as such."<sup>76</sup> In other words, labor solidarity of a very wide kind is not only possible but takes place—for objectives which are directly related to labor's position in industry.

The distinctive characteristic of this is its insistence that an understanding of labor and unionism must come from a study of its institutions and practices rather than from theorizing about historical missions. The theory is not necessarily related to the accuracy of Professor Perlman's forecasts about particular events or policies. The question is whether the labor movement can be better understood by examining its practices or by abstract theorizing. This view stresses the practical idealism of American unionism, and insists that the code of rules evolved by the labor organizations is the real basis upon which to judge labor.

#### CONCLUSION

As one surveys the theories of trade unionism, it is obvious that even when incomplete they usually deal with some significant aspect

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

of labor activity. Brentano thought he saw in the modern union a reincarnation of the medieval gild, and while this view overemphasized the restrictive and beneficiary features of labor organizations, he pointed out aspects which were of considerable importance in his day. Permanent unions could only arise when large numbers of workers were convinced that the opportunity for becoming employers or self-employed were limited. The first unions were a new type of institution, and almost inevitably they took on the characteristics of analogous organizations formed by other classes. Businessmen's combinations principally aimed, at the time, at monopoly of the market and exclusion of outsiders, and the early unions tended to follow such examples.<sup>77</sup>

In the United States, where no gild system existed, the early unions showed an affinity for monopolistic practices similar to those exhibited by unions elsewhere. Exclusion of the outsider and the sharing of the market is a very obvious method for protecting a craft, and this attitude if not innate follows almost inevitably upon organization.

The guilds conducted, in addition to their economic regulation, a host of friendly and ceremonial activities, some of which have been carried on by trade unions—especially the early ones. This in itself does not demonstrate either lineal descent or even the influence of the former upon the latter. To repeat, the guilds played no role in the United States, and yet we find the early unions adopting mutual benefit schemes and monopolistic practices. As a matter of fact, there was a tendency for organizations of labor to take on or cast off the protective function as the opposition to the economic activities of unions rose or receded. The absence of systems of social security caused the formation of mutual aid societies of journeymen for insuring members against certain kinds of wage loss. The transformation of these societies into trade unions meant only an addition of new functions. The emergence of trade unions out of the mutual aid society can be noted in the United States and in other countries as well.<sup>78</sup>

Monopolistic practices such as limits upon membership are an obvious method of protecting a group and would be especially attrac-

<sup>77</sup> Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), pp. 136-207.

<sup>78</sup> See introduction by Edouard Dolléans, in Guy Chaumel, *Histoire des Cheminots et de leurs Syndicats* (Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1948), p. xi.

tive in a period when the influence of Mercantilism was still alive. With the spread of labor organization among less skilled workers, the gild aspects of unionism diminished in importance, and the aspects underlined by the Webbs became clearer. Although the Webbs insisted that unionism developed only when the worker was separated from the tools of production, they did not regard the union as an instrument of class struggle or as an agency carrying out a predetermined historical mission. They showed the union, rather, as a group possessing limited aims which sometimes adversely affect workers outside of the group.

While Marxist theories explain the several attempts of the holders of these views to dominate the trade unions, Marxism itself played a significant role in insulating the trade unionists of Gompers' day against the appeals of the monetary reformer and trust buster. The class consciousness of the Marxists was transformed into wage consciousness by the trade unionists. Marxism inspired successive attempts to "capture" the labor movement. Such campaigns have, when openly made, usually ended in failure, although the communists by disguising their aims have, at times, been able to win influence. This has been due, in the main, to the split that developed in American unionism and not to the growing attractiveness of traditional social radicalism. This in no way implies that American labor is static or reactionary; it has shown great adaptability in policy and outlook, but changes are based upon pragmatic tests rather than upon the acceptance of a doctrinaire policy.

It should be noted, however, that even though American labor refuses to indorse doctrinaire radicalism, workers are not averse to remaining in unions directed by officers who are communists. The ability of communists to gain a foothold in American unions was due to the depression and to the great expansion of unionism in the 1930's when organizers and executives were sorely needed. This need was especially acute in the CIO, and was accentuated by the split in the labor movement. As a result, communists succeeded in gaining many places of authority and prestige in the new unions, and only the heroic action of men like Walter Reuther prevented greater gains.

With the "cold war" communist loyalties and objectives were automatically exposed, and the CIO found their presence a danger to the free world, to organized labor, and to itself. In some unions internal revolts swept the communist functionaries out of power. Finally the CIO refused to tolerate communist-dominated unions

which were using the CIO as a "respectable" front. They were expelled; but, while they have lost members and influence, they have by no means become extinct. Moreover, their losses of membership are due more to the assaults of rival unions than to the opposition of employers, who are not unmindful of the possibilities that at the present conjuncture communist unions are more pliant and less aggressive than their non-communist rivals. Certainly, neither Bridges' longshore organization nor the mine, mill and smelter workers' union, nor for that matter any others have been destroyed as a result of their radicalism. It is true that the communist views held by the leaders are often disguised, but it seems that members are more concerned with the efficiency of the union in winning concessions than with the views of the officers, and that employers are more concerned with a union's attitude at the bargaining table than with secret affiliation of its leaders.

American labor frequently has been cajoled and reproved for not adopting a policy of independent political action. Frequently, the plea is based upon the view that as labor is a separate class, it ought to promote a party of its own. While trade unions arise only when labor has become a separate economic class, it does not follow that it is in its interest to promote a special political party. There is no evidence that American labor would be more powerful politically if it embarked upon an independent political policy. Experience reveals the very opposite. Obviously, the refusal of many of the CIO unions to sponsor independent politics is not due to the influence of Gompers and his disciples. In fact, at the beginning, a number of CIO leaders regarded independent political action with favor, until their experiences in this field led them to change their views. Nor is there any relation between the rejection of independent political action and concern for European labor, as one writer maintains.<sup>79</sup> Isolationism in labor is closely related to the same phenomenon as in the country at large, and when conditions cause a change in view in one area the other also is likely to be affected. Growing awareness of international labor problems by American unions is in part the result of sympathy it has always shown for the workers of other countries, and in part it reflects the growing realization of the importance of foreign affairs by all segments of the American community.

<sup>79</sup> Adolf Sturmthal, *The Tragedy of European Labor* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 360.



Theories of labor usually are formulated by students rather than by participants in the labor movement. One writer, who is both, has always felt that the lack of philosophy of American labor was one of its fatal defects. According to him, "the philosophy of no generalizations [is] intended to keep the movement free from doctrinaire shackles. It has achieved little in this direction. It was responsible for a half a century of needless wanderings in the intellectual void, and only now it begins to dawn on some of the leaders of the second generation that the American labor movement is badly in need of an orientation."<sup>80</sup>

Twenty-five years after those lines were written, and after the American labor movement has grown in size and power, it still is without that philosophy. The solace that one can take from these events is that American labor has done quite well, both absolutely and comparatively. It has hedged millions of workers with a diversified system of protection and raised standards at every level. It need not hang its head in shame when it compares its achievements with the labor movements of other countries—those who know their destinations and travel in well-charted seas. Mr. Hardman remains perturbed about the failure of the labor movement to develop a coherent philosophy,<sup>81</sup> but does not present, in my opinion, any reasons why such steps should be taken. Let those who are concerned about American labor's lack of philosophy engage in a bit of comparative analysis. Is there any labor movement anywhere which so zealously defends the interests of its members, which hedges its members with as much protection, which seeks to squeeze as many concessions out of the employer as the unions of the United States? What mysterious effect would a philosophy have upon the conduct of the unions? ~~When the CIO was organized some thought the millennium had arrived, and that labor would be fully caparisoned with a modern up-to-date philosophy. Instead, the CIO unions have gone the way of all trade union flesh—the way of no philosophy.~~ Some unions in the past — the garment workers, machinists, brewery workers, and others — had, at one time, a philosophy: socialism. Without making invidious comparisons, it is only fair to say that

<sup>80</sup> J. B. S. Hardman, "The Mind of Labor, Ideas and Leadership," *American Labor Dynamics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1928), Edited by J. B. S. Hardman, p. 284.

<sup>81</sup> J. B. S. Hardman, "Power-Accumulation Transcends 'Job Consciousness,'" *Labor and Nation*, Winter, 1951, pp. 46-50.

those unions were not superior, in most respects, to others which did not have a philosophy.

Unions are living organizations which must take cognizance of changing conditions. Professor Sturmthal has noted American labor's growing political consciousness and the different and greater number of issues labor concerns itself with today than formerly. It would be both doctrinaire and unrealistic to assume that labor in 1950 should be as "self-denying" politically as in 1900, but, despite the social and economic changes, labor still refuses to sponsor the "new society" and demands, instead, legislation that will give tangible and immediate benefits to its members. Labor, like other departments of life, must adapt to change, but, in the matter of sponsoring the "new" societies, labor today is less enthusiastic than the movement was a half-century ago. We hear a lot about "a considerable widening of their interests, particularly pronounced in the case of younger labor leaders such as Walter P. Reuther, James Carey, and others."<sup>82</sup> There is a great deal of wishful thinking in some quarters about the significance of the "younger" labor leaders. That they differ from their seniors in some respects is less than a seven days' wonder. Perhaps more significant is their similarity to their elders, their shedding of their initial views on social reconstruction, and their closer approach to the outlook of the typical pragmatic labor leader. In contrast to the changes in attitudes which have been forced upon the unions by the economic and political changes and by the extension of unionism to the mass-production industries, doctrinaire radicalism is today weaker than it was prior to World War I. In 1917, the machinists' union and the miners' unions, both coal and metalliferous, were among those headed by a socialist. Socialism was a live issue on the floor of the conventions of the American Federation of Labor and of many unions. In 1912, a socialist candidate, opposing Gompers, polled one-third of the vote at the convention of the American Federation of Labor, and there was scarcely an issue of numerous labor publications that did not contain an essay on socialism. These are facts that might be pondered by those who see in realistic adaptation to changes in the economic and political environment a vision of a labor army marching to a promised land. This combination of hope and feeling usually expresses intellectual nostalgia rather than unimpassioned analysis. Certainly American labor should not refuse to learn from abroad, but there is really no reason why anyone should

<sup>82</sup> Sturmthal, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1951, p. 495.

assume that European labor represents the ideal and the American movement only a distortion of the true type. At one time, this kind of snobbery might have been difficult to confute. But we know that the roseate dreams of European labor have ended in slave labor and concentration camps on a grand scale. Where Marxism and the other kinds of socialism have remained democratic, they have still to perform great miracles. Pragmatic American labor, despite its real defects, can show a better record in defense of human dignity and freedom than the contemporary movements anywhere in the world.

The American labor movement focuses its main attention on the shop and upon the interests of its members. It is capable of sacrifice and solidarity in behalf of other groups and issues, but, as the power of each union is derived from the gains it wins for its members, it can never neglect this primary purpose without the risk of undermining its influence. This raises a problem for unions in an age in which government is steadily expanding its economic role. The Webbs believed the role of trade unions, in a society where industry is nationalized or municipalized, would diminish, and each would become "more and more concerned with raising the standard of competency in its occupation, improving the professional equipment of its members . . . and endeavoring by every means to increase its status in public estimation."<sup>83</sup> The Webbs' view has not been borne out by experience, and a recent study by a Fabian Research Group well argues that "in any form of society, and under any form of management, workers will need trade unions to look after their interests not only in relation to their employers but also in relation to government departments and officials and before the courts. . . . At least for the foreseeable future, the trade unions must take as their first objective the maintenance and development of their power to protect their members' interests, and must do nothing that would be liable to undermine their power."<sup>84</sup> This argues that the problems of the plant or industry, of vital concern to unions, are not necessarily eliminated by shifting ownerships. The trade union thinks essentially in terms of individuals and the power exercised over them on the job. To limit that power, or "to constitutionalize" it, is the job of the union, and as long as men are ambitious to advance or have a love of power the union's task will remain unfinished.

<sup>83</sup> Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, p. 826.

<sup>84</sup> Hugh Clegg, *Labour in Nationalised Industry* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1950), pp. 9-10.

Unions, in the main, are concerned with day-to-day problems. Their attitudes are influenced by the economic, political and social conditions in which they operate. Writers who have developed theories of labor have sometimes seized upon certain aspects of union organizations and have tended to over-stress particular characteristics. Unions cannot remain permanently anchored in their views or activities. Their survival depends upon their ability to adjust to changing circumstances. Were economic activity reduced to a level so that more than 10 per cent of the labor force were chronically unemployed, much of the basis for a strong trade union movement would be undermined. The search for relief from such disastrous conditions might lead labor to embrace new doctrines and develop different tactics. Should they fail to protect the economic position of their members, their outlook and policies would inevitably undergo overhauling—not because their orientation is wrong but because it may not be suitable under all circumstances. American unionism has a philosophy of simple pragmatism. Such a philosophy is not as ostentatious and lacks the architectonic grandeur of philosophical systems such as Marxism. This perhaps makes American trade unionism less attractive to those who enjoy the aesthetic experience of beholding a beautiful intellectual system. However, the absence of these qualities helps to make the American movement more democratic, tolerant, and flexible. Trade unionism in the United States is a means of protecting the individual against arbitrary rule and raising his standard of living. While it may not rank high for philosophy, it deserves high score on the latter count.

# THE STRUCTURE OF THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

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## *Introduction: Outline of Factors Affecting Structure*<sup>1</sup>

A PERSISTENT diversity of structural form coupled with a noticeable trend towards amalgamation comprise the two dominant features in the structural development of the American labor movement. These features are not, as they might appear, inconsistent. From the time that the AFL was formed, a virtually continuous process of amalgamation has produced a form larger than the craft union as the characteristic structural unit of the labor movement. But the characteristically larger form to which the craft union gave way was scarcely of a uniform type. Indeed, its diversity of form has been such as to require that both the phenomena of diversity and amalgamation be emphasized as distinctive structural manifestations of job-conscious unionism.

A rather considerable number of factors have exerted their influence in shaping the structure of the American labor movement. Operating in different ways and at different times, these factors account for the labor movement's structural multiplicity and its agglomerative trend. Chief among these factors is that of ideology; but once the ideological factor is accounted for, a series of additional factors emerge as significant for their influence upon structure. These include the labor movement's form—or one might say, its problem—of self-government; certain ethnic influences primarily associated with immigration and the polyglot character of the American labor population; changes in industrial organization; the unevenness of the organizing process during the past half-century; economic factors; and finally, the impact of the Federal Government through the National Labor Relations Act and the Taft-Hartley Act. No doubt the list of factors influencing structure could be extended beyond these seven. These appear to be the main ones, however, particularly in the sense that each of them, as will be seen below, provides a focal point for the consideration of other secondary but related factors.

<sup>1</sup> Structure will be discussed in this essay in its primary sense of the jurisdictional scope of labor unions. Structure is often discussed in conjunction with government. Except for a section that deals with the split in the labor movement, the matter of government is omitted. Another essay in this volume deals directly with that subject.

*Structural Classifications*

Before considering in detail the factors that have affected labor union structure, it will be useful to review some of the literature on union structure and draw some conclusions on the character of the labor movement's structural diversity and on the character of the trend towards amalgamation.

There is no "standard" classification of American labor movement structure. None has been developed by the labor movement itself; nor would any two students of the labor movement agree entirely on the categories of classification or on the characterization of particular unions. From among the many systems of structural classification in the literature on American labor, four have been selected for brief discussion and analysis. Each system was formulated by a well qualified student of the labor movement; but the four systems were sufficiently spaced in time and were sufficiently different in approach or purpose to permit some interesting perspectives on the problems of classification arising out of the diversity of American labor union structure, and, as will be seen in the following section, these four systems of classification provide the basis for a graphic sketch of the structural trend.

Among the earlier attempts at systematic classification of labor union structure was that of Robert F. Hoxie, one of America's outstanding investigators of the labor movement.<sup>2</sup> The Hoxie classification was genetic in its pattern, following what Hoxie considered to be the "natural sequence of development" of structural forms. The scheme included four main types: the craft union, the crafts or trades union, the industrial union, and the labor union. Two forms that Hoxie found difficult to classify, but which he included in his array as non-distinct types, were the compound crafts or compound trades union, and the quasi industrial federation.

There are several features worth noting about Hoxie's classification scheme. One feature is that his main types were really only two in number, craft and industrial, for the reason that his labor union type, the model for which was the Knights of Labor, was already becoming extinct; and his crafts or trades union type was by Hoxie's own definition a governmental rather than a structural form.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Hoxie's classification is contained in his *Trade Unionism in the United States* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936), pp. 38-44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41. Hoxie defined the crafts or trades union as "a federation of unions in different crafts or industries" and listed as examples city and state federations and national federations like the AFL.

A second noteworthy feature of the Hoxie system was his observation that most American unions appeared to fall under his two non-distinct categories. One was the compound crafts or trades union, which he defined as "a centralized, homogeneous organization of . . . workers in a number of related crafts" and under which he grouped such unions as the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, the Meat Cutters and Butcher Workers, and the Machinists, among many others.<sup>4</sup> The other non-distinct type was the quasi industrial federation, defined as "a federation of industrially related crafts and compound crafts, appearing in locals, district or state, and national units," and including such entities as printing trades councils, building trades councils, system federations of railway employees, and the Special Departments of the AFL.<sup>5</sup>

A third noteworthy feature of the Hoxie structural scheme was Hoxie's caution that his categories were not to be regarded as pure types but as categories of "developmental mutability." Hoxie was impressed with what he believed to be the non-unitary character of American labor unionism. While he attached greater importance to his various "functional types" as expressive of the labor movement's non-unitary character, he felt that the latter was further verified by the diversity of structural types and by his estimate that the several structure types he identified were themselves norms around which further diversity existed.

A considerably different scheme of classification was developed by a contemporary of Hoxie's, one of the eminent group of Johns Hopkins University labor students, Theodore W. Glocker.<sup>6</sup> While the Glocker classification also arrayed the structural types along the craft to industrial union scale, it treated the intermediate types from a different approach. Noting, as did Hoxie, that the preponderant variety of structural forms fell somewhere between the ends of the scale, Glocker identified this broad intermediate range as a general type and termed it "amalgamations of related trades." Within this broad range, however, he established a twofold subclassification. One was the amalgamation of related trades working for the same employers, and the second was the amalgamation of related trades working for different employers. The first of these two subdivisions

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> "Amalgamation of Related Trades in American Unions," *Trade Unionism and Labor Problems*, John R. Commons, ed. (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1921), Second Series, pp. 362-85.

included a large variety of structural types ranging from the industrial union to the forms of amalgamation which combined only a few crafts or trades. "To this group," noted Glocker, "belong most of the American unions." The second subdivision, "containing only a few organizations" included three structural types: the "vertical union"; the multi-industrial union; and the kind of union which attempted to organize all laborers working on the same kind of materials, regardless of industry. Glocker identified the Carpenters as a union aspiring to a vertical structure. The American Railway Union, already defunct when Glocker was writing, was cited as an example of the multi-industrial type; and another union more recently defunct, the Amalgamated Rubber Workers Union, which had attempted to organize in such diverse rubber goods industries as rubber tires and overshoes, was cited as an example of the kind of union that aspired to organize all employees working on the same kind of material.

Glocker's scheme of classification stands out in the literature on structure as a rather unique attempt to classify structural types in relation to their effective functioning. His purpose, unlike Hoxie's philosophic search for the "essence of unionism," was to attempt the formulation of a principle by which to determine successful amalgamations among labor unions. While he was able to identify several less effective structural forms, like the forms typified by the aforementioned American Railway Union and the Amalgamated Rubber Workers, he found on the other hand that a wide variety of structural forms were effective. Thus, through an approach quite different from that of Hoxie, Glocker corroborated the structural diversity of the American labor movement.

A more contemporary classification of union structure was developed by David J. Saposs and Sol Davison.<sup>7</sup> Saposs, a member of the Wisconsin School, was chief economist of the National Labor Relations Board when he collaborated with Davison, a member of his staff, in a study of the structure of AFL unions during the earlier years of the AFL-CIO split. This was the period when the illusion persisted that labor's civil war centered primarily around the craft versus industrial union issue. Like the Hoxie and the Glocker systems, the Saposs-Davison scheme located the preponderant number of AFL unions—more than two-thirds—in an intermediate range between the craft and industrial extremes. Unlike the Hoxie and

<sup>7</sup> *Structure of AFL Unions*, Research Memorandum No. 8 (Washington: National Labor Relations Board, May 15, 1939).



Glocker classifications, however, and possibly because it was formulated some two decades later, the Saposs-Davison tabulation provided clearer and more definite categories for grouping the intermediate class of unions.

Beginning with the familiar craft union classification, the Saposs-Davison system identified successively, the multiple craft union, the trade union, the semi-industrial union, the industrial union including a multiple industrial union sub-species, and finally a miscellaneous category for varieties difficult to classify. What Hoxie identified as an indistinct type, the compound crafts union, Saposs and Davison made a definite class and termed it the multiple craft union. Glocker's general category, amalgamation of related trades, was divided into three distinct types, the multiple craft union, the trade union, and the semi-industrial union. Saposs and Davison noted also the overlapping of unions in the sense that a number of unions acted in some areas as craft or trade unions, and in other areas as industrial or semi-industrial unions.

Similar to the Saposs-Davison system was one formulated by Florence Peterson, for a number of years the director of the Industrial Relations Division in the United States Department of Labor.<sup>8</sup> The Peterson scheme, published in 1946, is the most recent of those reviewed above. It paralleled in most respects the categories of types set forth by Saposs and Davison, except for a slight difference in terminology and an inclusion of a few more types. For example, the vertical industrial union was set up as a specific category, as were the multi-industrial union and the multi-structural union, all three sub-species in the Saposs-Davison classification. Like all the preceding systems, however, the Peterson system placed the majority of American unions in the intermediate range between craft and industrial unions.

It was noted earlier that there was no single standard classification of American labor union structure. The preceding brief review of classification systems bears out this observation and suggests also that most American unions tended to fall in the broad intermediate range between the craft and industrial union types, and that differences between classification schemes arose out of differences in arranging the intermediate forms. The review also permits some additional observations regarding the structural diversity of the labor movement. During at least the four decades of perspective represented by the four

<sup>8</sup> *American Labor Unions* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), pp. 57-71.

writers reviewed, the structural multiplicity of the labor movement has not decreased. Indeed, it may well be, although there have been no conclusive studies on the matter, that the trend over the past half-century has been towards an increase in structural diversity. While a few forms have passed from the scene, like Hoxie's labor union type and Glocker's category of organization which was structured to include all workers employed on a particular kind of material, other forms appear to have become more definite and amenable to clearer differentiation. Certainly no single type has come to dominate the labor movement as did the craft form at a very early stage. None except the boldly doctrinaire would urge today that any particular structural form is the "best" type, and especially is this so since the AFL-CIO conflict has had the effect of demonstrating that, while industrial unionism decidedly had its place, other lesser forms of amalgamation were scarcely out of date. It appears from this brief review of classification systems that a persistent diversity of structural form is an inherent characteristic of the American labor movement.

### *The Structural Trend*

The structural trend of the American labor movement has been towards amalgamation, notwithstanding the multiplicity of forms that amalgamations have assumed. This is perhaps another way of saying that the trend has been away from the craft union type towards a relative increase in the amalgamated and industrial types.

As early as 1901 the AFL authorized a special committee to draft the Federation's policy on structure. The issue had arisen in connection with the chartering of the United Mine Workers as an industrial union. The special committee, of which Samuel Gompers was chairman, recommended among other things that "closely allied or subdivided crafts give consideration to amalgamation."<sup>9</sup> That policy was reaffirmed in 1912, at which time the Executive Council of the AFL reported that "every effort has been made by the AFL, the Executive Council, and our organizations to bring about amalgamation of national and international unions,"<sup>10</sup> and went on to detail at least fifteen instances of amalgamation in the recent past.

While the AFL policy of encouraging amalgamation did not satisfy the "industrialists" of the day—mostly socialist and IWW adherents

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1925), pp. 406-7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407.

who were urging a comprehensive recasting of the AFL—the process which the AFL Executive Council reported in 1912 was in fact taking place.<sup>11</sup> The clearest indication of the amalgamation process was the noticeable disappearance of the craft union. Writing in 1915, Glocker noted that “a gradual evolution has been taking place in consequence of which craft unions are disappearing,” and noted further that “of 133 national unions, most of them affiliated with the AFL, only 28 may be called craft unions. . . .”<sup>12</sup> Nor, stated Glocker, did these figures tell the whole story, for at least half of the 28 craft unions were already cooperating with other unions through loose alliances.

A further decrease in the craft union type was noted by Saposs and Davison. They listed only twelve craft unions in 1939, and of these twelve regarded only a few to be of a “pure” variety.<sup>13</sup> The Saposs-Davison scheme included only AFL unions; but if to their 12 are added two additional ones, listed somewhat later by Miss Peterson, not affiliated with the AFL, we might conclude that as of 1939 and by what Saposs and Davison regarded as a very liberal allowance, about 14 craft unions were in existence.

The Peterson classification of 1946, without attempting to be inclusive, listed only seven craft unions. A count by the writer of some 172 national unions in existence in 1951<sup>14</sup> reveals that several of the craft unions listed in the Saposs-Davison scheme appear to have disappeared, and that, as of the present time, it might be estimated that there are probably fewer than 10 craft unions in the American labor movement.

While the craft union has been declining, the industrial union has been increasing. Glocker noted in 1915 that there were only five industrial unions then in existence. Saposs and Davison classifying the AFL unions in 1939 found 10 out of 102 to be industrial; and if to these ten are added another 12 CIO unions that could at that time be identified clearly as industrial unions, the 1939 figures for industrial unions might be estimated at about 22. A count of industrial unions by the writer among the 172 national unions in existence in 1951 places an estimated figure at approximately 30.

The increase of unions in the intermediate range between craft and industrial types has also been noticeable during the past forty years.

<sup>11</sup> Glocker, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.

<sup>13</sup> Saposs and Davison, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> This figure is adapted from the U. S. Department of Labor's *Directory of Labor Unions*, 1951 edition.

Here the increase has been absolute rather than relative, in the sense that as the total number of national unions increased during this span of years, the total number of unions falling in the intermediate range also increased but maintained a fairly constant proportion to the total.

The following table, based upon the Glocker estimates of 1915, the Saposs-Davison estimates of 1939, and the writer's estimates of 1951 aided by the Peterson tabulations, serves to outline the trend towards amalgamation as seen in the relative decline of the craft union, the relative increase of the industrial union, and the continuous increase, though not relatively in any marked degree, of the intermediate types of unions between the craft and industrial ends of the scale.<sup>15</sup>

Year	Type of Union			Total No. of Unions	Per Cent Craft	Per Cent Intermediate	Per Cent Industrial
	Craft	Intermediate	Industrial				
1915	28	100	5	133	21	75	4
1939	14	118	22	154	9	76	15
1951	10	132	30	172	6	77	17

A few qualifications must be added, however, concerning the trend towards amalgamation. One is that the trend cannot be entirely interpreted as having uniformly produced larger structural units. For example there was the classical instance of disintegration in the printing industry between 1889 and 1902, when the printing pressmen, the bookbinders, the photo engravers, and the stereotypers and electrotypers successively seceded from the International Typographical Union to form organizations of their own. Between 1911 and 1913, similarly, the window glass cutters and flatteners broke away from the Window Glass Workers' Union to form a separate organization. In more recent years, to mention a point that will be elaborated below, the AFL-CIO quarrel resulted in the development by the National Labor Relations Board of the so-called "Globe doctrine" type of election which permitted smaller groups of employees the option of separating themselves from potentially larger units if they so elected. The Globe doctrine principle was subsequently crystallized into statutory language as Section 9 (b) (2) of the Taft-Hartley Law. It might be mentioned briefly in passing, since the point will be dis-

<sup>15</sup> Given the difficulties of classification and the imperfections, consequently, in the estimates, the table undoubtedly has its deficiencies. The imperfections involved, however, are not of the kind that invalidate a conclusion about the unmistakable trend in the American labor movement towards amalgamation.

cussed later also, that the Taft-Hartley Law encourages separation for certain specified groups of workers by either making it possible or requiring that such groups be separate from more inclusive structural forms.

### *Factors Affecting the Structure of the American Labor Movement*

#### *A. The Ideological Factor*

Of the seven main factors, listed earlier, that have exerted an important influence on the labor movement's structure, undoubtedly the most basic one has been the ideological factor.

For job-conscious unionism the structural unit describes two things: it describes the scope of the job-territory within which the technique of job control is applied; and it describes the primary extent of labor's spontaneous solidarity. A labor movement motivated by a different ideology would pursue a different objective than job control on a different principle of solidarity and would therefore tend to develop different structural features. Many labor movements manifest "mixed" structural features, where, as in the case of Britain, an originally job-conscious unionism developed adjacent structural forms as it ripened into a political movement, or, as in the case of Germany, where job-consciousness developed its particular structural expressions in the context of an initially political-oriented labor movement.

In American labor history the Knights of Labor presented the most vivid contrast to job-conscious unionism from the viewpoint of the relationship between ideology and structure. By the testimony of its own constitution the Knights of Labor was not "a mere trade union and beneficial society." Its purposes were manifold and broad, but among the important ones were the organization of producers' cooperatives, "such as will tend to supersede the wage system," a thoroughgoing legislative reform of society, and an educational program for the moral advancement of the worker. It aimed to bring into one vast organization "all productive labor," and therefore admitted farmers, small businessmen, and intellectuals to membership. While many trade unions were swept into the Knights of Labor during its rapid ascendancy in the early 1880's, its ideology can scarcely be said to have been oriented around job control, and its structure was consequently vastly different from the kind that later came to characterize the labor movement.

The smallest unit of organization in the Knights was the heterogeneous local assembly composed of wage earners from different trades, and whose membership could include as much as one-fourth recruited from among non-wage earners. The district assembly, composed of local assemblies, was the next largest unit. Gathering together all the district assemblies was the General Assembly, run by a General Executive Board presided over by the Grand Master Workman. The district assemblies had absolute authority over the local assemblies, and the General Assembly in turn was vested with the "full and final jurisdiction" as the highest tribunal of the organization. Thus the Knights' principle of structure was geographic, and its composition of membership throughout was heterogeneous. Authority was centralized, and it aspired to be "one big union."<sup>16</sup> As a structural type, it was classified by Hoxie as the all inclusive "labor union."

It is difficult to say whether the Knights' structure suited its own broad and variegated ideology, for the Order declined as rapidly as it arose. It does serve to illustrate, however, the relationship of structure to ideology and to function in two ways. One is that its non job-conscious outlook of social reform accorded a secondary status to job territories and jurisdictional lines. The second is that the national unions of the 1880's revolted against the Knights' assimilative centralization to assert, in the form of the AFL, a decentralized federation that permitted a structural scheme along job-jurisdictional lines.

Perhaps more realistic about the locus of American labor's solidarity, but still too doctrinaire about the purpose and extent of labor's solidarity, were the socialists and the IWW. To the socialists—whether the La Salleans of the 1870's, the followers of De Leon two decades later, or the "impossibilists" of the early 1900's—the trade union was a primitive expression of a broader class-consciousness towards which it was inevitably to develop.<sup>17</sup> Industrial unionism, therefore, always described for them a natural orbit of solidarity and anything less than industrialism was suspect as a betrayal of labor's

<sup>16</sup> This was the conception of organization embodied in the Knights' constitution. In practice the Knights permitted the organization of "trade assemblies" composed of trade unions alongside its local and district assemblies. Also, Norman J. Ware, in *The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-1896* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1929) has maintained that the centralization of authority in practice was never as great as the Knights' constitution appeared to provide.

<sup>17</sup> The "opportunist" socialists of the social democratic variety were, of course, an important exception. Many of these were staunch trade unionists and not a few came to hold responsible posts in the labor movement.

ultimate destiny. As will be seen below, the socialists were not without influence on the labor movement's structure. Their long activity in and outside the ranks of the labor movement, however, never achieved for them the structural blueprint of recasting the labor movement along industrial union lines. Rather, from the labor historian's viewpoint, the long career of the socialists serves to emphasize the relationship between a class-conscious ideology and its distinct bias towards the broadest structural forms, while at the same time it serves to bring out in contrast the less doctrinaire approach to structure of the job conscious ideology.

Much the same can be said about the IWW. Launched in 1905 as a protest against the "conservatism" of the AFL and its craft unionism, the IWW was dominated at first by a revolutionary motivation to replace capitalism through direct action and political action. In order to attain its objective the IWW blueprinted for itself the organization of one big union of workers combining skilled and unskilled along industrial lines and centralizing the authority in the union to maximize the entire organization's striking power. Around 1910, however, the IWW split into two factions over the issue of political action. One group, mainly of the West, rejected political action and favored the direct action of revolutionary syndicalism. Its industrial unionism was conceived as a potent solidaristic instrument for class warfare. The other group of the East gradually espoused a more conventional conception of industrial unionism as a form of effective trade union action and as a possible basis for political action. In the course of their history, however, both wings of the IWW served to illustrate, as in the case of the socialists, the correlation between a doctrinaire class conscious outlook and a concomitant doctrinaire approach to structure.

As indicated above, the socialists and the IWW did exert an influence on the structure of the American labor movement, at least indirectly. The height of their combined influence occurred in the years 1912 and 1913. In those years the IWW conducted spectacular strikes in the textile centers of the East and outshone the ineffectual role of the AFL's own textile union, the United Textile Workers. Somewhat before 1912, several important AFL unions, notably the Miners, the Machinists, and the Tailors, had acquired a socialist leadership. At the 1912 convention of the AFL, the Miners, which had been instructed to introduce a resolution urging the Federation to recast its structure along industrial unions lines, precipitated a

long and ardent debate over the issue. While the resolution was voted down, it succeeded in gaining a very respectable support of more than one-third of the convention's votes. Such a display of strength could not be ignored; and both the organizational successes of the IWW and the pressure of the socialists had the effect of producing a more liberal attitude towards amalgamation and industrialism on the part of the "craft autonomists" in the AFL. At least the 1912 convention brought a vehement denial that the craft autonomy policy of the Federation, first formulated in 1901 as part of the famous Scranton Declaration, stood in the way of organizing the unskilled, or of amalgamation and industrial unionism. And immediately following the 1912 convention, a more liberal policy of the Federation became manifest in its efforts to organize migratory and other unskilled workers, as well as in its efforts to carry out the sanction given at the 1912 convention of organizing the skilled and the unskilled in the lumber industry.

Unlike the ideologies of the Knights of Labor, the IWW, and the socialists, the job conscious ideology that came to dominate the American labor movement eschewed any doctrinaire philosophy of structure. Yet, even as it struggled to resist the imposition of a doctrinaire industrial unionism, it was already demonstrating a compatibility with a variety of amalgamated structural forms, including the industrial union. The history of job conscious unionism since the New Deal has certainly borne out its compatibility with industrial union structure. What, then, is there to be said about the job conscious ideology and the compatibility it has manifested with a broad variety of structural forms?

To labor movements that have grown out of a strong class conscious foundation—like the British or the German movements—the issue of structure has generated fewer difficulties than it did for the American labor movement. For such movements, class solidarity reduced the barriers of job lines or jurisdictions to cohesiveness; and their strong reliance on political action and legislative reform lessened the importance of discovering structural forms adequate to secure job control. Job conscious unionism of the American variety, on the other hand, has bent its efforts towards the imposition of work rules in the primary job terrain. It could not rely upon a broad class solidarity, and it undertook instead to cultivate solidarity within the limits of particular job territories to secure the worker's protection by the technique of job control. Thus the matter of structure—that



is, an adequate form to assure job control—became a matter of great importance to American unions. This serves to explain how it was that the American labor movement resisted preconceived structural blueprints while it at once adapted itself to a large variety of structural types. It would appear that, in a job conscious labor movement, each group of workers—each union—must discover for itself within the particular job terrain it inhabits the kind of structural principle that will secure a satisfactory job control. This seems to be the pragmatic principle that needs to be satisfied. It permits differences in judgment, and hence the ferment that has always attended the issue of structural modification. It has made for little symmetry, and at times has appeared to ignore the kind of conscientious idealism that may have been required to bring more poorly situated workers under organization. Yet as many factors, some of which will be discussed below, tended to broaden job areas from craft to wider zones, job conscious unionism adapted itself—not always easily to be sure—to larger structural units without the loss of the kind of solidaristic potency that had formerly characterized the smaller, more particularistic units.

#### B. *The Influence of the Labor Movement's Government on Structure*

Structural modification in the American labor movement has not been an easy matter for, among other reasons, the important one that the kind of self-government which appears to suit the American labor movement has made modification of structure a difficult matter of constitutional principle.

The unions that revolted against the excessive centralization of the Knights of Labor to form the AFL established a form of self-government that John R. Commons once described as being “quite peculiar then and since to America.” Three constitutional principles underlay that government. One was the principle of autonomy for each affiliate, making each national union a sovereignty in its own right as respects its internal affairs and policies and its structural form. The second principle was that of regularity, signifying one national union in one jurisdiction. The third principle was that of legitimacy, which identified the AFL affiliate as the legitimate title-holder to a jurisdiction against all other pretender or “dual” unions. It is apparent from these constitutional principles that the AFL was a loose confederation of sovereign entities jealous of their jurisdictional titles; and like any

council of sovereignties unity depended to a considerable degree upon persuasion and diplomacy. The Federation did acquire a limited governmental function: it allocated new jurisdictions, settled jurisdictional disputes, and suppressed dual unions, the latter two not always successfully. But it was held together by a leadership that understood the fragile nature of its unity, and how much that unity depended upon not tugging too strongly at the bonds.

Obviously, in a government such as this, structural formulae could not be imposed from the center, for any decision from the center as to structure beyond the affirmation of autonomy on such matters would have had the effect of endangering the all-important principle of regularity. Thus, as Professors Perlman and Taft have written,

on the question of what shall be the proper basic unit in labor organization—craft union, industrial union, amalgamation, federation of allied trades, inclusive of the unskilled—the Federation leaders . . . found themselves facing a fundamental problem of “constitutional law” of their own organization. . . .<sup>18</sup>

The validity of the latter observation was borne out one year after it was written, when the labor movement split over the issue of industrial unionism. In 1935, after it had appeared from the 1934 convention of the AFL that the “craft” unionists had been persuaded to surrender their jurisdictional claims in the mass production industries in favor of newly chartered industrial unions, this same group reversed itself and stood on its “constitutional rights” insisting that the AFL had no authority to abrogate original charter grants of jurisdiction. Without their consent, the Federation lacked sufficient authority as a government to “federalize” the new unorganized mass production areas and carve out new jurisdictions along industrial lines from these territories. Ultimately, persuasion and diplomacy failed to elicit a willingness from the older unions to surrender their claims, and a vigorous minority split away as the rival CIO to precipitate the most severe crisis the labor movement has experienced over the issue of structure.

As a rival governmental body, the CIO, while more centralized in some respects, has followed the general pattern that was previously developed by the AFL. With the majority of its unions of the industrial variety, however, the problem of structure places less of a

<sup>18</sup> Perlman and Taft, *History of Labor in the United States*, Volume IV (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 355.

strain on its governmental processes. This does not mean that the CIO is or has been free from jurisdictional conflicts.<sup>19</sup> In the past, for example, the warehouse workers were a matter of contest between the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union and the United Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Workers. More recently the CIO appears to have experienced a kind of jurisdictional dispute that is peculiar to its preponderant industrial union type of constituency. Unlike the AFL kind of jurisdictional dispute, which most often involves boundary lines between various types of occupations, the CIO jurisdictional disputes appear to center around the question of boundary lines between industries. For example, the UAW has claimed jurisdiction over the farm equipment industry; disputes have arisen between the UAW and the IUE, and between the Steel Workers and both the UAW and the IUE. All of these unions tend to be of the multi-industrial rather than of the industrial type, largely because of the way in which their industries differentiate themselves into a variety of different products. Where the industries are contiguous it seems inevitable that problems of definition should arise as to where one union's territory ends and another's begins. Thus, even industrial unionism raises its own peculiar problems of structural adjustment, problems which can be aggravated with just a touch of "union imperialism" here and there.

One further question is worth noting in connection with the CIO's industrial unionism, and that concerns the place of the skilled groups in the context of broader structural forms. There is evidence of preferential treatment for these groups in the UAW where the tool and die workers are permitted a degree of autonomy, and in the Steel Workers where in recent years the union on occasion asked for percentage wage increases which resulted in the higher-paid skills getting a larger money increase. This is an old and familiar pattern, having been practiced in the garment trades, for example, where preferential treatment was frequently accorded such skilled groups as the cutters and pattern makers. It is too early to say, in view of the CIO's brief history, whether the skilled groups are in the industrial unions to stay, or whether they will be susceptible to the temptation of separatism in the future. At the present juncture they appear to have been well integrated into the industrial unions of the CIO.

<sup>19</sup> Recently the CIO established a special machinery to deal with jurisdictional issues, including an outside impartial arbiter. George W. Taylor was named to perform this function.

