

# *Important Events*

## in American Labor History

... A Chronology  
1778-1955

Labor movement - U.S. (1955)

*Bureau of labor statistics*

**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

James P. Mitchell, Secretary

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# Important Events in American Labor History [a chronology, 1778-1955] //

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Compiled by the  
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- 1778** Journeymen printers of New York City combined to demand an increase in wages. After the increase was granted the organization was abandoned.
- 1786** The earliest authenticated strike of workers in the United States in a single trade occurred when Philadelphia printers gained a minimum wage of \$6 a week.
- 1791** Philadelphia carpenters struck unsuccessfully in May for a 10-hour day and additional pay for overtime. This was the first recorded strike of workers in the building trades.
- 1792** The first local craft union formed for collective bargaining was organized by Philadelphia shoemakers. It disbanded in less than a year.
- 1794** The Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers was formed in Philadelphia by the shoeworkers. It lasted until 1806, when it was tried and fined for conspiracy. (See below.)

The Typographical Society was organized in New York City by the printers. It remained in existence for 10½ years.

- 1805** A Journeymen Cordwainers' union in New York City included a closed shop clause in its constitution.
- 1806** Members of the Philadelphia Journeymen Cordwainers were tried for criminal conspiracy after a strike for higher wages. The charges were (1) combination to raise wages and (2) combination to injure others. The union was found guilty and fined. Bankrupt as a result, the union disbanded. This was the first of several unions to be tried for conspiracy.
- 1825** The United Tailoresses of New York, a trade-union organization for women only, was formed in New York City.
- 1827** The Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations, made up of unions of skilled craftsmen in different trades, was formed in Philadelphia. This was the first city central type of organization on record.
- 1828** The Workingmen's Party, including wage earners, craftsmen, and farmers, was organized in Philadelphia in July. It went out of existence in 1832.

- 1834** The National Trades' Union was formed in New York City. This was the first attempt toward a national labor federation in the United States. It failed to survive the financial panic of 1837.
- 1836** The National Cooperative Association of Cordwainers, the first national labor union of a specific craft, was formed in New York City. There is no further record of this organization after 1837. Other trades which formed national organizations within the next few years were the printers, comb makers, carpenters, and hand-loom weavers.
- 1840** An Executive order issued on March 31 by President Van Buren established a 10-hour day for Federal employees on public works without reduction in pay.
- 1842** In the case of *Commonwealth v. Hunt*, the Massachusetts Court held that labor unions, as such, were legal organizations, and that "a conspiracy must be a combination of two or more persons, by some concerted action, to accomplish some criminal or unlawful purpose, or to accomplish some purpose not in

itself criminal or unlawful by criminal or unlawful means." The decision also denied that an attempt to establish a closed shop was unlawful or proof of an unlawful aim.

Massachusetts and Connecticut passed laws prohibiting children from working more than 10 hours a day.

**1847** The first State law fixing 10 hours as a legal workday was passed in New Hampshire.

**1848** Pennsylvania passed a State child labor law setting the minimum age for workers in commercial occupations at 12 years. In 1849, the minimum was raised to 13 years.

**1852** The Typographical Union, the first national organization of workers to endure to the present day, was formed.

The first law limiting working hours of women to 10 hours a day was passed in Ohio.

**1859** The Iron Molders' Union, the forerunner of the present Molders and Foundry Workers Union (AFL), was organized in Philadelphia.

**1862** The "Molly Maguires," a secret society of Irish miners in the anthracite fields, first came to public attention. The "Mollies" were

charged with acts of terrorism against mine bosses. They went out of existence in 1876, when 14 of their leaders were imprisoned and 10 were executed.

**1863** The present-day Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers was founded.

Laws providing fines and imprisonment for strikers preventing other persons from working were passed in Illinois and Minnesota.

**1866** The National Labor Union, a national association of unions, was organized. A federation of trades' assemblies rather than of national craft organizations, it included radical and reform groups. Drifting into social rather than trade-union endeavors, it lost craftsmen's support and went out of existence in 1872.

