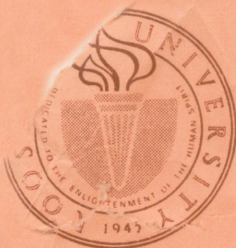


Labor movement - U.S.  
(1970 folder)



# ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

## LABOR EDUCATION DIVISION

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### THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE SEVENTIES

This collection of five articles gives a picture of what is happening today in the American labor movement and what is likely to happen in the 1970's.

The five authors are among the most perceptive and brilliant analysts writing about unions today.

We feel that these reprints will be very useful to those who want to know about the U. S. labor movement currently and what is likely to happen during the next decade.

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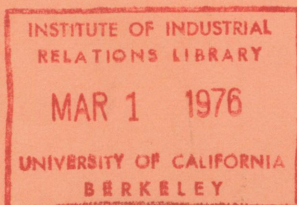
by Gus Tyler.

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Director

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# A Balance Sheet of American Unions

By BEN B. SELIGMAN

**P**ERIODICALLY, and seemingly with increasing frequency, observers of the labor scene pronounce the decay of trade unionism in America. Paul Jacobs, who at the age of 18 crawled on his belly across train tracks to set up a picket line, later declared that collective bargaining was dead; Solomon Barkin, a longtime leading figure in the Textile Workers Union, agrees that unionism is moribund; and B. J. Widick, a refugee from the UAW, bemoans the lack of zeal that unions used to display when he was young.

On the other hand, Gus Tyler, Assistant President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, sees nothing but a bright future for trade unions as they move to fulfill the appeals of white collar workers for organization, press for advances in social legislation, meet the job demands of Negroes more than halfway, and continue a long range thrust toward becoming a genuine social movement.

Which view is correct? I would suggest that neither has a stranglehold on the truth; in fact, a balanced analysis of trade unions today must be placed somewhere between the notions of a Jacobs at one end and a Tyler at the other. The spectacles of both are rather heavily tinted, one a dark gray, the other a cheerful pink, and neither provides a clear view of the trade union movement. For like other American institutions, the unions are in a sense faithful representations of the society from which they spring: they are uneven mixtures of pragmatism, idealism, cunning, competence, sloth, energy,

self-sacrifice, power, altruism, virtue and corruption. The same uneven mixture exists in the rest of society, and when everyone places the bitch goddess of Success on a pedestal, so do the unions.

Yet we have always insisted that unions be like Caesar's wife—above suspicion. But when Calpurnia's friends are dubious characters, she, too, can be besmirched. Therein lies the tragedy of the unions, for while they ought to be institutions of change, like Calpurnia's friends they prefer ancient habits of behavior.

Labor's problems are a compound of issues and questions stemming not only from bargaining, organizing, and politics, but above all from the kind of perspective they have on social matters. What indeed should labor unions be like? How should they behave in organizing and reaching the unorganized? What appeals on political matters ought they be making? What social views should they subscribe to?

The late J. B. S. Hardman, once editor for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union and a man who at the age of 85 had a clearer insight into American labor than many a younger trade unionist, used to speak of limited versus inclusive unionism. According to Hardman, a limited union was one that concerned itself with the worker only during his eight-hour day in the plant, ministering to his need for better wages, hours and working conditions and nothing more. An inclusive union casts its net much wider: it was interested in the problems that affected the worker where he lived, the way he

traveled to his job, the taxes he had to pay, and what he bought at the supermarket—in short, an inclusive union was interested in the worker as a whole citizen.

UNFORTUNATELY, most union leaders today assume postures that demonstrate a sense of unease with the inclusive approach. Their achievements, rather, have been in areas they know best—organizing and collective bargaining. And indeed, in these areas, few labor leaders can be faulted. Over the years, they have evolved techniques for attaining limited objectives in ways that Professor Jack Barbash, of the University of Wisconsin, has described as quite rational: negotiations have been regularized, they are conducted at neutral sites, and they are based on a kind of “common law.” Moreover, the institutional apparatus has been rationalized, utilizing a semi-professional staff of self-trained experts, spiced with sprinklings of fully trained professionals. All this has been imposed by the requirements of growth, for to contend successfully with the bureaucracies of business, it has been necessary for the unions to become bureaucracies, also.

But having reached this level of development, limited unionism has seemed to many labor leaders a comfortable enough haven. Why wrestle with the problems of poverty, organizing white collar workers or making room for Negro workers on union jobs, when the safe and sane thing to do is to worry solely about shop matters? Some trade unionists, particularly in the building trades, have always rejected inclusive unionism, thereby turning away from the one element that would convert trade unions into a labor movement in the sense that there is a never-ending concern with the total quality of daily experience. American labor organizations comprise rather a *trade union* movement that only at

the margin can or will deal with issues that transcend the place of work.

Insofar as American unions consciously pursue solutions to social and political problems, they do so without philosophy and without ideology. In the main, social issues are explored in *ad hoc* fashion and then only when they press on occupational interests. Unions consequently become spokesmen for their own members and for no one else. Seldom have unions in the 20th century stepped outside the boundaries of occupation. It has remained for reformers, radicals, academics, and civil rights protagonists to take up the cry of social change. In the main, unions, despite the exception of the 1930's, join the mainstream of reform only after a good deal of prodding, particularly by interested staff persons. Examples are Solomon Barkin's work on area redevelopment and Nelson Cruikshank's interest in social security. Only after they had done the essential spade work with legislators and after they had published the issues involved, did union leaders go along, oftentimes reluctantly.

The roots of this condition, one that has led many observers to announce, prematurely I suspect, that unions are moribund before their time, may be traced far back into the industrial history of our nation. Plagued for decades by a virtually illegal status, it was not until the 1930's that unions began to attain a measure of legality. Little wonder that the Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932 (which outlawed the capricious use of injunctions) and Section 7A of the National Recovery Act, were hailed as Labor's Magna Chartas. For once, a unionist could display his loyalties openly and an organizer did not have to look over his shoulder as he walked down Main Street.

Most organized workers up to that time belonged to the AFL, which was characterized by an unshakeable at-

tachment to the exclusive virtues of collective bargaining and the use of economic power. Its outlook shaped by the cautious notions of a Samuel Gompers, the AFL believed in self-help as an article of absolute faith. Its experiences with hostile governments impelled the AFL to reject any and all forms of federal intervention in labor-management affairs. Meanwhile, the workers were acquiring a middle class outlook; they became entirely committed to the idea of private property and the viability of the capitalist order. They wanted to be respectable and accepted by the rest of society. Socialist ideas on how labor unions should function were rejected. Class consciousness was not the American worker's metier and as a consequence he organized himself along conservative trade lines. This was true for both the AFL and the CIO.

**I**F TRADE UNIONISTS express any ideology at all, it is one identified with that of the middle class. The AFL-CIO recently conducted a poll of union members which provided the following picture: 45 per cent of union families are in the \$7500 to \$15,000 a year income group; 32 per cent are in the \$5000 to \$7500 range; about half are under 40 years of age; a fourth, under 30 years; almost half live in comfortable suburbs; only 17 per cent are Negro, Mexican, or Oriental; 54 per cent have been union members a decade or more, while a fourth have had their membership for less than five years; 58 per cent call themselves Democrats, 16 per cent, Republican, and 26 per cent are either Independent or unsure of their political affiliation.

The major problems uppermost in the minds of union members are such economic issues as taxes and high prices. The Vietnam war was identified as a major current problem, but civil rights was cited as an issue by

only a third of the respondents. About a third thought that President Johnson was doing as well as he could, while another large group thought that the war in southeast Asia should be escalated. According to the polls, these views are also those of the majority of the population. The portrait that emerges is solidly middle class.

Nothing that took place during the Great Depression has really altered labor's middle class perspective despite the dramatic breakthrough in the mass production industries by the CIO. The latter's effort, of course, was crucial for growth and expansion. The unwillingness of the AFL Executive Council to confront the demand for organizing workers in industries that had become citadels of industrial totalitarianism has been often told: old timers never weary of relating how they carried the water bucket in the Flint sit down strike, and the UAW shows a well-worn movie of its early history at virtually every convention. One can hardly blame them, for it was an heroic effort.

Further, the success of the CIO carried any number of AFL unions in its wake. Between 1936 and 1941, the Teamsters tripled their membership and the staid International Association of Machinists and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers began to invade mass production industry. Competition became the life of union organization and by 1940 the trade unions had reached a total of eight million members, over 14 per cent of the work force.

Idealism and an interest in broad social issues attracted an assortment of reformers and intellectuals to work as staff men and organizers, particularly in the CIO. Some were leftists who believed that the union movement could become the carrier of a New Society, though this was contrary to leftist dogma, for the latter taught that only po-

litical action could bring about change. To be sure, the left was later absorbed into the *ethos* of the trade union movement or tossed aside.

