



Dana Mc Gaugh  
3866 ~~Stotts~~ Street  
Arlington California





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# HERE COMES LABOR

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By Chester M. Wright

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT VELIE

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New York · 1939

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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## CHAPTER I

### WHO IS LABOR?

**A**MERICAN Labor is on the March. Millions of men and women, working people, are fighting for a chance to live better lives. Whenever they win, life is better for all of us together. This book is about Labor and what it is doing. But the word "labor" is sometimes confusing. Suppose we put it this way: If you spell labor with a small "l" you mean work. If you spell Labor with a capital "L" you mean people. So this book is really about human beings engaged in a dramatic struggle.

But Labor does not include everybody, or even everybody who works. Doctors, scientists, and other professional men often work longer hours than any

strong union would permit its members to agree to. Business men and bankers often work very hard. They have a right to say that they, also, help the people of the United States to live. And that is what work is for, to enable the people of a country to live. But professional and business men do not work for wages. And they are usually employers of others. The word Labor means wage-earners.

Some people hold that Labor is a class, the "proletariat," which owns nothing; the slaves of the capitalists or "bourgeoisie" who control everything. But it would be hard to convince an American locomotive engineer who owns his own home, perhaps some shares of stock in a good company, and whose son is studying in college, that he belongs to the proletariat or ever has belonged to an oppressed "class." American workers just do not think in those terms.

There are about fifty million men and women in this country who work—or would like to work—for wages. They do not employ others; they are not members of the professions. No doubt they are workers, but one cannot say what the whole mass of them wants, or where they are going, or what they are trying to do. They have never gotten together and decided on these things. They have no one to speak for them, or to lead them; they have no way of planning and acting together as a whole group to help make the life of each individual better.

So it is only the workers organized in labor unions who can be counted as a force in this country. They

have spokesmen who let their wishes and opinions be known. Acting together, they have developed great power over their own lives, and they deeply affect the life of the country as a whole. When you speak of American Labor, then, you mean organized working men and women. You mean the unions.

Unions are not made up of any one particular sort of person; almost every type of American is represented in their ranks. There are college graduates and people who have never learned to read. There are Negroes and Chinese. There are members of the country's proudest families, and people whose parents never took a bath in winter. There are also men of sound judgment, and fools. There are savage fighters and smooth diplomats. There are those who will gladly lay down their lives for a cause and those who will betray any party or any person for power or money. There are those who see ahead with clear eyes and those who follow blindly after the man of the hour.

In the conventions that order Labor's affairs, the man who digs ditches sits down between the clerk who spends his days juggling columns of figures and the skilled machinist to whom a hair's thickness is greater than the difference between a good job and a bad one. And as these men are different in their work, they are different in their lives and in the problems they have to face. So you cannot say that Labor is this kind of person, or that kind. Labor is Americans, organized to act and think together.

I have spent my life working with American Labor, sometimes as part of its organized body, sometimes as an observer. I have seen its triumphs and defeats from close up; watched it blunder, right itself, go on. I have known its people—members of the rank and file, the officers, and the men and women who have given their whole lives to Labor quietly, with small rewards and no fame.

And I believe in Labor. It has been a force for great good in the United States, socially, economically, spiritually. It has improved the standard of living, maintaining the right of the American worker to all that makes for health and the better things of life. It has helped to keep the United States democratic by fighting against too great a difference between the rich and the poor, by guarding the workingman's freedom, and by seeing to it that workers did not become a helpless mass, without a voice, without defense against exploitation, without a part in the nation's affairs.

Labor truly has taken to itself the principle upon which this country was founded—that all men were created equal before the law and that equal opportunity should be granted to all. And in the long run I believe that Labor has helped the very industries against whose owners and bosses it has struggled.

So I am going to talk about Labor as I have known it. I want to explain Labor's point of view; to tell of its actions and policies as Labor itself sees them; to justify as Labor justifies its own doings; to

criticize as Labor often criticizes itself. I am not an official and so have nothing either to say or to hold back as a matter of policy. And I am not interested solely in the subtle and impersonal problems of sociology and economics of which Labor is a part. The things I have to tell are these: what Labor means to union members, and what Labor means to you.

It is important that you understand the people who make up organized Labor, and how they are organized; what Labor seeks to do and what it helps to accomplish next; how it goes about it; whether or not it keeps step with the nation as the days march by.

This is not a history, but a look backward helps us to remember that what is happening now is in a large part the result of what has been happening through the years. For I am trying to help you see where Labor is going, and show you some of the main directions it is taking. I want you to understand the force of its drive as it goes along, and how these things relate to the nation as a whole.

Naturally, I cannot give all the details of this tremendous picture in a short book. But if you and your fellow citizens, who together make up America, know something of the main outlines, the most important facts, and something of the human side of it all, then you will be better prepared to understand what is happening here—and how it affects you.

The power of Labor depends upon the number of workers who are organized. All of Labor's hopes,

dreams, and aims are bound up with the strength of numbers. Thinkers and leaders do not always know exactly what they will do with a mighty membership, but they are certain that it will give them the power to accomplish whatever aims Labor may decide upon.

