

Labor movement - U.S.

(1949) ✓

*Labor
Through
the
Years:*

By

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subtitled

The story of the Laborers' Union
advance from the time of Samuel
Gompers to the present day lead-
ership of Joseph V. Moreschi and
William Green.

CO-OPERATIVE

**"THE RIGHTS LABOR HAS
WON, LABOR MUST
FIGHT TO PROTECT"**

. . . that was the motto of

FLOYD B. OLSON

Governor of the State of Minnesota



It was his hope that the organized
worker would always remember
to vote for the welfare of
the common man.



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INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK is published primarily for the purpose of giving our union members a handbook of information regarding the history, aims and aspirations of organized labor, and particularly the contribution of the Construction Workers' Unions to the welfare of the common man.

Labor built America. The toil of working men converted the vast expanse of wilderness into a nation of skyscrapers, factories and prosperous farm lands. They labored hard and skillfully, as only free men can. They built a free nation.

America has always worn overalls. But workers cannot wear them with dignity unless they are organized. Selfish interests always exploit labor. They measure human sweat in terms of dollars and cents.

It is futile to fight back singlehandedly. The unions have had and still have stormy seas to travel. The bitter attacks and misrepresentations of reactionary forces will continue to assail them.

In the early 1930's construction workers were paid as low as 20 cents per hour. Since that time there has been great activity in the organization and development of unions covering the various construction crafts. Thousands upon thousands of new members do not know from personal experience what it is to work under the conditions that existed prior to the New Deal which came during the years when our President was Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Lest we grow slack in our efforts to keep what we have, and to continue to strive for better things, it is necessary to review the past, and to plan for the future.

The unions have grown up—they are here to stay. Now that we have established for ourselves a permanent place in industry, we must turn our

attention to politics in order that our industrial gains are not lost through adverse political developments.

Union members must assume full civic responsibility. They must register and vote, and encourage their families and friends to do the same.

Good men, friendly to the cause of the common man, must be elected and kept in office. Otherwise the gains we have made in the industrial field may be lost in the political arena.

It is not enough just to join a union. Understand your union, work with it and for it. And, above all, do your duty as a responsible citizen in your community. Join with others in those liberal political movements that seek to preserve and advance the common good.

Register, and vote, and encourage others to do likewise!

To put the whole matter in a word, people join the American Federation of Labor because they are convinced that organized labor believes in and is fighting for the things in which they believe. And because they know that in union there is strength.

Every day we read in the papers about "labor." We hear commentators talk on the radio about "labor." In Washington, Senators and Congressmen always talk about "labor." Some of the newspapers, radio commentators and congressmen say that labor is ruining the country. Others state that unions have been a great benefit to our land and that a strong labor movement is essential to our democracy. They are quick to remind you that the first organizations Hitler and Mussolini destroyed when they came into power were the labor unions.

Since there is so much public discussion and disagreement about us, we trade union members ought to know a little more about ourselves.



EARLY AMERICAN LABOR

MANY newspaper publishers are convinced that labor unions and strikes were imported to this country very recently by bearded, bomb-throwing foreigners, but the facts of history tell us that at the time the Revolutionary War was being fought to obtain political freedom and democracy, the first labor unions were being organized to win freedom and democracy on the job.

As industry began developing and expanding the workers realized they had to organize if they wanted to receive a fair share of the wealth they were creating with their skill and their sweat. When they organized they demanded the right to negotiate with the employer about wages and conditions of work.

They soon learned that their strongest weapon was the strike. They also learned quickly that a small percentage of their fellow workers were willing to accept the benefits of the union but were **not willing to support** the union that made

these gains possible. They found that employers tried to break their organizations by setting non-union against union members. And so in the early 1800's we find the workers demanding the "closed shop" where everybody must belong to the union and carry his share of responsibility.

Scattered local unions existed throughout this period but it is not until 1827 that we can say a labor movement began in this country. In that year, for the first time, workers in different trades united to form one central labor organization. This occurred in Philadelphia when local unions of carpenters, bricklayers printers, glaziers and others joined together in the Mechanics Union of Trade Associations.

Following this organization in Philadelphia there developed city-wide unions in New York, Boston and other cities. There were even the beginnings of national unions in the 1830's. This was a prosperous and booming period and unions grew and expanded rapidly.

During boom times labor was usually in a favorable position because workers were in demand. Workers had money to support and strengthen their union. Strikes to increase wages and eliminate grievances have a chance to succeed. Labor soon learned this truth.

The grievances of the workers in these early days were many. Through their unions and political labor parties they demanded the vote—until the 1820's only property owners could vote. The workers wanted free education for their children—only charity schools were available for the poor. They wanted the 10-hour day. They fought against child labor and the sweatshop.

Some of these demands were won and the prospects for more improvements looked promising until the great panic and depression of 1837

suddenly gripped the country. Local unions, city-wide organizations, national unions, all were wiped out as the industrial life of the country completely collapsed. Factories and shops were shut down, men were thrown out of work and it was impossible for the unions to keep going.

It takes a strong union with a devoted membership and a large treasury to outlast a period of hard times. During a depression there are more men than jobs and the union is in a very poor bargaining position. It cannot strike for wage increases because too many hungry, unemployed men are ready to take the place of the strikers. Many union members are unemployed and cannot support the union, and, unless it has large financial reserves, the union is soon bankrupt and crushed.

During this period, many schemes to better the conditions of the workers were proposed by various reformers but none of them succeeded. It wasn't until the 1850's that workers turned again to labor unions to improve their standard of living. At this time the rapid building of railroads, the growth of industry and the discovery of gold in California increased employment and made the climate favorable for union success. During this period several national unions were formed but, again, a depression—this one in 1857—put an end to promising beginnings.

National Labor Union Formed

The Civil War, 1861-1865, had a remarkable effect on industry. New factories were built to supply the fighting armies. Large government contracts were granted to manufacturers of munitions, shoes, clothing and meats.

The growth of transportation and communication and the expansion of markets permitted

products made in different parts of the country to compete with each other. It was obvious to many trade union leaders that scattered, individual local unions were no longer capable of giving workers the protection they needed. For a short time, a single, local organization of workers might be able to get high wages and good conditions. But the workers would soon have to take wage cuts or lose their jobs if they could not organize competing plants in other parts of the country. Only a union organized on a national scale could solve this problem and in the sixties we find the formation of more and more national unions. Among them were the printers, carpenters, molders, machinists, tailors, painters, and others.

There was plenty of work for these unions to do because the conditions of the workers were in great need of improvement.

In order to fight effectively for workers' rights on a national basis, a strong, united federation of all the different labor unions in the country was necessary. After the Civil War several attempts were made to form such an organization.

The first was the National Labor Union formed in 1866. It was a loose federation of labor unions and many types of reform organizations. Although it campaigned for the 8-hour-day it never developed any trade union program as we know it today, and many of the unions soon left this organization. It concentrated on cooperatives and obtaining reforms through political pressure. It drifted completely into politics and died in 1872 largely because of internal disputes and lack of an efficient, well-planned organization.

During the sixties, likewise, another national trade union was formed which was to play an important part in labor history. This was the



Knights of Labor, organized in 1869 by a group of Philadelphia tailors.

Because they feared the newly formed national employers' associations and were afraid of being black-listed and discriminated against, the members of the Knights of Labor met secretly in club rooms and workers' homes. Each local union was called an assembly and could include farmers, shopkeepers, professionals and others, besides workers of mixed trades.

The Knights were slow to develop in strength and membership because of the depression of 1873 and because they lacked strong and able leadership. However, with the return of some degree of prosperity in the late seventies, the Knights of Labor reorganized itself, ceased to be a secret organization and became more aggressive.