The old line unionist might use leftist energy and enthusiasm, as John L. Lewis had used many Communists, but in the main he was apt to sneer at the "do-gooder" and "intellectual" who passed through his organization. J. B. S. Hardman used to tell of the days when he worked with Lewis on loan from Sidney Hillman. "J. B.," as he was known to everyone, wanted to mount an educational campaign for the Steelworkers Organizing Committee and set up classes in reading and writing for the workers. Lewis' response was characteristic: the only way to reach the workers, he told Hardman, was to "organize, organize, organize," punctuating each word with a thrust of his massive fist.

THE TRADE UNION LEADER is a self-made man who expresses the same sort of pride in his achievements that one might have found in a successful businessman at the turn of the century. For him, too, the material values of the larger society are meritorious enough to be coveted. As David Dubinsky once exclaimed, "What's good enough for the capitalist is good enough for the worker!" Though he is an ardent advocate of public education for the children of his members, the trade union leader is apt to send his own offspring to the Harvard School of Business Administration.

Men who have climbed out of the mines, shops, railroads and offices to head large union organizations are not predisposed to formulating a philosophy. They function within a kind of general *weltanschauung* that remains somewhat inchoate. Their experience, perspective, and middle class expectations reflect rather a stubborn pragmatism. Despite the harsh experiences

over the decades, they always had hoped to become part of American society, and now that they have arrived, labor leaders are not apt to sacrifice affluence for philosophy.

Having clawed his way to the top, the union official is often uneasy in the presence of intellectuals, though he has come to learn that their skills as lawyers, educators, and researchers are essential. Often the latter feel so committed to unionism that they willingly suffer the silent and sometimes not so silent barbs hurled in their direction by their principals. When a Teamster staff man once carried through a particular bit of negotiation, Hoffa's appreciative reaction was a vulgar, "Echl!" Yet moving the organization ahead even a bit seemed to the staff man worthwhile.

If Gus Tyler chides "intellectuals" for demanding that the unions undertake tasks for which they are ill-fitted, it is an admission that unions can only function within the boundaries specified by the establishment and that trade unions are not vehicles for social change. When Jack Conway, one of Reuther's chief lieutenants, charges that "intellectuals" pose the wrong questions by asking why unions aren't doing more about poverty, discrimination, automation and internal democracy, it is an admission that unions are unable to respond to critical matters without a good deal of prodding.

To be sure, the CIO experience during the 1930's served to widen the unions' horizons, but mainly to expand the meaning of Gompers' "More." Unions became concerned with job classification, seniority and fringe benefits. All this was quite proper, for it signaled a deeper involvement in the character and impact of work than was expressed by the pay envelope alone. Political activity was extended beyond the limits of the archaic aphorism, "Punish your enemies; reward your

friends." Vital domestic and international issues were pushing society ever closer to the welfare state and there was a growing realization that many social problems could not be solved by the technique of collective bargaining. Many in the CIO realized that programs rather than convention resolutions had to comprise labor's agenda.

It seemed for a while that the CIO would indeed forge a new ideology. The writers, speakers, researchers, educators, lawyers, and organizers who flocked into the CIO had no fears that government would suppress the independence of the workers. Nor were they overwrought at the prospect that a welfare state would undermine the loyalty of workers to their unions. There was too much to be done during the 1930's and 1940's and it appeared that achievement itself would create all the loyalties that were needed.

The CIO seemed to be heaven's answer to age old prayers for a New Society. With such expectations, it was harsh, abrasive discovery to learn that the American worker was like everybody else, that he could not be metamorphosed into Lenin's proletariat, that he was so middle class that one could find in him all the virtues and prejudices of that middle class. The American worker could be heroic and self-sacrificing, yet he was also anti-Catholic, anti-Negro, anti-Semitic, anti-foreign. Once away from the plant, the American worker preferred to hunt, read the comics, drink beer and listen to the soporifics of the radio.

Nevertheless, the AFL's outlook broadened under the cumulative organizing pressures of the CIO; it even allowed some of its staff people to make occasional public pronouncements instead of keeping them under lock and key. The conversion went far enough to make AFL and CIO so similar that merger seemed inevitable.

YET AFTER 1955, when merger was consummated, old habits prevailed. Momentum was lost and all too soon the unions abdicated their role as social catalysts. Walter Reuther himself became more "business union" oriented than he realized. For though the UAW stands up effectively to the big companies, it has enormous difficulties extending the boundaries of its organization campaigns and it cannot fully resolve problems at local shop levels, and it is such matters, matters that are essentially "business," that remain central to its concerns. These issues have a first priority within the union.

One may single out the activities of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, once headed by Reuther, as having been somewhat exceptional. It did involve itself in community activity, in fostering a program to defend the consumer against attacks on his pocketbook, and has spearheaded coordinated collective bargaining against such giants as General Electric; yet all of this has not produced any strong signs of a metamorphosis, any indication that the trade unions are that much closer to *becoming* a labor movement that is carrying on activities that deal with broad social issues transcending the job itself. Moreover, recent developments suggest that the IUD is entering a state of collapse.

What has happened inside the unions parallels events outside—an inability to match creed and deed. The creed is an excellent one. The last convention of the AFL-CIO provided a full range of resolutions on poverty, housing, rapid transit, youth employment, aid to education, consumer protection, equal rights and an equitable tax system. One can hardly quarrel with these statements, yet such resolutions are repeated from convention to convention and their fulfillment often requires much more effort than the unions are prepared to expend.

Admittedly, a resolution is little more than an expression of belief, but the "payoff," it is said, comes in the legislative process. Yet the latter in this country is such that the unions must behave exactly like any other pressure group. That is to say, unions must practice the art of the politically possible. They must be ready to compromise issues at stake in order to achieve objectives; they must behave in the legislative arena exactly as they do across the bargaining table. The results are sometimes less than fully satisfactory. For example, in the extension of minimum wage coverage in 1966, the AFL-CIO had to accept exemptions from overtime regulation for two groups of retail workers in order to secure other coverage it wanted. For these retail workers the compromise was retrogression. When an AFL-CIO lobbyist was chided for sacrificing one group of workers to gain benefits for others, he shrugged, "One has to give to get."

Such concessions convert broad social problems into *ad hoc* legislative contests, each one of which can be related only to the crisis of the moment. It becomes impossible to elaborate a cohesive social philosophy. The trade union movement, having converted itself into a pressure group, cannot become a spokesman for a labor movement.

Historically, the limits for union political action were drawn by Gompers' pragmatic perception of union performance. For him, an overwhelming concern with social action was an invitation to doom. Unions were to focus on their main tasks—collective bargaining—and to eschew programs that were redolent of radicalism.

WITH THE CIO, involvement in politics became more direct. The New Deal had generated a different political atmosphere from that which ex-

isted previously, and there was an implicit *quid pro quo* as the administration in Washington ground out reform after reform. The CIO imbedded itself more deeply than ever in national and local politics. Its Political Action Committee became an intimate part of American political life (albeit increasingly wed to the Democratic party), but not until 1947, with the threat of Taft-Hartley, did the AFL respond with its own political arm, Labor's League for Political Education into the Committee On Political Education. Soon, as in other activities, old AFL conceptions began to submerge whatever views had stemmed from the CIO. The possibility of political activity beyond mere pressure was lost, perhaps forever, and as a consequence the unions' influence has remained limited.

Perhaps this is the best that one can hope for in the American milieu, but the risks are grave. In a political sense, the AFL-CIO has become the captive of the Democratic party. Though it helps elect Democratic legislators, the latter often feel that their constituency comprises more than a COPE Director or a Central Trades and Labor Council. Hence, on issues that the AFL-CIO considers urgent, as the repeal of Section 14B of the Taft-Hartley Law, unions meet only frustration.

The narrowness of the unions' political approach is exemplified by the reversal of their attitudes toward former Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon, for whom their support in the last election was lukewarm if not entirely lacking. Morse's decision in an arbitration case was interpreted by the AFL-CIO and particularly the Machinists' Union, which was involved, as "anti-labor." Yet there was no legislator who in recent years had done more for labor than he. Nonetheless, the absence of strong union support meant the loss of an outstanding senator.

A second risk is an uncritical ac-

ceptance of everything the Johnson administration has done, including its behavior in foreign affairs. Witness the manner in which opposition to the Vietnam war was crushed at the last AFL-CIO convention. When the National Labor Leadership For Peace, a group of dissident unionists, presented a statement urging settlement of the Asian conflict, George Meany dismissed it with contempt. "Do you know how many times," said Meany, "President Johnson in the last few years has indicated his willingness to meet [North Vietnam] at any time, any place without reservations? Almost every day." Meany's adulation of Johnson was so great, that he ranked LBJ above Franklin Roosevelt.

