

Labor movement - U.S.
(1976 folder)



Official Symbol of
The United States of America's
200th Anniversary

Labor's Long, Hard Road

No single volume and surely no booklet of this size can adequately report the progress made by workingmen and women in the United States during the past 200 years. Noted here are only a few of the highlights and some of the low points in the labor movement, a movement of retreat as well as advancement, of terrible suffering and moments of great joy, and of almost unbelievable personal commitment. Yet through it all we see the employees' intense need for self esteem, and for respect as human beings rather than commodities to be bought and sold in the open market.

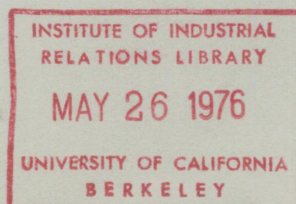
This booklet has been developed from articles published in "The Air Line Employee," official magazine of the Air Line Employees Association. The articles were based on talks given by Mrs. Constance LaPare, an elected union officer employed by National Airlines at Miami, Florida, and they are presented here in recognition of the nation's Bi-Centennial.



Air Line Employees Association, International (AFL-CIO)

(Affiliated with the Air Line Pilots Association, AFL-CIO)

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Labor's Long, Hard Road—First Shots Fired

I'm sure we're all aware that 1976 is Uncle Sam's 200th birthday. Did you know that the famous Boston Massacre, which sparked the Revolution, hinged around the violation of workingmen's rights? Well, actually, they didn't have many rights in those by-gone days, but their jobs were threatened and they weren't about to take it lying down. What happened, as near as can be determined, was that the British Redcoats, in their off-duty hours, were working in shipyards for less than standard wage rates. I suppose this would qualify them as our first scabs, although the longshoremen and shipwrights and weavers and tanners of that time were hardly in a position to call an actual strike. At any rate, the action of the soldiers caused a brawl on the docks and they retreated to the safety of their barracks near Boston Commons, a centrally located park. A few days later they came outside, were taunted by a small boy, and fired into a crowd that included several dock workers. Five people were killed and the Revolution began—for labor as well as for the country.

But while the Boston Massacre was a fight among laborers, themselves, workers had been struggling with management for a long time before that—in fact, ever since one man agreed to work for another (or was forced to do so.) In ancient Greece and Rome, those who weren't slaves were paid in cash; in the middle ages the peasants on feudal estates were rewarded with protection and whatever goods they didn't produce themselves; and in the 1600's the artisans who gathered at a master's shop were paid for the most part in food and clothing.

(Property, at that time, was all important, and anyone who worked for money, alone, was considered the lowest of the low. At the absolute bottom were the coal miners who lived and worked outside the village limits. They were shunned like the plague and weren't even allowed to be buried in the local cemetery. No wonder so many Europeans followed the Pilgrims to America!)

But streets weren't paved with gold . . . in fact, no streets!

Our earliest settlers stepped ashore with visions of easy wealth, even though Capt. John Smith, the English explorer, had warned them that, "Nothing is to be expected but fine work." Indeed, there was so much work that the guilds, transplanted from the old country, were able to demand high wages for their labors. As early as 1630 a Massachusetts court tried to stop this by setting a limit of two shillings per day for bricklayers, carpenters, and other craftsmen. (And here we thought Phase I of wage controls took effect just last year!)

These early attempts to regulate the economy failed when employers violated laws against overbidding for labor. The laws were soon repealed, but any workman who accepted more than the fixed rate was still subject to fine! It was this severe shortage of skills, though, that gave rise to slavery and "indentured" labor, the latter being a system whereby an immigrant was brought to this country on his promise to work as long as five years for his sponsor. The first Negroes came over here under that arrangement and, believe it or not, they staged the first recorded strike on American soil. This occurred when black chimney sweeps came down from the rooftops in Charleston, S. C., and vowed not to climb back up until



The Boston Massacre—where it all began.
(Engraving by Paul Revere)

they won a pay raise. I leave it to you to guess the outcome of such insolent behavior!

Conditions in Europe, however, coupled with those visions of "easy wealth" that exist to some extent even today, resulted in a far greater influx of workmen than came from Africa. Literally millions of cabinetmakers, sign painters, butchers, bakers, tailors, blacksmiths, tin-smiths, sailmakers, wagonmakers, and teamsters (small T!) landed on our shores. Furthermore, the freedom to work inspired the desire to live under a democratic political system—and thus began the movement toward the United States of America.