In 1880 and the years following, the tremendous industrial expansion of steel, coal and the railroads brought boom times to the country and also brought thousands of workers into the Knights of Labor. Although the leaders of the Knights did not regard the strike as labor's strongest weapon, and preferred to get benefits for the workers through nation-wide political reform, they soon found themselves leading some of the biggest strikes the country had yet seen. The membership and prestige of the Knights increased enormously when it won several sensational

strikes fighting against the Union Pacific Railroad and the Gould railroad system.

This was a period of bitter warfare between organized employers and workers. Industries were developing rapidly, heavy and automatic machinery was being introduced, profits were climbing, giant corporations were being formed. In many of the battles between the unions and the employers, the government took the side of the employers. The excuse was that the government had to protect private property and preserve law and order. Many times this "protection" meant using armed soldiers and National Guardsmen as strike breakers.

In 1886, in the midst of this exciting period, the Knights of Labor reached the height of its power and influence with a membership of 700,000. But in that same year it began to decline swiftly and by 1893 it had only 70,000 members left. What were the reasons for the sudden collapse of the first labor organization in American history that had been able to unite large sections of the working population; the first organization to bring to the attention of the government and the general public, on a nation-wide scale, the problems and conditions of the workingmen and women of this country?

There were several reasons. Two disastrous defeats in strikes against the southwestern railroads and the Chicago meat-packing industry weakened its influence and caused it to lose many members. The mixed membership of the Knights of Labor which included many other groups besides workers tended to weaken it, causing much confusion, disagreement in policies and lack of efficiency. Poor leadership also helped to quicken the Knights' downfall.

Another weakening influence was the famous Haymarket Riot of 1886 which caused such bitter feeling against labor that it injured the entire labor movement for many years thereafter.

The riot took place in 1886 in Chicago at the McCormick Reaper Works. The McCormick workers had been locked out when they struck for the 8-hour day in support of the nation-wide 8-hour day drive started by the labor movement. During the strike a fight developed between the police and the workers in which four strikers were killed and many others wounded. The following day a protest meeting was held in Haymarket Square. The police ordered the meeting to break up and as the crowd scattered a bomb was thrown and a policeman was killed. The police fired into the crowd and several workers fell dead.

The hysteria which followed was felt around the world. Leaders of the Chicago labor movement were arrested and convicted of the murder of the policeman.

Governor John P. Altgeld of Illinois, a great fighter for human rights, declared that no real proof was given at the trial as to who threw the bomb; and to this day many people are convinced he was right. But the explosion was used by the reactionaries of those days to smash the rights of labor and to put a temporary end to the movement for the 8-hour day.

The American Federation of Labor

All of the reasons listed—defeat in important strikes, mixed membership, poor leadership, the Haymarket Riot—helped to destroy the Knights of Labor.

But we have not yet mentioned what some consider the most important reason, the rise of a

rival labor organization which seemed to fit the needs of the times better than did the Knights.

You must remember that labor organizations which rose and fell during these years, years of expanding capitalism, were much confused in their philosophy and in their ideas of how to improve their working and living conditions.

Some believed in workers' cooperatives. Some wanted the abolition of the wage system. Others believed in forming political parties. Some wanted land reforms. Others were in favor of strictly trade union activity.

This new organization of workers, the American Federation of Labor, first organized in 1881 and reorganized in 1886, was the first labor organization to survive permanently the heavy attacks of the open shop employers and the anti-labor government. It was even able to hold together through the toughest depressions, something no other labor organization before it had been able to do. The Knights of Labor soon disappeared and the AFL became the most important labor organization in America.

Under the leadership of its president, Samuel Gompers, the AFL concentrated its chief efforts on the organization of the skilled workers into national unions and in securing for them, through collective bargaining and strikes, the economic improvements that the workers needed. Although it emphasized what became known as "pure and simple trade unionism," it also was active in Washington and in the state capitals, fighting for laws that would help workers.

The AFL profited from the very beginning from the experience of the Knights of Labor. Its leadership recognized that only a union with dues high enough to build a strong "war chest" could successfully survive depressions, attacks by well-

financed employers' associations, and the national and state governments which seemed to be under the control of powerful big business and anti-labor groups. "War chest" was the only way to describe the large treasuries that the unions tried to build because labor had to battle desperately for any and all job improvements it tried to get.

Two Defeats

In the steel industry, for example, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, AFL, called a strike at Homestead, Pa., in June, 1892, to fight a wage cut. The company declared that it would not recognize the union. In the clashes that followed between the workers and the imported, armed, company guards acting as strike-breakers, both strikers and guards were killed and many were wounded. As had happened, so often in the past, the State Militia was called in to "establish peace" and the workers were defeated.

Another great strike was fought two years later by the American Railway Union, an independent organization led by Eugene Victor Debs. A strike was called in an effort to get back a wage cut which the Pullman Company had forced upon the workers. No sooner was the strike called than the Federal Government ordered out troops to protect the property of the Pullman Company. Perhaps that was the real reason for bringing in troops but the result was that the strike was broken and the union soon fell apart.

Victories

During this period there were many successful strikes which helped to establish permanent unions in many industries. One of the most spec-

tacular of these was the 1902 strike organized by the United Mine Workers under the skillful leadership of John Mitchell. This strike for union recognition, the 9-hour day and other job improvements, lasted five and a half months and involved more than 100,000 miners. This victory was important because it ended in a union contract with the entire anthracite coal industry.

The building trade unions, including carpenters, bricklayers, laborers, painters, electrical workers and others, also developed strong organizations in the large cities. In this industry the main bargaining unit for the workers became the Building Trades Council made up of representatives of all building unions in a city.

During this period of the 1900's and the years following, we even find strong unions being built in the men and women's clothing industries, which were at the time the worst sweatshops in the United States. A series of dramatic strikes in 1909 and 1910 established strong unions which improved the conditions of the workers tremendously. The International Ladies' Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (men's clothing) developed into two of the most outstanding trade unions in this country.

AFL Reorganized

When the AFL was reorganized in 1886, the national and international unions which made it up were quite independent. Each union made its own rules, elected its own officers and carried on its policies generally with little or no interference from the national AFL officers or executive council. The same situation exists today. Thus you and your cousin may both be in the AFL but if you are in two different national unions, your dues, union rules and the way your union is run will

probably be different. Even in the same national union two locals may be run in different ways. This depends on the kind of local leadership, the amount of active participation by rank and file union members, the kind of relations existing between the employer and the local and many other reasons. A similar relationship exists among the unions in the CIO.

In each city where it has several local unions, the AFL forms a Central Labor Union which includes representatives of all the unions in the city and acts as a coordinating agency. In each state the AFL also has a State Federation of Labor which represents the AFL unions in the state capitals and which concerns itself primarily with labor legislation.

Policies of the AFL

The unions in the AFL concentrated on getting benefits for the workers by winning signed contracts or agreements from employers. The contract stated the wage rates and job conditions for each type of job. It recognized the union as the "bargaining agent" for the workers.

No longer could the boss fire you just because he did not like you. The contract said no one could be fired without a good reason. You had job **security**.

If business was slow the boss or foreman could not lay off anybody he wanted and keep his friends and relatives working. The contract called for **seniority**—no favoritism. Under the seniority rule, men with the longest service were the last to be laid off and the first to be rehired. In many contracts seniority also applied to promotions and shift-preference.

If you had a complaint about sanitary conditions, promotion, discrimination, work-load, or

any of the hundreds of problems that come up in a shop or factory, you did not have to quit your job. The contract provided **grievance procedure**. This meant your union representative, the shop steward, shop chairman or grievance committee, took up the problem with your foreman or supervisor. If they couldn't settle it, the union business agent and top management tried to reach an agreement. If there was still no settlement, the dispute could be taken to arbitration where a neutral outsider made the final decision.

