The American Socialist

Special Double Issue on:

American Labor Today

Bert Cochran	American Labor in Midpassage
Leo Huberman	No More Class War?
William Glazier	Automation and Labor
Harvey Swados	Labor's Cultural Degradation
Paul M. Sweezy	Condition of the Working Class
Douglas F. Dowd	The White Collar Worker
Harry Braverman	The Unions in Politics
Shubel Morgan	The Negro and the Union
David Herreshoff	Books About American Labor

JULY-AUGUST
1958

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Job You are Doing

The enclosed three dollars is little enough to pay for renewal of my subscription to the *American Socialist*. The job you are doing to educate for socialist consciousness in our country is excellent. You acknowledged my small contribution to the annual press fund, but I wish it could have been so much more. It wasn't, because I have an especially hard row to hoe these days and the dollars are very few.

The idea to publish a special issue on the U. S. labor movement today jointly with *Monthly Review* is unusual but seems to be a good experiment. Those of us who get both magazines should be urged to pass on one of them to a prospect, don't you think so?

I for one, am more than pleased with *American Socialist* and have no real fault to find with the editorial policy or the great majority of the matters treated since I began to read the magazine, January 1957, the start of your fourth year. One of the best things I can say of it is that I keep it on file complete for reference and intend to continue to do so. I've thought some about the matter of language brought up by J. G. in the May issue, and conclude that it is not possible to write for a mass audience and be sincere. Advertising copy is a good example of mass writing. Who are the workers who would have any enthusiastic reception for such stuff right now? That "mass audience," after all, must sort out, in your sub list into quite a few divisions of the population with a great range of educational level, language background and so on; and that means that many of us must have to re-read at times or look up an unfamiliar word. That's all to the good. On the whole, I think the articles are well written and within the comprehension of most workers—if they are only interested enough to want to understand. And after all, what real socialist and Marxist reader ever gets the idea that a good well-rounded understanding can be had just as easily as rolling off a log? The writers' styles vary enough to please everyone. Compare that of Kelly Hill in May with that of William Appleman Williams last July. My only complaint against the magazine is that it's only half as thick as I'd like it and it does not come out often enough and that means I like it just fine.

Perhaps our key difficulty now is how to get the people who deep down know they should be studying and doing something about socialism to do just that. So many have been gambling that they can hold two or three jobs; mortgage themselves to the eyes in time-payments; spend every spare minute making gadgets, and so forth, that they have no time to attend union or other meetings or read or study anything concerning themselves and their class. The recession should help to make them more receptive and I think the time is ripe to hit them right between the eyes with articles laying bare all their illusions, like the reprint of Murray Kempton's fine piece in the May number.

E. W. G. *New York State*

No Practical Substitute

The proper relationship of the forming Left to the big trade union movement in our country today is surely critically important. Hence my dejection after reading your Detroit Auto Worker's article on the UAW's profit-sharing and other contract proposals ["The Reuther Plan—Advance or Retreat," March 1958].

Fundamentally, the article criticized Reuther but offered no practical substitute for his tactics in the present difficult bargaining situation. It accuses Reuther of dropping the 30-hour week. But it asserts that some retreat in demands is necessary during the present period of heavy unemployment and Congressional committee attack. No program is offered as the correct one for the present situation.

In this letter I will not offer my own views on a proper program. I simply assert that to roundly criticize Reuther and offer no well-worked-out alternative is simply a factional attitude that cannot get response from auto workers who have no vested interest in factionalism.

May I also suggest that the *American Socialist* generally is weakened by not proposing proper activities that should be engaged in relative to such pressing current problems as unemployment and atom-mania.

After such a critical letter, one would get the wrong impression if I didn't add that I think the *American Socialist* generally is doing a bang-up job.

L. M. *Detroit*

Socialist but Not Dogmatic

Your magazine is good because it remains socialist without being too dogmatic; it takes in other countries in its articles, not merely the United States; and it is clearly written.

J. H. *Massachusetts*

One Man's Opinion

Here is one man's opinion: During the last two decades, the so-called "Socialist Party" literature was impossible to handle. Any time I sampled it, it went right into the waste basket with the determination not to touch it again. Seventy-five percent of Shachtman's literature went into the waste basket direct; about half of the Socialist Workers Party's, and quite a few issues of the Socialist Labor Party paper. And even the *American Socialist* stinked on occasions. As for the Communist Party, it was more full of bull than all the rest. The farther I am from this species of bird and his singing, the more I love him—in fact, the only way I can stand him is at a great distance.

But I am concerned about socialism, because I sucked it into my veins with my mother's milk. And anything that I consider unfit to read for my fellow anti-socialist, is also no damn good for me.

S. D. *Penna.*

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357

THE FORGOTTEN MAN IS BACK 3
AMERICAN LABOR IN MIDPASSAGE by Bert Cochran 5
NO MORE CLASS WAR? by Leo Huberman 11
AUTOMATION AND LABOR by William Glazier 17
A NOTE ON THE WORKER'S CULTURAL DEGRADATION by Harvey Swados 22
THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS by Paul M. Sweezy 25
THE WHITE COLLAR WORKER by Douglas F. Dowd 29
THE UNIONS IN POLITICS by Harry Braverman 32
THE NEGRO AND THE UNION: A Dialogue by Shubel Morgan 37
BOOKS ABOUT AMERICAN LABOR by David Herreshoff 39
BOOK REVIEW 44

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The Forgotten Man is Back

THE fact that the recession is no longer making daily headlines should not be taken to mean that things are no longer serious. On the contrary, the evidence continues to pile up that the American economy has settled spasmodically to a lower plateau, where it will remain for some time to come. The lessening of public outcry means merely that our ruling capitalists and government officialdom have accepted the slump as the new "normal." Five months ago, the government's do-nothing game was defended on wait-and-see grounds: a new upturn might be around the corner. By this time, it is clear that the present level of unemployment, around five million, will not elicit any curative federal intervention.

We are now in the midst, the economists tell us, of an "intermediate-size" depression, as judged by comparison with business-cycle statistics of the past century. Thinking back today to all the talk earlier in the year, two things are striking. First, the great ease with which the slump has been accepted and incorporated into the nation's daily existence, after the initial flurry of alarm. Second, the comparative ease with which the ruling policy makers were able to befuddle the nation, ward off demands for action, welsh on their promises, and settle down comfortably to a long, slow siege of economic doldrums.

What, actually, has the administration done to fight the depression? Government programs on highways, housing, and public works are hard to add up in concrete terms, because of the distinctions between contract placement and actual dollar payments; because many a "$100 million measure" often turns out, on closer examination, to be merely a measure which it is hoped will stimulate $100 million of private spending; because some of the bills simply shifted the timing of certain expenditures but did not change the full amount; because White House recommendations go through a lot of hands before they issue out of government in the form of firm commitments to spend, and often get reduced in the process. *New York Times* economic specialist Edwin L. Dale Jr. devoted a number of dispatches to the puzzle, and finally, after changing his figures a number of times, came up with the following conclusion on April 6:

> *Excluding the rise in defense spending over the original estimates, which is now a certainty, but which is not an anti-recession measure as such, it is doubtful if the budget expenditures of the Government in fiscal 1959 will rise as much as $2 billion over the President's January estimates, as a result of anti-recession measures.*

The promised extension of unemployment insurance, when finally passed, was turned into an optional aid which must be taken up state by state, and at this writing only nine states have accepted the federal offer. Most important of all, the proposals for a tax cut, offered on all sides as the major anti-slump remedy, have been so effectively mangled by the Congressional meat-grinder that no one now expects any action in this session. Lest any be quick to conclude that this is all a Republican plot, it should be noted that the Democratic leaders of the House and Senate cooperated fully with the White House in destroying chances for this single remedy, of all those officially proposed, which might have made a bit of a dent in the depression. "A tax-cutting truce is now in effect," reported the *New York Times* from Washington on April 26, "between Robert B. Anderson, Secretary of the Treasury, and the chief Democratic leaders of the House and Senate, Speaker Sam Rayburn and Senator Lyndon Johnson, both of Texas. Under a gentlemen's agreement reached in mid-March, neither side will put forward a tax relief plan without consulting the other." When Senator Douglas succeeded, in June, in forcing a vote on his tax-reduction plan, more Senate Democrats voted against than with him. Meanwhile, a number of states like Maryland and New York, trapped by declining revenue, rising expenses, and constitutional limits on their borrowing powers, have actually *increased* taxes in the last four months.

MEANWHILE, the course of the recession is not, despite whistling-in-the-dark comments, inspiring much confidence. What appears to be pretty well established is that the props to personal income, chiefly unemployment insurance, have prevented the decline from turning into a rout. But, on the cheerless side, the sector of the economy which was most responsible for the slump, capital goods spending, is due to keep on going down. Late last year, estimates were that capital spending in 1958 would be six or seven percent below 1957. In March of this year, a new survey of businessmen caused that guess to be revised sharply, to a 13 percent decline. Now, the Commerce Department and Securities &

About this Issue

The nine labor articles in this special double number represent a joint effort by *Monthly Review* and *American Socialist*. The articles were cooperatively planned, assigned, and edited for publication by the editors of both periodicals, and appear in the current issues of both periodicals. This represents a practical demonstration of fruitful cooperation on the Left since it has made possible a more comprehensive study of aspects of the labor movement than would otherwise have been the case. It is our plan to expand the contents of this issue into a book, to be published by Monthly Review Press this winter.

Readers who are not acquainted with the *Monthly Review* may obtain a sample by writing to it at 66 Barrow Street, New York 14, N. Y., and mentioning the *American Socialist*.

Exchange Commission report a new estimate as a result of their most recent survey: Expenditures are expected to be 17 percent belowe 1957 in the course of the present year. Since many capital expansion projects involve long-term plans and lengthy construction projects, it is clear that not just 1958, but the next few years as well, are involved.

The economic standstill in the face of a growing labor force and rising productivity seems to ensure that the present level of unemployment will not be reduced soon even if there is a moderate recovery from the slump, which is all that even the optimists expect. As reported by *Business Week* for June 14 under the title "More Jobless Despite Recovery," economists in the Labor Department and Census Bureau have been working on a detailed projection of the unemployment picture for the next 12 months:

> *What emerges from their analysis is the conclusion that a moderate recovery would be insufficient to make a dent in the present level of unemployment. Indeed, they reason, if the economy did no more than regain its 1957 peak by the second quarter of 1959, unemployment would be higher a year from now than it is today.*
>
> *This dour conclusion is leading some top-level economists to wonder whether a recovery too weak to reduce unemployment a year from now might not turn into a relapse, which in turn would boost unemployment considerably higher than the present peak. At least one experienced Washington hand—with a distinguished record as forecaster—thinks the recovery will be abortive and unemployment might reach 10 million in 1959.*
>
> *But even those analysts who assume a steady, continuing recovery starting in the third quarter of this year conclude that unemployment next June might be above 6 million.*

The economists reached this conclusion after taking as their starting point the optimistic estimate of the Council of Economic Advisers, that by the second quarter of 1959 the economy will make a recovery to a Gross National Product at an annual rate of $440 billion from a present level of about $420 billion. Allowing for a growth in the labor force of 750,000 to one million, a two percent productivity rise, and a recovery of the length of the work week from present low levels back up to 39.3 hours per week, the forecasters see an increase of unemployment to between six and seven million workers.

What this adds up to is saying that the best recovery now in prospect is too slow-paced and low-powered to consume the surplus of workers which has piled up and is still piling up as a result of the growth of the labor force and increasing productivity. While we have seen some remarkable recoveries and booms in the postwar period, this remains a powerful line of argument. Let us not forget that the recovery from the 1953-54 recession, although it was one of the strongest in recent economic history and carried the economy to its greatest-ever heights, still was not enough to prevent the pool of post-recession unemployment from being larger than the pre-recession unemployment. And that comeback was powered by the biggest capital goods boom in our history, which there is now no immediate prospect of repeating.

FROM the point of view of the organized labor movement, one of the most significant calculations made by the Labor Department and Census Bureau economists dealt with hours of labor. In April, weekly hours in manufacturing averaged 38.3, because of short-time operations. A lengthening of the work week in manufacturing by one hour, they calculate, would take the place of 400,000 full-time jobs that might otherwise be filled by unemployed. If this one-hour lengthening of the work week were experienced throughout the economy, by millions of others outside of manufacturing, the number of jobs thus destroyed might be as much as a million, they figure.

What is true of adding hours to the work week is equally true in reverse. A shorter week is the only way to fight the dangerous trend toward the obsolescence of a growing part of the population. In the first forty years of this century, average weekly hours were brought down from around 57 to around 40. In the nearly two decades since then, hours of work have been virtually unchanged. While we have avoided major economic troubles by means of two wars and a permanent semi-war economy, time has begun to run out. Even with our continuing giant arms budget, the prospect is for a growing army of chronically unemployed, and a consequent pressure on the wage levels of those who do have jobs, to say nothing of the unceasing threat of contagion for the entire economy.

Thus, from a strictly trade-union standpoint, the most pressing job for the labor movement is a vigorous and widespread drive for the reduction of hours. Had Reuther and the auto union held to their earlier demand of a shortened work week, the struggle with the auto corporations, into which the union has, in any case, been forced, would have opened up new prospects. From the point of view of the long-term interests of the labor movement, the auto union could have struck a great blow by carrying on, in the midst of the present recession, a vigorous drive for reduced hours that would have made a lot of sense to the public. The battle for shorter hours is, let us grant, a difficult one which calls for an extraordinary mobilization on both the economic and political levels of those unions which spearhead it, but it is a Rubicon which American labor will some time have to cross. Judging by the economic signs, that time is soon.

Despite its institutional strength, the union movement has been on the defensive for a decade. What are the weaknesses behind the powerful facade?

American Labor in Midpassage

by Bert Cochran

THE American scale is big and the trade unions have grown up to the same measure. The American trade union movement towers above all other trade union organizations as American industry towers above British, German, or Scandinavian. The British and Swedish unions have organized a larger percentage of the work force than the American, but the very breadth of the American trade union structure—with better than twice the membership of the British, with its 125,000 signed contracts, its approximately $500 million a year dues income and a roughly equal amount in local and district treasuries, its 650 weekly and 250 monthly publications, its 15,000 full-time national officials, organizers, and staff technicians and additional thousands in the localities, its million dollar buildings and office establishments—place it in a class apart. In terms of manpower, resources, and bureaucratic machinery, the American trade unions are the most powerful in the world—facing also the most powerful adversary in the world.

The very massiveness of the structure gives the labor movement social weight and latent powers of resistance, excellently shown in labor's contrasting fortunes in the two post-World War reactions. It is part of the historical record that after the nation won the wars for democracy, once in 1918, and again in 1945, labor, on each occasion, had immediately thereafter to face a sustained onslaught. Gompers' AFL did not have what it takes and succumbed to the attack: the steel strike of 1919 was crushed; the miners retreated under threat of government injunction; the packinghouse victory was quickly dissipated and the industry resumed open shop operations; the railroad shopmen's strike went under the knife. Company unionism was on the rise as the AFL lost its war-time membership gains and slid back to below the three-million mark. The unions stagnated during the twenties, surviving as isolated enclaves on the fringes of the economy. It was a far different story with the labor movement forged during the New Deal. The 1945-1946 strike wave was victorious all along the line, and came up with the first round of post-war wage increases. True, the employers had more success after they shifted their offensive to the political field and secured passage of the Taft-Hartley law. But even in the ensuing ten-year retreat, the unions continued to expand their membership with the growth of the labor force, and even bettered their percentage slightly. The membership stood at about 12¾ million in 1945 and 17½ million in 1956. If we divide the latter figure by 51,878,000 non-agricultural employees, union strength in 1956 would be a third of its theoretical potential. If we eliminate a number of virtually unorganizable categories, we get the official union calculation—40 percent of its theoretical potential. Union membership is a slightly higher percentage of the labor force than ten years ago, and four times the percentage of 1930.

AS Leo Huberman indicates in his article after reviewing some of the testimony before the McClellan Committee, the struggle against unions is going on today as it did before the advent of the CIO. We have only to mention Kohler, Perfect Circle, Square D, Louisville and Nashville, Southern Bell, Westinghouse, to recall that embittered strikes are also not unknown in the fifties. But overall, the struggle has assumed generalized political forms in an attempt to housebreak and contain the unions. Many of the biggest corporations cannot operate any longer on an open shop basis. Outright union-busting now takes place mostly in the unorganized sectors.

The union movement has held its own as a bureaucratic structure, even if it has not displayed much prowess in carrying the attack to the opponent. In the economic field, the unions are a substantial institution of a different order of power from the twenties. In the old AFL, labor unions were usually able to raise the wages of their members above the general level, but their wage rates set no pattern for the country as a whole. With the unions now bargaining for such a sizable part of the work force, amounting to 100 percent in some of the country's basic industries, the major wage agreements set a pattern that is followed to one degree or another throughout the business community. In the political field, the "reward your

friends, and punish your enemies" policy is likewise practiced on a qualitatively different scale. The unions have built a considerable machinery in the form of political action committees in the localities, positions of strength within the Democratic Party in many industrial centers, and a network of alliances with liberal political figures on the city, state, and federal levels.

The bureaucratic front looks solid, substantial, and even imposing. But behind the facade resides a creature wracked by disease. Despite its institutional strength, the trade union movement has been on the defensive and in retreat for a decade. The unions showed more political muscle inside the Democratic Party and the legislative halls twenty years ago when they were a third of their present size. Rather than mount a campaign to repeal the Taft-Hartley law, the unions have had rained on them an unending stream of hostile rulings from the National Labor Relations Board (the most recent consequences of which have been the setback in the department store field in Toledo, and the breaking of the O'Sullivan Rubber strike), the ICC attack on the "hot cargo" clauses in Teamster contracts, the passage of "right to work" laws in 18 states, and a renewal of unfavorable court judgments. (The recent Supreme Court decision permitting scabs to sue unions in the State courts has perilous implications.) The very idea of a labor counter-offensive is forgotten. Union officials are busy trying to fend off additional punitive legislation. Even social security legislation enacted during the New Deal has been permitted to erode. For example, unemployment insurance benefits—the most touted of the "built-in stabilizers" of the new peoples' capitalism—have been steadily chipped away so that by now employers have cut their tax rates by two-thirds and reduced average benefits to about one-third of weekly earnings compared to about half in 1935 when the law was passed.

THE new organizational campaigns announced at the time of the AFL-CIO merger have been stillborn. There is no substantial organization of new fields in progress. The South remains the haven of the open shop and runaway plant. Chemicals and textiles are largely unorganized. No inroads are being made among white collar workers. The breakthrough into new fields took place during the CIO crusade from 1935 to 1941. The next big membership gains came during the war when the established unions mushroomed out in their jurisdictions under the "maintenance of membership" clauses that they secured from Roosevelt's War Labor Board in return for the no-strike pledge and the wage freeze. Their expansion since has been primarily a reflection of the expansion of the work force in the unionized industries.

Traditionally, the American trade unions have not been front-line fighters for civil liberties. The craving for respectability and approbation of official public opinion has led the average conservative union official to shun associations with radicals, or those who might be tagged as radicals—even though such aloofness would endanger civil liberties, which are necessary foundation stones of free trade unions. But the labor record of the past decade has probably plumbed new depths in opportunist short-sightedness and bigotry. CIO officials got involved in the witch-hunt by themselves employing McCarthyite tactics against Communist opponents. The crooks and panderers in the AFL found anti-Communism a superb patriotic shield for their sordid transactions. Other more disinterested officials were animated by anti-Communist attitudes no different from those of officials in the American Legion or Chamber of Commerce. The labor movement has scarcely lifted a finger in the specialized sphere of government industrial security regulation, an area which directly endangers union contractual procedures. Even when the independent West Coast Longshore Union was able, through court action, to breach the Coast Guard blacklist, the decision was promptly sabotaged by the AFL-CIO maritime unions. Apathy, timidity, drift, as well as small-time opportunism—officials are able to rid themselves of opponents or potential "trouble makers" by getting them dismissed as "security risks"—these are the determinants, rather than the welfare of the labor movement as a whole.

The role of the unions so far as the transcendent questions of our time are concerned—war and peace, the H-bomb, nuclear testing, co-existence, colonial freedom—has been equally undistinguished. During the war, labor officials accepted appointments to various advisory commissions and boards. Some of the more socially alert labor officials got big notions of labor's coming role in foreign policy making. At the time, there was a considerable amount of criticism of "striped pants diplomacy" in the labor press, and demands by people like Irving Brown, Victor Reuther, and George Baldanzi, that labor officials be appointed to authoritative posts. Of course, these soap bubbles were quickly pricked after the war, and labor has relapsed into its traditional position as the object, not the subject, of foreign policy. The truth is most labor officials

are too provincial to have informed opinions on these matters. The membership rightly feels that it cannot receive guidance in this complicated sphere from union officers. Recently, there have been a few token gestures of progressivism, as when Walter Reuther and Jacob Potofsky signed citizens' declarations calling for a halt in

nuclear testing, but in the main, labor has been a faithful servitor of the cold war, while George Meany and a group of officials have been at pains to identify themselves with its most reactionary and uncompromising advocates.

IT might seem visionary to berate a labor movement for its indifference to civil liberties, or its support of the cold war, when it has permitted some of its leading unions to become sinkholes of peculation and corruption. Many might think it more important first to install better locks on the treasury boxes, and devise improved procedures for voting on union contracts, before we get unduly exercised about unionizing unorganized industries, or defending civil liberties of radicals. For forty years, labor students and sociologists have analyzed the causes of labor corruption. The most recent study (*Corruption and Racketeering in the Labor Movement,* by Philip Taft, Ithaca, New York, 1958) comes to roughly the same conclusions as previous investigations: "Basically, racketeering in labor unions appears to flow from a general slackness in American society, an emphasis upon material gain, and practices prevalent in many areas of the business community. . . . As employers in some trades will buy off inspectors, so they will make collusive bargains with a business agent." When American influence recently became marked in Western Germany, some of our labor mores apparently got transplanted, as well. "Labor representatives out of contact with their fellow workers and functioning as an organ of management on the codetermination boards have shown themselves avid spokesmen for the employers. The 'bonzen,' [bosses] as they are called, forgot their origins and became inordinately concerned with the problems of management." (p. 33-34.)

But explanation is not justification. The labor movement has arisen not to mirror the corruptions and exploitations of our acquisitive society, but to eradicate them. To the extent that unionism succumbs to the practices of the business world, it loses its *raison d'etre.* The very employers who make use of corrupt labor officials induce their political spokesmen to expose the corruption in order to discredit and undermine the labor movement. In the midst of the worst post-war depression, labor officials are preoccupied with undoing the damage of the McClellan exposures. It is startling how little has been done by the government in ten months of depression to alleviate the plight of the unemployed and how ineffectual and tame has been the response of this big labor movement. Its few feeble attempts at mass demonstrations turned into pep rallies for the Democrats. It has proven helpless even to secure passage of an improved unemployment compensation bill.

To sum up, the labor movement is not a leader in the nation today. It does not evoke an image as the protector of the underdog, the champion of progress, the advocate of the brotherhood of man. It is, in the mind of the general public, another "special interest."

BUT the unions have attained a numerical strength and a social weight where they can no longer limit themselves to their role of the past. Even if we assume that Gompers' narrow semi-syndicalist job-consciousness was the last word in statesmanship for a trade union movement of 1½ to 2 million, parceled out in craft jurisdictions, such a program is still unworkable for a labor movement of 18 million entrenched in the major industrial strongholds of the economy. Whatever historic role we assign the unions, whether the classic Marxist idea that they are the training grounds for socialist struggles, or the current sociological theory that labor is one of the important "countervailing forces" in a pluralistic society, or the liberal conception that the labor movement is a key institution for safeguarding democracy in a slowly evolving society, we would have to conclude on the empirical evidence that the labor movement's moral standing is declining and that it is not making adequate use of its powers. C. Wright Mills called the labor leaders "the new men of power" in 1948. His recent conclusion in *The Power Elite* (New York, 1956) fits the facts more accurately: "For a brief time, it seemed that labor would become a power-bloc independent of Corporation and State but operating upon and against them. After becoming dependent upon the government system, however, the labor unions suffered rapid decline in power and now have little part in major national decisions. The United States now has no labor leaders who carry any weight of consequence in decisions of importance to the political outsiders now in charge of the visible government. . . . Well below the top councils, they are of the middle levels of power." (pp. 262-263.)

The result has been a working class pushed off its perch of the thirties and reduced again to a submerged layer of society. The working class has been kept reasonably contented, however, like the proletariat of the Roman Empire, with bread and circuses. While the union organizations have solidified themselves as bureaucratic edifices, the *élan* and glow have gone, and the outlook of the ranks has grown philistine.

The more understanding of the labor intellectuals who follow union events closely recognize this state of affairs. They deplore the shortcomings and derelictions and offer suggestions for improvement. But they feel that, realistically, one cannot demand very much more from trade unions than they are doing, that unions are a functional institutionalism in our society which by its nature cannot go beyond the specific job of rendering a business service. They hold that criticisms made from the assumption that labor ought to remake our society, or be a decision-maker in the existing society, are instrinsically utopian, corresponding neither to the temper of the country, nor the wishes of the union membership. It was this sober administrative realism that led Selig Perlman and the Wisconsin school in the twenties to embrace Gompers' brand of business unionism and to ridicule the radicals. It is this same outlook that motivated J. B. S. Hardman and many labor experts in the forties and fifties to tailor their thinking to the existing labor movement.

AN empirical approach is often very effective in describing the existing situation, or estimating a slowly modifying one. But it falls down in anticipating "leaps" and "crises" in a historical development (as David Herreshoff

describes in his discussion of the Wisconsin school) and is poor at orienting itself in a fast-changing period. Even if an historical estimation contains errors, it is still more fruitful in furnishing a working hypothesis for purposes of long-range orientation and policy-planning than a merely descriptive sociology. Is this meant to suggest that the trade union movement will soon face a period of swift change as did the AFL in the early thirties? Or are the unions up against a typical round of difficulties, some of which will be eliminated by small modifications of their practices, and some of which are the usual problems that inevitably attend all organizations and human endeavors?