Liberal candidates in the last election who were critical of the Johnson administration received little support from the Committee on Political Education, the AFL-CIO political arm. In Ohio, a dovish candidate for senator was told to find other sources of money; a Democratic senate candidate in Illinois who supported George McGovern for the presidency could locate few union dollars; and in New York, Paul O'Dwyer, also running for the Senate, was written off because he refused to support Humphrey. And now, it is clear that the Nixon administration owes the AFL-CIO nothing, except a retaliatory needle which may be expressed by a change in the National Labor Relations Board as it already has been expressed by the installation of a quite conservative Secretary of Labor. Indeed, Mr. Nixon may very well move toward legislation seeking to curb the strength of the unions.

**D**ESPITE MEANY'S occasional irritation at some of the actions of Democratic administrations, as in the railroad hassle of 1963, he has nowhere else to turn—certainly not to the Republicans. To be sure, the unions are

able to solidify labor votes behind Democratic candidates (in the Eisenhower landslide, union members went 3 to 2 for Stevenson, though their families preferred Ike.) But in the main, union political activity fits snugly into the two party tradition. Organizing a labor party seems impossible; the country is too large. There are many states in which a third party cannot secure a place on the ballot; and the unions' geographic concentration in the northeast would militate against a truly national party.

A symptom of union ills is their present difficulty in extending the boundaries of organization. To be sure, there are unions—mainly in white collar fields—of which such a statement would be false. Some labor organizations have made great advances in recruiting members in these areas: The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, American Federation of Government Employees and the Retail Clerks International Association have recorded notable gains, the latter doubling its membership in about ten years.

Somewhere around 1955, the number of white collar workers began to exceed blue collar workers, reflecting fundamental changes in the economic system. Government employment expanded, particularly among teachers, who by 1960 numbered over 2.5 million, almost 2/3 more than in the previous decade. There are now more technicians, engineers, nurses and sales clerks than in earlier decades. Gains are bound to be made among these white collar groups, even if some prefer to maintain their organizations outside the AFL-CIO, as with the nurses and engineers. At an RCA plant in Camden, engineers function as a union, negotiating with management, processing grievances, and taking part in NLRB elections, but they are not affiliated to the House of Labor on 16th Street in



Washington. Nevertheless, their activity testifies to the growing ferment among white collar workers.

Despite the opportunities that these developments offer, the AFL-CIO has not shifted its posture nor altered its structure nor changed its tactics to take advantage of increasing discontent in the white collar field. There is no white collar department in the AFL-CIO to support organizing drives, and the White Collar Council, headed by Charles Cogen of the AFT, has been receiving little more than polite lip service from top echelons in the AFL-CIO. Most union leaders, stemming as they do from construction and manufacturing industry, seem somewhat suspicious of the white collar man—if indeed they are not indifferent to the latter's needs.

There is also a growing generational conflict in the unions; the membership is becoming younger (those under 40 now comprise half the total membership) and the leadership older. The officers are reluctant to surrender power and they accuse young members of failing to be "active," the meaning of which is limited to attending meetings at which they listen to the leadership line. While the outlook of the leader focuses on job protection, the rank and file member is apt to be concerned with community affairs. College-trained persons are joining unions in larger numbers as a result of organization among teachers, nurses, and government workers. These developments will generate internal tensions in the unions.

To be sure, the AFL-CIO is not the Federation of Samuel Gompers. George Meany must necessarily support liberal legislation. But labor in America is part of the establishment. When Walter Reuther squeezed his own orange juice at a Miami convention, his peers snickered, but their anger was aroused

when he questioned union leaders' country clubs and Cadillacs.

THE ISSUE of internal union democracy has been discussed ad infinitum. Ex-labor men like Paul Jacobs expect a union to be run somewhat like a New England town meeting, when to a union leader, reality requires that it be operated more like a corporation in which the stockholders are kept contented so long as dividends are declared. When union leaders cannot "deliver the goods" there is grumbling and collective bargaining agreements painfully reached are rejected by rank and file. Some management people think that contract ratification ought to be abolished in the interest of harmonious labor-management relations, but the ratification tradition is too deeply imbedded to be uprooted without a revolution or perhaps a *coup d'état*.

Some rebellions in the unions are little more than revolts of the barons, much like the titanic proxy struggles in corporations. In the Retail Clerks Union several local potentates had to wait until its president announced his retirement before daring to reach for power. They then felt safe in attacking the outgoing administration despite the fact that membership under the old régime went from some 75,000 in 1944 to over 500,000 today. There was a measure of irony in the Clerks' conflict; the rebels attacked a record of efficiency and unusual competence, reflecting only their desire to occupy the seats of the mighty. All this illustrates what is real in union life: internal politics not too dissimilar from the town council; a structure analogous to the forms of organization to be found elsewhere; and bureaucracy to counter bureaucracy. Perhaps this explains why critical social matters are pursued by civil rights organizations, university professors, and the church, with unions bringing up the rear.

The problem of Negro discrimination is a case in point. Although the AFL-CIO may declare its good intentions, in the locals, through which jobs are actually secured, Negroes still have their troubles. Only recently the Department of Justice has had to file suit under the 1964 Civil Rights Act against two locals—one in Indianapolis, the other in Los Angeles—charging discrimination against the employment of Negroes. Both are building trades unions that have no Negro apprentices and no Negro members. In fact in 1967 there was on the average one such suit per month.

Unfortunately, unions in the past were quick to adopt the discrimination patterns of the South. Oftentimes hostility between black and white workers was deliberately fostered by employers using Negroes as strike breakers. Not until the CIO came along were Negro workers given an alternative that did not force them to take scab jobs. Yet even the United Packinghouse Workers did not attempt to upset tradition in southern plants.

When the Railroad Trainmen and Firemen were admitted into the merged labor movement, Negro workers could not help but be dubious, for these unions had long practiced discrimination. The Railway Conductors and Locomotive Engineers dropped their lily white membership clauses only when forced to do so by the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Landrum-Griffin Act allows Negroes to sue to abolish auxiliary or segregated locals. Despite a Civil Rights Committee in the AFL-CIO, it has required the pressure of government to achieve even modest results.

**O**N CIVIL RIGHTS MATTERS unions have dragged along with marked reluctance. When Herbert Hill of the NAACP mounted a vitriolic attack on certain unions for their discriminatory practices, George Meany and David

Dubinsky were both furious. The ILGWU was a special target of Hill's venom, for its constitution, while designed to exclude Communists, worked equally well to keep Negroes and Puerto Ricans out of office. Despite overstatement and much heat in his indictment, many of Hill's charges rang too true to be dismissed out of hand.

A good part of the problem stems from the bigotry of union members themselves; on this issue many union leaders are like generals without an army. *They* may want to keep the doors of opportunity open, but often this is a matter on which they can expect little rank and file support. Union members are ordinary Americans and they reflect the prejudices and animosities that have been long implanted in the American *ethos*.

Equality of opportunity needs to be enforced by an outside agency such as the Civil Rights Commission; it needs to be enforced directly in the shop. The white backlash that frequently takes place at the bench must be countered by a carefully constructed campaign of placement and education, all supported by the sanction of government. An attempt by a local union officer to alter the mores of his community is for him a risky adventure.

Yet often union leaders have been ambivalent in their attitudes toward Negro discrimination. While Meany intervened in his home local in New York to have tests given to Negro applicants, he asserted that union men were right in refusing to "work with non-union men," though the latter, of course, were Negroes excluded by local union rules. On the other hand, in Washington, he threatened to recruit non-union Negro workers if the IBEW local continued in its refusal to accept Negro members.

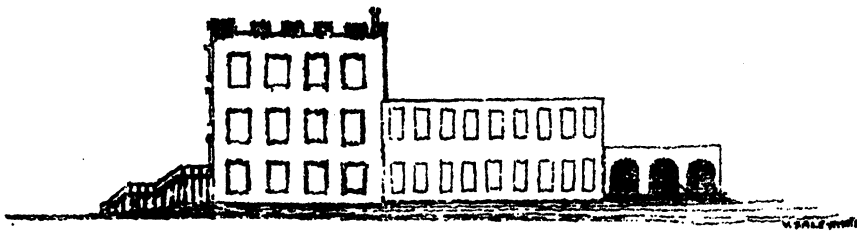
The union movement is confronted by other problems as well: its inability or unwillingness to change an aging

leadership in the Executive Council (only a public outcry moved Meany, himself well past 70 years of age, to ease out several ancient members of the Council); an inability to cast up viable solutions for problems generated by technology (at the moment, this does not appear too serious, since unemployment rates are low); and its hypercaution in extending the boundaries of organization (support for agricultural workers in southern California came only after Carlos Chavez had achieved some success)—all suggest that as organizations, unions are very much like the rest of American society.