Structure in the American labor movement thus has been and continues to be a matter of the labor movement's rather singular governmental arrangements. It is in this connection that the emergence of a new factor influencing structure has made its appearance. That new factor is the Federal Government. The occasion for its emergence as an influence upon structure was the split in the labor movement, now a chronic condition of some fifteen years standing,<sup>20</sup> which converted the problem of structure into a contest between two rival governments of labor, the AFL and the CIO. In the absence of a single government of labor, the Federal Government, through the National Labor Relations Board, pre-empted that role by intervening in AFL-CIO disputes.

### *C. The Federal Government as a Factor Influencing Structure*

The 1935 split in the labor movement signified the breakdown of its self government. It appeared in 1934 that the AFL had embarked upon a course of modernizing its structure by adjusting the old and the new, much in the spirit of the Scranton Declaration of 1901 which affirmed craft autonomy while permitting the Miners their industrial structure. The Executive Council was authorized by the 1934 convention to issue industrial union charters in several mass production industries; and while the convention stipulated that existing jurisdictions were not to be impaired, it did postulate that "in many industries in which thousands of workers are employed a new condition exists requiring organization upon a different basis to be most effective."<sup>21</sup> Had the Federation followed out its 1934 policy for the mass-production industries, the problem of structural modification would have remained, however turbulent, a matter of government. But, as noted earlier, the old line unions pressed their jurisdictional claims, a civil war was precipitated, and with its outbreak the problem of structure was converted from a matter of the labor movement's in-

<sup>20</sup> I regard the split in the labor movement, despite its prolongation, as a pathological condition, signifying a persistent failure of the labor movement to solve its problem of self-government, interfering with effective functioning in many important departments of the community's life, and opening the door to Government regulation. Obviously judgments can and do differ on this point. Professor Philip Taft, as early as 1937, pointed out that the split "may mean an end to the unity of the labor movement." ("The Problem of Structure in American Labor," *American Economic Review*, vol. 27 [1937], p. 16.) Professor Taft's analysis dealt with fundamental factors that precipitated the split in the labor movement, and adduced several considerations which suggested that unity could be an extremely difficult attainment.

<sup>21</sup> *Proceedings*, 55th Annual Convention of the AFL (1935), p. 94.

ternal self-government to an issue of warfare, with the two belligerent governments of labor attempting to lead their constituent unions to jurisdictional victories.

The split in the labor movement generated a widespread battlefield of jurisdictional skirmishes.<sup>22</sup> It was this rather far-flung jurisdictional battlefield that the National Labor Relations Board encountered when it decided to intervene in AFL-CIO disputes about two years after the split—a fact worth underlining because the NLRB intervened without taking explicit notice of the jurisdictional character of AFL-CIO disputes, and consequently without assessing in advance the meaning of its intervention in the labor movement's governmental crisis.

In June of 1936, in the *Aluminum Company of America* case,<sup>23</sup> the NLRB was petitioned to intervene in a jurisdictional dispute between two affiliates of the AFL. The NLRB declined to do so, and in a lengthy opinion spelled out the reasons for its refusal. The NLRB noted that what appeared to be a "representation" case in the terminology of Section 9 of the NLRA was in reality a jurisdictional dispute, which ought properly to be resolved by the AFL itself.<sup>24</sup> In the same year the NLRB also declined to assume jurisdiction over another case involving two AFL affiliates.<sup>25</sup> This case appeared to raise a question regarding an "appropriate bargaining unit" under Section 9 of the NLRA. Again the NLRB pointed out that the Act's vocabulary should not disguise the real nature of the dispute before it; and that such jurisdictional disputes were properly and preferably a matter of the AFL's internal government. The Wagner Act, noted the NLRB, was not set up to draw jurisdictional lines between unions. Adjudicating a dispute involving jurisdiction could not properly conclude such a controversy, for the issue involved the drawing of a jurisdictional line between unions. The authority to draw such boundary lines was peculiarly a matter of vital interest to the labor

<sup>22</sup> Within a few years after the split, three more or less distinct "theatres" of conflict over jurisdictions developed. One was the area of the mass production industries where many AFL unions competed against the newly formed CIO unions. A second area developed when sectors of AFL unions broke away to join the CIO and when the latter rallied other elements hostile to the AFL around itself. A third area of conflict grew out of the AFL and CIO rival organizing campaigns in spheres neither had initially undertaken to organize. A fourth, minor area of conflict developed when the AFL chartered new unions to replace those which seceded to form the CIO.

<sup>23</sup> 1 NLRB 530.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 535-38.

<sup>25</sup> *Axton-Fisher Tobacco Co.*, 1 NLRB 604.

movement, therefore located in its own governmental apparatus, and there it ought to remain without interference from the Federal government.<sup>26</sup>

The NLRB's understanding of the labor movement's internal governmental process was unmistakable in the preceding cases. But that same understanding was not adduced to provide a policy for AFL-CIO cases. Rather, one year after it had declined to intervene in the labor movement's internal governmental process with respect to AFL jurisdictional disputes, the NLRB did intervene in AFL-CIO disputes.<sup>27</sup> It intervened before the CIO had set itself up formally as a rival federation. It intervened without reviewing the events and the circumstances leading up to the split, nor analyzing how the breakdown of government had generated the disputes over which it was assuming jurisdiction. It did not, as it found desirable to do in the AFL cases, make it explicit that AFL-CIO cases were essentially jurisdictional in character and that the Wagner Act had not been designed to draw jurisdictional boundary lines. Instead of making a suitable inquiry into the character of the situation it was going to enter, the NLRB intervened on the bare grounds that it was its legal duty to intervene, and that unlike AFL jurisdictional cases, AFL-CIO cases presented a situation where there was no parent body functioning.<sup>28</sup> The latter ground was of course a truism that merited extensive investigation on the part of an expert quasi-judicial agency. As for the legalistic ground of its duty to intervene under the Act, it was never explained why that same legal duty did not override the exercise of its discretion not to intervene in AFL jurisdictional cases. The broader significance of the NLRB's interventionist policy for AFL-CIO disputes—a policy it never deserted thereafter—was that the NLRB moved into the vacuum created by the breakdown of the labor movement's function of self-government to discharge a function heretofore managed by the labor movement itself. The Federal Government, in short, *in loco parentis*, assumed an important role in the governmental function of the labor movement.

By its inability to solve the issue of modernizing its structure for the mass production industries, and by abdicating its function of self-government in the process, the labor movement made itself susceptible

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 610-11.

<sup>27</sup> The first case in which the NLRB intervened in AFL-CIO disputes was the *Interlake Iron Corporation case*, 2 NLRB 1036, decided in June, 1937.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1042. These two grounds were often repeated in other cases. See for example, 3 NLRB 257, 262; 13 NLRB 1320, 1322; 13 NLRB 1303, 1308.

to regulation in the realm of structure. Of course the NLRB need not have intervened, and it is conceivable in retrospect that a policy of non-intervention in AFL-CIO cases might have constituted an encouragement to unity, especially on the several occasions during 1938 and 1939 when unity was being seriously considered. Yet ultimately the labor movement had little reason to expect that the Federal Government should respect the "political science" of its own government, when it itself seemed to be so willing to disregard the integrity of its own constitutional order. In any event, while the implications of the Federal Government's assumption of a significant role in the labor movement's government signify a dangerous assimilative tendency, for our purposes it is important to note simply that the split in the labor movement and the intervention of the NLRB created a new influence on labor movement structure in the form of the Federal Government.

Thus it was that the NLRB came to debate the merits of "craft versus industrial unionism," and to develop a rather considerable body of "common law" on the subject matter of the appropriate bargaining unit to apply to disputant unions of different structural character. It is not the purpose here to summarize that body of doctrine. It may be of interest to observe, however, that virtually the entire body of doctrine was carried over to the Taft-Hartley Law, partly as a body of precedent for the new NLRB, and partly as a crystallization of older doctrine in statutory form, like, for example, the formulation of the "Globe doctrine" election technique developed by the Wagner Board into Section 9 (b) (2) of the Taft-Hartley Act.

It may be of interest, also, to note that the Taft-Hartley Law added some new limitations on structure. Thus, Section 9 (c) (5) requires that union jurisdictions, i.e., "the extent to which employees have organized," shall not be controlling when the NLRB makes a determination of an appropriate bargaining unit, a provision that appears to suggest that the Government is to be the final arbiter on the extent of union jurisdiction. Section 9 (b) (1) requires a Globe type of election for professional employees before they can be included in a bargaining unit with non-professional employees. Section 9 (b) (3) prohibits in the same bargaining unit plant guards and production employees. Section 14 frees employers from any legal compulsion to recognize or bargain with unionized supervisors. Potentially the most disruptive provision regarding structure, should an intense rivalry between the AFL and CIO be reactivated, appears

to be Section 9 (b) (2) which permits craft separatism by the Globe election process. This provision can be traced directly to the AFL-CIO dispute, and its import is that the Government has for the time being made an *a priori* determination in favor of small structural units in the event that such smaller groups evidence a will to separate themselves from larger structural forms. A dozen years ago, at least one member of the NLRB had decided *a priori* in favor of industrial union forms, and another seemed to be similarly disposed. Thus, there appears to have been a shift in sentiment from a favorable attitude towards the CIO on the part of the NLRB in its early years, to an unfavorable attitude towards the CIO on the part of the Congress that enacted the Taft-Hartley Law with respect to the issue of smaller versus larger bargaining units. Having become involved in the issue, the Government's record has not been a neutral one.

Only if the labor movement unites and reconstitutes and modernizes its own government to reassume the function of determining its own structure, will the Federal Government's role on matters of structure be minimized. At the present writing the Government's involvement in the labor movement's jurisdictional quarrels has put it well on the way towards becoming a permanent influence on the structure of the labor movement.<sup>29</sup>

#### D. *Economic Influences on Labor Movement Structure*

Economic influences affect union structure in many and subtle ways. For example, Alfred Marshall's well known case of the plasterers provides a persuasive rationale for craft sectarianism on economic grounds.<sup>30</sup> Marshall pointed out that in the factor market a check on the supply of a particular factor of production might cause a very great rise in its price if four conditions were fulfilled. A factor of production needed (1) to be essential with no cheaper substitute readily available; (2) to be involved in the production of a commodity the demand for which was "stiff and inelastic"; and (3) to constitute a small proportion of production costs, so that a considerably higher price for the factor would not significantly raise the

<sup>29</sup> The Taft-Hartley Law has extended the Government's authority over matters of jurisdiction beyond the authority assumed by the NLRB under the Wagner Act. Sections 8 (b) (4) (D) and 10 (k) of the Taft-Hartley Law are addressed to jurisdictional disputes over work assignments, and provide a procedure for NLRB arbitration in the event an existing dispute has not been settled within ten days after formal complaint to the NLRB.

<sup>30</sup> Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, Eighth Edition (London: Macmillan & Co., 1920), pp. 385-86.



price of the commodity produced. The last condition was that a small check to the amount of the other factors should cause a considerable fall in their supply prices thus creating a margin for paying a higher price to the favorably situated factor fulfilling the three preceding conditions. With this apparatus Marshall demonstrated how a small group of plasterers could increase its wages at the expense of the other factors and to some extent at the expense of consumers of housing.

Marshall's analysis makes the case for craft unionism; and it may be that approximations of his model could explain some of the craft unions' self-interest during the period when they dominated the labor movement. His model runs into difficulties, however, when amalgamated forms begin to predominate. It might still serve to explain how it is that skilled groups can gain some preferential treatment in unions that combine skilled and unskilled. Beyond this, Marshall's formulation falls short as an explanation for the broader structural forms of unionism.

For these broader forms, either of two general theories of the economic basis of unionism might serve as an explanation. One is the general class of theory that holds labor unionism to be a form of monopoly. The other is the general class of theory that regards labor unionism as an adjustment to various forms of monopsony.<sup>31</sup> The issue between these two interpretations has not been resolved. Nor is it the purpose here to decide which is correct. The purpose here is to outline the correlation between economic factors and labor union structure as embraced in both of these interpretations.

The structural implications of union monopoly depend upon how union monopoly is conceived to operate. The traditional analysis of union monopoly held that it was achieved through what the Webbs called the "restriction of numbers," or control of labor supply. This interpretation seems to be passing out of vogue as economists have come to see how difficult it is for a labor union to control the supply of labor. Insofar as it has validity, its structural implications involve a narrow restrictionism through such measures as apprenticeship

<sup>31</sup> Monopsonism refers to the condition of a relative insufficiency of buyers of a particular commodity to assure a competitive price. In the labor market a monopsonistic condition, where there was a relative insufficiency of purchasers of labor, would tend to depress wages below the competitive level. Theoretically, the adjustment to such employer monopsony could occur if workers combined to seek the higher competitive wage level. There are, of course, as in the case of monopoly, various forms of monopsony, such as pure monopsony, oligopsony and monopsonistic competition. I am referring here to both monopoly and monopsony as general categories and not to any particular forms of each that might occur in particular labor markets.

regulation, permit cards, prohibitive initiation fees, and other such techniques. Thus the device of labor supply restriction would seem to apply to the more highly skilled groups and their narrower structural forms, which, as we have seen, have been passing out of existence. The theory of labor monopoly that appears to be replacing the one relying upon restriction of supply conceives of labor unions as controlling the wage rate by controlling the employer through strikes, threats of strikes, political and legislative assistance to unions, and other means.<sup>82</sup> This interpretation of labor monopoly—whether or not it is correct—is at least in tune with the structural realities of the labor movement. For in order to control the employer, the union would have to extend its organization to the degree necessary to bring the employer to terms. Given different labor markets and different organizational characteristics of industries, different degrees of extension of organization could develop. Variations in structural types would then develop around a general tendency to extend organization, rather than, as in the case of the control of labor supply, around the restriction of organization. The principle involved was stated succinctly by Professor Charles E. Lindblom in the course of a comment on the deficiency of the supply control interpretation of union monopoly:

The nonunion worker is not eliminated from the market simply because he is not a member of the union. He is in the market, and nothing can prevent the employer from hiring him except the power of the union to control the employer. Because the strike is the real basis of whatever power the union has over the employer's hiring, the union cannot tolerate hostile workers outside the organization who are willing to act as strike-breakers. The union is therefore led to encourage rather than restrict membership.

This suggests that there is one obvious way to control supply in the traditional sense: organize all the workers. In some industries organization is so strong that workers need not fear nonunion workers. But even this does not give the union useful control over the labor supply because a high degree of organization is possible only if no attempts are made to restrict the labor supply.<sup>88</sup>

The union's aspiration to exercise control over the employer's wage decisions by strikes and other means, and therefore to extend its

<sup>82</sup> See for example Charles E. Lindblom, *Unions and Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), pp. 55-66; also Milton Friedman, "Some Comments on the Significance of Labor Unions for Economic Policy," in *The Impact of the Labor Union* (New York: Harcourt-Brace and Co., 1951), pp. 204-34.

<sup>88</sup> Lindblom, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

organization for effective action, is not inconsistent with the interpretation of labor unionism as an adjustment to monopsony. Indeed, the very same principle of structural adjustment stated by Professor Lindblom for the case of monopoly is found to apply, if labor unionism is conceived as a compensating reaction against monopsony rather than as a form of self-generating monopoly. In order to correct a monopsonistic condition of the labor market the union obviously would attempt to exercise some degree of control over the employer's wage decisions. Assuming the economists' verdict to be correct, that such control cannot easily be gained through restriction of the labor supply, then other means would need to be utilized; and among these other means is the extension of organization necessary to include those workers, who if unorganized, would jeopardize the union's capacity to influence the employer's wage decisions. The structural implications of the monopsony interpretation thus become very similar to those of the newer monopoly interpretation: variations in structural types would develop around a general tendency to extend rather than to restrict organization, and the variations in types around this tendency would be accounted for by different labor markets and the different organizational characteristics of different industries.<sup>34</sup>

It appears that labor union structure does not provide sufficient evidence to prove either the case of monopoly or monopsony. Labor union structure operates as a method of economic control, but whether such control is for monopolistic purposes or for purposes of correcting monopsony has to be proved by establishing the character of the labor market. As a method of economic control, however, the two-fold character of labor union structure is worth noting, despite the prevailing agnosticism regarding the purpose of the control. On the one hand, as has been indicated by Lindblom and others, labor union structure has to be adequate to permit the union to influence the employer's wage decisions. At the same time the structure of the union must be adequate to neutralize the "competitive menaces"<sup>35</sup> in the labor market and on the job. It may be, as Professor Lindblom states, that the purpose of controlling the competitive menaces of the labor market and the job is ultimately to exert the strongest influence over the employer. The fact remains, however, that a union which

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Chs. 5, 7, 8 and 10.

<sup>35</sup> The term is used by John R. Commons in "American Shoemakers, 1648-1895, A Sketch of Industrial Evolution," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 24 (November, 1909), pp. 39-98. It was intended to describe particular competitive hazards to wages and standards both in the labor market and on the job.

cannot control these competitive menaces will not attain the control it seeks over the employer by such means as the strike. John R. Commons in his remarkable sketch of American industrial evolution, as seen through the development of the shoe industry and its labor organizations,<sup>36</sup> disclosed a long list of competitive menaces which arose from time to time to threaten wages and work standards at various stages of industrial development from colonial to modern times. Some of the competitive menaces of the modern era were prison labor, contract labor, immigrants, child labor, the sweatshop worker, and the unskilled factory worker. Some of these competitive menaces were amenable to correction by legislation rather than by the adjustment of labor union structure. On the other hand, an important chapter in the history of many unions was the adjustment of their structures to include the sweatshop worker and the less skilled factory worker when the competition from such groups threatened the standards of more favorably situated elements.

In bringing us to the threshold of the union monopoly controversy, labor union structure as seen from the economic viewpoint defines labor unionism in one of two fundamental roles in capitalist society. For the monopoly interpretation—as represented, for example, by followers of the late Henry Simons—labor unionism is conceived as ultimately incompatible with capitalism.<sup>37</sup> Labor union structure from this perspective constitutes a diversity of monopolistic forms through which labor unionism poses its ultimate threat to the survival of capitalism. On the other hand, the viewpoint that interprets labor unionism as a compensatory reaction to monopsony, rather than as a self-generating form of monopoly, conceives of labor unionism as a fundamental corrective to a condition of capitalism, without which capitalism could become both economically and politically intolerable to the wage-earner. From this prospective, labor union structure constitutes a diversity of adaptive forms which enables capitalism to function, and, perhaps, even to survive.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* This sketch was later expanded and included in the introduction to Volume I of *History of Labour in the United States*, by Commons and Associates. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1918).

<sup>37</sup> See, Henry Simons, "Some Reflections on Syndicalism," *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 52 (1942); Lindblom, *op. cit.*; Fritz Machlup, "Monopolistic Wage Determination as a Part of the General Problem of Monopoly," in *Wage Determination and the Economics of Liberalism* (Chamber of Commerce of the U. S., 1947); Milton Friedman, in *The Impact of the Labor Union, op. cit.*; in same, Gottfried Haberler, "Wage Policy, Employment, and Economic Stability."

Thus is the issue drawn. It merits particularly careful consideration in a world in which the force of "free trade unionism" in the democratic sector constitutes one of the significant defenses against the specious promise of "liberation" that the force of Communism proffers to the worker everywhere.

#### *E. Industrial Organization and Union Structure*

The relationship between changes in industrial organization and union structure is both familiar and obvious and need not long detain us. The underlying trend induced by the development and the advance of the modern factory system has been towards amalgamation. The modern factory organization as we know it set the stage for amalgamation in two somewhat different ways. First, it brought into a functional relationship a series of skills and occupations. This was the earlier general result of modern factory organization. A subsequent one, connected more with technology, was the tendency to break down partitions between the skills and occupations originally brought together. These two conditions generated several considerations for amalgamation, which have been admirably stated by Glocker in his essay on amalgamation cited earlier.<sup>38</sup>

One consideration for uniting a group of related skills, noted Glocker, was the need of cooperating to sustain strikes against a common employer. Craft separatism was the great barrier that this consideration for amalgamation encountered, a barrier which did not yield easily. A second consideration for amalgamation, more closely related to technological advance, was the increased possibility of worker mobility, from one occupation to another, creating a potentially disruptive competition for jobs which a broader extent of organization could regularize. A third consideration for amalgamation, deriving both from the juxtaposition of related occupations and technological advance, was the effect that amalgamation could have of reducing the potentiality of jurisdictional disputes. Changes in machines and materials and new divisions of labor among different occupations cooperating in production often blurred the dividing lines between such occupations and generated jurisdictional conflicts. The jurisdictional conflicts could be much less sharp and more easily settled under conditions of amalgamation.

<sup>38</sup> Glocker, *op. cit.*, pp. 365-76.

The foregoing three considerations for amalgamation as outlined by Glocker are not without their qualifications. Looser alliances than outright amalgamations could often work as well, while at the same time preserving the autonomy of smaller groups. Then, too, amalgamation has itself caused jurisdictional conflicts between the side favoring the broader kind of organization and the side favoring narrower identities. In this connection it might be added that too often the "good" has been identified with outright amalgamation and the "bad" with the narrower forms. One of the results of the success of the CIO has been, paradoxically enough, to delineate more clearly than was the case heretofore, the place that narrower-based organizational forms can occupy in the labor movement. Just as industrial unionism has proven itself on a large scale during the past decade and a half, so have the narrower forms of union structure proven their staying power and their suitability for a large variety of industrial situations. Thus has the past several decades of American labor history disproven the optimism of the doctrinaire industrialist regarding the inevitability of complete industrial unionism, as well as the pessimism of the doctrinaire craftist regarding the inability of none but a craft union to survive.

The notion has long persisted that somehow the broader forms of organization are more idealistic and more progressive in their social programs than are the narrower forms of union structure. "Craft unions," wrote Hoxie in 1917, "tend to be businesslike, selfish, non-idealistic, nonpolitical, nondemocratic; trades unions tend to be group-conscious and political; labor unions tend to be idealistic, moralistic, political, theoretical, but nondemocratic; industrial unions tend to be class-conscious, socialistic, theoretical."<sup>89</sup> In the 1930's there were many who believed that the CIO signified a new, class-conscious unionism, that the CIO's industrial unionism was a prelude to a labor party and a broad agenda of social reform. The CIO has no doubt disappointed the forecasters of class-conscious unionism by developing into a mature job-conscious movement; but in doing so, it made the greater contribution of adapting job conscious unionism to an altered industrial environment. If hindsight serves a useful purpose, it might now be said in retrospect that, rather than an altered ideology of labor, an altered condition of the organization of industry was a basic factor in the rise of the CIO.

<sup>89</sup> Hoxie, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

### F. *Ethnic Influences on Structure*

"The competition of races is the competition of standards of living," wrote John R. Commons in commenting on the ethnic factors in the American labor scene.<sup>40</sup> One of the difficult tasks that devolved upon the American labor movement was that of stabilizing the effects of mass immigration upon living standards of the wage earner.

Immigration hit American industries with an uneven impact. Certain trades, like printing, commercial telegraphy, structural iron work, steamfitting, plumbing, and others were much less affected by mass immigration than were other lines of work, especially manufacturing and mining. Commons found, for example, that the textile industry of New England experienced a steady turnover of ethnic groups. It began with a generation stemming from American forbears. The Irish displaced many of these, and the French Canadians displaced the rest. Thereafter, Portuguese, Greeks, Syrians, Poles and Italians entered the industry successively. Similarly, in the Eastern garment trades, English and Scotch tailors were replaced by Irish and German and later by Jewish and Italian garment workers. And for these industries, as well as many others, the successive turnover of ethnic groups correlated with a strenuous pressure upon living standards.<sup>41</sup>

The first response of American labor to immigration was restrictionist. Before the Civil War, and particularly after the decade of 1831-40 when the number of immigrants for the first time reached the half-million mark, a protectionist attitude of labor made itself manifest through legislative proposals and political agitation. With the rise of national unions after the Civil War, restrictionist policies were carried out by a number of unions in the form of admissions policies. Such admissions policies were usually one of four types: (1) requirements of naturalization or declaration of intention to become a citizen; (2) high initiation fees; (3) approval or consent of the national union; and (4) presentation of a union card of a foreign union.<sup>42</sup>

Labor's restrictionism was rarely on racial or social grounds, but, as the above policies suggest, on economic grounds. Where restrictionist policies were successful, or where the overwhelming mass of immigration made organization difficult, the effect for a time on the struc-

<sup>40</sup> Commons, *Races and Immigrants in America* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924), p. 151. See also, pp. 135-59, and pp. 220-24.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-52.

<sup>42</sup> F. E. Wolfe, *Admission to American Trade Unions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1912), pp. 100-101.

ture of the American labor movement was to retard the previously noted trend toward amalgamation. But both restrictionism and the disruptive effects of immigration on organization gave way to efforts at organizing the immigrants. And in time the immigrant proved to be an eminently organizable element. In some industries, like coal mining and clothing industries, organization came early. Coal mining was particularly an example of the successful organization and amalgamation of almost a dozen different nationalities. In other industries, however, organization of the immigrant was delayed by the resistance power to unionism of strong and well organized employers who could, among other devices, make use of language and ethnic differences among their employees to defeat organization. The steel and meat packing industries were examples of the latter.

The success of the labor movement in organizing the immigrant has often provoked the observation that the labor movement successfully discharged the task of "Americanizing" the immigrant. Other American institutions have shared in this task—the frontier, the farm, the church, and the big city. But the American labor movement certainly incorporated the immigrant into a peculiarly American institution that could allay inter-nationality conflicts and assimilate the immigrant into a significant phase of the American democratic experience.

The problem of the Negro is of course a special and difficult aspect of the ethnic diversity of the American labor movement. Racial and social antagonism has stood in the way of an assimilation of the Negro into the labor movement to a much greater degree than in the case of most of the immigrant groups. But the problem of incorporating the Negro into the American labor movement is being solved: partly by greater self-organization among Negroes, partly by the successful organization of the mass production industries, partly by legislation, and partly by the pursuit of affirmative policies, perhaps more notably those of the CIO, to overcome prejudice and antagonism. The exclusion of the Negro from labor unions, while it was never the rule in the labor movement,<sup>43</sup> is undoubtedly less prevalent today than in the past. No doubt the success of industrial unionism in assimilating the Negro worker, especially in such newer areas as steel, automobile, meatpacking, and textiles, represents in this regard a high structural landmark of constructive experience which can only serve to improve the condition of the future.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112-34.



*G. Structural Aspects of the Unevenness of Organization*

The American labor movement's organizing experience has never been that of a steady growth over a long period of time. Rather, it has grown by spurts of organization with longer periods of relative quiescence, slower growth, and even losses of membership in between such spurts. Perhaps the period after World War II marks a new phase in the pattern of growth from a new, high level of organization; but the period has been too brief to be conclusive, and the slower growth that has marked this period also came after a larger war time organizational spurt. There were, of course, many reasons for the uneven growth of the labor movement. To list them would be to list virtually all of the factors in the American scene encouraging to union organization, and the many factors hindering organization. It was a particular combination of these factors at various times that determined whether organization would lag or spurt ahead.

Had the entire industrial sector of America, or a very large part of it, undergone organization simultaneously, the effect on union structure might certainly have been different than it otherwise was. Given the fact that skilled groups organized earlier, given the particularistic solidarity of American labor, and given also the peculiar make-up of the labor movement's constitutional government, it is not difficult to see how these factors would operate to obstruct an easy adjustment of jurisdictional boundary lines in the course of sporadic organizational outbursts afterwards. To these four factors, Commons added a fifth—the scarcity consciousness of the worker—to explain the high and persistent incidence of jurisdictional conflicts in the American labor movement, the ever-present symptom of structural imperfection.<sup>44</sup>

While the unevenness of organization made for difficulty in structural adjustment, the reciprocal character of these two factors must be noted as well. For the unequal and incomplete advance of some organizations beyond others and beyond the unorganized sectors could in part be explained by structural sectionalism. The organizing process was on more than one occasion retarded by the difficulty of achieving cooperative organizing efficiency among a number of narrower based unions when the task involved was the organization of broader industrial areas. The failure of the 1919 steel campaign is perhaps a case in point, as is perhaps the period of 1933-34 when a

<sup>44</sup> Commons, "Jurisdictional Disputes," *Wertheim Lectures on Industrial Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), pp. 93-123.

combination of inertia and structural conservatism kept the AFL from responding to the ferment for organization in the mass production industries.

While the unorganized group surrounding the core of organized in America has been substantially reduced in recent years, there is still a significant lack of organization among white collar, professional, agricultural, and governmental employees, and in the South as a geographic area. In another spurt of organization these areas may well be brought under organization; but if the labor movement remains disunited a new organizational spurt may be expected to stimulate quarrels over structure. On the other hand, even a united labor movement could generate quarrels over structure among the more advanced organizations seeking to organize new areas along different jurisdictional lines.

There is of course no perfect structural blueprint for the American labor movement. Just as the labor movement has frustrated doctrinaire conceptions of ideology, so has it frustrated doctrinaire conceptions of structure. What one might hope for in the future, however, is a reconstitution and a modernization of the labor movement's self-government in order to make structural adaptation—a process which has after all been constantly demanded of the labor movement—more harmonious in the future. Changes in structure, conflicts over structural forms and widespread experimentation with many structural types are at bottom indications of growth and adaptation. In these respects, at least, the American labor movement can scarcely be found wanting. But in our day a more stable method for structural adaptation seems to be called for, in order to permit the labor movement to discharge, more effectively than it can while its problem of self-government remains unsolved, those functions in the political and international departments of the community's life which the world crisis has endowed with unprecedented importance.

#### *Concluding Comment: Structure and Politics*

Any survey of the labor movement's structure makes it abundantly clear that the importance of the issue of structural form is an expression of the labor movement's preoccupation with the fulfillment of its will to job control. Ideologically the will to job control is quite different and quite distinct from the will to political power. But the illusion that the former could be transformed into the latter with the development of broader structural forms has long persisted, especially

among those who have always regarded labor's highest achievement as culminating in the formation of a political movement. It is in the realm of structure, however, where one discerns the labor movement's stubborn rootage in its industrial job terrain, and where one can see most clearly that the development of broader structural forms has not signified an ideological transformation from a will to job control to a will to political power, but has meant the fulfillment of job-conscious unionism in an altered industrial environment.

There seems to be little prospect, barring developments as yet unforeseen, that the labor movement will desert its fundamental orientation in job control. This being the case, an understanding of the labor movement's structure is of help in outlining where to locate the signs of any significant political interest in labor.

Given labor's abiding nuclear interest in job control, it seems that any developing will to political power will grow up adjacent to labor's will to job control. And any structural manifestation of such political aspirations will be adjacent to the structures designed to fulfill job control. It may be, then, that the AFL's League for Political Education and the CIO's Political Action Committee, along with the political departments that have been established in several national unions in recent years, represent embryonic developments of more significant future political forms. What is yet absent from the scene, however, is the kind of political organization that could combine the worker with other sympathetic elements in the community into a political entity that could more nearly be regarded as a "labor party." At the present juncture such partnership is achieved under the leadership of the professional politicians in the major parties. There is no prospect yet that labor has acquired the political prestige to achieve such a partnership with other elements in the community under its own leadership. An understanding of the labor movement's structure thus serves to corroborate the verdict derived from viewing the labor movement from other perspectives, that for the discernible future, the labor movement's political behavior will be of the "collective bargaining" variety. There is no evidence in the sphere of structure to suggest otherwise, except that the bargaining operations might be carried on with a greater capacity to deliver the vote, by virtue of the LLPE, PAC, and the political departments already noted.

# ETHNIC FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

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## *Limitations and Definitions*

THIS PAPER IS an exploratory attempt to assess the influence of ethnic groups in the development of the American labor movement. The systematic writing in the field is scant. Only the Jewish contributions have been given any sort of insightful treatment.

All I can appropriately claim for this enterprise is that it is a series of tentative hypotheses based on the literature and on some first hand observation of labor unions with noticeable ethnic influences. I hope the paper will be suggestive. It does not purport to be exhaustive or definitive.

I am conscious of another limitation which the reader will soon discover. The field in which I pretend to exercise my competence is economics. Ethnology is conventionally the jurisdictional property of the sociologist and the anthropologist and it may very well be that what I am setting forth with an air of having discovered a brave new generalization is just old hat to the practitioners in sociology and anthropology. All I can say in my own defense is that if they have already worked out the vein I have not been able to discover it.

There is no generally acceptable definition of the ethnic concept.<sup>1</sup> Subject to common sense modifications which I will make as we go along, the definition of Warner and Srole has been as good as I could find.

"The term ethnic refers to any individual who considers himself, or is considered, to be a member of a group with a foreign culture and who participates in the activities of the group."<sup>2</sup>

The word "foreign" in the Warner-Srole definition has some connotations which are not serviceable for the purpose of this paper. For example, I mean to include the Catholic influence and the Negro influence which cannot be sensibly regarded as foreign. Perhaps the concept which I am searching for is more closely related to culture in the sense of an identifiable pattern of social living.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. K. Frances, "The Nature of the Ethnic Group," *American Journal of Sociology*, March, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Clyde Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man*, New York, 1949, p. 17.

The fact that this paper seeks to isolate the impact of the ethnic factor does not of course mean that ethnic influences operate in a social vacuum in the workaday world. Nor should it be understood to imply that in a live situation the exclusive contribution of the ethnic factor can be fully isolated from the total complex of trade union behavior. Unions and union leaders are influenced by a complex of interacting influences stemming from the economics and technology of the industry, as well as the ethnic character of the leaders and the rank and file membership.

### *The Background—Mass Immigration*

Mass immigration and internal population movements make up the backdrop against which the impact of the ethnic factor must be studied. The English, German, Scandinavian, eastern European-Jewish, Slav, Italian, and Asiatic influences in the labor movement start with mass immigration. Internal movements of population are the starting point for the Negro and Latin-American worker in the American labor movement.

Immigration has been a means of expanding the supply of cheap labor, and the labor movement historically, and especially the American Federation of Labor, have been in the forefront of the groups opposing unrestricted immigration. John R. Commons suggests that the closed shop was aimed at contracting a labor supply inflated by immigration.<sup>4</sup>

Substantial immigration has ceased since 1920 and it is no longer an explosive issue for the labor movement. But the effect of mass immigration as the roots of ethnic lines within the unions is still very significant.

The ethnic factor in the American labor movement is, clearly, not an esoteric subject but goes to the core of many of the characteristics of American unions. There is, in fact, scarcely a union of any consequence in the United States which in one form or other does not show the impact of ethnic strains.

### *Ethnics and Ideology—The Jewish Unions*

For purposes of analysis I have chosen to think of the ethnic impact under two major headings: (1) its effect on the substantive policy which the union and its leadership pursue; (2) its effect on union government, administration, and politics.

Selig Perlman's study of the Jewish labor movement develops a theory of the impact of the Jewish labor leadership upon unionism in

<sup>4</sup> John R. Commons, *Labor and Administration*, New York, 1923, p. 153.

the garment industries.<sup>5</sup> For the most part this means the International Ladies' Garment Workers (AFL) in the women's garment industries, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (CIO) in the men's garment industries, and smaller unions like the United Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers of America (AFL). Perlman sees the "new unionism" as a unique contribution of the Jewish unions.

The terms "Jewish unions" and "new unionism" are each in turn shorthand modes of expression. The Jewish labor movement represents first of all a motivating Bundist socialist philosophy on the part of its immigrant leaders. The locale in which this philosophy operates is the New York garment industry—highly competitive, essentially non-mechanized, and sweating its workers. Looking toward assimilation in the local and national community, these Jewish socialist unionists find allies in native American humanitarianism represented by social workers like Lillian Wald, Jane Addams, and Florence Kelley, and in what Perlman calls the Gompersian labor movement. The native labor movement, pragmatic to the core and anti-socialist, had as its major architect a Jewish cigar maker from Holland by way of England.

From this "cross fertilization" of ideas and forces there emerges the new unionism. In the collective bargaining arena, new unionism means the establishment and development of an industrial common law where the "class struggle" tends to get shifted from the picket line to the offices of impartial chairmen. The leaders develop a sensitivity to the over-all health of the industry at the same time that they seek to protect the working and living standards of the industry's workers.

Internally the new unionism promotes the idea of the union as a way of life, going beyond the boundaries of the shop and concerning itself with the union member as a literate, socially aware, decently housed, and healthy human being.

### *The Irish-Catholic Influence*

Another important ethnic strain in the development of the American labor movement is the Irish-Catholic.<sup>6</sup> The leaders of most im-

<sup>5</sup> Selig Perlman, "Jewish American Unionism, Its Birth Pangs and Contributions to the General American Labor Movement," *Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society*, June, 1952, New York; also see Will Herberg, "Jewish Labor Movement in the United States, Early Years to World War I," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July, 1952, Ithaca, New York.

<sup>6</sup> David J. Saposs, "The Catholic Church and the Labor Movement," *Modern Monthly*, May, June, 1933; also Marc Karson, "The Catholic Church and the Political Development of American Trade Unionism," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July, 1951.

portant unions (historically and currently) are predominantly of Irish extraction and of the Roman Catholic faith.

The source of Catholic influence in the American labor movement lies in the fact that the majority of trade union members in the United States are probably of the Catholic faith. The labor union offered a natural defense for the exploited Irish-Catholic workers in the cities, and the beginnings of permanent unions in many trades and industries are inextricably associated with the pressing needs of immigrant Irish workers for economic protection.

At the same time the Catholic Church in the United States looked with sympathy on the labor movement in which its communicants were assuming dominant roles. It is only within comparatively recent times that other organized churches have viewed labor unions with some equal measure of favor.

Irish-Catholic influence has made itself most felt in its opposition to ideological programs of collectivism, whether of the socialist variety or of the communist variety. It is probably true that ~~the prevailing non-socialist orientation of American unions (in this respect almost unique among free labor movements) is attributable in large part to Catholic influence.~~

The Catholic opposition to collectivist programs strengthened the position of leaders like Gompers; Gompers on non-Catholic grounds resisted the attempts of the Socialists to "politicalize" the labor movement. To the extent, and it is a large extent, that the American labor movement is non-political, it is in large part due to the influence of Irish-Catholic leaders. In many respects the absence of an affirmative political orientation by the American labor movement has been a measurable source of strength in maintaining permanent, functioning organizations free from internal dissension on extra-curricular political issues.

Catholic influence in the labor movement has operated in a variety of ways. First has been the general propagation of Catholic viewpoints as these are held to affect the relationships between labor and capital. Here major vehicles are the parish pulpit, Papal pronouncements, and the labor schools run predominantly by the Jesuit order. Second, the influence has come through clerics like Father Dietz,<sup>7</sup> who exercised considerable influence within the inner circles of the American Federation of Labor, and on the basis of face-to-face relationships, sought to

<sup>7</sup> Karson, *op. cit.*

stiffen the AFL's resistance to socialist pressures ; or Father Corridan,<sup>8</sup> the New York priest who has been waging a vigorous fight against racketeering unionism on the New York waterfront. Third, formally organized groups like the current Association of Catholic Trade Unionists<sup>9</sup> and the Militia of Christ for Social Service<sup>10</sup> of another generation (1910) have sought to spread "Christian principles in the unions and to organize to keep out of union office elements hostile to these Christian principles."

There is no important or significant disciplined Catholic caucus within the American labor movement. The same is true of, what has been called, the Jewish labor movement. The AFL-CIO rivalry is an important case in point. Here leaders of the Catholic faith and Jewish faith are in leading positions in both federations.

The locus of Catholic influence, such as it is, within the American labor movement, is to be found largely in matters of broad doctrine rather than specific trade union policies. Within recent years the Catholic influence has extended to specific union matters on the issue of Communist domination in a particular union. The AFL's position on Federal aid to education has been substantially the Catholic stand, particularly with respect to aid to parochial schools. Philip Murray's Industry Council idea bears a close resemblance to the joint council idea of the ACTU. Yet on the other side of the coin is the determined opposition of both the AFL and CIO to the Franco government even though substantial elements in the Catholic Church favor Franco.

There have been, of course, other ethnic groups which have had an appreciable influence on the ideology and ideas of the American labor movement. Samuel Gompers has provided us in his autobiography with a probing treatment of the intensely politicalized unionism which the German immigrants imported to the New York labor movement of the post-Civil war period. Much of the motive power for socialist activity, as a political movement and as a faction within the American labor movement, came from these immigrant German sources.

The British influence in the American labor movement has not been that of a noticeably articulate ethnic group (with the possible exception, say, of the miners' unions) but more as a source of ideas on the structure and function of unionism. The American concept of the

<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Johnson, *Crime on the Labor Front*, New York, 1950, p. 216 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Taft, "The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, January, 1949.

<sup>10</sup> Karson, *op. cit.*



union as primarily an economic, rather than political institution, owes much to the influence of British union traditions on American labor pioneers.

### *Ethnics and Union Politics*

The ethnic factor is highly relevant in understanding the government and political administration of American unions. The elements of divisiveness or solidarity operating in a given situation can frequently be traced in whole or in part to ethnic ties. In turn the nature of the union exercises a sort of catalytic influence on the ethnic lines within a union or in inter-union relationships.

The union like other political groups seeks to maximize the area of agreement among its members and potential members and minimize the areas of disagreement. Thus an organizer of French-Canadian extraction will be used to organize French-Canadian textile workers; Negro organizers will tend to organize Negro workers.