Beneath the general slough in labor affairs, a considerable organizational and power re-arrangement is now in progress. The unity of the AFL and CIO two years ago was a threadbare, formal affair. It was further compromised by the disproportionate weight of the AFL in the policy-making Executive Council, and the consequent submergence of the CIO, which had in the past been the more militant and democratic labor body, and which even in 1955 was the cleaner and more virile organization. But the CIO had little bargaining power. It was by that time less than half the size of its rival. The expulsion of the Communist-dominated unions had been part of the process of its loss of momentum. When afterwards, McDonald of the Steel Union started a clique battle against Walter Reuther of the Auto Workers, the CIO was in danger of disintegration and had to take the best terms available from the AFL. Inside the common federation, the industrial unions appeared to be facing an uphill journey. The crafts started to aggressively push their jurisdiction claims. The Teamsters were perfecting a series of private alliances with other unions. And the Teamster-Building Trades bloc was holding up unification of the main state and city bodies. It also seemed at the time that the employers and politicians were going to throw their influence behind the business unionists of the Beck-Hoffa stamp. (Witness the deal with Montgomery Ward, and Senator Goldwater's declaration that he hoped Hoffa's philosophy would prevail against that of Walter Reuther.)

THE McClellan Senatorial hearings transformed the picture. As an unforeseen by-product of the disclosures, the AFL-CIO hierarchy was driven to make far-reaching alterations in its internal dispositions. The Teamsters Union has been forced out of the federation. The other big wheel, the Carpenters, has its officers under a cloud as well as an indictment. The revolt of the Building Trades petered out at the 1957 Atlantic City convention; President Meany, resting on a new power bloc, told them off in words that no one would have dared employ two years ago. New, more effective machinery to arbitrate jurisdictional conflicts was subsequently adopted by the Executive Council, and under the whip of public scandalization, a degree of centralized power has been assumed which would never have been tolerated by the International chieftains in Gompers' day. The executive weight in labor's councils—for the time being at any rate—has shifted to a combination of the industrial unions and the semi-industrial AFL unions like the Machinists, Electricians, Railway Clerks.

The McClellan disclosures have forced through the adoption of the so-called ethical practices codes and the squeezing out of a number of the more compromised officials. The atmosphere around the labor movement is very different from the time when Joseph Fay slugged Dubinsky at the New Orleans AFL convention for the latter's speech against racketeering, and Dave Beck was the honored speaker at businessmen's luncheons. The unions are now under heavy pressure to clean up their more flagrant administrative abuses in order to be able to present a defensible front to the public. But the McClellan disclosures produced no revolts in the ranks. The men and women who pay the dues were voiceless. The reform was a purely top affair and therefore of restricted scope. The AFL-CIO leaders run bureaucratized organizations and had neither the capacity nor the desire to appeal to the ranks to stage internal revolts within their unions. Hence, they had no alternative course but to drop the recalcitrant unions and to sacrifice those union officials who had been caught red-handed. The cleanup campaign will eliminate a few crooked leaders and will institute some improved procedures, but the character, leadership, and direction of the present union movement will be little altered; neither will it stop the decay or retreat. For that, other methods and forces are needed.

A BASIC redirection of union policies can be visualized only as a consequence of an insurgent mood sweeping the nation, and finding reflection in union ranks. It is hard to see the unions as initiators of such a change. They will, rather, be beneficiaries of it. Left to their own devices, the union officials will perpetuate themselves in office and continue to follow the lines of least resistance. But the mass mood has see-sawed in the United States every few decades, and there is no reason to suppose that the pendulum will not swing again in the opposite direction from the present. The time intervals vary depending on a whole series of circumstances, but the oscillating process goes on.

Any new upheaval inside the unions will necessarily assume different forms from the upsurge of the thirties. The unionization wave that came with the NRA hit a predominantly unorganized and leaderless working class. The old set of AFL officials feared the mass production workers and were in any case unequipped to cope with the problems of mass unionism. They weren't even up to protecting their organizations' interests in the code setups, as the exasperated comments of Mrs. Perkins and other friendly New Dealers attest. Consequently, the political radicals were able to play a unique role in the early stages of unionization as they possessed the special skills that were at a premium at the time. They partially filled the existing vacuum of leadership. Now, however, the union movement is, in a technical sense, an excellently organized machine, and disposes of a wide network of skilled personnel. The present union officialdom constitutes a formidable bureaucratic power. New bodies of workers will be absorbed, as they are organized, into the existing organism (as they were in the more alert unions like the Miners and women's and men's clothing workers in the early thirties) rather than form a rival power center, as did the

CIO. Radicals will play an independent role inside the unions again to the extent that they represent the sentiments of sizable segments of union ranks. Their militancy and self-sacrifice will be appreciated as they were in the thirties. But they will be operating this time in a union movement headed by an entrenched and seasoned officialdom, and their technical skills may very well be inferior to those of the administration forces.

Such a trend is all the more likely because of the collapse of political radicalism in the fifties. There is no sizable cadre of men and women ready to step into the breach. At the time of the AFL-CIO merger, when there was talk of launching an ambitious organization campaign, *Fortune* magazine voiced skepticism that it would come off, and gave as one of its reasons the absence of a group of radicals able and willing to handle that kind of work. This same collapse of radicalism explains the absence of rank and file initiative in response to the McClellan exposures. It is the other side of the coin of the prevailing apathy in the unions, reflecting the listlessness in the nation at large.

NOWADAYS, labor writers ignore the essential tie-up between union democracy and radicalism, probably because radicalism is currently viewed by the academic community as something alien which intellectuals or fanatics seek artificially to inject into the bloodstream of the labor movement. There have, of course, been innumerable instances of radicalized intellectuals or intellectualized radical workers, seeking, in a wise or unwise manner, to influence conservative labor movements in the direction of their ideas. Such efforts have met at different times favorable as well as unfavorable responses, because radicalism and conservatism are varying aspects of the workers' aspirations for a better life under capitalism; now one, now the other, coming into prominence, depending on conditions. Both are endemic to the labor movement, as any reliable text of American labor history will quickly reveal. Radicalism, however, is intimately connected with union democracy for two special reasons.

First, internal union life becomes vibrant only when workers are in motion. In such times, the ranks are interested in alternative lines to official policy, and seek to participate in decision-making. This may lead them to break through, or attempt to break through, the bureaucratic crust. Ordinarily, union proceedings are pretty humdrum, and only a tiny part of the membership participates. The most recent study of a group of medium-size industrial local unions showed that attendance at meetings typically ranged from 2 to 6 percent. Naturally, controversies of any nature can excite the passions of the members and impart vigor to union proceedings. The existence of a two-party system and the waging of hard-fought election campaigns in the Typographical Union is a case in point. But it is a historical fact that democratic participation and spirited controversy occur most commonly when the membership is in a militant state and anxious to realize substantial social objectives, or to change the union personnel, or both.

Second, a rank and file group is helpless when confronting an entrenched union administration unless it has leaders and some kind of organization. Even where the administration does not seek to apply pressures, threats, or sanctions against the dissidents, the democratic process is reduced to paltry and primitive proportions where its implementation depends on a scattering of unconnected individuals who attempt to pit their proposals against

those of a well-oiled machine commanding all the resources of office. That is why when union ranks are in upheaval and seriously resolved to enforce changes, they inevitably throw up new leaders from their midst and form at least some kind of rudimentary caucuses or working groups. Where upheavals spread through a number of unions, and reflect broader social issues rather than passing grievances of a strictly local union nature, such native union radicalism tends to fuse, to one extent or another, with political radicalism—whatever the precise mechanism by which the fusion is realized.

SOCIOLOGISTS have analyzed the process by which a labor union becomes conservatized as it gains responsibilities and power, how the agitator of yesterday becomes the bureaucrat of today, and how a fighting membership settles down when it wins some improvements in its work conditions. This evolution is by now a familiar story and has been repeated in the trade unions of every country in the Western world. Within severe limitations, Michel's "law of oligarchy" operates with fidelity. But the life cycle of the labor movement does not end with the conservatization and bureaucratization of once militant and democratic movements. Capitalism does not furnish labor unions with that kind of a stable foundation. New crises arise, which breed new upheavals, and start a new cycle—at times, on a higher basis. The American labor movement didn't get fixed for eternity, or even for a very long time, with Gompers' triumph over the Knights of Labor. And the present AFL-CIO, stemming from the New Deal, is not the last word on the subject, either. But today's absence of radical ginger groups around unions, and the prostration of organized radicalism, means that new moods of in-

surgency will find expression more slowly. It will take more time for the ranks to throw up new spokesmen. Internal union changes will rest for some time to come in the hands of the present officialdom, sections of it reflecting at times progressive currents.

Over forty years ago, John R. Commons wrote: "It doubtless has appealed to some people who consider the employer's position more powerful than that of the union, that the employer should be compelled in some way to deal with unions, or at least to confer with their representatives. But if the State recognizes any particular union by requiring the employer to recognize it, the State must necessarily guarantee the union to the extent that it must strip it of any abuses it may practice." (U.S. Commission On Industrial Relations, *Final Report*, Washington, 1915, p. 374.)

These remarks have a prophetic ring today. During the New Deal, labor officials started to lean on government boards and depend on government mediation machinery. The CIO officials embraced the alliance without qualm or inhibition. The AFL hesitated for a few brief moments, but soon forgot old Sam Gompers' admonition that "what they give, they can take away," and followed suit. The labor leaders have grown accustomed to using crutches and their walking limbs have atrophied. When the government turned its scowling side on the labor movement and passed the Taft-Hartley law, John L. Lewis proposed that the unions bypass the law and rely on their economic strength. But the labor hierarchs found this too strong meat for their stomachs. They decided to live with the law. The unions are now enmeshed in a tangle of legal regulations, NLRB rulings, and court decisions, which have made unionism a happy hunting ground for lawyers. With each new decision, the unions sink deeper into the quagmire of legalistic red tape and restrictive regulation. The hiring of more lawyers, more statisticians, more lobbyists, is not the unmixed blessing that many labor writers imagine. It is by no means exclusively a sign of maturity. Up to a point, it is the inevitable concomitant of big unionism dealing with vast corporations and a swollen government bureaucracy. But it also testifies, in part, to the flabbiness of labor unions which have permitted themselves to be sucked into the maw of capitalist government, and have consequently surrendered a part of their hard-won independence. Whatever be the fate of the new batch of laws now before Congress and the State legislatures, this is a process which will most likely continue and deepen, given the forces at play on both sides.

THE unions are not only caught in the coils of government regulation, but will time and again be faced with punitive edicts which will represent real dangers to their functioning and interfere with their growth. That is why the impulse to enlarge their political influence will grow with each new harassment. The authors of the Taft-Hartley law feared such a reaction and tried to forestall labor politics with crude proscriptions. But labor is strong enough to surmount these and future obstacles thrown in its path if it has the will to political power. Very likely, labor's political experimentations will eventually culminate with the establishment of some kind of labor party. Whatever its institutional form, however, it appears to be labor's manifest destiny to emerge on the political scene in another decade with at least the comparable effectiveness of its British cousins.

The process gives every indication of proceeding along the lines of slow, ponderous change—except for the fact that United States capitalism, as the twentieth century empire builder, is caught in a crisis of monumental proportions, and absorbs the crisis of every part of the so-called free world within its own system. What the precise impact of the crisis will be on the labor unions is difficult to gauge. A lot depends on the economic situation at home. An armaments prosperity bolstered by credit buying has up to now acted as a powerful soporific, effectively doping the working people and nestling intellectuals in clouds of euphoria. But the current depression is breaking the hypnosis. It is not the maintenance of any special level of living standard that determines the political mood. Given a certain minimum level, it is the feeling of security that makes for conservatism and acquiescence, and the feeling of uncertainty that provokes anxiety and impatience. Because the unions are being pushed irrevocably into the volatile sphere of politics, they will react with increasing sensitivity to coming atmospheric disturbances. And the signs point to a stormy decade ahead.

Capitalists employ labor for the amount of profit realized and workingmen labor for the amount of wages received. . . . This is the only relation existing between them; they are two distinct elements, or rather two distinct classes, with interests as widely separated as the poles. We find capitalists ever watchful of their interests—ever ready to make everything bend to their desires. Then why should not laborers be equally watchful of their interests—equally ready to take advantage of every circumstance to secure good wages and social elevation? . . .

If workingmen and capitalists are equal co-partners, composing one vast firm by which the industry of the world is carried on and controlled, why do they not share equally in the profits? Why does capital take to itself the whole loaf, while labor is left to gather up the crumbs? Why does capital roll in luxury and wealth, while labor is left to eke out a miserable existence in poverty and want? Are these the evidences of an identity of interests, of mutual relations, of equal partnership? No sir. On the contrary they are evidences of an antagonism. This antagonism is the general origin of all "strikes." Labor has always the same complaints to make, and capital always the same oppressive rules to make and powers to employ. Were it not for this antagonism, labor would often escape the penalty of much misery and moral degradation, and capital the disgrace and ruin consequent upon such dangerous collisions. There is not only a never-ending conflict between the two classes, but capital is in all cases the aggressor. Labor is always found on the defensive because:

Capital enjoys individual power and in the exercise of that is given to encroach upon the rights and privileges of labor.

Labor is individually weak and only becomes powerful when banded together for self-defense. . . .

Capital knows no other commercial principle than that . . . which says "buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest" but which if applied to labor means "keep down the price of labor and starve the workingman." . . .

If there is a mutuality and oneness of feeling, I ask, sir, what means this universal uprising of the workingmen of this continent who are rushing together as with the power of the whirlwind, towards one common center—a union of workingmen?

—William H. Sylvis, Speech to the Ironmolders International Union Convention, 1864.

Although the forms of attack have changed and unions are well entrenched in many industries, bitter anti-labor offensives, using many of the employer weapons of the past, still continue.

No More Class War?

by Leo Huberman

ON November 28, 1953, a testimonial dinner was held in the city of Pittsburgh in honor of Mr. David J. McDonald, President of the United Steelworkers of America, CIO. Present on that historic occasion, one of the many featured speakers gathered to pay honor to the leader of the union, was Mr. Benjamin F. Fairless, Chairman of the Board of the United States Steel Corporation. Mr. McDonald, head of the largest steelworkers' union in the world, and Mr. Fairless, head of the largest steel company in the world, had just returned from a two-week tour of the steel plants. Mr. Fairless thought that the "program of plant visitations" which he and his colleague had inaugurated was a very good idea. He reported to the assembled dinner company:

> *We have also had an opportunity to look beyond the immediate issues that divide us, and to see in much better perspective, I think, the one overshadowing task that confronts all of us today: the task of finding a road that leads to industrial peace.* (*Benjamin Fairless,* The Task Ahead, *United States Steel Corporation, New York.*)

Having stated the problem, Mr. Fairless went on to give his solution:

> *It can be accomplished very simply, I think, if we can ever rid ourselves of the utterly false idea that our economic interests are in conflict and that therefore we must always try to take something away from each other.*
>
> *Actually, of course, our interests are identical. For better or worse, we are inseparably bound together in a state of economic matrimony.*

It comes as no surprise, of course, to hear from the lips of an employer that the economic interests of workers and employers are identical. Nor would it be surprising to learn that many of the workers in the audience (if indeed there were any present) believed with Fairless that there is no class conflict. For that is the message which the current crop of labor leaders have been preaching to them for some time. Thus the *International Musician,* organ of the American Federation of Musicians, ran excerpts of the Fairless speech in its February 1954 issue, with this foreword: "The sentiments contained therein are practically identical with the thoughts expressed by President Petrillo at numerous conventions of the Federation, to the effect that the interests of the employer and employee are bound together and that each needs the other, and instead of antagonizing each other they should endeavor to cooperate."

THE editor's claim that Petrillo had already said it at "numerous conventions of the Federation" is probably true, but there is no doubt at all that Dave Beck, now outside the pale, but then General President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, beat employer Fairless to the lovefest by almost three months. In his Labor Day statement of September 7, 1953, Beck said:

> *We call upon industry to join with labor in ushering in a new era of labor-management cooperation.*
>
> *If labor and management could rid themselves of old-fashioned—actually Marxian—notions that they are forever locked in bitter opposition . . . then our country would soar to new heights of accomplishment.*
>
> *The key to this magnificent future is not industrial peace, which implies a compact between warring factions, but industrial fellowship, based on common understanding for a common goal.*

There are some employers who would look with cynicism at Petrillo's plea for cooperation and Beck's clarion call for "industrial fellowship." They would demand "deeds not words." To the most hardboiled employers in America, the members of the National Association of Manufacturers, in convention assembled in New York (December 1956) came a leader of labor who could satisfactorily answer this demand for "deeds not words." Where could one find better credentials for a top labor leader anxiously disassociating himself from the thought of class struggle than these from George Meany:

> *I never went on strike in my life, never ran a strike in my life, never ordered anyone else to run a strike in my life, never had anything to do with a picket line. . . .*
>
> *In the final analysis, there is not a great difference*

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between the things I stand for and the things that NAM leaders stand for. I stand for the profit system; I believe in the profit system. I believe it's a wonderful incentive. I believe in the free enterprise system completely.

Meany's junior partner in running the AFL-CIO is Walter Reuther, President of the United Automobile Workers. The *New York Times* of March 28, 1958, quotes Reuther as saying: "We don't believe in the class struggle. The labor movement in America has never believed in the class struggle."

We must accept the first sentence of Reuther's statement as a true expression of his beliefs. But about the second sentence there is some dispute. At any rate, the founders of the AFL, writing in 1881, certainly had an awareness of the existence of the class struggle since this is what they put into the Preamble to the Constitution of the American Federation of Labor:

Whereas, a struggle is going on in all the nations of the civilized world between the oppressors and the oppressed of all countries, a struggle between the capitalist and the laborer, which grows in intensity from year to year, and will work disastrous results to the toiling millions if they are not combined for mutual protection and benefit. . . .

In the minds of Meany and other AFL leaders this Preamble had long been out of date, so when the AFL and CIO merged in 1955, a new Preamble to the Constitution of the combined organizations was written which contained no hint of class conflict.

The class war, however, cannot be so easily swept under the rug. It may be what Dave Beck called "old-fashioned" and "Marxian" but it does exist—and all the talk by the Fairlesses and the labor leaders about the harmony between capital and labor will not make it disappear. In capitalist society there can be no such harmony because what is of benefit to one class comes out of the pocket of the other, and vice versa. The individual capitalist may want to raise wages, but to the extent that he does, he cuts into his profits. And if he cuts into his profits too much, he'll have to go out of business.

IT is true, of course, that if a capitalist owns his own plant and wants to play Santa Claus to his workers, no one can stop him. And there may be a few eccentrics of this kind. But today most business is carried on by big corporations, and if the management of a corporation should try to behave that way, the stockholders could go to court and get an order prohibiting the squandering of the owners' assets. In a system of corporate capitalism, in other words, the law *requires* businessmen to devote themselves to one end and one end only, the making of the greatest possible profit. And with that end in view, it is natural for the employers to resist wage increases by whatever means possible.

These are the facts of capitalist life, clear to intelligent non-Marxists as well as Marxists. Here, for example, is what the Brookings Institution, the most conservative of the respectable economic research organizations, had to say on the subject almost a quarter of a century ago:

For each particular business man, wages constitute one of the most important elements of cost; hence if he can reduce wage rates, he can gain a differential advantage over his competitors. Whatever the ultimate general results, there is immediate gain for the individual business enterprise which can reduce wages below the existing market rate.

Increases in wages above the market rate are resisted for similar reasons. As a general proposition, every individual business concern hesitates to advance its wages above the market level. The reason is obvious in cases where the margin of profit is slight; since competition cannot be met if prices are raised, an increase in wages threatens bankruptcy. But in the case of companies which have profit margins sufficient to permit an expansion of wages without an increase of prices, there are deterring considerations.

To pay more than the market rate for wages appears not only needless but also unstabilizing in its effects upon business generally. Moreover, the very essence of competition is to pay what has to be paid and not more. Why should one ignore market considerations when he hires labor anymore than when he buys raw materials? . . .

Wage increases as a rule are granted only under pressure—exerted by a general scarcity of labor or by the power of labor organizations. (Income and Economic Progress, *Washington, D.C., 1935, pp. 110-112.*)

It is because wage increases are won "by the power of labor organizations" that employers have made war on labor unions in the past and why they continue to carry on that war in the present. That continual war is the expression of class conflict in capitalist society. It goes on in spite of the fact that some labor leaders say, with Walter Reuther, that "we don't believe in the class struggle."

THE war between capital and labor changes with the changing times. It took American workers a century and a half of militant battling before they succeeded in having written into law their right to organize into unions and to bargain collectively without interference from the employers. The passage of the Wagner Act in 1935 coincided with the appearance on the trade union scene of the CIO with its emphasis on industrial unionism in place of the traditional craft union policy of the AFL. In the wave of organization that followed, trade union membership skyrocketed; within four years the CIO had enrolled over four million members—more than the AFL had organized in its 59-year history—and the AFL's membership also reached new highs. During the period from 1935 to 1945, trade union membership quadrupled; in the next ten-year period from 1945 to 1955, membership increased only about 25 percent. Membership in United States unions in 1956 totaled approximately 18.5 million, which,

deducting the more than a million of these members living outside continental United States (primarily in Canada), equaled about 25 percent of the labor force.

Membership in American unions continues, as it has for a long time, to be heavily concentrated in a few large organizations. Thus, of 189 national and international unions, the six at the top in 1956—teamsters, auto, steel, machinists, carpenters, and electrical workers (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers)—had more than a third of all organized workers. A survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the combined membership of these six biggest unions was more than two and a half times as great as the total white-collar membership. The number of white-collar workers organized into unions is 2.5 million, or less than 15 percent of total union membership.

The open bloody warfare that accompanied the spectacular growth of unions in the 1930's is much less prevalent today—except in the South. But that employers still resort to violence to "keep the union out" is shown in the opening paragraphs of a story which appeared in the *New York Times* on September 8, 1953—two months before Fairless of U.S. Steel was orating on the "identity of interests" of labor and capital, and exactly one day after Dave Beck called the perpetual labor-employer conflict an "old-fashioned" notion:

> *Hyden, Ky., Sept. 7—In the capital of the non-union coal producing country here, John L. Lewis' United Mine Workers Union has been waging a campaign for more than two years to bring the operators under contract.*
>
> *Eight organizers have been shot, one of them died, another is completely paralyzed. Cars have been dynamited and union meeting places, members' homes and friendly merchants' stores have been blasted or fired upon. The union and its local leaders have been sued, indicted, enjoined and even jailed.*

This kind of violence, so typical of the labor-capital war in the 1930's, seldom makes the headlines today. The Kohler Company war on the UAW, now in its fourth year, has been fought on the old lines with gun emplacements, barricades, machine guns, strikebreakers, and mass firings, but this is no longer the common pattern. Some of the most viciously anti-union employers of the old days fought the Kohler way, lost the battle, and now have collective bargaining contracts with powerful unions. Making a virtue out of necessity, they refer to union representation as "an accepted part of our industrial system" (Fairless, *op. cit.*).

THIS imprimatur coming from the big industrialists who have no choice now that they are faced with mighty union organizations which grew out of the bloody conflicts of the past; plus the fact that apart from exceptions like those in Kentucky and Kohler noted above (and in the South), the riot gun, tear gas, armed guards type of battling is not nearly so common as it once was; plus the legal restraints imposed on anti-unionism by the Wagner Act and other legislation—these changes have created the general impression that management accepts unionization, that employers no longer make war on labor organization. This may be true of those industries where unions already exist, but it is definitely not true in the unorganized sector. The evidence that many employers are still unreconciled to unions, that they do everything they can to block the efforts of their employees to organize, and that, if they fail, they then make "sweetheart" agreements with "cooperating" unions, is conclusive. It comes from the Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor or Management Field of the United States Senate—the McClellan Committee.

The McClellan Committee devoted most of its attention to an investigation of union racketeers and union racketeering. It conducted only two months of hearings on employer anti-unionism. It did not probe nearly so deeply into this subject as did the LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee in the 1930's. But it uncovered enough to show that big and little firms today, like big and little firms yesterday, still carry on the anti-union war—with the techniques tailor-made to fit the changed legal situation.

The McClellan Committee turned its spotlight on the activities of Nathan W. Shefferman and his firm, Labor Relations Associates of Chicago, representing some 400 clients throughout the United States. One of hundreds of similar "labor relations" outfits, LRA earned a gross income of $2,481,798.88 for the seven-year period from January 1949 through December 1955. Among its clients were these familiar names: Victor Adding Machine Company, Chicago; All-State Insurance Company; Blue Cross, Jacksonville, Florida; the Mennen Company; S. S. Kresge Company, Detroit; American Express, New York; Schaefer Brewing Company, Brooklyn; United Parcel Service; Nieman-Marcus Company, Houston; Abraham & Straus, Brooklyn; the Lerner Shops, Altman's, Bloomingdale's, and Macy's.

Shefferman was set up in business in 1939 "with the aid, advice, and financial assistance of Sears, Roebuck & Co." (*Interim Report* of the McClellan Committee, p. 274.). For union-busting activities, companies are willing to spend lavishly. Before the LaFollette Committee, General Motors officials testified that they had paid out

to all the labor spy agencies they had hired in the period from January 1934 to July 1936, the sum of $994,855.68. McClellan Committee investigators found that in the years 1953 through 1956, Sears, Roebuck had paid to Shefferman and his union-busting agency a total of $239,651.42. Sears was so pleased with Shefferman's anti-union work that it recommended his agency to its suppliers, gave him discounts to win the favor of his clients, and paid "entertainment expenses" for some of them.