Industrial Democracy

A union contract meant higher wages and better working conditions. But perhaps more important was the new feeling of dignity and freedom that unionism brought with it. College professors called this new freedom "industrial democracy." Maybe workers didn't know what these fancy words meant, but they knew they could not be pushed around anymore like so many bales of hay. Now they could say and do something about the conditions under which they worked. They could hold their heads high like human beings. They were free men inside the shop as well as in their own homes.

In the building trades and the printing, mining and clothing industries, the unions developed control of the job to a very high degree. As one labor expert remarked, "The boss owned the business, but the union—the workers—owned the job." These unions were successful in obtaining contracts covering an industry in an entire city or in a large section of the country. This kind of industry-wide contract made it possible to improve wages and conditions without forcing union employers out of business because of low-wage, sweatshop competition.



The AFL was also able to improve job conditions a great deal by getting the states to pass labor laws helpful to workers. During the years before the first World War the AFL state federations of labor joined with other groups in persuading many state legislatures to pass laws on workmen's compensation, child labor, health and safety protection for factory workers, the shorter work week and special protection for women workers.

In the states where workers were well organized, fairly good labor laws were obtained. In other states the laws were not so good. However, in all states, the organized labor movement continued to fight for the improvement of all labor legislation.

Industrial Workers Union Formed

Although there were unions in the AFL in the early part of the century that organized the unskilled and semi-skilled workers—among them the United Mine Workers, organized on an industrial basis—most of the unions brought within

their ranks only skilled craftsmen. Some of the union leaders believed it was impossible to organize the unskilled and the semi-skilled, many of whom were recent immigrants who knew little about American ways and nothing about unions.

In 1905 there was formed the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a radical labor organization which aimed to organize these unskilled and semi-skilled workers into industrial unions. Many of these unskilled workers, ignored by the AFL, welcomed the opportunity the IWW gave them to improve their miserable conditions. When the rebellious leaders in the labor movement devoted their energies to the IWW, progressive forces in the AFL suffered a loss.

The IWW was very active among western miners, lumbermen, textile workers, seamen and traveling agricultural laborers (migratory workers). It organized many sensational and dramatic strikes. Most famous was the Lawrence, Mass. textile strike of 1912, when 20,000 workers walked out against a wage-cut. Before the wage-cut the workers were averaging less than \$9 a week for a 56 hour work-week.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the IWW was its vigorous fight for free speech and the right to express its opinions. The IWW died soon after the first World War, due, in part, to its inability to build unions on a permanent basis and in part to the strong opposition of the government to its radical policies. The unskilled workers were not to be organized successfully, on a permanent basis, until the CIO came along in 1935.

World War I

It is a common saying that wars quicken the march of history. The relations between the government and labor during the first World War

seemed to prove this saying. For it was in this war, as a result of the demand for increased war production, that the government first recognized the right of the worker to join a trade union. This occurred when President Wilson—in setting up the War Labor Board of World War I—declared that “the right of workers to organize in trade unions and bargain collectively” was not to be interfered with.

This new government policy, together with the heavy demand for workers caused by the war, resulted in a great improvement of labor's bargaining position. A tremendous increase in trade union membership followed. Starting with two million members in 1914, the AFL doubled its membership to four million by 1920. Including the million or more members in the Railroad Brotherhoods and other independent unions, the organized workers reached the record total of five million union members in 1920.

This increase in membership was accompanied in some of the major industries by the establishment of labor-management committees. Many were optimistic enough to believe that the day of industrial democracy was steadily approaching.

But the employers' associations had different ideas. They decided that now was the time to cut wages and smash unionism and collective bargaining.

Then soon began one of the worst “open-shop” campaigns American labor ever had to face. This open-shop drive had a very nice, patriotic name. It was called the “American Plan” and it was supposed to wipe out the “un-American” closed shop. However, the history books tell us that what the employers really had in mind was the complete destruction of unionism. And they spared neither money nor effort to do this job.

Unions lost many of the strikes which they called in a desperate effort to hold on to what they had gained during the war. Many unions went down under the avalanche of blows delivered by hundreds of open-shop employer associations. The Seamen's Union, the Meatpackers' Union, various building trades unions, were completely crushed when they refused to take wage-cuts. Unsuccessful strikes involving more than a million railway workers, textile workers and miners greatly weakened these unions for many years to come.

Unions Fight to Survive

However, unions that were solidly organized and had large financial reserves were able to weather this open-shop storm. These unions included the Amalgamated Clothing Workers which defeated a wage cut when they survived a six-month strike of 65,000 workers. A \$1,000,000 defense fund helped save the union. In the printing industry the employer associations tried to increase the hours from 44 to 48. With the aid of 10 per cent voluntary assessment on their wages, the printing unions were able to smash this attempt to harm their job conditions. During the three year struggle (1921-1924) the printers raised \$17,000,000 for strike relief.

But this attack from employers in the unionized industries was only part of the story of the decline of the labor movement during the 1920's. In the non-union, mass production industries, such as automobiles, rubber, steel and electrical equipment, labor also met a solid wall of opposition. The giant corporations which controlled these industries flatly refused to deal with legitimate trade unions. They used spies, strike breakers and "law and order" committees of citizens to



break up any attempts at unionization. They recruited labor from farms and villages where cash incomes were low, and where unionism was almost unknown, with the idea of using this type of labor to keep unions out of their plants.

Many of these big corporations developed schemes such as profit-sharing, bonuses, pensions, baseball teams, company unions and health programs to help lure the workers away from the trade union movement. Some companies even gave wage increases "to keep the workers happy."

During this period labor was also weakened by the introduction of a great number of labor-saving machines which turned many skilled craftsmen into unskilled machine watchers. Many of the AFL craft union leaders were either too cautious, or too narrow-minded to take the only step that could organize the giant auto, rubber and steel plants which were full of this automatic machinery. That step was the creation of industrial unions—everybody in the plant organized into one union, instead of being split up into 20 craft unions. It was also weakened internally by the boring-from-within tactics of the Communists in the more progressive trade unions, tactics which resulted in a series of disastrous strikes.

The result of all these forces, between 1920 and 1930, was the reduction of trade union membership by more than a million. By 1930 the AFL had only 3 million members and it had lost much of its influence in American life. Then came the depression.

Depression and the New Deal

The collapse of the stock market in 1929, followed by the general financial crisis, stopped the wheels of industry. Millions of workers were thrown out of their jobs. They lost their homes and their life savings. They lost their dignity and their self-respect as they walked the streets looking for jobs which did not exist. Many committed suicide rather than face their poverty stricken families. Some sold apples on street corners. Many who had jobs shared them with the unemployed. Still the number of unemployed increased and by 1932 it was estimated that 16 million men and women were jobless.

During this greatest depression in the history of our country, the Hoover government acted as if it were paralyzed, doing little to eliminate or ease the suffering of millions. Discontent and despair among the masses mounted and on election day in 1932 a majority of the workers voted for a new administration which became known as the New Deal.

Many New Deal leaders were convinced that the depression was caused mainly because workers did not receive enough wages to buy back the goods that they produced. When the unsold goods piled up, factories cut production and men were thrown out of work. These unemployed men could not buy food, clothing, or house furnishings; therefore more factories cut production or closed

down, and more men were thrown out of work. Result—depression.

The New Deal government, led by President Roosevelt, believed it could pull the country out of the depression by increasing the purchasing power of the masses. For this, it needed a strong labor movement which would act as a force to raise wages. It therefore passed laws encouraging to trade unions.

Most important of these laws was the National Labor Relations Act, passed in 1935. This law, known as the Wagner Act, marked a fundamental change in peace-time government policy toward trade unionism. It recognized the right of the worker to collective bargaining. It made company unions illegal. It stated that discrimination against union members or interference with unionism was against the law. It called for a National Labor Relations Board to hold elections in order to decide what union, if any, represented the majority of the workers in a plant.