Yet if one accepts unions as essential instruments for improving the immedi-

ate material welfare of their members (and for that purpose there are few better instruments available) then it becomes necessary for other groups to become the torch bearers of change. Unions perform very well within their specified limits; if they did not exist they would have to be invented, for there is no other way to protect the job rights of workers. We may have to let the matter stand there. If we are concerned with civil rights, Vietnam and reform, the burden of these issues necessarily must fall on other shoulders.

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# Some reflections on organized labor and the new militants

Is a traditional instrument  
of protest action  
itself becoming  
a target of protest?

PETER HENLE

SEVERAL AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS, among them universities, business, church, and government, have been confronted by disruptive protest intended to force changes in policies or procedures. Until recently, labor unions, which traditionally have been viewed as economic protest organizations, have been spared as a target of such protest. Although expressions of strong and perhaps growing dissent have been heard, these have typically taken the form of membership rejections of tentative contracts or membership voting out of incumbent union leaders. However, a recent and more serious form of dissent involves groups of Negro workers in several industries who have been forming organizations that operate outside normal union channels.

In some cases, the new unit is simply a "black caucus" within an established local or national union such as that associated with the 1968 Steelworkers' convention.<sup>1</sup> Generally, caucuses do not take the separatist route but rather formulate "black" demands to be presented to the union leadership and membership. In other cases, as in the construction industry, an independent black union is operating in some localities apart from the AFL-CIO organization.

New groups, proclaiming more "revolutionary" aims that are still unclear, are appearing, notably in the auto industry. In Detroit, a new group comprised of Auto Workers' members and calling itself the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), has declared itself the "vanguard of the black revolution." And in a Mahwah, N.J., dispute, a wildcat strike, led by the United Black Brothers of Ford—Mahwah and given vocal support by local members of the Students for a Democratic Society, closed the Ford assembly plant for two nights last April. Without revolutionary rhetoric,

a new organization, calling itself Shipyard Workers for Job Equality, was formed at the Sparrows Point, Md., plant of Bethlehem Steel Co. by Steelworkers' Union members who felt that the union was not adequately concerned with the interests of Negro members.

These developments are not widespread but they represent an indication that the type of disruptive action so prevalent on the campus may be spreading to the industrial scene. Whether the goals of the new groups are the traditional objectives of equality of treatment or more in line with the separatist thrust of the New Left, there appears to be an impatience with, if not hostility to, established union leadership and normal collective bargaining procedures. For example, DRUM has provided the leadership for wildcat strikes in auto plants and has frankly expressed its goals as revolutionary.

There is nothing new about individual union members adopting an antagonistic attitude toward their union, their employer, and to the established system for handling labor-management differences. Individual union members or even informal groups of members frequently contend that their specific job grievances are not being pressed vigorously, their suggested contract demands neglected, and their candidates for office spurned by the union leadership. Such disaffection or hostility to established union authority is often based on a community of interest around a specific aspect of the job (specific skill or type of work) or personal characteristics of the group (race, religion or ethnic origin). Dissenters of this type are typically part and parcel of any mass membership organization.

Whether a new type of dissent, more militant in tone and more separatist in philosophy, will find widespread support among the union membership depends partly on certain observable factors such as union structure, policies, and procedures, and partly on personal attitudes and values which, in

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today's world, often defy measurement and prediction. The assessment that follows is focused chiefly on some observable factors and, hence, can be considered only a tentative approach to an extremely complex issue. It seeks to explore the implications of the present structure of unions and collective bargaining, the opportunities for changing union policies, and the role played by government. Finally, some comments are made on the possible reaction of union members and leaders to the new dissenters.

### Structure of unions and bargaining

First, consider the structure of the labor unions and the collective bargaining system. Are these so organized that the average union member can participate in the decisionmaking process that affects his conditions of employment?

A key element in this picture is the decentralization of power in the U.S. labor movement. Nearly 50 national unions now have 100,000 members or more. Only three of these have over 1 million. The U.S. labor movement is not dominated by one or a few unions. The largest U.S. union—the Teamsters—has 9 percent of total U.S. union membership. In England about 15 percent of union members belong to the Transport and General Workers Union, while in West Germany close to 25 percent are members of the Metal Workers Union.

Nor is there any discernible trend toward increasing concentration. At the turn of the century, the United Mine Workers could be said to dominate the labor movement (at least statistically) since their membership was 13 percent of the total. The share of the largest five unions, comprising almost 35 percent of total union membership in 1900, dropped to about 25 percent in 1939, has been rising slowly since, and has now reached over 30 percent, still below what it was in 1900. In England, the five largest unions comprise 40 percent of the total, and in West Germany, the comparable figure is 60 percent.

Although there have been mergers of smaller unions, there is still no labor counterpart to the recent growth of business "conglomerates" which seemingly can absorb within one corporate shell all manner of diverse activities.<sup>2</sup> One U.S. union that might have been called a conglomerate, the Miners, has lost its conglomerate character with the expulsion of its District 50.

Moreover, the ranking of the top 5 or 10 unions keeps changing. Three of the top 10 unions in 1948 are no longer in this category (Miners, Textile Workers, and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers). Taking their place are the Electrical Workers (IBEW), the Retail Clerks, and the Laborers.

In large measure, this decentralization is carried down into the structure of the individual union and further is reflected in the collective bargaining process. There are unions, of course, where the national officers wield great personal power, but more typically the center of decisionmaking is at the local, district, or regional level. In most unions, local autonomy is highly prized with the national leadership reluctant to interfere in local affairs. This provides the setting for a closer relation between the union member and his organization.

Despite the headlines which emphasize industry-wide labor disputes, much of today's bargaining is concerned with local problems. In many situations, the industrywide or companywide bargaining focuses on a few major issues; local supplements covering local issues are regarded equally as important as the wage increase issues settled nationally. In fact, in some cases, strikes over local issues have become far more common than any stoppage over any nationally bargained questions. In the auto industry, a new national agreement, sometimes reached only after a strike at one of the major companies seems to be almost invariably followed by plant strikes over provisions in the local supplementary contract.

It is true that in recent years unions in certain industries (chemicals is one example) have been pressing for companywide bargaining in situations where plantwide bargaining exists today. In other situations, some form of coalition bargaining has developed, in which several unions holding plantwide agreements with a single company join together to pool their bargaining strength. Although from the unions' point of view more effective bargaining has been achieved in a number of such cases, the changes in collective bargaining patterns as a whole have been relatively minor. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, for example, indicate practically no change between 1956 and 1966 in the number of union members covered by the average union agreement.

Additional evidence on the decentralized structure of bargaining comes from the statistics on



strikes. Most strikes involve relatively few workers although, of course, the larger ones get the headlines and cause the most disruption to the public. Fully half the strikes involve fewer than a hundred workers, and only 8 percent as many as 1,000 workers. Twenty years ago the figures were almost identical so there has not been any major shift toward larger strikes over the postwar period.

This decentralized structure—in union organization and in collective bargaining—increases the likelihood that union activities will not stray far from the expressed interests of the individual union member.

### Opportunity for change

While the degree of democracy within some unions is still subject to debate, the terms of the controversy appear to have narrowed, especially in the light of recent legislative enactments.<sup>3</sup> There seems to be greater consensus that, for the most part, union constitutions and union operations recognize majority rule, rights of minorities, and safeguards to assure fair elections. Union members regularly vote union officials out of office not only at the local level but increasingly at the national level as well. In recent years, an incumbent president has been defeated in several unions, including the United Steelworkers, the International Union of Electrical Workers, the State, County, and Municipal Workers Union, and the Insurance Workers Union. Strong opposition has been a factor in a president's retiring or failing to stand for reelection in other unions, including the Teachers, and the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers. Presidents had to battle strong opposition before winning elections in the Government Workers, Textile Workers, Mine Workers, and most recently, the Steelworkers.

Of a total of 186 national unions listed in both the 1965 and 1967 editions of the Bureau of Labor Statistics Directory of National and International Unions, 40—or 22 percent—changed presidents between the 2 years. Between 1963 and 1965, 32 unions changed presidents and the figure was 38 between 1961 and 1963.

Sometimes dissatisfaction with union leadership has led to a change in affiliation of individual local unions or groups of unions, or a move to outright independence. The AFL-CIO "no-raiding agreement"<sup>4</sup> is designed to outlaw efforts

by any union to entice a local of another union to shift its allegiance, but so long as such unions as the Teamsters, and now the Automobile Workers, are outside the AFL-CIO, there are alternative homes to which individual locals or groups of locals can turn. In recent years, the most dramatic move to independence has been the formation of the independent Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers from west coast locals of the two well-established international unions in the pulp and paper field.

