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TO BUILD A NEW WORLD

A Brief
History
of American
Labor.

by **THOMAS R. BROOKS**



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The Author

Thomas R. Brooks is a free-lance writer who has written on labor and other subjects for many periodicals. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the League for Industrial Democracy.

For a more detailed account of American labor history see the author's *TOIL AND TROUBLE*, A History of American Labor, published by Delacorte Press, New York, 1964, hardcover \$6.00 or by Delta Books, New York, September, 1965, paperback, \$1.95.

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TO BUILD A NEW *A Brief History of American Labor* **WORLD**

by THOMAS R. BROOKS

League For Industrial Democracy

New York, 1965

Preface

Collective bargaining is an enormously complicated process, ranging from the procedures through which one man may file a grievance against his foreman to the control of investment policies for nine-figure pension funds. And, in an age of automation, collective bargaining is sure to become even more complex. We should not, however, lose sight of its importance as an instrument, imperfect though it may be, of industrial democracy. Collective bargaining gives laboring men and women some say about the conditions of their employment. More than that, the pitting of the countervailing power of the unions against that of management sometimes opens a crack in the institutionalism that engulfs us, affording the individual worker an additional measure of freedom. But this is a by-product of a process considered by many of us to be central to the opening up of democracy in industry.

Unions are essential to this process. This is acknowledged in public policy, as approved by Congress. The law guarantees workers the right to organize, choose representatives, strike and to bargain collectively with their respective employers. To understand how essential this guarantee is to public policy in labor-management relations within a democratic society, we need to know something of the history and aspirations of American labor.

There is a thin, uncertain line that runs from the early journeymen cordwainers, who struck to save their craft; to Goldfield, Nevada, where the Wobblies defiantly posted the terms of work on union hall bulletin boards for employers to come, read and observe; down to the New York City school teachers, who recently threatened to strike to win a reduction in class size. Each of these events had to do with a worker's dignity, his pride in the quality of his work. On this slender thread rests whatever there is of lasting value in the struggles of American labor. This history is an attempt to introduce you to that thin line and some of its ramifications.

Colonial Labor Problem

Work is central to the American experience. “Nothing,” wrote Captain John Smith of the Jamestown settlement, “is to be expected thence, but by labor.” The changing nature of work has shaped our country and our unions from the day Captain Smith begged England “send but thirty carpenters, husbandmen, gardeners, fishermen, blacksmiths, masons, and diggers up of trees’ roots, well provided, than a thousand such as we have” down to the day in 1963 when AFL-CIO president George Meaney cried out before an AFL-CIO convention, “automation is a curse.”

Significantly, America began with a labor problem. To meet the growing demand for labor, the colonies turned to bound white labor and Negro slaves. This is a forgotten part of our heritage. Nearly 80 percent of the immigrants to America before the Revolution were indentured servants — Hogarthian “rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars” — or Negro slaves. The first Negroes were bonded servants. One of the first twenty Negroes to arrive in Virginia (1619), along with a “cargo” of white women brought over to ensure the future of the colony, became a free man after two years. Anthony Johnson soon acquired a plantation and a number of slaves of his own. Slavery grew slowly at first. In 1681, there were 6,000 white servants to 2,000 slaves in Virginia.

But the need to fill the hogsheads of tobacco required an easily disciplined workforce — white or black. And in the end, the difference was one of color. It was easier to capture a runaway black man than an escaped white man. You could also buy a black man for life at a cost of £24; the term of bondage for whites ran anywhere from two or three years up to seven or fourteen years, at a capital cost of £2 to £4 a year. Until 1808, when the slave trade was prohibited, between 300,000 and 400,000 black slaves were brought here. Another 250,000 were smuggled in after that date. Thanks to the slavers, the Negro workman of today can claim a longer lineage in America than most whites, if that is any comfort. Negroes may also claim with pride the first real strike in American history, that by Negro chimney sweeps in Charleston, S.C., in 1761.

Conditions were often harsh for those enslaved. Rebellion was common; whites out of hope, blacks out of despair. In 1712, in

New York, twenty-one slaves were executed following a rebellion in which nine whites were killed. In 1740, the good citizens of Charlestown hanged fifty Negroes — ten a day. Negroes had the worst of it, even though Governor Berkeley of Virginia did “drown in blood” Nathaniel Bacon’s 1670 poor white uprising. Eventually, bonded servitude died out. Slavery, however, lasted until the Civil War wrecked the nation. The cleavage between black and white workmen, developed in colonial times, has lasted with detrimental results to this day.

British workingmen, as early as 1689, began to act in concert to secure better working conditions. But similar action in America, in a sense, waited on the American Revolution. In part, this was due to the openness of American society, a factor that remained operative until after the Civil War. The American workingman, especially if he had skills, frequently could — and did — set up business on his own. There was still a good deal of cheap land available and farming remained a viable way of life until the 1900s when America finally became an urban nation.

But it is also true that some of the energy that might have gone into workingmen’s agitation or organization was funnelled into the brewing tempest that ended in a complete break between England and her American colonies. Artisans and laborers provided the muscle for anti-British riots in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charlestown as they later helped fill the ranks of Washington’s army. The class nature of the activity of the Sons of Liberty is glossed over by our prevailing mythology of a classless America. And, too, the leadership was often middle or upper class. But the fundamental role of the mechanics and laborers was such that it alarmed conservatives like Gouverneur Morris, who warned, “The heads of the mobility grow dangerous to the gentry, and how to keep them down is the question.” This early association of the colonial workingman with the egalitarian promise of the American Revolution was later to be an inspiration to the founders of the American labor movement.

While trade unions did not take lasting root in pre-Civil War America, certain patterns did evolve, patterns that in one form or another remain with us to this day. The swing from narrow, economic trade union action to broadscoped political action is a recurring pendulum in American labor history. The influence of government — and the courts — on trade unionism, for good or ill, also persists throughout our history.

The craftsman, or artisan, at the time of the American revolution enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom and status. The artisan and the farmer, each with his plot of ground, were the

The American Revolution

**Birth of
the American
Labor Movement**

two pillars on which a free society would rest. This was the Jeffersonian concept. But new markets in the South and West for the manufacturers of the East created a new set of economic conditions, undermining the independence of the artisans. Trade was no longer a local affair; competition increased beyond the scope and control of the original employer associations formed to eliminate "unfair" competition. The new merchant-capitalist pressed his journeymen the harder, cutting his labor costs whenever he could. The ancient skills were broken down; labor was divided so that a cordwainer, for example, no longer made the whole shoe. In reaction to this threat to their long-standing independence, good living conditions and status, the journeymen cordwainers of Philadelphia, in 1792, organized the first continuous organization of wage earners in America. It didn't last very long, only a few years; but it did make history.