The New Deal government also set up agencies to give workers a chance to earn some money, among them the Works Project Administration (WPA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and others. Thousands of doctors, dentists, lawyers and other professional men also found themselves working under WPA in order to exist. Laws were passed providing old age pensions, unemployment insurance, minimum wages and maximum hours. A new philosophy was born, the government must assume a responsibility for the welfare of its people; it must help them to help themselves.

With this kind of government encouragement, workers joined unions in great numbers. But the newer mass production industries—rubber, steel,

auto, electrical and radio equipment—remained unorganized.

The AFL conventions of 1934 and 1935 voted to unionize these industries. However, many leaders in the AFL insisted that the new union members in a plant be divided up among many craft unions. They did not seem to understand that these giant industries, with their mile-long factories, could not be organized effectively along craft lines.

Progressive unions in the AFL recalled the attempt of twenty-four separate craft unions to organize the mighty steel industry in 1919. It ended in miserable failure.

They declared that twenty-four separate craft unions could not organize the workers in one plant successfully, nor could twenty-four unions bargain successfully with one powerful employer. They wanted one local union for one plant, one national union for one industry.

Labor Movement Gains

Beginning in 1935, the AFL was not sleeping. It began a nationwide organizing drive, when the CIO was first formed, and gained thousands of new members. Craft unions like the machinists and the electrical workers organized many plants on an industrial basis in order, among other things, to compete effectively with CIO unions in NLRB elections. By 1945 the AFL had close to seven million workers in its ranks. Labor unions had more members than ever before but there still were 25 million unorganized workers in 1945.

For the great numbers of newly organized workers, progressive unions carried on educational programs to acquaint them with the labor movement. Classes were conducted in labor problems, in duties of a shop steward, economics, public

speaking and many other subjects. Unions organized cultural and recreational activities. Many unions built up insurance and other benefit funds. Many locals, for the first time, became active and progressive forces in the community.

World War II and Labor

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked us at Pearl Harbor, and we were soon in the middle of the greatest war in our history. The CIO, AFL and the Railroad Brotherhoods gave up Labor's strongest weapon—the strike—so that production for the war against fascism could go on without interruption.

Production was tremendous. Undreamed of quantities of planes, tanks, ships, guns, ammunition and other war materials rolled off the production lines into the hands of our 11 million fighting men. Labor migrated to crowded war centers. Hours were increased to forty-eight, fifty-four, and sixty per week. Women and older men entered industry.

The War Production Board and other government agencies planned for war production on a national scale. The Office of Price Administration set ceilings on prices and rationed food, gasoline and other items. The War Manpower Commission established controls over manpower. Some labor-haters and others were anxious to draft labor to work for the profit of private employers. But labor leaders pointed out that manpower difficulties could be solved by raising substandard wages, by eliminating discrimination in employment because of race, creed or color and by preventing the hoarding of labor.

Labor and Political Action

Although government laws and regulations had a great effect on labor during the war, this same situation existed, on a smaller scale of course, before the war. Laws on wages, hours, housing, social security and labor relations had become increasingly important since the New Deal. Experts agreed that after the war and particularly during the reconversion period the government would continue to play an active part in the nation's economy. Many unions realized they had to become more active politically if they were to give their members proper protection and representation.

During the war-time presidential election of 1944 the CIO formed the Political Action Committee which was very active in the campaign to elect President Roosevelt and a progressive Congress. Although the national AFL under its president, William Green, continued its traditional policy of non-partisanship, many AFL local and national unions also participated in the political campaign.

American Federation of Labor unions have been, by tradition, non-political in their activities for many years. That does not mean, though, that members of these unions have not exercised their political rights as American citizens.

Like other groups of citizens who have common economic and political problems, AFL members have united their support behind men who have been fair in their actions on questions concerning labor.

Members of AFL unions don't expect public officials to be one-sided in their views. They want these officials to set up and administer regulations that will give everyone the same chance to work



out his own problems, attain his own goal and live in the best American traditions.

For some years past, the trend has been in that direction, to help the common people live better, to help the big groups of wage earners acquire better buying power.

Suddenly, and apparently at the demand of a few powerful industrial giants, this trend was halted. Such legislation as the national Taft-Hartley act and the anti-secondary boycott and union suability bills became law over the protests of spokesmen for the common people who earn their living through wages.

Because of this political development, the economic outlook of some three-fourths of the population, union and non-union alike, has been darkened. The buying power of the common people will diminish because these laws will hamper their efforts to improve their conditions. The effect will be felt by farmers and merchants whose markets are located among the wage earners.

The obvious answer, of course, is to protect the common people's economic situation through political action—removal from office of public officials who have failed to see what lies ahead and

the election of persons who do understand the needs of the people and who will do something about it.

We must endorse candidates for public office who will pledge themselves to work for the benefit of all people—wage earners, farmers, small merchants—and to do all in our power to place them in office.

This is not a selfish act. It is an effort to save for all people who believe in the American system of free enterprise the rights and privileges that go with American citizenship. It is an effort to keep the wage earners, farmers and merchants on the path to prosperity and real American living.

If you are a non-union wage earner, you can help by becoming a member of the AFL union that represents your job.

If you are now a member of an AFL union, you can help by taking an active part in political campaigns.

If you are a farmer or merchant, you can help by expressing your understanding that without well paid wage earners, the market for your products will go the way of the depression markets, and that your happiness and prosperity are bound up in those of the wage earners.

America was developed by and for the common people. Let us keep it that way.

Help Yourself

You've heard a lot about labor unions lately. That's quite natural. Labor unions are out in front, doing things for the working people that they've dreamed of for years. Through unions such as the American Federation of Labor, working people have learned how to help themselves.

A lot you've heard has been critical of unions. That labor unions, for instance, are "too powerful." Whoever may be saying that, it isn't the rank and file of union folks. They know the facts.

What about this thing of unions being "too powerful?" How are they too "powerful?" What do they do with that power? Let's see.

Better Wages

Unions have used their power to help working people increase their wages. People want comforts and improved living. That costs money, and the only money working people have is their wages. Without enough wages, they can't buy steaks, shoes, a refrigerator or a dress.

In their unions, the working people bring out the facts, and together they go after wage increases that get them the things they want.

Of course, there's the old cry that high wages mean high prices.

But which is better: low wages and a low living standard or high wages, high prices and a high living standard? Which do you want?

Shorter Hours

The eight-hour day and 40-hour week we know has come to us because of the fight made by unions. Employers never voluntarily cut the work day. It took the brave fight of working people out to help themselves through their unions to reduce the work day from 14 hours to the eight hours we have today. Unions then were small and not so "powerful," but they kept plugging and fighting unwilling employers all the way. Today, wage earners' families can enjoy themselves together because of this union success.

Overtime Pay

It's not so long ago that employers kept employees on the job many hours after the regular work day was over. Sometimes they'd get 25 cents for supper money. but no extra pay for the extra hours.

These wage earners often found themselves working day and night while their neighbors were without jobs. This spectacle, and the weariness they felt from the long hours were factors in forming unions.

As they established the shorter work day, the unions insisted on extra pay for over time work—"time and a half." It had the desired effect—jobs for their neighbors and less demand for night work.

Today, wage earners can extend their paychecks now and then when overtime work is essential. It all helps pay those bills.

Looks to the AFL

There is an American Federation of Labor Union for every recognized craft and occupation.

Strong, well organized and efficiently operated unions are ready to serve you whether you are employed in factory, mill, shop, school, office, hospital, institution or home.

You should not delay becoming a member of the union that covers your occupation.

Seniority Rights

Before the day of "powerful" unions, the boss would look over his crew and decide that John Smith was getting too old. John might still be a good workman, but the boss wanted younger men. John would soon find a pink slip in his pay envelope.

The boss's friends and relatives who worked for him got the good jobs whether they were competent or not. Employees with long service, who had learned the ways of the industry had little chance at promotions.

Then, in slack times when lay-offs were necessary, the boss would often dismiss employees regardless of the services they had given him. Newcomers drawing lower pay would be kept on.