Another opportunity for union members to express their dissatisfaction with their leadership arises when they are asked to pass on a tentative bargaining agreement reached by union and company negotiators. Beginning a few years ago, the director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service began publicizing the fact that a larger proportion of these agreements were being rejected by the union membership. In a 1968 article, the director indicated that from 1964 to 1967, the number of cases in which union members rejected tentative agreements rose steadily until in 1967 it reached over a thousand rejections representing more than 14 percent of the cases in which the mediation agency was involved. There has been a slight drop in 1968, but the figures remain at a relatively high level.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, union members dissatisfied with the representation they are receiving may not only work to change their union affiliation, but may also adopt another route open to them by working to decertify their bargaining representative. It is interesting to note, however, that although the trend seems to be towards more frequent contests for union leadership, the number of decertification cases filed over the past 5 years and the number of such elections held have been fairly constant. Only about 5 percent of all representation cases coming before the NLRB involve decertification petitions. On this evidence, one might conclude that dissatisfied union members are more inclined to try to change leadership than to reject unionism completely.

### Government's role

In the protection of union members' rights government plays a crucial role. Until a decade ago, union business was considered solely the concern of the union; there was no basis, except as

uncertain court procedure, for intervening in such internal union affairs as the conduct of elections, eligibility for membership, or methods of accounting for funds. Congressional investigations into union affairs, with attendant publicity to various unsavory situations, led to the 1959 passage of the Landrum-Griffith amendments to the basic labor relations law. Later, a safeguard against discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, or sex in the treatment of applicants for union membership was included in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The result has been a change in the public attitude about internal union affairs. No longer is the union considered a private club where internal affairs are the business only of the membership; instead, the union's functions are considered so important to the proper functioning of the economy that the public has the right to make certain that the unions' business is conducted without discrimination, honestly, and with adequate safeguards for the democratic process.

Whether this new legislation is achieving its objectives and whether it handicaps unions in performing their responsibilities in collective bargaining is a continuing matter for debate.<sup>5</sup> To some extent, the limited number of election complaints under Landrum-Griffin (fewer than 150 annually in an estimated 18,000 elections of union officers) may testify to the basic democratic process previously prevailing. To some extent, it also reflects changes made in union constitutions as a result of the law and its interpretations by the courts. There can be little doubt that the law has had an impact on union procedures, particularly in the conduct of union elections, the management of finances, and the imposition of trusteeships over local unions. The most notable election cases involve the 1964 election for the president of the International Union of Electrical Workers and the recent election of the National Maritime Union's officers.

Despite these improvements and despite most unions' basic adherence to democratic principles, instances of undemocratic procedures or questionable interpretations of constitutional provisions can provide the basis for grievances by dissenters against the union "establishment." Similar grievances arise over possible arbitrary treat-

ment of individual employees under the collective bargaining process.<sup>6</sup> Yet under current union procedures, adequate opportunity would seem to be available for dissidents to place their case before the union membership.

### Role of the strike

The historical role of the union has been one of protest—against low wages, long hours, oppressive working conditions. The traditional instrument for protest has been the strike.

As unions became more established, often as a result of strike action, collective bargaining prevailed and the use of the strike became more selective, at times when bargaining failed or when agreement could not be reached on the terms of a new contract.

Several years ago, observers were speculating that the United States might be witnessing a long-run decline in the use of the strike.<sup>7</sup> They thought they discerned some indication that unions were resorting less to the strike to achieve their objectives and that bargaining agreements would be reached more and more without strike action. While it may be true that, over the years, collective bargaining has reached a certain maturity, particularly in situations where the parties have become more familiar with each other's point of view, it has not followed that the incidence of strikes has declined. In fact, strike losses during 1968, although comprising only 0.27 percent of total working time, were the highest since 1959.

Moreover, fully one-third of these strikes occur during the life of the bargaining agreement and do not involve the negotiation of any subsequent contract. It is true that most of such stoppages involve a relatively small number of employees and, further, that they are of short duration. Nevertheless, the number of such strikes is surprising considering the current and widespread use of voluntary arbitration as a grievance settlement device. Although any strike is a protest action, it becomes more dramatic when it takes place at a time when an agreement with appropriate procedures is in effect to deal with whatever conditions gave rise to the protest. Data are not available to indicate what proportion of these stoppages are in violation of a no-strike provision of

the contract, but many undoubtedly fall into this category. The fact that these occur in such numbers indicates the extent to which the current "established" system of labor-management relations already has to cope with insurgent unauthorized protest actions. Presumably, efforts by militant groups to assert union leadership would be accompanied by an increasing number of "wild-cat" or unauthorized strikes. No indication of such an increase is evident in the data for recent years.

### Attitude of union members

There is no reason to expect that expressions of dissatisfaction with union leadership and policies will shortly come to an end, especially in view of the prevailing mood of frustration throughout many levels of American society. The most serious heightening of tension, of course, has occurred in the area of race relations as Negro groups strive for greater recognition and equality.

A key question is whether, to the typical Negro unionist, the possibility of gaining economic advancement appears more appealing through a new militancy or through traditional union methods. On the one hand, like all workers, Negroes vary in their loyalty to the union. For many of them, union membership springs more from the existence of a union shop contract requiring membership as a condition of employment. Moreover, they normally pay a not inconsiderable sum (\$50-\$70 annually) for the services the union is rendering. When to this is added the uphill fight for recognition and equality that most Negro workers have faced, it would be surprising indeed if many of them could not be encouraged to join a more militant organization.

On the other hand, union leaders point out that, utilizing traditional union methods, Negro workers have been able to achieve substantial gains, both in terms of economic improvements and advances to positions of greater responsibility within the union ranks. Additionally, they contend that union attitudes toward the Negro minority have forcefully changed during the past decade. Action has been taken to eliminate barriers to admission, abolish discrimination in hiring practices, and negotiate changes in seniority arrangements which had been blocking Negro advances to higher paying jobs. At the same time, unions have given

strong support to governmental efforts in this same direction.<sup>8</sup>

The black separatists respond that the gains have been minimal and that unionists who have sanctioned past injustice will not correct it. As one advocate summarizes the current situation, "The racial intransigence and insensitivity of many labor unions to the interests of the black community and to the increasing radicalization of Negro demands suggest sharp confrontations in the near future."<sup>9</sup>

### The uncertain future

The outcome of this debate is uncertain. The factors in the background discussed earlier—the decentralized union structure, the opportunities for changing union leadership, and the essentially democratic union procedures—all seem to indicate that dissent can be expressed constructively within the present framework. Yet in some eyes, the union has outlived its usefulness as an instrument of protest—to become itself a target of protest. As recent events have demonstrated, the rise of new, more disruptive groups of dissidents in various arenas of American life does not always follow predicted paths.

Whether Negro unionists will heed the call of the new groups remains to be seen. Up to mid-1969, the separatist black groups do not seem to have attracted much support. It may be worth noting that despite many white Southerners' distaste for union civil rights and political efforts in 1968, relatively few have deserted their union. Will the Negro unionists retain their affiliation despite their disappointment with other union policies?

If action is taken to establish separate identities, the reaction by the white union members and the union leadership is likely to be quite sharp. In Detroit, for example, the UAW counterattacked against DRUM by circulating a letter to all area unionists calling attention to the actions of DRUM including "knifings and physical assaults." Furthermore, according to the union, "fires have been started inside the plant which, had they not been brought under control, could have meant the loss of workers' lives and the loss of jobs." The union letter stated that the UAW "will not protect workers who resort to violence and intimidation with the conscious purpose of dividing their union along

racial lines." Undoubtedly other unions faced with the same challenge would respond with equal vigor.

Looking to the future, the union may find its task of representing its members and channeling their feelings into constructive relations with management may become even more difficult. It may be worth noting that today's unrest on the campus coincides with the presence there of those youngsters born during the baby boom immediately following World War II. Perhaps it can be argued that this cohort of youngsters was bound to cause difficulties as it grew up, simply by virtue of its numbers. During the past 20 years, these numbers have overwhelmed school facilities at the elementary, secondary, and now at the col-

lege level. More recently this group has been moving into more permanent jobs in the labor force. Ten years ago, 37 percent of all men age 20-64 were under 35 years of age. Today the proportion has risen to 39 percent; by 1975 it will be over 44 percent. In other words, almost half the group from which the active union members are drawn will be under 35. This is bound to have a major effect on union goals, strategy, and organization. Unions, which until recently have been more heavily weighted with older workers, will find that a younger group will more and more be knocking at the gates of leadership. As this occurs, the present labor relations system, which up to now has been able to channel protest constructively, will be put to an even sterner test.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1968, pp. 16-17. For a report on similar problems at the 1968 convention of the American Federation of Government Employees, see the *Review*, November 1968, pp. 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> A recent newspaper story termed the newly formed Alliance for Labor Action (ALA) the "labor movement's first conglomerate." However, this journalistic characterization was based on the variety of organizing, political, and social action programs the new group proposed to undertake jointly. The ALA, formed by the United Automobile Workers and the Teamsters, is not a merger of the two unions and there is no jurisdiction over members in the two unions. (See *Wall Street Journal*, May 14, 1969.)