**1867** The Knights of St. Crispin was organized on March 7 to protect journeymen shoemakers against the competition of "green hands" and apprentices in the operation of newly introduced machinery in the shoe industry. The last vestige of the order disappeared in 1878.

**1868** The first Federal 8-hour day law was passed by Congress. It applied only to laborers, workmen, and mechanics employed by or on behalf of the United States Government.

The first State labor bureau was established in Massachusetts.

**1869** The Noble Order of the Knights of Labor was organized in Philadelphia. It maintained extreme secrecy until 1878, then began organizing skilled and unskilled workers openly. By winning railroad strikes against the Gould lines, and advancing the program for the 8-hour day, the Knights of Labor gained many followers, claiming over 700,000 members in 1886. It declined rapidly thereafter with the emergence of the AFL.

**1870** The first written contract between coal miners and operators was signed on July 29. It provided for a sliding scale of pay, based on the price of coal.

**1874** The Cigar Makers International Union in San Francisco made first use of the union label.



**1877** The first recorded instance of the use of Federal troops in a labor dispute during peacetime occurred during a strike of railroad workers against a 10-percent cut in pay. Railroads operating east of the Mississippi River were involved. Marked by violence and property damage, more than 100 were reported killed and 200 injured.

**1878** The Greenback-Labor Party was organized by a fusion of the Greenback Party and Workingmen's Party.

**1881** The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (FOTLU), which later became the American Federation of Labor, was organized in Pittsburgh in November with 107 delegates present. Leaders of 8 national unions attended, including Samuel Gompers, then president of the Cigar Makers International Union.

The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, later to become one of the largest AFL unions, was organized.

**1882** Peter J. McGuire, a New York City carpenter, suggested setting aside 1 day in the

year in honor of labor. The first Labor Day celebration was held in New York City during September of the same year.

**1883** The Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen was organized.

**1884** A Bureau of Labor was established in the Department of Interior. It later became independent as a Department of Labor without cabinet rank. It again returned to bureau status in the Department of Commerce and Labor, which was created in 1903, where it remained until the present Department of Labor was established in 1913.

**1886** Under the initiative of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, some 340,000 workers participated in a movement for an 8-hour day.

The Chicago Haymarket riot, in which one policeman was killed and several others wounded, aroused public opinion against unionism and radicalism and for several years stopped the movement for the 8-hour day. The meeting in Haymarket Square had been called as a peaceful protest against

the killing of four strikers and wounding of others during a strike for the 8-hour day at the McCormick Reaper Works.

The American Federation of Labor was organized at a convention in Columbus, Ohio, in December, as successor to the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions. Other trade unions and city councils which had failed to gain autonomy within the ranks of the Knights of Labor also joined the AFL.

**1888** The first Federal labor relations law was enacted. It applied to railroads and provided for arbitration and Presidential boards of investigation.

The International Association of Machinists was organized in Atlanta, Ga.

**1890** The United Mine Workers was organized in Columbus, Ohio.

**1892** The Homestead strike by the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers at the Carnegie steel mills in Homestead, Pa., resulted in the death of several strikers and Pinkerton guards. The strike

failed and the union was ousted from most mills in the Pittsburgh area.

**1894** A strike of the American Railway Union, led by Eugene V. Debs against the Pullman Co., was defeated by the use of injunctions and by Federal troops sent into the Chicago area. Debs and several other leaders were imprisoned for violating the injunctions, and the union's effectiveness was destroyed.

**1898** Congress passed the Erdman Act, providing for mediation and voluntary arbitration on the railroads, and superseding the law of 1888. The act also made it a criminal offense for railroads to dismiss employees or to discriminate against prospective employees because of their union membership or activity. This portion of the act was subsequently declared invalid by the United States Supreme Court.

**1900** The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (AFL) was formed.

**1901** The International Federation of Trade Unions (then International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centers) was formed on August 21. The AFL affiliated in 1910,

disaffiliated in 1921, and reaffiliated in 1937. It remained a member until IFTU was formally dissolved in 1945.