These practices resulted in union demands for seniority rights to protect faithful employees who gave good service. Seniority rights today are standard provisions of union contracts.

Vacations With Pay

Years ago, when an employee wanted to go fishing or take a trip he had to do it on his own time, often with the prospects of losing his job for taking time off.

Christmas, New Years, July 4, Labor Day, Thanksgiving—all supposedly days for celebration—were simply payless days for employees then. Many a wage earner finding it hard to make ends meet would rather have worked those days than be home to enjoy himself with his family.

Vacations with full pay are becoming the regular thing today. Many AFL unions have vacation clauses in their contracts, and a drive is on to make the vacation a universal thing. AFL unions also are driving ahead to get full pay for holidays, too.

Protective Laws

Another way in which "powerful" unions have used their power is to get laws on the statute books to protect distressed wage earners. Here are some:

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION: Employers are required by law to carry insurance that will give their employees some income if they are injured on the job or get an occupational disease. It hasn't always been like that. Before the unions went to bat on this problem in the state legislature, an injured or occupationally sick employee had to take care of himself or be taken care of by neighbors or charity. Often he couldn't afford medical and hospital care and died.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION: Not many years ago a laid off employee had to shift for himself and possibly starve hunting a new job. Today, most employees receive weekly unemployment compensation until they get a job in their own occupation again. Not all employees are covered yet, but unions are fighting to extend the coverage so that no wage earner and his family need go hungry if his employer lays him off.

SAFETY INSPECTION: Many a wage earner in years gone by has been injured or killed in industrial accidents that could have been prevented. There were no protective devices around hazardous machinery, and other conditions often claimed an eye, an arm or a life.

Unions used their power to convince legislators that such conditions should not exist, that no employer's activities were so worthwhile that he could gamble with the lives of his employees.

Industrial safety is now a watchword, with strict laws furnishing protection for working people against the hazards of their occupations.

These are only some of the things that have been accomplished through union action. Don't you think they're worth while? Even if you are not a union member, you benefit from them as much

as the union folks who carried on the fight and paid the bills. Organized labor is proud of what it has done for all the people.

The Truth About Union Leaders

Every day you read and hear about what some union leader is doing. You get the impression he runs the union all by himself and cracks the whip to make his members jump. It seems that he can call a strike, or call it off; he decides the pay scales and all of that. The union members say nothing.

That just isn't true.

The American Federation of Labor unions, from the smallest local to the largest international, are run by the rank and file.

No one becomes a leader unless he is elected by majority vote.

No leader can go any farther than his local wants him to. Whatever he has to say is something the membership has approved by majority vote.

Leaders, of course, negotiate union contracts with employers. AFL contracts are usually made for a year and then are opened up for new terms through agreement between the union and the employer.

AFL Unions Are Democratic

If the members feel their wages should be raised, that work days should be shorter, or that vacations, sick leave, holiday and other arrangements should be improved, they bring it up at the meetings long before the contract expires.

They decide what they want in the new contract. They tell their officers what to seek from

the employers. If employers won't agree to the new terms, the officers report back to the union for discussion. The members decide what action shall follow—further negotiations, a strike or what is to come next. Whatever step is to be taken, the union members all have a chance to vote on it. Usually, unions will try to avoid a strike and arrive at a satisfactory settlement.

This is one of the outstanding things about AFL unions. It is real democracy, the kind that we know and fight for in the United States. It is the kind of unionism of which everyone can be proud because it gives everyone an equal voice in decisions, with the majority ruling. It is the most effective way in which wage earners can help themselves.

If you are not now a union member, and decide to become one, you will find that your voice is as important as the next man's. If you have leadership ability, you'll find your fellow members anxious to entrust you with responsibility.

Dues and What Happens to Them

There's a lot of poppycock spread about union dues, such as exorbitant levies for membership, big treasuries, staggering salaries for leaders, etc.

Yes, there are some highly paid union officers. They are capable men so well thought of in their unions that the members vote good salaries in appreciation of their services. The officers don't fix the salaries—the members do it. If they don't like an officer, they vote him out.

By far and large, though, union leaders are paid about the same scale as the workmen in their occupations—sometimes a little more because of the long hours the leaders must put in to serve their members.

Few organizations give their members as much as labor unions do for the same money. Just look:

Where Dues Go

Each member's dues are split several ways. A portion goes to pay office expenses, business agent's salary and pay for other services. Another small portion is paid for membership in central labor unions, state federations, international unions and the American Federation of Labor.

Don't be misled by scare stories about dues.

Union dues usually run from as little as \$1.50 a month to an average of \$2.50. A few may be a little higher. Initiation fees range from \$10 to a maximum in a few unions of \$50. An average is about \$25. What the member puts in as his initiation is his stake in the union, his guarantee of good faith.

A portion goes into the strike benefit fund—the savings account to help tide members through a strike if they are forced out by their employers.

Another portion goes into the sick and death benefit fund, which is a great help to members and their families in illness or death. This amounts to insurance that a member might not be able to get any other way and it costs him little.

Unions also take part in civic affairs and contribute to charitable activities. They help each other out in contributions from the treasury in strikes and lockouts.

These activities have not been set up by a few leaders. They have been decided upon by the rank and file as a result of experience and a desire to make their unions as helpful as possible, equipped to take care of wage earners problems under all conditions.

These benefits are there for you, too.

Labor Unions Can Help You

The traditional objectives of the American Federation of Labor is to help wage earners improve their standard of living through better wages, hours, conditions, etc.

You can help yourself much more through organized effort than when you go it alone. The AFL has proved this in 68 years of representing working people.

Millions of Americans live better today because of the gains made for them by unionism, because they and their predecessors have worked together.

You can achieve a better standard, too, by joining with your fellow wage earners in the union of your occupation. Then your problems will be theirs and they will help you solve them.

If there is an AFL union where you work, and you do not belong, ask your fellow employees about it.

If there is no AFL union there, write to the State Federation office in your state.

You can **HELP YOURSELF** in an AFL union.

Why Should a Union Member Be Interested in Politics?

This question should not be a question at all. Somebody has been selling you something that you may have bought without thinking about it. I mean that those who don't know the meaning and value of politics enjoy telling you that "politics is dirty, crooked, and unimportant." They have sold too many union members that idea—and the results can be seen in city, state, and national politics.

Let us get it straight—only a dictatorship has no need for real politics. A democracy becomes a dictatorship when too many of us are sold the idea that we should not know anything about politics nor do anything about political leadership. Democracy is politics. It is government “of the people, by the people, and for the people” as Lincoln well said. And if it does not include you it is not completely democratic. For you are a part of our democracy and we are poorer if you don't take an active interest in politics. Just as your union must have your active help if it is to be a democratic union, so your city, state and national governments must have your help.

Our country is a democratic political economy. This simply means that our “politics” rules the way we make our living, the way we earn our bread and butter; whether we can live when we are too old to work on a decent pension; whether when we are unemployed we can have some protection for ourselves and our families; whether we or our sons and daughters have to go to war; whether we will pay most of the taxes or that they will be paid on the basis of the ability to pay. In fact, every single part of our lives is partially or fully dependent upon the politics in our democracy.

One illustration will be enough. There was a time not too many years ago that the laboring man could slug it out in the streets with the stingy, labor-hating employer, BUT THAT DAY IS OVER. The boss discovered he could not win that way so **he got into politics**. The union members have lagged far behind. The result is **Taft-Hartley**. It would not have become the law of our country if all the **Union Members** had remembered to vote in 1946. The boss did you can be sure! DID YOU!

How Should You Express Your Interest in Politics?

1. Attend your union meetings and participate in the business of your union. Encourage every member to attend every meeting.

2. Join a Ward Club, in the party of your choice. Take an active part in the business and discussions in the Political Ward Club.