The business agents in a local union will tend to be representative of the ethnic composition of the union. The local itself may on occasion be organized along ethnic lines as, for example, Local 89 of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union which is the local for Italian workers in the New York City dress industry, or the German locals and the Jewish locals in the Bakery Workers' Union.

In addition to language locals the union may utilize foreign language publications to strengthen the tie between the "ethnics" and the union. Most commonly this will take the form of a foreign language version of the union paper. Not too long ago *Justice*, the organ of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, was printed in Yiddish (*Gerechtekeit*), Italian, (*Justizia*), and Spanish (*La Justicia*). Or there may be a language section as, for example, the Spanish section in the *Pilot*, the publication of the National Maritime Union.

Representation in the offices of the union for every substantial ethnic group is characteristic of every union administration which wants to stay in power with as little friction as possible. This ethnic representation may be of a formal sort as in the case of a joint board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers which has an Italian co-manager and Jewish co-manager. Or more frequently it will be an informal but very essential arrangement as in the case of the New York Laundry Workers where the governing bodies will contain Negro and white officers not only by chance but by calculation as well. The failure to give adequate representation to ethnic groups in the

government of the union will always prove to be a disruptive influence.

Ethnic representation may serve the function only of recognizing the force which a "sense of kind" exerts on the membership and nothing else. In other situations ethnic differences may also represent economic differences within a union which need to be given an outlet for expression in the councils of union government. The Italian-Jewish entente in the garment industries represents no significant economic differences. On the other hand, the presence of Jewish executive board members in the Amalgamated Meat Cutters assures consideration of the special problems of the kosher meat branch of the industry.

### *Influence on Division and Solidarity*

The ethnic factor as a dynamic element in union development shows itself in a number of ways.<sup>11</sup> The bond of kind may serve a stronger inducement to bring workers together or to hold them together than what appears to be economic self-interest. The cohesive influence of the British miners working in the American coal fields has been well put by McAlister Coleman.<sup>12</sup>

By the middle of the nineteenth century, English immigrant miners, predominantly Welsh and Scotch, began arriving in the coal fields of America, fields hitherto worked by native-born farmers and their sons. These newcomers made two contributions to the young industry: the first, in introducing improved working techniques; the second, *in giving to the heterogeneous working force a 'sense of kind' that was to lead to national organization.* (emphasis added).

The language federations—the United Hebrew Trades, United German Trades, and the Italian Chamber of Labor—(only the first named is still functioning) capitalized on common ethnic ties to organize their immigrant countrymen who were otherwise not organizable. For one reason, the older unions were not especially hospitable to the immigrant groups and in turn the immigrant workers themselves had no way of understanding the goals and purposes of these unions. The immigrant labor federations which were affiliated to the AFL were indispensable in establishing a common ground between the immigrant worker and the indigenous labor movement.

<sup>11</sup> Many of the illustrations in this section rely on William M. Leiserson, *Adjusting Immigrant and Industry*, New York, 1924.

<sup>12</sup> *Men and Coal*, New York, 1941, p. 35; also see Carter Goodrich, *The Miner's Freedom*, New York, 1926.

Whether the presence of ethnic differences is divisive or cohesive depends in large part on the extent to which the prevailing leadership in the union consciously seeks to integrate the ethnic groups into the union. Union leadership will frequently resist the integration of an ethnic group into the union and the consequences are invariably disruptive of union unity. Thus the 1914 secession from the United Garment Workers of the group that was later to be the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was due in large part to the obstinate refusal of the UGW leaders to take into consideration the racial characteristics and social ideals of the various nationalities who made up the union.

In other unions, a leadership may try to ward off the entrance of ethnic groups into a trade or industry. The most conspicuous example is the attempt of the railroad unions to ban Negroes from employment by collective bargaining in certain branches of the industry. These objectives are also achieved by informal but effective restrictions on apprenticeship and union admission requirements.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast is the successful experience of the United Mine Workers in organizing immigrant workers. William Leiserson's description of an interview with John Mitchell, shortly before the latter's death, is illuminating on this point.<sup>14</sup>

The problem of organizing the immigrant workers in the bituminous fields, he said, was not as difficult as in the anthracite. In the former, native-born and other English-speaking miners were pretty much scattered among the non-English-speaking workers; but in the anthracite fields the companies colonized the immigrants, so that one race predominated. Up to 1898 sporadic attempts at organization were made, which brought tangible results in wages and working conditions, but permanent organization could not be maintained. In that year he took charge himself of organizing the anthracite country. The first work was to overcome the prejudice of the native miners. He dwelt upon the importance of organizing the newcomers and treating them as equals. He appealed to the native-born workers to discard derisive names like "Hunky" and "Dago," and if they could not pronounce the foreigners' surnames to address them by their Christian names.

While foreign language literature was used to a great extent, main reliance was placed on foreign language organizers and interpreters. Mitchell took it upon himself to select these men and to direct their work. He interviewed each one and made painstaking inquiries into their qualifications and integrity from persons who knew them and were competent to judge, such as priests, leaders of national organizations, fraternal lodges, etc. As a result very few organizers or interpreters be-

<sup>13</sup> Herbert R. Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro*, New York, 1944.

<sup>14</sup> Leiserson, *op. cit.*, p. 186-187.

trayed the union, a difficulty that is constantly met in organizing immigrants.

The immigrants were organized first in local unions of each nationality, and an interpreter was assigned to guide and foster each local. Not understanding trade union principles, the immigrants were impatient to strike as soon as they were organized, and a great deal of pains had to be taken to educate them to the importance of being businesslike, and the necessity of building up a strong union by paying dues regularly, so that their strikes and other efforts at improving conditions might prove successful.

Herbert Shepard has documented an ethnic situation in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in Toronto which is typical in its basic contours of the problem in all of the needle trades unions—namely the shifting ethnical composition of the rank and file. In the Toronto case native-born Canadians and other ethnic groups are replacing the older Jewish and Italian immigrants in the men's clothing industry. The leadership is predominantly from this older immigrant stock, yet the leadership is encouraging the newer ethnics to participate more fully and to assume positions of responsibility in the union.<sup>15</sup>

Over the long pull the ethnic lines of demarcation in the labor movement are being dissipated for many reasons. Immigration is no longer important as a fortifying influence. With respect to certain ethnic groups, notably the Jews, the children do not pursue the career patterns of their parents, turning to the white collar trades and the professions. And on balance the permanent separation of certain ethnic groups from the labor force in a given industry is not being offset by a corresponding number of accessions of the same ethnic stock.

Another reason: unionism by its very operation has an egalitarian impact. As Lloyd Warner and his associates discovered for themselves in their sociological study of a "Yankee City," ethnic prejudices are relegated to the background when the size of the pay envelope is vitally affected.<sup>16</sup>

Or as F. J. Warne noted in *The Slav Invasion and the Mine Workers*,<sup>17</sup>

The one bright ray of hope lighting up the uncertain future is shed from the activity in these coal fields of the United Mine Workers of America. With this organization, to a much greater degree than most

<sup>15</sup> "Democratic Control in a Labor Union," *American Journal of Sociology*, January, 1949, p. 311.

<sup>16</sup> W. Lloyd Warner, *The Social System of the Modern Factory* (Vol. IV, Yankee City Series), Chicago, 1947, p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Leiserson, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

of us realize, rests the solution of many of the problems presented in the hard-coal producing communities. Its power of uniting the mine workers of all nationalities and creeds and tongues . . . of bringing together the Slav and the English-speaking employees on the common ground of industrial self-interest . . . has only recently been demonstrated. Through this it is breaking down the strong racial ties which until its entrance into the region kept the two groups apart. In brief, this organization is socializing the heterogeneous mass.

In general the position of the older ethnic groups in the labor movement has been stabilized; specifically this means the Irish-Catholic, Jewish, German, English, and Scandinavian groups. But some ethnic groups are still to be heard from as they make a major bid for recognition in the higher councils of union government. In this category I would put Negroes, Italians, and Polish elements whose leadership positions do not seem to correspond proportionately to their rank and file membership. This is admittedly a speculative judgment based on observing particular union situations and also the stirrings within these ethnic groups for recognition on the political front.

Many unions feel ideologically committed to encourage the erosion of ethnic political lines. When this is true as in the case, say, of the United Automobile Workers, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, or the Textile Workers Union, the union leadership will engage in a positive program of education designed to reduce ethnic differences as far as union affairs are concerned.

In other instances the dominant leadership accommodates itself to the fact of ethnic pressure groups within the union by manipulation and maneuvering. Thus a predominantly white union with a substantial Negro membership uses key members of the Negro group as ambassadors or liaison with the Negro membership. In these situations there is no participation. The purpose of giving jobs to Negroes is to keep the group in line. In such cases key members of the ethnic group frequently develop a vested interest in ethnic differentiation (or Jim Crow) because the perpetuation of these arrangements is the basis upon which they maintain themselves in their jobs.<sup>18</sup>

The potentialities for division or solidarity in a diverse ethnic situation may also be influenced by employer tactics. When employers attempt to resist union organizing in their plants they may seek to exploit ethnic differences. A contemporary example is to be found in

<sup>18</sup> William Kornhauser, "The Negro Union Official," *American Journal of Sociology*, March, 1952, p. 443.

the southern textile industry where a recurring theme in management letters to employees runs something like this:

Who are the men who run this union anyway. I will name some of its chief officers to you. Baldanzi, Rieve, Chupka, Genis, Knapik, and Rosenberg. Where do you think these men came from and where do they live? Are their background, upbringing, viewpoints, beliefs and principles, anything like yours and mine.<sup>19</sup>

The exploitation of ethnic differences in this way, however, is directed more toward the exploitation of difference for its own sake, as a part of the tactics of union opposition. It does not seem that opposition would be abated if these ethnic differences were not present, and in any case the ethnic theme is only part of the total employer offensive against unions in certain industries.

### *Tentative Generalizations*

There are some very tentative generalizations which suggest themselves to me from this admittedly once-over-lightly treatment.

1. There is no such phenomenon as Irish-Catholic unionism or Jewish unionism or English unionism, in the sense that certain types of unionism are intrinsic to or inherent in a place of national origin or in a system of religious faith. To the extent that it is proper to talk about ethnic influences at all it is only in the sense that we are using ethnic as a shorthand term for a complex which includes temperaments, attitudes, ideologies, vocations, and homeland ties. The semantic fact that the label for this package is couched in geographic words should not obscure that what we are talking about is the *ethnic* impact—ethnic in the sense of culture as the modern anthropologist uses the term—that it, the way of life of a people. There is therefore no type of unionism which is implicit in Roman Catholic teaching or in the history of Germany or of the United Kingdom or of Judaism. On the basis of post-hoc reasoning it is possible to speculate about unionism which is influenced by Jewish immigrants from Russia, some of whom are Bundists; it is also possible to talk about an Irish-Catholic influence in terms of the economic status of Irish immigrants arriving in the middle decades of the nineteenth century and the application of Catholic doctrine to social issues.

<sup>19</sup> U. S. Senate, Subcommittee on Labor and Labor-Management Relations, 81st Congress 2nd Session, *Labor-Management Relations in the Southern Textile Industry*, Part II, 1950, p. 104.

2. The major impact of the ethnic factor seems to have been on union government, administration, and politics, rather than on the substance of union policy in specific situations. And to the extent that the ethnic factor has affected union policy, it seems to have affected the coloration and temper of that policy rather than the details.

To put it more precisely, the ethnic factor in union development does not seem to have affected wages, hours, seniority, or union security policies of the unions. These matters have been determined by factors other than the ethnic. The ethnic factor has affected the ideological orientation of unions, an orientation which, as I have said above, has nothing much to do with how a union bargains on wages, hours, and working conditions. The ethnic factor has been most influential in the power politics of unionism as either a divisive or unifying influence.

3. The ethnic influences have functioned within the framework of union goals and purposes. I have discovered no reputable evidence which validly supports a theory that a union has been used to further goals of particular ethnic groups at the expense of the union's integrity as a union. To put this generalization more pointedly, I know of no facts which will support the idea that the Catholic hierarchy has manipulated the American union leaders of the Catholic faith in a way to convert the union into a "front" organization. This generalization is applicable to the other ethnic groups as well.

4. In specific cases the diversity of ethnic strains has made organizing more difficult than it might have otherwise been; it has injected an order of political dealing not always to the best interests of the union. In an earlier period the unions were regarded in certain quarters as "foreign" because of the high visibility of the ethnics in the unions. But on balance the ethnic diversity has been a source of strength. It has made possible practical experimentation in types of unionism leading ultimately to the emergence of a characteristically American unionism, which has yielded socially desirable results and which the American labor movement has a right to be proud of.

5. The union has provided a meeting ground for people of diverse ethnic backgrounds and has resulted in submergence of ethnic rivalries in the interest of common goals. In short, the union has had a powerful "Americanizing" influence.

I think it is significant that the remaining strongholds of non- or anti-unionism—southern textiles, agriculture, white collar—are not

fortified in any appreciable way by resistance on ethnic grounds.<sup>20</sup> This is remarkable for a nation which is only one generation removed from wholesale immigration. It demonstrates that there are no insuperable ethnic barriers to union organization if the union wants to organize and if the climate is not too hostile.

<sup>20</sup> At first blush, southern textiles might seem to be an exception. Further examination indicates that it is not. There are no appreciable numbers of Negro workers employed in the southern textile industry. The "Negro social equality" propaganda line used by employers and kindred interests to oppose union organization is a stratagem. The real objection is to the union and the force which keeps the union out of the southern textile mills is physical not propaganda.



# UNION DEMOCRACY

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THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL degree of democratic activity in American labor unions. To a significant degree, union members, as distinguished from their paid officers, freely participate in the management of union affairs. This activity is constantly present in many local unions; the practice of democracy rises and falls in national organizations. Democracy is an ideal of both local and national organizations. All union officers, on any level, justify their powers and policies as the expression of free will of the membership. But democratic action comes easily in locals, while it faces many obstacles in the life and growth of national organizations. Successful national organizations often develop a self-perpetuating executive, superior to any critical membership judgment. The local tends to handle its business in a democratic way unless its business is taken over by the more powerful national body.

In many active locals, there are genuine contests for office; the union members freely debate policies and review official actions. The formal union organization, except in a few large locals, is not a thing in itself, distant from the membership, and controlled by the officers in charge. In the ordinary local, there are only one or two paid officers, the actions of the business agent or full-time president are reviewed weekly by an executive board of working members, and monthly membership meetings can supervise all official actions.

Even attendance at membership meetings is not crucial, since the members often know what is going on in the union from the shop-talk of those who actively participate in formal affairs. The shop society, or the group of workers on the job, lies immediately behind all formal local union activity. The formal organization of the union is directly connected with the shop society by the stewards or shop committeemen, who represent units of workers according to their work groupings. In addition, there are usually one or two individuals in each work group who like to attend union affairs, and who tell their workmates about it in shop talk.

There is a further safeguard of local union democracy. The membership can readily participate in formal affairs, like meetings and elections, whenever special occasions stir their interest. Thus, candidates for office can round up their friends to cast a vote in local elec-

tions. A member with a grievance which the union officials refuse to handle can get his friends to come to the meeting that will review the decision of the grievance committee. And a member facing disciplinary action is, in many unions, entitled to a vote by the local membership before any penalty is imposed. In short, a single individual with a point of view about union affairs is readily in touch with his fellow members and can get a hearing from the officers and, in most cases, at the membership meeting.

In the smaller local (not over one plant and 5,000 members), the close tie between the informal shop society and the formal organization makes democracy possible. Special action must be taken to suppress local democracy; in the national, it takes special action to preserve it. The local membership meeting is a form of direct democracy; and the problems created by the mechanics of representative government are not present in the local. Indeed, even a shop delegate council used by some large locals or amalgamated locals of several shop units expresses the will of the membership with high accuracy.

By contrast, all the problems of remote centralized authority, with the slipping of democratic holds, come with the rise and establishment of strong national unions. Organizations are created to exercise power, the exercise of the power must be granted to specific individuals, and powers once granted are hard to withdraw. The organization becomes a thing in itself.

At first and in their pioneering days, national organizations are likely to be democratic. Democracy is not a luxury attainable only by well established unions. It is a necessity to the formation of unions, expendable as union organization becomes strong enough to dispense with active support from individual members. This strength, narrowly confined to the realm of collective bargaining, has been nurtured by the uninterrupted success of collective bargaining in the past twelve years of rising wages and prices. Union officers have become successful executives rather than elected leaders. Their success, like that of many men of affairs, is dependent upon good fortune.

Historically, when organization was not easy, many national unions were formed by the combination of pre-existing locals, and in any case, a growing national organization, even when formed from the top, needs the active support of locals and individual members. In this early stage democratic activity is possible because the locals determine the policies of the national. National convention delegates are chosen by independent local membership; combinations of locals com-

pete for control of the national organization; the national officers seek the support of locals and their actions are critically reviewed by the active local members. The men who win national offices in these days are able, tough fighters. They have to select winning teams to carry out their policies. But the price they pay to gain competitive office soon induces them to keep office at all costs.

Their desires are favored by circumstances. They have the resources of the organization to aid them, its money and patronage. They control the union press and bulletins; they have agents throughout the area where locals operate. As the union grows in size and spreads over continental United States, it becomes almost impossible for any rivals to form a national party. It is utterly impossible for an individual, and even a local faces high bars, to send agents and circulars to other locals to campaign against national officers.

In the case of national unions where once there were lively contests for office, great debate at conventions, and critical reviews of official action, opposition has died out with the passing of the founding generation of union members. New members are the beneficiaries of the gains made by the pioneers, which are protected and handed down by the organization. It is precisely the purpose of organization to institutionalize social gains of a group, but the process lessens the need of direct individual action to secure the gains. The benefits of good working conditions come to the members of a well established union identified with the power of the national organization. The officers identify themselves with the organization and any criticism of them is treated as an attack upon the organization. Old rivals are defeated and obscured, or won over. The new membership look up to the old officers. By their long experience and skill in parliamentary matters, the latter are the masters of any debate, in the union press, the convention, local meeting or caucus. Union representatives are their local and district party organizers. The incumbent officers become a self-perpetuating group; successors are chosen, not by democratic election, but by official appointment.

In this cycle, union organizations are not unique or to be specially criticized; they are subject to the processes which characterize most social organizations. The same developments will be found in most fraternal, professional, or religious organizations.

The problems of democracy are posed by the fact that the officers in control of the national organization can only be dealt with on equal terms by a group of locals. But counter-organization of a group of

locals requires political skill and cash resources that are usually not available to an opposition group. Unless national parties or caucuses within the union or regional groups of locals stay organized with the growth of the national organization, democracy on a national scale withers away.

Democracy in the national organization depends upon the extent to which locals, by nature self-governing, can deal with national affairs. But the rise of the national brings with it two tendencies which lessen the power of locals to govern even their own affairs. First, the management of the national becomes more and more complex, and the membership becomes increasingly dependent upon the descriptions and analyses of union problems presented to them by their national officers. Criticism is handicapped by ignorance of technical matters of legislation and economics. Second, the very forces which give rise to the power of national unions displace the powers of the local. Strong national unions are necessary to eliminate wage competition. This result is accomplished by elimination of local wage bargaining and substitution of district or industry-wide bargaining and master agreements. Despite this trend, considerable local autonomy is left in a local if it handles the administration of the contract in the shop (or handling of grievances), at least up to the final stage of arbitration or discussion with top management. But a nearly complete atrophy of local function follows after the national organization aggressively takes over the administration of the contract in the shop. When this condition is reached, local self-government dries up for lack of business and with it the source of democracy in the national union disappears.

On the other hand, if the local retains control of grievance handling, then it will also play a significant part in negotiations for a master contract through a local delegate bargaining committee. Such locals also furnish a basis for democratic action throughout the union.

The relationship between local and national organizations on which union self-government depends, is affected by the intermediate union bodies. These bodies are either geographical (called boards, councils, or districts) or economic, as a nation-wide corporation department or a craft division. The intermediate bodies may represent combinations of self-governing locals, in which case they tend to strengthen democratic practices by enabling the local membership to deal with the national officers on equal terms. In other cases, the intermediate bodies are agencies of the national organization. This latter relation is likely to be true of unions organized from the top or those in which

the national has taken over control of the district body. It is also favored by economics of the industry which defy local control.

There are two other types of local-district-national relationship as it affects local self-government. In some unions, the district officers have become powerful in their own right; they dominate the locals by their control over bargaining and grievance adjustment, and in combination, the district leaders control the national office. Competition may occur between district or regional groups, but the membership individually play only a small part.

In other unions, the district leaders and the national officers form a combination of equals, respecting each other's rights and privileges, playing the game skillfully, after relationships are settled. Local union officers are then drawn into the combination and the union becomes a smoothly operating economic organization in which the problems of democratic action are hardly perceptible, at least for one or two generations.

The big local is similar in many respects to the district. It is sometimes the common agency of the shop, plant, or craft units which compose it. Big locals have the problems of indirect or representative government. The memberships of each unit are no match for the local officers, and informal organization of a caucus or party is difficult.

The problems of union democracy are not, on the whole, solved by any mechanics of government or forms of organization. Referendum votes bring about the same results as delegate bodies. Ideally, conventions should be held at least every two years, and for at least two weeks, officers' reports should be circulated in advance of the conventions, the union press should be open to correspondence, members should have the right to circulate leaflets and the union mailing list should be available to them. Caucuses should be legal and no union member should be penalized for criticism of officers or official policies.

The formal structure of unions for the most part permits democratic action. It is the informal power relationships that are decisive, and these in turn are shaped by traditions, values, and practical considerations of available funds, agents, and knowledge. In addition, individual members of unions, as in other social organizations, tend to yield power to their leaders rather than work at the responsibilities of self-government.

One formal safeguard of democracy is missing in union structure. There are no independent judicial officers. Judges who are independent of the executive can protect individual rights by checking the

executive application of union rules and policies to particular cases. This element is supplied in locals by the membership meeting, and in districts, by the locally-elected delegate body. In nationals, the convention is theoretically a supreme appeal tribunal, and this function is important in a number of unions. But where the national officers dominate the locals, they dominate the convention as well. Moreover, even biennial conventions are a distant remedy, especially where there is no provision for a stay of disciplinary action imposed by the executive officers, pending appeal to the convention.

It is therefore to be expected that as national organizations grow powerful and well established, the power of national officers is correspondingly increased. The membership and the locals become less able to deal on equal terms with the national officer—or the national-district combination of officers. Democratic action, which depends upon the popular control of official action, tends to disappear. The union becomes an efficiently managed economic organization yielding substantial benefits to its members, and the officers are like corporate management, who stay in office by producing a good dividend record without any interference with their control by the stockholders.

In time, however, the self-perpetuating official group becomes less efficient than its predecessors. Without the spur of democratic accountability and competition for office, the leadership loses touch with the membership and changing trends. It also fails to meet the needs of ambitious men in the ranks who can win popular support but not the favor of the incumbents.

There is enough in the experience of American labor unions to suggest that in the first or second succession to office, the incumbents face a revolt of the membership and new leaders. Democratic action re-asserts itself and once again democracy becomes a necessity to the life of the union. This need may show itself in the form of the secession of large groups of membership.

New unions are formed and they undergo the cycle of democratic action and dormancy and regeneration. This cycle is made possible because unions in the United States belong to a democratic society. Union members may be suppressed by internal union authority, but they have access to freedom of speech, press, and assembly outside the union. They can and do use these freedoms to re-invigorate their economic organizations.

# THE UNION'S ROLE IN INDUSTRY— ITS EXTENT AND LIMITS

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AN APPRAISAL of the union's role in industry must include considerations of an economic, social, and political nature. Wage bargaining represents the attainment of a mutually agreeable, or at least acceptable, level of wages arrived at by the process of persuasion, compromise, and bargaining power, in the light of economic circumstances facing the parties. Since wage negotiations usually take place along with the negotiation of other contract terms (except for reopening negotiations on wages only), the total bargain represents terms and conditions of employment which the parties have determined they can "live with" for the ensuing contract term. Contract provisions dealing with incentives and production standards, assignment of work, seniority rules, managerial functions, and other so-called "non-economic" items may actually be equally or even more important than a given wage adjustment to employer costs and may be highly significant to individual employee compensation considerations.

In the area of shop relationships also, the union adopts the protective role in representing individual employees in their grievances. Employees' union loyalties are closely tied to this individual grievance problem—the knowledge that someone will fight for their interests, that the employee is not completely at the mercy of the boss or the "Company." It is likely that employers would agree that respect for boss and firm are important ingredients in an efficient economy. Some may complain that the union's existence and activities have interfered with obedience. It is true that the exercise of authority is more difficult in the unionized environment. It must be based upon accepted standards of fairness and include in its considerations the political realities within the union. Do these limitations seriously impede efficiency? Are there any compensating factors in morale or productivity to offset any such decline in efficiency, apart from the possible stimulating or needling effect of union activities?

The most frequent and vocal complaints against collective bargaining arise out of such alleged loss in efficiency, which offers perhaps the greatest challenge to effective collective bargaining. Naturally, the impact of collective bargaining upon the working lives of employees and upon managerial efficiency varies greatly from one firm to another.

Nevertheless, the extent to which efficiency is affected may constitute the most important test of successful bargaining relations. Training of supervisors in the proper handling of a unionized staff becomes most important, as does the development of union leaders who can rise above pettiness. No known single factor is an open sesame to success. Nonetheless, experiments are proceeding apace at the shop level throughout our economy in an effort to develop better techniques and practices in collective bargaining.

Finally, the setting for a study of the union's role in industry must recognize institutional values as well as more narrowly economic forces. The notions of freedom and democracy have deep and manifold meanings, with different points of emphasis to different people. But private enterprise is deeply rooted in our mores and so also is freedom of speech and association and the right to join a group of one's fellows to advance a common interest. The institutional values of unionism on the one hand and encouragement of private business on the other may not be held as equally precious by the same individual. To each in his position, however, the concept may be equally strong. These separate values add up to a strong will to work out terms of the employment relationship insofar as possible by private determination rather than through imposition of such terms by government fiat. Thus, when either unions or employers seek government assistance in order to gain temporary advantage, as they do repeatedly, they run danger of government regulation becoming a habit, thereby undermining private determination of the terms of employment. When governmental influence on the terms of employment becomes ubiquitous and detailed, however, as under the War Labor Board in World War II, both parties chafe and seek to be rid of it.

The setting for the union's role in industry thus includes political and social values which cannot be lightly brushed aside. These facts have been missed by disciples of Keynes who insist that wage determination must be removed from private collective bargaining to prevent inflation and assure full employment. It may be that a society planned for full employment is inconsistent with private enterprise and collective bargaining. In the light of the institutional values cited, our enthusiasm for full employment should not blind us to the values of allowing freedom over as broad a sphere of economic activity as possible as long as social health and well-being are not seriously threatened. The production losses of mild recession and perhaps even of depressions must be balanced against the gains of economic free-



dom, of which private collective bargaining is a part, for freedom is the major key to high productivity and rapid growth.

### *Some Frequently Cited Functions of Unions*

The union in its economic aspects is the protector and aggressive promoter of the interests of its membership. If this end has been perverted on occasion, as have other human institutions, the hundreds of thousands of loyal union members in any one of a number of such organizations attest to the widespread faith in this goal. Over and beyond direct benefit functions are so-called union-oriented objectives which are well-recognized by the rank and file membership but sometimes forgotten by observers of the union scene. The "movement" fervor of organization members represents a belief that, besides direct employee benefits, the membership's interest is also served indirectly by the development and maintenance of union strength. Members are frequently critical of their union leadership, but are more willing to overlook the shortcomings of union officers than are those outside of the labor movement. Allowing then for "union-oriented" goals, it must still be said that the advancement of the well-being and aims of employee membership is the sine qua non of labor unions. Their role in industry, however, leads itself to further analysis of functions, procedures and effects.

#### *1. As a Stabilizing Device*

On sufficiently frequent occasions to be significant, the union has been described as a stabilizing device. On the one hand, its aggressiveness in advancing employee interests as it sees them and its insistence upon a "say" in matters affecting its membership may appear initially as disturbing elements to the apparent calm which had existed in the non-union situation. If the existence of some degree of industrial unrest and employee dissatisfaction may be admitted, however, the designation of the union as a stabilizing factor has a genuine basis. Employee whims and desires express themselves through the group rather than by erupting erratically and unpredictably. Although apparently inconsistent union demands may be advanced, sharply conflicting membership interests must be reconciled and compromised within the group. A stabilizing value of real significance to management may thus emerge in the plant community.

The outstanding recent illustration of the union as a stabilizing factor in plant labor relations over time is the General Motors-United

Automobile Workers, CIO, 1950 five-year agreement. Whether one explains this agreement as the Corporation's purchasing five years of labor peace, or whether one views it as a new era of statesmanship in collective bargaining, the practical significance of long-term contract stability cannot be lightly brushed aside. Other techniques of providing firm contracts of longer duration than was commonly found in the past have been the subject of recent experimentation. Under such agreements, many of the uncertainties and crises of the older short-term contracts are removed.

Another dimension of the stabilizing influence of unionism may be seen in the experience of the garment trades. A highly competitive industry such as the needle trades has been characterized by wide swings of market demand, with depression or other market deficiency being the signal for severe, almost cut-throat competition. Under these circumstances, wage-cutting initiated by one employer forces other employers to retaliate. Thus employers with high percentages of labor costs are caught in a spiral of wage-cutting, often against their will, while other less competitive sectors of the economy may or may not have more unemployment but offer considerably more resistance to the cutting of wage standards. Thus the famous Stabilization Agreement in the men's clothing industry, while designed primarily to meet the complex piece rate equalizations, is well named to characterize the union's role in this type of industry. Unionization in coal mining and some areas of trucking have also illustrated this function.

## *2. As a Communication Mechanism*

The need for adequate communication in a plant community has been stressed almost to the point of triteness. The complexity of modern industrial organization undoubtedly points up the need for understanding wage-earner attitudes and for attention to the techniques of effectuating management's chain of command. There is much confusion, however, in the prescriptions advocated for the communication malady varying all the way from "the President's door is always open" to "integration of the employee-recipients of command in the decision-making process in industry."

When a union becomes an accepted part of a plant community, it can be useful in some measure as a communication device. Whether this activity is a positive advantage or is a rationalization of the fact of employee organization, some firms have extracted positive gains from

the situation. News of impending personnel moves and occasionally even prospective business problems common to employees and firm may be sounded out in company-union meetings, thereby removing the element of employee surprise when the changes come about. Some companies deliberately keep the initiative in grievance committee meetings by raising company grievances as often as union grievances are advanced. Industrial relations harmony requires that this communication technique be administered through the union leadership so that no fears are engendered of union-breaking attempts by direct appeals to the employees "over the heads" of the union leaders. The frequently used company letter to employees during union-management disputes has the grave danger of intensifying the bitterness of conflict involved.

Successful company communication efforts through the union organization require an understanding then of basic union politics and structure. By the same token, however, the employees' job interest basic to unionism may be recognized to be of mutual concern to firm and union. Thus competitive dangers to job areas and market prospects as well as less momentous subjects of safety campaigns, community chest drives, and other community and shop matters may suggest points of common concern in which a company welcomes the communication aspects of unionism. The more successful employee publications issued by companies with satisfactory labor relations recognize these interests as common to firm, employees, and unions.

Much is said about the competition between union and company for employees' loyalties. Considerable bitterness can be avoided if it is recognized that in many areas these loyalties are not competing. Thus an employee, who is a good union member, may also be proud of his firm, its research accomplishments, the quality of its product, its name and success in its industry. The better company publications for employees stress safety accomplishments, new products, recognition received by the Company and its officers, and similar items which recognize and strengthen their employees' loyalty to them without diminishing the employees' loyalty to their union for grievance settlements and other union activities. The company publication in a successful collective bargaining relationship may include pictorial reports of joint union-company meetings, negotiations successfully completed, and employee earnings reports without attempting to belittle union organizational accomplishments. If the company's employee publication, however, becomes an organ to "sell" the employees against the

union, it may aggravate labor relations difficulties or give the union more ammunition for attacks in its own newspaper.

### 3. *As a Reflection of Psychological Drives*

Psychological factors cited to explain the growth of unions have varied from the boredom and monotony of factory work to an overwhelming psychological drive for status in the face of the insecurity inherent in machine technology and a complex money economy. Some of these explanations rely upon the social activities, welfare provisions, and political participation of unionism, extending beyond the shop. They include, however, the activities of grievance committeemen and local negotiating meetings, providing an outlet for self-expression and leadership in subjects of shop matters, rarely if ever present in a positive, independent form in the non-union situation.

The existence of a separate motivating psychology of employees has been the subject of considerable research. Professor Perlman's insight into the consciousness of job scarcity of Tom, Dick, and Harry is a penetrating analysis of the most dominant characteristic of wage-earners as they have sought to form unions to protect and advance their job interests. This theme has been repeated in new terminology by the questionnaire surveyors who have rediscovered that employees place job security high on their list of job preferences, at times even above high wages. Professor Roethlisberger rediscovered it when he observed production restrictions among unorganized workers on incentive, arising from the fear of working oneself out of a job.

Explicit in Professor Perlman's analysis is the opportunity consciousness of management. It may be that this distinctive psychology is not as widespread as was originally thought. Reports of restrictions and monopolistic tactics are sufficiently numerous in some industries to suggest the need for competitive prods to reestablish a "progressive" enterprise mentality. Despite these deviations, however, all measures show the American economy making remarkable gains in productivity whether such gains arise from organized research, competition, or the pioneer spirit.

The interests and psychology of farmers are often said to be in conflict with those of trade unionists. Yet both are engaged in activities to make their respective markets more orderly. Competitive menaces to the farmer prove especially severe in depression. Farmers have been faced with selling problems and have therefore sought to estab-

lish uniform marketing practices that will yield them a "fair" return. In this endeavor, their problem is to sell at a profitable price.

A unionist's view of the labor market is that of an imperfect market, subject to abuses and disorderly practices. Competition in wages spells danger to job standards more often than it augurs a bidding up of wage levels in "tight" labor markets. Fearing then more frequently the undercutting of labor standards, the unionist, by collective action, seeks to regulate the labor market to offset some of the weaknesses and abuses he visualizes in an imperfect, non-union labor market. Similar analogies could be drawn with businessmen's associations, professional groups, and other vocational organizations.

In these and other ways, the differences between groups may not be so much a matter of basic psychology as their particular techniques for implementing these objectives and the popularity of the techniques. Each group tends to associate its own position with the common interest. Unions link high wages with general prosperity; management points to the need for production initiative and drive to achieve high standards of living for all; and farm groups connect high farm income with good markets for industrial goods. Each position has an element of truth but each can be abused if self-interest is construed narrowly and with no concern for others. Unfortunate results may come as often from a narrowness of concept, an insecure shrinkage from conceding any justice in the other's position, or a failure to rise above pettiness in inter-group dealings. Perhaps condemnation of greed and narrowness is more a matter of religion or morals than economics but if protective self-interest degenerates sufficiently it becomes a significant conditioner of economic behavior.

The psychology of workers then and all that it implies occupies an important place in considering the status of unions in industry. It provides first a motivation for social and fraternal activities beyond the humdrum workaday life of modern factories, where increasingly semi-skilled work of the assembly-line variety replaces skilled and heavy unskilled jobs. The psychology of insecurity, awareness of job scarcity, provides a basic drive in the formation of unions and in their subsequent activities to protect and advance job interests. The insecurity *vis-a-vis* job opportunities merges with the drive for less uncertainty with respect to employee rights in the shop and the perquisites of the job including but not limited to wage rate. The homogeneous craft group found a strong identity of interest in preserving and advancing the job rights of a single craft. The variety of

modern factory jobs complicates the administration of a diverse job territory. Within the plant it gives rise to procedures like seniority rules to allocate job rights within the group. The job interest itself, however, with respect to employment opportunities, job characteristics, and employee behavior rights and privileges in the shop, remains a central issue. Its importance is attested by the numerous contract provisions in a typical industrial union labor agreement covering these subjects.

If not a basically different motivation from other groups in society, the psychology of employees reflects a different emphasis. Even if education or moral awakening were to lessen in part the restrictiveness of some inter-group behavior, the production initiative drive of management requires preservation and even stimulation, but it also requires an awareness of other group interests as well as its own. Similarly, there is danger of narrow construction of job security if not accompanied by recognition of other interests. The different emphasis must nonetheless remain. Psychology carried this far merges with other approaches to union functions, status, and role, as in the participation question next considered.

### *The Participation Question*

In considering the union's role in industry, probably the most debated question today concerns the matter of participation of the union in formulating and administering the rules of conduct governing the employment relationship. In this connection relevant concepts developed by scholars of labor economics include "industrial jurisprudence," "industrial democracy," and "industrial government." These characterizations of union goals and behavior bear in different ways upon the question of union participation in the rules of conduct for at least a part of industrial activities.

#### *1. Industrial Jurisprudence*

"Industrial jurisprudence" implies the formulation, interpretation, and application in specific instances of a body of laws—a code of conduct governing the employment relationship. The differences between the labor agreement and the typical commercial contract have been pointed out too frequently to require repetition here. Likewise, the difficulties of transferring to labor relations legal principles which are well known in other fields of law are commonly recognized.

One distinctive characteristic of the labor contract requiring consideration here, however, is that typically it does not provide for a sale or purchase of a specified quantity of anything, even labor services. It does not normally require an employer to hire any certain number of employees but merely sets forth certain terms of employment which will prevail if and when workers are employed. In this sense it resembles more closely the company rules which an employer would issue either orally or in writing, except that the labor agreement establishes such rules bilaterally and not unilaterally as happens in the plants of non-union employers. This relationship reveals the union, not as a labor contractor selling labor, but as a representative of the workers, specifying the conditions under which labor will be sold.

The union acts as the guide and representative of the workers in establishing the conditions upon which they offer their services. The union's function viewed in this light, however, raises difficult questions of responsibility. Can such representatives require performance in the sense of delivery of labor services? Again the answer may not be a hard and fast legal principle for all occasions. A union does constitute a social entity over and beyond the sum-total of individual members. Where agreements consummated through member and established representative procedures include certain pledges and employment terms for the duration of a contract, it would seem that maintenance of these terms can be required. The Taft-Hartley Act has attempted to regulate this area, but its lack of complete success is attested by the difficulties managements had after the passage of that Act in securing no-strike pledges from unions. Many qualifying clauses were inserted to relieve unions from responsibility for unauthorized strikes and similar failures of performance considered beyond the union's authority. Union performance may continue for some time to be more a matter of leadership and good-will than a question of legal sanctions.

The participation function of the union's role also raises difficult problems regarding the scope and extent of participation. In an extreme and unlikely case, may employees through their representatives require as a condition of offering their services that the union inspect the firm's accounts, approve plant locations and the installation of new processes, participate in financing decisions, and generally establish collective management of an enterprise? Superficially one might say that an innocuous offering of one's services on specified conditions

would not preclude such terms. And yet concerted activities toward such ends may offend public sentiment of appropriate group behavior and may seriously interfere with the initiating and directing functions of management in a dynamic economy. Withal, they may involve unions in responsibilities and activities inimical to their survival as worker-protective agents. Strains and conflicts created within their ranks as they assume authoritative and directing functions may break down their cohesiveness in aggressive and defensive moves in worker interest. In short, the new boss will have the same unpleasant duties and may attract a similar reaction as did the old boss. The concept of "industrial jurisprudence" *per se* is not helpful in meeting this problem. Its implication is that laws can be legislated by the parties at interest to govern this relationship. It gives us little hint as to the nature of the laws or the appropriateness of different types of legislation.

Similarly, the judicial concept of interpreting and applying the labor agreement has shortcomings on the human relations side of labor-management affairs. It is impossible to spell out in a contract all details of shop behavior where supervisors and workmen cooperate for eight hours each day in a joint production effort, which is itself subject to continually changing circumstances and problems. The contract then can at best set out general standards of conduct, which can be applied flexibly enough to meet new conditions as they arise. Voluminous contracts written in great detail as on the railroads introduce rigidities which may stultify the whole bargaining process and relationship.

While both parties to an agreement want its terms enforced, a realistic view of a bargaining relationship must encompass local practices and understandings, and perhaps even acceptable ways of meeting entirely new problems not anticipated when the agreement was drafted. The marriage contract analogy to represent a continuing, working relationship, not readily broken off, and requiring continual adjustment is designed to describe this aspect. Again the concept of industrial jurisprudence, unless it be focused on the law of domestic relations, is found wanting to describe adequately the collective bargaining relationship. Perhaps the emphasis upon industrial jurisprudence in this setting is partly responsible for attempts by both managements and unions to live by literal application of contract terms even where the realities of the situation cry out for practical solutions. Industrial jurisprudence then has been a useful phrase



to describe the ordering of employment terms on a bilateral rather than unilateral basis but does not get to the heart of the major problems of current industrial relations.