Soon laborers, craftsmen, and merchants alike were calling themselves "Sons of Liberty" and providing the muscle for protests throughout the British colonies. They burned tax offices and in Boston they routed the lieutenant governor from his house. The "Sons of Liberty" were led by Samuel Adams, a member of the family that produced our second and sixth presidents. Sam's best known exploit, of course, was the famous Boston Tea Party when a shipload of the stuff was dumped into the harbors as a protest against outrageous taxes.

After the Revolutionary War the colonial craftsmen enjoyed considerable freedom and status, but this didn't last long. Unlike Europe, where cities were crowded and every inch of land taken, America offered unlimited opportunity to more and more immigrants. These people settled in the south and west, creating rich markets for hundreds of small factories that sprang up along the east coast. Into these sweatshops swarmed whole families—fathers, mothers, and children as young as seven years—all willing to work for pennies. The industrial revolution was still in its infancy, but machines and assembly methods had already been developed to the point where jobs could be broken down into many simple operations.

Philadelphia, Cradle of Unionism

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to be free,
The wretched refuse from your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, storm-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

When the Statue of Liberty was erected in New York's harbor in 1886 this inscription may have warmed the hearts of immigrants, but it was hardly necessary. Beaten down by centuries of oppression and inspired by the promise of a fresh start in an uncrowded land, they had been coming over here since the Revolution—first by the thousands and then by the millions. Many left everything they owned in the old country, stepping ashore with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. And all of them, as soon as they had settled down, clamored for the necessities of life: household goods, furniture, tools, farm equipment, wagons, etc., etc.

To meet the demand, businessmen along the east coast set up shops and factories. Age-old skills, once so jealously guarded by craftsmen who took great pride in the fact that they could make an article from start to finish (and who, because of this, could also set their own wages to some extent) . . . these skills were cast aside in favor of mass production on assembly lines or simple machines.

Almost overnight, it seemed, craftsmen lost their means of making a living. In desperation, they took the only route open to them—they organized. The first to do this were the shoemakers of Philadelphia, in 1792. Thus, the "City of Brotherly Love" and the "Cradle of Liberty" took on yet another title: "The Cradle of Unionism in America."

Lacking any real organization and totally without a *Constitution and Bylaws* this group stayed together for only a year, although in 1795 they tried again. This time they were more successful, lasting until 1806 when they were tried and found guilty of conspiracy to raise wages. The jury, one might say, was somewhat stacked: nine merchants and three supervisors!

Although the fines in this first conspiracy case were minimal, \$8.00 each, the verdict put a damper on organized labor for many years to come. Still, the idea of unionism would not die, even during the depression following the War of 1812 (when the British captured outposts at Detroit and Chicago and burned the capitol at Washington before they were finally turned back at New Orleans by General "Stonewall" Jackson). Yes, times were hard, but the war had crystalized thoughts of patriotism and democracy among the workers. Now they began to look for other ways to change their lot and to protect themselves against charges such as "conspiracy to raise wages." What they needed, they agreed, was political clout, and the first step in that direction was

to be a registered voter.

But the ballot box wasn't the only factor in their progress. The steamboat had just been invented (1807) and within a very short time hundreds of miles of river waters had been opened to commercial navigation. As the economy grew, so did demands for higher wages. Strikes were not uncommon. Inevitably, perhaps, women also became involved, and the first instance of this shocking turn of events occurred in New York in 1825 when tailoresses put down their needles and thread and marched off the job. No wonder Francis Wright, our first suffragette, was led to observe: "A moral excitement, new in its nature and rapid in its progress, pervades the world. From the people arise the hum and stir of awakening intelligence, inquiry, and preparation."

It is certain that this attitude pervaded Philadelphia for it was there, in 1828, that the first industrial union worthy of the name was formed. Called the Workingmen's Party (of wage earners, craftsmen, and farmers) it left almost nobody out—and it was politically oriented. Its members rallied around such causes as the abolition of debtors' prisons and of child labor. They urged free education for all, land reform, and they sought laws that would make the payment of wages the first obligation of any company that went bankrupt. (We take these things for granted today, but I assure you they didn't just happen.)

The goals of the Workingmen's Party, however, were far too social in nature for

the bulk of the members. They wanted more direct results—like money in the pocket. When this didn't come about fast enough, they stopped attending meetings and the union dissolved. Still, their group had made an impact on politicians, and both the Whigs (Republicans) and the Democrats found it worthwhile to woo these new voters. Generally speaking, the Whigs enjoyed the support of British immigrants and native Americans, while the Democrats were supported by the Germans and Irish.