3. Read and listen to all points of view. Make up your own mind and try to convince others of your point of view.

4. Study your government—city, county, state and national—and learn how it works.

5. Keep track of how the man in office votes, see if he agrees with your ideas.

6. Support the candidate in every way you can that votes the way you believe is best for your city, county, state or country.

7. Vote yourself. See that your wife and all adult friends vote. Work to see that everybody realizes how important it is to be active in politics.

Now all of these suggestions take time, effort and money. But let us understand it clearly—democracy is the best but the most difficult kind of government. It is easy to let someone else—a Hitler or a Stalin—to decide everything for you. If you want to be a slave to the state just join the chorus of those who say “politics is unimportant, costly, and crooked,” and you will have your wish.

But if you want to be a free man join the chorus of those who believe with Franklin D. Roosevelt who said, “eternal vigilance is the price of democracy.”

Construction Workers' Union

Early moves to organize the construction workers were hindered by the idea "You can't have a successful union of unskilled men; anybody can do common labor and if you ever had to strike, too many people would be fitted to scab on you."

These ideas have been proven wrong by the success story of the International Hod Carriers Building and Common Laborers Union of America, of which the author is a member. The leaders of this International never sidestepped, never swerved from their goal. They were laying the foundation for what has become what most employers call the miracle union. The miracle of Construction Laborers Union has been most marked since General President Joseph V. Moreschi took over the leadership of this International in 1924, he spearheaded a membership drive that resulted in the miraculous growth in membership from 40,000 in 1924 to over 400,000 in early 1950.

In the first instance, our work is not unskilled. Not just any man, ablebodied as he may be, can walk onto a construction job and expect to keep up with the pace set by experienced workers in our jurisdiction. He may be a tower of strength, with muscles of steel, yet a small man with the knowledge of how to handle a pick and shovel can outproduce him two to one.

Nor is all our work of the pick and shovel variety. Ours has within its jurisdiction certain employments which demand the utmost in skill and knowledge, and which carry with them job hazards where experience becomes of primary importance. Mining and tunneling, caisson work, wrecking, blasting, quarrying and other pursuits within our jurisdiction are all trades in the full meaning of the word.

No wonder then that our union, which was said to be doomed at its birth, has become so important and so well established that it is one of the few instances where even the champions of the Taft-Hartley act admit that a closed shop works to better advantage for all concerned than does an open shop.

Contractors throughout the nation have learned that by calling up the Laborers' local, they can avail themselves of experienced and dependable men for their building needs and can put them on the job at once without "try-out-time." They know our union serves them freely as a hiring hall and employment office.

On April 28, 1903, the American Federation of Labor issued the charter to the union. There were at that time less than two million members of organized labor. The AFL itself was only 17 years old.

The influx of immigrants had made a union for the construction laborers badly needed. The westward course of empire was on and the guillible immigrants quite often fell victims of the "padrone system." These "padrones" got men under their control and hired them out. They took a profit on the immigrants' labor because the immigrants had no idea of the high wages which were being paid, high by comparison to the "bread and water" wages they had been accustomed to in Europe. As a result they were placed in a situation which was little better than slavery. More often than not the "padrone" advanced them money and continued to keep them in debt, binding them to him.

There were many early attempts to organize common laborers but there was no unity in the movement until Samuel Gompers issued a call for a convention to be held in Washington, D.C., in

the year 1903. Previous meetings had been held in Lowell, Massachusetts and Dayton, Ohio.

The convention opened on April 13, 1903 with 80 delegates from 22 cities representing 5,000 workers. The International started with 26 locals and added 112 by the end of its first year of existence. The time was ripe for the organization. Organized labor was on the upswing and employers were beginning to recognize unions and bargain with them. At the end of the year the membership had grown to 8,200.

Today we have 910 local unions, 39 district councils, and an average membership, as of 1948, of 337,456 members. We look forward to an increase in this figure for the current year.

Today we have grown so greatly that we have, to some extent, outstripped our name. The old-fashioned hod has been displaced in many instances by more modern material handling methods. As construction work increased our jurisdiction increased. By action of the AFL Executive Council in the early days we acquired jurisdiction over cement and concrete work in building, shipyards, roads and highway engineering, and in construction work.

In 1917 we amalgamated with the Compressed Air and Foundation Workers Union, which included workers who were employed on jobs requiring men to work under air pressure. In 1929 the Tunnel and Subway Contractors International Union amalgamated with us. This group consisted of "free air workers" as opposed to those who worked in pressure chambers.

In 1937 the Pavers and Rammermen's International Union joined us. This group had jurisdiction over work on highway and street surfacings.

Thus our job jurisdiction is wide and is, we believe, basic to the building and construction field.

Our tenders mix, handle and convey all materials used by masons, plasterers, carpenters and other building and construction craftsmen. Work within our jurisdiction includes the drying of plastering when done by salamander heat and the cleaning-up and clearing of all debris around a construction site.

Our members do the real "basic work" in construction. Building of the scaffolds and staging for masons and plasterers comes within our jurisdiction, as does all excavation work. Digging of trenches, piers, foundations and holes; digging, lagging, sheeting, cribbing, bracing, propping of foundations, holds, caissons, cofferdams, dams and dikes are part of the construction laborers' work.

Our jurisdiction in concrete construction is as wide as the application of this universally used building material. It includes concrete for foundations walls, floors, streets, roads, airports; anywhere where concrete is used. We handle the dry components, transfer them, measure and mix them, handle the finished product, convey it to the forms and spread it, where the finisher takes over.

The wrecking, stripping and dismantling of concrete forms and false work and the building of centers for fireproof purposes are also included.

On streets, highways and bridges our work includes the excavation, preparation, concreting, asphalt and mastic paving, ramming, curbing, flagging and surfacing of streets, ways, courts, underpasses and overpasses, airports and the grading and landscaping thereof.

In regard to trenches and manholes, our members cut out the streets and ways for laying con-

duits for all purposes, dig the trenches and man-holes and handle all material for this work. They concrete, backfill and grade and resurface in connection with trench and manhole work.

In the construction of tunnels, subways and sewers our people build sewers, shafts, tunnels, subways, caissons, cofferdams, dikes, dams, aqueducts, culverts, flood controls and airports.

The moving of structures is within our jurisdiction and our members, shore, underpin and raise all buildings and structures.

Drill running, jackhammering and blasting work is within our province. All work in compressed air construction where men work under air pressure, and the signal men in connection with such work is within our jurisdiction.

We do general excavating and grading work. Laborers in factories, shipyards, material yards, junk yards, asphalt and concrete plants and cemeteries are our members. Such general labor work also includes the cleaning of streets and sewers. Wreckers of all buildings and structures are within our jurisdiction, as are watchmen, flagmen, guards, garbage and debris handlers and dumpmen.

Thus it can be seen that our membership includes basic work in a great many lines of endeavor. The work is basic to the forwarding of the work of many other skills and trades in the building and construction fields.

Experienced contractors and builders know that reliable and experienced laborers and tenders are essential to the expediting of work. There can be a prodigious loss of time and productivity by laxity or inefficiency in the handling and storing of materials and the failure of inefficient tenders to the building tradesmen.

If a tender does not know how to mix plaster, how to properly tend a bricklayer, or is inept at his job there can be a terrific loss of time and money. Our membership can always be counted on to provide competent services.

There are occasions when construction contractors try to "cut corners" and use inexperienced and inept men from outside the union. An unemployed bookkeeper cannot be made overnight into an efficient materials handling man on a construction job. Anyone who has tried it knows that even such a seemingly simple operation as handling a wheelbarrow of concrete aggregate calls for an acquired skill. Certainly our unemployed bookkeeper would provide a poor hand at the preparation of a batch of concrete or plaster, for example, if anyone were foolish enough to hire him.