## 2. *Industrial Democracy*

The Webbs' famous characterization of the union's role as establishing and maintaining industrial democracy is a concept of a different nature. Democracy suggests participation of the highest order. It dramatizes the union's goal of enhancing the human dignity of the individual workman—of giving him some say in the conditions of his employment. The idea suggests that he be equally privileged with management to insist upon fair terms and to speak his mind freely without fear of discrimination or reprisal. Being wholly dependent on his job for his living and that of his family, he is considered to be helpless as an individual and to need the support of the group to prevent abuse.

Industrial democracy suggests continuing rights and participation and to this extent avoids the stultifying implications of too great emphasis upon jurisprudence. In concept it could be dynamic and flexible, meeting new situations as they arise. Although the emphasis upon democracy if taken literally may pose a dilemma between democratic and "responsible" unionism, outlined more fully below, it can be taken in its broader sense to mean participation by wage-earners or their representatives in formulating and applying the terms of the job relationship.

Industrial democracy may suggest to some people, however, participation to a much greater extent, with the implication of joint or collective management. The Fabians in Great Britain moved toward wider state ownership and operation of enterprise than was ever adopted in this country, and with more active labor participation in political control. G. D. H. Cole has sought to preserve a distinction between, but a partnership of, the Government as employer, and trade unions separate from but a part of a labor government—a somewhat nebulous and elusive distinction. In the post-war period of the British Labor government, the conflicts which arose between the trade unions and the Labor Party bear witness to the difficulty of establishing this distinction.

If we may again test a concept in its extreme form, it must be recognized that most ideas of joint management of business enterprise offend deep-rooted value judgments widely held in the United States.

More specifically, they run counter to the American faith that high productivity stems in significant part from the direction and drive which profit-seeking business management provides. This driving force is associated with the combination of decision-making and risk-taking (not always ownership) in the same person or small team, with high rewards for success, and bankruptcy (or relegation to impotent sideposts in corporate structures) for failure. Finally, a premium is placed on alertness to change in markets and processes, and quick decisions are required. The only term to describe the continual change inherent in a progressive, constantly more productive society, is dynamics. And dynamics in industry requires centralized initiative rather than legislative conferences over each shop decision.

It is true that the mechanics of this driving force varies between small business, with ownership risk and management identical, and the large corporation with elaborate management hierarchy. The aggressive rising "pusher" in a corporate hierarchy has only dreams of power and status, lush salary and bonuses to whet his ambition. It may also be that corporate hierarchies show different degrees of lethargic bureaucracy and flexible planning by leadership. Some may emphasize decentralization of responsibility and rewards, deliberate forcing of competition between divisions, and standards of testing and rewarding the deserving, or the lucky. The lethargic management, though not as readily discerned, may fall into similar disrepute, for inconsistency with the goal of a dynamic economy, as the stubborn and unreasonable union. With all the shortcomings of specific behavior on either management or labor side, the belief in this driving force is sufficiently strong in America to reject notions or implications of joint or collective enterprise.

If unionism meant participation by employees' representatives in all management decisions, the scope and extent of union activity would be clear and unequivocal. But the American labor movement has not normally made such demands. More typically the union has insisted upon participation in negotiating broad terms of employment. For the rest, it has insisted upon the right to "gripe," to complain against management decisions affecting its members' interests adversely, and the right to redress of grievances. Over broad areas of management it has shown little interest and preferred to avoid the responsibility and risks associated with such decisions.

We must conclude that industrial democracy is suggestive and helpful in epitomizing many of the values of unionism but again falls

short of pinpointing the role of the union in industry in this country. It deals with the participation question in such general terms that it may yield unwarranted disquiet to readers of the phrase, whether or not such an interpretation is wholly adequate and just. While no one is against democracy, questions are raised as to whether industrial democracy is consistent with values of efficiency and private business initiative which are also basic characteristics of our economy.

### 3. *Industrial Government*

Professors Commons and Perlman have spoken of "industrial government" to connote the union's interest and participation in the administration of jobs. They have provided keen insight into the function of strong employers in our private economy and the historical emergence and development of unions able to survive and establish a voice in the determination of the job conditions. Their concept of job administration by industrial government is antithetical to the idea of collective administration of the total business management. Professor Perlman's writing in particular has stressed the sufficiency of the job-interest and the incidental nature of any effects in other business areas which may occur insofar as these other areas have immediate and direct bearing upon jobs.

This use of the phrase "industrial government," however, has also been subject to misinterpretation in some commentaries. On the one hand is the reaction that job interest is too limited a goal for unions, sometimes provoking an impatience on the part of an intellectual labor sympathizer with the lack of ultimate ends contemplated. On the other hand, industrial government is interpreted by some critics as leading to joint management of industry. These criticisms, by their counter-balancing effect, may tend to establish the basic validity of the central theme. Since "government" may be either limited or all-embracing, however, the misreading of the phrase to imply a broader sweep of union participation than is characteristic of common collective bargaining practice has been hard to quiet in spite of the most careful development of the concept.

Our immediate concern is the question of limits—the extent and limits of the union's role as reflected in current collective bargaining practice. The concepts developed by scholars of labor affairs have established several basic functions and characteristics of unionism. In exploring briefly the problem of limits in the current labor-

management relations scene, however, we shall refrain from direct reference to any of the concepts discussed above, well-established as they are. Hoping to avoid at least some pitfalls of misinterpretation from general characterizations, we shall concentrate rather upon a discussion of collective bargaining behavior. In approaching the problem of limits, some attention is first required to the answers given to this question by other recent writers.

### *The Problem of Limits*

The central problem of the union's role in post-war years has been expressed by Professor Sumner Slichter as the "laboristic society." Professor Neil Chamberlain in "The Union's Challenge to Management Control" and other writers have developed the union's invasion of management in modern industry. People less sophisticated in union-management relations have predicted dire results to the economy and social fabric from the power struggles portrayed.

Impressed by this "threat" and yet recognizing the basic strength of union growth, some have turned attention to the plant community as a social organism. The need, it is said, is for "integrating" the union into the social structure. Since decision-making requires participation by those who receive direction as well as those who give orders, at least in the sense of willing execution as an alternative course to resistance and obstructionism, the answer is sought in broadening the concept of management through its communication and execution aspects to absorb the union organization into the management structure.

Several difficulties arise with this concept of the union's role. First, and most important, is its tendency to obliterate the distinctive functions of the union on the one hand as protector and aggressive agent over job problems, and management as the initiating, directing, driving force in an economy. It is true that employee and union acceptability of management decisions is vital to industrial harmony in dynamic productive operations. Techniques to achieve such acceptability by understanding basic union drives, by concessions in job security and the sharing of productivity gains for profitable managerial flexibility, by the development of confidence and cooperation in personal relationships are constantly being developed through the experience of collective bargaining parties in the field. Refinement and further development of such techniques by the parties themselves is perhaps the greatest need in union-management relations. In all of

this, however, there are many reasons for retaining in our analysis the union as a union and management as the directing force, and emphasizing the inter-group relations.

If the Perlman analysis of the union's basic function is correct, then grave doubts may be raised about the appropriateness of a union's considering itself a part of management. Union leadership is responsible politically to its constituents, the rank and file. So long as union leaders may state their constituents' case, may serve as their protagonists in union-management disputes from grievances to contract negotiations, they are solidly representing their constituents. As soon as they become a part of management, however, in many phases of the decision-making and effectuation process, they must order their constituents to conform. They then become as much "boss" as the employer, ordering their constituents to produce so many units at the incentive rate which they have set, ordering a man to leave his job when they have "co-fired" him, and in the full employment economy, refusing their constituents the right to ask for a wage increase because they are advised that inflationary tendencies may result. It is true that capable union leaders who have the confidence of their fellows can do much to moderate extreme and unreasonable individual behavior. The facts of life require, however, that they be constantly known to have the workers' interests at heart. Probably the quickest way to lose this position in their constituents' eyes is to become a part of management. This reasoning suggests that the integration of unions into management creates such internal strains within the union organization as to preclude its survival as a union. How quickly or completely a break-up would follow such a course is hard to predict in any given case, but the conclusion is suggested that institutional suicide would be inevitable. This point in itself suggests the unreality of the cited analysis.

It is highly doubtful too that the integration of the union into management is any welcome solace to employers. Much smoke arises from the issue of management prerogatives and the privilege of running a business as its owner sees fit. When the smoke is cleared away, the management function of initiating, directing, and providing a driving force remains as a basic value in a dynamic, progressive economy. Expressed in this fashion, the question becomes less a matter of prerogatives or even rights and more a matter of assurance in an operating principle considered by faith and experience as fundamental to our social fabric.

The impact of unionism on this driving force is also often oversimplified. The integration approach stems from instances in which greater employee cooperation has been achieved in some areas when the union has been invited to participate in planning certain business activities. Some employers have accomplished high acceptability in such situations by informing and discussing informally such business problems with union leadership, to remove the element of surprise, without conceding any "prerogatives" or even raising the question of union participation in decision-making. They thus achieve the communication advantage and obtain the desired results without embarrassment to the union's institutional nature. There is no intention of denying here that many problems can be attacked jointly by managements and unions without loss and perhaps with actual gain in efficiency. The bilateral participation in formulating labor contract provisions and in grievance settlement has been outlined above. A generalized prescription for legislating business decisions, however, is unrealistic, patently impractical, and violative of both union and employer institutional needs.

### *The Plea for More Responsible Unions*

One frequently hears the complaint, often from business spokesmen, that unions should be more *responsible*, not only in living up to their agreements, but in recognizing the indirect effects of their actions and even in stimulating greater productive efforts on the part of employees. The hope that unions be led by well-informed men of integrity is sound, but a number of implications not always realized are involved in the plea for responsibility as such.

In the first place, a move to increase the responsibility which union leaders are to take in the conduct of an enterprise may be a direct invitation for them to tread further on management functions. The more that they are asked to take a direct role even in such matters commonly subject to collective bargaining as disciplining employees and prescribing speeds of operation and work assignments, the more they will seek to participate in making the decisions which lie behind the problems. If a union is asked to bend all efforts to improve the net income figure resulting from a corporation's efforts, one can hardly blame its leaders for inquiring into the rest of the accounting records which yield the specific net income in question. If the managements seek to manage and leave the union in its role of protector and aggressive agent over job territory, then the plea for greater

responsibility may need to be moderated. Perhaps it may best be confined to the activities of living up to agreement provisions, moderating unruly elements in their midst by broader vision and leadership trust, and displaying a reasonableness when reasonableness is offered to advance the union's interests within the bounds of public sentiment and fair play.

Another quirk of the responsibility question is its inverse relationship to democratic processes within the union itself. A company may find it difficult to deal with a very democratic union. In an extreme case its leaders, standing for reelection each year, may be forced to consider the blocs of votes held by various locals so that they are not able to curb wild-cat behavior among the locals. The highly democratic process of referendum may prove exceedingly embarrassing if bona fide negotiating efforts have brought tentative agreements between the leaders of both sides. On the other hand, the highly authoritarian union structure can make a contract and see that performance is assured. Since inherent inconsistencies exist in the plea for democracy in unions on the one hand and union responsibility on the other hand, some compromise between these conflicting goals must be sought.

### *Mutual Recognition of Necessities*

Though many extreme statements of bargaining parties in negotiations and in the press may be discounted as for effect or just loose talk, misunderstandings engendered by these or otherwise may be an important source of much industrial strife. There are many areas of mutual interest between management and employees, including such basic factors as provision of jobs, good market prospects, and most aspects of stable industrial and community relations. A realization of the common goals which in fact exist is essential. This is not to say that crystal-clear understanding of each other's motives and goals in collective bargaining would eliminate all conflict, for such is not the case. Disputes, however, would then be limited to those areas of clearly divergent interest where compromise and a "meeting of the minds" must be reached. Some reduction of useless friction may be accomplished by an understanding by management of unionism's basic goals and an equally essential recognition by unions of the managerial function's requirements in our kind of economy.

Alert managements have obtained measurable gains in making technological innovation more acceptable to unions by providing job

security against displacement, by guarantees of the granting of transfer and re-training rights beyond general seniority provisions, and severance pay. Within the department, plant, or even entire bargaining unit coverage, a recognition of job-loss fears and the development of positive protective measures is a fruitful area for experimentation and development of reconciling techniques for management's need for increasing productivity and the basic union drive for job security. A request to cooperate with the social goal of higher production becomes more convincing to rank and file unionists when concern is shown for the individual "Joe Doaks" who loses his particular job in the process. Union interest in guaranteed annual employment and wages is an extreme reflection of this dichotomy. Short of guaranteed annual wages, however, real advance in securing acceptability to increasing production speeds and volume may be achieved by some measures for job security, often accompanied by a wage policy of sharing productivity gains through incentives or wage improvement factors.

In the management rights area, considerable success has attended bargaining relationships where emphasis has been placed upon management's administrative initiative with full opportunities for protest and redress afforded the union through the grievance procedure. Thus the union can retain its nature of championing the gripes of its membership without interrupting the dynamics of business enterprise.

Conversely unions must remember the management need for flexibility, initiative, and direction if the function consigned to it by our society can be performed. In this way union work rules may be negotiated without impinging seriously upon management as a directing force. Perhaps the greatest danger is the tendency toward rigidity accompanying, sometimes unbeknown, an attempt to cure a specific problem by a universal rule. A single foreman's abuse of a last minute overtime assignment, which personal circumstances of an employee made impossible to fulfill, may provoke a demand to prohibit all overtime work. Universal rules over minor as well as major items can straitjacket managements fruitlessly. Large group bargaining relationships soon find, for internal union purposes as well as management needs, that much must be left to local determination and only broad standards of conditions and conduct can be legislated for the entire group. Likewise the broader use of administrative management initiative subject to the grievance procedure in lieu of co-



determination can offer basic union protection in most areas, not all, while preserving the dynamic management initiating function.

### *Extent and Limits*

Our review of various statements of the union's role in industry has not revealed any simple, clear-cut answer to this problem. The union is of course the aggressive agent to protect and advance job interests. If nurtured with a modicum of care, it can be a stabilizing influence on shop relations, stabilizing over time, and even as to economic standards. It has attributes of a communication mechanism which need not, though it sometimes does, compete with company loyalties. The psychology of unionism is a complex of some universal cravings of mankind, with special emphasis on the characteristics of different groups at a given stage of understanding, opportunity, and social structure.

The participation aspects of unionism raise the most difficult problem in current collective bargaining discussions of this subject. The concepts of industrial jurisprudence, industrial democracy, and industrial government have stressed different aspects of the union's participation role without pinpointing (except as the Commons-Perlman concept has been developed and understood) the problem of of limits. Industrial jurisprudence is too legalistic and formalistic to meet human relations realities beyond the ordering value which it contributes. It does not provide any inkling of the extent or limit of the union's role, for all matters can be legislated and adjudicated. Industrial democracy highlights human dignity and participation but raises questions of consistency with the values of efficiency, initiative, and single-minded direction in a progressive dynamic economy. Industrial democracy and to some degree the concept of industrial government have been misinterpreted too frequently as implying an extension of participation far beyond the limits of most unions' activities in this country.

Finally, the current controversy over management rights and the union's invasion thereof have been treated in current literature with a high degree of unreality. Integrating the union into management decision-making and effectuation on any broad scale is inimical to the survival value of unions as such and is repugnant to demonstrated managerial values as well. Except for occasional nods to "salesmanship," unions remain basically the protector and advocate of job interests and management seeks most of all to manage. Understand-

ing of each other's role can narrow industrial conflict to those areas of divergent interest which must be solved by compromise and a meeting of the minds.

If some of the foregoing be conceded, it appears that there is a union's role, difficult as it is to "pigeon-hole" that role. If the union's function is job protection and advancement, what precisely is its extent and limit? If a basic management function is initiative, direction, and stimulus, how can this be preserved? For does not the job interest extend to all business interest ultimately? Can not employee representatives on the innocent grounds of assisting their constituents to formulate conditions upon which they will offer their services counsel that the business agent make all management decisions?

The answer to the final question might take the form of a reply and another question: "He can, but will he?" We might depend upon the institutional suicide for unions suggested above for the negative reply to this. But this might mean a long process of trial and error. It is perhaps the most conclusive answer that can be given, however, and its existence, well known to unions of maturity and experience, is compelling. Other considerations suggested in what follows also play a part.

Where then does the union stop? Here we seek for pigeon holes in human affairs and in this we may be disappointed. Two approaches to defining a limit are conceivable. One approach is to set aside certain areas of action for sole managerial decision. This is extremely difficult in an economy which is not completely static. Another approach is to emphasize the positive role of management in giving initiative and direction, and to consider the union's role as concerned with advancement, protest, and determining the acceptability of managerial decisions. Although bargaining practice probably involves a combination of both, either because of strong employer insistence or because of lack of interest by the union in most management affairs, the latter is most closely consistent with basic tenets of unionism and management.

In this combination of approaches to the limits of the union's role, public opinion cannot be wholly disregarded. Public approval or even acceptance of a policy is likely to depend not only upon the nature of a specific act but upon the scope of the action and also upon the kind of motives influencing action or policy. Thus a consumer may insist upon buying groceries only when they are pleasantly arranged. Is this an instance of dictation in matters of no concern to him? It would

be agreed readily that he has the right to insist upon the terms of his trade as part of the bargain. If a monopsonist, however, puts arbitrary conditions upon his purchase of a product or service and thereby deprives a large group of sellers of a market, such conduct is held to violate principles of fairness, justice, and efficiency. So long, however, as the single buyer is not unreasonable, sticks to matters of joint concern, and does not prescribe arbitrary conditions over the sellers' business affairs, then no public concern arises.

Thus a rule of reasonableness is a further limiting factor. On narrow issues of no public concern, a union can use extreme measures including economic strength even when its conduct is arbitrary. However, where a union is unreasonable, transgresses the accepted area of its basic activity, and is in a position of monopolist, it must exercise moderation. Otherwise it offends the basic standards of society. Arbitrary in a narrow field or reasonable in a broad field, it can survive.

The extent and limit of the union's role is not precisely measurable in a mathematical or legalistic sense. It will vary from one bargaining situation to another. Professors Cox and Dunlop have suggested a kind of "home rule" to let the parties work out their bargaining scope for themselves. But a test of reasonableness, even in the courts, is probably required to temper this home rule principle. We do not need to feel that we are in an area with no limits at all. Of primary importance is the existence and bargaining strength of powerful employers. Other checks and counter-balances have been outlined above. And most of all the unions' basic job interest can be relied upon to keep them sufficiently occupied to dispel undue fears of exceeding reasonable limits.

Collective bargaining is a study of costs and values. The alternative to free unions may easily be a governmentally, politically dominated economy. Thus the individual employer's interest may be to avoid unionism while at the same time employers generally have a stake in preserving collective bargaining rather than trusting the determination of wages and working conditions to the State. To the extent that unions and companies recognize that governmental domination may preclude their survival, they can be equally important bulwarks of the kind of economy most prized in this country. Institutions change gradually over the years but basic values of our present society include both initiating, driving, progressive managements and job-conscious unions of free men.

# UNION POLICIES AS TO THE AREA OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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IN THIS CHAPTER an attempt will be made to analyze union policies with respect to the area of collective bargaining and to consider their effects, in conjunction with the policies of employers and government, upon the determination of this important feature of collective bargaining.

The term "area" is used in this chapter in its old-fashioned geographical connotation. We shall speak of the area as the "locality," or the "district" or the "region," or as the "industry," in ascending order of geographical breadth. For those negotiations or agreements that are not with a group of employers but with individual employers we shall use the term "plant" or "shop" or some obvious equivalent. But where the employer is a company that deals with the union for operations spread over many localities, as in the case of a railroad system, or for plants situated in different localities, as in the case of a "multi-plant" corporation, the area will be termed "company-wide." This terminology is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive; undoubtedly there are many instances that escape or confound it.

In this discussion the area of bargaining is measured in terms of the occupational coverage aimed at by the union, not in terms of the bargaining activities of the employer. For example, if a craft union deals with all the employers in the city who employ workers in that craft, the area for that craft is the locality, even if each of the employers deals on an individual-employer basis with another union or unions for his other workers. Similarly, there may be an industry-wide agreement covering a particular craft; the term "industry-wide" does not imply "industry-deep" in the sense of covering all the organized workers in the plants in the industry in one agreement. On the other hand, if local unions of different national unions regularly bargain as a unit with their common employers, as in the Shop Crafts Federation or the Hotel Trades Council in New York City, that fact makes the area no wider than it would be if each union bargained by itself with the same group of employers, although the coverage of the unitary negotiations would be increased in number of unions and of workers.

Furthermore, the area of collective bargaining does not refer, in this chapter, to the scope of collective bargaining, in the sense of subject

matter. It is assumed, of course, that something of importance is bargained about and, in case of agreement, incorporated in the contract terms applicable in the plants or shops included in the area of negotiations. Thus, there may be more than one area, simultaneously, for the shops in an industry, with a wider area of bargaining on general matters supplementing a smaller area for matters of more localized character. For example, there has been regional, or wider, bargaining on the railroads for half a century on such matters as general wage or hours changes; the resultant changes are embodied in the agreements or "schedules" of the individual roads and the particular unions. Recent attempts, in other industries, to include provisions for health and welfare insurance or for pensions have already brought an extension of the area of agreement for such provisions beyond that for hours, wages, and other conditions of employment, just as it has brought about united action among local unions of different national unions in the same industry in the same locality.

Finally, this chapter is not intended to furnish a quantitative description of the areas of collective bargaining now extant in the United States, by industries, unions, or subject matter. Estimates of the quantitative distribution of union-employer contracts among the several area types, in terms of employees covered and of the industries in which they are found, are available elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Union the Dominant Factor in Widening the Area*

The chief influence in widening the area of collective bargaining beyond the plant or shop has been union policy. That is true both in a positive and a negative sense. Union policy has almost universally been favorable to widening the area of bargaining and the initiative in this respect has usually come from the union side rather than from that of the employers. Indeed, when it is a question of widening the area beyond the locality, the employers have often resisted it. As for the government, its role has been favorable rather than unfavorable to dealing on the more inclusive basis, especially when its intervention has been for the purpose of avoiding or ending a strike. However, the government's influence has usually been supplementary to action

<sup>1</sup> See "Collective Bargaining with Associations and Groups of Employers," *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 64 (March, 1947), pp. 397-410; "Employer Unit in Collective Bargaining," Vol. 71 (December, 1950), pp. 695-697. See also Frank C. Pierson, *Multi-Employer Bargaining: Nature and Scope*, Industry-wide Collective Bargaining Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948); *Idem.*, "Prospects for Industry-wide Bargaining," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 3 (April, 1950), pp. 341-361.

already taken by the union to widen the area involved in its demands, if not in its proposals for unitary negotiation. There have been times when the government has taken the lead in widening the area to be covered by an agreement, but for the most part the government has been an acceptor rather than an initiator.

It is only logical that the union should be the initiator in widening the area of collective bargaining, inasmuch as the union is the initiator of collective bargaining itself. The same reasons that lead the union to attempt to establish collective bargaining in the shop usually impel it to spread the bargaining over a wider area than the single shop, to the locality at least. The desire for what the Webbs termed the "standard rate" generally leads to standardization over an area wider than the single shop by an "organized local or national union."<sup>2</sup> It is not meant to imply that the area of the standard rate and the area of collective bargaining must be identical. But widening the latter is one way of implementing the widening of the former, as well as of the area of other elements in the terms of employment. What the Webbs called the "second stage" of collective bargaining is the extension of the area from the single shop to all the establishments of the same kind in the same town.<sup>3</sup>

The center of our attention in this chapter is not the reasons for union policy with respect to the area of uniformity in wages or other terms, but the effect of the policy chosen upon the area of bargaining. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to note that internal union pressure for "equal pay for equal work" appears generally to operate with the greatest force within the locality as contrasted with wider areas. For the wider area the external pressure to eliminate or reduce non-uniformities in the treatment of competing employers is likely to be the more important factor.

A big exception to this double generalization is found in union pressure for company-wide bargaining, as contrasted with inclusion of the workers in the local-area bargaining of the respective localities in which they work, or report for work. Here the primary cause of widening the area seems to be the policy of "going to the top" for final decisions on union demands. Unitary bargaining with the company increases the pressure for uniformity in terms within the company but, chronologically, company-wide bargaining appears to have

<sup>2</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., New Ed., 1902), p. 297.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

preceded the elimination, or drastic reduction, of geographical non-uniformities. How much the desire for uniformity has fathered the desire for company-wide bargaining as a means to that end it is difficult to say. Some company officials believe that it is uniformity that is the real objective of the union.

### *Local-Area Bargaining*

Returning to the choice between local-area bargaining and individual-employer bargaining, and postponing for the present the question of extending the area beyond the locality, it is a safe generalization that unions usually prefer "locality-wide" bargaining to individual-employer bargaining. Unions do not as a rule attempt to confine their dealings with the local employers to individual-employer bargaining with intent to get better terms from each, or from all eventually, by that method. Whatever advantages there might be, for some unions at some times, in "whip-sawing," or in establishing a pattern settlement with an employer or employers of greater ability to pay, and of at least equal vulnerability, the unions have generally preferred simultaneity of settlement along with uniformity to a possible higher standard for some members, that would be attained by the others only after delays and these of unequal length.<sup>4</sup> A union that is trying to standardize terms over the local area for members employed by a large number of employers is inclined to prefer dealing with all the employers in one negotiation, if only for greater convenience and saving of time.<sup>5</sup>

The simplest type of locality-wide bargaining is found in those industries in which all the shops are competing in the same product market and that market a local one. Here the objectives of equality of pay for equal work and of taking labor terms out of competition both point to the locality as the logical area. And the competing employers, subject to the same demands and required to bargain with the same union on either a shop basis or a wider one, are, in an industry in which labor costs are an important factor in competition,

<sup>4</sup> This refers to union policy in undertaking negotiations. Preference for locality-wide negotiations does not mean that the union will not, if negotiations break down, attempt to settle separately with any of the employers who will grant the terms asked. The union is more likely to follow this course after a strike has begun.

<sup>5</sup> David Kaplan, "Negotiating Problems of the Trucking Industry," in *Proceedings of the Conference on Industry-Wide Collective Bargaining, May 14, 1948*, Industry-wide Collective Bargaining Series, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-87.

likely to decide to negotiate as a group for city-wide terms.<sup>6</sup> This does not mean that some employers will not choose to remain outside the group negotiations and accept in individual-employer "bargaining" the terms agreed to by the group. The point is that the choice is their own; so far as the union is concerned, participation in the group bargaining is open to them.<sup>7</sup>

Locality-wide bargaining in this type of competitive situation does not require either absolute uniformity of "pay" to the workers or of labor costs to the employers. But a close enough approach to uniformity of costs is necessary to keep the employers from demanding separate bargaining in order to defend or improve their respective competitive positions, and so breaking up the locality-wide agreement. Generally speaking, uniform minimum or basic time rates for workers in the same occupation will be acceptable to the employers as a support for the control of competition based on wages.<sup>8</sup> Assurance to employers is more difficult to give under a piece rate system, especially if differences in styles, patterns, methods, and other conditions affecting output make it necessary to fix the actual rates separately in each shop. Nevertheless, it can be done if there is centralized control of the shop rates through centralized setting of standards and enforced conformity thereto in the fixing of the particular rates.<sup>9</sup>

Shop bargaining, as distinct from locality-wide bargaining, is much more likely to persist with employers who are in clearly different product markets. Employers who employ only a few members of a particular craft union are generally not inclined to act in concert with employers in other industries in dealing with that union. The labor costs to them of the particular occupation may not seem important enough to make it worth while. Such employers will accept the terms fixed by the union in collective bargaining with employers in the in-

<sup>6</sup> For the classical examples of local area bargaining, the printing trades and the building trades, see Robert K. Burns, "Daily Newspapers," and William Haber, "Building Construction," in *How Collective Bargaining Works*, H. A. Millis, chief ed. (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1942); also, Joseph F. Burke, "Negotiating Problems in the Building Industry," in *Proceedings of the Conference on Industry-Wide Collective Bargaining*, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> If the negotiations are conducted for the employers as a group, with the understanding that the terms are to be accepted by all those represented, it is locality-wide bargaining whether the actual contracts are signed by an association for its members or by the employers individually.

<sup>8</sup> See Jesse T. Carpenter, *Employers' Associations and Collective Bargaining in New York City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), pp. 260-266, 289.

<sup>9</sup> See Dwight S. Robinson, *Collective Bargaining and Market Control in the New York Coat and Suit Industry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949).



dustry or industries in which the labor costs of its members' services are an important factor, although the locality pattern may be modified somewhat for the first mentioned employers because of differences in conditions, such as regular rather than intermittent employment.

If the union is one organized on a plant-wide basis (an "industrial" union), the plant is even more likely to remain the bargaining area, unless it belongs to a multi-plant corporation and is covered by a multi-plant agreement. "Uni-plant" employers do not as a rule join with employers in other product markets to bargain with the union that represents their employees, even if there are other employers in the locality who deal with the same union.<sup>10</sup>

There are, of course, wide differences among employers with respect to what they regard as a sufficient community of interest with employers in other industries in dealing with a particular union to induce group bargaining over a locality-wide area. Much depends upon the strategic importance of the union members' services to the various industries and upon the nature of the union's demands at the time. In general, the inter-industry grouping of employers for bargaining with the same union is more likely to be in the nature of federated action of local associations already formed within the respective industries than an association made up directly of individual employers in different industries.<sup>11</sup> And such inter-industry action in collective bargaining, where it occurs, is usually found to be the result of employer, rather than union, initiative.

A well known example of associated action among employers in different product markets to deal with a strong union is found in the San Francisco Bay area. The first spectacular case was that of the united front of the distributors in different product lines, such as groceries, drugs, etc., against the warehousemen's union.<sup>12</sup> Concerted action then spread to many other groups of employers who were united not on the basis of product competition but on the basis of dealing with the same union or unions. It was encouraged and abetted

<sup>10</sup> For an exception, see the Toledo area pension agreement of the UAW-CIO. *Ammunition*, Vol. 9, No. 9 (September, 1951), pp. 10-11; also *Daily Labor Report*, February 16, 1950 (No. 33), B, 1-32.

<sup>11</sup> For example, see Nathan P. Feinsinger, *Collective Bargaining in the Trucking Industry*, Industry-Wide Collective Bargaining Series, *op. cit.*, 1949, pp. 11, 14-15, 32, 40; and Carpenter, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>12</sup> See George O. Bahrs, *The San Francisco Employers Council*, Industry-Wide Collective Bargaining Series, *op. cit.*, 1948, pp. 4-9; also Clark Kerr and Lloyd H. Fisher, "Multi-Employer Bargaining: the San Francisco Experience" in *Insights into Labor Issues*, R. A. Lester and J. Shister, eds. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), pp. 26-28.

by a general or federated employers association known as the San Francisco Employers Council. Its purpose was not primarily to bargain itself with the unions but to encourage local-area bargaining through affiliated autonomous associations of employers faced in each case with the same union, whether in the same product market or not.<sup>13</sup> "Originally opposed to the employer device of the master agreement and the multiple employer unit because of the unfavorable shift in relative power, the established unions have made their peace with them."<sup>14</sup> The "master agreement" type of contract has become the standard pattern in San Francisco; in 1948 three quarters of the employers covered by labor contracts in that city were under "master agreements."<sup>15</sup> Although there is no single determinant of the coverage of either the associations or the master agreements, the pattern of collective bargaining in the San Francisco area is simple in comparison with the situation in the New York metropolitan area.<sup>16</sup>

### *Regional Bargaining*

It takes strong pressure, of a kind exceptional, on the whole, in the history of American trade unions to enable unions to push the area of unitary bargaining for terms beyond the locality, when the geographical extension of the unit is not the result of geographically wide operations by the same employer. Where it would require bargaining with a group of employers transcending the limits of the locality, employer reluctance to enter into such an arrangement is hard to overcome, save in the presence of the fear of being put at a serious disadvantage in product-market competition under individual-employer bargaining.<sup>17</sup> An illustration of this reluctance is found in the opposition among the employer groups in the San Francisco area to a wider area of bargaining. The San Francisco Employers Council aims only

<sup>13</sup> Bahrs, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11, 36-37.

<sup>14</sup> Kerr and Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Compare Kerr and Fisher, *op. cit.*, with Carpenter, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 39-41, and Ch. VII.

<sup>17</sup> Even in an industry in which there is considerable interlocality competition and in which labor costs are an important part of total costs, there may be employer insistence upon local autonomy in bargaining, as in the commercial printing industry. Here employer preference for local-area autonomy persists in spite of charges that "unilateralism" by the national unions prevents full and free bargaining in the local areas. John W. Seybold, *The Philadelphia Printing Industry: A Case Study*, Industry-Wide Collective Bargaining Series, *op. cit.*, 1949.

at "community-wide bargaining in a purely local labor market area."<sup>18</sup>

If the reluctance of the employers to accept wider than local bargaining is overcome, how wide is the area to be?<sup>19</sup> Is it to be industry-wide or something wider than the locality but less than the industry? A respectable list of industries can be compiled in which some bargaining is found over an area that may be called a district or a region.

Not all systems that are called "regional" are really regional in the sense that the mid-West or the Pacific Coast is a "region." Some represent little more than an expansion of the metropolitan area approach; pressure for equality of pay for the same work may extend beyond the city and result in bringing into the unitary bargaining employers in surrounding areas.<sup>20</sup> Or, as in the women's garment industry, the control of terms within the metropolitan area may require the inclusion in the area covered by the agreement of all the towns in which contract shops are located that do work for the jobbers in the metropolitan "market."

It is rarely that a regional system of bargaining reflects a coincidence of the area of production for the same market with that of the area of coverage of the agreement. The case of the anthracite coal industry leaps to mind at once because it is so unusual. Here the bargaining system is both "regional," geographically, and industry-wide in the product-market sense.<sup>21</sup> But most regional systems represent either a stage of transition to industry-wide bargaining or the failure of any one union to organize the industry sufficiently to achieve a product-market-wide system. If the market is nationwide, dividing the bargaining regionally does not seem to be a satisfactory final solution from the union standpoint. Where regional bargaining is found in such industries, it is found, usually, in only part of the industry;

<sup>18</sup> Bahrs, *op. cit.*, p. 1; also Kerr and Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 43. This does not apply to the maritime industry, in which coast-wide bargaining was already established.

<sup>19</sup> It must not be assumed that all unionists look upon the extension of the area of bargaining to the region or the industry as an unmixed blessing. In the Twentieth Century Fund's *Trends in Collective Bargaining*, the late Robert J. Watt, then International Representative of the A. F. of L, warned of the danger of increasing "top controls" of labor organizations. (S. T. Williamson and Herbert Harris, New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1945, pp. 232-234). The writer has heard other unionists declare that industry-wide bargaining lessens the interest of the members in their local unions.

<sup>20</sup> See Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 86, for trucking. A somewhat different development is that of the "master" statewide contract that provides for differentials in wages by locality or industry. Feinsinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 11.

<sup>21</sup> W. E. Fisher, "Anthracite," in *How Collective Bargaining Works*, *op. cit.*

the rest of the industry is characterized by local or plant bargaining, if it is unionized at all.

To be sure, the union is likely to strive to get as many competitors as possible under the same agreement, even if the agreement does not take labor terms out of competition on a market-wide basis. The union's problem is to overcome the employers' resistance to binding themselves in an agreement which does not protect them from the competition which they fear most. However, employers in a fairly homogeneous section, like the Fall River-New Bedford area in cotton textiles, may associate to fix the terms, or changes in terms, for their own area. This is better, from the union standpoint, than plant bargaining. Similarly, a regional system may survive a failure to attain and hold an industry-wide system, because of non-union competition, where the union employers are still largely concentrated geographically, as in full-fashioned hosiery.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the union must usually proceed cautiously in its bargaining in such circumstances if it is to retain even the degree of regional bargaining that it has.

On the other hand, if the employers in a well defined region, geographically, are willing to deal with the union on a region-wide basis, an independent regional system may prove satisfactory if the region has competitive advantages that enable it to give better terms than the rest of the industry without fearing the loss of its market to producers in other parts of the country, whether union or non-union. This seems to be the case in the Pacific Coast region of the pulp and paper industry.<sup>23</sup>

An outstanding example of regional division of bargaining that is caused by division in union jurisdiction is the maritime industry, including longshore. With the revival of unionism after the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act, both the unlicensed personnel and the longshoremen split into rival unions in such a way that different unions hold the dominant position on the Pacific Coast, on the one hand, and the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts on the other. This is true both for the unlicensed personnel and the longshoremen.<sup>24</sup> Among

<sup>22</sup> George W. Taylor, "Hosiery," in *How Collective Bargaining Works*, *op. cit.*; Richard A. Lester and Edward A. Robie, *Wages under National and Regional Collective Bargaining* (Princeton, N. J.: Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, 1946), Ch. V.

<sup>23</sup> Lester and Robie, *op. cit.*, Ch. VIII; Clark Kerr and Roger Randall, *Collective Bargaining in the Pacific Coast Pulp and Paper Industry*, Industry-Wide Collective Bargaining Series, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Maritime Labor Board, *Report to the President and to Congress*, March 1, 1940.

the officers' unions the same regional split is not evident. Nevertheless, the fact that the employers are organized into separate coast-wide groups to deal with the unlicensed personnel unions seems to make it more difficult to get nation-wide bargaining with them.

Regional bargaining in over-the-road trucking has had considerable growth in recent years.<sup>25</sup> This would seem to be a natural development, from the union side at least, in consequence of the organization of drivers in that branch of the industry and of the analogy between this type of trucking and the railroads. The development appears to have been pushed more by the union than by the employers as a whole. Whether over-the-road trucking will follow the railroad example and attain national collective bargaining on large issues remains to be seen. Tendencies exhibited by the union look in that direction. And the employers are much smaller, relatively, than the railroads. On the other hand, the tie-in of the over-the-road drivers with the mass of members in the very important and diversified local types of trucking may present difficulties.

### *Industry-Wide Bargaining*

The numerical coverage of workers under national collective bargaining has never been large, apart from the bituminous coal industry, the men's clothing industry, and the railroads.<sup>26</sup> The two first mentioned industries meet the conditions usually considered favorable to industry-wide bargaining, namely, a large number of relatively small producers, with labor costs a large proportion of total costs, competing for a geographically wide market, and facing a single national union that represents the employees in the overwhelming majority of the shops. The railroads obviously do not. Instead, we have here large employers, with relatively high fixed costs, competing only partially and on a regional basis—but especially vulnerable to government intervention.

The history of collective bargaining in the bituminous coal industry is highlighted by difficulties in maintaining industry-wide action among the employers as an integrated group. This has been true even since the restoration of strong national unionism following the enact-

<sup>25</sup> Feinsinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 31; Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>26</sup> See George E. Barnett, "National and District Systems of Bargaining," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. XXVI (May, 1912), pp. 425-443; also *How Collective Bargaining Works*, *op. cit.*, especially "Glass," by Milton Derber and Appendices A and B by Philip Taft; also Lester and Robie, *op. cit.*, Chs. II, III, IV.

ment of the National Industrial Recovery Act.<sup>27</sup> It took government seizure of the coal mines to bring about the first real industry-wide agreement in the industry. It was as a result of a contract made originally by the Secretary of the Interior with the United Mine Workers of America, and later accepted at different times by separate groups of operators, that the union in March 1945 called a conference with the representatives of all the operators of union mines to negotiate new terms. This was the first really national conference in the history of the industry.<sup>28</sup> It was this type of joint conference that President Lewis characterized in 1946 as "the greatest single collective bargaining device in the civilized world."<sup>29</sup>

It was not until 1951 that "the national agreement" was again negotiated with the representatives of all the operator groups simultaneously. This was made easier by the fact that a new Bituminous Coal Operators' Association, which took in most of the old Northern Appalachian commercial operators and the captive coal mines, and represented about one-third of the nation's tonnage, had been organized for the express purpose of dealing with the national union. This Association included the people who, the union president said, could call the tune for the industry—and had done so in 1947.<sup>30</sup> Although there was not a single operators' negotiating committee in 1951 as in 1945, the representatives of the Southern Coal Producers' Association and the Illinois Coal Operators' Association were on the ground along with those of the new association and all were consulted. The agreement was signed at the same time by representatives for each of the three groups. The *United Mine Workers Journal* expressed the hope that "the 1951 method employed in negotiating (the) Contract will set a pattern." It declared that President Lewis had been pleading with the operators for 30 years to set up a small official committee, representing their many separate organizations, with whom the United Mine Workers could deal in promoting efficiency and peaceful settlements of wage matters.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Waldo E. Fisher, "Bituminous Coal," in *How Collective Bargaining Works*, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *United Mine Workers Journal*, Vol. LVI (1945), Nos. 5, 6, 8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. LVII, No. 6 (March 15, 1946), p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> *United Mine Workers Journal*, Vol. LIX, No. 11 (June 1, 1948), p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Vol. LXII, No. 3 (February 1, 1951), p. 8. It is worth noting that, although when the Central Competitive Field system of regional bargaining was established (in 1898) the great majority of the workers covered were paid on a tonnage-basis, under the present-day national agreement three-fourths of the men work under day rates that are uniform geographically.

