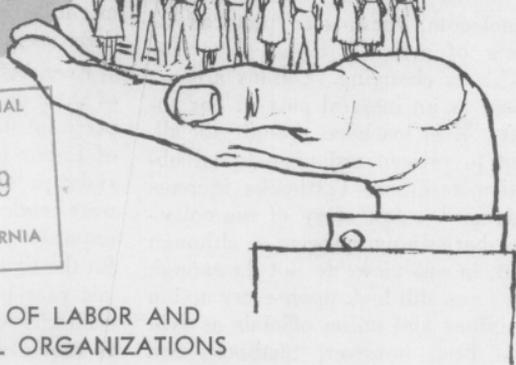


Labor movement - U.S. - Study and teaching
(1958)

Labor Materials for School Use

by Ruth Greenberg //



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Washington, 1958?

I NEED materials about the labor movement for use with my class in economics."

"Can you tell me where I can get pamphlets and class materials about labor?"

"We get so much from the manufacturers. Why doesn't labor provide pamphlets and films?"

"I am writing a paper on 'right to work' laws for my class in problems in democracy. Will you please send me some literature on the subject?"

These are typical of the requests which the Connecticut State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, receives throughout the school year. They come from teachers and students, from the lower grades and secondary schools.

There was a time when we in the labor movement could rightly complain that our children learned nothing at school about trade unions—how they function, why they exist, how they came into being—or that, if unions were mentioned in the schoolroom, they were pictured as forces of evil.

This is changing. Unions are accepted as an integral part of our society. Most teachers, though not all, want to present unionism in an objective fashion. Textbooks increasingly give a fair story of the collective bargaining process—although most, in our view, do not do enough and some still look upon every action of unions and union officials as evil.

At best, however, textbooks can

present only the outlines of the collective bargaining process or of labor history. They cannot give labor's views on current questions, nor can they explore intensively specific aspects of labor affairs, such as labor legislation, mediation and arbitration. The need for authentic materials on labor is present, as are the desire for them and the will to use them.

The Connecticut State Labor Council recognizes the situation and has embarked on a materials program for schools which it hopes will fill the need. A year ago the executive board of the Council voted to substitute such a program for the scholarship programs which the Connecticut State Industrial Union Council and the Connecticut Federation of Labor had conducted prior to the state labor merger.

As education director of the State Labor Council, I was asked to look into the kinds of materials which might be needed and ways of assuring their use.

Even before the merger, as a result of work on the Fitzgerald Scholarship program, the Connecticut Federation of Labor had begun a modest materials program. Kits of pamphlets were made available to students who requested them in order to prepare for the Fitzgerald examination. In the last year before the state merger 300 such kits were mailed out in response to requests.

Further, the Connecticut Federation of Labor suggested to the sixteen city central labor bodies that they subscribe to the *AFL-CIO News* for the secondary schools in their respective districts. This program has been continued. During the last school year the *AFL-CIO News* went to 130 schools. This is not full coverage. For the new school year we hope every high school in Connecticut will receive a subscription to the *AFL-CIO* weekly newspaper.

In order to get the labor materials program under way in our state, I have talked with Dr. Victor Pitkin of the Division of Instructional Services,

State Department of Education; social science teachers; Dr. Philmore Wass, executive secretary, Connecticut Council for the Advancement of Economic Education; Dr. Urbane Hennen, School of Education, University of Connecticut; Dr. Warren Fabyan, Teachers College of Connecticut in New Britain, and the staff of the Labor-Management Institute at the University of Connecticut.

From each has come valuable suggestions. The program which is evolving is due in large part to their counsel. Much of it will be under way before long.

The program, as planned now, is

Mrs. Greenberg chats with Connecticut University Professors John Glynn (left) and Urbane Hennen, who are writing material for secondary schools.



of three parts: (1) the distribution to interested students and teachers of pamphlets and books about labor and economic matters which are already in existence; (2) a library of films about labor for use by schools throughout the state; and (3) development of a resource unit on labor for students and teachers.

To start the program, we wrote to the principals of all Connecticut high schools. We asked whether or not they or their social science teachers would be interested in materials about the labor movement and to offer to send subscriptions to two AFL-CIO publications—*Labor's Economic Review* and *Economic Trends and Outlook*. The response to that single communication was proof to the State Labor Council of the need for a materials program.