As the years rolled by and mass production became the accepted method of manufacture, the ancient crafts practically disappeared. Now, even the "journey-men's associations" in the various factories were finding it impossible to deal with their companies on an individual basis. They tried forming "local councils" that would represent everyone of their kind in the entire city. Here, too, there was a lack of cooperation; but in 1840 the Philadelphia building trades did score a major victory: a 10-hour workday!

Five years later, President Martin Van Buren, a New Yorker who owed much to the support of workingmen in that state, established the 10-hour day for all government works. In most factories, though, employees stayed at their benches and machines from sunup to sundown. Some mill owners even went so far as to turn back the hands of the clock so their people would think they were quitting at 7 p.m. instead of 8!



The British are coming! The British are coming!

Immigration to America from Europe began in 1800 and has continued to this day. Above, an old woodcut shows workers leaving England, much to the consternation of John Bull and his dour lion.

Two Kinds of Slavery in the 1850's

Labor's long, hard road took a decided turn for the better in 1842 when Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw of Massachusetts ruled that unions were not "conspiracies to raise wages" and that they had a legal right to exist. This decision was reached in a case involving shoemakers and it wiped out a position taken 40 years earlier in regard to the same craft . . . possibly their own fathers!

Judge Shaw not only established the right of unions to exist; he said union shops were legal, that organized employees could lawfully refuse to work with non-members, and that the membership could not be held responsible for actions of union officials. All this, of course, freed labor groups from a wide range of outlandish charges. But the decision had its negative side, too. It awakened employers to the power of the court and, in the absence of any national legislation, management sought relief in local courts across the country for the next 100 years—and very few of these local judges were as sympathetic to labor as was Justice Shaw.

Mass production challenged

It is difficult today for us to imagine an America without factories (and perhaps you've been reading some of the criticism now being leveled at our system by sociologists and by employees, themselves). Many people are worried about the dehumanizing aspects of mass production and automation. Well, please believe me, they aren't the first to raise this question. As far back as 1845, Henry David Thoreau, the famous naturalist-philosopher, was asking, "Where will the division of labor end?" Nor was Thoreau the only one who deplored the passing of the craft era. The puritan conscience is a stern taskmaster, and throughout New England people were bothered about the social impact of the red-bricked factories that employed whole families. They deplored child labor, and they saw widespread evidence of immorality.

The "solution," as practiced by some mill owners, was paternalism. Under this policy the employer watched over his workers like children, even going so far as to provide dormitories on his property so he could supervise every aspect of their lives, private as well as on the job. This was pure idealism, of course, and like most impossible dreams it didn't work. Soon, unscrupulous mill owners were using paternalism as a screen for tyranny, and anyone who protested was not merely fired but also blacklisted. Farm girls, who once applied for jobs in droves, now had to be recruited

by agents who scoured the countryside in long, black carriages called "slave wagons." The girls were told the work was so easy they could dress in silks and spend much of their time in reading!

When the wagons arrived at the mills, however, the girls were in for a shock. The morning work bell, for instance, rang at day-break and except for time off for breakfast and dinner, the spindles and looms never stopped humming until 6:30 p.m., some 13 hours later. Obviously, there were no coffee breaks; in fact, one employer eliminated the breakfast period when he found some of his girls nodding after the meal. He was pleased to note that this increased his weekly production of cloth by 3,000 yards!

Now we come to 1849: the California gold rush and the opening of new, free land in the west. One might reasonably expect that because this created a job shortage back east, labor was benefited. Instead, the exodus of the Forty-Niners robbed unions of many of their best men. So unionism, already hard hit by recurrent depressions, was in a state of disarray when the Civil War broke out in 1861.

Labor lukewarm on slavery issue

Although northern workmen didn't actually support slavery, they were slow to take up arms against the South. Rather than listen to the abolitionists, few of whom seemed at all concerned about the low wages being paid above the Mason-Dixon Line, they sided with southern spokesmen. The Confederates were saying—with a great deal of truth—that there was really very little difference between "wage slavery" and actual slavery, except that Negroes were better treated and had greater security. Eventually, though, this argument was turned around when northern workers realized that if they didn't answer Lincoln's call they, too, might someday be enslaved. This horrible prospect was enough to cause whole unions to enlist!