The grievances of the workingmen of that day, however, were more general than the immediate difficulties they experienced as journeymen within their own crafts. As an instance, workmen in many states did not have the vote, nor were their children able to secure a decent education. As a result, the American labor movement was born. The transition from the early job-conscious journeymen's associations to the broader socially-conscious workingmen's political movement was a matter of three decades. And, it is only recently we have seen a melding of the two developments into one; a socially-conscious trade unionism that embraces both political and economic action. The first unions were organized in the 1790s: the labor movement, in the form of workingmen's parties and incipient industrial unions, was born in 1827. Within those decades, the economy had moved from mercantile capitalism to an infant industrialization. And government, particularly the courts, had moved into open hostility against the new forms of workingmen's organization.

Philadelphia, the "cradle of liberty," was also the cradle of American unionism. The first strike for a ten-hour day occurred in May, 1791, when the Philadelphian house carpenters spontaneously downed tools. (They lost.) Collective bargaining as we now know it did not exist. Journeymen shoemakers, for example, set a price for their work in just about the same fashion their employers, the master shoemakers, set a price on their goods, by meeting and agreeing on a figure. Journeymen simply pledged that they would not work for any employer who would not pay the wage. Journeymen's associations and masters' organizations that lasted any length of time, however, began appointing committees to meet jointly to discuss demands.

This rudimentary bargaining process, however, was brought to a halt by a series of court cases that brought the government's weight to bear against the workers. The most important of these was that of the Philadelphia cordwainers. In January, 1806, eight journeymen cordwainers were indicted for forming "a combination and conspiracy to raise their wages." They and their fellow workers had struck a year earlier protesting a wage cut. They had lost. Out of the Philadelphia cordwainer case evolved a legal doctrine holding that workers acting in concert to raise wages were engaged in a criminal conspiracy under the common law. It acted as an early check on trade unionism until it was set aside in 1842 by a Massachusetts Chief Justice, Lemuel Shaw, who, using good old common sense, reasoned in *Commonwealth vs. Hunt* that, since the motivation or purpose of a labor union was the improvement of working conditions, its object was not improper or unlawful, and, so long as the means were not unlawful, the doctrine of criminal conspiracy did not apply. Shaw's decision was a landmark removing, as it did, the fear that workers would be subject to criminal proceedings merely for joining a labor union.

The Courts

Samuel Slater opened his first textile mill, in Pawtucket, R. I., with seven boys and two girls, ages 7 to 11. In the mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, young women worked a 12 hour, 13 minute day, or 73½ hours a week. Born out of rebellion against a rising industrialism, the early labor movement made common cause with the middle-class, transcendentalist reformers, largely based in New England, against the new conditions. When the mill owners in the 1840s reduced the work day by a half-hour in response to the growing public pressure for shorter hours, their move, in many instances, was deceptive. Many mills, adopting the practice of the Middlesex Mills, fixed their clocks so that the operators would think they left work at seven when actually it was closer to eight o'clock. Employers, too, began playing off the new immigrants against one another. When, for example, the Irish laborers in New York City organized a benevolent society and went on strike in 1846, to raise wages from 65 cents a day to 87½ cents a day, the contractors broke the strike by hiring newly-landed Germans. The Irish tried to defend their jobs but the military were called out and the Irish workers overcome.

Rebellion Against Industrialism

The first half of the 1800s was the period of workingmen's parties, utopianism, communal experiments like that of Brook Farm outside of Boston, agitation for land reform and free public education. "A moral excitement, new in its nature and rapid in its progress pervades the world . . .," wrote Frances Wright, America's first suffragette, in 1830. Moved by the same moral fervor, the

"A Moral Excitement"

Workers and Abolitionists

“furrow turners” and “huge paws” of New England formed what amounted to the first industrial union in the United States, the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workmen. The New England workmen and the workingmen’s parties of the 1828-1830 period in Philadelphia, Boston, New York and elsewhere espoused the abolition of imprisonment for debt, universal free education, a mechanics lien law (making wages the employers first obligation in bankruptcy), the abolition of child labor, credit, currency and land reforms. The collapse of early unions under the conspiracy laws, on one hand, and the extension of the right to vote to workingmen, on the other, sparked the new political movements and created an interest among workmen in middle class reforms efforts.

By the time of the Civil War, the middle class reformers, who had sought, in various ways, to escape confrontation with the new industrialism, finally succeeded by becoming absorbed in the anti-slavery movement. Workingmen, unable to escape the new industrialism so easily, developed an indigenous leadership, some of it with a socialist cast, and began to organize their own institutions for confronting the inevitable industrialization of their country. In the 1850s, national organizations were formed by hat finishers, cigar makers, upholsterers, building tradesmen, lithographers, painters, silver platers, cotton mule spinners, stone cutters, iron moulders and others. Apprenticeship rules, the closed shop, minimum wages, initiation fees, dues, strike benefits, union hiring halls were all tried as means for building unions and ways of improving working conditions and wages. But, with the exception of the typographers, few unions survived either the depression of 1857-62 or the westward pull of free land and gold. Some workmen escaped the industrialism of the East by going West. The Civil War, too, disrupted the development of trade unionism.

That ingenious Yankee, Eli Whitney, with his invention of the cotton gin made cotton king and slavery immensely profitable to the southern plantation economy. Initially, the workmen of the North took a dim view of the abolitionists, who, with the notable exception of Wendell Phillips, ignored the plight of the “wage slaves.” Northern workmen also feared the influx of Negroes into the labor market upon emancipation. But once guns rumbled at Fort Sumter, northern wage earners rallied to the union cause. Entire local unions enlisted at the call of President Lincoln.

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The Civil War changed America and nowhere more so than in the explosive growth of industry. Capital accumulated out of wartime profits searched for investments. The tariff wall, erected by a Congress ever mindful of the needs of the new powerful business interests of the North, protected from foreign trade the opening markets of the West and of the reviving South. Combination was the order of the day; the new trusts in oil, iron, steel, copper, coal and coke, sugar and railroads rose as giants in the land. The steam-powered turbine replaced the water-powered mill to change the basic character of manufacturing.

In 1860, slightly more than a billion dollars was invested in manufacturing and there were only 1.5 million American industrial wage earners. By the end of the century, capital increased to more than 12 billions and the number of wage earners to 5.5 million. While population from 1850 to 1900 trebled (from 23,192,000 to 79,995,000) and the product of agriculture nearly trebled (from \$1,600,000,000 to \$4,717,070,000), the value of manufacture increased elevenfold (\$1,019,107,000 to \$11,406,927,000). Within twenty-five years of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, America had become the leading manufacturing nation in the world.

The Civil War, at first, caused a paralysis of business and an increase in unemployment. But this soon passed and labor activity picked up along with economic conditions. Workmen revived dormant local unions, or organized new ones. Local unions banded together in city central bodies and attempts were made to organize national unions. A depression in 1866 revived worker interest in shorter hours. Ira Steward, a self-taught Boston machinist, formed eight-hour leagues throughout the country, seeking pledges from candidates for public office on behalf of the eight-hour day. As Steward's popular couplet put it:

"Whether you work by piece or work by day,
Decreasing the hours increases the pay."

This notion still has currency within the labor movement with the added recognition that shorter hours will also mean more jobs.

Eight-Hour Leagues

National Labor Union

It is embodied in the AFL-CIO's current proposal for fluctuating the length of the work week in order to maintain full employment; the idea being that, when joblessness increases, the work week is to be cut until all who want work are once again employed.