<sup>3</sup> While the extent of union democracy became a major public policy issue during the 1960's during a period of several Congressional investigations and debate over pending legislation, relatively little has been written on the subject since. See Alice H. Cook, *Union Democracy: Practice and Ideal* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1963); William M. Leiserson, *American Trade Union Democracy* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1969); and Seymour M. Lipset and others, *Union Democracy: The Internal Politics of the International Typographical Union* (Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> William E. Simkin, "Refusals to Ratify Contracts," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1968, pp. 518-540.

<sup>5</sup> See Frank M. Kieller, "The Impact of Titles I-VI of the Landrum-Griffin Act," *Georgia Law Review*, Winter 1969.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Aaron, "Individual Employee Rights and Union Democracy," a paper presented before the winter meeting of the Industrial Relations Research Association, December 1968.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur M. Ross and Paul T. Hartman, *Changing Patterns of Industrial Conflict* (New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1960).

<sup>8</sup> For a good summary of the union view on minority rights, see the address by AFL-CIO President George Meany at a banquet honoring A. Phillip Randolph, May 6, 1969. For a Negro union leader's view of black separatists, see comments by A. Phillip Randolph in *Proceedings, AFL-CIO Convention, 1967*, vol. 1, page 335. For more detailed assessments of the issues see, F. Ray Marshall, *The Negro and Organized Labor* (New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965); Herbert Hill, "The Racial Practices of Organized Labor—The Age of Gompers and After"; and John E. Hutchinson, "The AFL-CIO and the Negro"; in Arthur M. Ross and Herbert Hill, *Employment, Race, and Poverty* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967).

<sup>9</sup> Herbert Hill, "Black Protest and the Struggle for Union Democracy," *Issues in Industrial Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1969.

## UNION PROSPECTS AND PROGRAMS FOR THE 1970'S

by

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George Orwell once wrote that, "How right the working classes are...to realize that the belly comes before the soul not in the scale of values but in point of time." Orwell was indeed perceptive insofar as the American labor movement was concerned. The AFL during the first 50 years of its existence steadily rejected the intellectuals' vague reforms and the Marxist's millenium and instead chose to seek more -- more wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions. By doing so, they firmly fixed the labor movement as a permanent and prominent part of the American landscape while those unions that followed other pied pipers disappeared from the scene. Moreover, inadvertently, the AFL helped alter the American economic scene surely more than those unions which had taken different routes. No matter what the AFL said about how it supported the free enterprise system, it was, in fact, through collective bargaining altering the system by preventing wages from being determined in the market place, by restricting the law of supply and demand as it affected workers, and so forth. And these restrictions on laissez faire economics readied America for the mixed economy of the 1930's and after.

Then in the 1930's, the labor movement expanded its definition of "more" to include support for a host of social welfare legislation (still mainly

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concerned with the belly). During that decade, it reached its peak of effectiveness since labor's goals and those of nonworking class liberals coincided. They both sought to help the poor and the unemployed -- to deal mainly with the issue of quantity. In fact, one reason why liberals supported the Wagner Act was that they believed that if more workers could be unionized this would raise the standard of living not only of those organized but of those not yet members of unions. For one brief shining moment, labor and liberals saw eye-to-eye and together pushed through the major changes which we have labelled the New Deal. By the end of this period, both groups together had forged certain basic changes in American life: one, they had wounded laissez-faire economics and replaced it with a mixed economy; two, they had changed a group of small, select trade unions into a mass, labor movement; and, three, they had destroyed the Marxist dream of using the working class's increasing poverty as the motivating force for a revolution by lessening poverty and misery among the organized workers. The worker's belly was finally becoming full, and the union movement, helped by middle class reformers, had helped to fill it.

But Orwell only believed that labor's genius was in recognizing that the belly should come first, not that it was more important than the soul. And it is this changing order of priorities which I believe is one of the keys to labor's prospects and goals in the 1970's. Will it continue to deal mainly with the problems of the belly or those of quantity as it has up to now, or will it shift some of its focus to the problems of the soul or to those of quality? "Trade unionism in the United States," in the words of one of its greatest historians, Philip Taft, "is a means of protecting the individual against

arbitrary rule and raising his standard of living...and deserves high score" for its successes there.<sup>1</sup> Will it now be ready to deal more with qualitative needs which are more difficult to determine than hunger and more difficult to solve than unemployment? "Hunger calls for food to eat," comments a French member of the New Left. "But what does emptiness, boredom, dissatisfaction with life and with the world call for?"<sup>2</sup> The New Left claims it has an answer to this question and so wants to replace the old world with a new one. The labor movement, however, generally ignores the issue. It forgets that, as was true in the past, for it to progress best, it has to secure the support of other groups in America. It cannot say in response to the following objective of the Alliance for Labor Action: "To develop policies and carry out programs that will enable the American labor movement to repair the alienation of the liberal-intellectual and academic community," what George Meany said: "Well, I couldn't care less about that one."<sup>3</sup> The AFL-CIO should care more, for an understanding of what concerns liberals and others in America may help unions grow and better serve their members, as well as bring needed changes to American life.

It is not as if the discontent with the qualitative aspects of American life is only felt by the New Left. If this were so, it would be only a relatively unimportant matter, for whatever the loud noises from the New Left, it

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Taft, "Theories of the Labor Movement," in Industrial Relations Research Association, Interpreting the Labor Movement, December 1952, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> André Gorz, Strategy for Labor: A Radical Proposal, Boston, Beacon Press, 1968, p. X. For a brief summary of the point of view of Gorz and his associates, see Sidney Aronowitz, "New Working Class, Old Labor Movement," New Politics, Vol. VII, No. 3, pp. 58-67.

<sup>3</sup> AFL-CIO, Proceedings, Eighth Constitutional Convention, 1969, p. 63.

numbers only a few. And it is not as if only intellectuals, ensconced in academic communities, beat their breasts concerning labor's faults. Academics generally are not particularly interested in the labor movement, and even those in such an organization as this one, the Industrial Relations Research Association, are less and less concerned with the problems of organized labor. We do not even have a radical caucus -- which perhaps reflects on our irrelevance and the fact that young radicals, who once used to study labor problems, do not bother any more.

Not only the New Left and intellectuals, whatever their relative importance, are troubled by issues of quality or soul, but also large numbers of others (how many, it is impossible to tell) and one such group, as we shall see, is organized labor.

But first, there are the liberals. This group, once so sympathetic to organized labor, no longer cares very much about what happens to unions. They could not care less when the plumbers in Southern California try to raise their hourly wages to \$11.61; they could not care less when a union talks about the need to protect apprenticeship programs while it is using them as an euphemism for keeping segregation; and they could not care less whether or not a union secures a shorter work week (they recognize that this really often means more pay not more time off). These reformers care about unions when labor takes a position on foreign policy or on civil rights (and for wrong or right reasons liberals are critical of unions in both areas). They only become sympathetic to unions when labor is trying to organize the really disadvantaged, such as farm workers or hospital employees. At other times, these once loyal supporters of labor are either disinterested or hostile to organized labor.

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And the reasons for this loss of support are not the result of the almost paranoid attacks upon intellectuals by AFL leaders but because the reformer is becoming more concerned with style, soul, or quality and less and less with what the union movement continues most concerned -- namely, quantity, or more. For example, George Meany cannot understand why so many intellectuals and middle-class reformers supported a Kennedy or a McCarthy over a Humphrey or a Johnson and given his terms of reference, he is, of course, correct. But his terms of reference are no longer that of large segments of American society which once loyally worked with unions. (The liberals are surely not always correct in their disenchantment with labor, for the unions correctly have helped lead the recent fight for tax reform and continue justifiably troubled that inflation should not cause the workers' real wages to decline and that the price to be paid for deflation should not be a high rate of unemployment.)