Immediately following the war there was a rush to form new national unions or to revive old ones, but the casualty rate was high. The country was still licking its wounds, and neither labor nor management were yet truly national in scope. Still, there was some movement toward an eight-hour day, as reflected in a popular saying of the time: "Whether you work by piece or by day, decreasing the hours increases the pay." This thought was advanced by a Boston machinist, Ira Stewart, and it was meant to overcome "boom and bust" periods. The concept is still held to some degree by the AFL-CIO which has proposed a fluctuating work week to compensate for unemployment during slack periods: the less work, the shorter the hours—hence more jobs. During Stewart's time, however, Uncle Sam was the only employer to honor the eight-hour day; federal employees went on this schedule in 1869.

By far the greatest clash between labor and capital occurred on the railroads which, within six short years (1867 to 1873) laid 33,000 miles of track. This was also a time of deep depression and, although the companies never stopped paying dividends, the workers received less than \$1.00 for a 15-18 hour day. Many lived as squatters alongside the track, and at least one company (the Erie RR) had the gall to charge \$25 annual rent for the privilege! Those who lived at home had to pay regular fares as they rode the train back and forth to work, and this even included the engineer.

Protests grew to full blown war, and riots erupted at nearly all rail centers from Baltimore to San Francisco. Federal troops were called out in Reading, Pa. (11 people killed, 20 wounded) and in Pittsburgh (20 dead, 29 wounded). Eventually, the great upheaval burned itself out, but the old master-journeyman relationship was forever lost. Frightened by the riots, civil authorities reinforced the militia—and the massive armories we now find in most of our major cities are monuments to that fear.

Time Table of the Holyoke Mills,

To take effect on and after Jan. 3d, 1853.

The standard being that of the Western Rail Road, which is the Meridian time at Cambridge.

MORNING BELLS.

First Bell ring at 4.40, A. M. Second Bell ring in at 5, A. M.

YARD GATES

Will be opened at ringing of Morning Bells, of Meal Bells, and of Evening Bells, and kept open ten minutes.

WORK COMMENCES

At ten minutes after last Morning Bell, and ten minutes after Bell which "rings in" from Meals.

BREAKFAST BELLS.

October 1st, to March 31st, inclusive, ring out at 7, A. M.; ring in at 7.30, A. M.
April 1st, to Sept. 30th, inclusive, ring out at 6.30, A. M.; ring in at 7, A. M.

DINNER BELLS.

Ring out at 12.30, P. M.; ring in at 1, P. M.

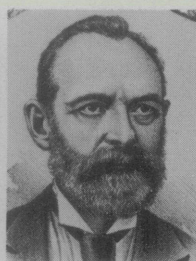
EVENING BELLS.

Ring out at 6.30, P. M.

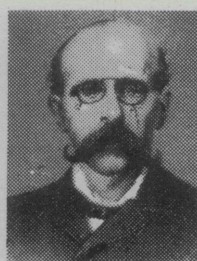
The Cry of the 1870's: Organize! Organize!



William H. Sylvis



Uriah S. Stephens



Terrence V. Powderly



Adolph Strasser



Peter J. McGuire



Samuel Gompers

One hundred years, more or less, separate us from the six labor leaders pictured above. But the goal these men and their legions of followers fought and died for in 1873 remains the same. That is the respect of management—an ideal that encompasses fair wages, proper hours, and decent working conditions.

Following the Civil War, America was faced with one crisis after another and sometimes they all came at once. Along with the mighty task of reconstruction, the nation somehow had to absorb the millions of refugees who flocked to the promised land from poverty-ridden Europe. Our soaring population, in turn, required more and more goods of all kinds, and this meant the replacement of small shops with sprawling factories. Yes, business was booming, but not for the working man. Bankers, railroad tycoons, mine owners, and merchants held a tight grip on the economy, and in the absence of any government controls, they paid starvation wages. It was a time when Labor seethed with unrest as never before.

Out of this turmoil, then, came our six leaders — Sylvis, Stephens, Powderly, Strasser, McGuire, and Gompers. William H. Sylvis, an iron moulder, was first on the scene. His demands for a revised economy, an eight-hour day, and equal rights for women (Susan B. Anthony, the famous suffragette, was one of his most vociferous speakers) won the loyalty of thousands who joined his National Labor Union.

Long range goals, however, failed to hold the interest of his desperate membership and many deserted to a radical, communist group called the International Workingmen's Association. Imported from England where it was sired by Karl Marx, the IWA proved too far out for most American laborers, and very few votes were cast for their 1872 presidential ticket: Victoria Woodhull, a white woman, for president, and Frederick Douglass, a black man, for vice president.