The campaign for the eight-hour day stimulated the formation of the National Labor Union, founded in 1866 by William H. Sylvis, one of the great leaders of labor, who headed the Moulders' Union. Though the NLU did not last a full decade, it did leave a mark. The first permanent labor lobby was established in Washington, in 1886, to press for a Department of Labor. (A Bureau of Labor, first in the Department of Interior and then in Commerce, was established in 1884. The present Department was established in 1913.) A. C. Cameron, editor of the Chicago *Workingman's Advocate*, was sent by the NLU to the Basle, Switzerland, conference of the International Workingmen's Association. The eight-hour day was secured for Federal employees as a result of the NLU's efforts.

"Second Emancipation Proclamation"

The race question cropped up at the 1869 NLU conference. "We are all slaves together. The labor movement is a second Emancipation Proclamation," declared Sylvis. At his urging, the convention seated Isaac Myers, president of the Colored Labor Union, as a delegate. But delegates took no further steps to merge the two labor groups. Before further action could be taken, the NLU died, a victim of depression in the 1870s.

If we recall the importance of coal and the railroads to the spread of industrialism, we will immediately recognize the significance of the great struggles of the coal and railroad workers to organize during the decades that followed the Civil War. Most attempts, however, were doomed.

Miners' National Association

The fall of the Miners' National Association illustrates what happened to many workers' organizations of the day. In December, 1874, under the leadership of Mark Hanna, the bituminous coal operators of Ohio's Tuscarawas Valley decided to reduce the miners' scale from 90 to 70 cents a ton. Hanna, first industrialist to recognize the common sense of negotiating with representatives of one's employees, convinced the mine owners that they ought to sit down with the union. After negotiations, a new rate of 71 cents was set. But one operator, irked by the failure of the other employers to order a general lockout against the miners' demand for their own checkweighman (a crucial demand, for miners were paid by the ton and owners often cheated on the weight) revenged himself by offering to pay his men 80 cents. This angered miners, already restive over the pay cut. They begged their officers to be released from the 71 cent commitment. This was granted; strikes forced up the pay scales temporarily. But within two short years, the 35,000 member miners association was destroyed.

The collapse of railroad speculation and the failure of the nation's leading brokerage house, Jay Cooke & Co., precipitated the Panic of 1873. Wages were depressed and often in arrears although the railroads continued paying dividends of eight and ten percent on stock. Trackmen on the Erie lived as squatters in shanties alongside the tracks, a long-established custom. Suddenly, they were ordered to pay ground rent of \$20 to \$25 a year or vacate. Some railroads deprived their employees of the customary passes needed to carry them to and from their work. An engineer on the Lake Shore Line, for example, was paid 16 cents in wages to run a train from Collinwood to Cleveland. He then had to pay a 25 cent fare to report back to his superior in Collinwood. In 1877, the Pennsylvania, after five years of this sort of harassment of workingmen by the railroads, led the way in cutting rail wages by ten percent. The Baltimore and Ohio followed suit; a first class fireman, under the new scale, would receive but \$1.50 a day. On July 16, the day the new scales went into effect, the trains were manned as usual, although 40 firemen and brakemen on freight trains in Baltimore refused to work. In view of the then high unemployment, the railroads were confident that those who quit or otherwise caused trouble would be easily replaced. But as the day wore on, reports of "discontent" and "insubordination" poured into the main office. At Martinsburg, West Virginia, firemen abandoned their train and the next morning the B & O called upon the governor for militia. Townspeople and nearby farmers joined the ranks of the strikers as did two whole companies of the militia, including officers. They ruled Martinsburg until Federal troops arrived. Federal troops were also called out to quell "disorders" in Reading, Pa., where eleven people were killed and 20 wounded in a single day. The one city where no violence or bloodshed occurred was Allegheny City, across the river from strife-torn Pittsburgh, where the Trainmen's Union, organized by Robert H. Ammon, had strength and controlled the city throughout the strike. But in Pittsburgh, an angry mob, including businessmen as well as workers, turned out to loot and burn rail property. Railroad arrogance not only cut workers' wages but also imposed a burden on local businesses through high freight rates. Militia from as far away as Philadelphia were brought in to cope with the rioting. Twenty persons were killed and scores wounded. The people of Pittsburgh soon had the Philadelphia militia penned up in a Pennsylvania roundhouse. Three pieces of artillery were captured by the enraged citizens. A carload of coke was saturated with oil, set afire and run up against the roundhouse. The besieged militia shot their way out of town. A fire broke out and before it ran its course, it destroyed 104 locomotives.

Panic of 1873

**"Great Upheaval
of 1877"**

tives, 2,152 cars, and 79 buildings for a total loss of \$5,000,000 to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Turn to Politics

The Great Upheaval of 1877, as the strike was called, burned itself out pretty much as did the Pittsburgh fire and riot. The strikers were too disorganized to prevail for long against the superior strength of Federal troops and the militia. The courts temporarily revived the old doctrine of conspiracy and applied it with renewed vigor against the weak unions of the day. So, workmen turned to politics for succor. Labor parties flourished in the years that followed 1877. The Greenback Labor Party, a farmer-worker alliance, polled a million votes in the congressional elections of 1878 and fourteen Greenbackers were elected to Congress. The alliance, however, was not a stable one. The farmers' easy credit and the redemption of greenbacks in gold, in 1879, increased the volume of currency and heralded the return of prosperity. The Greenback Labor Party passed into history with its disparate elements swallowed up by the Democratic Party and the Socialist Labor Party, the predecessor of the Socialist Party. Workers turned to the Knights of Labor.

Knights of Labor

The Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor was founded in 1869 by a group of Philadelphia tailors under the leadership of Uriah S. Stephens. The organization grew slowly, first under Stephens, then under Terence V. Powderly, who succeeded Stephens as Master Workman. The Order was that all-encompassing vessel, the one-big union. Its constitution provided that three-fifths of every Assembly (the local unit) must be composed of wage earners. But all were otherwise welcome — professional men, small businessmen, farmers, women as well as men, Negroes in the South, immigrant "greenhorns" in the North — all but "bankers, stockbrokers, professional gamblers, lawyers and those who in any way derive their living from the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquors." Significantly, it was a series of victories on the railroads that brought the Knights to their peak membership of 729,677 members in 1886, a year which saw a growth of close to 600,000 members for the Order. During the summer of 1884, the Knights won a strike against the Union Pacific, forcing the rail giant to rescind a wage cut. In the following year, railroad workers struck the mighty rail system of Jay Gould, embracing the Wabash, Missouri, Kansas and Texas, and the Missouri Pacific, winning again under the aegis of the Knights. For the first time in American labor history, a labor organization met on equal footing a giant of industry. The rush to join the Knights was soon on. Within one month, February, 1886, 515 assemblies were organized.