WHY? What did Sears get in return for the nearly a quarter of a million dollars which it paid to LRA? It got what it wanted—defeat of the AFL Retail Clerks Union drive in its Boston store. When the Shefferman agency operatives had finished their "work," the majority of the Sears employees voted for no union. It wanted to keep other stores from being organized—LRA worked on that, too. It wanted unions kept out of the plants of its suppliers such as the Whirlpool Corporation which manufactures Sears' "Kenmore" refrigerators, ranges, and washing machines—the McClellan Committee gives the details of LRA's union busting program at the Whirlpool plant, and says in its *Interim Report* (p. 267): "The evidence showed that next to Sears, Roebuck & Co., the largest single payments of retainers were made to Shefferman's firm by the Whirlpool Corp. for work done in connection with its plants at Marion and Clyde, Ohio, and St. Joseph, Mich." Sears didn't want its workers organized—LRA's success is shown in the fact that only 14,000 of its 205,000 workers have joined a union, and half of the 14,000 are in the Teamsters Union. Dave Beck and Shefferman were bosom pals—trips, entertainment, and presents for Beck were paid for by Shefferman with Sears money; this may help to explain why the Teamsters have never really gone after organizing Sears.

The evidence is plain—Sears got its money's worth from LRA. Shefferman's agency employed 35 operatives who were assigned to whatever client anywhere in the country was having "union trouble." The techniques they used to smash the union or bring in a cooperating union with a "sweetheart" contract varied according to the particular setup, but the general pattern was the same. It was well illustrated to the McClellan Committee in the story of the Morton Frozen Food Company which opened a plant for the making of frozen meat pies, fruit pies, and TV dinners at Webster City, Iowa, in February 1955.

After the plant had been in operation four months, field representative Eugene Peterson of the United Packinghouse Workers, CIO, started a drive to organize the 200 women and 100 men employees. The Morton Company hired LRA to keep the union out. John Nevett, agency operative, soon turned up in Webster City, and the anti-union campaign took shape: (1) Two pro-company men were sent to a local attorney who helped them organize a "We, the Morton Workers" committee which promptly prepared and distributed anti-CIO leaflets. (2) The anti-union committee was enlarged and, with Nevett, checked off on a list those employees who were pro-union and those who were anti-union. (3) Some of the pro-union employees were fired, some were transferred to inferior jobs.

Nevett worked intermittently for about five months; his "We, the Morton Workers" committee continued to put out its anti-union leaflets; for new applicants for jobs a "family information form" was prepared by Nevett and gone over by the attorney for the plant who noted "o.k." or "no" on them. When the NLRB election was held on November 22, 1955, the result was: for the Packinghouse Workers Union 103, against the union 196, challenged 14.

For its work in keeping the union out of the plant, LRA was paid by the Morton Company the sum of $12,590.29. But the Morton Company did well on the deal—in other food plants which had been organized by the Packinghouse Workers and had a union contract, average wages for women workers were 26 cents per hour higher and for men 48 cents per hour higher. So by hiring LRA to keep the union out, Morton had saved roughly $170,000. (*Interim Report,* p. 259.)

IN the ordinary course of events that would be the end of this anti-union story. But shortly after the election, the Morton Frozen Food Company became a division of the Continental Baking Company of New York. And whereas Morton wanted no union in the plant, Continental did want a union—its own pet, the Bakery and Confectionery Workers' International Union. What the workers at the plant wanted didn't seem to matter—Continental wanted to sign up with the Bakery union.

The Bakers, at the invitation of Continental, put on an organizing drive, but unfortunately for management, the workers had learned their *no-union* lesson from LRA too well, and the Bakers drive didn't get off the ground. What to do? Call Shefferman. Done. Enter Charles Bromley, LRA operative sent in to generate union interest on the part of the workers for the Bakers union.

Phyllis Ring, secretary to plant manager Binns when all this was going on, gave this testimony to the McClellan Committee:

> SENATOR ERVIN. *As I understand it, Mr. Nevett, representing the Shefferman interests, came down to teach that unions were bad?*
>
> MRS. RING. ***Yes.***
>
> SENATOR ERVIN. *And then Mr. Bromley, representing the Shefferman interests, came down to teach that the unions were good?*
>
> MRS. RING. *Yes.*
>
> SENATOR ERVIN. *And you say Mr. Bromley had some difficulty because Mr. Nevett had been such a good teacher?*
>
> MRS. RING. *That is right.*
>
> (Hearings, *Part 15, p. 5799.*)

Bromley went about the job of "re-educating" the Morton workers, securing signatures on Bakery Union cards; meanwhile, in the office of Shefferman in Chicago, without the knowledge of the Bakers union representative in Webster City, the higher-ups of Continental and the union signed an agreement which the Senate committee reports was "arrived at without the formality of an NLRB elec-

tion and . . . the negotiations were conducted without the participation or even the knowledge of the workers who were to be affected by this contract." (*Interim Report,* p. 263.)

The Bakers union representative, Merle Smith, testified that when he finally saw a copy of the contract, his reaction was one of "disgust, disappointment and just—I was almost ready to blow my top." (*Hearings,* Part 15, p. 5880.) It was a "sweetheart" all right, since it "provided no seniority protection to the employees, allowed the company to do away with a wage incentive program without consulting the union, and provided only a 5-cent wage increase." (*Interim Report,* pp. 265, 266.)

It becomes obvious, from the findings of the Senate Committee, that Labor Relations Associates was not selling what its name suggests. On the contrary, it was selling *no* labor relations. That's what the employers wanted, that's what they were paying for. Senator McClellan, chairman of the committee, said so in a statement issued on November 5, 1957:

> *The activities disclosed before this committee reflect a great discredit on some business firms in this country. They cannot adopt the posture, as did some of the firms appearing here, that all this was the doing of Mr. Shefferman and his agents. . . . It was management who paid the bills for the activities of Nathan Shefferman, and it was management which knowingly utilized the services of Nathan Shefferman with no compunctions or regrets until the revelations in recent months. They were aware of what they were doing and how their money was being utilized.* (New York Times, *November 6, 1957.*)

It must not be supposed that the old reliables in "labor relations," the old spy agencies like Burns and Pinkerton whose activities in union-smashing were revealed by the LaFollette Committee, have left the field to Shefferman. Not at all. In a front-page story on December 1, 1953, the *Wall Street Journal* tells us: "The private detective, hero of many a mystery story and TV thriller, is doing more and more of his sleuthing on behalf of business these days. . . . All told, it's estimated that there are over 5000 private detective agencies in the country, taking in more than $150 million a year. . . ."

UNDOUBTEDLY many of these agencies are investigating in fields completely unrelated to labor relations—pilferage in plants, credit risks, fraud, and—such are the ethics of capitalist society—the customers and secrets of their clients' business competitors. But business firms hire these agencies for still another reason, according to Mr. John O. Camden, vice-president of the Pinkerton agency: "There's a growing concern in business about Communist infiltration into plants and offices." (*Wall Street Journal,* December 1, 1953.)

This explanation sounds plausible in a period of cold war when the hunt for so-called "security risks" has become a national obsession. But it is not so convincing when we recall that the predecessors of Mr. Camden, on the stand before the LaFollette Committee, also talked about ferreting out sabotage, theft, Communists, when they were really spying out members of unions. Here are the Pinkerton officials on the stand:

> SENATOR LAFOLLETTE. *Mr. Pinkerton, will you take a look at that exhibit, please* [*Pinkerton journal sheet*], *and tell me what kind of information you would say the agency would try to get for the United States Rubber Reclaiming Company?*
>
> MR. PINKERTON. *Information dealing with sabotage, theft of material and other irregularities. . . .*
>
> [SENATOR LAFOLLETTE *then reads a report of a Pinkerton spy, dated May 16, 1936,* describing a union meeting *attended by some workers of the United States Rubber Reclaiming Company, Buffalo, N. Y.*]
>
> SENATOR LAFOLLETTE. *Would you say that this report had to do with investigation of sabotage of the company's property, theft or other irregularities?*
>
> MR. PINKERTON. *No, sir.*
>
> SENATOR LAFOLLETTE. *What would you say, Mr. Rossetter, about that?*
>
> MR. ROSSETTER [*vice-president and general manager*]. *I would say that it did not touch those points, but my impression is that that was a "Red" organization. I am not familiar with the names of the different units comprising the Communist Party or its supporters, but that report would cover—*
>
> SENATOR LAFOLLETTE (*interrupting*). *Would you say it had anything to do with the investigation of the company's property, theft of materials, or other irregularities?*
>
> MR. ROSSETTER. *It might lead to sabotage if those people were the kind that I think they may be—Communists.*
>
> SENATOR LAFOLLETTE. *Now, Mr. Rossetter, isn't it true that the description, in the Pinkerton journal, of*

sabotage, theft and irregularity often actually covers up investigations to be made of union activities?

MR. ROSSETTER. *Well, if you can take that as a sample, I will have to say "yes" to it. . . .*

(*Quoted in Leo Huberman,* The Labor Spy Racket, *New York, 1937, pp. 14, 15. Emphasis added.*)

Today, the prevailing practice is to hire ex-FBI men to ferret out "security risks." One of them, agent Albert J. Tuohy, Security Director for Republic Aviation, gleefully described his tactics in an article in the magazine *Factory Management & Maintenance* in October 1954. The article was entitled "What You Can Do About Communists In Industry." Here is Mr. Tuohy's answer—note how quickly the jump is made from "Communists" to active unionists:

Fire 'em! . . . That's exactly what we did to 250 of them this year. . . . Of those 250, only 15 were known Communists. No matter. They all get the same treatment. . . .

We're alert to which men are becoming prominent in plant organizations ranging from hobby and sport to religious and political groups. We know who is running for office and who has been elected in the various organizations.

Techniques of spying out unionists have, of course, changed with the times. This is the age of electronics and the newest methods include hidden television cameras and wire-tapping. This became front-page news in New York City in December 1957, when the Motormen's Benevolent Association went on strike for eight days. When the details of secret conversations in union headquarters became known to Transit Authority officials, Frank Zelano, executive secretary of the union, wondered how it happened. He searched the meeting room and found a small microphone embedded in a sponge which was fastened to the underside of a radiator. Wires attached to the microphone led to a recording room in an office building. Further investigation disclosed that ever since the union had been formed, in 1955, its headquarters and meeting halls had been "bugged" by the Transit Authority.

MOST expert, perhaps, of the professional wiretappers and eavesdroppers is a man named Bernard Spindel. In testimony before a Congressional committee in March 1955, he amazed his listeners by claiming that he could stand outside the building he was in and listen to telephone conversations inside; make a record of private conversations with a device 500 yards away from the talkers; stand several feet from a row of public phone booths and record, without direct tap wires, both sides of a conversation on any of the phones. (*New York Times,* March 31, 1955.)

Obviously so highly skilled a specialist would not long go unnoticed by business. In an illuminating article entitled "The Private Eyes" in the *Reporter* for February 10, 1955, we learn that Spindel has indeed found all kinds of employment for his specialty. Here is a description of part of one operation conducted for the manager of an eastern aircraft factory:

To maintain a constant watch over the activities of plant employees, Spindel has installed no less than twelve bugs—four in the men's washroom, two in the women's washroom, and six in the company dining hall. . . .

"That's one factory where nobody pulls wool over the boss's eyes," Spindel boasts. "The manager has found the setup very useful. He knows just which employees are acting up on the outside. He knows which junior executives are loyal to him and which are his enemies, and that way he knows who to promote and who to fire."

It's loyalty to the *country* which is, supposedly, in question in the case of security risks; but the loyalty which determines who gets promoted or fired in this aviation factory, is loyalty "to him"—the boss. And active unionists, or any one left of Senator Knowland, are always looked upon as disloyal.

Beneath the sugar-coating of sweet phrases concerning the partnership of capital and labor, there lies the bitter pill of class war. So long as society is divided into classes with opposing interests, the class war must exist. There is no use in imagining that it is merely the invention of agitators—and that if only people would stop believing in it, it would vanish. That is as ridiculous as saying that those scientists who discovered the atom, invented it, and if only people would stop believing in it, it would cease to exist.

The class struggle can no more be willed *into* being by those who accept it as a fact of capitalist life than it can be willed out of being by those who reject it.

Far from being advocates of class war, those of us who are socialists are unalterably opposed to it. We believe in the brotherhood of man, in the Golden Rule—instead of the rule of gold. That's why we are in favor of the transition from a society in which classes *must* exist, capitalism, to a society in which classes will not exist, socialism.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the worker who is freed from his trade union is thereby left in servitude to his employer.

* * *

I hardly need to point out that the doctrine of the supposed harmony of interests is, historically, a propaganda device more or less coincident in origin with the birth of classical economics and intended to protect its main postulates from the devastating attacks of its early critics. I suspect, indeed, that any labor leader would have refused to accept it in, say, the little depression of 1937. It has never proved convincing to organized labor except in times of overwhelming boom; and it is one of the first concepts to be thrown overboard as boom conditions decline and the signs of a depression begin to make themselves felt.

Harold J. Laski, *Trade Unions in the New Society,* 1949.

If the workers surrender control over working relations to legislative and administrative agents, they put their industrial liberty at the disposal of state agents. They strip themselves bare of means of defense—they can no longer defend themselves by the strike. To insure liberty and personal welfare, personal relations must be controlled only by those concerned.

Samuel Gompers, *The Workers and the Eight-Hour Day,* 1915.

With automation, the tempo of capitalism's efficiency-hunt has speeded up. But what will be the outcome, under our system of production for profit, of the search for new ways to produce more with less labor?

Automation and Labor

by William Glazier

". . . the automatic machine, whatever we think of any feelings it may have or may not have, is the precise economic equivalent of slave labor. Any labor which competes with slave labor must accept the economic conditions of slave labor."
Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings*
New York, 1954, p. 162.

WHENEVER a new machine or system of machines increases labor productivity in any society the opportunity presents itself for the working people to live a better life. As far as the United States is concerned, the extent and the timing of any such improvements in living standards depend, of course, upon the outcome of a whole series of economic and political contests between workers and employers. These differences over how the output is to be divided up, and the compromise solutions which result, are usually irrelevant to the production potential of the machines themselves. Similarly, in an underdeveloped country, or in one operating under a planned economy, although the manner in which it is decided how increased productivity will be used is not the same, it nevertheless still holds true that the considerations brought into play are again not directly related to the latent productivity of a new technique or machine.

We must keep this rather obvious point in mind when examining the impact of automation upon labor in the United States. Ours is an economy driven by profit, and this, rather than the dramatic and even revolutionary effect of automation upon labor productivity, must be our point of departure. It is automation under American capitalism which is our interest, not automation in the abstract. Scientists and technologists may paint pictures of the "push button world" opening up to mankind, but when we try to see how labor in the United States might benefit from it or how labor can minimize the burdens which such a change in the production process would impose on working people, we find ourselves again concerned with those facts about the economic organization of our society which persist despite changes going on in the techniques of production.

Workers, whether organized into trade unions or as individuals, have always faced the introduction of new machines with apprehension and misgiving. Machines displace men, and although social scientists can construct theories which prophesy a painless process of less sweat and toil, higher output, reduced prices, new jobs, a higher standard of living, and more leisure, in practice it rarely works out this neatly. The question for the individual worker—or for his union—is not what will happen to the entire economy in the long run as the result of introducing advanced production methods, but what to do right now about the specific man or woman whose job has been taken over by a machine.

A recent ILO report on automation and technological developments puts the issue in these words:

> *Thus the long-run outlook is good. But in the meantime many short-run problems have to be met with imagination and vigor. It is significant that most of these relate to the labor and social aspects of technological change rather than to the technical aspects and to our ability as a society to absorb change readily to the general benefit of the people.* (*Report of the Director-General, Part I, "Automation and Other Technological Developments," ILO, Geneva, 1957, p. 3.*)

The challenge which automation presents is not a new one to working people. From their point of view, it is still more of the same never-ending scramble to make a living. To the employers and owners of industry, however, the move to automated production opens up the vista of increased profits in a vastly more complex and more unstable economy. They welcome this kind of change.

ON the other hand, the spokesmen for American labor complain righteously at not getting union benefits automatically. A recent conference on automation sponsored by the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department heard IUD Director Albert Whitehouse proclaim that

> *it is time to point out that automation and other technological changes have failed to bring automatically those things promised so blithely. Where are the great numbers of more highly skilled jobs? Where are the lower prices? Where are the jobs for everybody that were virtually guaranteed us?* (*Quoted in* Labor Relations Reporter, *May 5, 1958, p. 18.*)

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And, one might also inquire, what manner of labor leaders are these who count on benefits coming "automatically" to working people?

The workman's sole capital is his labor and his technical skill. Anything which depreciates their value deprives him of part of his property. Because the advantage of machinery lies in the savings in labor which it makes possible, workmen have no alternative but to look skeptically at the promises of a world of leisure which are dangled by the enthusiasts for automation. To most workers technological change always spells trouble.

Unemployment resulting from technological change has been spotty and difficult to isolate from the loss of jobs due to other causes. Through the late twenties of this century the American economy was generally expanding, with the result that workers displaced by machines were absorbed into new jobs. The persistent unemployment of the thirties which amounted to 20 percent of the labor force in 1939 and was still 10 percent in 1941, two years after the rearmament program had been initiated, did not come about because machines were replacing men. However, by 1937, production had climbed back to its pre-depression level while the number of unemployed had increased nearly seven times. How many of these workers were without jobs because machines had displaced them it is impossible to determine.

World War II and the postwar decade were both periods generally marked by the kind of economic buoyancy which minimized the impact upon working people of new labor-saving machines and production methods. Output grew as labor productivity increased, and unemployment was never a serious problem except for the recession months in 1948-1949 and in 1953-1954.

The usual employment pattern in an industry or firm replacing men with machines in these years—recent experiences in the electrical manufacturing industry are a good example—was for the percentage of production workers to decline while the number of professional and clerical employees increased, although not enough to offset the number of skilled and semi-skilled displaced. While output in a given plant thus grew more rapidly than total employment, the overall growth of the economy tended to create new jobs for both redundant workers and young workers entering the labor force. Of course, not all years were equally favorable to the absorption of displaced workers, nor did all industries follow the same growth pattern. But generally this was the way it went.

SO much for the past. Meanwhile today's recession, accompanied as it is by the heaviest unemployment since 1940, has brought with it such a host of pressing unpostponable problems to the labor movement that concern with automation has receded into the background. When, for example, the steel industry is producing at less than 50 percent of capacity and tens of thousands of steel workers are either wholly unemployed or working short weeks, it doesn't make much sense for the union to worry about workers who might be displaced in the future by the prospective automation of production lines. Neither steel nor any other major industry is currently preparing to embark on heavy new investments in automation to make plants more efficient when they can't figure out how to utilize their present capacity profitably.

Edwin G. Nourse, formerly chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and respected as a conservative academic economist, warned about this condition of overcapacity when he testified at the Automation Hearings back in October 1955. Nourse stated then, long before the present recession had set in:

> *I strongly suspect that we have already built up at many spots a productive capacity in excess of the absorptive capacity of the forthcoming market under city and country income patterns that have been provided, and employment patterns that will result from this automated operation. . . . We have not yet demonstrated our ability to adjust the actual market of 1956-57, and later years, to the productivity of the production lines we have already modernized. They have not yet come to full production, but as they do we see incipient unemployment appearing.* (Automation and Technological Change, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Economic Stabilization of the Joint Committee on the Economic Report, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 623.*)

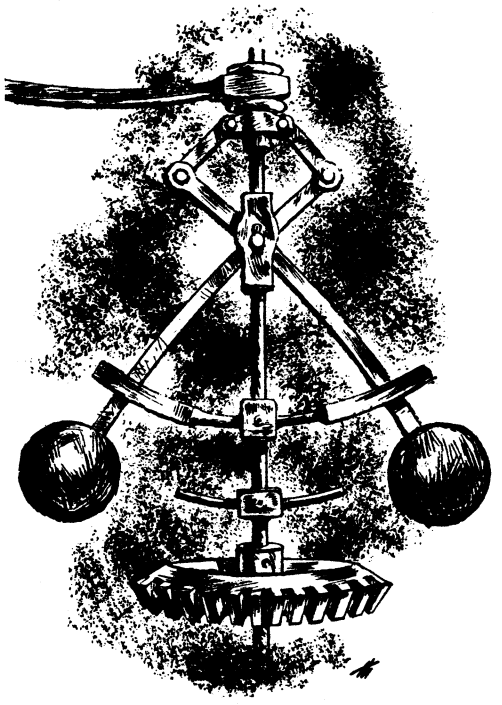
This existing overcapacity is not only the major cause of the present economic decline; it also explains why automation—despite the great savings in labor costs it holds out—has been introduced so slowly. The heavy costs involved, and the existence of relatively new capacity installed since the end of the war, but still not fully utilized, continue to be barriers. Automation would have to promise enormous savings in operating costs to make the required heavy new investments profitable in the face of existing unused capacity and a declining demand for the products of American industry.

However, it is unnecessary to point out that we are certainly not witnessing today the final collapse of the American economy—far from it. The recession will work itself out, sooner or later, and the working people will, as usual, bear the brunt of the process. We can anticipate some sort of economic recovery before too long although its specific features need not concern us here. It is most likely that precisely in this future recovery phase of the cycle American labor will feel the first major impact of automation.

A revival of production *without* an accompanying elimination of the new pool of unemployed workers seems to be in the cards. Because the revival of business investment which is necessary to set off economic recovery will be increasingly for labor-saving machinery, there are good grounds for labor to begin thinking now of the implications of automation, the most labor-saving of capital investments.

THERE seem to be as many definitions of automation as there are experts writing in the field. Each definition, of course, depends upon where one stands in the scale of things. In the frame of reference of this paper, the scientific or technological features of automated productive processes are of secondary interest. What is important, are the kinds of change in the structure of production and of industry which result from automation

along with the enormous increases in the productivity of labor. For what automation means is that the same output can be produced by many fewer workers; or put another way, it means that the rate at which men are technologically replaced is accelerated.



Although automated machine assemblies are still relatively few in the total of American industry, a sufficient number have already been introduced to suggest their dramatic potential for raising labor productivity. For example, David A. Morse, Director-General of the ILO, stated in his 1957 Report:

> *Fourteen glassblowing machines, each operated by one worker, now produce 90 percent of the glass light bulbs used in the United States and all the glass tubes used in radio and television (except picture tubes).* (Op. Cit., *p. 8.*)

The 1955 Hearings on Automation and Technological Change conducted by a subcommittee of the Joint Committee on the Economic Report of the United States Congress are replete with examples of enormous strides in productivity resulting from automated processes. Two workers now assemble 1,000 radios a day, a task which had previously required 200 workers. One man in Ford's Cleveland plant runs a transfer machine performing more than 500 operations formerly done by 35 to 70 men. Forty-eight workers, under automatic methods, now complete an engine block in about 20 minutes, whereas it used to take 400 workers 40 minutes to complete the same job. And so it goes.

In the past when a mechanical device was substituted for manual labor, productivity might have been doubled or tripled. Such increases in output per manhour were on a scale with other improvements in productivity resulting from such changes as better planning and control, better transport, better product design, or just driving the workers harder. What is new about automated processes is that the *scale* of improvement is so much greater. Increases in productivity by 10 and 15 times have now become possible in those places where automation can be applied profitably.

When employers decide to invest in any kind of technological innovation, they do so in expectation of reducing costs. This is the spur. Although labor costs per unit of product are invariably reduced by automation or any other technological improvement, there is no reason to assume that either more units will be produced, or prices will be lowered, or both. In the same way, there is no way to determine in advance whether or how rapidly the labor displaced by an automated process will be absorbed. This will depend upon a whole series of conditions which are quite separate from the automation; for instance, upon the general economic climate, whether the market for the products in question is growing, how rapidly new workers are coming into the labor force, and so on.

AUTOMATION holds out a special kind of advantage to industry. In contrast with previous improvements in methods, or adoption of new machinery, automation makes it possible to operate at a maximum rate for most of the productive day. This results from the self-regulatory system under which machines, and not men, supervise and control other machines. With human rather than machine control of machines, the best that can be hoped for is intermittent maximums. But with the optimal potential under automated processes, the limiting factor is the market for the goods.

Another way to look at the possible advantages accruing from automation was well put by the Director-General of the International Labor Organization in the report already referred to. He remarked (p. 73) that "an element of choice is always involved" in the course of taking the benefits of the rapid increases in productivity and the resultant savings in labor. These savings can go into more production, into profits, into shorter hours, higher wages, or price reductions. And with careful understatement he concluded that "we have seen some sharp differences of opinion on this matter during this last year." (P. 75.)

Automation will undoubtedly intensify these "sharp differences." Even when some workers gain from the increased productivity, their benefits will be substantially less than capital's. Moreover, whatever the gain of certain groups of workers, it will take place at the same time that many other workers become displaced by the new machines. How does a union cope with this kind of situation?

The United Automobile Workers announced early this May that about 500 workers, including some with 30 years of seniority, will be thrown out of work by the closing of the die room of General Motors' Fisher Body Division plant in Pontiac, Michigan. The union, incidentally, was not advised in advance of the company's plans to concentrate this work in a few newer and more efficient plants. All it could do in the circumstances was ask that the men discharged be guaranteed the right to move with their

jobs, that the cost of relocating them and their families be paid by the company, and that adequate severance pay be provided for those who do not wish to relocate. General Motors is under no obligation, it appears, to do any of these things. Nor, it can be added, is there any chance that the company will voluntarily take care of the displaced men.

On the other hand, union policy within a wholly automated plant or department of a plant normally encompasses the usual routine demands for greater job security, higher wages, shorter hours, along with the retraining and upgrading for the men with seniority to fill the new jobs. Frequently union discussions on automation result in demands for guaranteed employment (or wages) and some form of severance pay for the men released. It should be added that because production changes of this kind come about unevenly, and because their impact on both the industry and the firm can be most varied, it becomes exceedingly difficult for a union to work out a general policy that fits all situations.

IT is generally held that representatives of the workers should have an opportunity to discuss the introduction of automation *in advance*. Such prior negotiations are considered by many economists and union spokesmen to be the key to insuring that automation will benefit and not harm the displaced workers. Certainly no one would quarrel with prior discussions and negotiations, but one can have some skepticism about the usefulness of such talks unless the union is strong enough to prevent the employer from putting the new production methods into operation. Without this kind of strength—even if it isn't employed—most discussions will be pretty thin on results.