The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel & Tin Workers (AFL) lost 14 union contracts after a 3-month strike against the United States Steel Corp.

The United Textile Workers of America (AFL) was organized.

**1902** The United Mine Workers of America ended a 5-month strike on October 21 against anthracite operators, agreeing to arbitration by a Presidential commission. The Anthracite Coal Strike Commission, appointed on October 16, recommended on March 18, 1903, a 10-percent wage increase and conciliation machinery, but denied union recognition.

**1903** The Department of Commerce and Labor was created by an act of Congress (Act of Feb. 14, 1903, 32 Stat. 825), and its Secretary was made a member of the Cabinet.

**1905** The Industrial Workers of the World was organized in Chicago.

The Supreme Court held that a maximum hour law for bakery workers was unconstitutional under the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment. (*Lochner v. New York.*)

**1906** The International Typographical Union (AFL) struck successfully in book and job printing establishments for the 8-hour day, paving the way for extension of shorter hours in the printing trades.

**1908** Section 10 of the Erdman Act applying to railroad employees, whereby the "yellow-dog" contract was outlawed and an employer was forbidden to discharge a worker for union membership, was declared unconstitutional. (*U. S. v. Adair.*)

The boycott by the United Hatters of Danbury, Conn., against D. E. Loewe and Co. was held to be in restraint of trade under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. In January 1915, the individual union members were held responsible for the union's acts and were assessed damages and costs totaling \$252,000. This was the first application of the treble damage provision of the act to a labor union.

**1910** The 2-month strike of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (AFL) was settled by providing preferential union hiring, a board of grievances, and a board of arbitration. This laid the foundation for the impartial chairman method of settling labor disputes.

**1911** The Supreme Court upheld an injunction ordering the AFL to eliminate the Bucks Stove and Range Co. from its unfair list and to cease to promote an unlawful boycott. A contempt charge against union leaders including AFL president Samuel Gompers, was dismissed on technical grounds. (*Gompers v. Bucks Stove and Range Co.*)

The Triangle Waist Co. fire in New York on March 25, which caused the death of 146 workers, led to establishment of the New York Factory Investigating Commission on June 30, and eventual improvement in factory conditions.

**1912** Massachusetts adopted the first minimum wage act for women and minors.

The (Walsh) Commission on Industrial Relations was created to investigate industrial

unrest. In 1916, it rendered a comprehensive series of reports on the status of labor-management relations.

**1913** The United States Department of Labor was established by law. It included the Bureau of Labor Statistics (created in 1884 as the Bureau of Labor, see above), the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (created in 1891), and the Children's Bureau (created in 1912). Power was given the Secretary of Labor to "act as mediator and to appoint commissioners of conciliation in labor disputes," and in 1918, the Conciliation Service was established as a separate division of the Department.

William B. Wilson, a trade-unionist and Member of Congress, became the first Secretary of Labor.

**1914** The Clayton Act was approved, limiting the use of injunctions in labor disputes and providing that picketing and other union activities shall not be considered unlawful.

On December 1, the President appointed the Colorado Coal Commission which inves-



tigated the Ludlow Massacre and labor conditions in Colorado coal mines following an unsuccessful strike by the United Mine Workers.

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers was formed by a seceding group of the United Garment Workers (AFL).

**1915** The LaFollette Seamen's Act was approved, on March 4, regulating conditions of employment for maritime workers.

**1916** A Federal child labor law was enacted (declared unconstitutional on June 3, 1918); followed by act of February 24, 1919 (declared unconstitutional on May 15, 1922); followed by a child labor Amendment to the Constitution on June 2, 1924. Thus far, 28 of the necessary 36 States have ratified the amendment.

The Adamson Act, providing a basic 8-hour day on railroads, was enacted to eliminate a threatened nationwide railroad strike.