Success, however, stretched the Order beyond its capacities

as an organization. Its leadership was divided between trade unionists, who wanted to build an organization rooted in the work place, and those who saw the order as an amorphous, all-embracing organization of workers, farmers and small businessmen transforming society. The rank-and-file, by and large, was militant, raring to go, but without experience. An 1886 strike on the Missouri Pacific ended in a Gould victory and the blackball—a railroad-wide refusal to hire Knights activists—destroyed the Order on the railroads. At the same time, the Order's membership took up the new American Federation of Labor's proposal, advanced by Peter J. McGuire of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, that the eight-hour day should begin on May 1, 1886. Powderly was chary, viewing the eight-hour day as a chimera. Nonetheless, Knights assemblies across the country adopted the notion and on May 1 workers downed tools. At first, the shutdowns seemed a success. Some 45,000 packinghouse workers in Chicago, for example, were granted the shorter day without a strike. Some employers, however, resisted. Several hundred policemen wielding clubs broke up a mass picket line outside the Chicago McCormick reaper works; other workers rushing to join their fellows were met by a hail of bullets. Many were wounded; four were killed. On May 3 a rally was held to condemn police violence. Several of the speakers were anarchists active in the Chicago Knights. The mayor attended as an observer. He left for home at about 10 P.M., after reporting to the local police station that all was quiet. But then Inspector John Bonfeld, who had a reputation for brutality, marched into Haymarket Square and ordered the small crowd left to disperse. Suddenly, a bomb exploded among the policemen, wounding 66 (seven died later). Hysterical, the police fired round after round into the stunned crowd, killing several and wounding 200. The identity of the bomb thrower is unknown to this day. The Chicago anarchists were arrested and tried. Although there was no evidence linking these men to the bomb, seven were sentenced to hang; the eighth was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Two petitioned for clemency and their lives were spared; another committed suicide. On November 11, 1887, the rest died bravely on the gallows.

Haymarket Riot of 1866

"The bomb," as Samuel Gompers noted, "not only killed the policemen, but it killed our eight-hour movement." The Chicago packers took away in the fall of 1868 the eight hour day they had granted in May.

Membership in the Knights declined drastically. Craft unionists, however, survived in the new American Federation of Labor (AFL), which was officially founded in 1886 by Samuel Gompers, Peter J. McQuire, and the head of the cigar makers, Adolph

American Federation of Labor

Homestead Strike of 1892

Strasser. To recover the losses of the first May Day, McGuire proposed that one trade—the Carpenters to be the first since they were the strongest—lead the way to an eight hour day instead of the Federation mounting a general strike. On May 1, 1890, 23,000 carpenters in 36 cities won the eight-hour day; another 32,000 in 234 cities won the nine-hour day. These victories assured the success of the newly-formed AFL.

└ The Federation, however, was unable to make much headway among the new giants of industry. In 1891, the United Mine Workers sought to carry the banner of the eight-hour day into the coal fields, especially in the coke region around Connellsville, Pa. But by a vigorous use of armed deputies, an arrogation of state power by the coal barons, the mine owners smashed the strike and nearly wrecked the UMW. The miners' defeat at Connellsville was a curtain raiser for a far greater and more significant clash between workers and the new concentrated power of industry at Homestead, Pa., during the summer of 1892. On one side were ranged the workmen of the Homestead works of Carnegie Steel and their union, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers. On the other side, was the chief barony of the new age, the Carnegie Steel Company, forerunner of United States Steel Corporation, which owned and operated twelve steel and coke works in the vicinity of Pittsburgh, employing 13,000 workers. Henry Clay Frick, the "Coke King" of Connellsville, was the new operating head of the company.

At Homestead, Carnegie Steel turned out, with a workforce of 3,800, boiler plates, beams, structural steel of all kinds, and armor plate. The monthly payroll totalled \$200,000; wages ranged from 14 cents an hour for common labor to \$260 a month for skilled workmen. But most of the skilled men made less than \$200 a month. In the spring of 1892, the company unilaterally announced—despite negotiations then in progress—a new wage scale pegged to a \$23 ton, a figure which represented a wage cut of 18-26 percent. The workmen at Homestead hung Frick in effigy on company property; a hose was turned on the men sent to cut the figure down. Frick used the incident as an excuse to shut down the Homestead works, two days before the old agreement with the union expired on June 30, 1892.

To prepare the way for reopening the Homestead works with scab, non-union, labor, Frick arranged for a boat load of Pinkertons (private detectives) to be towed up river on barges to occupy the works. The townspeople had made common cause with the strikers and a frontal assault on land was impossible. As the barges neared the shore at dawn on July 5, 1892, the Pinkertons were warned off by strikers. But a plank was shoved ashore, the

Pinkertons began disembarking. The steamboat fled downstream, leaving the invaders without means of escape. An unknown person fired a shot providing an excuse for return fire from the armed Pinkertons. Women and children fled out of range; their menfolk crouched behind the steel, pig iron and scrap stacked in the mill yard and returned fire. When the Pinkertons finally ran up the white flags that evening, three Pinkertons and seven workers lay dead and scores were wounded on both sides. The Pinkertons were shipped back to Pittsburgh; the wounded were cared for, the dead buried. All the damage done to the mill was repaired by the strikers.

On July 12, the Governor of Pennsylvania responded to company pressure and sent militia in to occupy the peaceful town. Other steelworkers went on a sympathy strike. The company retaliated through the courts; six indictments were secured—three for murder, two for riot and one for conspiracy. In the fall, twenty-seven Homestead leaders were indicted for treason against the State of Pennsylvania. The men were vindicated in the courts but their cause was lost. The union treasury was depleted. The Homestead lodge of the Amalgamated voted to lift the ban against working for Carnegie Steel. The power of unionism in the steel industry was smashed.

The Homestead strike settled the fate of unionism in the giant industrial plants then springing up throughout the industrial East. Early in 1894, a new union emerged on the railroads embracing all crafts, the American Railway Union. It won a brief strike against James J. Hill's Great Northern Railroad. Within several short months, the ARU grew to 150,000, over one-half the combined membership of the then AFL unions. Its Pullman strike of 1894 illustrates the oppressive role of government in siding with management and inhibiting the growth of trade unionism.

Pullman Strike of 1894

George M. Pullman, in 1880, built a model town adjoining the southern edge of Chicago for his employees who built and repaired his "palace" cars. These were leased to the railroads, earning Pullman stockholders an 8 percent annual dividend. (The Vanderbilts were major stockholders.) During the Panic of 1893, wages were slashed by one-fourth, while dividends were raised by \$360,000. (The company also had \$25,000,000 in undistributed profits at the time.) The reduced wages ranged from four to 16 cents an hour, hardly sufficient considering that the employees had to pay their paternalistic employer monthly rents of \$18 for five room "pens" with conveniences. Rents were cheaper in nearby towns but if you moved, you didn't work for Pullman much longer. Chicago supplied Pullman with water at four cents a thousand gallons; the company charged its employees ten cents a thousand. Gas cost Pullman 33 cents a thousand feet but tenants paid \$2.25 a thousand. When

wages were slashed, the cost of living remained unchanged. One worker was left with a check of two cents, after paying for living in Pullman. He framed the check.