I know of nothing that illustrates all this so well as a drama, small in itself but great in meaning, that took place more than twenty years ago. Samuel Gompers, who did more than any other man to bring Labor together under one banner and give it a voice in the country's affairs, stood alone with me one night on the open porch of a hotel in Atlantic City. In the starlight we could watch the waves sweep in, an endless procession, powerful and majestic.

As he watched, Samuel Gompers saw in those rolling waves a symbol. It was during the World War, and organized Labor was growing with a great forward surge. Gompers stretched out his fist in a gesture that showed how eager he was, and how baffled, and said in a voice tense with emotion:

“If we only had ten million organized——”

There are not yet ten million organized. But during the last few years Labor has again surged forward. Dark and troubled days came after that night when Gompers saw Labor's future in the rolling waves. Except for the period of the World War, there was very little change in the nation's way of thinking about Labor over the twenty-five years before the coming of the New Deal.

Labor could be expected to do certain things, and

it was generally felt that certain things could safely be done to Labor. The "yellow dog contract," which bound the worker not to join a union, was upheld and protected by the courts.

Labor injunctions were issued, preventing men from doing, as organized groups, the things they had a lawful right to do, and compelling them to do the things they had a lawful right to refuse to do. "Private detective agencies," as they were called, fought to break strikes ruthlessly and on a grand scale. The Bergoff Agency, leader of them all, reached the pinnacle of its battle-axe success.

There were periods when Labor gained and periods when it lost, but not much change in the large, important parts of the picture. There was a great deal of talk, but not much was done that was new.

With the autumn of 1929 came unemployment in great, man-swallowing waves. Union treasuries went down; union dues fell away. Labor ranks shared the woes of all the country's banks. Great ambitions went into the dark of economic night like ghosts of grandeur.

Then came Franklin D. Roosevelt—and action. The nation turned its face away from old ways. Freed by New Deal laws and spurred by New Deal policies, Labor surged forward. From a scant three and a half millions, the unions grew to more than seven millions. This new surge brought great changes, and more are coming.

It will not be a rash, rampaging Labor any more.

Most of the strong-arm days of reckless moblike action are over. The coming days are likely to be a time of well considered, constructive action, of cooperation for the making of a sounder nation. The future will see less yawning gaps between the "haves" and the "have-nots"—a fairer distribution of the rewards of American industry.

The march goes on. Today America can look down the road and say, in truth, "Here comes Labor!"



## CHAPTER II

### WHAT LABOR WANTS

**O**NLY a few workers, those especially gifted or especially fortunate, can get what they need and want if they have to act alone. The only way for all of them to get their fair share of America's plenty is to band together and use the power of numbers. They must "bargain collectively." Large groups must sell, through spokesmen, the services of all their members on better terms than individuals could command.

But workers must collect in groups before bargaining can start, and employers must accept the fact that they are to deal with a group before an agreement can be reached.

Freedom to organize, a freedom long denied by law and by custom, has always been the first thing Labor wanted. And the second thing has been the recognition by employers of unions as the agents with whom they have to deal. Most other things that Labor may need or want can be gained only when collective bargaining is possible.

Freedom to organize is guaranteed by law, now, and employers are compelled to deal with unions. Labor today has thrown most of its strength into the

effort to get for its members the practical benefits that collective bargaining brings within reach.

First are the material needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, the things every man and his family must have in order to live decently. This is, in spite of its evident justice and economic soundness, a large order. It means, among other things, steady work and continuous income for workers. As the weeks rush along, this problem is shaking American political life to its roots.

High up among Labor's wants are the natural ambitions for power. Also important is the desire for what are called the spiritual and ethical experiences, the desire for a full life. What a person needs for rich, full living, each must measure and define for himself. But we may say generally that workers, like all Americans, want education, pleasure, travel, as much freedom as possible, and an understanding of the world about them.

Workers are people in no way different from those about them. Ordinary men themselves, they want what other ordinary men want. And they expect to get these things in the same way and by the same means. They strive to satisfy their ambitions and their desires.

That brings them, through their unions, to these questions:

How much do things cost?

How much has Labor got, or how much can it get, with which to pay the bill?

To answer, Labor must consider just about every factor that goes to make up what we call economics. The list includes taxes, both seen and unseen, real wages, the services and costs of government, profits, operating costs, and so on down the line.

These are the factors out of which we get a sum total called National Existence. Organized Labor faces a real job in supplying what the workers want, and the demands increase as our national life becomes more complicated.

We have said that all workingmen are not alike. Neither are all bankers, all merchants, or all doctors. Among union members we can find almost the whole range of human ability and human capacity for thinking and understanding. The ranks of Labor no longer contain only men who wear overalls—though sometimes men who wear overalls have great powers of mind and magnificent qualities of soul and spirit.

By and large, the mind of the worker is the product of his time; and we are living in a time of machinery and of science. A great share of the work of today has been shifted from human backs to marvelous machines. It takes many intelligent and highly trained workers to run those machines and keep them in repair.