**1917** A strike led by the International Workers of the World (IWW) in the copper mines of

Bisbee, Ariz., was ended when the sheriff deported 1,200 strikers.

The President appointed a Mediation Commission, headed by the Secretary of Labor, to adjust wartime labor difficulties.

The "yellow-dog" contract was upheld and union efforts to organize workers, party to such contract, were held to be unlawful. (*Hitchman Coal & Coke Co. v. Mitchell.*)

**1918** The Federal Government took control of the railroads from December 1917, until March 1, 1920, under existing Federal legislation which provided for Government railroad operation in wartime.

The President named the Secretary of Labor as War Labor Administrator on January 4.

The President created the National War Labor Board on April 8 "to settle by mediation and conciliation controversies \* \* \* in fields of production necessary for the effective conduct of the war." It went out of existence in May 1919.

The minimum wage law of the District of

Columbia was approved September 19. (Declared unconstitutional on April 9, 1923.)

- 1919** Led by President Gompers of the AFL, a commission, created by the Peace Conference at its second plenary session in January, recommended the inclusion in the Peace Treaty of labor clauses creating an International Labor Organization.

The United Mine Workers of America struck against bituminous-coal operators on November 1. In December, the union agreed to arbitration by a Presidential commission. The Bituminous Coal Commission appointed by the President on December 19 awarded a 27-percent wage increase, but denied the 6-hour day and 5-day week.

- 1920** The AFL Iron and Steel Organizing Committee ended an unsuccessful 3½-month strike in the steel industry on January 8 after most of the strikers had drifted back to work.

The Women's Bureau was established in the Department of Labor by act of Congress.

The Kansas Court of Industrial Relations provided the first experiment in compulsory

arbitration in the United States. (Held unconstitutional in part in 1923.)

The Transportation Act provided for a tripartite Railroad Labor Board and terminated Federal control of railroads on March 1.

**1921** The Supreme Court held that nothing in the Clayton Act legalized secondary boycotts or protected unions against injunctions brought against them for conspiracy in restraint of trade. (*Duplex Printing Press v. Deering*.)

An act restricting the immigration of aliens into the United States and establishing the national origin quota system was approved.

The International Seamen's Union (AFL) and Marine Engineers Beneficial Association (AFL) lost a 52-day strike against wage reductions.

The President's Conference on Unemployment placed the main responsibility for unemployment relief upon local communities.

The Arizona law forbidding injunctions in labor disputes and permitting picketing was held unconstitutional under the fourteenth amendment. (*Truax v. Corrigan*.)

**1922** The United Mine Workers was held not responsible for local strike action and strike action was held not a conspiracy to restrain commerce within the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Labor unions, however, were held suable for their acts. (*Coronado Coal Co. v. UMWA.*)

A 2½-month unsuccessful nationwide strike of railway shopmen against wage reductions began July 1.

**1924** Samuel Gompers, president of the AFL, died on December 13.

**1926** The Railway Labor Act, passed on May 20, required employers to bargain collectively and not discriminate against their employees for joining a union. The act also provided for the settlement of railway labor disputes through mediation, voluntary arbitration, and fact-finding boards.

**1927** The Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act was enacted.

The Journeymen Stone Cutters' action in trying to prevent purchase of non-union-cut stone was held to be an illegal restraint of

interstate commerce. (*Redford Cut Stone Co. v. Journeymen Stone Cutters' Association, et al.*)

**1929** The Hawes-Cooper Act governing the shipment of convict-made goods in interstate commerce was approved.

The Communist-inspired Trade Union Unity League was formed in September. It was dissolved in 1935.

**1930** The Railway Labor Act's prohibition of employer interference or coercion in the choice of bargaining representatives was upheld by the Supreme Court. (*Texas & N. O. R. Co. v. Brotherhood of Railway Clerks.*)

**1931** The Davis-Bacon Act provided for the payment of prevailing wage rates to laborers and mechanics employed by contractors and sub-contractors on public construction.