Pullman was a pretty generous fellow; he kept the shops open in 1893 and 1894 as a philanthropic gesture. The wage cuts, he explained, were essential to enable the company to enter lower bids to secure orders during depressed times. Since Pullman had a virtual monopoly — his cars were running on about three-quarters of the country's total railroad mileage — his employees were skeptical. Powerless, however, to do anything about it, they accepted Pullman's promise that none of the workers elected by their fellows to present their grievances would be fired and that the company would investigate shop conditions. But on May 10, three members of the grievance committee were fired. By noon the next day, three thousand Pullman employees laid down their tools in protest. They demanded reinstatement of the three men, a return to the old wage scale and reductions in rent. Modest demands but Pullman, the paternalist, was affronted. The Pullman employees then turned to their fellow workers in the ARU for aid.

Against the wishes of Eugene Victor Debs and the other leaders of the ARU, the union voted a boycott of all Pullman cars unless the company indicated a willingness to mediate or arbitrate the dispute. Pullman remained adamant. The railroads saw an opportunity to smash the ARU and events marched swiftly. The so-called Debs rebellion spread fast; by June 28, 125,000 railroad workers had joined the boycott and twenty railroads were tied up. In order to break the union, Pullman cars were hitched to trains that never before pulled them, especially to mail trains, in order to provoke government intervention.

There was little violence, however, until President Grover Cleveland, at the instigation of his attorney-general, Richard P. Olney, a former railroad lawyer, ordered Federal troops into Chicago, center of the strike, over the protests of Illinois governor John P. Altgeld. Railroad agent-provocateurs infiltrated crowds of workers, stirring up trouble. Riots ensued and on July 7 Federal troops fired upon unarmed crowds, killing some 30 persons.

The strike was finally broken by the use of the injunction, ironically issued under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, which had been enacted in 1890 to curb the excesses of big firms like Pullman and the railroad corporations. Under the injunction, Debs and the ARU leaders were jailed. The strike was strangled and the ARU destroyed. The injunction was to hamper the efforts of American workmen to improve their lot until the Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932 freed the unions of this ominous threat.

3

President Theodore Roosevelt awaited a very important guest. Already it was the thirteenth of October and the poor in the cities of the Northeast were clamoring for coal. The 1902 anthracite strike was in its 143rd day, running into a cost of \$100 million for the railroads, the operators and the 140,000 striking miners. John Mitchell, president of the United Mine Workers, had agreed to refer the dispute to arbitration by a Presidential commission. But the mine operators were moved by a contrary spirit. As George Baer, president of the mine-owning Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, wrote to a troubled stockholder, "The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for — not by the labor agitators, but by the Christian gentlemen to whom God has given control of the property rights of the country." Impotent before the arrogant power of the coal barons, President Roosevelt fumed, "From every consideration of public policy and of morals they should make some slight concessions." But the operators would not budge. So, it was with considerable relief that the President greeted his visitor, J. P. Morgan, head of the banking house, who was, as always, to the point: "The operators will arbitrate."

Government Intervention

"Great is Mr. Morgan's power," wrote a Washington correspondent. Yet, there was more to the White House visit than a mere flexing of Morgan muscle; Morgan's presence was an implicit recognition of public interest. For the first time, the public interest became operative in the settlement of a major strike. As Selig Perlman noted in his *History of Trade Unionism in the United States*, "a labor organization tied up for months a strategic industry and caused wide suffering and discomfort to the public without being condemned as a revolutionary menace to the existing social order calling for suppression." President Roosevelt took an opposite course from that of President Cleveland, who only eight years earlier sent Federal troops to Chicago to quell the Pullman strike. Roosevelt intervened as a mediator, effecting a settlement through

a Presidential commission empowered to hold hearings and to issue an award. It was a form of government intervention that has grown through the years and is now common.

Clearly, public temper had changed with the turn of the century. Reform was in the air and just as significant, trade unionism had developed staying power. As Samuel Gompers reported to the 1900 convention of the AFL, "It is noteworthy, that while in every previous industrial crisis the trade unions were literally mowed down and swept out of existence, the unions now in existence have manifested not only the power of resistance, but of stability and permanency." From 1900 to 1914, AFL membership rose from 550,000 to over 2 million.

Middle-class Reformism

The years preceding World War I in America were years of middle-class reformism stimulated by the seething discontent of the laboring masses in the great cities. The social evils festering in the slums were mercilessly exposed by Jacob Riis. In the *Shame of the Cities*, published in 1904, Lincoln Steffens unveiled the greed and corruption that created vast slums. Ida M. Tarbell and Upton Sinclair excoriated the trusts, which exploited workers and consumers alike. Sinclair, novelist Jack London, Clarence Darrow and other well-known writers and civic leaders in 1905 founded the League for Industrial Democracy (then called the Intercollegiate Socialist Society).

The agitation of the muckrakers, reformers, socialists, and trade unionists soon bore fruit. In 1906, Congress enacted the Hepburn Act to curb the power of the railroads and the Pure Food and Drug Act to protect the health of the consumer. The 16th and 17th Amendments to the Constitution were adopted in 1913, providing respectively for the income tax and the direct election of Senators. By 1912, a considerable body of social legislation governing wages and hours, the employment of children and women, and factory health and safety conditions had been enacted by various state legislatures. The Clayton Anti-Trust Act, enacted in 1914, declared that "the labor of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce." The Act was an attempt to set aside court decisions applying the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to labor. It forbade the use of injunctions in labor disputes unless a court decided that one was necessary to prevent irreparable harm to property. But the courts quickly seized upon the law's vagaries to restore the dismal status quo for struggling unions, a state best illustrated by the fate of the Danbury Hatters.

Danbury Hatters

In March, 1902, the United Hatters of North America called a strike and proclaimed a boycott against Dietrich Loewe and Company and its products. The boycott succeeded, for in 1903 the company sued the 240 members of the Hatters in Danbury for treble

damages of \$240,000 under the Sherman Anti-Trust law. Workers' homes were attached, pending the outcome of the suit. After 14 years of legal wrangling, the United States Supreme Court upheld the validity of the suit, confirming a \$252,130.90 judgment against the Danbury Hatters. The AFL spent \$98,756.02 fighting the case; the 1915 AFL convention called for a donation of one hour's pay from union members to aid the hard-pressed Danbury hat workers. Altogether, the case cost the far from affluent labor movement more than \$420,000. The actual cost was far greater. The fear of suits prevented many workers from forming unions. The AFL was forced to drop the boycott, a potent weapon in labor's arsenal against anti-union employers.