Quite different has been the story of the employers' part in the development of national bargaining in the men's clothing industry in the past fifteen years. Although the initiative has come from the union, the employers have been willing to associate on a national basis to establish and continue, and intensify, the joint industry-wide action.<sup>32</sup>

The method of taking wages out of competition is unusual and the administration of it unique. The device used for the control of labor costs is not an industry-wide uniform scale—that would be impracticable in the face of the diversity of patterns and methods under the piece work system that prevails in the "tailoring" operations in the industry—but a national minimum labor cost per garment of like grade, for tailoring. The unique feature of the administration of this "Stabilization Program" is that it is not administered through a national joint union-employer committee, but through the national office of the union.<sup>33</sup> However, the national agreement, in effect, includes the stabilization program in that it assumes it. The results are substantially the same as they would be under joint administration.<sup>34</sup> Thus, although there are nominally three areas of bargaining in men's clothing—shop, locality, and industry—the national system seems to be the most important today.<sup>35</sup>

On the railroads, regional bargaining by the brotherhoods in the engine and train service had begun by 1902 as the result of the presentation of uniform demands for wage increases on all the roads in the same region. After the unions had attained company-wide bargaining with the respective roads or systems there seemed to them no

<sup>32</sup> Robert J. Meyers and Joseph W. Bloch, "Men's Clothing," in *How Collective Bargaining Works*, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Meyers and Bloch, *op. cit.*, pp. 436-443; also *General Executive Board Report to the Fourteenth Biennial Convention*, May 15-19, 1944, pp. 179-183; *General Executive Board Report and Proceedings of the Fifteenth Biennial Convention*, May 6-10, 1946, pp. 63-64, 200, 201; also Richard A. Lester and Edward A. Robie, *Constructive Labor Relations* (Princeton, N. J.: Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, 1948), Ch. VI.

<sup>34</sup> However, this system does permit the national union to allow a small differential below the standard minimum labor cost to offset other costs incurred by a contractor in an out-of-town location. See Thomas Kennedy, *The Significance of Wage Uniformity*, Industry-Wide Collective Bargaining Series, *op. cit.*, 1949, p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> In the women's garment industry, which has many of the same problems, there is not industry-wide bargaining. However, this industry is in an unusually favorable position in its coat and suit branch and its dress branch in that these are concentrated largely in the New York metropolitan area and the local bargaining there sets the pattern for the industry. Nevertheless, the union must be ever on the alert to keep the shops in other areas organized and to keep their wages at a level that does not threaten New York standards.

good reason why the principle of equal pay for equal work should not be applied to all the roads in the same "territory." Undoubtedly, too, the practice of regional bargaining, once begun, was extended and kept going by federal mediation. And by 1916 the "Big Four" railroad unions were bargaining in concert with the railroads of the nation for the "eight-hour day." Both national dealing and national standardization of terms were furthered by war-time government operation. Both were union objectives after the war but the unions lost the first and something of the second.<sup>36</sup> It was not until the depression that national bargaining again became the rule. No doubt, government intervention has strengthened the tendency to handle important changes on a national basis.<sup>37</sup>

The railroad unions favor national bargaining on wages and rules, as a means of standardizing up to the "best practice"; they favor uniformity when it means standardization upwards. And national bargaining has resulted in a large measure of standardization, not only of wages but of rules. Thus, national bargaining has become more important, in general, than road bargaining.<sup>38</sup>

A form of national agreement for a limited purpose is found in the building industry. This is the agreement between the Building and Construction Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor and the Associated General Contractors Association and eight specialty contractors' associations for a National Joint Board for Settlement of Jurisdictional Disputes. The agreement does not fix terms of employment in the ordinary sense but it does represent an attempt to deal on an industry-wide scale with a problem that has defied solution through local-area bargaining.<sup>39</sup> Undoubtedly, the agreement was stimulated by the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act.<sup>40</sup> This type of national agreement is to be distinguished from one between a

<sup>36</sup> Harry D. Wolf, *The Railroad Labor Board* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927).

<sup>37</sup> *Idem.*, "Railroads," in *How Collective Bargaining Works*, *op. cit.*, pp. 339-343, 365; also Herbert Northrup, "The Railway Labor Act and Railway Labor Disputes in Wartime," *American Economic Review*, Vol. 36 (June, 1946), pp. 324-343.

<sup>38</sup> For a case in which a union subject to the Railway Labor Act has opposed nation-wide bargaining and insisted on individual employer bargaining, see Herbert R. Northrup, "Collective Bargaining by Air Line Pilots," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 61 (August, 1947), 533-576. Personal factors seem to have played a part in this case.

<sup>39</sup> John T. Dunlop, "Jurisdictional Disputes," in *Proceedings of New York University Second Annual Conference on Labor* (New York: Matthew Bender & Co., 1949), pp. 494-498.

<sup>40</sup> Title I, Section 8 (b) (4) D.



particular national union and the employers in a single specialty branch, such as the Standard Agreement between the International Union of Elevator Constructors and the National Elevator Manufacturing Industry, which covers many items in detail but provides that the wage rate to be paid shall be the average rate of the five highest of seven trades, specified in the agreement, in the locality.

### *Company-Wide Bargaining*

Company-wide bargaining is a natural objective for a union that bargains for the plants of a multi-plant corporation.<sup>41</sup> In order to achieve it, however, nearly all of the plants of the company must be organized—and by the same union. The term “company-wide” need not be restricted to cases in which the union bargains with the company for all of its plants any more than “industry-wide” implies 100 per cent coverage of the industry. Nevertheless, it seems inappropriate to use the term company-wide in cases in which there is a substantial division of the plants between unions of competing jurisdictions, even if there is occasional (but only occasional) cooperation between them in making demands upon the company.<sup>42</sup> It is the failure to organize nearly all the plants within the company in the same national union that is the greatest obstacle to the extension of company-wide bargaining in the mass-production industries. Obviously, it is also a barrier to industry-wide bargaining.

On the other hand, where company-wide bargaining does prevail in a mass-production industry and rival industrial unionism does not, we do not find industry-wide bargaining. The outstanding examples are the basic steel industry and the automobile industry. In both, the unions are strong and both unions have declared that industry-wide bargaining is one of their objectives. In neither have the employers favored it; in neither have the multi-plant employers felt the need of the protection of an industry-wide agreement against competition based on lower labor terms. In both, the unions have made substantial advances under company-wide bargaining. Is company-wide bargaining with gigantic multi-plant corporations by strong unions, its own

<sup>41</sup> This is not meant to include the growing number of cases in which employers such as chain stores or large construction companies make agreements with national unions to hire their members for local operations, subject to the actual terms of employment fixed by local-area bargaining for the respective occupations.

<sup>42</sup> This refers to national unions in the same industry, not to national unions in different industries that deal with the same “multi-industry” company.

logical terminal for such industries? Has it become, by its very success, a viable alternative for the unions to industry-wide bargaining?

The United Steel Workers, like its progenitor, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, had as one of its main objectives the establishment of industry-wide bargaining. Held back by the delay in organizing the so-called "Little-Steel" companies, it was not in a position to make a strong push for industry-wide bargaining before the advent of war-time controls in 1942 precluded coercive action to that end.<sup>43</sup> However, the treatment of the industry as a unit by the War Labor Board, in some respects at least, led to a considerable degree of collective action by the employers and eventually to what was in effect almost industry-wide action with the union in the establishment of a job classification program which went far toward granting the union demand for equal pay for equal work.<sup>44</sup>

In 1947, with the union presenting uniform and almost simultaneous demands for changes in practically a standardized form of contract as to hours, shift differentials, etc., and with basic hourly wages already standardized over most of the industry, there were present technical conditions favorable to industry-wide bargaining. Yet the negotiations returned to the traditional "follow-the-leader" practice, which left the key bargaining with the union in the hands of the United States Steel Corporation.

Twice, in 1949 and in 1951, this system has resulted, according to the union, in a concerted refusal of the companies to bargain in fact on the union's demands, prior to government intervention.<sup>45</sup> In 1949 the employers' front was broken after a strike and favorable settlements were made by the union on a company-by-company basis. This was a far cry from real industry-wide bargaining, but to the union it was preferable to the earlier industry-wide action of the employers.

In 1952, with an industry-wide strike again imminent because the union accepted the Wage Stabilization Board's recommendations and

<sup>43</sup> See Frederick H. Harbison, "Steel," in *How Collective Bargaining Works*, *op. cit.*, pp. 539, 569; also Clinton S. Golden and Harold J. Rutenberg, *The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), pp. 300-314.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Tilove, *Collective Bargaining in the Steel Industry*, Industry-Wide Collective Bargaining Series, *op. cit.*, 1948. *Idem.*, "The Wage Rationalization Program in United States Steel," *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 64 (June, 1947), pp. 967-982.

<sup>45</sup> Steel Industry Board, *Report to the President of the United States on the Labor Dispute in the Basic Steel Industry*, submitted September 10, 1949. *Proceedings of Special International Convention, United Steel Workers of America*, Jan. 3 and 4, 1952, pp. 19, 28-31, 39, 45-48, 68-71.

the employers did not, a committee representing six major steel companies asked the union to confer with it. The union agreed. The employers' proposal to negotiate was accompanied by a disavowal of precedent-setting.<sup>46</sup> Their approach to the method of collective dealing may prove as ephemeral as the "Big Four" companies' negotiations with the United Rubber Workers in 1946 and 1947.<sup>47</sup> However, there is a stronger foundation of company-wide bargaining in the basic steel industry than there was in rubber in 1947 and a much closer approach to uniformity in wage rates and other conditions of employment. Moreover, the United Steel Workers has a much more unified control of the industry.

There is an obstacle in an industry like steel to really industry-wide bargaining that is not found in coal, clothing, pressed and blown glassware, etc. It is the lack of homogeneity between the small number of large integrated producers who produce three-fourths of the output and the smaller producers who are competitors of and at times purchasers of materials from the large integrated companies.<sup>48</sup> Many of the smaller producers apparently are not in favor of industry-wide bargaining; they do not see how it would protect them from the competition of the larger ones, inasmuch as they want differentials to offset what they regard as competitive disadvantages in other respects. Instead of looking to industry-wide bargaining as a relief from having to follow "patterns" in the setting of which they have no hand, some of them, at least, prefer to look to Congress to prohibit industry-wide unionism.

Thus, if the large companies continue to oppose formal industry-wide bargaining the union may not press aggressively for it, despite its earlier declarations. The union has not done badly under company-wide bargaining plus pattern-setting, plus Presidential intervention, so far as material results are concerned. Equality in material results does not equate that system with formal industry-wide bargaining in the hopes of many unionists.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the present system

<sup>46</sup> *New York Times*, March 28, 1952.

<sup>47</sup> See Robert A. Winters, "Aspects of Joint Bargaining in the Rubber Industry," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 3 (October, 1949), pp. 1-16.

<sup>48</sup> Barnett listed homogeneity among the employers as a condition favorable to the establishment and continuance of national or district systems. *Op. cit.*, pp. 441-42.

<sup>49</sup> Compare Golden and Ruttenberg, *op. cit.*, Chs. X and XI, with J. Backman and A. L. Getlow, "Evolution of National Multi-Employer Collective Bargaining," *Southern Economic Journal*, Vol. 18 (October, 1951), especially 213-215.

leaves the union free to make concessions when necessary to allow a weak producer, who is the only one in his locality, to go on.<sup>50</sup> This is not putting wages into competition in the sense of making lower wages the basis of taking business away from other producers; it is merely allowing a weak producer to keep going. The union can do this under company bargaining without the embarrassment of having to get the other employers to agree to the differential.

In the automobile industry the union still adheres to its objective of equal pay for equal work, not only as a matter of equity among workers, but as a necessity among "competitive shops" to prevent the lowering of labor standards. Industry-wide bargaining has been favored as a means to geographical wage uniformity; it has also been regarded as essential to participation of the workers' organization in the larger problems confronting the industry.<sup>51</sup>

It is not always easy to tell what is meant by "industry-wide" in union pronouncements. In discussions of general aims and objectives, it apparently includes all plants manufacturing parts that go into the vehicle, whether owned by the vehicle manufacturers or by independent companies. The attainment of industry-wide bargaining in this larger sense, although still an ideal, does not now seem to be an immediate objective of the UAW. The core of its strength is in the plants of the big three manufacturers of the finished vehicle—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler—and with these it has company-wide bargaining. Its jurisdiction is practically unchallenged in the vehicle field. The results of company-wide bargaining here in recent years have left it little to fear in the way of pressure of price-competition among employers upon labor standards.

The big companies with which the union carries on its company-wide bargaining are not in favor of industry-wide dealing with the union. The largest of them has been articulately opposed to it.<sup>52</sup> Under the circumstances, it would have meant a very hard fight by the union to bring it about. Furthermore, opposition to industry-wide bargaining has not meant united action by the companies in resistance to the union's demands. On the contrary, there have been spectacular

<sup>50</sup> Tilove, *Collective Bargaining in the Steel Industry*, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34, 35.

<sup>51</sup> W. H. McPherson, in *How Collective Bargaining Works*, *op. cit.*, pp. 598, 614-16. Frederick H. Harbison and Robert Dubin, *Patterns of Union-Management Relations: United Automobile Workers, CIO. General Motors. Studebaker* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1947), pp. 28, 33-34, 73. *Proceedings of Eighth Convention, United Auto Workers-CIO*, Oct. 4-10, 1943, pp. 178-182, 402. *Ammunition*, Vol. 4, No. 11 (November, 1946), p. 506.

<sup>52</sup> Harbison and Dubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 28, 56-58, 63, 67, 73, 192.

instances of divided action among them which has apparently rebounded to the advantage of the union. By pushing its demands against each separately and at different times, the union has attained a close approach to uniformity in basic terms from each of the big companies in the same areas, with geographical differentials in the vehicle industry reduced to such proportions as not to be an important issue.

Thus, the union has accomplished its objectives as to terms of employment satisfactorily enough in the vehicle "industry," under the "one-at-a-time" method, so that industry-wide bargaining is no longer regarded as a pressing need for purely bargaining purposes.<sup>53</sup> As a matter of fact, the union's basic company-wide contracts in the vehicle industry have another three years to run. However, the union has not abandoned its desire for joint union-management action on an industry-wide basis to help solve the problems of the industry, particularly as they affect the workers.<sup>54</sup>

One large industry in which industry-wide bargaining is sought by the union—or at least by the largest union in the industry—and strongly resisted by the employers is the telephone industry. "Industry-wide" in this industry is practically tantamount to company-wide, according to the union. The union contends that the American Telephone and Telegraph Company controls the labor relations policies of the companies associated in the nationwide network of the Bell Telephone System, as well as those of the "long lines" which it owns directly. This the AT&T and the associated companies deny. Furthermore, the associated Bell companies themselves do not, as a rule, grant company-wide bargaining. Apparently it is not the policy of the Bell companies to engage in company-wide bargaining unless the National Labor Relations Board constitutes a company-wide unit the "appropriate unit."<sup>55</sup>

Obviously, this union, the Communications Workers of America—CIO, is not seeking industry-wide bargaining in order to take the pressure of competition off wages. It avers that the only logical system of bargaining in the industry is one in which the union bargains

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16. *Proceedings of the Twelfth Convention*, July 10-15, 1949, pp. 231-239; *Ammunition*, Vol. 8, No. 6 (June, 1950), p. 32.

<sup>54</sup> For example, *Report to the UAW-CIO Membership*, 1951, by Walter Reuther, International President, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> *Hearings* before Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations, Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, 81st Congress, 2d Session, on Labor Management Relations in the Bell Telephone System.

with "the source of authority, the policy-makers, the only ones with authority to make decisions in the Bell system, namely . . . the AT&T Management."<sup>56</sup> But a supporting reason is the union refusal to accept the "community wage principle" advanced by many of the associated companies as the proper determinant of wages in this industry.<sup>57</sup> Although the union does not now insist on geographical uniformity in wage rates for the same jobs, one of its aims undoubtedly is the reduction of geographical differentials, if not their eventual elimination.<sup>58</sup>

Here employer refusal to widen the area of bargaining is, as in many other cases, made easier by divisions among the workers with respect to the union that is to represent them. The Communications Workers of America—CIO, is opposed by other unions, many of them independent unions. Some of these independent unions, while charging that the AT&T prevents their respective operating companies from bargaining with them freely in reality, are opposed to unitary bargaining for the whole Bell System, presumably because it would threaten their existence as separate organizations.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the Communications Workers of America has itself but recently emerged from a series of reorganizations aimed at greater integration.

### *Conclusion*

We conclude that the two outstanding areas of bargaining in the great growth of collective bargaining in the past decade are the locality-wide and the company-wide areas. In each of these, respectively, we find a convenient unit for the exertion of union pressure (in the absence of conflicting unionism) combined with little employer resistance to the area "on principle."

Union pressure for industry-wide bargaining appears not very insistent in the absence of the necessity of repelling employer charges that employers in other localities are receiving lower terms that enable them to take away the business. It is this necessity rather than the "principle" of equal pay for equal work that has made for industry-wide bargaining. In wide-product-market industries in which strong local unions can advance their standards of employment without rais-

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 739.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 169-71, 182-83, 333, 362-63, 387, 411, 570.

<sup>58</sup> *Background of the 1950 Telephone Wage Dispute*, Communication Workers of America-CIO, Washington, D. C., p. 9. *Daily Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention, CWA-CIO*, week of April 2, 1951, pp. 401-404.

<sup>59</sup> *Hearings, op. cit.*, pp. 253-312, 763-68.

ing unemployment problems for themselves, local-area bargaining is likely to continue. Strong craft locals in big centers may be in a like position with the locals of a strong industrial union dealing with a big multi-plant corporation on a company-wide basis, in that both may be able to advance standards without industry-wide bargaining.

Thus, there is no one area of bargaining that is a matter of union principle. The area of bargaining is but an instrument for the attainment of the particular objectives of the particular union. That area is likely to be accepted as a matter of union policy that promises the best results, given the position of the employers and, perhaps, the policy of the government.

# UNION WAGE POLICIES

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AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS are organizations whose objectives are primarily economic, and whose decisions are reached through a political process. The statement that union decisions are reached through a political process may seem to be a truism, equally applicable to all organizations. It has, however, some special relevance in the case of unions, since their officers are elected by the membership, and since the labor movement has a tradition of belief in democratic government. The union staff representative or officer has more frequent direct contact with the membership than the corporation officer or employee has with the stockholders.

Wage policy lies at the heart of the economic objectives of the union. Therefore, the economic environment often appears to control wage policy; at other times political considerations seem dominant.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will attempt to show the interrelation of economic and political forces in the formation of wage policy.

Union wage policy will be used here to mean the formulation of wage demands which the union intends to press, and for which, if necessary, it is ready to fight by means of strikes, boycotts, or the use of its influence in government. It will not be used to mean the formulation of initial bargaining demands which are greatly in excess of what the union expects to receive, and whose purpose is to gain tactical advantage in negotiations or to influence public opinion. Neither will it mean the formulation of long-range wage goals, which

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<sup>2</sup> The dual nature of union wage policy has given rise to a controversy in which one side has emphasized the political factors and the other has emphasized the economic factors. Both sides can make a strong case by pointing to union behavior under certain circumstances favorable to their interpretation.

The political factors are emphasized by Arthur M. Ross in *Trade Union Wage Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948) and in his reply to Petshek, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, IV (October, 1951), 99-101. The economic factors are emphasized in John T. Dunlop, *Wage Determination Under Trade Unions* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Inc., 1950), especially pp. iii-v; G. P. Shultz and C. A. Myers, "Union Wage Decisions and Employment," *American Economic Review*, XL (June, 1950), 362-80; and Kirk R. Petshek, "Employment as an Element in the Wage Bargain," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, LXIV (November, 1950), 633-41.



the union may be sincerely trying to reach, but for which it is not prepared to fight in the short run. Union wage policy is not identical with the outcome of wage negotiations, since this is influenced by employer policy, and at times by government policy. Yet since union wage policy as distinguished from bargaining demands is seldom made public, we are forced to infer it in part from the outcome of negotiations, and from the tactics which the union employs. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the consequences of wage determination by collective bargaining.

Wage policy is determined at different levels of union organization in different unions. In highly decentralized unions such as the teamsters, it may be determined almost entirely by local unions, or groups of local unions in a given area. At the opposite extreme, basic wage policy for the United Mine Workers is determined by the national union for the entire bituminous coal industry. In between are many cases in which wage policy is determined by the union for the leading firms in an industry, while policy for smaller firms is worked out case by case by local unions assisted by field representatives of the national organization.

In general, the determination of wage policy is a function of union leaders. In some unions, membership meetings at the local level or, at higher levels, committees or conventions of representatives from local unions, assist in formulating initial demands. However, the leadership provides guidance for such meetings, and must decide in negotiations whether or when to retreat from the initial position. Although there are some unions whose wage agreements must be ratified by the membership, it is uncommon for the membership to reject agreements reached by the union negotiators.

The term "political factors" will be used primarily with reference to the internal politics of the union movement. This includes, first, politics within a particular union—the struggle of organized factions for power, or the conflicting ambitions of individuals for positions of leadership. It also includes rivalry between different unions or their leaders. This rivalry may be for favorable public opinion or for influence in government. It may be rivalry in organizing the unorganized. Inter-union rivalry reaches a bitter peak when a national union seeks to persuade local unions affiliated with a different national union to change their affiliation, or tries to win bargaining rights through a representation election where another union is already established as bargaining agent.

The most important element of the political factors in wage determination is the concept of parity or equity; of a "just" or "fair" relation between different wage rates. This concept is applied to comparisons of wages between jobs, plants, areas, or unions.

Since one of the primary purposes of American trade unions is to make economic gains for their members, rivalry within a union, and rivalry between unions will often be focused on the performance of union leaders in obtaining wage increases. The political pressures on the leadership will encourage it to pursue the stated purposes of the organization energetically; to seek "more" whenever possible, and to hold tenaciously to past gains when these gains are threatened. The leadership would, indeed, seek "more" in the absence of political rivalries, but the rivalry helps to define how much more is necessary. Often, this will be at least as much as some other union has received.

The term "economic factors" will be used to refer to part of the environment in which the union operates—the state of the labor market; the movement of the cost of living; the demand for the products of the unionized employer; and competition from the output of other employers, or from the products of other industries. Whereas the political factors operate largely as an upward pressure, increasing the union's efforts to seek higher wages, the economic factors are best viewed as restraints limiting the possibilities of achieving gains. In some cases they become downward pressures against the union's existing wage position. The most important element in these economic restraints is the effect of wage changes on employment. However, one factor in the economic environment frequently works in the opposite direction and reinforces political pressures: a rising cost of living will act as an upward pressure.

To argue that the economic environment imposes effective restraints on union wage policy does not mean that unions pursue narrowly a policy of maximizing purely economic gains. This view of economic factors is consistent with the pursuit of multiple goals by union leadership, of which maximizing the wage bill may be only one. It is not contradicted by behavior which courts economic losses; for example, by costly strikes when the amount at issue is very small.

It is most useful to distinguish between the influence of political and economic factors in cases where they work in opposite directions. Imagine, for example, a union faced with a rival union with an overlapping jurisdiction. The rival union has won a substantial wage increase, and uses this as propaganda in a raiding campaign. The leadership of the first union realizes that a similar increase in its own plants

would lead to a substantial reduction in employment. Which set of forces will predominate?

It is possible to define political forces so broadly that some of them will always work in the same direction as economic forces. Thus a desire to maintain employment and avoid hurting the competitive position of an employer can be viewed as a desire to maintain membership and good relations with management, which could have a political rationale. This wins a semantic victory for a political explanation of wage policy at the cost of greatly weakening it as an analytical tool. To explain everything by political motivation creates difficulties similar to the difficulties of those economists who explain all behavior of firms by reference to profit maximization. Pushed to extremes such explanations become tautological—they seem to explain everything and actually explain nothing. “Political behavior” becomes by definition whatever a union does.

When economic forces affect the vital interests of a union, they will create political groupings within the union which will support a policy of making necessary adjustments. It is not only members who want higher wages who exert political influence; members who want more work can also influence union leaders. However, the political pressure here is a secondary effect of economic forces.

Using the view taken above of the nature of political and economic factors, some generalizations can be made about the conditions under which each will have its greatest importance. Economic restraints will be least useful in explaining wage policy during the expansion phase of the business cycle, and political pressures will then provide a large part of the explanation. During the contraction phase of the cycle political factors will explain less, and economic forces will tend to be controlling. Moreover, economic forces will be most important to unions in highly competitive industries, whereas political factors will explain more of wage policy in industries whose monopolistic character insulates them somewhat from competitive forces. Often the economic environment will determine the broad outlines of wage policy, while the political pressures will determine its specific form.

#### *Union-wide Wage Policy When Employment is Rising*

The discussion so far has sketched roughly a way of looking at the forces influencing wage policy. This and the following sections will illustrate these forces by discussing wage policy under various types of conditions.

The postwar inflation of 1945 to 1948 provided ideal circumstances for the maximum influence on the policies of unions in mass production industries of political forces working toward uniform wage increases. The high level of demand for products and for labor and the favorable profit position of large firms made it unnecessary in most cases for unions to worry about any possible adverse effects of wage increases on employment. The sharp rise in the cost of living spurred union demands, and affected all unions similarly. The only significant restraint which confronted most unions was the willingness and ability of management to "take a strike." Under these conditions, the first wage bargain between a large union and a major employer in any period of contract renewal set a pattern which was widely followed in other bargaining. The result was three "rounds" of wage increases which were virtually uniform in timing and amount for large firms in several industries. These included the basic steel, automobile, agricultural implement, electrical equipment, rubber, and metal mining industries.

What explains the uniformity of wage increases in these industries during this period? In large part, it was the refusal of union leaders to settle with prosperous firms for less than the pattern. They feared that if they did so, they would lose prestige in the eyes of present and potential members. This would encourage raiding by rival unions, or provide ammunition for opponents of incumbent leaders within their own organizations. The bitterness of hostility between factions of the labor movement intensified these fears. In Ross's words, the political pressures produced "orbits of coercive comparison."<sup>8</sup> On the employer side, a willingness to accept "pattern" wage increases was created by the ease with which they could be passed on to the consumer in higher prices.

Even in this situation, however, the influence of political pressures on actual wages can be easily exaggerated. What is equalized is not so much the actual wage increases as the apparent increases. A certain leeway between the two is created by the inclusion in the wage "package" of fringe items, such as pensions, insurance, paid vacations, and call-in pay. By altering their estimates of the value of such items, union or management spokesmen can create an impression of more uniformity than in fact exists. A prize example of such conduct is afforded by a statement made after the bituminous coal wage agreement of 1947. Steel industry management was reluctant to admit that

<sup>8</sup> Ross, *Trade Union Wage Policy*, p. 53.

it had given more to its coal miners than to its steel workers. The chairman of the board of the United States Steel Corporation declared :

It is not more inflationary to grant a wage increase of 15 cents an hour to coal miners than it was to grant a substantially similar wage increase a few months ago to workers in many other industries. Doing something to make the wages of miners accord with an already existing general wage pattern does not inaugurate a new inflationary spiral.<sup>4</sup>

This statement ignores the fact that the wage settlement in question included, in addition to a 15 cent an hour money wage increase, a one hour reduction in daily hours without reduction in pay for miners on day rates, and an increase of five cents per ton in royalty payments to the miners welfare fund. The effect of the agreement was to raise the average hourly earnings of bituminous coal miners by approximately 30 cents, not including the value of increased welfare payments.

It is useful to distinguish between similar wage increases (those of roughly the same size) and uniform wage increases (those of exactly the same size). During the post-war inflation large firms in heavy industries would almost certainly have given similar wage increases in the absence of any political pressures, or even in the absence of unions. This could have resulted from the rising demand for all products, and the resulting general shortage of labor at existing wage levels, which affected most of these firms similarly. Political pressures on union wage policies turned the potential similarity of wage increases into actual uniformity for the large firms. However, the unions could not have created uniformity without the help of forces working toward similarity.

#### *Union-wide Wage Policy When Employment Is Falling*

Economic circumstances provide the most complete explanation of wage policy when a union is faced with a substantial loss of employment in the firms with which it bargains. In some such cases, union leaders may agree to forego wage increases or to accept wage reductions, even though such a policy will strengthen the cause of a rival union, or be used as an issue by a rival faction within the union. In other cases, rival factions within a union may agree on a policy of wage reductions or of foregoing increases.

<sup>4</sup> Irving S. Olds, *The New Labor Contract in Bituminous Coal*, statement of July 17, 1947 (New York: The United States Steel Corporation, 1947), p. 3 (Pamphlet).

Cases in which adverse economic conditions affect the general wage policy of a national union occur most frequently when the union does not control the entire industry with which it bargains. A depression, a decline in the size of the industry, or even a slackening of the industry's rate of growth will then create conditions under which lower wages in the non-union sector of the industry will threaten the employment of workers in the union sector. Sooner or later, the union will be forced to lower wages or to increase productivity in its sector to check the threat. Outstanding examples of wage policies of this type occur in the history of collective bargaining in the bituminous coal and full-fashioned hosiery industries.

In bituminous coal between 1923 and 1927 the competition of non-union fields caused a reduction of 28 per cent in employment in three of the leading unionized states. The United Mine Workers, under the leadership of John L. Lewis, fought bitterly against wage reductions, using the slogan "No Backward Step." The union was finally forced in 1928 to accept reductions of from \$1.20 to \$2.50 a day in the principal unionized fields.<sup>5</sup> This wage policy was carried out by the majority (Lewis) faction of the union during a violent factional battle against the minority "Save The Union Committee," led by John Brophy. The minority seized upon the wage cuts as an issue, and demanded action to restore the old scale. In the midst of the controversy over wage policy, the "Save the Union Committee" was expelled for dual unionism.<sup>6</sup>

In the full-fashioned hosiery industry, competition from non-union mills forced the union to accept a series of reductions in rates, starting in 1928. At the same time, the union worked to increase efficiency in the mills under its jurisdiction. When general depression was added to non-union competition, the wage reductions became very substantial. By 1931, the union had accepted rates 60 to 65 per cent below the 1927 levels. This policy was carried out despite severe opposition within the union. A number of insurgent strikes were conducted by locals who opposed the wage reduction policy.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, the generally rising price level has averted the necessity for wage cuts, except in rare and unimportant cases, even

<sup>5</sup> Waldo E. Fisher, "Bituminous Coal" in H. A. Millis, ed., *How Collective Bargaining Works* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1942) pp. 257-65.

<sup>6</sup> Selig Perlman and Philip Taft, *Labor Movements 1896-1932*, Vol. IV of *History of Labor in the United States*, ed., John R. Commons (4 vols., New York: The Macmillan Co., 1918-35), ch. XLI.

<sup>7</sup> George W. Taylor, "Hosiery" in Millis, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 473-89.

for unions faced with strong non-union competition. There have, however, been important instances in which non-union competition has forced unions to forego wage increases at times when unions in other industries were receiving them. For example, the Northern cotton and rayon textile industry and the Textile Workers Union of America, CIO negotiated no wage increase or other economic improvements in their contracts between January, 1948 and September, 1950, a period of almost three years. The "fourth round" of wage increases was skipped in this industry. In January, 1949, an arbitration award was made in accordance with the wage reopening clause of a continuing agreement between the union and two key employers associations. This award denied the union's demand for a wage increase. The union attacked the decision; however, it withdrew its requests for increases in the rest of the industry. A year later, a convention of delegates from the local unions in the industry agreed to allow their existing contracts to renew themselves without change.

A revealing editorial comment was made by the union's paper during this period:

Somebody once called politics "the art of the possible." He might have been talking about union negotiations.

With the textile industry slumping through the folly of its own management, and with little more than a third of its workers organized, TWUA is unable to win general wage increases this year. Our only present alternative would be industry-wide strikes, many in violation of contract, which might well wreck the union, the organized segment of the industry, or both.<sup>8</sup>

During this period there was an intense factional battle within the Textile Workers Union between adherents of President Emil Rieve and those of Executive Vice-President George Baldanzi. Charges of mistakes in wage policy in particular local cases were prominent in this factional dispute, but the basic policy of not striking to secure a general wage increase was not attacked by either faction.<sup>9</sup>

The shoe industry affords an example similar to that of textile; although it involves fewer workers, it is more dramatic. The Brotherhood of Shoe and Allied Craftsmen and the Brockton, Massachusetts shoe manufacturers negotiated no general wage increase from December, 1946 to September, 1950. This union faced competition within its industry from an AFL and a CIO union each many times as large.

<sup>8</sup> *Textile Labor*, June 18, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Proceedings*, Sixth Biennial Convention, Textile Workers Union of America, C. I. O.: Boston, May 1-5, 1950, pp. 52-87.

Members of CIO's United Shoe Workers of America in Massachusetts received a general wage increase in January, 1947 of 2.5 cents an hour, and another general increase of 5 cents an hour in July, 1948. George P. Shultz, in a study of the Brockton union, reports that during this period its leaders were engaged in a fight to defeat the USWA in a representation election, and were also faced with closely contested elections within their own union. Yet despite this, the question of a general wage increase was never much of an issue. Shultz concludes, "The absence of general wage increases during a period marked by intense inter- and intra-union rivalries . . . is best explained by reference to local employment conditions . . . As one of the Brotherhood officials explained, 'Our problem right now is *shoes* not wage rates.'" <sup>10</sup>

Examples cannot be given of cases in which unions having bargaining rights for substantially all of their industries faced declines in employment large and long enough to generate severe downward pressure on wages. Prior to 1932, there were few fully organized industries of any consequence.<sup>11</sup> Since 1932, we have experienced generally rising employment and prices. The contraction of 1938, although very sharp, was so short that it had little effect in reducing wage rates, which usually lag at the downturn. Average hourly earnings in nondurable manufacturing, generally quite sensitive to business conditions, dropped only 2.5 cents from their peak in January, 1938, to their trough in September, 1938.<sup>12</sup> Many, if not most, of the industries in this group were largely unorganized at this time. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that strong unions were able to adopt and enforce a "hold-the-line" policy against wage cuts. However, the 1938 contraction did prevent most unions from seeking general wage increases between the spring of 1937 and the early part of 1941.

It seems probable that, in the future, unions in fully organized industries will oppose general wage cuts during periods of declining employment and that they will be able to make the policy stick. However, even the strongest unions are unlikely to try to win wage increases during a period of pronounced decline in business activity.

<sup>10</sup> George P. Shultz, *Pressures on Wage Decisions* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1951), p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> For the extent of union organization by major industry divisions in 1910, 1920, and 1930, see Leo Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1936), p. 118.

<sup>12</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, monthly issues, 1937-39.



*Wage Policy in Individual Firms*

Unions which organize many firms competing keenly in the same product market will almost always pursue a standard wage policy within a given product market. The purpose of this policy will be to equalize hourly wage rates, piece rates, or even unit labor costs between firms so as to "take labor out of competition." The building trades and printing trades unions offer examples of standard hourly rates for all firms within a given local product market. Unions in the clothing, shoe, and hosiery industries generally pursue a policy of uniform piece rates or of equalizing unit labor costs. If the product is sold on national markets, the union will, to the best of its ability, try to make the uniformity of labor costs or piece rates national.

The "Stabilization Plan" for the men's clothing industry introduced by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers is an excellent example of a wage policy of this type. The plan involves classifying garments into quality grades and assigning a labor cost, uniform for all producers, to each garment within each grade. Piece rates for individual workers are set so that they add up to the assigned labor cost.<sup>13</sup>

Unions bargaining with many employers selling in the same product market can seldom make concessions in wages to individual firms which meet economic difficulties. To do so might give these firms a competitive advantage which would threaten the jobs of union members working for other employers. It would certainly cause protests by other employers that the policy was unfair, and if the protests were not heeded, some employers might try to lock the union out. Yet to allow all firms the same concessions would mean general wage reductions to the level which the marginal firms were willing to pay. Political pressures, which favor wage uniformity because it seems equitable to union members, here work in the same direction as economic pressures.

However, in order to preserve jobs for the members, a union of this type may help to improve the efficiency of firms in economic difficulty. Where piece rate systems are complex and vary from firm to firm, they can provide a basis for disguised wage cuts that do not threaten the competitive structure or create the impression of inequity.

<sup>13</sup> R. J. Myers and J. W. Bloch, "Men's Clothing" in Millis, ed., *op cit.*, pp. 436-41. For the operation of similar plans in the women's clothing and shoe industries, see Dwight E. Robinson, *Collective Bargaining and Market Control in the New York Coat and Suit Industry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 83-87, and Shultz, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-121.

The situation is very different for unions which bargain with diverse employers who do not compete in the same product markets. A union such as the United Steelworkers of America, CIO, in the steel fabricating industry bargains with many firms producing specialized products. These firms may face no direct competition in their markets, or have competitors which are organized by other unions or are unorganized. The United Steelworkers has been accused of applying wage increases uniformly to such firms during the post-war years, regardless of differences in their individual circumstances. This policy has been attacked on the ground that it will cause a misallocation of resources.<sup>14</sup> A recent study of this union's wage policies in steel fabricating and miscellaneous industries shows that the national union, although it announced a policy of seeking uniform increases, did not press this policy where local conditions made it seem unwise.<sup>15</sup> Even during 1946, when the union pursued most vigorously its attempts to obtain uniform wage increases, some exceptions were permitted. In each successive year through 1950, the wage increases in steel fabricating deviated more in amount and timing from the basic steel pattern. The deviation was least among fabricating firms located near centers of basic steel production, and greatest among firms located far from basic steel centers.

Additional evidence of the same sort is available in a study of a New England labor market.<sup>16</sup> The evidence relates to bargains between local unions affiliated with the CIO rubber, auto, steel, and electrical workers unions, and twelve companies, during the years 1946, 1947, and 1948. In only two of the twelve cases did the union obtain the national pattern of wage increases for its industry in all three years. In four cases, the unions did not get as much as the national pattern in any year.

Why do unions of this sort permit deviations from their wage patterns when bargaining with the smaller firms in their jurisdiction? Political pressures would generally work in the direction of uniformity of increases. However, in some cases the uniformity sought may be with the wage increases or fringe benefits most common in the locality, or with those of the industry of which the employer is a member,

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Leo Wolman, *Industry-Wide Bargaining* (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: Foundation for Economic Education, 1948), p. 35.

<sup>15</sup> George Seltzer, "Pattern Bargaining and the United Steelworkers," *Journal of Political Economy*, LIX (August, 1951), pp. 319-31.

<sup>16</sup> Lloyd G. Reynolds, *The Structure of Labor Markets* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), pp. 170-76.

rather than with the wages or fringe benefits of the national union and its principal industry. In the cases where deviation from union-wide wage patterns is permitted, political pressures for uniformity are offset by economic pressures on the individual employers. Local union leaders, or the representatives of the national unions who service the local, may fear that a pattern increase would hurt employment in this firm. In other cases, they may fear that a pattern increase could be won only through a strike that the membership doesn't want. Since a below-pattern increase would not create a competitive threat to employment in other firms bargaining with the national union, it is accepted.

An example of union thinking in this kind of situation is given in a letter from a district director of the United Steelworkers to the national union headquarters. He explained a below-pattern wage increase given by a Southern stove company in these words:

This is an obsolete plant and in my judgment the wages are the best that could be done at the present time. The members of the local union insist upon us accepting this supplemental agreement rather than to strike the plant, as we feel certain that if we were to strike this plant, it would probably never open again.<sup>17</sup>

Even during periods of inflation, when unions insist on pattern wage increases from prosperous firms, economic forces limit the spread of the pattern. In firms where wage increases might have adverse effects on employment, substantial deviations from the union's general wage policy will occur.

In addition to withholding demands for general wage increases, unions whose employers are not in direct competition in the same product markets will frequently make concessions concerning incentive systems and production standards. If an employer faces severe economic difficulties, and particularly where he is located in a small community, a union of this type will often allow cuts in incentive rates or tightening of production standards. These will be much less apparent to other employers than would cuts in basic wage rates. The union may also assist in increasing output and reducing waste, sometimes by means of a formal program of union-management cooperation.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Seltzer, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

<sup>18</sup> Several cases of this type are discussed in F. H. Harbison and J. R. Coleman, *Goals and Strategy in Collective Bargaining* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1951), Ch. 4.

*Direct Union Interest in Employment*

Some unions bargain directly for increases in employment in either of two ways: they bargain to increase the number of men employed on a particular job, or to increase the length of time certain workers are employed. The first method is exemplified by "full crew" requirements of various sorts, and requirements for the performance of unnecessary work. Full crew requirements are widely used by several unions, including the musicians and printing pressmen's unions, and some railroad unions.<sup>19</sup> The electricians and typographers unions have required the performance of unnecessary work.<sup>20</sup>

The second method is exemplified by the guaranteed work week or the guaranteed annual wage. Agreements including this type of guarantee are still rare. Such guarantees are being demanded in collective bargaining with increasing frequency by several unions, especially in the automobile, steel, and meat-packing industries, although the demands have not been pressed very energetically.