**1932** The Anti-Injunction (Norris-LaGuardia) Act prohibited Federal injunctions in labor disputes, except as specified, and outlawed "yellow-dog" contracts.

Wisconsin adopted the first unemployment insurance act in the United States.

**1933** Section 7 (a) of the National Industrial Recovery Act provided that every NRA code and agreement should guarantee the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively through their representatives without interference, restraint, or coercion by employers. (Title I of act declared unconstitutional in *Schechter v. U. S.* on May 27, 1935.)

The Wagner-Peyser Act created the United States Employment Service in the Department of Labor.

**1934** The first National Labor Legislation Conference was called by Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins to obtain closer Federal-State cooperation in working out a sound national labor legislation program. Annual conferences have been held regularly since 1934 except in 1953 and 1955.

The United States joined the International Labor Organization.

**1935** The National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act established the first national labor policy of protecting the right of workers to organize and to elect their representatives for collective bargaining.

The United Automobile Workers Union was founded by the AFL.

The Bituminous Coal Conservation (Gufey) Act was passed to stabilize the industry and to improve labor conditions. (Labor relations provisions declared unconstitutional on May 18, 1936.)

The Federal Social Security Act was approved August 14.

The Committee for Industrial Organization (later the Congress of Industrial Organizations) was formed on November 9 by several AFL international unions and officials to foster industrial unionism.

**1936** In the first large "sitdown" strike, the United Rubber Workers (CIU) won recognition at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.

The Anti-Strikebreaking (Byrnes) Act declared it unlawful "to transport or aid in transporting strikebreakers in interstate or foreign commerce."

The Public Contracts (Walsh-Healey) Act established labor standards on Government contracts, including minimum wages, overtime compensation for hours in excess of 8



a day or 40 a week, child and convict labor provisions, and health and safety requirements.

**1937** General Motors Corp. agreed to recognize the United Automobile Workers (CIO) as the bargaining agent for its members, to drop injunction proceedings against strikers, not to discriminate against union members, and to establish grievance procedures.

United States Steel Corp. recognized the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee as the bargaining agent for its members. A 10-percent wage increase and an 8-hour day and 40-hour week were negotiated.

The National Labor Relations Act was held constitutional. (*NLRB v. Jones & Laughlin Steel Corp.*)

Ten people were killed and 80 were wounded in a Memorial Day clash between police and the members of the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee at the plant of the Republic Steel Co. in South Chicago.

The National Apprenticeship Act authorized the Secretary of Labor to promote apprenticeship.

The Railroad Retirement Act of 1937 was approved, followed by the Carriers Taxing Act of 1937. (Similar laws of June 27, 1934, and August 29, 1935, had been declared unconstitutional.)

The 5-week "Little Steel" strike was broken on July 1 when Inland Steel employees returned to work without union recognition or other gains.

**1938** The Merchant Marine Act of 1936 was amended to provide a Federal Maritime Labor Board.

The Fair Labor Standards Act provided minimum wages and time and a half for hours over 40 a week. (Amended October 26, 1949, raising the minimum hourly wage to 75 cents effective January 25, 1950.)

The Railroad Unemployment Insurance (Crosby-Wheeler) Act was passed.

**1940** A sitdown strike was held not to be an illegal restraint of commerce under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in the absence of intent to impose market controls. (*Apex Hosiery Co. v. Leader.*)

**1941** Actions by the carpenters' union in jurisdictional disputes were held to be protected from prosecution under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act by the Clayton Act. These actions were construed in light of Congress' definition of "labor dispute" in the Norris-La Guardia Act. (*U. S. v. Hutcheson.*)

The UAW (CIO) won recognition at Ford Motor Co. after a 10-day strike. The union and the company signed a union-shop agreement—the first with a major automobile manufacturer.

The President on December 24 announced a no-strike pledge by the AFL and CIO for the duration of the war.

**1942** The President established the National War Labor Board to determine procedures for settling disputes.

The NWLB laid down the "Little Steel" formula for wartime wage adjustments (i. e., based on a 15-percent rise in living costs from January 1, 1941, to May 1, 1942).