As for the immigrant invasion, the most explosive, prejudice-packed situation occurred on the west coast where incoming Chinese were soon labeled the Yellow Peril. At first these newcomers were a threat only to jobs, and employers could not care less. But when some Chinese had the nerve to open shops of their own, the established California businessmen joined



SECRET NOTICE of a mine union meeting is chalked on a rock by Knights of Labor who used code words, mysterious symbols, and distinctive handshakes to recognize each other and to keep companies in the dark as to their activities. Entry to the "Inner Veil" (meeting place) was guarded by a "Venerable Sage" (retired workman) and the meeting, itself, was conducted by the "Worthy Foreman."

the fight against "unfair" competition!

Meanwhile, back east in the Pennsylvania and West Virginia coal fields, the newly arrived Irish were having troubles of their own. Mine owners had chopped wages to next to nothing and the workers were up in arms — literally. Foremost among the demonstrators were the Molly McGuires, so named because, although they didn't dress the part, they used the same tactics as old country peasants who had disguised themselves as women while raiding the estates of oppressive landlords. After a series of violent confrontations with company spies and strikebreakers, the Mollies were arrested and charged with murder. Strengthened by a certain amount of government collusion, the company made its charges stick and 10 of the protesters were hung — an action that brought down the wrath of all miners.

In the midst of these terrible conditions arose the first truly national labor union, the Noble Order of Knights of Labor. Founded by Uriah S. Stephens, a garment worker who at one time had studied for the ministry, the Knights were a highly secret organization that attracted laboring

men by the thousands. Under Stephens' successor, Terrence V. Powderly—a former mayor of Scranton, Pa.—the membership exploded from 50,000 to 750,000 within a single two-year period . . . so fast did the cards come in, in fact, that the home office in Philadelphia was forced to call a 40-day freeze on all organizing!

The Knights of Labor was a catch-all union that welcomed everyone to its ranks; it had almost no council structure and it completely ignored the idea of "craft unionism." Although it favored blacklists and boycotts over strikes to settle disputes, its greatest membership gains were made as one group after another stopped work on various railroads. The Order had one major flaw, however, and it proved fatal—very few of its agreements were covered by written contracts! So as soon as the union turned its back, the companies reneged on their promises. Disillusioned, members abandoned the organization in droves, the final blow coming in 1886 when a Knight became involved in the Haymarket Riot in Chicago.

Later that same year, in Columbus, Ohio, two cigarmakers and a carpenter—all immigrants and all former Knights of Labor—launched what was to become the American Federation of Labor. The cigar men were Sam Gompers and Adolph Strasser, and the carpenter was Peter McGuire who just four years earlier had organized the first Labor Day parade in New York.

Gompers, the prime mover, was a short, stocky man with an unruly mop of black hair and a great talent for booming speeches. McGuire, too, had an Irish flair for flamboyant oratory, and with Strasser's practical backing, this trio could not be stopped. They steered clear of politics and, in contrast to the Knights, they went all out to organize workers by crafts. These autonomous groups, often built along ethnic lines of Germans, Irish, Swedes, and Italians, protected their own skills and also strengthened the Federation.

Yes, the House of Labor was at last getting itself together—a fact recognized in 1884 when the government established a special Bureau to handle workingmen's affairs. Eventually, the Bureau would become a Department, but not until another 19 years of struggle had passed.

20th Century Begins—Management Strikes Back

IF OUR NIGHTLY TV news shows carried anything like the labor-management riots that scarred the early 1900's they would be banned from the air. Too much violence we'd say. It's slanted toward labor . . . or it's slanted toward management. We just don't believe it! Then we'd switch channels to something like "All in the Family" or better yet, "Love, American Style."

Well, these things did happen and you'd better believe it. Bloody though they may be, they are a very real part of labor's history. We should remember, too, that we owe a tremendous debt to those who have gone before us—working people who were ready to die for the things *they* believed in: self respect, a decent wage, an end to 12-hour shifts six days a week, an end to child labor, and a great deal more attention paid to safety on the job.

Actually, there was only one short period of labor peace during the 20-year "war" tabulated below. This was in 1917-18 when employers and employees closed ranks in patriotic support for our boys over there in World War I. Even then, the pot continued to boil when the International Workers of the World (the notorious IWW's who were sometimes called Wobblies) refused to support the war effort and went on their own radical way toward what they hoped would become "one big union."