Just before World War I broke out in Europe, America experienced a general drift towards radicalism. For a time, around 1912, the year the Socialist Party of Eugene Victor Debs racked up its greatest percentage of the vote, it seemed likely that the radical rival to the AFL, the Industrial Workers of the World, (IWW or Wobblies) founded in 1905, would repeat the sudden growth experienced by the Knights of Labor in 1886. Itinerant Wobbly soapboxers carried on free-speech fights in San Diego, Spokane, Fresno, Sioux City and elsewhere. They organized immigrant silk and textile workers in the East, harvest hands in the grain belt, lumber and mine workers in the West, and shoreside and seagoing maritime workers on both coasts. The kind of job control the Wobblies won, for example, in Goldfield, Nevada, was the envy of the conservative craft unions. The IWW in Goldfield organized every job in town — mine workers, carpenters, cooks and waiters, and the like. "Under the IWW sway," IWW secretary-treasurer Vincent St. John later recalled, "the minimum wage for all kinds of labor was \$4.50 a day and the eight-hour day was universal. No committees were ever sent to any employer. The unions adopted wage scales and regulated hours. The secretary posted the same on a bulletin board outside of the union hall, and it was the LAW. The employers were forced to come and see the union committee."

But the Wobbly membership never topped 250,000. World War I intervened, created a patriotic hysteria that was the undoing of the anti-war IWW. Nonetheless, IWW successes in the Lawrence textile strike of 1912 and the Patterson silk strike of 1914, among others, demonstrated that unskilled and semi-skilled workers speaking many tongues could be welded together to form a fighting organization. It was a lesson that the Congress of Industrial Organizations was to take to heart in the late 1930s.

Meanwhile, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers pioneered a new

Industrial Workers of the World

Wilson and World War I

socially-conscious unionism that melded the socialist-industrial union sense of solidarity to the pragmatic craft union concern with the collective bargaining agreement. The needle trades unions, through negotiations, won an entirely new spectrum of gains in employer-financed, union-controlled pensions, health and welfare benefits, and the like, that are a permanent part of the fabric of today's welfare unionism.

Although the AFL reached a membership of 2 million in pre-WWI America, its existence was precarious enough. It was the war and government encouragement of collective bargaining that finally put the AFL on a permanent footing. Woodrow Wilson became the first President to address an AFL convention and the first to enunciate a government policy that, in effect, the right to organize was in the public interest. "We must," President Wilson told the AFL convention delegates in 1917, "do what we have declared our purpose to do, see that the conditions of labor are not rendered more onerous by the war, but also that we shall see to it that the instrumentalities by which the conditions of labor are improved are not blocked or checked." Wilson had already established a Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, appointed a former secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers, William B. Wilson, Secretary of Labor, and was to make union recognition a cornerstone of federal labor policy in war-essential industries where unions already had some sort of beachhead. As these war industries burgeoned, so did the unions. The Railway Clerks bounded from 7,000 members in 1917 to 71,000 in 1919; the electrical workers grew from 42,000 to 131,000. The AFL doubled its membership over the same period to 4 million by 1920. The government's favorable labor policy, however, was limited. The steel industry, for example, remained non-union during the war and, in 1919, when steel workers sought to organize, the steel companies brutally smashed their union. Nonetheless, the AFL at the end of the war enjoyed a permanency that gave weight to President Wilson's observation some years earlier that no future President would be able to ignore the labor movement.

The "American Plan"

However, even the AFL did not escape the 1920s unscathed. Employers launched a counter offensive against the unions under the euphemism, the American Plan. Employers in the metal trades, for example, eagerly sought the blacklisting, spy and strike-breaking service offered by the National Metal Trades Association. As a result, the membership of the International Association of Machinists fell from 330,800 in 1920 to 77,900 in 1924. The courts held the "Yellow Dog" contract legal. An agreement signed by a prospective employee that he would not, while employed, join a union or seek to organize his fellows, the "Yellow Dog" contract was sanctified by

law and became a potent employer weapon. All strikes where such contracts existed automatically became illegal. The breaking of alleged illegal strikes enabled the open shop, in reality, a shop closed to union men, to flourish. Union membership, at a 5 million peak in 1920, fell to 3.6 million in 1923 and was down to 2.9 million by 1933. The AFL survived — but just barely.

The one exception to this otherwise gloomy picture was on the railroads. When the Federal government nationalized the railroads during World War I, the government directly fostered collective bargaining and an effective grievance machinery. Upon the transfer of the railroads back to private hands in 1920, Congress provided for the continuation of the Railway Labor Board. And, in 1926, Congress improved rail labor relations through the Railway Labor Act.

When the depression hit in 1929, American workmen were first stunned into fearful apathy but then reacted with a renewed militancy. Three times as many workers struck in 1933 as in 1932 and more went out in 1934. The sole issue was union recognition. That the tragedies of Homestead and Pullman were not re-enacted over and over again (though they occurred often enough) during the 1930s was due to a significant change in public policy proclaimed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and first enacted in Sections 7a and 7b of the National Recovery Act of 1933 and in the Wagner Labor Act of 1936. Workers were guaranteed the right to organize, to choose representatives freely and to bargain collectively with their employers. Under the aegis of the Blue Eagle, the symbol of the NRA, the United Mine Workers organized 300,000 new members in two short months; the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union jumped its membership by 100,000 and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers by 50,000. These successes were the inspiration for the formation of the Committee of Industrial Organizations, within the AFL, composed of unions interested in organizing workers in the mass production industries.

But the NRA ran into trouble in the courts. Attempts by workers in unorganized industries to organize ran into bitter employer opposition. Workers did secure a few victories but at a great cost. In Toledo, Ohio, for example, National Guardsmen protected, at bayonet point, strikebreakers at the Autolite plant. Showered by beer bottles and bricks, the Guardsmen opened fire, killing two and wounding hundreds. The threat of a general strike, however, brought the company around. Federal mediators helped to work out a settlement acceptable to both parties. The union won recognition. In Minneapolis, the Teamsters' Union all but tied up the entire city — at a cost of 67 wounded, two dead — before winning recognition for in-city truck drivers. The Minneapolis Teamsters then

**National Recovery
Act, 1933**

**Minneapolis
Teamsters**

organized a District Drivers' Council to coordinate the activities of truck driver locals throughout the region and to win the first uniform contract for over-the-road drivers in 1938, a prototype of present Teamster "master" agreements. This sort of strength won truck drivers the present hourly rate of \$3.14 and \$200 a month pensions.

But all this was still in the future when American industry made still another effort to break the labor movement. In 1936, employers spent at least \$80,000,000 on labor spies and strike-breakers. In North Carolina, the Governor called out the state guard at the request of textile mill owners. As Josephus Daniels wrote President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "In nearly every instance the troops might as well have been under the direction of the mill owners." The protection of the Blue Eagle, in the end, was illusory. Sections 7a and 7b operated to favor the growth of company unions at the expense of legitimate unions. The NRA was finally declared unconstitutional; Congress reconsidered national labor policy. In 1936, Congress passed the Wagner Labor Act — and labor came into its own.

But not without further struggles. The AFL was reluctant to take in industrial workers without careful consideration of craft and jurisdictional lines. John L. Lewis, head of the United Mine Workers and chairman of the Committee of Industrial Organizations, broke with the Federation in 1937 and launched the CIO as a new national labor center. Renamed the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the new union group welcomed workers in auto, steel, oil, rubber and other mass production industries to its ranks.