Nearly 50 per cent of the public schools replied to that single communication. Of 104 public secondary schools, forty-eight replied requesting eighty-two subscriptions to the AFL-CIO publications. More than half of the state technical schools answered.

Response from the private and parochial schools was somewhat less impressive. Eight of twenty-three parochial schools asked to receive the publications, while nine of the forty-nine private schools requested ten subscriptions.

These subscriptions will be renewed when they expire and others added. Packets of pamphlets are being assem-

bled for teacher and student use. These packets will include the excellent Public Affairs pamphlet by Jack Barbash called "The Labor Movement in the U.S.," a sample union contract, pamphlets presenting labor's position on so-called "right to work" laws and the like.

From time to time, as new pamphlets are published which we think will have interest for teachers and students, distribution will be made to interested schools.

The second part of the Connecticut State Labor Council's materials program is the library of films. There is a growing body of 16mm. films about various aspects of labor. Many of these films are too specialized for school use, but there are excellent films available which will help to fill the requests for labor films.

For example, "With These Hands," produced by the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, tells the story of that organization through the eyes of a cloakmaker from the earliest bitter struggles for recognition to the time when the union had become an established fact.

Several films produced by the National Film Board of Canada describe why workers organize, how a union is formed and the functioning of a union. "Labor's Witness," produced by the United Auto Workers, is another film which could have value for school use. Made from film taken during a hearing before a Senate

committee, "Labor's Witness" presents UAW President Walter Reuther testifying on his union's political education program. As a demonstration of how Congressional hearings are conducted, it is excellent. These are some of the labor films which might be helpful to teachers and students.

Books, pamphlets or resource units on labor written specifically for school use are difficult to find. "Labor in America," by Mark Starr and Harold Faulkner, a high school text, and "The Story of Labor in American History," a teaching unit published by the Minnesota Federation of Labor, deal primarily with the history of labor.

Neither the Connecticut State Labor Council nor teachers we have consulted are aware of any other teaching materials on labor. Valuable as the two works mentioned are, they do not entirely fill the need for a teaching unit on the collective bargaining aspects of unions, on contract negotiation and enforcement, on the administration of unions and on the role unions play in the community, legislative and political life of present-day society.

The third part of the State Labor Council's materials program is the development of a resource unit on trade unionism which would fill this specific need. To assure itself that such a unit would have objectivity, that it would not be just another piece of propaganda and that it would have

stature as a teaching aid, the Council has sought the advice of members of the Connecticut Council for the Advancement of Economic Education and personnel in the Labor-Management Institute and the School of Education at the University of Connecticut.

From those consultations a plan has evolved for five units on trade unionism for use in the secondary schools. They will be written by John Glynn, associate professor, Labor-Management Institute, and Dr. Urbane Hennen, associate professor, School of Education, University of Connecticut. Bibliographies and suggested work projects will be included with each unit.

The units will be written in such a fashion as to be useful to student and teacher alike. There will be a general introduction (development of the industrial economy) and the units cover the function of the trade union, union administration, development and growth of trade unionism, and unions and democracy.

A NOTABLE thing about this project is the editorial policy agreed upon by the authors and the State Labor Council. The Council has said that the content and philosophy of the units will be the authors' and that it will exercise no censorship on the project. In this way the Council

hopes to set a high standard for materials developed for school use by outside organizations.

The units will be published only after teachers have read and criticized them. A first draft of the units will be presented to teachers attending the Economic Education Workshop at the University of Connecticut. Their suggestions and criticisms will be taken into account by the authors when the final draft of the units is written.

Development of a teaching unit on trade unionism is not enough, of course. Its use by as many junior and senior high school teachers and students as possible is the objective of the Council. We shall do our utmost to make this unit known to teachers.

We have no doubt that, once known, its quality and objectivity will make it a valuable aid to the teaching and study of the labor movement.

The program of materials about labor for school use as sketched here is only the beginning. It is contemplated as a continuing, growing program which will succeed only if it fills the needs of the men and women in the social science departments of our schools.

We shall be in touch with school people continually to seek their advice, to ask for their evaluation of the program. Only by constant communication does the State Labor Council feel it can serve the teachers and students of Connecticut schools.

This material appeared as an article in the November 1958 issue of the AFL-CIO American Federationist by Ruth Greenberg, education director of the Connecticut State Labor Council.



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