Rising Up Angry in the Early 1900's

1902—300,000 strike Pa. coal mines
1909—20,000 strike NYC garment shops
1910—10 die in L.A. 'Times' bombing
1911—154 die in NYC sweatshop fire
1913—copper miners strike, Michigan
1913—33 coal miners die, Cripple Creek, Colo.
1914—46 die, Ludlow, Colo., coal mine massacre
1915—refinery strike, Bayonne, N.J.
1916—10 die in S. F. parade bombing
1919—Seattle hit by city-wide strike
1919—Boston police strike
1919—Eddie Cantor leads actors' strike
1919—300,000 steel workers strike
1922—Coal strikes, Pa. and W.Va.

But getting back to the mainstream, what caused the 20-year upheaval among working people in all parts of the country and in every industry? There were two primary reasons for this: first, they now had official status in Washington through the Dept. of Labor, established in 1913; and second, unions had ceased fighting each other and had come together under the banner of the American Federation of Labor.

At long last, workers were fed up with exploitation and they struck back with every weapon at their command. Boycotts, walkouts, strikes, gaudy parades, mass demonstrations, loud speeches, and blatant, hostile posters kept union members at fever pitch. And woe to any "rat" or "scab" who stood in their way!

(A rat, we should explain, was a union member who crossed picket lines. And the best definition of a scab, any person who accepts work in a struck plant, is attributed to the famous novelist, Jack London, who wrote: "*After God finished the rattlesnake, the toad, and the vampire, He had some awful substance left with which He made the scab. A scab is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water-logged brain, and a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumor of rotten principles. No man has a right to scab as long as there is a pool of water to drown his carcass, or a rope long enough to hang his body. Judas Iscariot was a gentleman compared with a scab. The modern strike-breaker is a traitor to his God, his country, his family, his class, and most of all, to himself.*")

Stimulated by such emotion-charged language, it's no wonder that workers marched against one and all: plant guards, the state militia, city police, and even the National Guard. Nor was London the only popular writer to leap into the fray. Upton Sinclair's book, "The Jungle," spoke out in no uncertain terms about horrible conditions in Chicago's sprawling stockyards. Besides exposing the plight of immigrant workers, his vivid description of meat processing led to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. He told, for instance, how poisoned rats were shoveled into meat grinders, how filth scraped from the floor was sold as potted ham, and how government inspectors were bribed to pass tubercular cattle.

All of this, of course, eventually reached Washington where it had dramatic impact, particularly during Wilson's administration from 1913 to 1921. Among other advances in the field of labor during these eight years were the establishment of a Children's Bureau, an eight-hour day on the railroads, the U.S. Employment Service, and the welcoming of union leaders to policy-making bodies.

Then came the Roaring Twenties and although these may have been gay, happy-go-lucky years on the surface, they were a sorry time for workingmen and women. Over in Russia the Bolsheviks had just disposed of the Tzar and all his family, and the fear of communism swept like wildfire across the United States. Labor uprisings were said to be "Red inspired," and instead of belonging to unions—which were put down as obsolete—employees were told they should cooperate with management under something called "The American Plan."

There were several catches to this scheme, however, the most disgusting being the Yellow Dog contract that job applicants were forced to sign, stating they would never join a union. Biased judges even turned to the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to ban the closed shop on the grounds it was a union monopoly and therefore in restraint of trade!

So labor had little to be happy about during the 1920's, except maybe the Railway Labor Act (1926) which called for collective bargaining and was later extended to the air line industry. In 1929, as faces grew longer and skirts got shorter, the country was recklessly moving toward another major crisis, the Great Depression.



CHILD LABOR in canneries (above) and many other industries was a tragic fact of life in the early 1900's. Although many states bowed to pressure from the AFL, exploitation of waifs like these was not stopped nationwide until the Fair Labor Act of 1938! (A similar bill reached Congress in 1925 but was defeated when the Natl. Assn. of Manufacturers, the American Farm Bureau, and southern textile companies claimed it was a socialistic step that violated states' rights!)



Depression and the 'New Deal'

In 1930 as the country sank deeper and deeper into economic quicksand, everyone hoped prosperity was "just around the corner." Before that corner was reached, however (seven years later), unemployment rose to 15 million, mortgaged homes were being repossessed by the thousands, and Washington was besieged by an army of World War I veterans seeking the bonus they had been promised 10 years earlier.