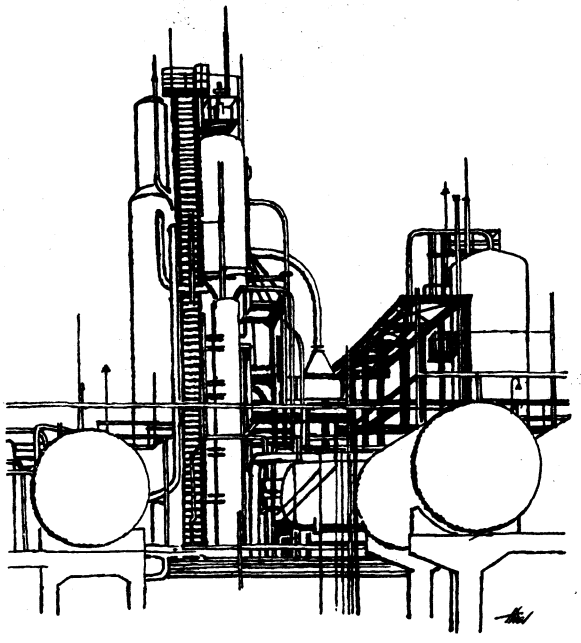
Clark Kerr, new Chancellor of the University of California and a highly respected academic authority in the field of labor relations, argues that the primary contribution of unionism to the long-term productivity of society lies in its participation in the determination through collective bargaining of the rules which apply in the plant or factory. It is his contention in regard to wage discussions—and the point is even better taken when applied to automation—that the discussions are really more important than the outcome:

> *While the total union impact on wages may not be very great, particularly in raising labor's share of national income, the process of exploration of possibilities by the unions and their acceptance of the results undoubtedly leads to greater satisfaction by the workers with the system of income distribution. There is a stronger conviction that the results are equitable, or at least inevitable, than would otherwise be the case.* The process may be more significant than the results. (*Clark Kerr,* Productivity and Labor Relations, *Berkeley, 1957, p. 21. Emphasis added.*)

Interestingly enough, in this same brief monograph, Kerr maintains that there has been no showing that productivity increases have slowed down over the decades as unions have become more powerful—on the contrary. And further, that there is no showing that productivity increases average less in unionized than in non-unionized industries.

But it is not alone in dealing with employers on the job level that labor will face many new questions as the result of automation. For automation also accentuates some of the broader tendencies under capitalism with which we are already familiar—to name two important ones, that of productive capacity to outrun consumption, and that of production to gravitate increasingly under the control of fewer big firms.

High productivity, instead of being a blessing to the owners of industry, can be a liability when the consumers are not interested in buying or can't afford to buy. An individual firm with increased output as a result of automation might be able to carry on a campaign of costly advertising, special services, and the like, and thereby grab a larger share of the available market for itself. In this way automation—savings from which probably helped pay for the intensified advertising campaign—might be the salvation of a particular enterprise. But it can't similarly be the salvation of the free-enterprise system itself. Because automation doesn't automatically spread more purchasing power around among consumers.



There is no known method—at least to this writer—by which a balance can be continuously maintained between increased productivity and mass purchasing power under our present economic system. Some American labor leaders have urged wage increases in American industry specifically to keep up the market for autos, houses, and other durable goods; good advice, except that if followed it would cut into industry's profits. And since, in the absence of such boosts to purchasing power, as many conservative American economists are now publicly acknowledging, the economy generates capacity faster than demand, it follows that automation simply aggravates this affliction and the economic declines which are set off by it.

THERE really are no good grounds for disagreeing with the conclusion that what we have on our hands is an economic system that has no machinery to deal with sweeping technological change smoothly and without bringing about the displacement and unemployment of workers. Automation is not responsible for this condition—capitalism is. And trade union policies are not the vehicle for coping with economic problems of this magnitude.

What about automation's acceleration of the concentration of production in the hands of fewer and fewer large corporations? Carl Dreher in his amusing and instructive little book on automation sagely observes:

> *Those will automate who have the resources and the hardihood, and from those who have not will be taken away even that which they have. It will be an automation shakeout, and it will hit the smallest hardest.* (Automation, *New York, 1957, p. 115.*)

Only the larger and more highly capitalized firms will be able to afford the high initial investment required to install automated equipment. Moreover, there is an obvious advantage in concentrating production in large units turning out standardized products. Only in this way can the fullest benefit be obtained from automation. Small and medium-size firms will just not be able to take advantage of the kind of a switch-over which puts such a premium upon size.

Thus unions can expect, as automation proceeds, that production will become more and more concentrated in the larger firms. These firms will employ fewer production workers while turning out more products. Thus, while the scale of production grows, and with it the size of the establishments and the capital employed in them, the number of workers employed will decline. In addition, if the servicing of automated machines is handled by specialized maintenance firms—as will be most likely in the future—employment of production workers will be even further reduced.

A sidelight on displacement of production workers is that the shift of such workers to clerical, service, and other such jobs—which the automation optimists make much of—is a shift directly into areas which most experts expect to be increasingly automated. Routine office and clerical jobs are ideally suited for automatic machine processes.

On the other hand, as automation increasingly replaces purely routine, unskilled, and semi-skilled labor by automatic devices, there will be a need for a greatly expanded and more highly trained professional and engineering force. Such professional workers have been notoriously anti-union in the past and there is no reason to expect them to be different in the future.

As automation progresses, the unions will find themselves facing fewer but more powerful antagonists on the other side. At the same time the production base of the unions will become narrower, weaker, and less effective.

FREDERICK Pollock, a leading German authority on automation, even goes so far as to prophesy in his book *Automation* (New York, 1957) that in the new era the strike weapon will lose much of its effectiveness. And he gives as an example a 1954 strike of operating and maintenance workers at the atomic energy plants at Paducah and Oak Ridge. A handful of supervisory employees were able to keep up full-scale production during the three-day walkout because the plants are so highly automated.

There is little doubt that some new kind of polarization of the working class will result from widespread automation. Those factories or plants which are conducive to automation will gradually move out of the orbit of the mass industrial unions. And the union movement, in its structure and organization, will be forced to change with these changes in industrial organization.

How far will this go? There is no way of knowing. One dark prediction from, of all places, an investment firm on the New York Stock Exchange, points out:

> *If the educational system fails to adapt itself to the new circumstances [i.e. automation], we could conceivably be faced with the problem of what to do with millions of "misfits," people who would simply not be employable in the more advanced industries and would therefore have no way of sharing in the benefits of increased productivity. Some of these people might become and remain totally unemployed, but it seems more likely that in a predominantly inflationary era the bulk of them would provide a low-wage labor force for a sector of marginal, substandard, exploitative industries. On the other side, there would tend to grow up a professional and skilled elite garnering most of the benefits of rising productivity and developing its own distinctive style of life. A division of this sort once established, would tend to perpetuate itself; the United States would be well on the way to becoming a new form of caste society.* (The Scientific-Industrial Revolution, *Model, Roland & Stone, New York, 1957, p. 45.*)

When the Luddites smashed textile machinery and destroyed factories early in the last century, they were not trying to "hold up progress," nor were they opposed to the lightening of their work burdens. These desperate men were hitting back at the greed of their employers and at the organization of society which denied them any of the benefits of the new machines. Their lot was completely miserable and, futile as it was, they smashed machines and burned and destroyed both raw and finished products because this was the only way of fighting that they understood at the time.

American unionists will certainly not follow the example of the Luddites. But how to get the benefits of improved production processes into the hands of the workers still remains. Without fundamental and far reaching changes in the structure of our society, the problem will continue to be with us. So long as the economy expands and grows, the burdens incidental to automation will be solved, or lost, in the general improvement. But when the economy declines or falters, automation will show its other face. American labor will then have to find new resources of strength, spirit, and ingenuity if it is not to be overwhelmed.

The ceaseless barrage of sex and violence, and the commercialization of all aspects of culture, hit all Americans, but those who are most defenseless are the workers.

A Note on

The Worker's Cultural Degradation

by Harvey Swados

THOSE of us who persist in clinging to certain archaic notions about the human degradation attendant upon capitalism, and who in consequence cannot shake off the suspicion that this might be a better world with the arrival of something we call socialism, are often taxed with the lack of foresight of Karl Marx. Not only is Marx held posthumously accountable for all the crimes committed in his name or in the name of socialism—from the Stalinist slave-labor camps to the Socialist management of imperialist pacification in Algeria—but he is also charged with having failed to foresee that capitalism would be able to provide not less and less, but more and more and more of the good things of life for its proletariat. It is true that in recent months these sardonic cries have become somewhat muted, as the unemployed are once again arrested for stealing food and display other signs of reluctance to proceed quietly from overemployment to home relief; but still the claim is made that the working class under capitalism (especially in Magic America), far from being increasingly exploited and degraded, is living at least as well as anyone else in the world, if not better.

Well, what about it? Are we to deny that the packinghouse worker and the auto worker can and do buy color television, three-taillight automobiles and Chris Crafts to go with their fishing licenses? And if we admit it, shouldn't we also admit that capitalism is after all capable of satisfying all the wants of the underlying population, allowing for occasional recessions?

I for one do not think so. I for one think that the working class is not having its basic emotional wants and psychological needs satisfied. I for one think that the working class—regardless of whether it is envied by other proletarians who would like to drive cars instead of bicycles, or who would like to ride bicycles instead of walking—is being cheated, swindled, and degraded as ferociously as ever its English counterparts were a century ago when Marx and Engels were anatomizing them. The fact that it may not be aware of its exploitation does not alter the reality of its situation. The fact that, even with an appreciable portion of it presently subsisting on unemployment insurance, its material status is still light years ahead of its European (to say nothing of its Asian or African) counterparts, is relevant only as it sheds a little light on the potential of plenty that would be available to all mankind if industrialization and the accumulation of capital were to take place at a rational pace on a world-wide basis.

CONSIDER the condition, say, of the Chicago slaughterhouse worker at the turn of the century. Upton Sinclair railed magnificently, and with ultimately telling effect, not only at the economic subjugation of workers forced to toil sixty and seventy hours a week for a pittance, but also at the conditions under which they worked, at *what* they had to do for a living, and at *how* they were ruthlessly cleaned out in the saloons when the long day's work was done. It was his contention that the workers were being degraded and enslaved not only during their working hours, but afterward as well, when they turned to the consolation of booze to help them forget how they were spending their lives.

Let us grant at once that these workers are no longer forced to toil (not even the moonlighters) sixty and seventy hours a week. Let us grant at once that they are paid much more for working much less than they did at the turn of the century, and that, thanks to their union, their conditions of employment have been immeasurably improved. *What* they do does not seem to have altered as appreciably. Since Chicago packinghouses no longer offer public guided tours, let us note what was said very recently by one of America's most distinguished women, who felt impelled, in her ninth decade, to address a letter to the *New York Times* (April 30, 1958):

> *I have been horrified within the last few weeks by learning that the old cruel way of slaughtering animals for food is still being widely used, and that still, just as in my youth, there is no law to forbid it. This is to me absolutely incomprehensible because we are not a cruel*

Harvey Swados' last novel, On the Line, *deals with auto workers. He writes for the* Nation *and other periodicals.*

people: we do not want to eat what comes to us through pain and suffering. And yet, as I know of my own knowledge, the facts about the slaughterhouses were investigated and publicized well on to sixty years ago....

Miss Edith Hamilton does not dwell in her letter on the effects of this cruel work on those hired to perform it, nor need we linger here over the question beyond observing that it is not one currently asked by those engaged in promulgating the myth of the happy worker.

AS for *how* workers are gulled and mulcted in the hangouts which Sinclair described as traps designed to stupefy the worker, and which we today might characterize as the liquid television of half a century ago, only those who live in the dream world of official mythology imagine that they no longer fulfill the evil function they did in the days of *The Jungle.*

An armored truck [A. H. Raskin tells us in the New York Times Magazine *of May 4, 1958] stood outside the unemployment insurance office in a down-at-the-heels neighborhood five minutes ride from Detroit's glistening civic center. On the truck's side was a sign: "Charge for cashing checks. Up to* $50—15 *cents. Over* $50—20 *cents." Two-thirds of the workers streaming out of the office thrust their checks through the slot and paid tribute to the man in the truck. . . . Inside the office the manager frowned: "That armored truck is violating the law, but the cops don't bother the owner. And the wives like it, it keeps their men out of the beer gardens to cash their checks.*

But new techniques for the inducement of oblivion have far outstripped the traditional saloon, with its check-cashing window and its soft-sell technique of simultaneously taking the worker's money and enabling him to forget that he has just spent his day hitting screaming animals on the head, tightening bolts on auto bodies, or seeking the opportunity to find such employment. Indeed the new techniques of merchandizing both "leisure" and forgetfulness have now developed to the point where they can be said to play as large a part in the degradation of the worker as does his actual employment. The English writer, Richard Hoggart, puts the matter quite succinctly in his *The Uses of Literacy* (Fairlawn, New Jersey, 1957):

Inhibited now from ensuring the "degradation" of the masses economically, the logical processes of competitive commerce, favored from without by the whole climate of the time and from within assisted by the lack of direction, the doubts and uncertainty before their freedom of working people themselves (and maintained as much by ex-working class writers as by others), are ensuring that working people are culturally robbed. Since these processes can never rest, the holding down, the constant pressure not to work outwards and upwards, becomes a positive thing, becomes a new and stronger form of subjection; this subjection promises to be stronger than the old because the chains of cultural subordination are both easier to wear and harder to strike away than those of economic subordination. . . . (pp. 200-201.)

What is perhaps ugliest about the whole process, however, is that competitive commerce is now meshing the chains of cultural subordination with those of economic subordination. The worker is not simply lulled into forgetfulness of his daily idiot routine by the TV western: he is simultaneously pressured into permanently mortgaging himself by acquiring the objects manufactured by the sponsors of his daily ration of opiates. The peddlers of persuasion have now developed such techniques of sophistication and grown themselves into such large-scale enterprise that they engage the talents and the creative passions of a substantial segment of young college graduates in the fields of sociology, psychology, economics, and the English language itself. They regard the worker-consumer as a manipulable object rather than as a human being with individual needs and aspirations; they address him in consequence with a cynicism that can only be described as shameless, and they exploit him culturally as ruthlessly as he was exploited economically a generation ago. Thus Dr. Ernest Dichter, president of the Institute for Motivational Research, recently informed the Sales Executives Club of New York and the Advertising Federation of America:

A year ago it was correct to advertise the purchase of air-conditioners under the slogan, "You deserve to sleep in comfort." Today, it may be psychologically more correct to shift to a moral approach, utilizing spartan, work-oriented appeals such as, "You can't afford to be tired all day," or "You work better and produce more after a refreshing night." Dr. Dichter termed this one approach for giving the consumer "moral permission" and "a rational justification" for buying products that represent the "good life." . . . Motivation research's view on price cuts, according to Dr. Dichter, is that they must be accompanied by advertisements that explain to the consumer the reasons for the change. Otherwise, "there is a grave danger that the consumer will become more than ever convinced that he was being cheated during a period of prosperity." Dr. Dichter also urged that salesmen become philosophers as well. To help dispel the sales lag, "he has to sell us not only a product but the desirability, the correctness of purchasing the product." (New York Times, *March 19, 1958.*)

Those who manage to accommodate themselves to a lunatic order of things have in general reacted to observations like those in the preceding paragraphs in one or a combination of the three following ways:

(1) They assert that the great virtue in our social order is that, in addition to providing the working class with the necessities and the amenities of a secure and civilized existence, it also provides the worker for the first time in history with an unparalleled variety of cultural possibilities, ranging from the great thinkers in inexpensive paper books to the great composers on inexpensive LP's.

(2) They claim that the manufacturers of distraction are giving the public what it wants, and that if the proletarian turns in his off-hours not to Plato but to Spillane,

not to Beethoven but to Alan Freed, this is no more than a reflection of the traditionally abominable taste of the masses, which preceded and will endure beyond the current American order.

(3) They point out that—if it is indeed true that we are the victims of an unremitting, concerted commercial assault on our nerves and our senses—this degrading and relentless battering affects not just the working class but all of us, and that it is therefore romantically inaccurate to single out the proletarian as the particularly exploited victim of the mass-media panderers.

ALL three defenses are interconnected; a response to all must start with an insistence upon the lately neglected fact that it is the man on the bottom of the heap, the man who does the dirty work, who has the fewest defenses against the unending barrage of sex and violence and the propaganda of commerce. He *is* the particularly exploited victim of the mass media; he is *not* given an honest possibility of developing an individual taste for individual works of the human imagination; he does *not* have the range of cultural choice available to college students, white-collar people, and middle-class citizens of the republic.

As Daniel Bell observes of the work situation itself, in his *Work and Its Discontents* (Boston, 1956, p. 38), "a tension that is enervating or debilitating can only produce wildly aggressive play, or passive, unresponsive viewing. To have 'free time' one needs the zest of a challenging day, not the exhaustion of a blank one. If work is a daily turn round Ixion's wheel, can the intervening play be anything more than a restless moment before the next turn of the wheel?"

The man who leaves the packinghouse or the assembly line is neither physically nor psychically prepared to appreciate the quality paperback or the classical LP. Nor are they readily available to him in any case; the merchandisers of the mass entertainments reserve the right to restrict certain of their wares, or conversely to cram others down the gullets of their victims. It is no more accidental that the only civilized TV programs are presented on Sundays, when the average viewer is either sleeping it off or visiting relatives, than it is that the much-touted bookracks in the poorer neighborhoods are packed not with Plato but with anonymously mass-produced borderline sado-pornography.

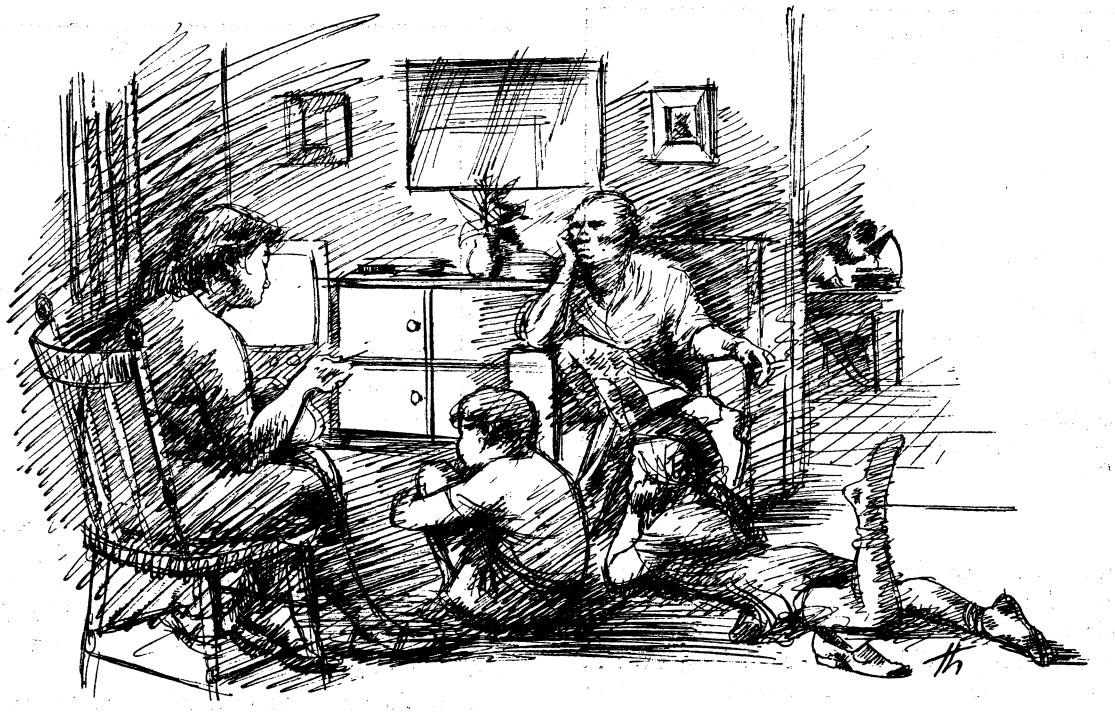
It is not only that the mass-media exploiters are capitalizing on the cultural backwardness of the great majority of the American people. Worse: they are actively engaged in the *creation* of new types of subliterature (see the paperback racks), sub-music (radio and jukeboxes), and generally sub-human activities (television), which they dump on a defenseless public in saturation quantities. No demand can be said to exist for such products of greedy and distorted minds until they are first created and then reiterated to the point of nausea or numbed acceptance. In the process of production and reiteration, whatever remains of an independent, traditional working class culture—as Mr. Hoggart spells it out painstakingly in *The Uses of Literacy*—is gradually eroded.

THE middle classes and the intelligentsia can at least be said to have alternative choices for their leisure hours. Thanks to the numerical increase of the college-educated and to their steadily increasing purchasing power, the masters of mass consumption have made available to them the cultural treasures of the ages through the media of books, records, and even FM stations. But these have not been, nor will they be, addressed to the working class, to the vast inarticulate masses, who are deemed by their betters to have lower tastes than the primitive Africans and Asians to whom the State Department exports Marian Anderson and Louis Armstrong. What could be at once more patronizing and more bankrupt than the claim that the flood of swill daily pumped through our cultural pipelines fairly represents all that the ordinary man can ever be expected to appreciate? If it is true that this capitalist society has all but wiped out economic degradation and oppression, why can it produce only consumers assertedly hungry for cultural products as degraded as those of any previous epoch of human history? The fantastic technological and scientific advances of recent years—not the singular product, we see now all too clearly, of American capitalism—do not merely call for an accompanying cultural advance, up to now unobservable among us; they will be positively insupportable without such an advance, without a new definition of the meaning of culture and of the individual human potential.

Meanwhile the fact of the apparent hunger for cultural rubbish combined with the salesman's pitch, and their apparent mass acceptance, should not blind us to the basic shabbiness of the degradation and the exploitation of those who, all too unaware of what is being done to them, may even be asking for more of the same. I must turn once again to Richard Hoggart, who speaks to the point on this matter:

> *If the active minority continue to allow themselves too exclusively to think of immediate political and economic objectives, the pass will be sold, culturally, behind their backs. This is a harder problem in some ways than even that which confronted their predecessors. It is harder to realize imaginatively the dangers of spiritual deterioration. Those dangers are harder to combat, like adversaries in the air, with no corporeal shapes to inspire courage and decision. These things are enjoyed by the very people whom one believes to be adversely affected by them. It is easier for a few to improve the material conditions of many than for a few to waken a great many from the hypnosis of immature emotional satisfactions. People in this situation have somehow to be taught to help themselves.* (Op. Cit., *p. 264.*)

It should not be discouraging that there are few voices like Mr. Hoggart's on this side of the Atlantic. Surely it it better to speak late than not to speak at all, and by one's silence ensure the continuing and intensified exploitation of those least able to resist its seductive and ultimately corrupting effects. Every voice which says "No" is itself a demonstration of the existence of an alternative to the cultural degradation of the masses.



Most of labor's gains during the years since the Great Depression have been due, directly or indirectly, to war—a fact which the literature of the "American celebration" neglects to mention.

The Condition of the Working Class

by Paul M. Sweezy

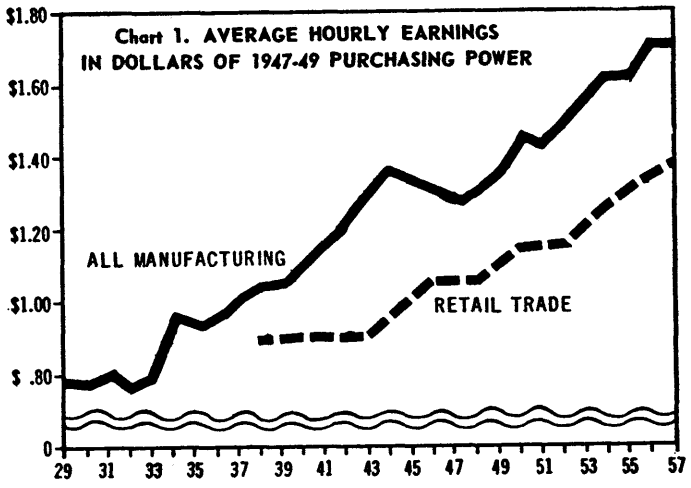
MUCH has been written in recent years about the "American standard of living," the "income revolution," the "conquest of poverty," and the like. In this literature, American capitalism has become the workers' paradise which socialists were once scornfully derided for holding up as a vain and utopian hope to the toiling masses. How much of all this is fact and how much more or less deliberately fabricated ideology is a most complicated and difficult question which obviously cannot be answered in a few pages. And yet I think it is possible, even in very brief compass, to present enough of the answer so that the problem can be seen in its true proportions. And if I am right that clarity on this whole range of topics is a matter of the greatest importance for the American Left (in which I include the labor movement), then at any rate no apologies need be offered for making the attempt.

Most of the facts and figures to be presented are compressed into a few simple charts the data for which are taken, unless otherwise specified, from *Economic Indicators* (both the latest number and the 1957 Historical and Descriptive Supplement), a useful and authoritative statistical compilation published monthly by the President's Council of Economic Advisers.

Chart 1 shows average hourly earnings in dollars of 1947-1949 purchasing power. The series for manufacturing extends back to 1929; for retail trade, which is included for purposes of comparison, to 1939. Considering all the changes and upheavals of the period, the picture is one of remarkably steady progress. The big exceptions are, first, the Great Depression and, second, the three years from 1944 to 1947 comprising the end of the war and the reconversion to peacetime conditions. For the rest, the gains of the thirties are fully as impressive as the gains of the forties and fifties.

As between manufacturing and retail trade, the latter is not only lower throughout but the spread widens: In 1939 hourly earnings in retail trade were 85 percent of manufacturing; in 1957, 80 percent. There are several reasons for this, as Professor Dowd shows in his article on white collar workers elsewhere in this issue, but I think we would probably be safe in attributing the main role to the greater degree of unionization among manufacturing workers.

Paul M. Sweezy is co-editor of Monthly Review.



The fact that hourly earnings increased as rapidly during the depressed thirties as during the booming forties and fifties clearly suggests that if there has been a significant change in the condition of the working class in recent years it must have been caused by factors other than a simple rise in wage rates.