Such demands indicate that the union is choosing between increased wages and increased employment. The power to impose costs on the employer which is used to secure "full crews" or employment guarantees could alternatively be used to increase wages for a smaller number of workers.<sup>21</sup>

There are also many unions which attempt in various ways to increase the demand for the output of their employers. One frequent method is to advertise union label goods in the hope that this will increase the sales of unionized employers, and at the same time aid in organizing the non-union employers. Where an industry is fully organized, the union may help to advertise the products of the whole industry.<sup>22</sup> In some cases, especially in the building trades, unions help to create or enforce product market monopolies for union employers.<sup>23</sup> Finally, unions may use political pressures to increase

<sup>19</sup> See S. H. Slichter, *Union Policies and Industrial Management* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1941), pp. 183-91; Dunlop, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-63; and Petshek, *op. cit.*, pp. 637-39.

<sup>20</sup> Slichter, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-183.

<sup>21</sup> For other statements of this argument, see *ibid.*, p. 197, and Petshek, *op. cit.*, p. 639.

<sup>22</sup> See Dunlop, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-102.

<sup>23</sup> The principal device used for this purpose is the secondary boycott, which is now illegal under the Taft-Hartley Act. Earlier, some such activities had been held illegal under the anti-trust laws, but only where they involved formal cooperation with employers. Some secondary boycotts probably continue despite the law. There are also legal ways of creating protected markets for union employers, such as persuading government bodies to purchase from union employers only.

the demand for the products of their industries, or to prevent it from decreasing. Thus both the mine workers and railroad unions have lobbied against the St. Lawrence Seaway; the former because it would substitute hydro-electric power for coal; the latter because it would substitute water for rail transportation.

Union activity of these sorts, however, has no necessary bearing on wage policy. Assuming that the union has succeeded in increasing the demand for union labor, it can still choose freely between ways of utilizing this advantage. It can choose more employment at the same wage, higher wages at the same level of employment, or some combination of the two. Policies which increase demand are mentioned here only because they have been cited in discussions of wage policy as though they were in themselves evidence that unions regard employment as being affected by wage rates.<sup>24</sup> A union which was firmly convinced that wage levels have no effect on employment, and was opposed to moderating wage demands to protect jobs, would still be justified in pursuing such policies, provided that it wanted increased employment or increased membership. It would not be sacrificing wages in pursuit of these other objectives.

### *Wage Structure and Fringe Benefits*

The discussion thus far has considered the broader outlines of union wage policy. It has dealt with decisions concerning the general level of wages which the union tries to obtain. Wage policy also includes a large number of questions about the specific form of wages and wage increases. Should wages be paid on a time rate or piece rate basis? What should the occupational wage structure within the plant be like? How much of the employer's total wage cost should be paid in the form of insurance, pensions, paid holidays, paid vacations, and similar fringe items?

Space limitations do not permit a detailed discussion of the factors influencing policy on each of the many specific questions of this sort which a union must decide. In general, economic restraints will have less effect on most of these decisions than on decisions which affect the total cost of the wage package. An employer is likely to be indifferent or nearly indifferent as between a demand for paid holidays costing two cents an hour, and a direct wage increase of the same amount. The preferences of particular groups of union members will

<sup>24</sup> Petshek, *op. cit.*, p. 639.

determine many such decisions. These group preferences will be based on economic advantages to the members of the group, but will be seen as political pressures by the union leaders.

The divisions or factions which form around such issues within a local union do not necessarily correspond to the broader factional or ideological structure of the national union. Thus older workers may favor a demand for pensions, whereas younger workers may prefer a direct wage increase. The most able or individualistic workers may favor incentive rates, whereas workers who feel a strong attachment to the group may oppose them. If there is a factional split within the national union, each side in a local controversy on methods of wage payment could include members of both national factions. In other instances, however, such issues can become involved in broader political struggles. Thus, during the period from June, 1941 to August, 1945, the so-called "left-wing" unions were advocates of incentive pay because they believed that it would speed the war effort, and they attacked other unions which maintained their traditional preference for time rates.

Although wage structure and fringe items offer a fertile ground for union politics, they can also be subject to external economic pressures. In the determination of occupational rate structures, for example, unions are constrained by market forces. Wage increases of the same absolute amount per hour at all occupational levels have tended to narrow the relative differential between occupations in recent years. This narrowing has been widely cited as a consequence of collective bargaining by industrial unions. However, at the same time, wages of unskilled workers were rising relative to those of skilled workers in unorganized sectors of the economy. This is one of the effects of full employment, especially in the case of dirty or heavy jobs. Rates for such jobs rise relative to other rates in periods of full employment because it becomes more difficult to fill them.

Changes in occupational rate structures may be produced by the differential strength of craft unions in an industry. Thus unions of skilled building trades workers have probably increased the differential between skilled and unskilled workers in the construction industry during certain periods.<sup>25</sup> However, it seems unlikely that industrial unions can create substantial and lasting alterations in

<sup>25</sup> See Stephen Sobotka, "The Influence of Unions on Wages and Earnings of Labor in the Construction Industry," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago.

occupational rate structures, or even that they will try to do so, in the absence of economic forces tending to move rates structures in the same direction.

It is true that craft groups within those industrial unions which are controlled by semi-skilled workers have often organized their political strength in order to influence union policy on rate structure.<sup>26</sup> However, such groups are likely to feel aggrieved only when there is a discrepancy between their earnings and earnings elsewhere. Electricians in an auto plant will be content with \$2.50 an hour if building trades electricians at \$3.00 an hour are out of work much of the time. Let the building trades electricians become steadily employed, and electricians within the auto workers union may become restive. They will compare themselves to similar skilled workers in other industries, even if in fact the content of their jobs is somewhat different. Political activity on their part, however, is more likely to be a response to changes in the demand for their skill, either in their industry or in other industries, than to mere changes in union rates elsewhere. Workers will usually recognize the fallacy of comparing rates alone when the amount of employment received is subject to wide variation.

In more detailed aspects of rate structure, the pressure of market forces is often weak and slow, and traditional differentials will persist for long periods. The policy in such cases is often designed to remove "inequities" in rate structures by means of systematic comparisons of skills within a plant or company. The United Steelworkers has been especially active in this area.<sup>27</sup>

The increase in the number and scope of pension, medical care, and insurance plans negotiated through collective bargaining has been striking in recent years, and indicates a significant shift in union wage policy. Unions seem to want an increasing share of total wages to be paid in these forms. The wide variety of possible policies in this area confronts unions with many new possibilities to choose from and new decisions to be made. It permits a new diversity of policy between unions. Union with many members working for a few large employers, such as the auto workers and the steel workers, have generally negotiated pension and welfare plans company by company, and have often accepted money wage increases in lieu of pensions from the smaller firms. Unions such as the mine workers and clothing workers,

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Ross, *Trade Union Wage Policy*, p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> See Robert Tilove, "The Wage Rationalization Program in United States Steel," *Monthly Labor Review*, LXIV (June, 1947), 967-82.

which deal with many small employers, organize multi-employer funds by areas or in some cases on an industry-wide basis.

The principal purposes of welfare plans are to provide security against the hazards of illness and to provide funds for retirement. Occasionally the plans also have important secondary purposes. The United Mine Workers pension and welfare plan offers an interesting case, where taking a substantial amount of wages in the form of a welfare plan tends to prevent shifts in the location of employment. In recent years, the union has seemed little concerned with the effect of its wage demands on total employment in the bituminous coal industry. It negotiated substantial wage and welfare fund royalty increases in the spring of 1950, after a period of slack demand for coal and part-time work for miners. However, the union has insisted on financing the welfare fund by means of a royalty on each ton of coal produced, rather than the more usual plan of a percentage levy on payrolls. The effect of this has been to minimize the effect of the welfare fund on the location of employment. Under the present 30 cents a ton royalty, a strip mine producing thirty tons per man-day pays \$9.00 per man-day into the welfare fund, a fully mechanized underground mine producing ten tons per man-day pays \$3.00 per man-day into the fund, and a mine producing four tons per man-day pays \$1.20 per man-day into the fund. The royalty thus works toward equalization of unit labor costs between mines of different efficiency, whereas a welfare fund financed by a percentage levy on payrolls, or a direct increase in money wages would create an additional incentive for the concentration of employment in the mines whose output per man-day is highest. The royalty system also diminishes the incentive to substitute machinery for labor.<sup>28</sup>

### *Conclusion*

This paper has attempted to show that it is not useful to view union wage policy as determined by either political or economic forces alone. Rather, political rivalry within and between unions helps shape policy within a framework set by economic conditions. This framework at times provides wide latitude for the operation of political forces—at

<sup>28</sup> Officials of the United Mine Workers will not confirm this explanation of their insistence on a tonnage royalty. The other possible advantage of such a system is that a constant tonnage royalty will produce increased revenue per worker as output per man-day increases over a period of time. However, the amazing success of the union in increasing the amount of the royalty per ton is an indication that they did not need to use the tonnage basis for this reason.



other times it restricts them severely. The union seldom faces a choice between the accommodation of conflicting political forces on the one hand, and accommodation to economic conditions on the other. The political forces within the union will themselves respond to economic conditions, and the union will be able in most instances to pursue a policy which is both politically and economically tenable. On the whole, this has been done by American unions in recent years with considerable success. The conflict between wages which seem equitable and those which will preserve employment might indeed be an irreconcilable one, were it not for the subtle but ultimately powerful influence of the market on concepts of equity in wage payment.

The belief that economic forces do not have any widespread effect on union wage policy leads some to the conclusion that small-scale bargains cannot be responsible.<sup>29</sup> Ross therefore favors a nation-wide inter-industry master wage bargain, and argues that only when we have this "will negotiators be in a position to assume the responsibility for the consequences of their decisions, and only then will economic analysis be of substantial assistance to them."<sup>30</sup>

A master wage agreement would force negotiators to pay more attention to the effects of wage policy on the national economy. However, the misuse of purchasing power arguments by unions, and their frequent statements that deflation is always in an imminent danger, do not offer much promise in this direction. In creating greater concern for effects on the national economy, a nation-wide master wage policy would weaken or eliminate concern for effects on employment in particular firms and industries. If the view taken here of union wage policy is a correct one, this would be a real and serious loss.

On the other hand, there have been proposals to restrict the scope of collective bargaining over wages to much smaller units. H. Gregg Lewis would restrict it to the individual employer.<sup>31</sup> These proposals rest on the thesis that unions in general have achieved too much monopoly power at present, and that where they are strong, they have set wage levels which restrict employment. Both advocates of broader and narrower wage bargains feel that unions in general do not moderate their wage policies substantially because of adverse effects

<sup>29</sup> Ross, *Trade Union Wage Policy*, p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>31</sup> H. Gregg Lewis, "The Labor-Monopoly Problem: A Positive Program" *Journal of Political Economy*, LIX (August, 1951), 277-87. For a similar proposal, see Raleigh W. Stone, "Trade Unionism in a Free Enterprise Economy," *University of Chicago Law Review*, XIV (April, 1947), 399-408.

on employment. Ross finds this commendable because he denies that such effects are important. Advocates of restricted bargaining would, of course, disagree with him at this point.

There are unquestionably some unions whose wage policies have reduced employment in certain crafts or industries, or prevented it from growing. The employment effect may fail to cause a more restrained wage policy in part because the sufferers (the unemployed, or those who are forced to work at lower paid jobs) were never in the union. On the whole, however, American union wage policy has been economically realistic. It has responded to the dynamic features of our economy, and does not seem responsible for any serious malfunctioning of the labor market. Union wage policy could be improved in many cases; in some of these cases it would be wishful thinking to expect the unions to reform themselves, and public action may be called for. But drastic changes in the scope of the wage bargain, applicable to all unions and industries, seem at best unnecessary, and might do serious damage.

# UNION ATTITUDES TOWARDS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ROLES OF THE MODERN STATE

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WILL HERBERG has recently suggested that Samuel Gompers, contrary to the general consensus, was never really a socialist; he was a "conservative" syndicalist. "A reinterpretation of old-line 'pure and simple' trade unionism from this point of view," Herberg parenthetically and rather casually remarks, "promises fruitful results."<sup>1</sup>

The present writer is prepared to accept Mr. Herberg's revisionist characterization of the youthful Gompers, but he does not share the former's optimism as to the results which might be expected at this late date from a reinterpretation of the ideological origins or voluntarism or "pure and simple" trade unionism. This is not to belittle the importance or the necessity of historical research for its own sake. It is merely to suggest that the results of historical revisionism, in the case of "pure and simple" trade unionism, are not likely to be very "fruitful" from a practical point of view. Whether Gompers arrived at the philosophy of "pure and simple" trade unionism via syndicalism rather than socialism is an interesting question, to be sure, but one that is very probably irrelevant, in terms of the immediate realities of the second half of the 20th century.

The more relevant question at the present time (assuming, as the present writer is constrained to do, that neither syndicalism nor socialism is either viable or desirable in the United States) is whether or not "pure and simple" trade unionism has been abandoned and, if so, whether or not it has been or is being replaced by an alternative ideology.

Five or ten years ago the answer to the first question would have been almost unanimously in the affirmative and the answer to the second at least tentatively so. Even as early as 1935 perhaps the majority of labor economists and labor philosophers would have agreed with David Saposs when he said that "voluntarism is as dead as its cousin *laissez-faire*."<sup>2</sup> At the present time, by contrast, many of them seem to be of the opinion that Saposs' obituary notice may have been published prematurely.

<sup>1</sup>*Socialism and American Life*, edited by Donald Drew Egbert and Stow Persons (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1952) Volume 1, p. 492.

<sup>2</sup>"American Labor Movement Since the War," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 49: 236, February, 1935.

Perhaps the disagreement is more semantic than real. It all depends upon the individual writer's definition of voluntarism or "pure and simple" trade unionism. If the only alternative to voluntarism or "pure and simple" unionism is some form of socialism (as certain commentators almost seem to suggest) then voluntarism is obviously still very much alive, for it is perfectly accurate to state, as the editors of *Fortune* have recently done, that "never have left-wing ideologies had so little influence on the American labor movement as they have today."<sup>3</sup> If, however, there is a *tertium quid* between voluntarism or "pure and simple" trade unionism on the one hand and various forms of socialism on the other, then it is somewhat less than certain that voluntarism or "pure and simple" trade unionism is still alive.

The present writer is of the opinion that there is such a *tertium quid* as an alternative to "pure and simple" trade unionism and/or various types of socialism and that this alternative is gradually being accepted, however unconsciously and inarticulately, as the prevailing philosophy of the American labor movement.<sup>4</sup>

Before this opinion can be intelligently discussed, it will be necessary to go back to the beginning and briefly outline the nature and the history of voluntarism from the time of Samuel Gompers until the beginning of World War II—a terminal point which has been chosen merely for the sake of convenience.

### *Nature and History of Voluntarism*

For the purposes of this brief paper voluntarism can be described rather briefly in the words of Louis Reed:

That philosophy [Gompers' philosophy of voluntarism] may now be briefly summarized. Society is made up of contending groups, each of which has an eye single to its own interests. Labor is one of these groups. It alone understands its interests and ought to be left free to advance them. Hence, what the workers chiefly demand of society is recognition of their rights to form unions, to strike, to boycott, etc. As with labor, so with the rest—progress will be made if each group follows its own self-interest without regard to the others. For the government to interfere in this struggle is wrong and harmful; wrong because such interference

<sup>3</sup> *U. S. A. The Permanent Revolution*, by The Editors of *Fortune* With the Collaboration of Russell W. Davenport. (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951), p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> If, indeed, it is possible now or was ever possible, as far as that is concerned, to predicate a single philosophy of a heterogeneous movement which encompasses such disparate personalities as a Walter Reuther and a William Hutcheson.

is destructive of personal (and inalienable) rights, harmful because it destroys initiative, independence, and self-reliance—qualities that form the basis of a nation's strength. . . . Governmental regulation of and interference with the affairs of labor is especially to be abhorred because the government is unfriendly, even hostile, to labor. But not only is it hostile; political government is not equipped to deal with the affairs of labor, with industrial relations, and, for that matter, with industry altogether. . . . So political government must take a back seat while industry works out its own problems.<sup>5</sup>

Voluntarism, then, takes the position that capitalism is so strongly entrenched that the workers ought not to attempt to replace it. It is wiser for them to accept capitalism and to organize within the system to protect and advance their interests, relying on their economic strength by functioning primarily through their unions. They can expect little from the government. The only desirable legislation for the workers is that which offers protection to their labor market by restriction of immigration, and which restrains government agencies, such as the courts and the police, from encroaching upon or hampering such union activities as strikes, picketing, and boycotts. The workers ought not to demand more positive legislation from the government; the unions are the agency upon which the workers must rely for positive gains. Therefore, according to voluntarism, such legislation as they need can be obtained more readily by opposing or supporting individual candidates of the two major political parties than by organizing a separate labor party.

"This negative attitude toward government as an instrument of economic reform," Gus Tyler of the I.L.G.W.U. has written, "was a strange admixture of Old World revolutionary dogma on the class character of the state; (Gompers was certain that the Sherman Act would become an anti-union act—as it did); of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian notions on the evils of Leviathan government; of a negative rugged-individualist attitude applied to the collective efforts of a working class to improve its status. To all this, Gompers gave the name Voluntarism."<sup>6</sup>

Briefly, therefore, it is the attitude of voluntarism just described which Saposs has declared, with apparent satisfaction, to be dead. It is significant that Saposs' criticism is typical of numerous other unfavorable comments on Gompers and his philosophy of voluntarism

<sup>5</sup> *The Labor Philosophy of Samuel Gompers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), pp. 126-127.

<sup>6</sup> "The Gompers Heritage," *New Republic*, May 8, 1950, p. 14.

since the great depression of 1929. True, this type of criticism was heard within and without the ranks of the AFL even before 1929. As a matter of fact, there was always a minority within the Federation which demanded periodically that the policy be modified, if not completely abandoned.<sup>7</sup> The very titles of William Z. Foster's communist tracts, for example, indicate his determined and almost fanatical opposition to Gompers and the Gompers philosophy of trade unionism.<sup>8</sup> The late John Dewey, again, spoke for many who were angry with the AFL over its repudiation of the Brookwood Labor College:

It cannot be too generally understood that the condemnation of Brookwood is no isolated event. It is part of the policy to eliminate from the labor movement the schools and influences that endeavor to develop independent leaders of organized labor who are interested in a less passive and more social policy than that now carried on by the American Federation of Labor in its close alliance with the National Civic Federation.<sup>9</sup>

The files of the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, and other liberal journals of opinion during the twenties reveal similar attacks upon the Federation and its leaders over the Brookwood controversy. A reading of the record of this controversy at the 1928 convention of the AFL will show quite adequately how the forces within the Federation itself were lined up on the question of voluntarism at that time.<sup>10</sup>

It became the fashion during this period for dissidents to lay the blame for all of the Federation's failures directly at the door of Gompers and his philosophy of voluntarism. Abraham Epstein, for example, in his impatience with the Federation over its continued rejection of social insurance, made a sweeping condemnation of the Gompers school of thought: "The lamentable status of the American labor movement today is but the natural harvest of a policy implanted by American labor leaders forty years ago."<sup>11</sup> Epstein's dissatisfaction with voluntarism was echoed more or less emphatically by many others.

It is equally important, however, to note that during this same period—i.e., from the twenties on—there were just as many who were

<sup>7</sup> For a typical and revealing example of this debate within the Federation itself, see: *A. F. of L. Convention Proceedings*, 1914, pp. 321-324.

<sup>8</sup> *The Bankruptcy of the American Labor Movement* (Chicago: The Trade Union Educational League, 1927).

*Misleaders of Labor* (Chicago: The Trade Union Education League, 1927).

<sup>9</sup> "Labor Politics and Labor Education," *New Republic*, 57: 213, January 9, 1929.

<sup>10</sup> *A. F. of L. Convention Proceedings*, 1928, pp. 314-325.

<sup>11</sup> J. B. S. Hardman (Editor), *American Labor Dynamics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928), p. 248.

prepared to come to the defense of Gompers and of his policy of voluntarism. Perhaps the support which Gompers would have valued most and which students of the American labor movement must credit with considerable weight is that of John R. Commons, an outstanding pioneer in the field of American labor history and the mentor of so many influential labor economists since the beginning of the present century. A little less than two years after the death of Gompers, Commons took his stand with the founder of the AFL as the "greatest intellectual of them all."<sup>12</sup> In his autobiography, written in 1934, Commons was to refer to the writing of this article as the occasion on which "I . . . declared myself a follower of Gompers."<sup>13</sup>

In 1928 Selig Perlman, one of the better known of Commons' many disciples, reechoed the sentiments of his tutor when he paid the following tribute to the Gompers-Strasser type of unionism :

It was indeed a new species of trade unionism that was evolved. It differed from the trade unionism that the native American labor movement had evolved earlier in that it grasped the idea, supremely correct for American conditions, that the economic front was the only front on which the labor army could stay untied.<sup>14</sup>

Lyle Cooper, too, comes to the defense of Gompers' "economism" in appraising Perlman's conclusions :

On this whole question, the leadership of the American Federation of Labor appears to be wiser in its reading of history and better acquainted with the realities of the present situation than some of its intellectualist critics. Professor Perlman, through the cogency of his reasoning and the realism of his interpretation, supplies the so-called 'conservative' American unions with a justification for the major policies they pursue.<sup>15</sup>

### *Argument For and Against Voluntarism*

The principal arguments in favor of voluntarism, as they can be summarized from an analysis of this prolonged controversy among the intellectuals, may be put down as follows:

1. There are inherent weaknesses in the American political system which in its present form make it an unsatisfactory agency for handling matters of industrial relations. These weaknesses are: the dual nature of the government of the United States, which renders it ex-

<sup>12</sup> "Karl Marx and Samuel Gompers," *Political Science Quarterly*, 41: 234, June, 1926.

<sup>13</sup> *Myself* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), p. 171.

<sup>14</sup> *A Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), p. 197.

<sup>15</sup> "Theories of the Labor Movement as Set Forth in Recent Literature," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 43: 163, November, 1928.

tremely difficult to pass satisfactory laws which will be national in scope; and the peculiar character of the system of American party politics. Unlike the political parties in some of the countries of Western Europe, American parties, by and large, have not been characterized by any rigid and clear-cut class consciousness. They have been adaptable and almost unpredictable. Accordingly, even had Gompers and his colleagues desired to turn to the state as the principal weapon in their struggle for progress, the American party system would have hindered their efforts to have favorable legislation enacted.<sup>16</sup>

2. No matter how beneficent a law may appear on paper, it can be and very frequently has been distorted by the Courts to the detriment of Labor. This argument carried more weight with Gompers than perhaps any of the other objections against reliance on legislation. It is the premise upon which he stood almost exclusively in the debate on the subject at the 1914 Convention.<sup>17</sup> To understand better why Gompers was so constantly preoccupied with this fear of the Courts, it need only be recalled that the Sherman Anti-Trust Law was applied for the first time in the Debs case growing out of the Pullman strike; that the Clayton Act, so enthusiastically acclaimed even by Gompers in 1914 as *Labor's Magna Charta*, led to further disillusionment; and that the Lever Act, intended as a weapon against food and other racketeers, was made the basis, one year after the Armistice, of an injunction against striking coal miners.

3. Working rules established by law are cumbersome and can be revised only with great difficulty to meet the needs of rapidly changing economic conditions.

4. The victory won by legislation is never complete. Labor must always be satisfied with a compromise Act, which will be a sort of lowest common denominator of justice acceptable to all of the many conflicting factions in the legislature. By means of collective bargaining, on the other hand, Labor can effect a much more complete victory.

5. By its very nature, the struggle of Labor for a greater share in the profits of Industry must be experimental and must be adapted to the conditions of each craft and each industry.

6. Minimum rates established by law tend to become maxima.

<sup>16</sup> See: John Mitchell, *Organized Labor* (Philadelphia: American Book and Bible House, 1903), Ch. 25, pp. 215-221. Selig Perlman, *A Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), pp. 169 ff.

<sup>17</sup> See: David Saposs, *Readings in Trade Unionism* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), pp. 395-398.



7. Reliance on legislation tends to weaken the self-reliance and the dignity of the worker, and, to that extent, makes him apt to succumb to dictatorship or paternalism of one kind or another.

8. Reliance on legislation is likely to lead to compulsory arbitration and to governmental regulation of unions.

9. Reliance on legislation tends to wean workers away from the labor movement and weakens their loyalty.

10. The participation of the Government in a broad system of social and economic planning tends almost inevitably towards bureaucratic domination, if not to some form of fascism.

11. Dependence on legislation tends to lead labor into partisan politics and thus distracts it from its primary economic ends.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, partisanship in politics will split the labor movement into conflicting groups.

The principal arguments against voluntarism are, in turn, as follows:

1. Legislation for certain minimum standards is the best method of achieving universality and uniformity in labor conditions. It minimizes, more effectively than collective bargaining, the deadly competition for jobs among low-paid workers, and competition among workers has always been a strong weapon in the hands of anti-union employers.

2. Labor must encourage constructive legislation if it is to compete successfully with the many anti-labor pressure groups who lobby so effectively for reactionary laws.

3. Labor legislation is a speedier process than collective bargaining.

4. Legislation is the only effective protection for workers who are still unorganized, or for those, who, while organized, are employed in industries in which standards are still too low. Actually, substandard wage earners can be organized into unions only with very great difficulty, and, as a general rule, they can be protected only by a legal minimum wage.

5. Labor has invariably prospered during those periods in American history in which the Government has given it assistance. Furthermore, increased wages paid to low-paid workers because of the operation of minimum wage laws increase the total buying power of the nation and therefore increase total employment.

<sup>18</sup> For reply to this argument see: Henry R. Seager, *Labor and Other Economic Essays* (New York: Harper, 1931), p. 286.

6. Far from weakening the self-reliance of workers, constructive labor legislation, by removing the evils of poverty and fear, enhances their dignity. It gives them new hope and vision and makes them more aggressive in fighting for further progress.

7. Administrative abuses under certain Acts are not an argument against legislation as such. Abuses can be corrected without scrapping the laws themselves.

8. Protective labor legislation need not weaken the loyalty of workers to their union. On the contrary, if the unions will show their members—as only they can show them—how to take full advantage of such legislation, their prestige among workers will be enhanced. The loyalty of the men to their organizations will be increased.

9. Governmental participation in planning is indispensable for the success of any such program.

These, it is believed, are the most important arguments, pro and con, which have been adduced at one time or another in the long debate on the question of voluntarism.

Perhaps nowhere has this debate been summarized more adequately than in the classic work of Sidney and Beatrice Webb written in 1914, *Industrial Democracy*. True, the Webbs are concerned primarily, if not exclusively, with conditions in England. Nevertheless, clearly aside from the fact that Gompers and his colleagues leaned considerably on the experience of British trade unionism in fashioning the structure and the policy of the AFL, there is a note of universality about this standard work of the Webbs which has recommended it to American almost as much as to English students. With a few changes to allow for the passage of time and for certain differences between conditions in England and the United States, the Webbs' summary is still highly enlightening. Of particular interest at this point is their final conclusion from the study of the pros and cons of this debate, a conclusion which will be quoted here, not as a definitive judgment on the subject, but rather as a possible and tentative guide to an intelligent solution of the argument:

Hence the Method of Legal Enactment is best adapted for those regulations which are based on permanent considerations, such as the health and efficiency of workers. The minimum requirements of Sanitation and Safety need no sudden modifications. Much the same argument applies to the fixing of the Normal Day and even of minimum wages, calculated so as to prevent any class of workers from being driven down below the standard of healthy subsistence. These are all matters of physiological science. The Method of Legal Enactment is, in fact, economically the

most advantageous way of enforcing all Regulations based on the Doctrine of a Living Wage.

But the Method of Collective Bargaining has also its legitimate sphere. In our analysis of the economic characteristics of the Common Rule, we have pointed out how essential it is, in the interests of each particular trade, and also in those of the community as a whole, that no section of workers should remain content with the National Minimum secured by law, and that each trade should be perpetually trying to force up its own standard of life. . . . In short, for everything beyond the National Minimum, and the technical interpretation of this to secure to each trade the conditions necessary for efficient citizenship, the wage-earners must rely on the Method of Collective Bargaining.<sup>19</sup>

It would probably be unrealistic to assume that the policy of voluntarism in the AFL was fashioned solely in the light of the clear-cut and more or less theoretical arguments which have just been set forth. At the very least, it is necessary, for the sake of perspective, to turn for a moment to the opinions of some of those who have adduced other and more practical considerations.

In discussing the origin of voluntarism, J. B. S. Hardman, for example, makes a rather sharp distinction between Gompers, on the one hand, and the majority of his followers and satellites, on the other. The latter, he says, were voluntarists for one reason only: they were truly ignorant of any issues other than the very narrow one of wages and hours. Gompers, on the contrary, was an acute student of broad social and economic issues. His adherence to voluntarism, says Hardman, was a clever strategical move to ward off contenders for power in the AFL:

Mr. Gompers fought "theory" and "philosophy" and professed or pretended contempt for "intellectuals" not at all to cover and protect his own limitations, as did many of his aides and followers. The master mind of America's A. F. of L. unionism was a reading and a keenly thinking man. He wrote and spoke well and he knew the radicals and the radicalism that he fought. His anti-"theorism," which in effect became a theoretic base for conduct with him and his, was but a political device brought into the labor movement to fight earlier opponents and to ward off dangerous contenders for power.<sup>20</sup>

Eleven years earlier, Louis Reed, like Hardman, had hinted at the influence on Gompers' policy of this consuming desire to perpetuate himself in office. Reed was referring, in this instance, not to Gompers'

<sup>19</sup> *Industrial Democracy* (London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1914), pp. 803-806.

<sup>20</sup> Theodore Brameld (Editor), *Workers' Education in the United States* (New York: Harper's, 1941), p. 13.

attitude towards the state, but rather to his unwillingness to force the issue of organizing the unorganized. But, because of his allusion to the Socialists, his criticism is relevant to this discussion :

Having put himself on the opposite side of the fence from the Socialists, he founded his regime on the least progressive elements within the Federation. To continue in office, he had to retain the support of these groups, and could not hold out for any policies which ran counter to those they saw fit to hold. . . . Holding the leadership of a going concern like the Federation entailed the making of one compromise after another between expediency and principles.<sup>21</sup>

Earlier in the same work, Reed had admitted that the principal reason for Gompers' adamant adherence to voluntarism was his well-founded distrust of an unfriendly government.<sup>22</sup> Other contributory reasons he listed as follows : Gompers may have contracted some of his individualistic ideas from contact with employers on a friendly basis in the National Civic Federation ; his early work as President of the Federation may have further influenced him ; and finally his own ingrained personal philosophy of life probably abetted these other factors. "In his living," Reed observes, "he would suffer no inhibitions, no restraints, no compulsions. He had to be absolutely free. Conventional usages he disregarded utterly if he wished."<sup>23</sup>

Finally, for the *bona fide* Socialist explanation of the origin of voluntarism, it is sufficient to attend to the almost fanatical criticism levelled against Gompers in 1934 by George Simpson. "Nowhere in the annals of labor history," he said, "either on this continent or across the water, has there been such complete and childish domination of trade unionism as Sam Gompers exercised in the years 1881-1924."<sup>24</sup> After this merciless attack, he simplifies the origin of voluntarism very pointedly: the policy was adopted, he says, solely because of Gompers' ridiculous fear of Socialism.

These are only a few of the more outspoken criticisms of Gompers and his policy of voluntarism or "pure and simple" unionism.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem.*, p. 128.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>24</sup> George Simpson, "Sam Gompers: Misdleader of Labor," *American Mercury*, 33: 185-92, October, 1934.

<sup>25</sup> Certain critics have followed a different pattern. "It has become the fashion for critics," says Matthew Woll, "to praise the late President Gompers, crediting the American labor movement with more or less progress in the past, and to claim that now it is going backward. . . ." "American Federation of Labor," *Current History*, 33: 245, May, 1930.

At best, it would seem that any theory which tries to explain voluntarism in terms of the personal ambitions of Gompers is inadequate; at worst, it is the child of unthinking prejudice. It is much more objective to conclude that voluntarism is traceable to a number of inter-related causes, with personal ambition playing a very minor part in the process of its development. Wisely or unwisely, it was adopted partly through fear and partly through hope: fear, on the one hand, that an unfriendly government would serve labor to ill advantage; and hope, on the other, than an untrammelled labor movement, through its own organized economic strength and bargaining power, could accomplish much more satisfactory results than could be achieved through the give-and-take of compromise legislation. Allied to these two principal reasons, of course, was the AFL's ingrained resentment of Socialist intrigue within its own ranks; its disillusionment with the "intellectuals" and "reformers," both within and without the labor movement; and, finally, personal ambition.<sup>26</sup>

In any event, given the conditions under which the AFL had to operate, the policy was probably more or less inevitable. At most, Gompers was a spokesman for the dominant sentiment within the Federation; he had the vision to gauge this sentiment correctly, but he did not create it. Presumably this is what John Spargo had in mind when he wrote, one year after the death of Gompers:

It in no wise detracts from my estimate of the high and honorable character of his [Gompers'] leadership of the American Federation of Labor to say that, in my judgment, the fundamental character of the labor movement in this country would have been the same under any other leadership that could conceivably have been maintained. Another way of saying the same thing is that if Mr. Gompers had held other views and ideals and had attempted to realize them—if he had held the views and ideals of a Powderly or a Haywood, for example—he would have failed completely and would not have retained his leadership for so long.<sup>27</sup>

### *Voluntarism Revised*

Interesting as a study of the origins of voluntarism may be, it is not the principal concern of this paper. The fact is that, for better or for worse, the policy of voluntarism or "pure and simple" trade unionism was drastically revised, if not completely abandoned, during the dec-

<sup>26</sup> For a very enlightening discussion of the origin of the A. F. of L.'s philosophy, see: John R. Commons, "American Federation of Labor," *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1935), Vol. 2, pp. 23-29.

<sup>27</sup> "Passing of Gompers and the Future of Organized Labor," *North American Review*, 221: 409, March, 1925.

ade of the '30's. During the 1930's the American Federation of Labor, in the face of an unprecedented amount of unemployment—which caused the Federation to lose confidence in its own unaided economic strength as well as in the recuperative powers of the American economic system—was forced to modify its policy of voluntarism in a manner which can be conveniently summarized under the following four headings:

1. *Unemployment Compensation.* The AFL, traditionally opposed to this type of legislation, continued its opposition until 1932, at which time, under pressure from its own rank and file, it suddenly reversed its policy and declared itself in favor of unemployment insurance. This sudden change in policy marked a clear departure from voluntarism. To this day the Federation continues to support not only unemployment compensation, but other features of social security legislation as well.

2. *National Industrial Recovery Act.* The AFL's approval of NIRA, with little or no accompanying debate, marked another clear departure from its traditional voluntarism. The Federation reserved its criticism in this instance for what it deemed to be the inadequate administration and enforcement of the Act. It was particularly critical of the fact that Labor was not given adequate representation in the formulation of the codes of fair practice and that Section 7 (a) of the Act was not enforced with sufficient vigor.

3. *National Labor Relations Act.* The approval given by the AFL to the principles embodied in NLRA did not represent in itself a departure from voluntarism. It has been suggested by some that the Federation's continued criticism of the National Labor Relations Board for its allegedly biased interference in the determination of the appropriate unit for collective bargaining was an even more rigid type of voluntarism than the AFL professed at the beginning of the thirties. The latter conclusion, however, cannot be put down as certain, for the reason that, in its criticism of the Board, the AFL may have been opposing the rival CIO more than the fact of governmental "interference" as such.

4. *Fair Labor Standards Act.* The AFL's very grudging, but explicit, approval of the FLSA marks another and perhaps its most drastic deviation from the policy of voluntarism during the thirties. There are some grounds, furthermore, for concluding that such reluctance as the Federation displayed in approving the Bill was motivated at least as much by its opposition to the CIO as it was by a

lingering loyalty to voluntarism. In any event, the solicitude of the AFL to safeguard the Act against its enemies, particularly during the critical days of National Defense, is proof enough that, having once abandoned voluntarism in this particular, it is still persuaded that the change was for the good.

The essential difference between the attitude of the AFL and that of the CIO towards social and labor legislation during the thirties was one chiefly of degree. Both organizations pursued a policy during the thirties which was different from the traditional policy of voluntarism, the CIO by deliberate purpose, the AFL by dint of gradual pressure and with more or less reluctance. Their policies were the same in kind, but the CIO was willing and anxious to carry its non-voluntarist principles to much greater lengths. The AFL, at least until very recently, never quite reconciled itself to accepting legislation, even the broad planning and stabilization implicit in the National Industrial Recovery Act, as anything more than an *ad hoc* remedy for a specific set of emergency circumstances. The CIO, on the other hand, from the very beginning thought in terms of a broad and permanent policy of social planning.

The differences between the legislative policies of the AFL and the CIO are attributed, in part at least, to the fact that the depression fell more heavily upon the mass-production and generally the lower-paid workers who make up the bulk of the CIO than it did upon the more favored craftsmen who predominate in the AFL. The newer CIO unions, faced with the inescapable fact of interregional competition of their products, were almost forced to look to legislation as their only salvation.

### *The New Philosophy of Labor*

Since the beginning of World War II there has been no significant difference between the attitude of the AFL and that of the CIO with regard to legislation. They share a common enthusiasm for the so-called New Deal-Fair Deal program, and, far from reverting to the philosophy of voluntarism or "pure and simple" trade unionism, they have led the fight during the past decade (none too successfully, for reasons beyond their control) for more rather than less socio-economic legislation. To be sure, they are still committed to voluntarism or "pure and simple" trade unionism if these terms are defined as being synonymous with anti-socialism. Such a definition, however, is a latter-day revision and would not have been acceptable to Gompers.

It must be remembered that Gompers was opposed not only to socialism but to unemployment insurance!

If the philosophy of voluntarism, as it was understood and practiced by Gompers, is now dead, this does not mean, of course, that the American labor movement has lost sight of the "fundamental and permanent mission" of a trade union movement, described in a labor-sponsored resolution at the 1952 ILO Conference in Geneva as "the economic and social advancement of the workers." If American labor is committed to a considerable amount of legislative action in the field of economics, nevertheless it is also committed to the thesis that political action on the part of a trade union movement "should not be of such a nature as to compromise the continuance of the trade union movement or its social and economic functions, irrespective of the political changes in the country." It would wholeheartedly support the above-mentioned ILO resolution when it goes on to say that "governments seeking the cooperation of trade unions to carry out their economic and social policies should recognize that the value of this cooperation rests to a large extent on the freedom and independence of the trade union movement as an essential factor in promoting social advancement, and should not attempt to transform the trade union movement into an instrument for the pursuance of their political aims, nor should they attempt to interfere with the normal functions of a trade union because of its freely established relations with a political party."<sup>28</sup>

The American labor movement, in other words, does not look to government for the creation of Utopia. As Daniel Bell has suggested,

there is still [in the present-day trade union movement in the United States] large-scale sentiment for a strong 'positive' state—but largely in the realm of 'welfare' rather than 'planning.' To the degree that a set of limited objectives has emerged from twenty years of New and Fair Deal experiences, it is a conception of government as setting a series of floors under the economy: minimum wages for workers, parity for farmers, state-supported health, housing, and education for the poorer sections of the population. In a full-employment economy, and so long as full employment continues, the unions can demand little more.<sup>29</sup>

"The unions can demand little more?" From government? Granted. Nevertheless it hardly follows from this that "in the deepest sense the present-day trade-union movement has accepted capitalist society."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Reported in *I. L. O. News Service*, June 4, 1952 (Washington Branch, International Labor Office, Washington, D. C.)

<sup>29</sup> "Labor's Coming of Middle Age," *Fortune*, October, 1951, p. 150.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem*.



"It is an old axiom," Mr. Bell himself has written in another context, "that men develop loyalties to the institutions they build and tend to see events from those particular vantage points."<sup>31</sup> This axiom is employed by Bell to explain Gompers' gradual transformation from a socialist [or syndicalist—it makes no appreciable difference either way] into a voluntarist. Gompers, he says, "changed his viewpoints as unionism in the course of its development found a respectable place in American society. For the socialists, however, life was still a triumph of dogma over experience."<sup>32</sup>

This same axiom can be used to equally good advantage, in our opinion, to account for the development within the American labor movement of a new ideology (different from voluntarism on the one hand and socialism on the other) which has yet to be given a permanent name either by its progenitors or by a referendum of the intellectuals. Various names have been tentatively suggested for the heir of voluntarism, but none of them has permanently found its way into the official records. The result is that not a few commentators have been sorely tempted to conclude that we have no labor philosophy at the present time, unless it be an up-to-date variety of voluntarism.

Perhaps the difference arises in part from our own unconscious proclivity to pay more attention to what the American labor movement says than to what it actually does and/or is being forced to do by the inescapable realities of contemporary economic life. We are sometimes inclined to argue, for example, as follows: voluntarism was eclipsed in the thirties by a number of so-called left-wing ideologies based upon the concept of governmental planning. But we hear practically nothing at all about these left-wing ideologies in the early fifties. Therefore—either we are right back where we started from and have settled more or less permanently for an up-to-date variety of voluntarism or we are living in an ideological vacuum.

In part, too, as we have already indicated, the difficulty may arise from our own inability, reluctance, or refusal to admit the possibility of their being an adequate or a viable *tertium quid* as between voluntarism on the one hand and governmental planning on the other.