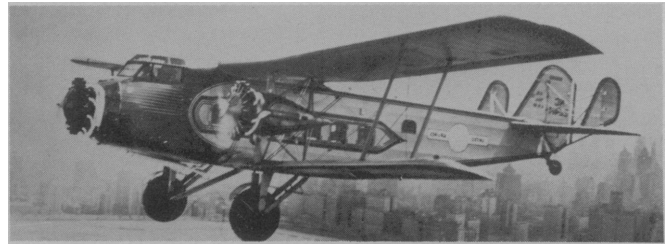
The entire labor-management system, it seemed, had cracked up and nobody knew how to get it running again. People who could spare 25¢ sought escape from hard times at movies like "Golddiggers of Broadway" and "It Happened One Night." Others flocked to watch marathon dancers drag their weary bodies from one end of the ballroom to the other. And many spent their evenings simply working jigsaw puzzles or listening to Eddie Cantor, Fibber McGee, and Guy Lombardo on the radio.

Then in 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democrats brought forth a whirlwind of new legislation, the likes of which had never been seen before. Some of their projects, like the National Recovery Act, were eventually declared unconstitutional. Nevertheless, the New Deal lifted the country from the depths of depression and brought new hope to millions who found employment with the Works Progress Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and so on and on. It goes without saying that this wholesale use of public funds drew the wrath of conservatives who likened it to Socialism. Private panaceas, too, tumbled over one another to attract attention—ideas like the Townsend Plan which would solve all problems merely by pensioning everyone over 60, and Technocracy, a complex scheme for balancing production with consumption.

It was in the midst of conditions like these that the air line pilots, numbering 7,000 in an industry that offered only 1,500 jobs, decided to organize. Captains at that time made only \$250 per month for 125 hours, but they couldn't protest for fear of being replaced by someone else. The first pilot meetings were held in secret, but later—after they had convinced Congress to broaden the Railway Labor Act to include air transport—they surfaced as a fully established union and won their first agreement with American.

Meanwhile, workers in other areas were making great strides—so great, in fact, that in one year management paid more than \$80 million to anti-union spies and stool pigeons who put the finger on union organizers. Sitdown strikes and riots swept the auto and steel industries, and it was during this period that Walter Reuther got his baptism of fire at the Ford plant in Detroit.

In 1935, however, Sen. Robert Wagner of New York introduced the most significant labor law in history, the National Labor Relations Act which gave employees the right to bargain collectively through elected representatives. The result was an almost instant increase in union membership—300,000 added to the United Mine Workers, 200,000 to the Ladies Garment Workers, and a nationwide drive by the AFL in the auto, rubber, steel, and textile mills.



BEFORE THE DC-3 was introduced in the mid-thirties, the air lines soared aloft with planes like this Boeing 80-A. Labor, what little there was of it, was not only unorganized . . . it was disorganized!

But there was a maverick in the AFL, and his name was John L. Lewis. The bushy-browed leader of the mine workers wanted to organize workers on an industry-wide basis rather than by craft, and although AFL President William Green had no quarrel with this, he favored a more democratic approach to the issue than Lewis was willing to accept. The two men came to a parting of the ways in 1937 and Lewis marched out, taking the auto, steel, and textile workers along with him to form the CIO (Committee for Industrial Organization).

During World War II, America's laboring class called a truce (as it had done during World War I). But in 1946, with Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo finally laid to rest, Labor reasserted itself, and this time Congress balked. Over President Truman's veto, it passed the highly restrictive Labor-Management Relations Act (Taft-Hartley), thus setting the stage for a dispute that continues hot and heavy to this very day.



MOST HATED part of the 1947 Taft-Hartley law was Section 14-b which gives states the right to ban union shop contracts and which is still in effect in 19 states. (The restriction, of course, does not affect the Railway Labor Act which, since 1936, has been applied to the air lines.)



"YOU NEW DEALERS, YOU!" blurted Sewell Avery, head of Montgomery Ward, when the Army carried him out of his office in 1944 when he refused to obey wartime labor laws. Like workingmen, though, most businesses cooperated during the national emergency.

New Field of Labor: Air Line Professionals!

Now we've come to the end of our 200-year journey down labor's long, hard road — the period since 1950. For most of us, it shouldn't be too difficult to recall the events of the past 20 years because, as Walter Cronkite used to say on TV every afternoon, "We were there!"