The second group that talks about recognizing the need for quality of life includes some segments of management, and surely many of the intellectuals serving management. Industrial executives, unlike so many union officials, rather than fearing the nation's intelligentsia have used it -- and at times even listened to it. And one of the messages these intellectuals have carried is the need for satisfaction at work -- that the worker is not only concerned with his belly but also is concerned with other things; that, in fact, the belly is at the lowest level of workers' needs, and that once it is reasonably filled, the worker desires other satisfaction, be they social, ego satisfying, or developmental. As a result, some firms have become concerned that workers be given some role in decision-making concerning his job, that the work

itself become more varied and creative, and that the worker have more responsibility concerning what he does. As a result of the work of scholars and propagandists for participative management, a number of firms are looking over their work situations and altering them. As a result, for this reason among others, unions have not been able to organize such firms as Texas Instruments, and such workers as white collar employees.<sup>4</sup>

The third group increasingly concerned with quality or style are the workers. For example, there are many signs which indicate the desire of workers for participation in decision-making. They are rejecting negotiated settlements. They have voted against their union officials causing increased turnover of union officers, often for apparently no real ideological reason (just as the rejection of the settlements do not normally result in any marked changes in the eventually accepted agreement). Both acts reflect at least the feeling that the workers want to be heard -- even just to have the pleasure of saying "no." The pressure on the part of workers in local plants or of certain categories of workers, such as skilled workers, to have a voice in decisions affecting their futures is another manifestation of the push for participation. And then there are the few black caucuses demanding to be heard, and the increasing number of young workers, tired of tales about the thirties, who want to help decide their future in the seventies. Moreover, the current attack upon Boulwareism is not merely a fight over the terms of

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<sup>4</sup> Arthur A. Thompson and Irwin Weinstock, "Facing the Crisis in Collective Bargaining," M.S.U. Business Topics, Summer 1968, pp. 37-44; Fred K. Foulkes, Creating More Meaningful Work, American Management Association, 1969, passim.



a contract, but rather, it is over the role workers should have in determining what should go into that contract.<sup>5</sup>

This worker discontent is not only over substantive issues but often reflects a concern with the style in which things are being handled -- a desire to have a voice. One misreads this protest if one attempts to answer it by saying that since unions have become more democratic, provide more opportunities for change and are more decentralized, that "dissent can be expressed constructively within the present framework."<sup>6</sup> In theory, I agree with my associate, Peter Henle, when he made that judgment but people do not always act that sagely. It is like saying that blacks ought to protest only through the present channels since they have made much progress. But it is because of the progress, and it is because many of them do not believe that they can secure what they want through the "present framework," that they protest outside of it. Similarly the workers, having made much progress, having seen their quantitative needs becoming more satisfied, may indeed become more restless (as they have) and may even look outside of the unions for answers to such questions as, "What does emptiness, boredom, dissatisfaction with life and with the world call for?" The dissatisfaction may cause him to feel threatened and to think about voting for George Wallace or feel frustrated, as many of our ethnic white groups in their urban enclaves do and blame the

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<sup>5</sup> For example, see Peter Bommarito's (the head of the Rubber Workers) views on youth and labor as reported in John Herling's Labor Letter, July 19, 1969, and compare it with the platitudes offered by Walter G. Davis, the AFL-CIO's Director of Education, in the October 1969 issue of the American Federationist.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Henle, "Some Reflections on Organized Labor and the New Militants," Monthly Labor Review, July 1969, pp. 20-25.

blacks for it. "The fundamental cause" of all this restlessness, according to Archibald Cox, may, however, run, "a good deal deeper. It is part of the same ferment that produces the civil rights movement, the draft-card burnings, and the student demonstrations in Berkeley. Today everybody wants more of everything." And he is right. The workers not only want more money, but they want more of everything.<sup>7</sup>

This does not mean that George Meany is not correct when he declares that a union leader cannot stop asking for more money. "If he does," Meany declared, "he isn't going to be the head of that union very long." And another union leader agrees: "I've never felt as much pressure from rank and file for more money."<sup>8</sup>

Obviously, this will continue to be true. No one expects a worker to be satisfied with what he is making. The very fact that he is making more will prompt increased demands, not less. But why do these demands continue to focus mainly on issues of quantity? It is because organized labor has rarely tried to satisfy other needs of its members. No wonder workers never think of going to their leaders with other requests. Organized labor has left to management the problem of increasing satisfaction at work. It has left to society the problem of increasing satisfactions outside of work. Labor has focused instead on the gut issues of money and job security, the prerequisites but not the only requisites of a good job. But unions in the 1970's must look

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in Foulkes, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> New York Times, December 1, 1969.

to problems of quality. It needs to do this if it wants to grow, for some managers are concerned with this issue, thereby making it more difficult for labor to attract affected employees into unions. It needs to if it is to service the growing needs and demands, even if not fully articulated, of its members. It needs to as part of an increasing American concern with quality of life.

What are the specific needs to which I am referring? Insofar as organize labor's demands in collective bargaining, union leaders might begin by reading what management spokesmen have been saying, and some of them are doing, to make work more meaningful. One start might be to stop only hiring economists as staff employees (reflective of the belly syndrome already mentioned), and hire some sociologists, psychologists, and organizational behavior types. Union leaders trying to organize clerks, for example, bemoan the white collar employees' identification with management, but continue to use mainly economic techniques to organize them -- with a steady lack of success. A new type of staff employee might be able to offer the prounion advice to counter the anti-union advice management is securing from its staff. Moreover, these staff members might be able to develop or identify worker demands so that the securing of job satisfaction will be the result of real worker participation through unions in collective bargaining, not as a result of management largesse.

And what might some of these demands be? The right of the workers to have more discretionary power over their jobs (some truck drivers have fought for the privilege to take alternative routes than the one management designated), job rotation, and job enrichment are some examples. Others can be discovered at the work place, just as new economic demands have been discovered

by the unions. More important is that the unions have fought for and achieved a voice in decision-making over the many matters now included in a typical union agreement. This indeed was a revolutionary change in American industrial life; now it has to broaden this involvement so workers have the right to participate with management in making a host of other decisions: involving first limited then broader aspects of production, planning, promotion, productivity, personnel, and priorities.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond these collectively bargained goals, unions will have to deal with the frustrations of the workers outside the job -- urban blight, transportation bottlenecks, polluted air, excessive costs of inadequate medical care, old age, troubled schools, safety, status, leisure time alternatives, race relations, pervasive poverty, and foreign policy. The supposed failure of unions in not having fought hard enough to solve these problems has helped cause the split between liberals and labor discussed earlier. It has caused even those as sympathetic to trade unions as Professor Ben Seligman to argue that:<sup>10</sup>

"If one accepts unions as essential instruments for improving the immediate material welfare of their members (and for that purpose there are few better instruments available) then it becomes necessary for other groups to become the torchbearers of change. Unions perform very well within their specified limits.... We may have to let the matter stand there. If we are concerned with civil rights, Vietnam and reform, the burden of these issues necessarily must fall on other shoulders."

But as the union movement once expanded its horizons from just the material well-being of its members to the material well-being of the broader society

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<sup>9</sup> See Adolf F. Sturmthal, "Workers' Participation in Management: A Review of United States Experience," in International Institute for Labour Studies, Bulletin 6, June 1969, pp. 149-186; Foulkes, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

<sup>10</sup> Ben B. Seligman, "A Balance Sheet of American Unions," Mainstream, June-July 1969, p. 49.

and helped change the nature of our economic system (moving from collective bargaining to political action and thus wisely rejecting the reverse order recommended by Marxists and intellectuals), so, I would argue that once labor, through collective bargaining, recognizes that there is more to the job than money, and more to time-off than just hours, then labor may well expand its political horizons again. Once labor recognizes more fully that it now can afford to worry about the soul and, with the belly, make it a part of the labor body, a meaningful cooperation between liberals and labor may again be forthcoming. And such a goal for the 1970's is needed if the prospects for both labor and society for that decade are to be more pleasant than the decade through which we have just lived.



## PROPHETS: LEFT AND RIGHT

(Reprinted from "The Labor Revolution" by Gus Tyler for classroom use only)

American labor is in the midst of a deep and quiet revolution. Unions are organizing new kinds of workers in new industries. In the past, most union dues payers wore blue collars and worked for wages; in the future, legions of new members wearing white collars and working for salaries will pour in. From 1935 to 1965, the labor movement grew most rapidly in the great basic industries: automobile, rubber, electronics, aircraft, transport, maritime, chemical, atomic, steel; at present, unions are growing most rapidly in the service trades, especially among employees of government at the local and state level. Until recently, professional people looked upon their "societies" as the retort to unions; today professionals are converting their guilds and associations into unions or are forming and joining unions outright. As a result of these trends, total labor-union membership is climbing rapidly toward a new plateau: the doubling of membership experienced in the 1930s and 1940s promises to be repeated.

As the size and composition of the labor movement change, the locale of action shifts. In the past, the scene was industrial and urban America. Now the industrial and political battleground moves to the suburbs. In the past, the geographic base of unionism was almost entirely in the North and West and Midwest. Now the focus shifts to the South and the Southwest.

Among the older and established unions, automation poses challenges that compel fresh responses. At the bargaining table, unions seek new types of security for the mechanically dispossessed, the workers who are automated out. In the shops, unions must start almost from the beginning shaping wage policy as new production methods wipe out old job definitions and create new and hitherto unevaluated work categories. At the polls, labor voters turn out to vote for programs that will guarantee full employment and continuing income despite the threats of automation, computerization, cybernation. Consequently, even among the settled unions there is a mood of unrest that expresses itself through new contract clauses and a heightened interest in politics.