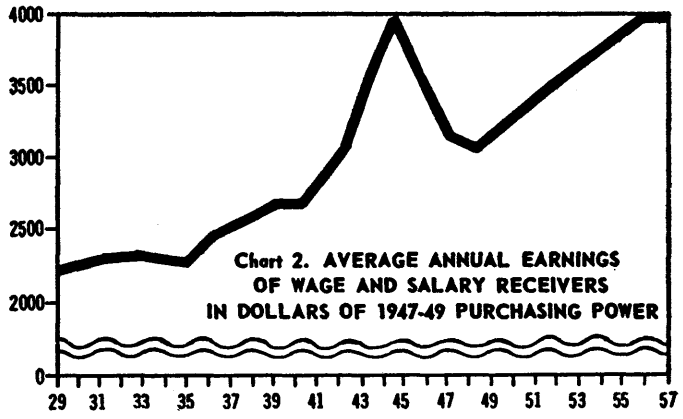
CHART 2, showing average annual earnings of wage and salary receivers in dollars of 1947-1949 purchasing power, presents a very different and at first sight quite paradoxical picture. Here the increase during the thirties is very slow, and a change that can without exaggeration be called of revolutionary magnitude takes place during the war. Thereafter, there is a sharp decline followed by a gradual recovery which did not regain the 1945 peak again until 1956!*

The explanation of this different pattern, of course, is that annual earnings depend on both hourly earnings and the total time worked, and that during the war both the steadiness of employment and the numbers of hours per week increased sharply.

The fact that annual earnings reached a wartime peak of approximately $4000 which has only been equalled in the last two years does not mean that the realized material standard of living was as high during the war as it has been since. For one thing, much of wartime monetary income was saved at the time and spent later, so that the actual enjoyment did not coincide with the receipt of income;** and for another, a large proportion of consumer durable goods bought since the war (especially houses and automobiles) has been financed through borrowing rather than from income. On the other hand, more members of the family were likely to be working during the war, so that for large strata of the working class, particularly those

* This runs so counter to current notions that some readers may wish to check the figures for themselves. The procedure is simple: Take compensation of employees as shown in national income, divide by the number of wage and salary workers as shown under the heading of nonagricultural employment, and divide by the consumers price index with 1947-1949=1.00.

** The abandonment of price controls after the war, resulting in a rapid rise of prices, robbed workers of a considerable part of the real purchasing power of their wartime savings.

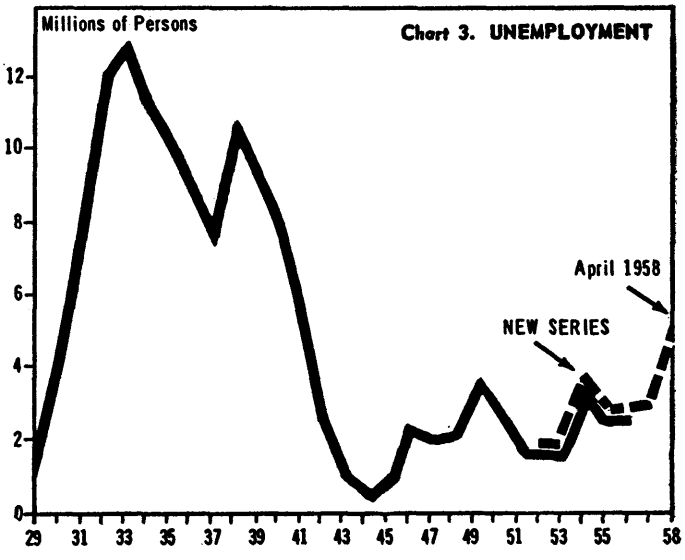


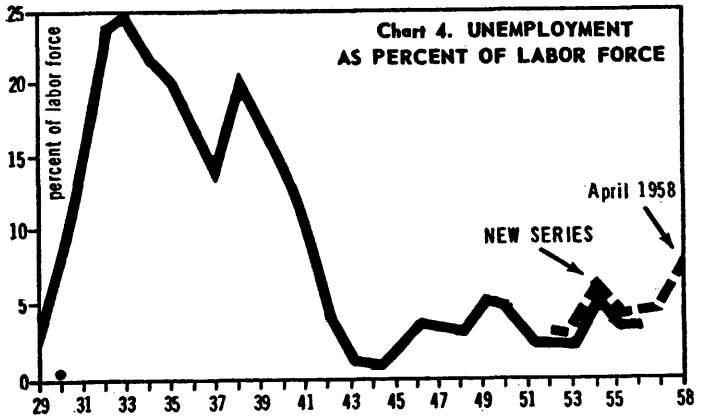
in the lower income ranges, actual realized standards of living were at their maximum during the war years. Chart 2 must be interpreted with care, but the message it conveys is none the less authentic and important: at least in the short run, the purchasing power which the worker has at his disposal depends first and foremost on the amount of work he can get.

It should be noted that substantially the same story is told by the figures on average net spendable weekly earnings of manufacturing workers. In 1939, a worker with three dependents had just under $40 of 1947-1949 purchasing power to spend. This rose by almost 50 percent to a wartime maximum of nearly $59 in 1944, then declined in the same manner as annual earnings, and finally surpassed the wartime figure in 1955, reaching a postwar peak of $63 in 1956. Here the postwar maximum is a mere 7 percent above the figure reached during the war years.*

THIS brings us to the related subject of unemployment. The next two charts show unemployment in absolute numbers (Chart 3) and as a percent of the labor force (Chart 4). The figures are an understatement throughout

* These figures are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics monthly releases on "Employment and Earnings."





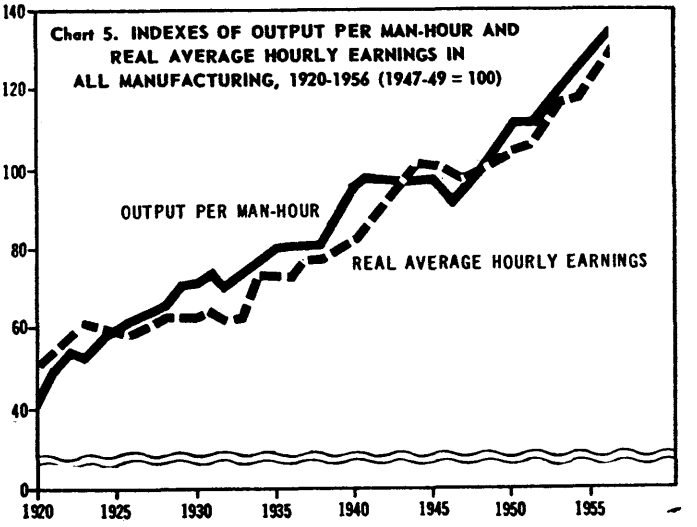
(even in the case of the new series beginning in 1952), but they undoubtedly give an accurate indication of the major fluctuations.

Unemployment shot up with the Great Depression and remained high during the whole decade of the thirties. It then plummeted to under a million during the war and has since then been slowly and with interruptions, but none the less surely, creeping back up again—a trend which shows up very clearly in both charts.

But for the cold war, needless to say, unemployment would have been much more severe in the postwar period, and weekly and annual earnings figures would doubtless have recovered from their postwar slump much less rapidly and completely than they actually have. But the thing to be stressed in this year of depression 1958, as we look ahead rather than back, is that unemployment has been making a comeback for a long time and has now again attained the status of a chronic disease.

Since there has been much discussion in recent years about the relation between wages and productivity, it seems appropriate to include Chart 5 showing indexes of output per man-hour (productivity) and real average hourly earnings in all manufacturing. It shows that except for two relatively brief periods during the early twenties and again at the end of the war and in the first years of peace, output per man-hour has consistently exceeded hourly earnings, and that ever since the war output has increased more rapidly than earnings. These figures are taken from a detailed report entitled *Productivity, Prices, and Incomes* put out in 1957 by the Joint Economic Committee, in which it is also shown that substantially the same relation between productivity and labor costs is obtained by using more refined measurements.

Note that these figures pertain to all manufacturing and thus include a large part of the economy's *productive* workers. Figures purporting to show the productivity of the *entire* labor force have little or no meaning since a large and growing proportion of American workers, typified by the salesman and advertiser, have nothing whatever to do with the production of goods and services (or utilities either, for that matter) and are paid merely for their role in helping to turn goods into money. To speak, as bourgeois economics does, of the "productivity" of such unproductive workers is a contradiction in terms and can lead only to confusion or nonsense or both.



IN 1953, Professor Simon Kuznets, a pioneer in the field of national income and product statistics, published a work entitled *Shares of Upper Income Groups in Income and Savings* (National Bureau of Economic Research) which purported to show that the share of total income accruing to the richest five percent of income receivers had decreased from 32.2 percent in 1929 to 19.4 percent in 1948, a drop of no less than 40 percent in two decades. This alleged decline in the share of the very rich, widely interpreted as proof of growing economic equality, has taken its place in the literature of what C. Wright Mills calls the American celebration as the "income revolution."

This is not the place for an evaluation of Kuznets' results. Suffice it to say that they have been subjected to a good deal of expert criticism,* after reading which one can conclude on perfectly reasonable grounds that the "income revolution" is partly, largely, or even entirely a statistical illusion stemming from the fact that the very rich appropriate a large and growing share of the nation's output of goods and services not in the form of personal income but in a variety of institutionalized forms (corporate savings, unrealized capital gains, expense accounts, deferred payment plans, corporate and government services, and so on).** But suppose we concede for the sake of the argument that there has indeed been an important reduction in the share of the top income group and in this sense an increase in economic equality. We find then that the change took place as it were in two steps. The first, from 1929 to 1939, would have to be explained in terms of the social and fiscal reforms of the New Deal.

* By far the best summary of the basic statistics and the critical literature which has grown up around them will be found in Selma F. Goldsmith, "Changes in the Size Distribution of Income," *American Economic Review,* May 1957 (Papers and Proceedings of the 69th Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association). Mrs. Goldsmith is chief of Department of Commerce work on income distribution and the country's leading authority on the subject.

** The best discussion of the newer forms of institutionalized appropriation is in C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite,* especially Chapter 7.

The second step took place during the war and would be due to price control and the achievement of full employment. The war period undoubtedly did bring a real improvement to the low income groups; since the war, however, there is *no* statistical evidence of a further trend to greater equality. To quote Mrs. Goldsmith:

> *A salient point is that for the lowest 40 percent of consumer units, the period of greatest relative gains was between 1941 and 1944. Since 1944, there has been little change in the relative distribution of family income according to available figures.* (Op. Cit., *p. 507.*)

This means, of course, that to the extent that the upper class has expanded its "institutionalized income," there has actually been an increase in economic *inequality* since the war.

Thus the "income revolution," if indeed it ever took place, was all over before Roosevelt died. On this point, needless to say, the minstrels of the American celebration maintain a discreet silence.

ONE of the crucial aspects of the condition of the American working class is the relation between Negro and white workers. I know of no recent statistical study of this subject, but the general picture has certainly not changed radically since publication in 1952 of the Department of Labor's Bulletin No. 1119, *Negroes in the United States: Their Employment and Economic Status.* Two tables from this study tell the essential story.

Table 1 shows the median wage and salary income of workers by color in 1939 and 1947-1950:

Table 1

Year	Nonwhite	White	Nonwhite as a percent of white
1939	$364	$956	38.1
1947	863	1,980	43.6
1948	1,210	2,323	52.1
1949	1,064	2,350	45.3
1950	1,295	2,481	52.2

Table 2 shows the percent of workers unemployed by color in 1947, 1949, and 1951:

Table 2

Year	Nonwhite	White	Nonwhite as a percent of white
1947	5.4	3.3	163.6
1949	8.2	5.2	157.7
1951	4.8	2.8	171.4

There has been some improvement in the relative income of Negro workers since prewar times, but as late as 1950 it was still hardly more than half of white income; and in the recession year 1949, when unemployment went up sharply, the ratio of Negro to white incomes slumped just as sharply. Further, unemployment is always much heavier among Negroes than among whites. Clearly, the material condition of black workers is still far inferior to that of their white brothers.

THE foregoing facts and figures are intended to be presented in such a way as not only to permit but encourage the reader to draw his own conclusions. I will mention only the two which struck me most forcibly as I reviewed the material:

(1) Marx was absolutely right to stress the decisive importance of the reserve army of labor, which was his term for unemployment, to the material and moral condition of the working class. The last three decades have indeed witnessed a large rise in the level of workers' real incomes, but most of it occurred during World War II and was directly associated with the achievement of really full employment in those years. Now that unemployment is again returning to "normal" (for capitalism), we can venture the forecast that the era of important workers' gains has ended. And we may hope that this foreshadows the rebirth of labor militancy on both economic and political fronts.

(2) Since only war has been able to produce full employment under capitalism, it follows that most of what the workers have gained during these years they have owed indirectly to war. Sooner or later, American workers will have to face up to the implications of this fact. Do they want to restore full employment, with its concomitant advantages to them, through more war? Or will they finally comprehend the terrible cruelty and irrationality of such a course and set themselves the arduous but rewarding task of building a new social order in which both employment and incomes will be under the planned control of the society of producers?

I think the time is long overdue when we stop throwing away our strength for the Republicans and Democrats and build a real farmer-labor party of our own. We have seen during the war, we have seen since the war, people that we helped put into office do everything possible to wreck our labor movement. We have placed people in Congress of the Democratic Party particularly and we have to stay behind them with a blackjack in order to keep them in line on such matters as the Case bill and other matters of legislation.

We have to completely re-examine the political role we have been playing in our movement. For ten years since we have been organized in the State of Michigan we have been throwing away our strength. If we started years back to build a real labor party of our own we would not be in the political mess that we are in at the present time.

Delegate Emil Mazey (now Secretary-Treasurer of the United Automobile Workers) to the eighth annual convention of Michigan State CIO, June 1946.

Take courage and believe that we of this age, in spite of all its torment and disorder, have been born to a wonderful heritage, fashioned of the work of those who have gone before us; and that the day of the organization of man is dawning. It is not we who can build up the new social order; the past ages have done most of that work for us; but we can clear our eyes to the signs of the times, and we shall then see that the attainment of a good condition of life is being made possible for us, and that it is our business to stretch out our hands to take it.

William Morris, *Signs of Change,* 1915.

Unionism has brought industrial wages up above the white collar level, and white-collar workers have, for this and other reasons, been slowly changing their views about unions.

The White Collar Worker

by Douglas F. Dowd

THE white collar worker, as C. Wright Mills puts it, is one who "manipulates people and symbols, rather than things." His numbers have expanded spectacularly in the twentieth century, not least in the United States. His influence must be taken into account in any assessment of the main drift of American society—particularly in an examination of the nature and potential of trade unionism.*

The growth in numbers of white collar workers—primarily professional and technical, sales, and clerical and kindred workers—has been one aspect of the development of industrial capitalism in America. Any industrial society—whether capitalist or socialist—generates a white collar group, but if that society is also capitalist, the group will be substantially larger. Industrialism, as it progresses, requires the proliferation of functions entailing the manipulation of symbols—the filing cabinet is itself a fitting symbol of this development—for purposes of analysis, record-keeping, communication, and so on. And industrialism also entails the manipulation of people—by administrators, teachers, and the like—if for no other reason than to bring order and predictability into the functions of large masses. But when capitalist institutions are meshed with the industrial technology, the needs multiply in both these respects.

The institution of private ownership, and the relative fragmentation into competing industrial units that goes with it, means that all else aside, the numbers of bureaucrats (using the term in a technical sense) will have to be some multiple of that needed for a planned economy. (A political parallel may be found in the relative number of "government clerks" needed in the Germany of the petty principality as compared with the Germany of, say, 1900.) Thus, although a "financial sector" must exist in a socialist economy—and would in any industrial society—the number of people required to "service" the economy in a financial sector which is close to purely functional is some fraction of that required by a financial sector in a capitalist economy. For in the latter the number is determined not only by the necessary function which financial institutions perform to lubricate the wheels of industry, but it is multiplied by the existence of private ownership and the profit motive. Every privately owned asset has one or more pieces of paper establishing claim to it, and many of these claims are of course transferred innumerable times in the course of their existence. Moreover, there is profit to be made from (among other things) organizing and handling these claims to ownership, and so we find an enormous number of tiny-to-very-large financial institutions, the function of which would be eliminated the minute production for profit were eliminated.

ADD to this, in the American economy, a structure of production and a level of productive capacity which requires heavy and continuous *selling* to keep it operating at anything like reasonable capacity, and we may understand easily the growth, particularly in the last forty years, of an enormous apparatus of salesmanship.

Thus we find that in America today nearly a third of the total work force is white collar, and that about a quarter is in the "trade sector" (defined to include wholesale and retail trade, finance, real estate and insurance, and business and repair services). The difference between the two proportions is made up largely of technical and teaching personnel (excluded from consideration are self-employed professionals—mostly doctors, lawyers, and engineers).

The accompanying table, based on Benjamin Solomon, "The Growth of the White Collar Work Force," *The Journal of Business,* October 1954, p. 271 (this article is a good survey of the relevant statistics), sums up the main facts about the growth of the white collar labor sector. It should be added that of the *total* white collar work force in 1950, Solomon estimates that 15.8 million were wage or salary earners, the remainder being self-employed.

Growth of White Collar Occupations

	Clerical and kindred	Professional and technical	Sales	Total
1870				
Number (in millions)	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.7
Percent of total work force	0.8	2.6	2.3	5.7
1910				
Number (in millions)	2.0	1.7	1.8	5.5
Percent of total work force	5.5	4.6	4.9	15.0
1950				
Number (in millions)	7.1	5.0	4.0	16.1
Percent of total work force	12.0	8.5	6.9	27.3

The composition and magnitude of the white collar force changed and grew rapidly in this century, and so did the economic and social characteristics of its members. It is in the determinants of these latter changes that we find much that is analytically critical in assessing the meaning of white collar workers vis-à-vis American trade unionism.

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* The most comprehensive work on the white collar group is of course C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* (New York, 1951). Mills is concerned with a group broader than the worker group, however.

Up until the middle of World War II, the average wages of white collar workers were always higher than the average wages of production workers. There are two principal reasons for this: (1) the farther back we go, the smaller was the group able to enter the white collar work force, for at least a high school education was a prerequisite; and (2) the later in time we look, the better organized the production workers became. That is, the demand for white collar workers in the earlier period was strong relative to the supply; but as time went on the supply expanded rapidly (as a high school education became open to most), and this expansion was accompanied by little effective union organization. On the other hand, the enormous need for production workers during World War II, together with the spread of unionism among them, pushed the average wages of production workers above those of white collar workers, and that situation is likely to continue into the foreseeable future.

A striking confirmation of this causal nexus is provided by the fact that in the nation today, it is only in the South that white collar workers still receive wages substantially above those of production workers—due primarily to the lower level of education in the South, the lower degree of industrialization, the lower degree of unionism among production workers, and the effective closing off of white collar jobs to Negroes.*

WHY has unionization made such slow progress among white collar workers? The average proportion of wage earners under union agreements does not fall below 40 percent (and rises to 100 percent) in the manufacturing industries. Except for workers in transportation, communications (telephone operators, for example), entertainment, and newspapers, the degree of unionization does not rise above 19 percent in the white collar group—predominantly clerical and sales.** Overall, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of white collar workers in unions is about 2.5 million, representing less than 15 percent of all members of national and international unions.

One important factor determining this pattern is the high proportion—about half—of women in the white collar group. It is not their sex which makes them reluctant to join or form unions, of course, but their expectations concerning the length of time they will remain workers and the motives which led them to seek employment (often less urgent than those for men, and often partially non-economic). Much of the growth of the white collar work force is to be explained by the increasing availability of women for employment, because of urbanization, smaller families, increasing number of jobs requiring relatively less physical exertion, a changing social attitude toward the proprieties of work, and so on. As will be discussed later, the situation in these regards is likely to change over time, as indeed it is already changing.

* See John P. Henderson, "A Deviation in the Pattern of Relative Earnings for Production Workers and Office Personnel," *Journal of Business,* July, 1955.

** See W. S. Woytinsky and Associates, *Employment and Wages in the United States* (New York, 1953).

Perhaps the major factor holding back unionization of the white collar worker has been his attitude toward his job and the relationship he bears to his employer. Traditionally, the white collar worker, particularly the clerical worker, has thought of himself as being (potentially, at least) on the ladder going up, as a part of the (usually small) firm rather than as a mere hired hand. Traditionally, that is, the white collar worker has thought of himself as a member of the middle class, not of the working class. Stemming from this has been the notion that white collar work is respectable, and that production work is not. Historically, much of this had to do with the qualifications for the white collar job. It was almost always the second, third, or later generation American who became the white collar worker, since he had the needed opportunity to acquire the education which was required for the job. This meant that it was the immigrant, in the popular mind, who did the production, or dirty work. The intense nativism prevalent in this country from the latter part of the nineteenth century until very recently (if not still) solidified these attitudes. Whether or not the white collar worker was in fact going up the job ladder, he was still a white collar worker, dressed like one, and could appear to be genteel, even though he was actually an impoverished sales clerk or bookkeeper.

BOTH the underlying situation and the attitudes of the white collar worker have been changing, apparently at an accelerating rate, in recent years; and the effect has been to undermine and weaken traditional white collar hostility to unionization. These changes may be briefly summed up as follows: First, since a high school education is no longer the restricted possession it once was, there is less (or no) reason to take special pride in it. Virtually nobody is now walled off from a white collar job because of lack of education (except perhaps in the South). Second, in these days of high consumption expenditures, and changing roles for women, a decreasing percentage of women look upon their jobs as temporary. The economic motivation of necessity is increasing. Third, white collar jobs are increasingly jobs held in large stores or large offices, as the scale of enterprise has expanded. This means that the sheer problem of organizing has become easier. Fourth, the notion of climbing up the ladder by virtue of starting off as a clerk is dying out, owing to the larger scale of enterprise, the institutionalization of pay raises and promotions (if any), and the increased concentration of control over the processes of economic change. Fifth, the old distinction between the foreign-born production worker and the native white collar worker is for all practical purposes dead. Sixth, the sales clerk or office worker is increasingly confronted by the threat or the actuality of automation, and more easily able to understand the search for job security of the production worker. Seventh, the white collar workers' wages are in fact below those of the production workers, and the gap is widening. The former believes, quite rightly, that unionization is at least partially responsible for the gap. Eighth, trade union membership has become more respectable since World War II. Ninth, the already organized production workers and/or their leaders believe that they would gain from

a more fully organized white collar work force. Indeed, much of what unionization exists among white collar workers was brought about directly, or substantially aided, by existing industrial and craft unions (for example, the retail clerks by the teamsters). Finally, the effective resistance of employers to unionization of white collar workers is waning.

Other factors might be mentioned, but the prospect is fairly clear that unionization will increase in the white collar group, although probably never reaching the degree attained by manual workers. For American trade unionism, this means that the aggregate strength of organized labor in this country will increase over time—particularly if, as is likely, further advances take place in the organization. of blue collar workers.

It probably means, in addition, that the political conservatism of organized labor in America—already a long-established characteristic—will be further buttressed. With rare exceptions, the background of present and future white collar workers is unlikely to be one of extreme poverty. If they view the economic system as containing imperfections, these imperfections are not likely to take on the magnitude required to stimulate a qualitative rejection of the system. The white collar worker is likely to focus on the grievances surrounding his job—petty except for his fear of unemployment—and on his relatively low pay. These are precisely the areas in which business unionism is able to operate most effectively. The white collar worker's job is likely to bore, to frustrate, to irritate—not to outrage him. And whatever the reality may be, there usually remains some vague hope of upward job mobility associated with white collar work.

Though he may be driven or pulled into unionism by fear, or hopes of material betterment, the white collar worker has middle class values and his demands on unionism will not go beyond his immediate problems. And, apart from all else, American trade unionism at the present has little else to offer or to suggest to the white collar workers, except its forays into the realm of policy proposals to mitigate unemployment. It is regarding this last point—unemployment—that speculation regarding the white collar worker becomes most interesting.

AT the moment it is difficult to see what further possible changes in the economy would contribute to a *relative* increase in the size of the white collar group. On the other hand, there are strong indications that the relative size of the group will stabilize or even decline. The primary factor at work in this respect is automation. The very forces which have given rise to the massive clerical force in modern business have now reached the point where they have made it possible and economical to automate clerical work. This development, as it continues, will affect only a percentage, not the entirety of the clerical force, but that percentage will be significant within even the present generation. On a lesser scale, but still with significance, is the already well developed tendency toward self-service in retail distribution. These developments, when taken together with the growing supply of potential white collar workers and something like the same tendencies in factory production, threaten to create a sizable employment problem in the foreseeable future.

Whether the continuation of business unionism as basic policy among organized production workers or organized white collar workers is likely under such circumstances would be hard to pin down, but at the very least an important realm of speculation is opened up. In order to avoid an unemployment problem of some magnitude, the economy will have to maintain or more probably increase its historical rate of growth (about three and a half percent per annum). Although it would be difficult to argue conclusively that such a rate will not be forthcoming, it would seem to be even more difficult to imagine that rate, or a higher one, without substantial governmental intervention in the economy. "Substantial governmental intervention" does not mean socialism, of course, as events of recent decades should make clear. The quality of the intervention will be determined to an important extent by the pressures brought to bear by organized labor in America.

At this juncture, certainly, there seems to be little reason to expect that the pressures forthcoming from the white collar segment of organized labor—in its present small or subsequent larger magnitude—will be of a kind designed to promote beneficial social change. On the other hand, if social and economic troubles accumulate, the further organization of white collar workers might take place with the labor movement in a new state of insurgency. Despite the rise of the white collar workers to social importance because of sheer numbers, they are not independently led, nor do they form a cohesive social bloc. In the thirties, some of them discreetly followed in the wake of the upsurge of unionism in the mass production industries, and when organized, took their lead from these stronger labor bodies. Indeed in some cities, white collar groups were even good recruiting grounds for the political radicals. If the unions experience a new wave of militancy, white collar workers may very well participate in the parade rather than try to hold it back. But it seems reasonably clear that they will not be the initiators.

The old Gompers primitivism in political action dies hard, but progress has been made in shaking it off. Labor influence in politics has grown greatly over the past two decades, and the pre-conditions for new steps towards greater political maturity have been established.