In two or three meaty paragraphs of a characteristically brilliant article in *Fortune*, Daniel Bell has capsulized the two-fold point of view to which we are referring. "The traditional Gompers attitude, with its focus on collective bargaining and the market situation," he

<sup>31</sup> *Socialism and American Life*, Volume 1, pp. 250-251.

<sup>32</sup> *Idem*.

says, "is replacing the social planners' unionism of the last decade and a half. . . ."

Thus in the last five years the social impulses that had agitated the minds of labor intellectuals and radicals have been almost completely exhausted. The enthusiasm for planning is probably at its nadir. Attempts to articulate a philosophy of labor have practically ceased. The organizational and ideological influences of the once powerful left-wing groups, notably the Socialists, have disappeared.

"Today," Mr. Bell continues in the same article, "the CIO is still on record as being in favor of industry councils but this allegiance is nominal and the present source for it is largely Catholic social philosophy, which has become for the trade-union leader more acceptable than the hoary radical rhetoric."<sup>33</sup>

All of this is reasonably adequate as a summary of what the labor movement is currently saying, but somewhat less than adequate, in our tentative opinion, as a summary of what the labor movement, consciously or unconsciously, is actually doing and is likely to continue doing for the indefinite future. And if Mr. Bell's original axiom is still applicable, the latter is presumably more important than the former in determining the content of the American labor movement's philosophy.

If it is true, in other words, that "men develop loyalties to the institutions they build, and tend to see events from those particular vantage points," the "institutions" and "events" of 1952 are more important than the "language" of labor. These "institutions" and "events," in our opinion, are so significantly different from those of the voluntarist era that the contemporary labor movement, unless the axiom has suddenly lost its validity, is even now in the process—however unconsciously or inarticulately—of developing a new philosophy, call it whatever you will. We ourselves would call it the philosophy of the Industry Council Plan for lack of a better or more widely accepted term. When Mr. Bell says that the CIO's allegiance to this philosophy is purely "nominal," he is probably attaching too much importance to the language or the rhetoric of labor and too little importance to "institutions" and "events." The facts of contemporary economic life, much more than "Catholic social philosophy," are the operative influence in the American labor movement, however deterministic such an analysis may superficially appear to be. To overestimate the influence of "Catholic social philosophy" in

<sup>33</sup> "Labor's Coming of Middle Age," *Fortune*, October, 1951.

1952 (a tendency much more common among non-Catholic commentators than among the leaders of the Catholic social action movement) is to make the same mistake that a Karson has made in overestimating the Catholic influence during the adolescence of the American Federation of Labor.<sup>34</sup>

Among other things, it fails to take into account the very significant influence of the three continuing trends in American industry to which Chamberlain of Yale very properly attaches such overriding importance: the rise of self-government in business; the extension of union control into all fields of managerial discretion; and the expansion of the area of negotiations into industry-wide collective bargaining.

"If these three trends are correlated," Chamberlain says in a very thought-provoking article<sup>35</sup> written as early as 1944 and subsequently elaborated upon in other articles and books by the same author, "there emerges the suggestion of a pattern of industrial organization resembling a loose system of industrial corporatism."

Many of Chamberlain's professional colleagues are frightened by this gradual but consistent trend towards "a loose system of corporatism." They look upon it as a trend in the direction of Fascism. Chamberlain, on the contrary, refuses to capitulate to the benevolent tyranny of slogans. This trend towards industry-wide self-government, with labor and management cooperatively establishing the rules (presumably under the surveillance but not the thumb of government) could go either way, he concludes. He refuses to be doctrinaire about the matter.

"Should the budding organized industry of America ever blossom into full flower . . .," he argues, "we may expect that this indigenous plant will have its own characteristics, and we may find that it can be made a tool of the democratic as well as of the Fascist state. We cannot assume, but it may prove to be true, that the organized industry will open up a possibility of industrial democracy which will provide a concomitant to the political democracy of the state."

Chamberlain explicitly eschews the role of a prophet. "The only point being made . . .," he says, "is that there is no reason to assume

<sup>34</sup> Marc Karson, "The Catholic Church and the Political Development of American Trade Unionism (1900-1918)" *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July, 1951. Karson, in the opinion of the present writer, greatly exaggerates the influence of American Catholicism in forestalling socialist penetration of the American Federation of Labor.

<sup>35</sup> Neil Chamberlain, "The Organized Business in America," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. LII, No. 2, June, 1944, pp. 97-111.

a priori that if organized industries arise in this country they will necessarily be opposed in principle to the democratic state."

If Chamberlain's analysis of contemporary trends is accurate, the American labor movement would seem to be doing in 1952 what Gompers is said to have done a generation or two ago. It would seem to be looking at "events," and revising its philosophy, in the light of its loyalty to the "institutions" it has built or helped to build. In other words, if Gompers abandoned socialism (or syndicalism) because "unionism in the course of its development found a respectable place in American society," the labor movement of today, having long since abandoned the voluntarist philosophy of Gompers, is now beginning to commit itself to "a loose system of corporatism" because its "place in American society" requires it to do so.

Voluntarism was basically a philosophy of "group individualism"<sup>36</sup>—the indigenous product of an epoch which has gone with the wind of wars and depression. "Laissez-faire economics," says Norman Thomas, "has yielded supremacy even in America to a high degree of confused collectivism. . . ." <sup>37</sup> This "confused collectivism" will not remain "confused" indefinitely, nor can it be expected to yield to the ineffective discipline of the so-called welfare state. It will either be reorganized from within the system itself by the application of a philosophy of "group cooperation" beyond the limits of collective bargaining, or it will be disciplined and ordered by the machinery of a centralized government.

The majority of labor economists (and notably the ex-Socialists) have already concluded that the latter development is not to be expected. They would concur with the opinion of a publicist like Max Ascoli when he says, echoing the opinion of the editors of *Fortune*, that "labor has purged itself of radicalism and given up any dream that some sections of it may have had of imposing a socialist order on business."<sup>38</sup> Many of them, on the other hand, would probably demur when Ascoli concludes (with limited reference to the 1952 steel dispute and similar national emergencies) that "we need the cooperative effort of all the parties concerned—government, capital, and labor—through new regulatory agencies, at least for the indefinite duration."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Remember David Sapos's illuminating reference to "its cousin *laissez-faire*."

<sup>37</sup> *A Socialist's Faith* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1951), p. 159.

<sup>38</sup> "The President and Il Duce," *The Reporter*, June 10, 1952, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> *Idem*.

It is our contention that many segments of the American labor movement, for better or for worse, are gradually being committed (in fact, if not in theory) to this system of "loose corporatism" which Ascoli, unlike so many of his liberal colleagues, is willing to espouse even at the conscious risk of being accused, however inaccurately, of flirting with neo-fascism.

Those who deny that the labor movement is committing itself, however gradually and tentatively, to the philosophy of the Industry Council Plan are constrained to agree with Mr. Bell when he says that the labor movement has no philosophy whatsoever. They are content to say, as Richard Lester puts it, that collective bargaining is and "will undoubtedly continue to be the central core of trade unionism in this country."<sup>40</sup>

"As long as our standard of living improves and widespread unemployment is avoided," Lester continues, "the bulk of American labor is likely to evidence little interest in socialism, Communism, an Industry Council Plan, or even an independent labor party. Organized labor will continue to place primary reliance upon the negotiation and administration of collective agreements, upon economic strength and means. That does not, however, preclude considerable and increasing stress by labor upon government action in areas where the market mechanism proves deficient."

This is reasonably accurate as far as it goes. Collective bargaining is "the central core of trade unionism in this country." But collective bargaining in 1952 is not the same kind of collective bargaining that was both cause and effect of Gompers' philosophy of voluntarism. "Collective bargaining," as Chamberlain reminds us, "is beginning to emerge not only as a method of control by the workers over their job conditions but as a mechanism for the joint control by the bargaining parties of the business or industry as a totality." The very nature of collective bargaining in 1952 is one of the factors responsible for leading the American labor movement in the direction of the Industry Council Plan. To say, without qualification that "the bulk of American labor is likely to evidence little interest in . . . an Industry Council Plan" is again to attach too much importance to words and too little importance to facts. Mr. Lester refers to the Industry Council Plan as though it were just another theoretical program of social planning which the labor movement has academically examined and found to

<sup>40</sup> *Labor and Industrial Relations* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 403.

be impractical or undesirable. "Although fathered by Philip Murray in 1940," he says, "and proposed for the steel and automobile industries during World War II, the Industry Council Plan has, so to speak, remained on the reserve shelf during recent years."<sup>41</sup>

This, again, is accurate insofar as the "language" of Mr. Murray and the CIO is concerned. It is necessary to add, however—and this is the important point—that Mr. Murray is doing his share to hasten the evolution of collective bargaining into a "mechanism for the joint control by the bargaining parties of the business or industry as a totality" and is therefore contributing to the development of a system of industry councils—a form of "industrial democracy which will provide a concomitant to the political democracy of the state." (Chamberlain). Mr. Murray and his associates, in other words, are effecting a silent (and perhaps an absent-minded) revolution which is too little understood by observers of the labor movement. Perhaps it will be helpful, in conclusion, to cite the case of Mr. Gerard Picard, President of the French Canadian Confederation of Catholic Workers, as an instructive example of how and why the phenomenon described by Chamberlain is misunderstood in other countries. The example may also serve to suggest how and why the same phenomenon is misunderstood, to a lesser extent, even here in the United States.

Speaking on the necessity of the reform of economic life during the course of the 1951 convention of his own Confederation, Mr. Picard was more "anti-capitalist" than any American labor leader would dare to be in addressing a similar labor convention in the United States. If Philip Murray or William Green were to criticize the capitalist system as vigorously as Picard has done, they would be universally labelled as socialists or worse.

Why is it that Picard is more critical of capitalism—especially American capitalism—than our own labor leaders are? Perhaps a partial explanation is the fact that Picard—like many other spokesmen for the Christian unions of Canada as well as of Western Europe—can conceive of the possibility, and indeed repeatedly emphasizes the desirability, of finding a via media between capitalism and collectivism; whereas we, in the United States, are usually inclined to think that the only alternative to capitalism is some form of socialism. And since the majority of Americans—including American trade unionists—are unalterably opposed to socialism, most of us feel constrained to say that we are in favor of capitalism.

<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 210.

“Too many people,” says Picard, “imagine that to wish to abandon capitalism is necessarily to wish to enter upon the road to socialism or communism. This conclusion is far too simple and extremely unjust.”

We may or may not agree with Picard’s criticism of American capitalism (we ourselves are inclined to think that he doesn’t fully understand the animal), but we would be well advised, I should think, to give him a hearing when he warns us that it is a great oversimplification to assume that whenever people talk about giving up capitalism they are necessarily favoring socialism or communism. This is an oversimplification which is literally being worked to death in the United States even by otherwise responsible organizations, such as the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, and otherwise responsible writers, such as Donald Richberg, both of whom have recently alleged that a sizable number of American clergymen are espousing socialism.

When Picard calls for the reform of industry and recommends basic structural changes in the capitalist system, he is thinking, among other things, of some form of co-determination or co-management—arrived at not by legislation as in Germany, but by voluntary agreement between employers and workers. He doesn’t say that economic co-determination or co-management is a natural right; but he does insist that it is a highly desirable goal towards which we may legitimately strive by the use of every available voluntary method of labor-management cooperation.

Picard is not surprised, he says, at the negative attitude of American industrialists with regard to co-determination, but he is frank to admit that he cannot for the life of him understand the apathy of American labor representatives. He seems to interpret their indifference to co-determination as another indication of the evil influence of American capitalism upon the life of the United States.

This is where Picard makes his mistake, it seems to us, in his approach to the American situation. He fails to understand that when American labor representatives say that they are in favor of “capitalism” and “free enterprise,” they merely mean to say that they are opposed to socialism. They do not mean to say that they are completely satisfied with the present system; nor do they mean to suggest that their horizon is limited to traditional collective bargaining and a certain minimum of welfare legislation. They, too, like Mr. Picard and many other representatives of the Christian unions, are looking forward to the blessed day when labor will be accepted in American industry as an equal partner with management.

American unions do not talk about "structural economic reforms" as much as European and French Canadian unions do. Their approach is much less theoretical, much more practical and pragmatic. We would suggest, however, that the pragmatic, bread-and-butter, non-ideological American unions have already transformed American capitalism more effectively than those of any other non-socialist country. We would hazard the guess that the long-range reconstruction of economic life advocated by Mr. Picard will come to pass in the United States, at the insistence of our unions, sooner than in any other so-called capitalist country, Canada included.

The trouble is that we Americans, to the confusion of our friends from other lands, will probably continue to call our system "capitalism" even after it has been transformed—just as we continue to pay our respects to "free enterprise" and "pure and simple" unionism after we have abandoned both.



## LABOR IN POLITICS

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### *Labor and the Democratic Party*

A STORY IS TOLD by one newspaperman at the recent convention of the Democratic Party in Chicago that he asked David Dubinsky, whom he met in a hotel lobby there, what he, a leader of the Liberal Party in New York, was doing at a Democratic Party conclave. Dubinsky replied: "I came here because if I were in New York everybody would ask me why I am not in Chicago."

The AFL and the CIO played active roles at the Democratic Convention. It is estimated that there were about 200 members of various labor unions who attended the convention as delegates or as alternates. Meetings were held of the "labor caucuses" every morning to discuss proceedings of the past day and plans for the next. During the day and late into the night leaders of the AFL and CIO met with each other informally to exchange views, information, and determine strategy. It is true that neither William Green nor Philip Murray came to Chicago during the convention week, even though Mr. Murray was a delegate to the convention from Pennsylvania, but their ever-present vigilance through their lieutenants was clearly evident. George Harrison, Joseph Keenan, Al Hayes, and Charles MacGowan of the AFL could frequently be seen in the hotel lobbies and corridors conversing with each other and with leaders of the Party. CIO leaders Walter Reuther, James Carey, Joseph Beirne, and Jack Kroll were very active on the telephones and in hotel room meetings, attempting to keep pace with convention progress on an hour to hour basis. These labor leaders gathered in Chicago to set up their informal headquarters days before the convention opened. They were not united on a candidate but they were determined to use their energy and influence to prevent the selection of any candidate for either President or Vice President who was "anti-labor" or otherwise unacceptable to them.

In reviewing the convention proceedings, it is clear that labor played a decisive part in the decision making of the Democratic Party. There was no "Sidney" to "clear it with," but it was very clear that the Democratic Party did not take any steps at the convention which would alienate organized labor. The labor movement was unmistakably, though perhaps unofficially, considered an essential arm of the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party had lasted in office for 20

years by being a farmer-labor-minority-nationality party. Organized labor not only provided funds for election campaigns but provided votes on election day. In addition, the American labor movement in the past 20 years under Roosevelt and Truman had helped to create, administer, and champion the program of the Democratic Party.

The activities of the labor leaders at the Democratic Party convention were, of course, not unexpected. Their active role was taken for granted in the light of labor's political activities in between conventions. Trade unions today have large legislative and political staffs. They take part in formulating, drafting, advocating, and enacting public policies at every level. Labor conventions pass resolutions on most every phase of public policy. A labor lobbyist hurrying through a Congressman's office is just as likely to be doing so for the enactment of the St. Lawrence Seaway or the United Nations as for the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act. These lobbyists are not always as effective as they might be and do not in all cases represent the "best foot forward" for the unions, but they are active on many fronts and concern themselves with the fullness of political and legislative activities. Too many labor unions have still not learned that lobbying is a profession which calls for the development of an expertise and is not merely a reward for past services performed, but the presence of labor interest is felt.

In most cases this has meant that the trade unions have been an essential part of the Administration's political and legislative program under Presidents Roosevelt and Truman. There are no more constant advocates of the New Deal and the Fair Deal on the Hill than the labor advocates. They are frequently consulted before an Administration measure is presented to the Congress and their energies are frequently solicited by executive agencies and New Deal Congressmen in behalf of the program. This has served to identify the interests of the trade unions with the interests of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. It has also served to make clear to the national offices of the AFL and CIO the importance of local Party organization, particularly as it affects the nomination and election of Congressional candidates.

Labor's concern with local political organization is not new. Even during the period when national labor officials would make "hands off" speeches about participation in national politics, local trade union officials developed relationships with local political party machines. This usually took the form of an adjustment between the trade union

business agent and the dominant political party of the community. Thus we have frequently found in the past, local labor Republican leaders, as well as local labor Democratic leaders. This adjustment was necessary in order to improve trade union relationships with the police force in strike situations and where local ordinances and practices affected the crafts. It is only in more recent days that the ideological content has been provided for local political participation by trade unions. Trade union officials today want to be consulted in the selection of candidates for Congress, as well as for local positions, and when national conventions come around every four years, they like to be designated convention delegates.

The ever developing close relationship between the labor movement and the Democratic Party has had its effect on both groups. It has served to temper and provide a realism to the political philosophy and objectives of the trade unions. It has also served to mobilize, democratize, and humanize the Democratic Party in those northern midwestern states where the labor movement has been influential. The objective of this relationship, however, has not been the transformation of the Democratic Party into a labor party. The development of trade union political consciousness, as we shall see, has left the concept of a labor party far behind and, furthermore, the Democratic Party itself is much too large and heterogeneous a body to allow itself to be so parochialized or fractionated. Both understand that a labor party would be doomed to a status of a minority party in the American political scene. The relationship, therefore, is based on a marriage of convenience and compatibility of ideas. The extent to which the marriage is formalized, however, varies from state to state, depending upon both the nature of the state Party organization and the nature of the local trade union movement. In states like Minnesota and Michigan, the close relationship has been formalized, whereas in states like Ohio, Indiana, New York, and California, the relationship is an *ad hoc* one.

The experience of the Minnesota Democratic Farm-Labor Party provides an illustration of what may be the trend of organized labor in politics. The trade unions early associated themselves with the Non-Partisan League oriented Farmer-Labor Party in the 1920's and 1930's. The merging of the Farmer-Labor Party with the Democratic Party in 1944 to form the Minnesota Democratic Farmer-Labor Party brought the trade union leaders of that state into the official policy determining bodies of the Democratic Party. The Party itself remains

organized sectionally rather than functionally or industrially, but the active political participation of trade unions in the Party caucuses and primaries usually insures a large labor delegation to the State Conventions and labor representation in the party councils. The experiences of the state indicate that frictions are not thereby irradicated, but the tendency is to develop closer understanding and stronger support of the Party by the trade unions. In return, the trade union leaders receive recognition, prestige, and, at times, public office, in addition to the satisfaction of their ideological aims, insofar as the Party is able to provide that satisfaction. Thus in Minnesota many union officials hold public office and one of the state's four Congressmen is a former business agent.

In states like New York the relationship between the labor movement and the Democratic Party is slightly more tenuous and flexible. A great deal of consultation takes place between the leaders of the two groups, but the union officers are not part of the Party's councils and do not participate in the decision making of the Party except in an advisory capacity. Thus, although it is highly unlikely that any candidate would be chosen by the New York Democratic Party for public office who is not acceptable to the labor unions of the state, unions frequently find that their influence in actually naming the candidate is quite limited. This gives the labor unions some sort of an implied veto power, since their financial and voting support is necessary for the campaign. This status was quite evident in the discussions to select a candidate in New York to oppose Senator Ives. Most of the unions preferred Averell Harriman or Robert F. Wagner, Jr., but once having indicated to the Party that John Cashmore would be acceptable, even though reluctantly, the New York Party leaders went ahead and chose him their favorite for the spot. Most of the unions in the state followed through with their endorsement of Cashmore.

#### *Financial and Other Support for Liberal Candidates*

Financial support by trade unions is very vital for the success of liberal candidates for public office today. Campaign costs have become exorbitant, particularly in the light of the growing importance of radio and television as campaign techniques. The Taft-Hartley Act outlawed direct contributions or expenditures from union treasuries to candidates for public office—and this has severely impeded labor's political participation in campaigns. But the Act does not affect contributions to candidates for state or primary campaigns and does not prevent unions from raising voluntary contributions specifically des-

ignated for political objectives. Thus, many candidates for Congress who have found their sources of campaign contributions dried up or channeled to their more conservative opponents have welcomed with open arms campaign contributions from the CIO Political Action Committee or from the AFL Labor's League for Political Education. In some cases, labor funds spent directly for radio or television work spell the difference between success and failure. In other cases, labor's contribution has been an energetic registration drive to bring out the vote in the expectation that a large vote tends to favor the liberal Democrats. Here again, however, the degree to which labor's political participation has been successful varies from year to year and from state to state. In predominantly conservative areas loud expressions of support by a labor minority have served on occasion to alienate rather than add to the support for a candidate. Frequently too, a number of unions have been satisfied with newspaper advertisements and the issuance of propaganda as substitutes for hard precinct door-bell ringing activities in working class neighborhoods. In addition, questions have been raised of late by some sociologists as to whether union leaders in fact have any influence over the politics of their members. John L. Lewis' inability to sway his mine workers against Roosevelt and for Willkie in 1940 is frequently cited, as is the victory of Taft in Ohio in 1950 and a recent sociological survey of UAW workers in Detroit.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the influence of trade unions cannot be under-emphasized and very few candidates can be found who would avoid accepting labor support—financial or energetic. There are instances, particularly in primary races in the South, where labor support has been quiet, furtive, and at times clandestine, but those instances are exceptional. Both the candidate and the labor movement in most cases desire to take credit for the endorsement.

The railroad unions have been particularly effective in their political support of candidates and hence in their influence within party councils and in the Congress. This is due to a number of factors. First, is political, the rather limited objective which the railroad unions set for themselves. They ask candidates to support legislation favorable to their immediate job interests and little more. They also limit the areas of their activity to those districts where their members are concentrated. In addition, railroad union membership is usually found in

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Kornhauser, *Detroit as the People See It*, to be published by the Wayne University Press.

rural areas where their influence, therefore, is more urgently needed. Being a relative "aristocrat" of labor, due to his traditionally higher income level, the railroad union member is thus frequently a more respected member of his community, a fraternal and church member, and one whose views are frequently considered weighty by his neighbors. Furthermore, the nature of the mores within the railroad industry has tended to solidify the railroad workers to a larger extent than employees in other industries so that a political position or recommendation given by the railroad union would more likely receive the support of the union members. In many railroad communities, for example, copies of *Labor*, the Railroad Unions' weekly newspaper, are quite prominently found and usually carefully read. This background and understanding has, therefore, meant that railroad unions have seldom been satisfied merely to endorse a candidate for public office. They have usually followed up their endorsements with contributions and other forms of active support. It is quite common to find special editions of *Labor* printed for use of endorsed candidates in their districts.

#### *The Change in Labor's Political Approach*

An examination of the role of the labor movement in politics today shows labor to be a full participant in the political process of our society. That participation reflects a change in labor's traditional approach to politics, but it is a change which in retrospect could well have been anticipated. It is a change not based on ideological conversion but more as a result of the pragmatic experiences of the last decade. The change is sharply revealed by the realization that as late as 1933 the annual convention of the AFL voted down a resolution calling for a federal program of unemployment insurance. But the change should not be overemphasized or exaggerated into a new theory of the labor movement.

It is always difficult to attempt a definition or an understanding of a phenomenon within any dynamic movement, particularly that of the trade union movement. There are, today, 15,000,000 members of trade unions, and it is clear that an attempt to arrive at a set of beliefs sufficiently coherent or comprehensive to represent a movement of that many members is nearly impossible. Union leaders express complex and at times diametrically opposite doctrines. Furthermore, to imply that the leaders of the trade union movement are all fully conscious of their attitude toward legislation and politics is to attribute to them a

rationality above that of most men. It is more likely and more accurate to state that the union leaders act rather instinctively to a particular set of circumstances and develop a philosophy and reasons, if any, to justify that action.

Samuel Gompers feared that labor would be hurt seriously if it tied itself too closely to a political party. He said :

Political movements are ephemeral. The trade union movement is not alone for today. Its continued existence is too valuable to be gambled in the political arena. History demonstrates that at least two movements, predecessors of the AFL, have passed into decadence because of their adventure in the field of politics.<sup>2</sup>

Gompers rejected the notion that the labor movement had an ideological and teleological role to fulfill in society. It was his influence on the labor movement which led Commons and Perlman to develop their theory of "job conscious" motivations within the labor movement. But the experiences of the past two decades have brought a new approach.

Comparing the labor movement of Samuel Gompers with that of today does produce an awareness of deep changes. The "job conscious" theory has been shaken up quite decisively in the crucible of time. The labor movement, like all dynamic institutions, has been quite sensitive to the pulls and strains of civilization's tensions. A theory and a program developed more than 30 years ago based on the empirical evidence of that day, of necessity, could not escape a major depression, social revolution, and world war without being molested.

This is not to say that the "job conscious" approach is no longer a handy key with which to unlock the door to an understanding of trade union impulses. It is rather to say that labor's understanding of what "job conscious" means has undergone change. In a sense, the experiences of a great depression and a costly war have served to educate labor to an understanding of the importance of interdependence in modern life. This change was not limited to the United States alone. In 1894, for example, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the historians of British trade unionism, defined the union as "a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment." By 1920 they changed the definition so that "conditions of their working lives" replaced the phrase "conditions of their employment." This evolving definition illustrates the

<sup>2</sup> *American Federationist*, February, 1919, p. 150.

changing nature of trade union development to meet new demands made by shifting economic and political realities.

The main stimulus for operating within a trade union remains for the worker his job interest. The definition and scope of that interest have undergone a change but not its objective. Protection against the hazards of industrial life and the attainment of a higher standard of living for the workers remain the stated aims of the labor movement. What has changed is that the means of achieving those objectives have responded to the changing realities of society. To the extent that labor unions have understood that economic collective bargaining alone is inadequate to achieve labor's ends, they have turned to politics.

Political activity was nothing new for the trade union movement. From the beginning, American trade unions considered themselves part of the political life of the community. In the early days, trade unions were treated as conspiracies to be legislated and opinioned out of existence by legislators and judges. To achieve the right to exist, protection for their funds, and the right to strike, the unions utilized political, as well as economic, weapons. When these limited objectives were partially attained, labor played a less active political role. Today with collective bargaining inexorably tied to the legislative process, with job security affected by all manner of fluctuations in the economy and polity, with employment opportunities related to fiscal policy, legislative debate, foreign trade, and election results, labor again turns its head in a political direction.

Thus, Jack Kroll, head of the CIO Action Committee, in replying to the question: "Why is labor in politics?" said:

The answer is simple: Labor is in politics for the same reason that it has always been in politics. Ever since there has been labor organization in this country the proponents of labor have been organized politically as well as economically. It has always been clear that the very right to organize labor is a legislative matter and not one left exclusively to negotiations between management and workers. Child labor laws, working hours and conditions, workmen's compensation and all the circumstances affecting the worker are as much legislative problems as they are worker-employer relationship problems.

In the earlier days of labor organization trade unionism itself was treated as a conspiracy to be legislated out of existence by the legislators, who by and large reflected the employer's point of view. For this reason workers ever since they began to organize realized the importance of State and Federal political and legislative activity.

Legislation is passed by legislators and therefore labor has recognized from the start that it must participate in the election of State and Federal legislators sympathetic not only to the cause of labor but also to all



other needs of the people. Workers live at home. They and their families are profoundly interested in the community welfare. Health facilities, the school system, transportation problems and all the other community problems subject to legislative control are naturally influenced by political action. For this reason political action has long since been recognized by all labor leaders as the obverse of the trade union coin. One side is meaningless without the others.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Evolution of the Gompers Philosophy of Political Action*

The American labor movement has been an indigenous product of American life. The first trade union came into being soon after the Declaration of Independence was adopted. Its original philosophy, therefore, was steeped in the principles of independent rights, self determination, full opportunity, and political equality. Because of the nature of the craft economy and the potentialities of an expanding frontier, American men and women of the period interpreted the democratic attitude which was developing in the United States to mean eventual freedom for themselves from the status of worker to that of owner. They looked to democracy and Americanism as a creed which would raise their own level in society to the status of full equality and citizenship with the more privileged land owners. Thus as early as the 1830's American labor unions were calling for a free public school system. In the 1840's trade union programs advocated equality of economic opportunity and at one point demanded a grant of public land free of charge to everyone willing to brave the rigors of pioneer life. By the 1880's American labor began to stress the cooperative or self-governing workshop.

The attempts at the formation of cooperatives, however, failed. Emerging industrialization made it clear that the worker was here to stay. Trade unionism became closely interwoven with the institutional pattern of capitalism. Unions obtained popularity and strength by bending capitalism to the short run interests of the workers.

In this crucial respect the development of the American labor movement differed from that of the European labor movement. The lack of political democracy in Europe heavily influenced the European trade unions toward Marxism and the goal of social revolution which he dramatized. European labor, therefore, developing before the democratic tide against tyranny could gain a foothold, considered itself revolutionary in character with an historic mission to overthrow capitalism either by peace or by force.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Times Magazine*, October 27, 1947, p. 15.

The American worker and trade union leader, however, was far from being a revolutionary or radical. Rather he shared a basic antipathy with the American community toward Marxism and other forms of collectivism.

For a brief period during the 19th century, American trade unions experimented with their own forms of social, economic, and political expression. Turmoil of the Knights of Labor during the 1880's likewise brought into the ranks of organized labor a number of educated people and intellectuals whose role had up until then been a restricted one in the American society. Many of these intellectuals came into the labor movement urging direct political activity. They were influenced by Utopianism and Marxism and also found that politics gave them an opportunity for eloquent self expression through debate. The intellectuals tended to view minimal political action by labor as the first steps of a child learning to walk and they frequently identified political maturity with the formation of a labor political party.

The leaders of the American Federation of Labor feared political socialism and thus rejected it as an ideology and as a political platform. They likewise, therefore, developed an anti-intellectualism, and tended to reject those who came to labor bearing gifts of ideas—ideas about collectivism and the economic interpretation of society, life, and the Constitution of the United States. This feeling grew deeper as a number of Socialist groups and independent parties came into being in the latter part of the 19th century without being able to grab root in the American society.

Kautsky had written :

Modern Socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge—The vehicles of science are not the proletariat but the bourgeois intelligentsia.

Lenin voiced the same sentiments :

The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic historical and economic theories that were elaborated by educated representatives of the property classes, the intellectuals. . . .<sup>4</sup>

An editorial which appeared in the *American Federationist* for February, 1919, illustrates the nature of the opposition which intellectuals faced within the American labor movement :

<sup>4</sup>Both the Kautsky and Lenin quotations are cited in *Collected Works of Lenin*, edited by Alexander Trachtenberg (New York: International Publishers, 1929), Volume IV, pp. 114, 115, 122.

Labor has never yet formed parties or undertaken to form one but that the control has been wheedled out of their hands by a lot of faddists, theorists or self-seekers, and thus perverted from its true labor interests and working class characteristics. This is true of the whole world over, wherever the attempt has been made.

It is clear that the editorial writer had in mind a vision of the many unions wrecked on the jagged shoals of sectarian conflicts. Instead of striving for improved wages, lower hours, and better working conditions, many of these unions subordinated those economic goals for the more Utopian ones of a communal society, producer cooperatives, money reform, and various political party panaceas.

Samuel Gompers arrived on the scene as a leader of the American Federation of Labor at a most opportune time. The pattern of trade unions which he saw growing and which he advocated was one which was developing a favored interest in capitalistic institutions and could, therefore, not be used as a revolutionary weapon. The AFL came close in 1893 to becoming a part of the Socialist movement in the United States but a year later the Anti-Socialist forces led by Gompers succeeded in defeating the Socialists. A plank calling for the collective ownership by the people of all means of production and distribution was eliminated. Gompers and the American Federation of Labor embraced, cajoled, and modified the economic system rather than assaulted it.

In rejecting Socialism, it is clear that Gompers gauged correctly and reflected accurately the temper of the American worker. Thus while actual membership in the various Socialist parties remained small, the AFL grew steadily in numbers. Its rivals, the American Labor Union and the Industrial Workers of the World, soon disappeared from the American scene.

Gompers saw economics as the fulcrum of power and he was aware of the fact that economic decisions operated within a political context. During his period, questions of tariff, immigration, and court injunction directly affected labor relations. The extension of labor's interest to political activity in those fields, therefore, was a natural step. Gompers insisted, however, that the step be taken with a minimum of danger and irritation. He, therefore, encouraged the development of working relationships between the trade unions on the local level and the local political machine which was dominant in the community. He looked upon labor political action as a bipartisan action. In normal Republican states, the labor organizations tended to be Republican. In normal Democratic states they were Democratic.

In no case did Gompers want labor to form a political party of its own and take the risks associated with such a drastic step.

Gompers explained his position as follows:

Suppose in 1912 we had a labor party in existence; do you think for a moment that we could have gone as the American labor movement to the other political parties and said: "We want you to inaugurate in your platform this and this declaration." If one of the parties had refused and the other party consented and took its chance, would the American Federation of Labor have been permitted to exercise that independent political and economic course if the labor party had been in existence? How long would we have had to wait for the passage of a law by Congress declaring in practice and in principle that the labor of a human being is not a commodity or an article of commerce—the most far-reaching declaration ever made by any government in the history of the world?<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The position taken by Gompers with regard to labor's participation within political parties was in harmony with the prevailing views of his period as to the function and composition of the political party system in the American society. The two political parties claimed to represent the entire American community regardless of economic interest. They came into being before class feeling crystallized in the United States. Both parties appealed for the support of the working people.

The organized labor movement never represented more than a small minority of the American population. A diversified characteristic of American life and of American organization meant that the country was divided into a number of functional and economic groups, none of which had the numerical strength to obtain political power on the basis of its own momentum. A coalition of forces has, therefore, been necessary to form a majority. Each of the two major political parties attempted to form that coalition under its own tent and party label. Thus to a realist like Gompers, the thought of a "labor government" or "labor party" was thoroughly Utopian and even undesirable. The failure of the various sporadic third party movements in the United States and the fact that not since the victory of the Republican Party in 1860 did a new party come close to success added weight to the thought that a labor party was an impossibility. This view has remained the prevailing view of American labor with the one exception of the 1924 election when the AFL permitted itself to be drawn into a third party effort in support of Senator Robert LaFollette. At that

<sup>5</sup> Address by Samuel Gompers, "Should a Political Labor Party Be Formed?" December 9, 1918, pp. 13, 14.

election the LaFollette-Wheeler Progressive Party slate drew five million popular votes and 13 electoral votes.

The diversified character of American government has also served to discourage independent labor political activity. Our federal system of checks and balances has made party government difficult to achieve. There are in fact 49 governmental systems in the United States. This serves to present a disheartening task for any group in society desiring to strike off on its own politically. State election laws also present serious obstacles, thus making it virtually impossible for any new political party to get on the ballot in all 48 states, or even in a major part of them. Furthermore, our election system is so diversified as to make it difficult to elect public officials or political parties to office on the basis of a consistent program. In 1948, for example, we elected a President and Congress; in 1949, many state officers; in 1950, a new House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate; in 1951, more state officers; in 1952 we are prepared to start all over again.

In addition, political loyalties in American life have traditionally been a potent part of our folkways. Political affiliations are frequently absorbed by individuals early in their lives. Members of trade unions, therefore, like other Americans have traditionally considered their political party preference to be a private matter. Their loyalty to their trade unions is primarily an economic bond. These economic ties, however, are not sufficiently strong so as to disregard religious, familial, or political environmental and temperamental influences. Working men and women in the United States have interests more varied than their job interests. Being organizationally conscious, the average American is a "joiner" and belongs to many social, fraternal, and religious groups. Thus political loyalty is one of those factors in American life which has tended to produce an emotional response so that in the absence of an unusual economic influence such as low wheat prices for farmers or unemployment for labor, it has been in the past difficult to pull people away from their traditional political grooves.

Finally, it should be noted that the trade union movement made strides within the framework of the two-party system and without the formation of an independent labor party. To have attempted to achieve the same objectives through a third party would have probably been a long, slow, and possibly an impossible task, involving the sacrifice of many urgent needs along the way. A comparison of the record of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, a third party, with the record of the Democratic Party administration in New York on social wel-

fare and labor legislation does not in any way establish the proposition that a labor party can produce more desirable legislative results than labor can obtain for itself through influencing a major political party. A story is told that Tammany Hall Boss Charles F. Murphy, expressing surprise at a large vote which the Socialist Party was able to get in one working class district in the 1920's, said:

We don't need a Socialist Party. If the people of New York want Socialism then Tammany Hall will give it to them.

The Gompers philosophy remained the dominant theme of the American labor movement until the New Deal. It was in harmony with the political party system of its day and met the needs of the economic environment.

The American Federation of Labor engaged in political activity, but only as a minor part of its program and on a clearly "bi-partisan" basis. It supported both Democrats and Republicans, looking upon candidates as individuals rather than as representatives of a political party. It gave support to candidates who acted as "friends" of labor, and it punished its "enemies." On the national scene it found that the Democratic Party listened more attentively to its platform demands than the Republican Party, but it still insisted on maintaining its independence. Whatever alliances the AFL chose to make with political parties were done on the local level. In most cases those alliances were between local labor leaders and Democratic Party machines but there were many instances of alliances with dominant Republican Party machines as well.

### *The Effect of the New Deal*

With the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932 and the beginnings of the New Deal, a change took place within the American political party system. This change reflected the subtle and economic revolution which the New Deal fostered. The effect of the New Deal on the American labor movement was instantaneous. John L. Lewis sent union organizers through the coal fields of the country, urging "Roosevelt wants you to join the United Mine Workers." Union membership grew by leaps and bounds. The economic recovery of the American people also meant that there was a demand for union organization within the mass production industries. The CIO came into being in 1935 to meet that need.

The growth of industrial unionism gave the American labor movement a blood transfusion. The event was one of the most significant

social, economic, and political developments in American history. Coming at a period when the New Deal was captivating the imagination of the American people, organizing workers on an industrial basis seemed in harmony with the changes taking place on the face of America. Industrial organization meant that individualism would give way to solidarity in labor's ranks. The new members of the labor movement developed a discipline of acting together in great bodies, since their weapon against the employer's armory of legal and economic resources was sheer numbers rather than job scarcity.

The growth of industrial unionism had inevitable political repercussions. The vitality of industrial unionism, encouraged by the enthusiasm of the New Deal and the open endorsement of President Roosevelt, enlisted millions of people into the ranks of trade unions. The collective principle of industrial organization lent itself quite easily to political action.

In 1935 a number of CIO and AFL unions formed Labor's Non-Partisan League to formulate and direct political action for the 1936 Presidential campaign. As the growing division between the AFL and CIO became sharper, the League became an open arm of the CIO but this did not seriously affect the 1936 campaign. The League spent many hundreds of thousands of dollars to reelect Roosevelt and a number of Congressmen who were considered friendly to labor. The American Labor Party was also formed in New York to act as an independent labor force to help Roosevelt.

The form which labor political action would take was still not clear during the early years of the CIO. The AFL remained true to the Gompers tradition but it too responded to an increase in political consciousness as a result of the changing concept of "job interest." The CIO, on the other hand, being a new organization, flushed with initial success and organized industrially, tended to develop a more radical concept of political action based on a growing class consciousness. The formation of the American Labor Party in New York was evidence of that consciousness. The CIO in its literature distributed in 1936 carried the following message to its members:

Industrial unionism develops a new conception of our class duty—in craft unions, steam fitters talk as steam fitters, plumbers as plumbers, and so on down the line in all the trades. But in industrial unions, workers talk and act in relation to their class identity, irrespective of trades. In industrial unionism we do not develop craft, trade, religious, political, or race ideas. We develop class solidarity.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *The Union News Service* (Mimeographed), June 15, 1936.

John L. Lewis stated the objective of CIO political activity in his closing speech before the 1937 CIO convention as follows:

We are not only fighting for the economic emancipation of the millions of Americans who work for a living, but we are fighting also for their political emancipation, for the right to live in communities free from corporation's domination to a point that limits and circumscribes their political action.<sup>7</sup>

Roosevelt, during this period, attempted to forge a close link between American labor and the Democratic Party. He consulted frequently with AFL and CIO labor leaders and attempted to mold the Democratic Party into ideological lines consistent with the program of the labor unions. He attempted to translate party politics into issue politics and thus to bring labor into the ranks of the Democratic Party.

During World War II trade union leadership was given a responsible place in the establishment of war policy and the execution of war programs. Labor was employed in all of the chief defense agencies: the War Production Board, the War Manpower Commission, the Office of Price Administration, and the Office of Civilian Defense. On the state and local level, trade union officers served on Price and Rationing Boards, on Selective Service Tribunals, on Civilian Defense Committees, and in other war work. The tie that developed between the trade unions and the government had a very direct effect in coalescing labor political action with the Democratic Party.

The political developments from the beginning of the New Deal to date brought a realization on the part of the American Labor movement that political activity must consume an essential part of its energies and that its existence is tied to the political realities in the United States. The story of labor in politics during the New Deal and Fair Deal is very much the story of labor in search of a political ally.

The basic commitment of American labor to the two-party system has remained dominant throughout this period. For a short while and within some sections of the CIO, third party sentiment could be found, but this influence became weaker rather than stronger as the CIO matured.