The Stabilization Act authorized the President to stabilize wages and salaries, as far as

practicable, based on September 15, 1942, levels.

**1943** The President by an Executive order created a Committee on Fair Employment Practices, empowering it to "conduct hearings, make findings of fact, and take appropriate steps to obtain elimination" of "discrimination in the employment of any person in war industries or in Government by reason of race, creed, color, or national origin."

The War Labor Disputes (Smith-Connally) Act, passed over the President's veto, authorized plant seizure if needed to avoid interference with the war effort.

**1944** The Railway Labor Act, authorizing a labor union chosen by a majority to represent a craft, was held to require union protection of the minority in that class. Discrimination against certain members on ground of race was held enjoined. (*Steele v. Louisville & Nashville Railroad.*)

**1945** The CIO affiliated with the newly formed World Federation of Trade Unions. (It withdrew in 1949.) The AFL held that the labor

organizations of Soviet Russia were not "free or democratic" and did not affiliate with the WFTU.

The President's National Labor-Management Conference convened in Washington, D. C., but produced few tangible results.

**1946** The United Steelworkers (CIO) ended a 1-month strike and established a "first round" wage pattern increase of 18½ cents an hour.

The Employment Act of 1946 committed the Government to take all practicable measures to promote maximum employment, production, and purchasing power.

The United Automobile Workers (CIO) ended a 3½-month strike against General Motors Corp. by negotiating an hourly wage increase of 18½ cents, after a Presidential fact-finding board had recommended 19½ cents.

Locomotive Engineers (Ind.) and Railroad Trainmen (Ind.) ended a national 2-day strike following an injunction and under threat of legislation to draft the workers. They accepted the 18½ cents-an-hour increase recommended by the President.

The UMWA bituminous-coal miners won a health and welfare fund from the Federal Government which had seized the mines, the fund to be financed from payments by operators of 5 cents a ton of coal produced.

The President provided for the termination of all wartime wage and salary controls.

- 1947** The Norris-LaGuardia Act prohibition against issuance of injunctions in labor disputes was held inapplicable to the Government as an employer. (*U. S. v. John L. Lewis.*)

A nationwide telephone strike started on April 7 for industrywide bargaining. Settlements began April 25 on an individual-company basis.

The Portal-to-Portal Act was approved, "to relieve employers and the Government from potential liability . . . in 'portal-to-portal' claims."

The Labor Management Relations (Taft-Hartley) Act was passed (June 23) over the President's veto.

- 1948** Mississippi became the forty-eighth State to enact workmen's compensation legislation.

The President appointed the Commission on Labor Relations in the Atomic Energy Installations, which, on April 18, 1949, recommended establishment of a panel to protect free collective bargaining in atomic plants.

The Federal Government's first National Conference on Industrial Safety met in Washington, D. C.

**1949** The United States Supreme Court, by denying review of a lower court's action, upheld a decision that the Labor Management Relations Act requires employers to bargain with unions on retirement plans. (*Inland Steel Co. v. United Steelworkers of America (CIO).*)

Settlement of a steel industry-United Steelworkers (CIO) strike on the basis of non-contributory \$100 monthly pensions at age 65, plus death, sickness, and accident benefits, followed a recommendation by a Presidential fact-finding board that employers contribute 6 cents an hour toward pensions and 4 cents an hour toward social insurance for each worker.

The CIO anti-Communist drive culminated in expulsion of two unions at its annual convention. Trial and expulsion of nine other unions followed early in 1950.

The free, democratic trade unions of various countries, including the CIO in the United States, withdrew early in 1949 from the World Federation of Trade Unions, which had become Communist dominated.

A new worldwide labor organization—the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)—with the AFL, CIO, and United Mine Workers participating, was formed at a meeting in December at London, England, of labor representatives from 60 countries.