Actually, the split proved to be as beneficial to the AFL as it was to the new born CIO. By 1937, the CIO had a membership of 1.5 million, just about a million fewer than the AFL. By 1941, the AFL, revitalized, had a membership of 4.5 million to the CIO's 2.8 million. The Teamsters alone jumped in membership from 135,000 in 1937 to 530,000 in 1941. This expansion, however, was not without its costs in human lives and effort. Company goons nearly killed Walter Reuther and many other unionists, who fought back on the picket lines. On May 30, 1937, as an instance, strikers at Republic Steel's South Chicago plant gathered in a nearby field to hear speakers. They decided to cross the field and picket the plant to affirm their right to do so, a right upheld at the meeting by the Mayor of Chicago and in the new labor law now on the books. Casually, the strikers strolled with their families towards the plant gates. The holiday spirit was met by gunfire. Some strikers retaliated with stones or whatever else came to hand from the field. But most fled. Ten were shot, seven in the back, three in the side. Thirty others were wounded. The police dragged

severely wounded strikers across the ground. The Memorial Day massacre, as it is called, marked a defeat for the Steel Workers Organizing Committee then engaged in a struggle with the so-called Little Steel Companies. Riots in Ohio steel centers resulted in several deaths. The steel union lost that strike and for a time the CIO lost momentum. But this time the union retained a secure hold in "Big Steel," mostly the U. S. Steel Company, and, with the coming of World War II, soon followed up to organize the balance of the industry.

Memorial Day Massacre

World War II brought a new maturity to industrial relations in this country. It also brought a change in the leadership of the CIO. Philip Murray, a soft-spoken miner, replaced the flamboyant John L. Lewis as head of the CIO, a position Murray held until his death in 1952. (AFL president William Green died the same year.) During the war, union membership grew steadily, rising to 12 million. Negroes, formerly largely employed in agricultural, unskilled or service jobs, were drawn into defense industries. A. Philip Randolph, president of the Pullman Car Porters, organized his March on Washington Movement as a protest against the exclusion of Negroes from jobs. The threatened march brought a quick response from Washington. On June 25, 1941, President Roosevelt issued an executive order establishing a Fair Employment Practices Commission to investigate complaints of discrimination. Although the FEPC never acquired enough power to be fully effective, it did open many doors to employment for Negroes.

World War II

Federal cost-plus contracts in defense industries with their guarantee of profits, took the sting for employers out of union negotiations and recognition. Wages and salaries were stabilized by the government along with prices. Still, the upward pressure of high profits pushed prices up despite price controls. Unions managed to protect their wage gains through negotiations and through hearings before the War Labor Board. Unions relinquished their right to strike but only when they received in return some forms of union security. A maintenance of membership formula was worked out at the behest of the government. Employees were granted a 15-day period after the signing of an agreement to withdraw from union membership. If they did not avail themselves of this (and the fact that most did not is a tribute to the basic attractiveness of trade unionism to workers), they had to remain union members for the duration of the new contract. This gave the unions a much needed stability and placed labor relations on a solid footing. This footing was imperilled by the war-time coal strike and the rail dispute as well as by the postwar 1946 strike wave. But in sharp contrast to the past, there was little violence in 1946 as striking auto, steel, rubber and other workers

hit the bricks to raise wages in line with high prices and profits.

Taft-Hartley Act of 1947

Employers, however, did manage to place a check on union power through the Taft-Hartley Amendments to the labor law. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 hampered the unionization of the new industries springing up in the South, following the war. But since however, the American public wanted no repetition of Homestead, the Pullman strike or the turbulence of the 1930s, the Act did reaffirm the government's basic commitment to free collective bargaining. Existing unions were not destroyed, as in the past; efforts were merely made to hamper new organizing drives.

The balance of the 1940s were given over primarily to winning key wage agreements between labor and management. The United Auto Workers in 1948 secured the first cost-of-living escalator clause in its contract with the auto industry, relating wage increases to price increases. An "improvement factor" also allowed for annual increases based on increased productivity. In 1949, a new era opened when the Steelworkers settled a strike upon Presidential recommendations that employers contribute six cents an hour towards pensions and four cents an hour towards social insurance for each worker. Labor and management during the 1950s imaginatively came up with a host of welfare benefits, ranging from near comprehensive medical benefits to extended vacation and early retirement plans. These gains in collective bargaining accompanied a period of consolidation on the part of American trade unions. Union membership stabilized around the 15 million mark during the 1950s, where it has remained since.

AFL-CIO Merger

Since the war, a new leadership developed within the labor movement. Walter P. Reuther, a red-headed tool and die maker, became, first, head of the 1 million member United Auto Workers and then president of the CIO in 1952. George Meany, a Bronx plumber, succeeded William Green as president of the AFL the same year. In 1953, the foundation for unity between the two labor groups was laid with the negotiation of a no-raiding agreement between 65 AFL and 29 CIO affiliates. On December 5, 1955, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merged. George Meany was elected president of the new AFL-CIO; William F. Schnitzler, secretary-treasurer; and Walter Reuther became head of the Federation's Industrial Union Department and a vice president of the AFL-CIO.

Within recent decades, few unionists have had to confront boatloads of armed Pinkertons. Yet, recent history indicates that unionists are now facing a challenge ultimately more deadly than the Pinkertons of the past. "It is one thing," says Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz, "to bargain collectively about the terms and conditions of employment and quite another to bargain about

the terms of unemployment, about the conditions on which men are to yield their jobs to machines." It is this difficulty that has been at the root of most recent strikes. The uses — or abuses — of automation will shape for better or worse the new world unionists have sought for so long.

Automation may be a long-range blessing but it is a short-range disaster for the displaced worker or job-applicant turned away from the factory gate. Despite propaganda to the contrary, workers, as unions well know, have been displaced by machines, although there is no precise count of the number. A Bureau of Labor Statistics survey of the results of a shut-down of a steel car manufacturing plant in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, shows that of the nearly 2,000 employees laid-off, 12 percent were still out of work two years later, 11 percent were underemployed, and 9 percent had left the labor force. A local union official reports that in a General Electric plant in California, some 600-700 employees now produce 102,000 electric irons a week, whereas in 1946, 1,100 to 1,200 employees produced but 50,000 irons a week. Seymour L. Wolfbein, director of the Labor Department's Office of Manpower, has predicted that by 1970, because of automation and increased productivity, the nation will be able to match its 1960 total economic output with 22,000,000 fewer workers. The potential labor force is expected to increase by 13 million between 1960 to 1970. The United States, according to Wolfbein's estimates, will need 35 million more jobs in 1970 just to keep unemployment at the current rate of about 5 percent.

Automation is also changing the mix of the workforce, accenting the long-run trend towards bleaching the blue collar. Within the automated factory, the workforce shifts from production work to maintenance work. Blue and white collar jobs become indistinguishable adjuncts to programmed production. The average number of workers engaged in manufacturing in 1948 and in 1961 was 15.5 million. But the number of production workers—where union membership is concentrated—declined by 1.5 million while supervisory and clerical workers increased by 1.5 million. The trend is likely to continue.