The Unions in Politics

by Harry Braverman

BACK in the 1920's, the most baffling and vexatious feature of the American scene, in the eyes of thoughtful radicals and liberals, was the powerlessness and inactivity of labor on the political front. In Europe, the long evolution of the labor movements had created powerful socialist parties. By contrast, American labor efforts were not only feeble, but seemed to be getting weaker. The local labor parties that had sprung up early in the nineteenth century lasted only a few years before succumbing to inexperience and factional conflict between nostrum peddlers. After the Civil War, a few semi-national organizations tried to blend trade-union and political functions, but their strength was limited by the weakness and decline of the organized base upon which they rested, and much of the labor politics of the day fell into confused efforts at making alliances with Greenbackism, the Single Tax movement, and Populism, with few satisfactory results. With the rise of the AFL, political nonpartisanship and disentanglement became the watchwords. Independent labor politics went over largely into radical politics, had its heyday in the Debs era, and thereafter faded into a game played by isolated sects with practically no impact on the electorate.

The post-World War I days witnessed a significant interlude. The Non-Partisan League of North Dakota, which had taken over the administration of that state in a whirlwind farm revolt, spread to a number of other states in the Northwest, and began to involve labor in the cities of the area. As far east as Illinois, John Fitzpatrick, head of the Chicago Federation of Labor, organized the Farmer-Labor Party of Illinois, and the 1920 elections saw a number of such parties on the ballot. At the same time, the railroad unions were wrestling with the problem of how to maintain their wartime gains, made under government administration of the industry. They pushed the Plumb Plan for cooperative management of the roads, but both parties got together and, in turning the railroads back to private ownership, handed the workers a Railway Labor Board which started pressing for wage cuts and the obliteration of valuable shop rules. The result was the Conference for Progressive Political Action, formed in 1921 by the four railroad Brotherhoods outside the AFL, the 12 Brotherhoods inside, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the Socialist Party.

When, in 1924, the Republicans nominated Coolidge and the Democrats chose John W. Davis, a corporation lawyer closely identified with the Morgan interests, the CPPA joined with the Northwest farmer-labor groups and the Wisconsin progressive Republicans in a third-party venture. The AFL, rudely rebuffed by both old parties, gave only grudging support to the enterprise; but many unions, city and state labor bodies, cooperatives, and other such organizations dove into the 1924 presidential campaign with a will. The Progressive Independents polled almost five million votes for LaFollette, some 16.5 percent of the total. While this gave the LaFollette ticket the electoral vote of only one state, Wisconsin, it came in ahead of the Democrats as the "second party" in a dozen others.

IN retrospect, the showing had all the marks of a good beginning, but it led to nothing further at the time. The Wisconsin insurgents went back to the Republican Party after the death of LaFollette, group after group broke away, the railroad Brotherhoods lapsed once more into political immobility after getting partial satisfactory of their grievances, and the CPPA was soon destroyed. Observers were quick to label the movement the "last gasp" of anti-monopoly farm revolt, which perhaps it was. In the euphoria of the twenties, commentators and analysts were most impressed by the rapid disintegration of the protest movement. Few took note of the rapidity with which it had been assembled, or, more significant, of the role which labor had played for the first time in a national political movement.

Meanwhile, the traditionally "political" unions were becoming more and more indistinguishable from the typical AFL business agents' paradise. In the needle trades unions, for example, socialist influence had always been heavy. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers had been formed as a semi-industrial union outside of the AFL, before World War I, and foreshadowed the later CIO in its basic principles and origin. The Amalgamated membership was strongly socialist in ideology, as were some of the leaders, and the special distinction of the union was its "social" flavoring. Yet, by the late twenties, such unions as the Amalgamated and the United Mine Workers—which could boast before the war of conventions at which one-third of the delegates held Socialist Party cards—were not practicing too different a unionism from much of the AFL. While left-wingers placed a lot of the blame on this or that personality, the universality of the development showed that it was not a matter especially of "misleadership"—

although there was plenty of that—but of a strong tropism in the American environment which bent all the unions in this conservative, business-unionist direction as a condition of their existence.

The progress-in-reverse of the American labor movement was soon codified in a number of theories. Selig Perlman relates, in the preface to his book *A Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York, 1928), how as a young man in Russia in the first years of the century, he had "professed the theory of the labor movement found in the Marxian classics." But after coming to this country and joining the research staff of Professor John R. Commons at the University of Wisconsin, he underwent a sharp change in outlook. The Marxists had always depicted an "ascent" from "pure and simple trade unionism" to a labor and socialist political consciousness. Yet, he found, the American Federation of Labor, growing out of the socialist movements among immigrant workers in the sixties and seventies, had shucked off its early political mentality. Such AFL founders as Gompers, Strasser, and McGuire had all started as socialists and had been led by their experiences to a pure-and-simple union path. Thus, Perlman theorized, the notion that labor has a "historical mission," a political task, to perform, proved under classic conditions to be alien, grafted on by intellectuals, and soon outgrown in favor of the "maturity" of business unionism devoid of ultimate ends.

AT the time, such theories had great empirical appeal. The labor movement seemed to be inexorably impelled to "find itself" in Gompersism. Looking back today from the vantage point of three more decades of experience, however, it becomes clear that Gompers reflected a brief stage, rather than the end product of labor evolution. Shortly after Professor Perlman completed his theory, it was rudely exploded by the Great Depression, the rapid mass organization of the industrial workers, and the creation of a great new labor movement, five times as large as that of the twenties. Moreover, this new labor movement was galvanized by two great waves of political activity which, although they have not created the labor party of long radical aspiration, have completely altered the politics of the nation and labor's place in them.

The first wave coincided with the industrial union movement. In 1933, even before the formation of the CIO, labor and farmer-labor political formations began to crop up—in Connecticut, New Jersey, Washington, Massachusetts, Ohio, and elsewhere. Several powerful AFL unions leagued together in a bloc committed to independent political action, and got support from many city central bodies and state federations. At the 1935 convention of the AFL, 13 resolutions calling for the formation of an independent labor or farmer-labor party were introduced by unions representing about a half-million members. In 1936, the convention of the reorganized auto workers' union passed a resolution in favor of a farmer-labor party. The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, the sole major remnant of the old Non-Partisan League movement and the 1924 LaFollette campaign, enjoyed a great surge of support and by 1930 had elected a Farmer-Labor Governor. In March 1936, that party, in an action attracting widespread notice at the time, came out for the exploration of possibilities of a new nationwide party similar to itself.

In the summer of 1936, the CIO leaders, with the cooperation of some of the AFL unions, set up Labor's Non-Partisan League, which played an active role in the Roosevelt landslide of that year. The CIO made a major foray into the Democratic Party of Pennsylvania, and, while failing to capture it, succeeded in installing Thomas Kennedy, secretary-treasurer of the miners' union, as lieutenant-governor of the state, and in winning the administrations of a number of small steel and coal cities. The American Labor Party was organized in New York State to give the hundreds of thousands of socialist-minded voters a chance to get behind Roosevelt without having to vote Democratic. The new party polled some 300,000 votes in its first year, and increased that total substantially in later years, electing five out of 26 New York City councilmen in 1937, and remaining a power until about 1950. Thus by the time the CIO was organizationally consolidated, labor had become a powerful force in the nation's politics, speaking with a new voice of authority on national and international, as well as purely "labor," issues. In a scant ten years from the time when Perlman's theory of progressive retrogression from politics to pure unionism had been announced, the entire picture had been turned on its head, or, more properly, right side up. Labor's evolution had once again assumed a forward direction.

THE second major wave of labor politics came toward the end of, and after, World War II. Labor's Non-Partisan League had collapsed in the break between John L. Lewis and the rest of the CIO over support of Roosevelt, and in the early war years the unions concentrated their efforts on further organization of the war-swollen industries and extension of economic gains. But after a few years of war, the labor ranks began to chafe under the restrictions that held them to a specious "equality of sacrifice" while corporate enrichment soared as never before. A number of strikes, particularly in the coal mines, caused the Roosevelt administration to raise the issue of compulsory drafting of workers, or "national service" legislation, and relations between Roosevelt and the unions began to show signs of strain.

The May 1943 convention of the Michigan CIO witnessed a significant blowup, as a group of second-line leaders rose in revolt, passing resolutions against the no-strike pledge and for an independent labor party. The October 1943 convention of the auto union voted only "conditional support" to Roosevelt for a fourth term. In early 1944, the insurgent UAW forces started a new party, the Michigan Commonwealth Federation, which, after a promising beginning, was pressured into the newly formed Political Action Committee setup.

The Political Action Committee of the CIO was started in 1943; and, with its formation, the now-familiar pattern of labor politics began to take shape. It was reinforced later by the AFL's Labor League for Political Education, and the merger of the two union federations eventually

produced the present Committee on Political Education, through which the labor movement now exerts its by no means negligible influence on American politics.

Despite all this, the labor movement has produced neither its own party nor a truly independent political organization. In retrospect, the job is not as easy as it may have seemed at various times. That the early movements foundered and the AFL alone possessed the sea legs with which to weather the vicissitudes of labor organization, seems to us today not the conniving of traitorous men that it seemed to the radicals of the time, but the pressure of material forces stronger than any ideology. The 1924 coalition behind LaFollette was clearly an initial foray with only ephemeral possibilities, since, as Sidney Hillman was later to point out, the United States never really possessed a labor movement worthy of that name until the formation of the CIO. The narrow craft organizations of that day were too weak a base for a political movement. The wartime and postwar upsurges, while they looked promising at the time, were impelled by mass sentiments that soon evaporated. Wartime grievances were resolved with the close of the war and the strike wave of 1946, and the widespread fears among workers that the end of the war would bring a renewal of the depression of the thirties proved premature.

YET, coldly and realistically as we may appraise the past, there was clearly one opportunity for revamping American politics along labor lines—that was in the formative years of the CIO. The late thirties saw many of the ingredients for a new alignment present in abundant proportions. Faith in the capitalist system had been severely shaken among wide masses of people. Great and powerful new organizations of labor had just come into being, and were advancing rapidly. Among the farmers and middle class, political ferments were, if anything, even greater. Sizable and energetic forces of organizers, chiefly young radicals, had won their spurs in the industrial battles of the day and were looking towards broader social horizons. Labor's prestige in the nation was high, and it was widely viewed as a crusade which could lead the nation out of the wilderness of unemployment, greed, and strife. Yet, no basic realignment appeared.

The alliance with Roosevelt and the liberal New Dealers was probably an inevitable feature of the rise of the unions in the thirties. In more ways than one, Roosevelt was the real political leader of the CIO in those days. The new atmosphere that had materialized in Washington, and the new attitudes coming out of it, seemed to the workers part and parcel of their own strivings for unionization. Yet it did not take a master strategist to see that the objectives of the Democratic Party, with its reactionary Southern wing, were not identical with the objectives of the labor movement. Congress was a great disappointment after 1938, when it stopped passing liberal legislation; the corrupt city machines upon which the Democratic Party rested in the North had their own ends in view; and Roosevelt, even with his liberal experimentalism, was always balancing between antagonistic forces.

In that situation, it didn't take radical ideology—just common sense—to see that the sooner labor built its own truly independent political power and vehicles, the better position it would be in to secure its gains and continue its advance. And that is just what its actions were commonly interpreted as meaning. No one expected a sudden rupture with Roosevelt, but many expected the construction of local labor parties and the running of local labor slates, the building of an independent political organization, and the gradual preparation for the eventual launching of a labor party. When Labor's Non-Partisan League was begun, when many local campaigns did eventuate, when the American Labor Party was founded, when John L. Lewis began to cross swords with Roosevelt over the Little Steel strike—Lewis accusing the President of ingratitude after having "supped at labor's table"—an evolution in the direction of a labor party seemed inevitable.

But the pattern was disrupted by the timidity of narrow-minded leaders. Most of the CIO succumbed to Democratic blandishments. Lewis, for his part, trying to carry his course through to some kind of an end, was rapidly isolated, and, striking out in a blind and vain rage, jumped over to the Republicans in the election of 1940. The fault is not that a labor party was not launched, full blown, to oppose Roosevelt in 1940. That was not in the cards nor would it necessarily have been wise. The fault is that the continuity of political evolution was forcibly broken, labor's political independence sacrificed, and the process which would have eventually led to the creation of a new party totally disrupted by short-sighted leaders. The coming of war completed the havoc, drowning labor in a sea of spurious "national unity" shouting in which the New Deal was knifed to death and the labor political organizations nearly wiped out.

IF there is no labor party, and no noticeable trend to one at the moment, what then is there in the way of labor political organization? Harold Laski, in his *American Democracy,* (New York, 1948) passed a rather harsh judgment:

> *The CIO has therefore continued to employ the technique of Gompers; the only difference is the vigor and urgency with which they have used it. . . .*
>
> *The only difference in principle between the outlook of Mr. Gompers, say, in 1913, and Mr. Hillman in 1944, was that the latter had evolved for the CIO a much more effective organ for political expression in the PAC than anything Mr. Gompers had constructed in his long years of almost unrivalled leadership. (pp. 221, 226.)*

From the purely formal point of view, there is evidence to back up this opinion. After all, the techniques of lobbying and labor pressure were not unknown to the AFL years ago, and non-partisanship was more often a pose than a fact. The AFL broke its posture a number of times to participate actively in political campaigns. The 1906 political program of the AFL embraced an ambitious list of objectives and promised electoral efforts to secure acceptable nominees and even to make independent nominations where neither party chose an acceptable candidate. In the

first Wilson administration, the high point of AFL legislative efforts, the passage of the Clayton bill and an eight-hour railroad bill, moved a great New York newspaper to protest that "Congress is a subordinate branch of the American Federation of Labor." If the current labor movement is trying merely to secure certain legislation, and to "punish friends and reward enemies" at election time, what then has been the advance?

This is one of those cases where purely formal criteria fail. The fact is that there has been a great transformation in labor's political role, though it is not possible to analyze it by a comparison restricted to the resolutions of Gompers' day and ours. In the first place, there has been a big change in the thinking of millions of workers, so that they now vote as a fairly solid and cohesive bloc—not unanimously, but in sufficient numbers to show a rudimentary consciousness of common class interest. Joel Seidman wrote in the *Public Opinion Quarterly* in October 1939, when talk of a labor party was on many lips, that "a workers' political party is not likely to become a permanent and major factor in the United States until the great bulk of American wage-earners recognize that they belong to a working class, and that they and their children are likely to remain there permanently." This important postulate thus stated, he then proceeded to blinker his vision by following the Gallup pollsters' lead into a never-never land where all America considered itself "middle class." The Gallup poll had asked a sampling of Americans, in the style of the W. Lloyd Warner school of sociologists, whether they consider themselves "upper class," "middle class," or "lower class." Naturally, just about everyone (88 percent) said "middle class," and Seidman dolefully concluded that there was nothing to be done along laborite lines in politics.

Professor Richard Centers some years later noticed something wrong with this procedure, and made a reputation for himself by simply adding to the questions the additional choice of "working class." Lo and behold! A goodly half of his respondents, the largest single category, leaped voluntarily into that class. He then went further, and constructed a battery of six questions, touching on strikes, unions, government ownership of industry, and the like, as a test of "conservatism" and "radicalism." Not only did he find that a good third or more of the sampled group fell into the radical side of his balance, but that the feelings of radicalism were concentrated most heavily among the working class sections. (See Joseph A. Kahl, *The American Class Structure,* New York, 1957, Chapter VI.)

SINCE these studies, various analyses of national election returns have strongly confirmed a tentative division in the population along ideological lines, with the Democratic Party winning the bulk of the protest, or laborite, or liberal, or welfare-statist—however you chose to label it—vote. The excellent study of the Wayne County (Michigan) voting of auto union members in the 1952 election, *When Labor Votes* (Arthur W. Kornhauser and others, New York, 1956), gave one of the clearest pictures. The investigators found that when they constructed a scale of occupations ranging from white collar through skilled and semi-skilled workers, the voting for Stevenson followed the scale with mathematical purity, ranging from 41 percent in the case of white collar workers up to 81 percent for semi-skilled workers earning less than $2 an hour. When they divided their interviewees into groups that owned their own homes and those who didn't, they found that 85 percent of renters voted Democratic as against 71 percent of owners. No matter what kind of an economic or occupational scale they constructed, they got the same kind of correlation, even when they went by fathers' occupations! The studies of Samuel Lubell and others, or even common rough observations of voting by ward and precinct in important elections, all have proven that, if we haven't got a class and social division in politics today, we have something that closely resembles it.

Of course, no figures can prove that America is today divided along lines of class feeling comparable to those on the European continent. The Eisenhower trend that chipped away at the pattern described above in 1952 and 1956 is one piece of contrary evidence. The fact that one of the old parties, differing very little in ideology from its twin, is the repository of this laborite feeling is another. The absence of a coherent body of labor feeling on many issues of national and international scope that go beyond the quarrels in which the unions are directly interested, is a third. The weakness of socialism and all forms of radicalism is still another. But few can claim today, as was commonly agreed years ago, that there is neither a labor ideology nor a labor voting coherence. In rudimentary form, both of these exist sufficiently to sustain a body of labor political activity far beyond what is at present undertaken by the union movement.

This trend to a labor vote is the first basic change from the days of Gompers. The second is the development of a major alliance between labor and one wing of the Democratic Party, to the point where this has now become one

of the foundation stones of American politics. This new feature has become prominent in the national headlines, especially since the 1944 Democratic Convention where the phrase imputed to Roosevelt about the choice of a Vice-Presidential nominee—"Clear it with Sidney [Hillman]"—was put to use as a Republican campaign slogan. But while the *national* power of labor has often been exaggerated, the clearest evidences of this new alignment and the most significant portents for the future are to be found on the local level.

WITH the rise of the unions came the erosion of the powers of the city political bosses. The mass industrial organizations were able to perform on a wholesale basis the welfare functions previously retailed by the ward and county boss. The new pole of allegiance rallied the most energetic and forward-looking of the workers, liberals, young lawyers, and those who previously clustered around party clubs. Even in voting power, while the unions quickly found that they could not turn over unanimous blocs of votes with a word of command, they were able to swing sizable parts of the electorate that rivaled those controlled by precinct machines which had been a century in the building. The factors of union endorsement, union financial contributions, union-paid political workers in the weeks before election day, began to loom large on the political horizon and brought the shrewder politicians around to negotiations. Thus the unions took their place side by side with the party machines in many cities as factors to be reckoned with.

The most telling single example, of course, is that of Michigan. Normally a Republican state, the permanent Democratic organization was weak, and, after a brief joyride during the New Deal, collapsed entirely in 1942, leaving control in the hands of a clique of Old Guard Democrats with their eyes on Washington patronage. Two dissatisfied groups developed, the "Reform Democrats," and the "Michigan Democratic Club" of New Dealers. The labor movement entered the picture strongly after 1944 with a state Political Action Committee, and, after pressuring the Michigan Commonwealth Federation back into line, started looking around for toeholds in the Democratic Party. A coalition with the two dissident groups was formed in the early part of 1947. The state PAC formulated the following course: "It is our objective in adopting this policy to remold the Democratic Party into a real liberal and progressive political party which can be subscribed to by members of the CIO and other liberals. We therefore advise CIO members to become active precinct, ward, county, and congressional district workers and attempt to become delegates to Democratic conventions."

In the 1950 convention of the Democratic Party, this coalition, composed of the two Democratic factions, the CIO, parts of the AFL, and some minority groups, was able to claim over 750 of the 1,243 delegates, about 486 of whom were members of the CIO. The entire 68-member state committee was of the liberal coalition, 20 being CIO members. The *New York Times* complained that August Scholle, director of the state CIO, was the "real head of the convention."

Despite this sensational showing, labor influence in the Democratic Party of Michigan has been limited. As is generally the case with such coalitions, the political basis is a common denominator set by the most backward element. CIO leaders have found that they must furnish most of the money and manpower, while hiding modestly behind those "regular" Democratic elements which official public opinion has decreed, through the corporate-controlled media of mass propaganda, to have a "right" to be in politics. Regular Democrats are always ready to lecture the CIO on its "political naiveté" in thinking that elections are won by issues instead of personalities and precinct work, and the union leaders have shown themselves adept at learning this deep lesson from the politicians. The result has been that labor's strongest single weapon, its aura of a crusade for a better nation, has generally been drowned in the morass of ward-heeling politics.

Moreover, the decline of the machine and the rise of labor have not been clean-cut antipathetic processes. Some of the ward-heelers on a local and national level have learned to take on a labor coloration. What is far more serious, many of the unionists have been absorbed by the pull of machine politics, jobs, influence-peddling, patronage, and dirty in-fighting. As the tone has been set by the top leaders becoming immensely "practical" in their political arrangements, the union political committees and caucuses have become happy hunting grounds for job seekers and careerists.

To one extent or another, the unions have built up political machinery in the major industrial centers. Labor has become an important factor in a continuing coalition within the Democratic Party. While the gains have been meager and the resulting corruption of objectives has been, at times, so great as to make this maneuver look more like a detour than a step along the road to labor's political emancipation, it is hardly a development that can be elbowed aside. Given the fiasco of the late thirties when the movement was aborted by its own leadership, the Democratic Party road became an inevitable experience for labor. Judged by comparison with the Gompers era, it represents the claiming of higher political ground.

A FRESH and venturesome course by labor faces major obstacles. The American labor movement is a broadly based, slow-moving monolith. Its leaders, disposing of great dues income, enormous welfare programs, large staffs, and a carefully built up air of respectability, are timid and not inclined to strike out off the beaten path. Its members, moreover, are by no means convinced that work within the old-party framework is useless. In the above-mentioned survey of Wayne County unionists, *When Labor Votes,* the pollsters found that of the four major groups into which they divided their subjects, the pro-labor pro-politics group, by all odds the most advanced in its attitudes, taking in about one-third of the interviewed workers, was by far the *most* convinced of all the groups that there is an important difference between the two parties.

The depression of the thirties crystallized a certain political alignment in this country which still has not been disrupted. The unionized and progressive-thinking

parts of the working population are strongly inclined towards the Democratic Party. It will take major new issues, causing great upheavals in attitudes, to break this pattern in favor of a labor party orientation. New economic troubles, a big debate over foreign policy, a movement for more and better welfare-statism and for greater public responsibility in presently neglected social spheres—one or all of these issues may provide the focus for such a realignment. It is hard to foretell either the issues or the form in which tomorrow's labor politics will emerge. Given the disparity of situations in various parts of the country, we are likely to see a variety of forms, ranging from fights inside the Democratic Party to local independent labor-liberal parties.

But if issues and forms cannot be foretold, the major trend is clear. Labor's political evolution has taken on a scope and forcefulness far beyond anything that can be dictated by short-sighted leaders. If we have been a long time catching up with European labor movements in their independent politics, we have been making important progress, as this review has tried to show. While partisans of independent labor political activity may see little current day-to-day motion, we may be sure that if Gompers were alive today he would be bewildered by the extent of the change and would consider his own program at least half discarded. And, while motion may be slow at the moment, when American labor does move it tends to do so in sudden leaps.

The Negro and The Union: A Dialogue

by Shubel Morgan

THE following is an imaginary colloquy between a defender of the record of our unions in the battle for full Negro equality, and a critic of the record:

* * *

DEFENDER. I am not so naive as to attempt a categorical defense of the American labor movement on any issue. In George Meany's house there are many mansions. I simply contend that—to quote Jack Barbash's pamplet *The Labor Movement in the United States*—"there has been a major change in the climate of union opinion" regarding the Negro and his rights. This change is toward the better and, as such, bodes well for our economy and our society generally.

CRITIC. Nor do I wish to cite the sins of the "dinosaur wing" of organized labor to smear the whole. But I cannot see that any significant contribution toward racial equality and justice is being made, or soon will be made, by the AFL-CIO. The policy response on matters of Color has been much like that on Corruption—too formal, too little, too late. But tell me, on what does Brother Barbash base his optimism?

DEFENDER. He points out that there are "a considerable number of unions in which equal treatment is an article of faith. Such unions face up to racial problems through a conscious effort and seek to integrate the 'minority' group as full participants in the union, through educational activities, fair practice committees, and the like."

CRITIC. I think you would admit that the larger the Negro minority within a particular union, the less conscious (or unconscious) effort is made to achieve those goals.

DEFENDER. Granted. And Barbash, too, agrees in an indirect fashion. He says, "Full employment, or near it, has made it possible for Negroes to get jobs in industry previously denied to them by company employment policies. The union, in order to survive, has had to work for the integration of the Negro worker in the union."

CRITIC. You could also read that to mean management sets the pace, by being the first to lower racist lines.

DEFENDER. And you have to remember that unions are born in a world they never made. But Barbash's main hope lies in "the setting-up of an AFL-CIO Civil Rights Committee manned by a full-time staff, and a constitutional commitment by the AFL-CIO to eliminate discriminatory practices in affiliated unions."

CRITIC. What has the committee done lately?

Shubel Morgan is the pen name of a white Southern writer who is now on the staff of an AFL-CIO union.

DEFENDER. It helped get the civil rights bill through the last Congress. A weak thing, perhaps, but something. And they are continuing to demand further Congressional action.

CRITIC. Oh? I hadn't noticed it. Nor have I seen any massive discipline invoked upon the unions which continue to ban Negroes from membership or conspire with management to deprive them of seniority and upgrading rights.

DEFENDER. I will concede that racial discrimination has not evoked the thunder of disapproval accorded Communism and Corruption. But you must consider AFL-CIO internal politics. The lily-white building trades, buttressed by the Teamsters, formerly dominated the Executive Council. Now, with the shift in power to the industrial unions, George Meany is talking out of the CIO side of his mouth. A recent article in *Reporter* magazine gives a good account of how he is prodding some of the backward brothers. Were it not for the recession, I wager that you would be well aware of AFL-CIO concern. . . .

CRITIC. It strikes me that the AFL-CIO will always find something to talk about besides racial matters. Or rather, when they do talk, it is a banal rehashing of the headlines in an ADA-tinged resolution. They never make the headlines. They have not launched a single major project for civil rights in the North or South. Reuther's name on the letterhead of the NAACP is the most dramatic gesture.