**1950** A 5-year contract with no reopening provisions was negotiated by the United Automobile Workers (CIO) and the General Motors Corp. It provided for pensions, automatic cost-of-living wage adjustments, guaranteed annual increases, and a modified union shop. (Revised in 1953.)

The AFL launched a year-long series of observances commemorating the centennial



of Samuel Gompers' birth on January 27, 1850.

A United Labor Policy Committee composed of representatives of the AFL, CIO, and railroad unions was formed in December for the purpose of presenting labor's views to the Government on problems arising from the national emergency. The AFL withdrew from the Committee in August 1951, thereby dissolving the group formed in December 1950.

The Defense Production Act, authorizing the President to curb inflation and promote defense production, was approved September 8.

**1951** The International Association of Machinists reaffiliated with the AFL in January after being independent since 1945 due to jurisdictional disputes. In August, the American Federation of Hosiery Workers, formerly an affiliate of the AFL United Textile Workers, rejoined the AFL as a separate union. During the year, the CIO established the United Department Store Workers Union and the United Railway Workers of America.

The Inter-American Regional Workers Organization (ORIT) of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions was established at a meeting in Mexico City in January. It claims to represent 17 million workers in North, South, and Central America.

Labor representatives withdrew in February from all participation in the Government's mobilization and stabilization program in protest over what they felt was labor's secondary role in its operation. They voted to return in April after being given a stronger voice in policymaking.

The CIO participated with the AFL as part of the United States delegation to the International Labor Conference of the ILO for the first time since 1946.

The first amendment to the Taft-Hartley Act, permitting negotiations of union-shop agreements without previous polls of employees, became law in October. The union shop for workers on the Nation's rail and air lines had previously been approved under the National (Railway) Mediation Act in January.

**1952** A Presidential emergency board, in February, recommended agreement on the union shop between the railroads and nonoperating railroad unions representing about 1 million workers.

Three unions of railroad operating employees and the carriers reached an agreement on wage increases and working rules in May. Federal operation of the railroads was brought to an end, after being in effect since August 1950.

A strike of nearly 8 weeks' duration ended in July when the United Steelworkers of America (CIO) signed agreements with basic steel producers employing about 500,000 workers. Following the companies' rejection of Wage Stabilization Board recommendations, the Government seized the steel industry. The strike began after a district court granted an injunction restraining the seizure order, but it was halted at the request of the President pending review of the decision by the United States Supreme Court. The strike was resumed after the Supreme Court held that the President exceeded his constitu-

tional powers when he ordered the seizure.

Wage and price controls were extended until April 30, 1953, by a revised Defense Production Act. The act established a new tripartite Wage Stabilization Board without disputes-settlement authority.

Presidents of the two principal labor federations, Philip Murray of the CIO and William Green of the AFL, died in November. The AFL executive council elevated George Meany, former secretary-treasurer of the federation, to the presidency. Walter P. Reuther, president of the United Automobile Workers, was named president of the CIO by the CIO convention.

Martin P. Durkin, president of the Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Union (AFL), was designated by President-elect Eisenhower to be Secretary of Labor in the new Cabinet. Mr. Durkin was the first active union official and the fourth unionist to be named Secretary of Labor since the establishment of the Department of Labor in 1913.

**1953** President Eisenhower on February 6 ordered the end of Government controls on

wages and salaries. At the same time, he ordered prices decontrolled on a considerable list of consumer goods. All remaining price controls were terminated on March 17.

The Supreme Court of the United States upheld the right of the International Typographical Union (AFL) to compel a newspaper to pay for the setting of type not used, and of the American Federation of Musicians (AFL) to demand that a local "standby" orchestra be employed when a traveling orchestra was hired for an engagement. The court said that neither practice violated the "featherbedding" ban in the Labor Management Relations (Taft-Hartley) Act.

Martin P. Durkin resigned as Secretary of Labor on September 10. On October 8, President Eisenhower appointed James P. Mitchell, who had served as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower, to succeed Mr. Durkin.