This shift in the make-up of the workforce poses the problem of white collar organization for the unions. Significantly, the Office Employees International Union recently added "Professional" to its name in an effort to attract professional workers to the 60,000 member union. Trade unionists have been encouraged by the recent successes of white collar unions, such as the American Federation of Teachers, which has nearly doubled its membership within three years. And office automation, which threatens to destroy forever traditional white collar job security, may well prove to be the catalyst for office and professional worker

The Challenge of Automation

unionization.

Automation is a pressing and immediate concern of the unions. The first reaction, naturally, is largely defensive — save jobs. The lost battle of the rail unions to keep firemen on freight, oil-fired diesels is a classic instance of this posture. American unions do not oppose automation per se. As AFL-CIO president Meany points out, "We do not say the answer is to do away with 'machine production.' We have never said that. We are in favor of technological progress, better methods, more efficiency. All we say . . . is that you have to bring the people along with the machine."

To defend their people, unions have negotiated special automation funds, such as those that exist in waterfront stevedoring and in meatpacking, to help ease the impact of automation on the displaced. Retraining, severance pay, special unemployment benefits are also a part of labor's achievements to alleviate the impact of automation just as the shorter work week is a part of labor's immediate goal to create jobs. After the 116-day 1959 steel strike, the United Steelworkers and Kaiser Steel Company worked out an ingenious plan for increasing efficiency with automation and sharing the savings that result. The plan assures each worker that he will not lose his job or income because of technological innovations. This is done through the development of a plant-wide labor pool consisting of any workers displaced by changes. Pool members are assigned to the random jobs that come up in most manufacturing operations and to permanent jobs as they open up. An attrition rate of about 8 percent a year absorbs those who might otherwise be laid-off. Moreover, Kaiser workers share 32.5 percent of every dollar saved through the use of materials and supplies, cuts in labor costs, and from the increased efficiency in the use of machines. In March, 1963, the first month that savings were split, each of the 4,000 eligible employees received a bonus of \$75 for that month. This was their share of the \$962,000 saved. This initial performance has since been matched in succeeding months.

Unfortunately, the Kaiser plan is of limited applicability. For one thing, like most of the automation plans so far negotiated, it protects only those already employed. Such devices, including those of early retirement and the 13 week extended vacation plan for the top 50 percent of the steel labor force, create some new jobs. But certainly not enough for the future health of our nation. The shorter work week would be of immediate help but it is no substitute for a democratically planned economy.

**Labor's
Newest
Frontier**

Collective bargaining, as history shows us, has its limitations. It serves to introduce a measure of democracy into an otherwise autocratic industrial system; it protects the workers' interests on the job and vis-à-vis those of management within the industrial

complex. But collective bargaining alone cannot fulfill labor's basic goals—including better education, more housing and jobs, more adequate and comprehensive medical care for all, better pensions and the elimination of poverty. There is no substitute for democratic planning for achieving the Great Society. And, in this context, collective bargaining, essential as it is to freedom in the economy, is not a means for worker participation in the planning process. How to best achieve this is perhaps labor's newest frontier.

Labor must begin with jobs, meaningful jobs in which people can take pride. Significantly, it is around the notion of full employment that the civil rights and the labor movements are seeking to revive what A. Philip Randolph has called the "coalition of conscience"—that grouping of civil rights forces, the churches, liberals, democratic radicals, and trade unionists which secured the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Equal opportunity, now legally assured through the civil rights law, is meaningless without job opportunity. To give but one example: the Workers' Defense League, through its apprenticeship program, is recruiting and helping to train qualified Negro candidates for apprenticeship training programs within the hithertofore nearly all-white construction industry. But a decline in construction has limited the number of jobs—and apprenticeship—openings. Now, Negro and white workers can either battle each other over a declining number of jobs or join together to fight for more jobs.

Where are these jobs to come from? An AFL-CIO statement, *Labor Looks at the Nation's Economy*, offers a clue: "On the basis of Labor Department Studies, it is estimated that \$1 billion of government outlay for public works directly creates about 40,000 on-site construction jobs, with approximately 25 to 30 per cent of the jobs for unskilled and semiskilled workers. In addition, such investment outlay also directly creates about 60,000 jobs in the production and distribution of building materials and equipment . . . As these workers spend their earnings . . . sales increase and more jobs are indirectly created in retail stores, warehouses and companies that produce consumer goods. . . . A government expenditure of \$1 billion for public works indirectly creates about 50,000-100,000 jobs—a total of about 150,000-200,000 jobs. An increase of \$3 billion in public works outlays, therefore, would create about 450,000-600,000 jobs."

To expand job opportunities by expanding work in the public sector of our economy takes political action rather than collective bargaining. That labor understands this is shown in the growth of trade union COPE (Committee on Political Education) activities. In the 1964 elections, for example, COPE endorsed 354 candidates for the House, and of these 237 including a goodly number

of trade unionists were elected. To take advantage of this political power as well as to develop it further, labor needs to develop a program of comparable magnitude. How to achieve this is the major task now facing the American labor movement.

In recent years, much has been written about the failures of the labor movement and its impending collapse. But AFL-CIO president George Meany has had the last word on this subject: "Some people are worrying about the future of the American trade union movement, complaining that we don't have the same zeal, the same drive we had in the early days. We are perhaps more business-like and maybe we don't get as excited. But the American trade union movement is not dying of dry rot, it is not suffering from hardening of the arteries. It is very much awake and very much alive."

NATIONAL TRADE UNION COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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The National Trade Union Council for Human Rights is a division of the Jewish Labor Committee. It seeks to relate the struggle for economic, social, and political equality more directly to the goals of American labor, the liberal community, and the civil rights movement. JLC has as its major goal in the coming period solidifying the alliance of America's trade unions, activist youth, minorities, and liberals. JLC's concerns are programmatic — they deal with the quality of life of our urban and rural poor, with issues of discrimination North and South, and always in the broader context of the struggle for social justice and economic democracy.

Clip and mail to:

NTUC, 25 West 78th Street, New York, N. Y. 10021

- ☐ I am interested in knowing more about the labor movement and how students can relate to it — please place me on the mailing list of your student labor project.
- ☐ I am interested in attending meetings of youth and trade unionists.
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STUDENT-LABOR PROJECT
of the
NATIONAL TRADE UNION COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Just as an earlier generation of activists participated in the struggle for social change through the labor movement, so today's students contribute importantly to building a democratic America by working for civil rights, helping the poor to organize themselves, and grappling with the perplexing problems of foreign policy in a nuclear age. But today's students have their difference with labor — and labor has not always seen eye to eye with the student activists. Some of these differences represent concrete political problems, but too often in the past there has been a lack of communication between labor and politically active youth.

To help bridge the gap between labor and the youth movement, the National Trade Union Council for Human Rights has established a **STUDENT-LABOR PROJECT** to initiate a dialogue between young people and the trade unions. The labor movement needs young people; the students need to know that they can act for social change through labor. And the students need an understanding of labor and its aspirations.

Tom Brook's brief review of the history of American labor's struggles is being made available by the NTUC in co-operation with the League for Industrial Democracy as a contribution to this dialogue. We hope that this will be the beginning of an educational process on both sides that in time may lead to concrete co-operation between youth activists and labor.