DEFENDER. Labor lobbied for FEPC laws in those states which have them.

CRITIC. Yes, a few unions did. But could you tell me if the AFL-CIO is still in favor of a national FEPC law? My eyes aren't very good on fine print. However, the sort of thing I am referring to is this:

IN the South, in 1955-1956, before there was a McClellan Committee or a recession, 40,000 Negroes in Montgomery, Alabama, staged perhaps the greatest strike in the history of this country. For better than a year they maintained a bus boycott, resisting all repression, acting in disciplined, self-sufficient fashion that exceeded a picket captain's fondest dreams. As a matter of fact, a principal strategist in the boycott was the president of a Sleeping Car Porters local. There were plenty of times when the Montgomerians sorely lacked both cash and sympathy—but, with the exception of the Sleeping Car Porters, the Packinghouse Workers, and a couple of UAW locals, the unions defaulted.

The major labor angle to come out of the situation was the formation of a KKK-oriented "Southern Federation of Labor." This outfit actually posed a "raid" threat to some large Steelworkers locals in Alabama, gathering momentum from AFL-CIO silence on the issues. Finally, because of the ineptness of the SFL promoters, the threat fizzled, and the AFL-CIO press has been gloating ever since—but the "triumph" is comparable to that of Eisenhower over McCarthy. AFL-CIO silence on the issues continues to this day.

But I supose you will tell me that the problems of merger diverted the conscience of the AFL-CIO?

DEFENDER. No. I will say simply what I have heard from many union staff guys. The white Southern rank-and-filer is oftentimes the best unionist in the country—except on *one* issue. The Southern worker had a harder fight to get his union and he values it more. Several internationals have derived much of their leadership and program from their Southern locals. Good leadership and good program—except on *one* issue.

The hard question therefore faces many unions, assuming good will on the part of their national officers: Why risk gutting the organization in the interest of a gesture, however worthwhile? They understandably choose an easier, slower route—education of their membership.

CRITIC. Without casting aspersions on the virtues of education, I have to interject that most union educational programs—leadership schools or whatever—seem to concern themselves mainly with negotiation and grievance procedures, or with intra-union politics. Racial matters get a real softpedal, becoming inaudible the further South you go.

Furthermore, co-operation with the NAACP stops at the Mason-Dixon line. And, as I understand it, an informal, but inflexible blacklist bans any support for several Southern interracial organizations. The only group that is pure is the Southern Regional Council, whose Ford Foundation grant keeps it from doing much else besides making "surveys."

Here is a Northern example: In an Ohio city a Steelworkers local (predominantly Negro) went on strike at a foundry because the company refused to upgrade a Negro worker. He had been employed there for more than ten years. "They promoted past him foreigners who couldn't speak English—they promoted anybody who was white," to quote one of the strikers. The company reached the newspapers with its version of the walkout—namely, that the union was trying to dictate policy on incentive pay. No mention of color. And there was an editorial tut-tutting about 400 people giving up days and days of wages to win a few more cents an hour for one employee. The Steelworkers international representative refused to make any statement. Fortunately, after more than a month, the strikers forced the company to submit to arbitration and the man won his promotion.

BUT I can't help thinking that the Steelworkers missed a fine opportunity to call attention to one of the grosser industrial inequities in the area, and to their own, in this instance, heroic role. Or did they fear, because this sort of injustice is so prevalent, that they might open a Pandora's box?

DEFENDER. Unfortunately, unions are democratic—even in being undemocratic. "The problem of civil rights in the union reflects the tensions and views of the population at large," Barbash says. Education must precede action. I think you know the Steelworkers have produced a movie on segregation in housing.

CRITIC. Yes, and it avowedly suggests no remedy to the situation.

But let me clarify my fundamental disagreement with you. You are looking forward to what the AFL-CIO might eventually do *for* the Negro. I am concerned with what the AFL-CIO attitude toward the Negro is doing *to* the union movemnt. For the past ten years, union membership in this country has remained stationary. Losses through automation have barely been offset by the "business union" type gains of such outfits as the Teamsters. Furthermore, cardholders far outnumber

members, even in the most democratic unions. The old, declining industrial areas are unionism's strongholds, while the new, booming regions are virtually wilderness.

DEFENDER. Now come on, you can't hang all these things on one hook. Unionism can be its own worst enemy at times, but there have been plenty of outside pressures at work.

CRITIC. And those pressures are still at work. But how will the unions ever defy them if they do not find a new vitality—a new "ginger" group to bolster their ranks? Negroes have played a crucial role on several occasions in union history. They tipped the balance in the mines of West Virginia, at the Ford River Rouge plant, and in the Chicago packing houses.

Today, because so much industry has moved South and because so many Negroes have migrated North, they are nationally strategic. And they are natural union material: wage-earners, organization-minded, and possessed of a class consciousness unequalled by any other native Americans.

But in the South, the timidity or outright hostility displayed by unions since the Supreme Court desegregation decisions has tended to make the Negro distrust them. He has moved closer to his church and fraternal organizations—where, as witness the Montgomery and Tallahassee boycotts, the needs of human dignity, if not economic needs, are well served.

IN the North, I find Negro unionists who suspect and discount the programs of their unions because they have seen how slow the union reflexes are on racial matters. Even though their own locals may be honestly integrated, they know that Southern locals often are not—and that national officers usually compromise with the Southern view. Smart managements take advantage of this situation by voluntarily easing color lines at the plants. They *deliver,* and they make good company men out of many a potential union militant.

DEFENDER. I will concede to you the existence of these disturbing factors. But I think you will concede that the Negro is better off with a union than without one. The economic gains he has made thereby have paid for some of this ferment for complete equality. Only during World War II did the Negro obtain relatively easy entrance to unions. He has not yet acquired the sophistication—of the Irish, say—necessary to manipulate organizational politics. As several of the more decent Southern Senators tell Negro leaders in their states: You get the voters on the books and I'll stop filibustering. The same process will occur in the AFL-CIO, in time. I will not say that Meany, Schnitzler, Reuther, or several others will be around then—but it will occur.

CRITIC. I am only afraid that before the process you describe can take place, the Negro will get tired of waiting. He had to move on his own with the March-on-Washington movement to get Roosevelt to sign the wartime FEPC. And he has had to move on his own to try to get the Supreme Court decision observed. If labor hopes to get Negro grass-root backing, it will have to go a lot further than the halting steps it has taken up to now.

So far, we have, as regards the Negro, another of the failures of nerve which cumulatively threaten to make organized labor an adjunct of the Civil Service system: pure, gutless, and the easy tool of a plutocratic Washington.

Books About American Labor

by David Herreshoff

THE labor movement has held the attention of radicals more than other aspects of American civilization. The resulting labor literature has evoked, in a period of nearly total acceptance of established institutions, some scholarly grumbling. "Only in the labor field," complains Vaughn David Bornet, "has there appeared a noticeable percentage of writings dedicated, not to telling the story, but to discrediting leaders, movements, organizations, our balanced two-party system, and an economy based on the profit motive." ("The New Labor History," *The Historian,* Autumn 1955.) Despite Mr. Bornet's alarm, many studies of labor advance no great criticism of our way of life. Indeed, the first, and still influential, trend of labor studies, the Wisconsin school of John R. Commons and Selig Perlman, has always been anti-radical.

While the Wisconsin school declined in post-Roosevelt America, its decline has not been accompanied by a gain in influence of radical writings about the labor movement. Socialist interpreters have in the main grown less radical, and the Communist-influenced school of labor studies has virtually collapsed. Meanwhile liberal and academic-sociological trends have expanded in scope and influence. To express the shift symbolically, the cult of Sidney Hillman and Walter Reuther has grown at the expense of the cults

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of Samuel Gompers and Karl Marx. My purpose here is to discuss the main trends of thought about labor as they find expression in books of the last two decades. It will serve this discussion to preface it with some remarks about Wisconsin labor theory in the years before the CIO.

"The labor movement is always a reaction and a protest against capitalism," wrote John R. Commons in his article on "Labor Movements" in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1932). But for him, the protests of the labor movement tend to grow less radical, and the movement itself becomes less intellectual and more businesslike, as it matures. Writing at the nadir of the Great Depression, however, he appears far less sure of this aspect than was Selig Perlman.*

WISCONSIN labor union theory begins, with Commons, as an attempt to explain the peculiarity of the American labor movement. It rests on two major theorems. The first is that in America the unions originated prior to the industrial revolution in response to the development of regional and national markets; it is the market, therefore, and not change in the processes of production resulting from technological development, which defines the structure and activity of the American labor movement and the psychology of the American worker. The primacy of the market promotes the rise of unions exclusively concerned with protecting their members' "property rights" in their jobs and favors craft rather than class consciousness among the workers.

The second theorem is that the emergence of the AFL under Gompers as the dominant American labor organization is a manifestation of the law of the survival of the fittest as it operates in human history. Perlman cites four attributes which equipped the AFL for survival. "The unionism of the American Federation of Labor 'fitted,' first, because it recognized the virtually inalterable conservatism of the American community as regards private property and private initiative in economic life." Second, the AFL understood the limited possibilities of political action under American conditions. "It went into politics primarily to gain freedom from adverse interference by judicial authority in its economic struggles—it did not wish to repeat former experiences when trade unions standing sponsor for a labor party found themselves dragged down to the ground by internecine strife." Third, "the unionism of the Federation was a fit unionism to survive because it was under no delusion as to the true psychology of the workingman in general and of the American workingman in particular. It knew that producers' co-operation was a beautiful but a really harmful dream. . . ." The AFL, finally, "was also without illusions with regard to the actual extent of labor solidarity. . . . Where conditions made co-operation between different crafts urgent, it was best obtained through free co-operation in 'departments' of unions in the same industry—each union reserving the right to decide for itself in every situation whether to co-operate or not." (*A Theory of the Labor Movement,* New York, 1928, pp. 201-203.)

These tenets voice the characteristic feelings and attitudes of the "pure and simple," "job-conscious" unionism of the Gompers officialdom in the AFL. But these ideas were a response to nineteenth-century conditions, and they became anachronistic along with the *laissez-faire* economy which nurtured them. The CIO contradicted the Wisconsin assumptions and prognoses. But cultural lag is strong in the social sciences, and the school has continued in being, although its influence is a long way behind what it had been in the twenties.

THE taste and smell of the CIO labor awakening in the mid-thirties were caught by Edward Levinson, *Labor on the March* (New York, 1938); Bruce Minton and John Stuart, *Men Who Lead Labor* (New York, 1937); J. Raymond Walsh, *The CIO: Industrial Unionism in Action* (New York, 1937). These books form a brilliant, lively background against which to view the often ponderous, though not always understanding, studies of the unions appearing in more recent years. Hope and urgency glow in their pages, and they remind us that a period of labor upsurge encourages bold generalizations. Other useful books of the years between the emergence of the CIO and the coming of the war include Benjamin Stolberg's *Story of the CIO* (New York, 1938), and two by Herbert Harris: *American Labor* (New Haven, 1939) and *Labor's Civil War* (New York, 1940). The last-named, containing a strong plea for labor unity, prophesies that "in the reallocation of personnel which would accompany any AFL-CIO fusion inheres a brilliant opportunity for the former to expel its handful of racketeers and for the latter to oust its fistful of Stalinists." The anti-Communist note in both Stolberg and Harris anticipates the later general attitude of many socialist and liberal writers. Harold Seidman's *Labor Czars—History of Labor Racketeering* (New York, 1938) studies a problem rooted in "class collaboration for profit" and the stifling of democracy and militancy in unions. Making use of the disclosures of the LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee, Leo Huberman analyzes the methods by which the employers sought to keep unions out of the mass production industries, in *The Labor Spy Racket* (New York, 1937).

With these books and many others to follow, most writers on American labor began to align themselves against Perlman's contention, reiterated as recently as 1951, that American labor still moves pretty much along the old Gompers road. Labor and academic liberals, socialists and Communists—all are generally agreed that the post-CIO labor movement does not harmonize with the Wisconsin theory. But the writers who reject the Wisconsin interpretation of the labor movement do not agree on what to put in its place. Among them, only the Communists and those influenced by them can be said to constitute a school.

Writers displaying an identifiable commitment which is not Wisconsinite but is anti-Communist, approach the labor movement from both liberal and quasi-socialist standpoints. One can call them "labor liberals," or, if they are

* Commons' thought shows vestiges of populistic radicalism which are not continued in Perlman. As Philip Taft, himself of the Wisconsin school, suggests, the main concern of Commons was to shield the AFL against open-shoppers; Perlman's concern was to shield it against the criticisms of radicals. (*Proceedings of Third Annual Meeting, Industrial Relations Association,* Madison, 1951, p. 141.)

union leaders or staff members, "social unionists"—to distinguish them from business unionists. Twenty years ago these men and women, typically, were under Marxian influence; but since then their radicalism has cooled,

leaving them, for the most part, without an integrated theory. In this respect they are closely attuned to the American labor movement as it exists today. For the joining of the two wings of the house of labor in 1955 was made possible by the decline of CIO social radicalism on the one side and the partial abandonment of traditional AFL narrowness on the other. The result has been a labor federation whose potential is handicapped by intellectual inadequacy. One can not regard the non-Wisconsin, non-Communist writers who are oriented toward the contemporary labor movement as a school. They are too variegated for that—some of them showing a strong residual, or a burgeoning, radicalism, others clustering about a dead-center liberalism, still others gravitating toward the Wisconsin position, or so immersed in the specialized routines which occupy union technicians that they feel no need for any perspective. Within this broad and diverse category of labor writers, a number, like J. B. S. Hardman and Jack Barbash, have maintained an interest in labor's outlook and future.

HARDMAN believes that the Wisconsin scholars understood the pre-New Deal labor movement better than the radicals. "The identification [by Commons] of the factor of job-consciousness in the workers' outlook deflated the then current terminology of class consciousness. The latter, in terms of American experience throughout the period, was altogether unreal: there could be no genuine class consciousness where men did not stay put in permanent, stratified classes, or at least were not convinced that they would for long; certainly they were sure that their children would not be proletarians forever." But absence of class consciousness "would in no way justify the assumption that American workers, and their organizations, lacked in considerable social awareness, and that they would not on occasion 'reach for the stars'—a statutory crime in the Wisconsin code of exemplary labor conduct." Americans have never been frightened of grand aims, and "the 'core-substance' of unionism is an ever evolving contest for a satisfying share in carrying on the business of living within the reach or the outlook of the nation and the time." The CIO, unforeseen in Wisconsin theory, saved the American labor movement from "aggressive senility." It was a response to the needs of the time, "in the teeth of such theories as 'no politics,' no 'mixing with the middle class,' no engagement in 'visionary goals.'" At present, the workers have attained a "consciousness of kind" which is broader than the old job and craft consciousness but which is not Marxist class consciousness. (*Third Annual Meeting, Industrial Relations Research Association,* pp. 153-154.)

The House of Labor (New York, 1951), edited by J. B. S. Hardman and Maurice Neufeld, is a collection of articles written mostly by present or past union staff members, devoted to the internal functioning of unions. It is useful in two ways: It acquaints the reader with both the scope of union activity and also with the viewpoint of the union technicians who, according to the Gompers rules, should advise but never lead, and who, understandably, are sometimes dissatisfied with the role assigned them by tradition. Another book fulfilling this double function is Jack Barbash, *The Practice of Unionism* (New York, 1956). A reading of Barbash suggests that the union technician lacks critical independence in his appraisals of union leaders and their policies. Still, Barbash wishes the union leaders would indulge in "a little less posturing, a little less conspicuous consumption, a little less use of the phrases 'my union,' 'my members.' . . . It can mean the difference between enlisting loyalties on the basis of intellectual and emotional attachments or solely on the basis of usefulness. Historically, movements, including the labor movement, have had to fulfill both needs in order to survive and grow."

Appraising in *The House of Labor* the state of the labor movement since the CIO and World War II, Hardman finds that "American labor unions have become a social power in the nation and are conscious of their new import." The new and improved situation of the labor movement results from economic expansion which "found a labor leadership willing to utilize helpful circumstances." Hardman considers the problem of union democracy under contemporary conditions to be increasingly complex. With the enormous growth of workers' organizations, town-meeting procedures become less applicable. Furthermore, "union democracy obviously can be fairly judged only in the light of the state of the art everywhere. And as to that, perfection is rarer than compromise. Franklin D. Roosevelt had to cope with the Hagues, the Kelleys, the Pendergasts, and even Woodrow Wilson had to take political cognizance of the pork-barrel legislation processors of his time." Compare American unions to the Democratic Party, in other words, and it will be seen that the unions are not especially undemocratic.

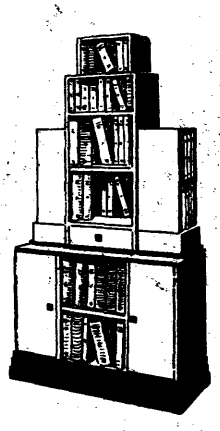
With this defensive response to the circumscription of democracy within the unions, Hardman draws attention to a vital distinction between the radical and the labor liberal approach to the labor movement. The labor liberal inclines to acceptance of the existing labor movement as the norm. He does not feel that there can be too great a difference in kind between the political and social institutions which represent the capitalist social order and those which are created by the labor movement. But the radical views the labor movement as a reaction against capitalism and the potential bearer and prototype of institutions which are more democratic than those which characteristically arise in the capitalist environment. The knowledge that bossism is normal within the Democratic Party, therefore, does not allay the apprehensions of the radical about the lack of democracy in the unions. His criterion for judging the health of the labor movement is his normative conception of its potentialities.

IT might help at this point to compare and contrast the three approaches to the labor movement, examples of which have been discussed, with reference to their respective normative concepts of the labor movement. For the Wisconsinites, the normal labor movement is the parochial business unionism of Gompers—a reality of the past. For the radicals, the normal labor movement is a broad socialist unionism—a potentiality of the future. For the labor liberals, the normal labor movement is the "social unionism" of Reuther—the reality of the present. The labor liberals receive their norm from the present reality, passively, instead of trying to impose their norm on the given labor movement. Their relation to the world helps them to observe and describe but hinders them from ordering their impressions and thoughts. Both the Wisconsin and radical doctrinaires, by contrast, have often permitted their attachment to their respective norms to obscure their vision when they look at the contemporary labor movement.

Turning now to the next school: Philip S. Foner conceives of his *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (New York, Vol. 1, 1947; Vol. 2, 1955) as a replacement for the hitherto standard *History of Labor in the United States* by Commons and associates. Foner's energetic research through the memoirs of labor leaders, unpublished theses, and the AFL archives brings to light information which corrects the Wisconsin scholars on minor points of fact, and which, more important, recovers the record of forgotten class battles. Of greater significance for this discussion is his quarrel with the Commons group over the interpretation of labor history.

Foner rejects the Commons image of American labor as job conscious rather than class conscious. In opposition to Commons, he represents the workers as having attained a consciousness of long-run class interests well over a century ago. Thus he asserts that during the first Presidential term of Andrew Jackson, "most workers" criticized Jackson's "connections with Tammany, his militaristic views, his partisanship in turning opponents out of office, and his contempt for the rights and just claims of the Indians." Before the Civil War the "wage workers," in Foner's view, "understood that not until slavery was smashed could the working class advance." In interpreting the draft riots which broke out during the Civil War in such working class centers as New York City and the Pennsylvania mining districts, Foner suggests that only "a small section of the working class, chiefly the unorganized, succumbed to Copperhead propaganda."

The concept of a working class endowed with class consciousness, but with a perverse genius for picking leaders who lag behind the rank and file in awareness of the workers' strategic and tactical interests, appears in Foner's



discussion of Powderly, DeLeon, and Gompers. It appears again in the appraisal of more recent events and persons in Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais, *Labor's Untold Story* (New York, 1955). In the Boyer-Morais explanation of the purge of left-wing unions from the CIO a decade ago, the vulnerability of many CIO left wingers as a result of their lack of independence from the sudden shifts of Kremlin policy is studiously ignored, as is the pervasiveness of frenzied anti-Communism in the union ranks. "The plot to divide the CIO," say the authors, "was at all times a design of the CIO's cold war leadership. It never had the approval of the CIO rank and file."

Characteristic of this school is a persistent exaggeration of the workers' radical propensities and an unwillingness to regard the working class as a contradictory entity which evinces, in the course of its historical evolution, immature or reactionary moods and attitudes as well as bursts of high political sensitivity and heroic idealism. Another characteristic, painfully evident in its discussions of the labor history of the last thirty years, is its trust in the wisdom of the Communist Party—an organization which, it would seem, marches from strength to strength in the van of the mass movement. To maintain this trust demands arduous apologetics.

A DEEPENED understanding of labor history, from labor liberal and radical points of view, is apparent in such important works of the postwar years as Irving Howe and B. J. Widick, *The UAW and Walter Reuther* (New York, 1949); Leo Huberman, *The Truth about Unions* (New York, 1946); Charles A. Madison, *American Labor Leaders* (New York, 1950); Matthew Josephson, *Sidney Hillman: Statesman of American Labor* (Garden City, N. Y., 1952); and Joel Seidman, *American Labor from Defense to Reconversion* (Chicago, 1953). But, a generation ago, Robert F. Hoxie thought of the writing

of labor history as a fad, and in *Trade Unionism in the United States* (New York, 1917) he chided those who "think that academic reconstruction of the past can contribute to the ends of the practical interests of the present." Without necessarily sharing Hoxie's view, numerous students have since recognized the need for analyses of union structure, practices, and attitudes. Utilizing some of the recent techniques employed in the social studies, a number of professional investigators have set down data on the actual administration of numbers of unions and pinpointed attitudes of groups of members. These, as well as the specialized studies of individual unions, follow the example of social scientists in other fields: They amass a plethora of detailed, very often valuable, factual data and organize it inadequately because of a dearth of overall concept.

C. Wright Mills is of course an outstanding exception to this practice. He invariably integrates his materials into a discernible pattern. In *The New Men of Power* (New York, 1948), he focuses on the plight of an economically virile and politically impotent union movement. The union officials are unlikely to lead a political movement, "for their character and the tradition of the organizations they lead have selected and formed them as different sorts of men: many are indeed the last representatives of economic man." Yet an independent labor party is needed if an alternative to an increasingly business-oriented government is to be found. Mills analyzes the devolution of inspired labor leaders into pedestrian administrators and provides a biting critique of "liberal rhetoric" as a factor of befuddlement in industrial relations.

A more specialized book is Arnold Rose, *Union Solidarity* (Minneapolis, 1952). Rose studies Local 688, built up in St. Louis under the vigorous leadership of Harold Gibbons, originally a socialist opponent of Samuel Wolchak in the CIO retail and wholesale workers' union, and latterly an intellectual aide of James Hoffa. The cultural factors which have shaped the sense of union solidarity are neatly delineated. The most important single practice in promoting the sense of solidarity is the involvement of members in the affairs of the union; but even in a relatively enlightened local union, the line of communication between the ranks and the leaders is ragged.

TWO very good studies are available in the Negro labor field. Robert C. Weaver, in *Negro Labor, A National Problem* (New York, 1946), considers the prospects of the Negro worker in the postwar economy, in the light of wartime experiences. Louis Ruchames, in *Race, Jobs, and Politics: The Story of the FEPC* (New York, 1953), shows how the Negro March on Washington movement wrested the FEPC from a reluctant Roosevelt, and illuminates subsequent struggles over Negro job rights, including the Philadelphia transit strike of 1943-1944.

Two useful works on labor political action in the 1950's are Fay Calkins, *The CIO and the Democratic Party* (Chicago, 1952) and Arthur Kornhauser, Harold L. Sheppard, and Albert J. Mayer, *When Labor Votes* (New York, 1956). *The CIO and the Democratic Party* analyzes five election situations in 1950 in which the CIO Political Action Committee worked, or attempted to work, with the regular Democrats. The more memorable episodes are the Taft-Ferguson Ohio Senatorial race, the campaign for G. Mennen Williams in the Michigan gubernatorial election, and the effort of Willoughby Abner, an officer of the Chicago CIO, to win a Democratic congressional nomination in the Illinois primaries. *When Labor Votes* studies the political attitudes of auto union members in the Detroit area in the hope of providing "deeper understanding of working people's motivations and feelings as these affect their political outlook and behavior." While the data of the study consist of interviews with auto workers before and after the 1952 election, the authors go beyond the particular locale and year, attempting to discover basic and stable trends in labor political action. The idea that the forms of labor political action have changed significantly is flatly challenged from a Wisconsin standpoint by Mark Perlman in *Labor Union Theories in America* (Evanston, Ill., 1958). "Unions," he asserts, "are today no closer to engaging in direct political action—that is, becoming part of one party's political machine—than they were in 1912." Unions "have never concluded a blanket alliance with a national party machine. . . ."*

DEMOCRACY in unions—or the lack of it—has evoked much discussion. "Business unionism, as a set of ideas justifying the narrowest definitions of a union's role in society, also helps to legitimate one-party oligarchy, for it implies that union leadership is simply the administration of an organization with defined, undebatable goals. . . ." So say Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin A. Trow, and James S. Coleman in *Union Democracy: The Internal Politics of the International Typographical Union* (Glencoe, Ill., 1956). The book studies the only American union to enjoy a continuous fifty-year tradition of internal democracy based on the existence of two parties within the organization. *Union Democracy* casts an ironic light on the "anti-totalitarianism" of the present leaders of American labor.

The Wisconsin view of the internal politics of the unions has been recently restated by Philip Taft in *The Structure and Government of Labor Unions* (Cambridge, 1954). Taft thinks that union elections at the national level seldom become contests between the incumbents and opposition candidates because of the popularity of the existing leaders, because rival leaders compromise their differences so as to present to the public a picture of harmony within the unions, and because the leaders respect the opinions of their membership. He regards factionalism within a union as undesirable and holds that the salaries of national officers—in the light of their duties and responsibilities—are not excessive. To him the powers in the hands of national union leaders are neither too great nor unwisely used. The machinery of discipline works smoothly and the opportunities for appeal are adequate. Thus Taft in this work carries forward the traditional Wisconsin approbation of the union status quo.