The Fifties, if memory serves me right, weren't quite so nifty as nostalgia would have us believe. Sure, we had Elvis Presley and his "Hound Dawg," we had hordes of bobby soxers, and all the boys wore classy d.a. haircuts. But don't forget, we also had the Korean war with 53,000 American deaths . . . and this was a time when the "House of Labor" was shot through with corruption.

Rigged elections, mishandling of union funds, and kickbacks to top officers gave labor a very bad image, indeed. All of this was paraded before the public during Congressional hearings, and as a result Teamster President Dave Beck landed in jail, to be followed a few years later by his successor, Jimmy Hoffa.

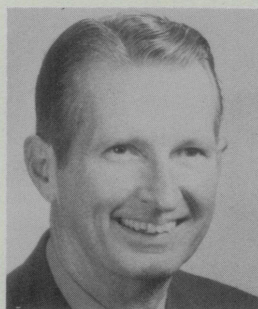
But the housecleaning had its good side, too — at least for responsible organizations. Out of the turmoil came the 1959 Reporting and Disclosure Act requiring both labor and management to give a full accounting of their activities. Another definite plus for railroad and airline employees during this period was an amendment to the Railway Labor Act permitting the union shop agreements which are so essential to the excellent job security we in ALEA have today.

The union shop rules apply to other industries, as well, but their employees are stymied by the Taft-Hartley law which gives individual states the final say on organizing within their own borders. Today, no less than 19 states have these "Right to Work" rules which, in my opinion, take workers back to the industrial jungle where it's every man for himself, instead of reaching agreement through sensible, civilized bargaining. A better term might be "Right to Shirk," because employees are allowed to turn their backs on fellow members of the work force. They expect to sit down at labor's table and eat, but they refuse to cook or do the dishes!

In November, 1952, death came to the presidents of the two most powerful labor organizations in the country — the American Federation of Labor (William Green), and the Committee for Industrial Organization (Phillip Murray). Taking over in the AFL was vigorous, determined George Meany, and moving up in the CIO was the man who had just won what amounted to a guaranteed annual wage for auto workers, Walter Reuther. Within three short years the two groups merged, healing differences that had kept them apart for 18 years.

The year 1952 has a special significance for ALEA, too — in fact, that's when we

LABOR'S TRIBUTE. In photo taken shortly after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, George Meany presents his widow and the President's brother Attorney General Robert Kennedy, with an AFL-CIO pledge to work for the kind of world envisioned in New Frontier policies. Although foreign affairs plagued both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, their domestic programs were conducted in a climate highly favorable to labor.



Victor J. Herbert
President, ALEA



John J. O'Donnell
President, ALPA

were born! The Air Line Pilots Assn. was well on its way by then, and President Dave Behncke chose two of his staff members, Victor J. Herbert and William A. Schneider, to extend air line professionalism to the thousands of agents and other white collar employees who, at that time, were definitely "second class citizens" within the industry. The response was so great, says President Herbert, that by 1960 we had earned our own ALPA charter and were ready to embark on our own program — that of representing clerical office, fleet and passenger service employees exclusively. Today we hold contracts for those people on more air lines than any other union in the country. And if I may be permitted to slip in a word edgewise for women's lib, 37 percent of our total membership is female!

Of course, with 60,000 agents and office personnel on nine air lines still unorganized, ALEA is not about to slow down. As a matter of fact, because of our know-how, the AFL-CIO's new organizing chief, Alan Kistler, is looking to us for leadership in the vast field of white collar employment. Total union membership in this country and Canada, incidentally, has now reached 23 million; of 189 unions, 126

are in the AFL-CIO.

But getting back to history, labor made many important gains during the 1960's, especially in social areas. Among the highlights were the Civil Rights Act of 1964,

bans on age and sex discrimination, improvements in Social Security, and a Manpower/Training Act to offset layoffs due to automation.

So now, after a trip that began with the American Revolution, we reach the swinging Seventies . . . or maybe I should have said streaking! But even after two centuries, labor still fights for freedom. This is not freedom from ruthless bosses, most of whom have long disappeared from the scene. But it is freedom, nonetheless — freedom to hold one's head high and to be an individual in a world ruled by vast corporations and, yes, by unions whose only interest is size. On the other hand, our problems are not all that different from those of the colonial craftsman. He soon learned that in this country, at least, he couldn't make it on his own. His solution was the same as ours: to work together, responsibly.

Come to think about it, isn't that what unionism is all about?



Air Line Employees Association, International

(Affiliated with the Air Line Pilots Association, AFL-CIO)