A statement by Philip Murray in 1946 described third parties as panaceas which are "our greatest indoor and outdoor national sport." He explained the CIO position in the following terms:

We in the organized labor movement do not become alarmed over these manifestations; we regard them as pure Americana and weigh them on

<sup>7</sup> *The CIO Crusader*, 1937, pp. 8, 9.



the scale of practicality. It is for this reason that we have discarded at this time and for the foreseeable future all proposals to establish in the United States a third political party.

The whole American approach from the beginning of this Republic has been to resolve disputed questions on a yes and no basis. . . . This method of operation has become so deeply ingrained in the American people that immigrants arriving on our shores accept it as an assured fact. Without regret they reject the traditional systems of other countries which maintain more than two major political parties.<sup>8</sup>

When the Communist Party formed the Progressive Party in 1948 to elect Henry Wallace, the sealing nails were hammered into the coffin of third party political activities on the part of the American labor movement. Even in unions like the CIO United Auto Workers, where there still remained strong traces of Socialist thought and where resistance to the traditional party system was great, the term "third party" has been gradually dropped from the vocabulary and replaced with the concept of "new party" with a clear implication of intent to operate within the framework of the two-party system.

The class struggle within American labor today is being attacked for its "romanticism." There is an emphasis rather on the "leg work of practical political action." Summarizing this philosophy within American labor, Victor Reuther wrote some time ago:

. . . if history has proved anything about the role of labor . . . it has proved the gross error of ascribing to them a revolutionary character preordained to impel them to overthrow the capitalist system.<sup>9</sup>

The election of the Republican 80th Congress in 1946 had a profound effect upon the political program and political ideas of both the AFL and CIO. The enactment by the 80th Congress of the Taft-Hartley law proved to be a severe jolt to the labor leaders who concluded that their failure to be effective during the 1946 election was responsible for the Republican victory, and who feared that a failure to regain lost ground in 1948 would bring further punitive anti-labor legislation. The overwhelming support which the Taft-Hartley Law found from Republican Congressmen also served to make it difficult for labor leaders to identify themselves with the Republican Party.

The CIO had created in 1944 its Political Action Committee. In its early years PAC became the center of much controversy and obtained a great deal of publicity for itself, but its major efforts were devoted

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times Magazine*, April 21, 1946, pp. 13, 47.

<sup>9</sup> "Labor in the War—and After," *Antioch Review*, Fall, 1943, pp. 311-327.

largely to publicity rather than to the precinct aspect of politics. Faced with the election of 1948, the CIO infused the PAC with new energy.

The AFL likewise attempted to mobilize its ranks for the 1948 campaign and formed Labor's League for Political Education. The Taft-Hartley Act prevented unions from making direct political contributions or expenditures for political purposes in connection with national campaigns. A national system of volunteer contributions from labor members was, therefore, put under way.

Both the AFL and the CIO were further inspired by the formation of the Progressive Party, which appealed to the union members over the heads of the leaders and which, to the leaders of organized labor, was a Communist-led effort to divide the liberal and labor coalition.

The death of Roosevelt had brought about a change in the attitude of the trade union movement toward the Democratic Party. President Truman seemed unable to fire the imagination of the trade union membership and he did not follow the policy of frequent consultations with labor leaders which had been so characteristic of Roosevelt. Liberals and trade union people, therefore, tended to become more "independent" and to disassociate themselves from the machine politicians who had once again risen to ascendancy in the Democratic Party. Furthermore, the post-war period and the early months of the Truman administration were characterized by growing tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. This in turn served to make the Communists within labor more militant and to separate the Communists from the anti-Communist forces within the unions, particularly within the CIO where the Communists had gained a substantial minority foothold.

The split within the CIO took political shape in 1946 in a rivalry that developed between those CIO officials loyal to the Progressive Citizens of America, which was organized in late 1946 around the personality and ideals of Henry Wallace, and those trade union leaders who associated themselves with Americans for Democratic Action. ADA stated as one of its principles that Communism and liberalism were incompatible and thus excluded Communists and fellow travelers from its deliberations and membership. This rivalry came to an early crisis within the CIO in 1947 and was temporarily resolved with a policy statement of non-participation, applicable to both organizations. This solution could not last, however, and as the internal struggle against the Communists within the CIO took final shape and met with greater success, the CIO as an organization identified itself more closely with the ADA, both officially and financially.

To many CIO leaders in 1947, ADA appeared to be a vehicle through which labor could form an alliance with liberal agriculture, cooperative, and business groups for political action. Union leaders from both AFL and CIO were represented on its national board and ADA showed promise of being a "liberal caucus" free of either Democratic or Republican Party identification. This met the needs of the Gompers tradition within American labor and met also the disillusionment with the Democratic Party which characterized the first year following Roosevelt's death.

The 1948 political activity of the AFL and CIO, therefore, was on an independent and bi-partisan basis. Both organizations paid tribute to the platform of the Democratic Party and severely chastised the Republican Party record. The CIO officially endorsed President Truman, while the AFL withheld official endorsement and gave instead financial and tacit organizational support to the Democratic ticket. President Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act was widely and roundly praised by all of organized labor.

The 1948 platform of the Democratic Party and the unexpected Truman victory that year served to forge anew the alliance between the Democratic Party and American labor. An increasing number of labor leaders became determined to operate within the framework of the Democratic Party and strengthen the liberal ranks within the party. In New York, for example, immediately following the November election, Paul Fitzpatrick, State Chairman of the Democratic Party, credited labor with a "vital part" in the Democratic gain of 9 New York Congressional seats, 10 seats in the State Senate, and 20 in the Assembly. He commended labor for its magnificent role and promised in return to regard the election results as a "mandate" to press for a legislative program which had the support of the labor movement.<sup>10</sup>

Louis Hollander, President of the New York CIO, predicted as a result of the election that there would be a coalition between the Democratic Party and the CIO in New York. The state CIO convention at which he spoke again went on record officially preserving an "independent nonpartisan role" in choosing between Republican and Democratic candidates in the future. But the trend was unmistakably, as Mr. Hollander expressed himself and his organization as being, in full accord with the Democratic program in the state. "If Mr. Fitzpatrick stays at the helm and the Party holds fast to these principles, we can

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, December 17, 1948.

work out a coalition that will make New York once again a symbol of liberalism for all nations.”<sup>11</sup>

In the four years between 1948 and 1952, the coalition continued to develop at the local political levels. In many cities AFL and CIO unions banded together behind liberal Democratic Party candidates and in varying measure became part of local political machines. Trade union officials became involved not only in state and municipal policy problems but in patronage questions as well. In a number of communities local trade unions have been supplying funds to the local organization of the Democratic Party and on occasion providing staff and participating in the selection of candidates.

The 1952 Convention of the Democratic Party has served to further identify the trade union leadership with the aspirations of the Democratic candidate for President and with the future of the Democratic Party. The CIO, soon after the convention, officially endorsed Governor Stevenson. The AFL, after a series of political discussions within the executive council, decided to invite both candidates for President to speak at its convention with the view toward the convention making an official endorsement. The decision to support Governor Stevenson is the first time since 1924 that the AFL has officially supported any candidate for President.

### *Conclusion*

This review of labor in politics has proved to be a discussion of labor's search for a political ally. The labor movement is still impelled by the power force of its collective bargaining needs. The changes that have taken place in labor's attitude toward political parties and political action are changes which have grown out of a developing definition of what a "job conscious" movement must do to meet the needs of its membership. The interests of the labor movement of necessity no longer remain narrow but rather encompass most public questions.

It is still too early to tell whether the coalition developing between the Democratic Party and the American labor movement will be a lasting one. Much will depend on the power struggle now taking place within the Democratic Party. There is strong evidence to support the conclusion that the Democratic Party is irrevocably committed to a liberal program and to presenting the liberal alternatives to the American electorate. The forging of an alliance between the trade unions,

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

minority groups, and liberal elements within the Democratic Party will further strengthen that trend and thus further bind labor's interests to the interests of the Democratic Party. The 1952 election results will undoubtedly affect the end of this story.

In the meantime, however, the trend has had a healthy ideological effect for American democracy. Increased political participation of the labor movement has strengthened democracy in meeting the threat of Fascism and Communism. The necessity for the trade union movement to help meet that threat has become accepted even by the most nearsighted of trade union leaders. It would appear as if the experience of the European labor movement has had its effect on these shores.

Sturmthal has traced the relationship between the defeat of democracy in Europe and the failure of the European labor movement to meet its political responsibility. He has described the tragedy of European labor as a preoccupation with pressure group action rather than with mature political activity. This was true even though European labor organizations were organized as political parties. "The mental growth of the movement," he said, "has not kept step with its rise in influence." The result was that a movement which had no fewer than 26,000,000 adherents with some 1300 parliamentary members failed to meet the threat of Fascism and fell together with its society before the onrush of totalitarianism. Sturmthal says:

Most of the European labor organizations were strongly committed to the defense of democracy. It had enabled them to grow into a powerful social force and to develop institutions that were among the highest achievements of European civilization. But they failed in their decisive test. They were not able to stem the progressive disintegration of democracy and to offer a rallying point for the reconstruction of a democratic society. The defeat of democracy on the continent of Europe is no less due to the failure of labor than to the breakdown of democratic capitalism. Labor was strong enough seriously to interfere with the smooth working of the existing institutions of society but it was neither sufficiently strong nor sufficiently constructive to rebuild society. . . .<sup>12</sup>

World history and the rise of Fascism and Communism have demonstrated the inability of labor to combat the rise of reaction by a narrow program which appeals strictly to a limited section of the community. Whether American labor can learn this lesson may well determine the future of Democracy in the world. The signs are encouraging.

<sup>12</sup> *The Tragedy of European Labor* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1944), p. 5.

# INTERNATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS

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THE RELATIONS of the American labor movement with the other labor movements of the world have been and are being shaped by two interacting sets of factors—the methods and objectives which trade unionists in the United States share with workers throughout the world, and the methods and to some extent even the objectives which are peculiar to America.

Like their fellow-workers in other lands, Americans want peace, security, and an adequate and rising standard of living. They want democracy and a sense of human dignity in the factory as well as at the polls. They want adequate social services, and laws to protect the economically weak. In their majority, they believe in the equality of men without regard to race, creed, or color. With few exceptions, they now believe that government has a responsibility to stabilize the national economy and prevent the recurrence of the sort of economic catastrophes which have occurred in the past.

In other respects, however, American workers are uniquely fortunate. Living in the richest country in the world, and one which is steadily growing richer, they can devote themselves largely to demanding “more and more, here and now”—that is, a bigger slice of the economic cake. They do not, like the workers of less lucky lands, have to concern themselves with increasing the size of a meager cake which, however sliced, cannot yield an adequate standard of living for everyone.

Americans live in a country which has been unravaged by war for almost a century. They live in a country which has been free of alien domination for almost two centuries. They are the citizens of a nation in which the losing party in an election accepts the verdict of the voters and does not seek to reverse it by force. Their government was so carefully designed to prevent the concentration of political power that no dictators have ever arisen to dominate it. This heritage of democracy and internal peace is something the like of which millions of their fellow-workers do not enjoy.

American trade unionists like to say that they are more practical than others—or, as their intellectuals like to put it, more “pragmatic.” While unionists in other countries concern themselves with “pie in the sky,” Americans want pork chops and a refrigerator. There is some-

thing in this. But few who boast of it pause to reflect that independence, economic development, and political democracy—objectives still to be achieved in many parts of the world—were parts of the birthright of the American labor movement. Precisely because they can take these blessings largely for granted, trade unionists in the United States can devote themselves more whole-heartedly to bread-and-butter struggles.

It has often been remarked that Benjamin Franklin was much less a stranger in London and Paris, in spite of his homespun attire, than the average American is today. So also, in its beginnings, the American labor movement was much more like that of Europe than it is now. The same utopian aspirations were proclaimed, with the same vagueness about the means by which they were to be achieved. There was a constant cross-fertilization of ideas between the Old and the New Worlds. Most Americans today would be surprised to hear that such patently “un-American” institutions as labor parties and May Day first appeared in America, and only later in Europe.

#### *Divergence Between American and European Movements*

The real divergence between the American and the European labor movements began in the closing years of the last century. It was at this time that the British trade unions turned towards socialism while American labor, under the leadership of Samuel Gompers, turned decisively away from it. Gompers and the newly-founded American Federation of Labor adopted a course of action to which scholars like Professors Commons and Perlman later added a theoretical superstructure.

Gompers confronted a highly individualistic society and economy, in which the economic position of unskilled workers was constantly undermined by the tidal waves of immigrants. As he saw it, any identification of labor with such alien theories as socialism would bring down upon it the wrath of the entire community. Besides, such theories could only distract trade union leaders from the practical task at hand—which was the building of strong and stable unions among the various categories of skilled workers, the only groups which held sufficient economic leverage to win recognition from stubborn and hostile employers.

The Gompers strategy was justified by the fact that the unions conducted in accordance with it survived in the American environment, whereas others did not. But it can hardly be said to have led

to any sensational success. The U. S. labor movement was well-nigh a Cinderella among Western labor movements, until the New Deal fairy godmother came along to touch it with section 7A of the National Recovery Act. Until then, it enrolled only a small fraction of the nation's workers, and these mainly in craft-dominated fields like printing and construction and in relatively stagnant sections of the economy such as the railroads and the coal mines. American management easily repelled every trade union assault on the strongholds of the American economy—steel, glass, auto, rubber, electrical goods, in fact virtually all the mass production industries. Such industries were organized in Britain fifty years ago; in America they succumbed less than twenty years ago, when the power of the state was put behind the trade unions.

The unique history of the American labor movement has left it with some ideological biases which have handicapped it in its relations to the labor movements of other countries. Outstanding among these is the prejudice against socialists and socialism which many, though not all, American trade unionists manifest. It is easy to understand why American trade unionists are not socialists. What is harder to understand is why so many of them express a doctrinaire antagonism to socialism and tend, when abroad, to usurp the traditional role of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce in hymning the glories of free enterprise.

It is true that there was a time when socialists were strong enough seriously to challenge the orthodox leadership of the American labor movement. But this period is now so remote that one would have expected the antagonisms then generated to have disappeared. Actually the battle has survived in theory far longer than in practice. Although Gompers has been dead for many years, there are some who still feel a burning need to justify his policies. Then, too, socialism is somehow vaguely identified with "intellectuals," and practical trade unionists, in America as elsewhere, distrust the intellectual.

This antagonism to socialism from the beginning colored the relations of the AFL with the European labor movements. Because of it, the AFL delayed its affiliation with the first genuine trade union international, the International Federation of Trade Unions, until 1910, nine years after it was founded. For the same reason, the AFL withdrew from the IFTU soon after World War I. It is fair to note, however, that Gompers took a prominent part in founding the International Labor Organization, an adjunct of the League of Nations, and that the AFL has maintained a continuous and active interest in it up to the present day.



Throughout the world, in the years between 1917 and 1935, a pitched battle was waged by the Communists for the leadership of the labor movement. This was as true in Europe as in America. On both continents, the struggle left a heritage of hatred and distrust for the Communists on the part of the established trade union leaders, whether socialist or not.

Nevertheless, the attitude of European trade unionists towards Communism remains rather different than that of the Americans, a fact upon which George Meany, AFL Secretary-Treasurer, has forcefully remarked. Americans tend to think of Communists as aliens or intellectuals "infiltrating" the trade unions. Europeans occasionally use the same word, but hardly with the same content. They are aware that socialism and Communism have a common ancestry, and that the European Communist parties originated through splits in the established socialist parties, sometimes massive enough to carry the majority of the membership with them. Communists cannot really be said to have "infiltrated" the European labor movement; indeed, the elder among them were active in the trade unions and socialist parties before the Bolshevik revolution and the establishment of the Comintern.

Moreover, most European labor movements went through a four-year period (1935-1939) of cooperation between Communists and non-Communists, in so-called "popular fronts." In retrospect, those who abstained from such collaboration may claim superior wisdom. It is a fact, however, that the United States was much more remote from Nazi power than was France, and did not, as France did, face a serious internal fascist threat as well. The Popular Front was only in part a shrewd Kremlin maneuver. It was also a response to a deeply felt desire on the part of the working class for unity in the face of danger, which in France at least was evident even before the Kremlin had decided to play for unity.

The growing power of Nazi Germany, and the accompanying risk of a reconciliation between the IFTU and the Soviet "trade unions," reawakened AFL interest in the IFTU. In 1934 the delegation at the AFL convention from the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union proposed that the AFL consider reaffiliation. But it was not until 1939, after the British Trades Union Congress had made a determined effort to bring the Soviet organizations into the IFTU, that the AFL did reaffiliate—and shortly thereafter the IFTU was reduced to a skeleton as the Nazis over-ran Europe.

*Formation of the WFTU*

World War II had the effect of vastly increasing Communist prestige, particularly in the areas occupied by the Nazi and Japanese armies. The Communists profited from their considerable (and skillfully exaggerated) role in the various national resistance movements, and from the reflected glory of the Red Army. Moreover, many workers felt that the pre-war divisions in the labor movement had been responsible for the rise of Hitler to power, and they were eager to merge their differences in the strongest possible anti-fascist unity. Europe's socialists—traditional competitors with the Communists for the allegiance of the workers—were in some countries divided and disheartened. Many of them, particularly in France and Italy, had gone over to the Communists. Others, while hesitating to take this step, advocated joint action by the Communist and socialist parties.

In this atmosphere, and with Roosevelt and Churchill meeting with Stalin to plan the post-war world, it seemed to the leaders of the British TUC logical that another attempt should be made to bring the Soviet unions into an international labor organization. Largely through their influence, the Soviets were invited to join in founding, in January, 1945, a new international labor movement, the World Federation of Trade Unions.

The AFL, in line with its traditional anti-Communist policies, refused to enter the WFTU or to recognize the state-dominated Soviet organizations as genuine trade unions. The CIO, however, did join in founding the WFTU. A variety of factors accounted for this. The considerable Communist elements then in the CIO naturally supported the step. To others, it was an opportunity to raise the prestige and status of the CIO—they strongly resented, for example, the fact that the AFL, on the ground that it was the largest national trade union center in the United States, refused to allow the CIO a share in representation at the ILO meetings. Then, too, labor statesmen like Sidney Hillman thought that they could keep the Communists in hand, and perform in the area of international trade unionism something like the role of President Roosevelt in the diplomatic field.

At a time when British trade unionists are sometimes reproached by their American colleagues as being "soft" towards Communism, it is worth recalling that in 1945 the British were genuinely alarmed by what seemed to be the prevailing American naïveté about the Soviet Union and its Communist friends. The Communists in the CIO delegation played, or appeared to play, a very considerable role

in shaping its policy. They followed a double line. On the one hand, they argued, in the interests of "unity," that nothing should appear in the declarations of the WFTU which would embarrass the American unions at home—with the result that the WFTU declarations, in contrast with those of the pre-war IFTU, had little socialist, let alone Communist, about them. On the other hand, they helped create a synthetic "anti-fascist" atmosphere in which anyone critical of Soviet policy, or of European Communists, could be stigmatized as, at best, a disrupter, if not an actual Fascist sympathizer.

After the foundation of the WFTU, the Communists seemed well on the way to establishing a predominant position in the post-war world labor movement. The Secretary-General of the WFTU, a professed socialist, sided more and more openly with the Communists as time went on. Communists came to dominate the WFTU Executive Board, and sought to mold its every action to their purposes. The TUC and the CIO, while alarmed at the trend, were handicapped by their WFTU membership in operating independently in Europe and elsewhere to encourage non-Communist trade union forces.

#### *Setbacks for the Communists*

Fortunately, the AFL retained full freedom of action. Its able and energetic European representative, Irving Brown, roamed the Continent encouraging anti-Communists wherever they could be found. Fortunately, too, many of the more experienced trade union leaders had not been swept off their feet by the post-war enthusiasm for anti-fascist unity. Democratic leadership was particularly strong in the "international trade secretariats," organized to represent the workers of all countries in a given trade or industry. Led by the International Transport Workers' Federation and its General Secretary, J. H. Oldenbroek, these groups strongly resisted incorporation into the WFTU. Quiet but effective work against the Communists and the WFTU was also carried on by the labor attachés who appeared at a growing number of American embassies. They played a new role in the striped-pants world of diplomacy, but a very important one.

In the first years after the War, America was regarded with great suspicion by many European workers, even those not under Communist influence. With the death of President Roosevelt, the United States had lost its most compelling progressive symbol. Many Europeans reverted to their habit of thinking of America in terms of Jack

London and the early novels of Upton Sinclair. Brought up to believe in socialism and to distrust capitalism, European workers could hardly be blamed for regarding "Wall Street" America with suspicion. Nor should the part played by sheer ignorance be forgotten. Knowing nothing of America, many people (like the ancient geographers) tended to fill the blank spaces with imaginary monsters. It was not at all uncommon for European socialists to ask, in all sincerity, whether the advent of fascism in America could be averted for as much as a few months.

American trade unionists abroad, in military, governmental, or private capacities, did much to bring home to their European colleagues the realities of modern America. In various ways, many Europeans were brought to America to see for themselves. Actually, the ideological gap between the European and American labor movements had very much narrowed in everything except language. The Americans had re-defined "free enterprise" to include a large measure of social welfare and economic intervention by government. Moderates in Europe had re-defined socialism so that it could hardly be distinguished from the Fair Deal. Here, for instance, is the list of socialist objectives given by Haakon Lie of the Norwegian Labor Party, the socialist party which since the War has enjoyed most continuous success in its own country.

- "1. To raise the standard of living,
- "2. To provide social security,
- "3. To guarantee the freedom of the individual, and
- "4. To develop a rich and harmonious communal life."

It will be noted that there is no mention of nationalization, no echo of the class struggle. The Norwegian Labor Party has travelled a long way since the period, after World War I, when it was actually affiliated with the Comintern.

A timely revision of concepts about America, at least among many of the top leaders of European trade unions and socialist parties, also helped to narrow the Atlantic. According to the new view, the United States, without most Americans actually admitting it, has become semi-socialist—the Tennessee Valley Authority being most often cited as evidence. Morgan Phillips, secretary of the British Labor Party, told an international socialist conference at Copenhagen that socialist prejudices against the United States must be exposed as out of date. Ever since Roosevelt, he said, the trade unions had exerted a decisive

influence on American policy, with the result that the United States had become ("next to Britain and Scandinavia") the most progressive country in the world. Ernest Bevin, addressing an annual convention of the Labor Party, went even further:

"That great labor movement, the AFL and the CIO," he said, "would bring down any government in the United States that set out on a path of aggression."

European labor leaders, of course, recognized that to the American trade unionists "socialism" was still an untouchable word. They remarked, however, that one could be as socialist as one liked in America so long as one avoided the word itself. In any event, they found no difficulty on this score with the more sophisticated representatives of American labor abroad, who constantly emphasized that differing words, or even differing methods in obtaining the workers' objectives, should not create divisions, so long as these objectives included democracy and the right of the unions to organize freely and to advance the interests of their members, without domination by a totalitarian state.

Working with non-Communist trade unionists in Europe, American unionists had a part in the first important setbacks the Communists suffered. They helped Leon Jouhaux and other French trade unionists to break away from the Communist-dominated CGT and found a rival movement, the CGT-Force Ouvriere. They repeated this success in Italy, where Giulio Pastore, previously a leader of the Catholic labor movement, assumed leadership of the CISL, a new labor movement founded on non-denominational lines. In Berlin, they prevented the Soviets from taking control of the trade unions in the Western sectors of the city. Although the Communist unions remained the dominant force in Italy and France, they were no longer able to operate as freely as when they had less effective competition.

In Germany, for a variety of reasons (not least the experience of Red Army occupation) the Communists have been relatively weak. American trade unionists in military government, however, made an important contribution towards creating a unified German labor movement, resisting considerable pressure for the re-establishment of the pre-war Catholic unions. When the German unions decided to seek as their primary objective workers' participation in management ("co-determination") American trade unions, while registering their disagreement with this policy, defended it against determined attack by American business interests with investments in Germany.

In Latin America, the AFL rallied the non-Communist trade unions, and here Communist influence, strong at the end of the War, was greatly reduced. In Japan and elsewhere in Asia, U. S. trade unionists played a substantial role in thwarting Communist drives to trade union power.

The important decisions, however, were made at a higher level. Had friendship and cooperation between Russia and the Western powers thrived, as was once fondly hoped, the AFL might well have found that its militant policy had placed it in self-imposed isolation. Indeed, that policy in 1945 was widely criticized by non-Communists in Europe as too intransigent. The Soviet rules, however, did their best (or worst) to justify every charge the AFL had levelled against them. What had once seemed to many sheer anti-Communist malice began more and more to look like inspired foresight. The worse relations between Russia and the West became, the more sense the AFL strategy made.

The decisive blow against the WFTU was struck when the Marshall Plan was launched. In deciding to attack the European Recovery Program from outside (rather than sabotaging it from within) the Kremlin made one of its really serious tactical blunders. This led to the withdrawal of the democratic unions from the WFTU, as the Communists were put by their Moscow masters in the position of openly opposing European recovery.

Washington, with a shrewdness for which it has been given too little credit, moved swiftly to capitalize on its advantage. Anti-Communist American trade unionists were attached to every ECA mission, and equipped with assistants drawn from the labor movement. American socialists did a particularly effective job. Welcomed as colleagues by the socialist trade unionists of Europe, they were able to "sell" American policies in a way no outsider could.

### *Problems of the ICFTU*

After much hard work by American trade unionists and ECA representatives, the stage was set for the founding conference of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in London during December, 1949. Nearly all the non-Communist unions of the world were present at this gathering. The AFL and the CIO both sent large delegations, and the United Mine Workers were represented as well. In deference to the Americans, socialist language (strongly advocated by the Belgians, among others) was omitted from the Mani-

festos and the "Declaration of Basic Social and Economic Demands" of the new organization. As David Dubinsky, a leading AFL delegate, expressed it: "The London declarations breathe a spirit of self-reliance, rather than of reliance on the state."

One of the troublesome issues which faced the conference was what to do about the admission of the Christian (generally Catholic) unions which exist in such countries as France, Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland. The socialist unions, with their strong anti-clerical traditions, were vigorously opposed to the admission of these unions. Although the Americans also opposed the division of the workers along religious lines, they were very conscious of the need of uniting all opponents of the Communists.

After strenuous negotiations, a compromise solution was reached—that the Christian unions should be admitted if they disestablished their own international trade union organization. The Americans were very pleased with this solution, which they had played a large part in arranging. Actually it has led to nothing, since the Christian unions proved unwilling to abandon their long-standing international ties. The religious issue, also troublesome because of the considerable Catholic influence in American trade unionism, has continued to haunt the ICFTU.

The Americans made a great point of taking all possible precautions against what they called "great power" domination of the ICFTU, citing the Soviet Union's role in the WFTU as an example to be avoided at all costs. Generous representation was given in the executive committee to the new and weak trade unions outside Europe and America. At American insistence, a place was made on the Executive Board for the Italian trade union leader Pastore. This was not popular with the socialists as they suspected, in spite of his repeated declarations on behalf of a non-sectarian labor movement, that he actually inclined to the Catholic side. This again was to be a source of future trouble.

To some Europeans, it seemed that the "great power" against which the Americans (and particularly the AFL) were so determined to take precautions was Britain. Color was lent to this charge by the stubborn battle the Americans waged against the location of the ICFTU headquarters in London. They suggested Paris. This the British opposed, saying that the headquarters should not be located in a capital where the Communists dominated the labor movement. After many heated debates behind closed doors, the weary delegates

agreed upon Brussels as a compromise. It was not a happy choice. Since then, the ICFTU has been seriously handicapped in obtaining for its actions and statements the world-wide publicity they needed, because Brussels is not a major world news center and is off the beaten track for journalists touring Europe.

The Americans seemed to have their way in the choice of leaders for the new organization. The election of Paul Finet of Belgium as President was in line with American opposition to a "great power" choice. J. H. Oldenbroek, who left the International Transport Workers' Federation to become the General Secretary of the ICFTU, had been strenuously supported by the AFL. These triumphs were destined to be short-lived. Finet resigned after a year to take another post, and Oldenbroek soon lost the confidence of the AFL, who accused him of "playing the British game."

All things considered, the American delegation at London made a strong impression on their colleagues from the rest of the world. The very size of the U. S. delegations, and the prominence of their members, particularly in the case of the AFL (they included William Green, George Meany, and a considerable portion of the AFL Executive Council) gave the others a feeling that U. S. labor had definitely turned its back upon its former isolationism. Moreover, the working unity between the AFL and the CIO at the conference inspired high hopes among European observers that the American labor movement was progressing toward organic unity at home.

On the part of many American observers, there was confidence that the U. S. unions had assumed leadership in the world labor movement. Professor Perlman, for instance, spoke of this "under-rated labor movement" as "suddenly blossoming out as the leader of the free trade unions of the world."

So far, these high hopes have not been justified. International developments have caused more dissension than harmony between the AFL and the CIO. Relations between the AFL and the ICFTU steadily deteriorated to the point where the AFL for a time boycotted important ICFTU meetings and deferred its financial contribution to the vital ICFTU task of building trade unions in the underdeveloped areas of the world.

It is difficult, and perhaps invidious, to allocate the blame for this unhappy trend of events. Trouble began, it now appears, with the decision of the AFL and the CIO, in spite of the fact that they had joined in founding the ICFTU, to maintain their own independent



representatives abroad. All sorts of good reasons could be advanced for this. The ICFTU was in no position to offer the salaries that qualified American trade unionists expected. Direct representatives of the American labor movement would be in a better position to deal with U. S. officials abroad, upon whose decisions much depended. The ICFTU was considered by some Americans as not sufficiently "militant"—i.e., anti-Communist. Although the ICFTU in its statements repeatedly denounced the Communists, some of its non-American members, for the reasons earlier indicated, found it difficult to equal the high pitch of American anti-Communist fervor. Also, it was said that, while the ICFTU might eventually grow into a strong organization, it would take time for it to reach the level of effectiveness which would make direct American representation abroad unnecessary.

One can sympathize with all these reasons. The Americans, for example, may well be right in considering some of their European colleagues as complacent about the Communist danger. The ICFTU may not yet be in position to take over the functions which the U. S. labor representatives abroad have performed. Yet its growth in strength and prestige can hardly be helped by what looks to many observers like an American determination to "go it alone." The highly able U. S. representatives abroad should, it seems to these observers, somehow be fitted into the new world labor organization which their parent organizations support, and in fact helped to found.

If this were done, it would at least be possible to avoid having the conflict between the AFL and the CIO extended openly broad. It can in no sense be indiscreet to allude to the disagreements between the AFL and the CIO representatives in Europe, since they have been widely publicized. Responding to the prevailing European mood, the CIO has tended to play down the anti-Communist line and to put emphasis on the need for raising European living standards. The AFL, while also recognizing this need, believes that the Communist danger urgently requires the attention not only of the European trade unions but of European governments as well. Setting aside the question of which is right, one must, reluctantly but in all honesty, record the fact that this conflict does damage to the prestige of U. S. labor abroad.

Open divergence between the AFL and the CIO in international affairs first appeared at the second ICFTU conference, in Milan in 1951. It came to a head in the choice of a successor to M. Finet as

president. The AFL strongly advocated the election of Pastore. To this the British replied that they were in favor of the choice of a president from a country other than one of the great powers, if a suitable candidate were available. But they said it would be unwise to elect someone from a country like Italy, where the Communists were still the strongest force in the trade unions. With this reasoning the CIO agreed. It joined in supporting Sir Vincent Tewson, the General Secretary of the British TUC, in his successful bid for the ICFTU presidency.

The AFL indignantly charged that a "gentlemen's agreement" that no leader from one of the great powers should receive the presidency had been breached. It suspected anti-Catholic bias in the socialist opposition to Pastore. Once again, as in the pre-war IFTU, AFL resentments against European socialism were aroused. Furthermore, the AFL delegates were furious with the CIO. According to published reports, this seems to have been at least one major cause for the withdrawal of the AFL from the United Labor Policy Committee a few months later. So, instead of the participation of the AFL and the CIO in international affairs having brought them closer together, as many had hoped, it actually had the effect of driving them further apart.

There were other heated arguments at a meeting of the ICFTU Executive later in 1951, when an Italian trade union center of socialist orientation, the UIL, was admitted to the ICFTU over vigorous AFL protests. Again, the AFL saw in this action a socialist effort to undermine the position of Pastore and his CISL. It was after this meeting that the AFL decided to withhold for the time being its contribution to the ICFTU fund for the building of trade unions in underdeveloped territories, and began its boycott of ICFTU meetings.

A movement towards conciliation began with the issuance of a joint statement by the AFL and the CIO, asking the two major non-Communist trade union centers in Italy, the CISL and the UIL, "to work together in good faith on the basis of unity of action, so as to hasten the day when organic unity will be achieved." The AFL took further steps to heal the breach when it invited Oldenbroek to attend its convention in September, 1952, and likewise invited the ICFTU Executive Board to hold its first meeting in America later in the year.

In spite of these favorable developments, the events of the past two years have somewhat tarnished the original bright prospects for U. S. leadership of the world free trade union movement. It is increasingly

clear that the disunity of the American labor movement is a handicap to it abroad as well as at home.

It is possible, of course, to exaggerate the significance of these internal disagreements. The flood-tide of American influence in world trade unionism came at a time when the launching of the European Recovery Program and the initial resistance to North Korean aggression had increased U. S. prestige among Europe's democrats. Some aspects of America's China policy, its emphasis upon rearmament, and the apparent revival of reactionary forces in America symbolized by Senator McCarthy, have strained the free world's confidence in American leadership. These doubts are inevitably reflected in the world free trade union movement.

Close cooperation between the U. S. unions and their friends overseas is, however, more vital now than ever before. To the ever-present Communist danger has been added a threatening resurgence of reactionary forces. In Germany, and even more in Italy, there has been a revival of fascist influence. In Japan, the new and promising labor movement is menaced by the return of the big industrialists and their political pawns to power. These are problems with which U. S. trade unionists can and must help their fellow-workers abroad.

### *Some Myths and Realities*

Whatever its future role in world labor, the American trade union movement will continue to make a distinctive contribution. In the past few strenuous years it has been engaged in finding out what that role may best be. As always, this has meant shedding some myths and recognizing some realities.

The first myth which must go is the insistence that unionism should develop everywhere, as it is alleged to have developed in the United States, without the intervention of government. This theory has always come oddly from the leaders of trade unions which, more than any others in the world, have grown strong from the patronage of a friendly government. It is a fact that, even after the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, American unions enjoy a degree of state support which was not even approached in Britain during six years of Labor government. Wherever the trade union movement is weak, as it was in America in 1933, government can and should intervene to assure to workers the basic rights of trade union recognition and collective bargaining. The National Labor Relations Act is, in fact, a precedent which might well be followed in many countries.

A second myth which needs deflation is that of "productivity" as the solution for all of the workers' problems. It is an attractive myth, and it has not always been easy for Americans overseas to resist the temptation to describe the average trade union in the United States as keenly interested in increasing productivity. Trade unionists from abroad have only to visit this country to observe for themselves that this is not typical union policy. Moreover, higher productivity may in many countries simply increase the disparities between rich and poor, as the lion's share of the resulting higher national income is taken by a privileged few.

Among those American trade unionists abroad who recognize this problem, there is a tendency to see its solution in too simple terms. The workers, it is said, need to be more militant in pressing for higher wages. Trade union pressure for higher wages, it is contended, has been responsible for high American productivity, by compelling management to mechanize and modernize in order to cut manpower costs. This claim does not stand up to serious examination. Productivity in America began to outstrip that in Europe half a century ago, and mainly in those industries which were unorganized at that time and for a generation later.

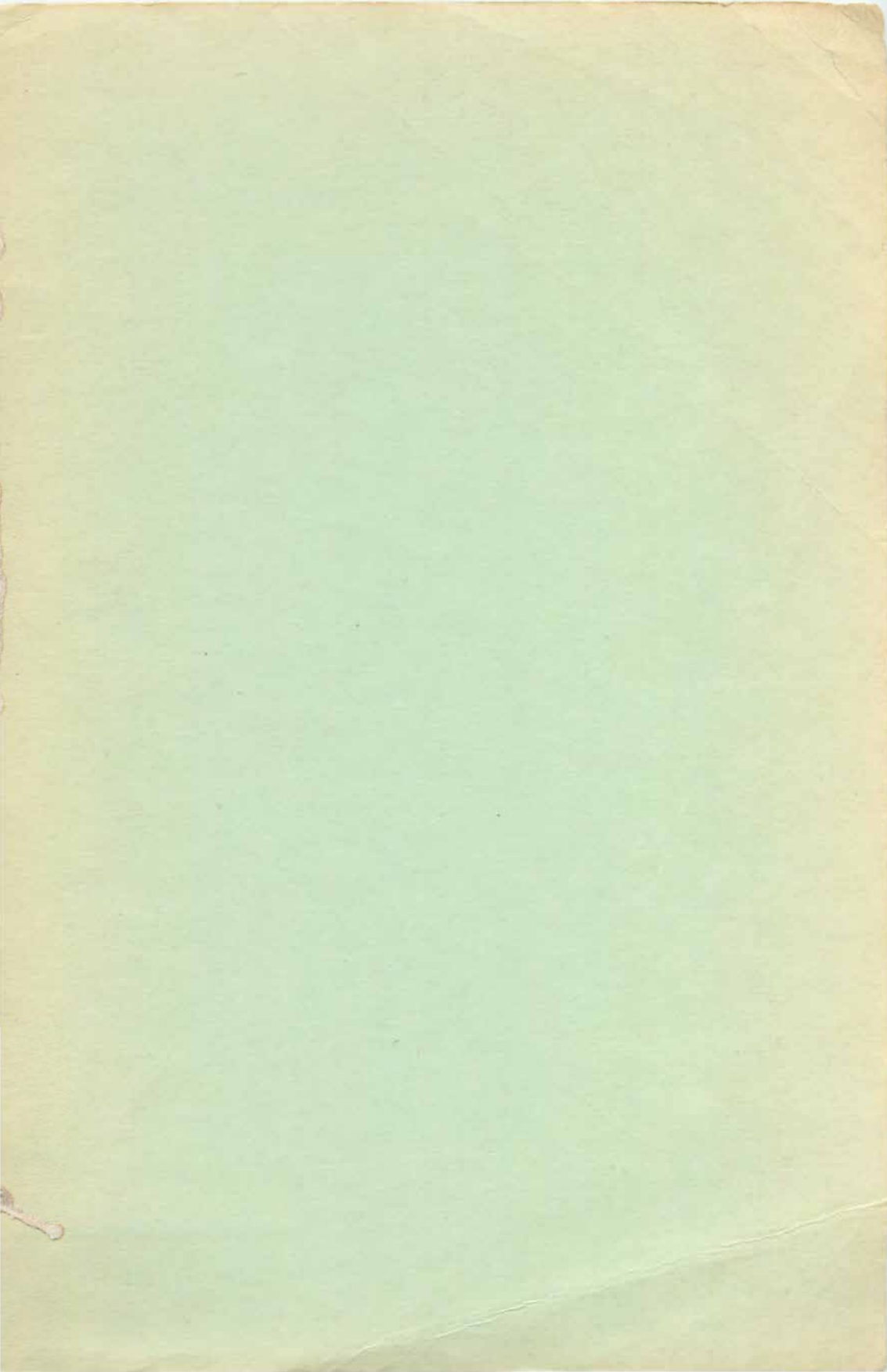
Higher wages in France will not contribute to ending inflation (they may even add to it) or cure the manifold disabilities from which French democracy suffers. Higher wages in Germany are no safeguard against the return of fascists to power. Pure and simple trade unionism in Latin America cannot prevent the spread of military dictatorships, nor in Asia solve the many problems of nations which have only just won or are still seeking their independence.

Even less abroad than in the United States can the trade union movement divorce itself from politics. The major problems of today are political, or if economic are strongly tinged with politics. It may well be that European, Asian, and Latin American unions have not always shown the best political judgment. It may also be the case that new and weak trade unions should be more cautious about undertaking political responsibilities out of proportion to their strength. But "business" unionism is not the answer. It can easily mean that the unions abdicate their responsibility for the future of the community as a whole, and permit the important decisions to be made by other groups. In most cases, decisions made without the workers will be made against them.

The radical problems of other countries may require radical solutions—the “Point Five” of drastic social reform that Justice William Douglas has described as essential, in much of the world, to the success of “Point Four.” American trade unionists should recognize this, and refrain from the veto of such words as “socialism.” Above all, Americans in their contacts with the trade unions of other lands need to acknowledge how fortunate they have been. They live in a country which has been uniquely blessed by economic and political success. For almost two decades they have ridden a high tide of government favor and almost continuous economic advance. They will do best when they swallow a natural sense of pride and self-righteousness, and deal modestly and sympathetically with the problems of the workers of other nations whose histories have been more turbulent and whose present difficulties are more formidable.

*note geography for  
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Is this only a romantic problem  
Business unionism

Business unionism  
industry council  
corporatism

American capitalism

- 1- what is
- 2- what ought to be