To counterpose the Taft and the Lipset-Trow-Coleman

* Lest this quotation give rise to a false impression of the content of the book, I should add that it is substantially a non-polemical account of American labor union theory between the 1880's and the New Deal.

interpretations of the internal politics of unions is to reveal the tension between tendencies in the labor movement itself. The books communicating these interpretations are symbolic of the undetermined final character and fate of the labor movement.

The resolution of the tension between bureaucracy and spontaneity is the unfinished business of the movement. Meantime its presence on the agenda precludes the formulation of a finished theory of the labor movement. Marx had expected the growth of socialist and democratic consciousness in the workers, in America as elsewhere. Commons did not bar a future radicalization of labor organizations, but the Wisconsin school in the main charted a growing conservative "practicality," an ever firmer subordination of the anti-capitalist intellectual visionaries in the movement to the Gompers business types. In opposition to the Wisconsin interpretation, Communism, the "official" Marxism of the past generation, was so compounded of dogmatism and special pleading as to be unable to leave any lasting intellectual imprint. The spokesmen of the union technicians have discerned changes in the labor movement which overthrow the Perlman codification of Wisconsin labor theory, but contradict Marxian expectations about the American working class.

The dialogue between the Wisconsin scholars on the one hand and the labor liberals and technicians on the other, will probably continue to stimulate American labor studies for some time to come. It would be a good thing to try to change the dialogue into a symposium to which independent American Marxism contributes its insights. For, as Joel Seidman and Daisy L. Tagliacozzo say ("Union Government and Union Leadership," in Neil W. Chamberlin, Frank C. Yurson, and Theresa Wolfson, eds., *A Decade of Industrial Relations Research,* 1946-1956, New York, 1958.), "The time is probably ripe for new theoretical insights into the nature of the labor movement and for an integration of the knowledge based upon the empirical material accumulated in the postwar decade."

Individualist Supreme

ATTORNEY FOR THE DAMNED, edited and with notes by Arthur Weinberg. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1957, $6.50.

SIX DAYS OR FOREVER? TENNESSEE V. JOHN THOMAS SCOPES, by Ray Ginger. Beacon Press, Boston, 1958, $3.95.

FOR years, our writers have been obsessed with the Civil War period, and the chronicles and commentaries continue to pour out. A branch industry has even grown up to explain the causes for this magnetic pull. But only now in the late fifties are some of our writers getting interested in the post-World War I period of the twenties. Our own and the earlier postwar decade bear so strongly upon each other, the delay would seem surprising. But holding up the mirror too closely to the era of Sinclair Lewis's "Main Street," Harding-Coolidge-Hoover "normalcy" and Henry Ford "welfare capitalism" would have invited embarrassing comparisons and no doubt disturbed the sirupy stereotypes of our slicks. The twenties were liable to conjure up an uncomfortable image of the *dénoument* of the Jazz Age in the crash of 1929.

But probing into the maladjustments and turmoils of our time, writers sooner or later found the twenties an unavoidable point of reference. Spread of juvenile delinquency and crime have inevitably led back to the sensational Leopold-Loeb murder trial when America first grappled uneasily with this new and little understood disease. We have already had three novels, an Alfred Hitchcock movie, a paperback history and a Broadway play, taking their themes from this case. Now, Ray Ginger has written a book about the famous Tennessee "monkey trial" of 1925 which likewise has much interest for us today. It was the climactic point of the fundamentalist anti-evolution crusade, part of the first post-war reactionary tide, which rose menacingly with the Palmer Red Hunt, and as it receded, backwashed into a dozen muddy streams like the Ku Klux Klan, Prohibition, religious bigotry.

There is an F. Scott Fitzgerald revival on, and our clothes designers are pushing sack dresses, pointed shoes and wig hats, but writers who discuss the period are still very selective in their choice of subject matter. Harvey Swados pointed out in a recent article that though they have fastened on the Leopold-Loeb case, they have carefully stayed away from the Sacco-Vanzetti case. Swados' explanation is that the Sacco-Vanzetti case was an ending where the Leopold-Loeb case was a beginning: " . . . the Sacco-Vanzetti case is the *last* instance in recent history in which the American people were stirred in great numbers to protest an apparent and gross miscarriage of justice. . . . Just so, the Leopold-Loeb case may be viewed as one of the *first* instances in contemporary American history in which official cognizance was taken of the vast murky areas beyond such deceptively simple words as guilt and insanity. . . . It is just this ambiguity, just this realization—indeed, at times this reveling in the fact—that there are no simple answers, that has proved so appealing to readers and writers of the 50's."

THE reasoning is perceptive on both counts, and yet they seem like peripheral explanations. As Swados himself suggests a couple of paragraphs along, the fact that Leopold and Loeb appear to be prototypes of today's lost teenagers has a lot to do with the fascination of the theme. As for the American public never having been similarly stirred about a trial since the Sacco-Vanzetti case, we have to remember this: The attempt to murder labor leaders or radicals by the technique of legal frameup went into decline after the Sacco-Vanzetti explosion. The powers-that-be got scared off. Even during the worst of the McCarthy bacchanalia, they deported people, they sent them to jail, they fired them off their jobs, they drove some to suicide. But there was no repetition of the Haymarket, Haywood, Tom Mooney, Sacco-Vanzetti frameups. The only exception was the Rosenberg trial, which was an outrage and a judicial murder, but in this case, the liberal public was never sure whether the damaging evidence offered against the Rosenbergs at the trial was perjured or not.

It is not as easy to stir up the human conscience when life itself is not at stake. Beyond that, American liberalism, the American Conscience, the American spirit of fair play, and so on, never took such a beating as in the cold war decade. The confusion over Russia, the revulsion against Stalinism, the inchoate fears about scarcely understood novel social phenomena, played havoc with all traditional lineups in American political life. Nothing was clear anymore in the fifties. No one knew who was friend or foe, or what was vice or virtue. The result was a decade of disorientation, destruction of values, cynicism and opportunism, political reaction, and personal decomposition, before which paled the worst bigotries and excesses of the twenties.

But it is unnecessary to go this far afield to ascertain why writers and readers are concentrating on only certain aspects of experience, and are, at least up to the present, more or less assiduously ignoring

those which can roughly be put under the heading of "political radicalism." After all, our writers, no less than our scientists, have been terrorized in a decade of cold war. They not only steered clear of certain subjects, they even adopted an abstruse Aesopian terminology to get by the unofficial, but nonetheless effectively functioning, censorship. Only with the decline of McCarthyism have they begun to leave the storm cellars, uncertainly move their limbs, and gaze bleary-eyed at the social world around them. It is to be expected that the preliminary explorations should occur in the cultural and literary pastures, whether of the twenties or of today. As they get accustomed to a bit of freedom, and if the atmosphere continues to clear, we can expect that many of them will start examining the socio-political enclosures as well.

The man who dominated both the Leopold-Loeb and Tennessee trials was Clarence Darrow, the internationally famous American trial lawyer. A Centennial Celebration was held last year in Chicago where Darrow was eulogized as a fearless liberal. This is part of the *Zeitgeist* of the fifties where it is no longer good form to call a spade a spade. Fearless he certainly was, but if words have any meaning at all, Darrow was not a liberal, but a radical, and a very pronounced radical, at that. He was too lazy intellectually to ever try to tie together the loose strands of his thought, but his deep-seated skepticism was bound up in contradictory knots with socialism, Tolstoyan pacifism, and anarchism. There can be no mistake about this, as Darrow was an outspoken as well as an articulate man. He explained his ideas in numerous essays and speeches, and they run like threads through all his court arguments.

FOR most of his life, Darrow operated as part of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, but soon after he came to Chicago, he lent his efforts to cement a Labor-Populist alliance in Illinois, and on and off, throughout his life, he contributed money to the socialists. Insofar as one can tie down the political philosophy of so mercurial figure as Darrow's, it is probably set down in his autobiography as well as anywhere. He wrote:

> *During these early years in Chicago I was very much interested in what passes under the name of "radicalism" and at one time was a pronounced disciple of Henry George. But as I read and pondered about the history of man, as I learned more about the motives of individuals and communities, I became doubtful of his philosophy. I never believed that land should be reduced to private ownership, and I never felt that any important social readjustment could come while any one could claim the unconditional right to any part of the earth and "the fulness thereof." The error I found in the philosophy of Henry George was its cocksureness, its simplicity, and the small value that it placed upon the selfish motives of men. I grew weary of its everlasting talk of "natural rights." . . .*
>
> *Socialism seemed to me more logical and profound; socialism at least recognized that if man was to make a better world it must be through the mutual effort of human units; that it must be by some sort of cooperation that would include all the units of the state. Still, while I was in sympathy with its purposes, I could never find myself agreeing with its methods. I had too little faith in men to want to place myself entirely in the hands of the mass. And I never could convince myself that any theory of socialism so far elaborated was consistent with individual liberty . . . I always have had sympathy for the socialistic view of life, and still have sympathy with it, but could never find myself working for the party.*
>
> *Anarchism, as taught by Kropotkin, Recluse, and Tolstoy, impressed me more, but it impressed me only as the vision of heaven held by the elect, a far-off dream that had no relation to life. So, without having any specific radical faith, I always was friendly toward its ideals and aims, and could feel and see the injustice of the present system, and generally found myself in conflict with it.*

Darrow not only disdained to hide his views in the courtroom, but in labor cases he invariably related the points of the indictment to the class struggle which he would proceed to expound in a most extreme and uncompromising manner while unambiguously placing himself on the side of the exploited. His language at times was so scathing and his attitude so defiant, that some of his associates thought he was more interested in promulgating a socialistic philosophy than in safeguarding the immediate interests of his clients. John Mitchell, president of the miners union, had a dispute with him about the line of his proposed summary argument before the coal commission appointed by Theodore Roosevelt to arbitrate the issues arising from the great anthracite strike of 1902. He accused him of trying to make a socialistic speech to satisfy his own personal theories. The same charge was made by Edmund Richardson, his associate lawyer in the Haywood case. "His great fault," Richardson said, "was that he was a socialist and was inclined to put the interests of the party ahead of the interests of the men on trial for their lives."

These accusations are wide of the mark. As seen, Darrow was never a member of the Socialist Party and considered himself at most as generally sympathetic to some of the socialist ideals. Besides, as an individualist supreme and a confirmed skeptic of all professions of men, his whole makeup was such as to preclude his interest in anything but winning the case at hand and making the best showing for his client and himself. He demonstrated that to the hilt in the McNamara case where without agreement with any of the parties concerned, he bargained away the Socialists' mayoralty victory in Los Angeles and the trade unions' defense campaign, to save McNamara from the gallows.

AS one studies the man, it becomes obvious that Darrow could no more avoid making a class struggle speech (which invariably veered off into a cloudy plea for Tolstoyan forgiveness and reconciliation) in a labor case than Winston Churchill could eschew Gibbonesque rolling periods in his oratory. It was part of the man. He wouldn't have known how else to make a winning talk. It was one of the ingredients that went into the making of his magical powers to create an atmosphere in the courtroom which left jurymen weeping overwhelmed by the tragedy of all human endeavor, the helplessness of man, the cruelty of blind fate, the desirability of reconciliation and love.

As an individual, Darrow was by no means the plaster saint that Irving Stone made him out to be in his Hollywoodized biography. Some of his admirers called him an exemplar of the Christian life. Maybe he was. But he was all too human just the same. William Allen White described him as "a cynic, a sophisticate, and a Sybarite," all of which was also true, but he was many other things besides, and it was the unique combination that impressed itself upon the American public and that made Darrow one of the best-loved platform personalities of his time. His jealously guarded individualism, his unpredictable shuffles on public questions, and his philosophy of ultra-mechanistic materialism verging on fatalism, conspired to make him more of an intellectual figure than an intellectual leader. Nonetheless, it is a high tribute to his nimbleness and artistry that he was able to maintain himself as a major public personality for three decades, all the while dancing on the fringes of radicalism.

After the McNamara case and his own two trials, it looked like Darrow was finished. He lost his practice and was generally avoided. But he then staged a comeback as a criminal lawyer and soon recouped his standing. His predecessor, Robert Ingersoll, had been a radical only on religious and allied matters, but a solid Republican in politics. Darrow flouted middle-class mores up and down the line. Besides his agnosticism on religion and his political heterodoxy, he was on the side of the labor unions, he was always defending radicals, and even in personal morals, he had preached and practiced free love during the interval between his two marriages. John Jay Chapman was surely not wrong when he wrote, "It would be hard to find a civilized people who are more timid, more cowed in spirit, more illiberal than we." But a man could always find a niche, there was always a chance of squeezing into the interstices, and Darrow was a master in that game. Of late, the state has been getting more efficient and pervasive. America

was very much the poorer for not having a figure of like ability, reknown and generosity in the fifties. Probably the country in its present state could no longer sustain a Clarence Darrow.

ARTHUR Weinberg, who was in charge of the Darrow Centennial, has collected in the current volume Darrow's arguments from some of his best-known cases. There is also included his address on "Crime and Criminals" delivered to the inmates of the county jail in Chicago, his New York debate with Judge Talley on capital punishment, his summation before the Anthracite Mine Commission, his lecture on John Brown, and his remarks at the funeral of John Peter Altgeld. None of this material has been available for years and it is a genuine public service that it has now been gathered together in one handsome volume.

Ray Ginger's study of the Tennessee evolution trial and its antecedents will become part of the indispensable bibliography of this period. It is well written, it has good biographical sketches of both Darrow and Bryan, the atmosphere of the trial is authentically caught, and the events skillfully related to the social drift of the period.

After Bryan joined the anti-evolution movement in 1920, it swept through different parts of the country. Many communities had learned during the war to ban the teaching of German and other unpopular subjects and now transferred their censoring zeal to evolutionism, pacifism, political liberalism. Several state legislatures passed anti-evolution laws or resolutions in the next few years and a number of liberal professors were hounded out of their posts. A survey issued by the American Civil Liberties Union at the time of the Scopes trial said that more restrictive laws had been passed in the preceding six months than at any time in the country's history. Roger Baldwin, ACLU director, attributed this repression to the growth of class conflict that had followed the Russian revolution.

It was inevitable that the Scopes case would become a *cause célèbre* after Bryan joined the prosecution and Darrow the defense. This was the only time in his life that Darrow had volunteered his services in a trial. But far from the liberals snapping up his offer, the three important policy-makers of the ACLU—Forest Bailey, associate director in charge of executive work, Felix Frankfurter, then Professor of Law at Harvard, and Walter Nelles, ACLU general counsel—tried in the worst way to maneuver him out of the defense. All three thought that the case required a lawyer of unchallenged religious orthodoxy. What they were after was a conservative and respectable attorney, some one like John W. Davis or Charles Evans Hughes, who would conduct a quiet dignified trial on the sole issue of the constitutionality of the Butler Act. Henry Fairfield Osborn, director of the American Museum of Natural History, warned Scopes not to let his defense get tainted with radicalism. But Scopes finally tilted the scales the other way—he wanted Darrow.

DARROW justified the worst of his critics' fears. He converted the trial into a lusty circus, tried the case in the country's newspapers, and broadcast a full-throated propaganda in favor of science and intellectual freedom. Scopes' conviction was inevitable, in any case, and on the appeal, the court threw out the case on a technicality while evading the constitutional question. But the law became a dead letter and the anti-evolution crusade went into a fatal decline. In this case, as in others, Darrow displayed a mastery of what we now call "public relations," and a grasp of the essentials that go into the making of state power and public sentiment. He knew his only chance in this case was to change public thinking, and the way he ran the trial was certainly a blow for that. If the ACLU had tried the case with a John W. Davis, the technical decision would probably have been no different, and the trial would have been productive of no results beyond possibly furnishing textbook references for law students.

A final word about Ray Ginger. We expected that any book by the author of "The Bending Cross" would be a conscientious piece of scholarship, and we were not disappointed. Ginger is scrupulous and thorough in gathering his facts and understands how to integrate them into an authentic synthesis of social history. He has widened his interests and reading since his previous work, and very probably modified his political slant. It is an obviously matured man who has written this second book. But something unsatisfactory has been introduced as well, signalled, as it were, by his studding the text with inappropriate five-dollar words. Ginger has been reading modern writers of sociology, psychology and ethics, and his attempts to explain some of his materials in terms of these frames of reference do not always come off. The oversimplifications that were the glaring fault of the Debs biography have now been replaced by an over-sophisticated, not always successfully blended mix. These are secondary faults. Ginger is one of our superior biographers and social historians.

B. C.

Automatic Factories

AUTOMATION: A STUDY OF ITS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES, by Frederick Pollock. Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1957, $5.

WE might begin by arriving at a definition of what one steel magnate brushed off as a "menacing word—a kind of modern bogey-man with which to frighten our people," *automation*. Although there is no general agreement as to what the word means, the interested parties fall into two camps—those who say automation is simply a continuation of technological progress and therefore has no special social and economic consequence, and those who say it entails entirely new methods of production which have tremendous impact on society.

On one point there is no disagreement. The topic is in the minds of people all over the world. A growing wealth of literature exists. In the United States the subject received an extensive Congressional enquiry in 1955.

In this climate of growing concern Frederick Pollock's thoughtful and thought-provoking book is certainly welcome. Originally published in Germany in 1956, it has been translated by W. O. Henderson and W. H. Challoner "with only minor changes." The author is Professor of Economics at Frankfurt University and Associate of the Institute of Social Research.

"Automation," Pollock writes, "is a technique of industrial production, combined with a method of processing data, introduced since the second World War. With the aid of the most advanced techniques and devices—but with certain economic limitations—this method of production attempts to perform by machinery all the functions hitherto performed by human beings. The machines are 'controlled' by machines."

The author adds that "the real importance of 'automation' lies in the fundamental changes it will bring about in the structure both of the economy and of society." That is what the book is about.

Two adjectives frequently associated with automation are "continuous" and "integrated." With the aid of electronic devices, separate operations formerly broken down into individual steps and divided among workers are linked together into continuous productive processes. As automatic machines perform at all stages of manufacture, and transfer the work through all the positions, an integrated production flow is achieved largely in the absence of direct human labor. Illustrative are a growing number of steel fabricating plants where machines a) take note of the various stages of production; b) make comparisons; c) make decisions; d) test the product; and e) make all necessary adjustments. The electronics industry has a device known as Autofab which not only assembles electronic components but also "does its own inspecting and delivers only perfect assemblies ready for use." Chrysler boasts an automated assembly plant which assembles 1,200 automobiles in an eight-hour day at half the previous cost.

IN these processes self-regulators or feedbacks have eliminated human control. A familiar example of the feedback principle is the thermostat which automatically sets the furnace on or off when the temperature falls or rises beyond a certain degree. An industrial application of this principle is a device which checks the operation of machine tools against a blueprint or model, and immediately records any error. These same machine tools are controlled by computers "to within a hundredth of a centimeter" by use of numerical symbols. Pollock urges us "to bear in mind the fact that this new technique can be applied not only to plants with a huge output of mass-

produced standardized units but also to plants which are making relatively few units of one kind."

The sore point in all this under our present economic system is the fact that magnetic tapes and electronic gadgets are replacing men, in many instances highly skilled men. There is at least one cement plant which "uses no manual labor at any point of the process" from mixing the stuff to routing it out of storage to waiting trucks. A radio factory using Autofab, with two men, is doing the work formerly done by 200. This displacement of manpower is destined to be so extensive that Pollock writes, "Automation may threaten to deprive wage earners and salaried employees not only of a particular job but it may perhaps even render certain professional skills redundant and undermine the social status of many people employed in industry." He sees the change in the system of industrial production and subsequently in the social structure so complete and qualitatively new that he feels justified in speaking of the "second industrial revolution."

In the first industrial revolution machine power replaced muscle power. In its mid-twentieth century counterpart, devices are replacing sight, touch, hearing—in short, the sensory organs and the brain. As the definition reads, automation "attempts to perform by machinery *all* the functions hitherto performed by human beings." The nineteenth century saw unskilled workers, requiring little intelligence, alertness or interest in performing their tasks, replace skilled artisans. Just as the movement toward rationalization first undermined the position of skilled mechanics, so automation, with its automatic controls at every stage of production, will continue the trend. True, a small minority will have to have a higher degree of technical knowledge, but not the vast majority of workers. The result will be a widening gulf between a small group of specialists and the masses.

AS the proportion of the skilled group in the labor force declines, Pollock concludes, we may also expect that a) most young people will not want to bother with time-consuming training in the face of shrinking opportunities for skill; b) most people will take jobs that can be learned quickly; c) their social status will be lower; and d) they will constantly be threatened by an equally capable pool of unemployed. At the same time all engineers, technicians and "semi-skilled engineers" who work in automated plants will feel superior in belonging to a new labor aristocracy. "That attitude has more in common with a totalitarian way of life than with a democratic way of life."

The vast productive power of automation increases the responsibility of managers who must program production with a sharp eye on market trends many years in advance. A wrong decision will not only be disastrously costly for a great corporation, but also will affect the lives of its employees and millions of consumers.

The electronic computer, "the very symbol of automation," aids this decision-making process. With data fed into it, it produces reliable conclusions and can "bring together innumerable combinations of facts that have never been related to each other before." A computer was used to choose some of the tactics in the Korean war.

The difference between the electronic computer and previous calculating machines is that the latter can only add, subtract, multiply, and divide. The new devices can make comparisons as well. Their development has been fantastic. The familiar UNIVAC is already made obsolescent by the Livermore computer that "in a few days . . . will perform calculations which the existing UNIVAC takes up to two years to complete." It can "memorize" 200,000 symbols with room for attachments extending its "memory" to infinity.

Up to now the greatest headway in the use of the computer has been in clerical and administrative fields. It is being used to calculate payrolls, tabulate bank and insurance data, "store" information, direct the in and out of warehousing, and so on. Consequently functions in the factory are changing. There is a "move from the shop-floor to the office" where production programs are mapped out and instructions for control devices are prepared and translated so that the machines can "read" them. The white collar engineer assumes part of the task of the foreman and worker.

WE are only at the threshhold of the new era. But after only one decade "all reports agree that every important American industry—with the single exception of agriculture—is actively considering the introduction of automatic machines in its plants and of electronic computers in its administrative offices." And there are possibilities in agriculture too.

It is clear that automatic machines displace labor. Why then has there not been an accompanying rise in unemployment? In the first place, automation has not yet taken a central position in the economy. Also, economic conditions have been favorable, allowing business to put many displaced workers in new jobs. But one wonders if management is as ready in today's recession to find new jobs for their laid-off employees. What happens to the labor automation saves? The Pollyannas maintain that it will be absorbed elsewhere in the economy. As the population grows the demand for goods and services increases, requiring more jobs to satisfy them. In this framework the use of machines expands purchasing power by bringing prices down, thereby increasing demand for labor to produce more goods. Following this reasoning, Benjamin F. Fairless of U. S. Steel observes: "The record clearly shows that the rapid increase in employment has occurred chiefly because of mechanization—not in spite of it." A popular variation is provided by Peter F. Drucker, who has compiled a statistical projection showing population increasing at such a rapid rate that a relatively declining work force will not be able to cope with its needs without a ruthless application of automation.

This "compensation" theory rests on two assumptions which the theorists have never been able to substantiate. The one is that every new consumer requires a new producer, which leaves out of account the factor of rising productivity. The other is that each new member in the population represents an effective demand. Technological unemployment does not exist in this scheme.

THE strength of Pollock's analysis lies in his rejecting this superficial theory and replacing it with Marx's concept of the reserve army of labor. This reserve army is recruited primarily from workers displaced by machines, in Marx's words, "whether this takes the more striking form of the repulsion of laborers already employed, or the less evident but not less real form of the more difficult absorption of the additional laboring population through the usual channels." Pollock not only treats the labor force as a function of the economic system, apart from any population assumption, but also treats technological unemployment as an inevitable feature of capitalism. He demonstrates that disturbances in the labor market have been greater than the publicists would have us believe.

In recent years government spending on arms has been the primary factor absorbing people in the labor market and expanding job opportunities. Without the arms program there would have been 10 million unemployed in 1954, according to Pollock's estimate. Or, the standard of living could have been maintained by a 15 percent smaller work force if a peacetime economy had prevailed.

At the same time labor is becoming evermore efficient, allowing smaller numbers of workers to produce the same amount of goods. But the condition for the capitalist to install machines is to save labor cost. If the displaced workers "are found other work in the same factory or find jobs with a firm making automatic machines then—assuming output to remain constant—it would not be possible to secure a *net* saving in wages and salaries. The 'redundant' workers would merely be doing different jobs. All that would have happened would have been a change in the methods of production—not increased productivity."

This fact of economic life answers those who hope that displaced workers will find jobs tending automatic machines or making them in an endless round. Even if they find jobs making automatic machines, how long will such jobs last when the initial rush for automatic machines is over and "fewer workers are required to produce machines that are capable of displacing more machine operators."?

There are innumerable aspects which cannot be covered in one review. That, of course, is a further recommendation for reading the book. However, we should mention in closing that Pollock does not look at automation as an unavoidable curse. He urges economic planning, the success of which "would mean that the second industrial revolution could help to establish a social system based on reason."

R. CHILDERS

Look to the Fall Harvest

FROM now on "American Socialist" will be published bi-monthly during summers, which means simply that July and August will be combined in a double number each year. This will give editors and staff a chance to catch up with accumulated work loads, and also (perhaps) to get a much-needed break in the routine. Heretofore, vacations have meant cramming a month's work into two weeks before leaving or after return, which is not exactly the best way to do things.

From the reader point of view, the new setup also has advantages. Little is lost, all will agree, if the double issue is so bountiful as this summer's. And, as regular reading routines are disrupted by the call of the outdoors, getting our summer output all in one package at the start of the season will probably be appreciated by many.

But don't get the idea that we are encouraging you to forget all about us for the hot weather weeks. Not when we are putting into your hands an issue of the "American Socialist" as valuable as this one. Take a few hours right away to send us the names of labor people who ought to get a copy. Loan out your copy to possible new readers (take advantage of a season when you see people you normally don't come into contact with). Order a small bundle (at reduced rates) for distribution. Do a little summer planting—the fall harvest will be worth it.