The primary reason for the existence of any labor union is to provide protection for the membership from those who would enrich themselves at the expense of the laboring man. Our steadily rising wage scales bear ample testimony that our International has served our members well in this respect. Just recently there was publicity given the rise in wages made possible to construction workers through the activities of our International and local officials.

The Union Serves the Employer

Our union also serves the employer. This statement is true since it is virtually impossible for every contractor to know the qualifications of every laborer in the area. He cannot afford to carry at all times a force sufficient to discharge the work he may need performed at a peak in his operations. He cannot afford to run the risk of hiring inept and inefficient workers. He cannot

afford to pay for men's services during a "trying out" period. What, then, is the contractor to do? He simply picks up the telephone and calls the Laborers' Local with jurisdiction over the work he needs performed. He tells the number of men he needs, when and where. If the men are available at all, the business agent will be able to find them, to notify them, and the employer will have them on the job as he needs them. He will know that as regards manpower he is on an equal competitive basis with his competitors as to skills and pay for the men. He will not have to "try them out."

This is why contractors and builders associations have been before Congress, testifying shoulder to shoulder with labor leaders that the building and construction trades, of which we are the most basic, are natural closed shop activities. We are, in effect, a hiring hall for the employer free of charge. In return we secure certain invaluable benefits and protections for our membership.

Our War Record

The construction workers made for themselves a war record which is practically without comparison. Like the Minutemen of the Revolutionary War they laid down their tools and took up muskets. Our rolls took a tremendous leap in the prewar construction period. Our men toiled tirelessly to throw up the army cantonments, defense plants and other works which were essential to the successful prosecution of the war. After the works of defense were completed, virtually thousands went into the armed services. Some of course went via the draft, but many went as volunteers. Of these latter, many enlisted in the Seabees, those heroic navy construction battalions. Old men, hands seamed by years of toil, "lowered"

their ages to get into these building, fighting crews. They threw up airports and army camps in remote places across the vast Pacific and then dropped their picks and shovels to pick up guns and fight back at the enemy who tried to destroy them and their works.

The chief of army engineers has paid high praise to the construction workers. He said: "By the war's end it was evident that American construction capacity was the one factor of American strength which our enemies most consistently under estimated. It was the one element of our strength for which they had no basis of comparison. They had seen nothing like it." It was indeed a great effort and a successful one and our membership is proud to have been an important part of that "Secret weapon" for which the enemy "had no basis of comparison."

Union Without Discrimination

Our union, which so staunchly defended America, is one of the most "American" of all organizations in the country, labor or otherwise. There is absolutely no discrimination in our union on any grounds, whether it be race, creed, color or religion. This is specifically stated in our constitution and has been one of the credos of our organization to which we have scrupulously subscribed. Ours is the real "melting pot of America."

Our books are open to our members, and consequently, to the world. Since 1903 certified quarterly financial reports have been made available to our local unions and through them to any and all members. Our per capita tax is one of the lowest in the American Federation of Labor. The total per capita is 35 cents per member per month, of which 7½ cents goes into the death benefit fund.



Thus it can be seen that our organization throughout its existence has been primarily an organization of service. That creed of service to all has been zealously upheld. Naturally, our greatest service and our reason for being is service to our membership. No one is barred from membership in our organization because of race, creed or color. The services of the organization are equally at the disposal of all members without question.

While that is our primary service, we have been of service, as has been seen, to the contractors and builders. With them and with their organizations we have enjoyed an association which, throughout the years, has been by and large, one of peace and mutual cooperation.

We have been of service to the public because through the provision made for skilled construction laborers at the disposal of the contractors, we have been able to provide more efficient and therefore less costly services. The net result has been a savings of the construction dollar.

Finally, we have been of service to the nation through the tremendous construction miracles of the late war. Should war again threaten our country, members of our union will be on the front lines of the firing front as well.

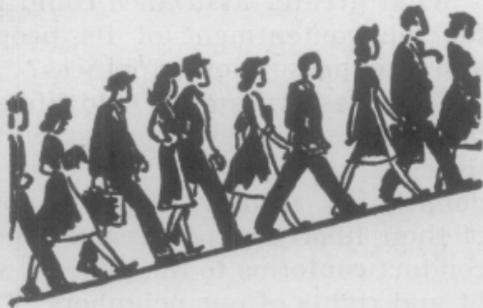
In the meanwhile, banded together under the banner of the International Hod Carriers Building and Common Laborers Union of America, we will continue to fight the construction battles of peacetime, fighting for a better place in which to live.

All Common People

Some, at times, have used the term "common laborer" in a derogatory sense. Are not the common laborers the common people of our nation and all other nations? Is not society, in the main, composed of common people? Could we, in the natural course of events, have a balanced society without the common people? The answer is obvious—NO!

On the other hand, the common people need the capitalist and the capitalist needs the common people. It is the fruit of their united efforts that feeds and supplies the world.

My message to the laborer is—be proud of your work and your position. Remember that you are part of a whole and that the whole is made up of its component parts. In fact, you are a very necessary and important part of the unit which composes the construction industry. Your labor helps to build homes, commercial structures, airports, tunnels, by-passes, roads and many other essentials. Without your efforts, these needs could never be realized. The same is also true of many other craftsmen but it is still true that the laborer is usually the first man on and the last man off a job site.



The obligations of the laborer in the maintenance of his family and the rearing of his children are the same as all other men. He is therefore entitled to the benefits of his labor, commensurate with his effort. This is his only means of meeting his obligations.

Yes, the laborer may also be proud of more abundantly supplying the greatest need of any nation, its citizens. Again, an added reason for consideration. The more abundant the blessings of children, the more necessary the means with which to rear them. For a nation, a depleted citizenry is as dangerous as a poorly fed, poorly clothed, poorly educated and unhealthy citizenry. The laborer helps to avoid such depletion and should therefore have sufficient means to properly feed, clothe, educate and care for his progeny.

Place in Society

One of the greatest American documents, the Declaration of Independence, guarantees our freedom from tyrannical domination, and establishes the truths of equality among men and the inalienable right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The laborer, therefore, may take his place in society with other men and in so doing is entitled to the economic benefits of his efforts.

What greater assurance could any nation offer for the contentment of its people—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? Life means the right to be born and to hold life as an individual possession. Liberty means the right to live our lives as we will it, free from restriction and domination, insofar as we do not deprive others of their liberty or possessions and insofar as our conduct conforms to the general well being, benefit and rights of our neighbors. The right to happiness means the right to live in contentment. Material contentment sums up all the other rights. To be content one must have life; one must be able to live his life freely; with freedom from want, freedom to express his thoughts, freedom to worship his God as he sees fit, and freedom to join with his fellow men to protect all things of mutual benefit. We, as Americans and lawful abiding citizens, can enjoy these freedoms to the fullest measure possible.

Does the pattern of the union fit into this picture? Of course it does. In the constitutional rights of free speech and freedom of assembly, the union man can join with his fellow workers, in seeking just compensation and decent working conditions. Hence, the fundamental and basic objectives of a union can be lawfully established. Having thus organized, he then has, in the freedom of contract, the right to bargain, as a unit, with his employer for just and proper recognition and decent working conditions.

Hence, the cause of unionism is proper; it is dignified; it is lawful; it is American.

One of the functions of government is the maintenance of peace amongst its people. Lasting peace, however, must be righteous and it must be just. It does not preclude the assertion of proper and natural rights, in fact it must guarantee



them. The curtailment of these rights breeds discontentment, which leads to disruption, contempt and lack of faith.

Civilization has brought man out of the jungle where might means right. But, does this mean that all pressure must be abandoned? No, the struggle may be on an intellectual basis. We do not countenance violence but we do maintain that working men have the right to exert their combined economic power, in a proper, peaceful and lawful manner, for the attainment of worthy objectives.