As the old order changes, so does the old guard. A generation of top leaders exits, with about one-third of the high command in the AFL-CIO Executive Council stepping out at one convention (1965); a younger generation steps in; and, in the wings, a generation still younger impatiently awaits its cue.

This new labor movement—changing in composition and in character—is coming into being in response to the personal and collective needs and attitudes of the new labor force that has been growing since mid-century. Yet, self-centered as these groups necessarily are, they find that they cannot go it alone. They seek allies out of necessity and compassion. Increasingly the labor movement seeks ententes with civil rights groups, with social planners wrestling with megalopolis, with economic programmers seeking full employment, with warriors against poverty, with internationalists crusading for a world of peace with freedom. Consequently, the massive impress of the labor movement in a great liberal coalition is changing the face of the nation.

This quiet revolution has been progressing without public notice. It has proceeded largely unnoted because, first, the process is in its early stages; second, unions are habitually neither introspective nor image-minded; third, the current change—unlike the earlier one in the mid-1930s—was not dramatically launched with a split in the ranks and the formation of a new federation; fourth, many intellectual commentators on the labor movement have either grown so far away from the unions as to have lost sensitive contact with current developments or are so immersed in recording and reinterpreting the past as to have lost interest in the future. Hence, a great phenomenon in the making may go unheard until it overwhelms both the seers and the doers, the intellectuals and the trade unionists.

# **THE U. S. WORKER IN THE SEVENTIES**

## **REMARKS OF SAM ZAGORIA**

**MEMBER, NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD**

Inexorably, not unlike death and taxes, time marches on. In the bubbling, bursting cities, the pace often seems like double time, but even here in the peace and tranquility of a hall of learning in a beautiful rustic setting, time does move along. In less than three months we will be entering the new decade of the Seventies.

What will the next ten years bring by way of labor challenges, problems, and hopefully, solutions? What have we learned from the Sixties and before that we can start applying in order to lessen the impact of the problems and enhance the prospect of the solutions?

Even if I were presumptuous enough to attempt to answer these questions in the midst of this array of manpower experts and daily practitioners in the art of industrial peace, I fear there would not be time enough to deal with many aspects. Let me concentrate instead on a few.

During the Seventies America's work force is expected to grow from about 85 million to 100 million. Despite this anticipated growth some manpower experts, including your fellow Pennsylvanian, Dr. Seymour Wolfbein of Temple University, are warning of possible shortages in filling jobs, and they may be right if we do not see the needs early enough and adjust our course accordingly.

But one thing is certain with a work force of this size, bigness is bound to be a dominant characteristic of our labor-management institutions. Fortune magazine each year does an analysis of the nation's 500 largest firms. This year, the average size of these firms was about 28,000 employees, and each year the size keeps growing. The ties which bind together company management and company employees have to include a lot of stretching elastic. The probability of an individual worker knowing the president of the corporation, or, for that matter, the president of his international union, if he belongs to one, is realistically quite small. And as the work force grows, the possibility practically disappears.

John Diebold, the noted computer expert, in his new book, "Man and the Computer," declares that, "America has entered this era (of automation) with a legacy of concepts developed to meet the needs of the unskilled worker. The results of labor-management relations to date might be summarized as the guarantee of equal treatment and the expectation of average performance. These concepts are already recognized as archaic in dealing with creative personnel. What must be encouraged is exceptional performance, and what may well be needed is individual treatment."

Whether or not this is the era of automation, as Mr. Diebold states, there is no doubt that employees, from the lowest paid employee to the highest executive, are seeking attention to their plea that "I want to be me," not just someone represented by a badge and a payroll number. Top-flight executives, for example, have frequently been known to put aside promises of extra income and

benefits, opting instead for greater responsibility and independence in managing. Already, some personnel wise men, while accommodating to corporate growth, have been emphasizing a growing need for decentralization of authority, for greater responsibility for more people.

Understandably every worker wants to be heard and respected. As firms grow larger, employees tend to feel smaller and this creates a need for management ingenuity and imagination in finding ways to deal with individual problems. The techniques of the suggestion box, gripe sessions, the grievance system and, more recently, the ombudsman, have been used to improvise new links connecting company leadership and rank and file employees. Some of these have been implemented formally through labor-management contracts, but in the coming decade we will need more and better ways of overcoming the problems posed by industrial growth and change.

The bigness problem facing us in the Seventies is immense, for it is not work alone that frustrates the worker of the Sixties and the Seventies. It is also the sheer bigness of the society in which he lives—his lost letter is hardly unique among 82 billion pieces handled by the Post Office Department this year; his car is in steady competition—and often collision—with growing millions of vehicles vying for space on the road; indeed his daily life is constantly pummeled by the congestion, noise and fumes resulting from 70 percent of the country's population packed on 1 percent of the nation's land. By the time the workman gets to work, he may be a beaten and bitter man, and relations on the job—which takes up a half or more of his waking day—may suffer from the strain.

The growth of local issues in contract negotiations may reflect job frustrations and demonstration of individual independence. The growth in rejection of contract settlements reached by union committees and in the development of intra-union groups formed along skill or racial lines indicate an insistence that "I want to be heard. I want to be dealt with."

Individualism will be registered in other ways, too. The Seventies will be marked by increasing worker mobility and by radical change in the composition of the work force. The Labor Department has already warned, "No longer can a boy or girl expect just one occupation to cover a lifetime of work. Even today, a 20-year-old man could be expected to change jobs 6 or 7 times during his work life expectancy of 43 years." These young people, mobile and independent, will dominate the work force—by now half our entire population is in the 30 years of age or under bracket. In the next decade the 25 to 34 year-old worker group is expected to expand by 40 percent. A steadily increasing percentage will be college-trained, and during the Seventies the number of technical and professional workers is expected for the first time to exceed the total number of skilled craftsmen in the work force. These are significant changes that are bound to leave their imprint on labor relations of the Seventies.

Dealing with a younger work force, one untouched by the Depression, one more educated and therefore more confident of its own abilities, will be a new experience for industrial chieftains and labor union leaders. With this group, too, there will be less reluctance to switch jobs, switch locations. At present, one of every five Americans moves each year and the main reason is a better job elsewhere. Many young professionals, particularly, are finding that job-jumping is a faster way to climb the executive ladder than staying in one place.

Another major factor in the Seventies: the work force will have a larger proportion of women on the job. Almost 30 million women are now at work—more than a third of the work force—and as the demand grows from the service industries, government, technical fields, they will find opportunity ever widening, for here brains and not brawn are usually the criteria.

To illustrate: by 1975, it is expected that almost 1 of every 2 people will be a white collar worker, 1 out of every 5 will be earning a living by buying and selling, 1 out of 6 will be engaged by a government enterprise (mostly state and local) and 1 out of 7 will be a professional or technical worker. Many of these, you may be sure, will be women.

Black workers, male and female, will have a more substantial role in the work force both in terms of numbers and level of responsibility. This is easily said but will not come about easily, as the demonstrations in the big cities constantly remind us. Resolving the difficult problems involved in job training, testing, referral and seniority will demand much of all of us. But in a society where there are so many unmet needs and where equality of opportunity is preached from childhood, job doors must be opened to all. If we are to do the many things which an urban society requires, there are more than enough jobs for all. It will take leadership and courage to find the ways to get them started and convince white and black workers that one must not suffer in order for the other to achieve. If we can lick the problems of finance, there is enough pent-up demand for construction that this one industry alone could triple or quadruple its manpower with full-time work for all who can learn the trades.

Another aspect of the Seventies: Automation. Adjustment to automation will require patience and ingenuity for it continues to grow, spurred by the tremendous potential of the computer. In 1970, American industry plans to spend \$14.5 billion for automation, almost a fourth of industry's total planned capital investment. The pioneering of the Armour Automation Committee, the Kaiser Long Range Sharing Plan, and the West Coast Longshoremen's Mechanization Fund is a lesson for all of us, and similar labor-management statesmanship is certain to come.

Another factor of the Seventies: Government at all levels is expected to experience growth in numbers accompanied by a growth in collective bargaining efforts. A growth in government employment as a whole is anticipated on the order of 40 percent. Government unionization has been spurting, too, with the claim made of an average enrollment of 1000 new members every working day. States and municipalities who fail to recognize this growth lose the valuable chance to channel employee efforts into smooth and peaceful relationships.

In short, the Seventies present us with a steady push toward the milestone of 100 million workers. This tremendous growth will be accompanied by substantial changes in the composition, stability and educational preparation of workers. We shall all have to do more thinking about finding ways to bridge the distance between the big employer and the individual worker, exploring ways of making jobs more satisfying. Many of the present techniques will succeed, but there may be value in some innovations, for white collar workers particularly—for example, job transfers to provide change and challenge, periodic mind-stretching sessions with outside experts, occasional sabbaticals or exchanges with government units, and generally greater participation in professional organiza-