The American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, meeting in their respective conventions, approved a no-raiding pact to extend for 2 years from

January 1, 1954. The agreement is binding only upon those member unions accepting it. Both organizations hailed the pact as the first step towards organic unity.

The convention of the American Federation of Labor on September 22 revoked the 60-year-old charter of the International Longshoremen's Association, charging corruption within the union. A new union was immediately chartered by the AFL. A bitter struggle for representation in the East Coast longshore industry, between the old ILA and the newly chartered AFL union, took place on the docks, in the courts, and in NLRB hearing rooms during the last 3 months of 1953. (Following a representation election in which the AFL union was defeated, the unaffiliated ILA was certified by the NLRB in August 1954 as collective-bargaining agent for the dock workers.)

**1954** Organic unity between the AFL and CIO moved swiftly toward accomplishment as a result of action taken during the year. A "no-raiding" agreement was activated in

June. After a series of meetings, unity committees of the two federations agreed in October upon merger without resolving in advance the jurisdiction of competing AFL and CIO unions. (Unity committees and the executive boards of the AFL and CIO approved the terms of the merger in February 1955.)

Major railroads and the unions of nonoperating railroad workers negotiated an agreement to provide comprehensive health and insurance benefits, to be financed by contributions from employers and workers.<sup>1</sup> This action raised the total number of workers covered by some type of health, welfare, and pension plan under collective bargaining to approximately 12,000,000.

In his message to Congress on January 11, 1954, President Eisenhower recommended that Congress initiate a thorough study of welfare and pension funds with a view to protecting and conserving these funds. Investigations by State and Federal committees, which uncovered instances of fraud and mismanagement on the part of local union officials

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<sup>1</sup> Employers took over full cost in 1955.

in the administration of welfare and pension funds, prompted the AFL and CIO to act to end such abuses and to establish standards for fund management and control.

Unions increased their efforts to end, or prevent the passage of, State "right to work" laws, which ban union membership as a qualification for employment. These laws were in effect in 17 States at the end of 1954. Secretary of Labor Mitchell, in an address to the CIO convention, expressed his opposition to such laws.

Proposals for guaranteed annual employment or wage plans were developed by the United Automobile Workers, the Steelworkers, the Electrical Workers, and the Rubber Workers, all CIO unions.

The AFL and CIO resumed active participation in the work of the U. S. Foreign Operations Administration in the revitalized Office of Labor Affairs, with labor missions and advisory posts abroad. American unions also continued to participate actively in international labor affairs through their affiliation with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).



**1955** The Fair Labor Standards Act was amended to raise the minimum wage for covered workers from 75 cents to \$1 an hour, effective March 1, 1956.

In June, the Ford Motor Company and the United Auto Workers (then CIO) negotiated a new 3-year agreement which established a supplementary unemployment compensation plan financed by company contributions of 5 cents an hour. Payments under the plan to eligible laid-off workers were to start on June 1, 1956. By the end of 1955, similar plans were negotiated for more than a million workers including the remainder of the auto industry.

The founding of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (the AFL-CIO) on December 5, 1955, brought into one center unions representing approximately 16 million workers—over 85 percent of the membership claimed by all unions in the United States. The last conventions of the separate organizations, held on December 1 and 2, approved the merger agreement, a new constitution, and

an implementation agreement designed to combine the two federations without dissolving either organization. The first convention of the AFL-CIO elected its president (George Meany), secretary-treasurer (William F. Schnitzler), and 27 vice presidents, 17 of whom had been proposed by the AFL and 10 by the CIO. Under the constitution, these 29 officers constitute the executive council, the governing body between the biennial conventions.

Mergers among AFL-CIO affiliates, while encouraged, are not to be dictated by the federation; conflicts among unions competing in the same field are likewise to be adjusted voluntarily. Existing State, territorial, and local bodies previously established by the CIO and the AFL are required to merge within 2 years. The constitution provided for an industrial union department to promote the interests of unions organized on an industrial basis. It was organized during the convention week, with 69 affiliated unions, including 38 former AFL unions.