If a situation reaches a point where accord and agreement cannot be reached, then we have the meeting of two irresistible forces. When this happens, there must be a clash. But, the clash need not be violent to the point of destruction. It may be peaceful and orderly. For the ill, we must find the cure, but let us not be so solicitous that the potion administered will kill the patient. If we do, it is no longer a cure. It is an instrument of destruction.

Hence labor should not destroy by violence, and government should not destroy by punitive and restrictive legislation.

The righteous and the just road lies ahead. Let us get back to that road. Some of us, including

labor, industry and government, may have strayed from that road, but the road is still there. It may get rough at times and it may lead uphill. All that is required is a little sincere effort and patience to reach the top, after which it is apt to be smoother and more level. If we want to reach the summit as a unit, then labor and industry must pull together, if either strays off the road or lags behind the unit will be lost. Oneness of purpose requires oneness of effort. It can be done, it should be done, and I am confident that with proper education it will be done. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder and march forward to real and substantial success.

Some people refer to the period before the growth of organized labor as the "good old days." The 1880's for instance, when the labor movement was in its infancy, when the employer had nearly everything pretty much his own way. Just how "good" was that period?

Did You Know?

That in 1881, when the American Federation of Labor was founded, that women who labored in Philadelphia textile mills worked 75 hours a week?

That "labor trouble" in that "good" period was caused far more often by lockouts than by strikes?

That a dollar a day was regarded as "adequate" pay in those happy times? And that the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, by no means an unkindly man, but reflecting the beliefs of the times, said this: "Is not a dollar a day enough? Water costs nothing, and a man who cannot live on bread is not fit to live."

That in those "good old days" a workman was not always free to spend his small earnings where and as he pleased? That in many places he could

buy only at a store owned by the company that employed him, only the brands the company store chose to offer, only at prices the store saw fit to charge?

That the rights of men were frequently subordinated to the rights of property, openly and in so many words? That property rights were sacred? That George Baer, president of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad found wide agreement about 1900 when he said: "That rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for, not by the labor agitators, but by the Christian men and women to whom God in His Infinite Wisdom has given control of the property rights of this Country."

That, in 1886, Jay Gould, financier and railroad owner, said: "I can hire one half of the working class to kill the other half."

That often it looked as if he were right? For, until 1881 and formation of the AFL, the idea of American working people nationally united in their own interests was barely a dream.

Did You Know That?

Throughout its 67 year history, the AFL has been the most powerful, the most consistent foe of communism in America?

Before the turn of the century, Samuel Gompers, founder of the AFL, resisted all red encroachment efforts?

In 1920 the AFL monthly magazine ran a cartoon showing "commies" being booted out of a building labeled, AF af L?

In 1933, the Federation officially opposed American recognition of Soviet Russia as a dictatorship with slave labor, as the anti-thesis of all that

America cherishes, and long before World War II, recognized and disclosed the Hitler menace and opposed shipment of scrap iron to Japan.

That William Green, president of the AFL, recently said: "Communism is a curse upon humanity which degrades the citizen into the status of a slave and makes the state his master."

Credentials committees at AFL conventions carefully searched out any communists who have evaded detection and refused to seat them.

There is an easy way to determine whether you prefer the slave state or the free state.

Organized labor is chiefly responsible for our high standards of life.

Our 40 hour average week provides productive efficiency, plus more leisure than anywhere else.

Increased wages of working people have made possible the highest living standards in the world, not only for union men, but for all Americans. A prosperous group of working people is the foundation for the prosperity of everybody.

What brought about these changes? Mainly they were brought about by unions working together with fair employers under the American system of private enterprise, through the practice of collective bargaining. Through collective bargaining over the years, the AFL has gained many objectives that seemed Utopian and visionary back in the 1880's.

Did You Know That?

Samuel Gompers first enunciated the doctrine of "Conservation of child life," and that the AFL led the struggle against child labor in industry, winning its abolition in 1938 under the Wage and Hour Law.

The AFL pioneered in the movement for free, public compulsory education for children.

The idea of workmen's compensation, the idea that workers should be recompensed for disability or death resulting from their employment, was pioneered by William Green in 1911 when he was a state senator in Ohio.

The AFL continued to advocate it until all states adopted it (Mississippi in 1948 was the 48th). No industry would willingly return to the old "who cares" attitude of the 1880's.

The AFL was in the forefront of the right for Social Security, Old Age Pensions, Retirement benefits. Today seeks increased rates, more extensive coverage, plus adequate minimum wage.

The American Federation of Labor is proud of these accomplishments and many others. But the AFL recognizes that attainment of these was possible only by the cooperation of employers and workers.

In its own operations the AFL represents democracy in action. The federation functions in accordance with democratic practices and principles, officers are elected and measures passed or rejected solely by rule of the majority after open and free discussion has given all sides the opportunity to be heard.

The rank and file run the AFL for it is the annual convention of the AFL that tells the officers and the executive council what to do during the following year.

The 105 affiliated unions are autonomous, run themselves and have rights which are rigidly upheld, just as the 48 states have their states rights.

The AFL issues charters for many industrial unions and not just for craft unions.

Organized labor is not the colossus of wealth that some people say, that deposits of all unions show about \$27.00 per member.

Young men choosing a life work today are joining the unions of their vocations in the secure knowledge that their AFL organizations will best represent them and serve their interests.

This, in conclusion, is the story in brief of the American Labor movement. As you can see, it is a story of struggle, sometimes bloody and bitter struggle. This struggle to build an American labor movement was fought by workers like you who organized unions like your own, to help get a decent life for themselves and their children.

Yesterday the labor movement fought for the very right to exist; for the right to bargain collectively with the boss. It fought against child labor, for free schools, for the right to vote, for workmen's compensation, for safety and health rules in factories. Today the labor movement is recognized as an important force in our country.

The fight for better jobs and better living conditions continues on many fronts. It includes the battle for paid vacations and holidays, free health insurance, dismissal pay in case your job is taken by a machine, a guaranteed annual wage, adequate unemployment insurance and old age benefits, and most important—**jobs for all**. And there always is the fight to organize the unorganized, increase wages, shorten hours. There is the fight on the international front against fascism and communism and for world peace; a fight that includes cooperation with the labor movement of other lands, and the building up of a world federation and international organizations aiming at the uprooting of the causes of war.

There has been criticism that labor unions sometimes prevent technological improvements and thus prevent progress. Economists and industrialists state that even though some workers may be temporarily thrown out of work by an auto-

matic machine, in the long run all workers will benefit because of greater production at lower prices. The unions have pointed out that everything may come out fine in the long run, but, in the short run, the workers are unemployed and their families are hungry. Unions declare that unless workers have the assurance they can get a decent job or sufficient unemployment insurance if a machine takes their job, it is hard to blame them if they worry about automatic machines which throw them out on the streets.

Labor leaders and labor unions are not and have not been perfect. There have been some dishonest men and there have been racketeers. Some leaders have become dictators. There have been unnecessary and harmful jurisdictional disputes between unions.

We must remember that unions, just like corporations or banks or fraternal societies, are run by human beings, not supermen. Mistakes have been made and more will be made in the future. Dishonest men have been elected, inefficient men have been elected. Some anti-labor people have implied that all labor unions should be destroyed because of a few wrong-doers. Yet they do not suggest we abolish all government because there are crooked politicians or that we close all the banks because there are some dishonest bankers.

Where there have been cases of bad union leadership and bad unions it has frequently been due to neglect of the union by the rank and file members. You weaken the union when you stay away from meetings and when you let a handful of your fellow workers carry the entire burden of the union on their shoulders. Without your active support, the union is only a hollow shell, a mere shadow of its potential strength and power. With your active support, with your presence at your

union meetings, you make the union breathe, you make it live, you make it a powerful instrument to help you get a better life for yourself and your fellow workers.

The history of the labor movement teaches us that the workers, through their organized strength, have played and will continue to play an important part in the never-ending struggle to build.

A Better Job
A Better Life
A Finer America