It does us good to remember that there was a time in the past when all workers labored with their hands, when they tilled soil, tended flocks, wove at their looms, or handled simple tools. For century after century there was almost no change.

Look at your own family records to see how recent was the breakaway from living directly by hand. A scythe, a cradle, and a flail were the workaday tools of the farm when my grandfather was a young man. All of the tools and materials for making a house out of trees were simple; all except the nails, hinges, locks, and glass. And there was great debate in those days about whether the new wire nail which came with the machine age was really any good, as compared to the old square-cut nail of tradition. In the parade of the centuries, that time of my grandfather's was only yesterday.

Just back over the hill, in the later eighteenth century, men began to apply steam to machinery. The result was the greatest change in the speed of living since the human race began. Eighteen centuries had been running on and on, each very much like the last, so far as the average man was concerned. Then in less than two centuries came the amazing world of today. And so we have to think about what Labor did to meet the new conditions, and about the whole Labor problem. The speed of change has been no less for Labor than for others, but Labor has had a harder time keeping up. Today change is so rapid that we have problems which must be settled in a week, whereas in earlier times—if there had been such problems then—they might have waited for years.

Year by year the speed of change grows faster. I should like to emphasize that phrase, Speed of

Change. It needs to be fixed in our mind. Look at it over the last ten years; look ahead a little. Speed of Change. And the catalogue of what Labor wants is changing in the same way. The Knights of the Round Table had no such complicated issues as those which face the executive board of a 1939 union.

So we have new demands today which are not material needs in terms of food and clothing and housing, but which are just as important. On many a day in the past, gunpowder was the principal requirement of Daniel Boone. With another workingman of that day, the broken ax handle was a tragedy. He had to have a new one or stop work.

Today the great need may be a decision by the National Labor Relations Board, and it may well be that until the decision is handed down all wheels are stopped and all hands are idle.

A change in the rate of a tariff schedule may mean the difference between work and no work for a large group. A Supreme Court decision may alter the course of life for thousands. An act of Congress may constitute something vastly more important in the lives of workers than a revolution would have accomplished a hundred years ago.

The means by which needs are satisfied have changed, and are changing, with the speed of lightning. The result has been to let down the bars, to create new rights, and to send organized Labor driving ahead with the greatest speed of growth it has ever known.

Labor's wants thus can be defined only in terms of today. They do not stand still. They are not wrapped in packages and laid neatly away upon shelves, from which they may be taken one by one, last year, this year, or next year, always the same. If we are to understand them at all, they must be regarded in terms of life. And life never stands still. Inventions create new needs. New needs frequently require new laws. New laws have their imperfections—and again change is demanded.

Beneath the shifting pattern of economic life are two basic things that are unchanging because they are now, always have been, and always will be part of life in America: first, freedom; second, the material things necessary to provide a high standard of living.

Freedom has, through all the history of organized Labor, been number one on the list, and at least so far as the present generation is concerned it will stay at the top. As for material things, Labor wants all it can get and isn't afraid to say so. As a matter of fact, Labor's official declarations have repeated a thousand times the principle that workers must receive, for services given, a return that is ever larger and larger.

Any ideas that there are certain enjoyable things which workers should not want may as well be dismissed. Definitely, the organized Labor movement wants every good thing there is, and wants every good thing there is just as soon as it can be had legitimately

and with due regard for the safety of the whole system.

The needs of individual workers will always differ just as do those of bankers or preachers or idlers. Workers want automobiles. If next year they can afford a better car than they own this year, they will buy it. Education, environment, and earning power are three of the major factors in determining the needs of all individuals, whether they are workers or not.

How to satisfy needs, both material and otherwise, is perhaps the greatest problem confronting the nation today. There is plenty wrong with both industry and law, and to adjust those weaknesses is one of the main concerns of the Labor movement.

## CHAPTER III

### WHAT LABOR ASKS FOR

SOME Labor leaders think in terms of immediate objectives—of victories that can be won tomorrow or the day after. Others have their eyes fixed on distant goals, and would guide Labor's march accordingly.

This is confusing to those who want to know what Labor is after. To add to the confusion, leaders disagree as to how fast Labor may forge ahead toward its objectives and still keep its balance. Around this disagreement is centered the fight between the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O., and the air is full of war cries as each side tries to rally more and more men to its standards. So it is necessary to stand off and study the question coolly, without taking sides and without being swayed by the opinions of either party.

Beneath the conflict and the oratory are three immediate objectives for which all Labor strives: pillars which uphold the benefits that are won for individuals and families:

1. Stable conditions of employment, steady jobs.
2. A minimum standard of living through fixing a minimum wage by law or otherwise; high enough incomes.



3. Collective bargaining in regulating relations between employers and employees and in managing the nation's economic structure.

In general, these are what the fighting and the shouting are all about.

Pay that is more than a fixed minimum and working hours that are fewer than a fixed maximum establish a higher standard of living for workingmen's families, and guarantee them more freedom to live a full life. When conditions are stable, when work is steady and the terms under which Labor is sold to the employer remain the same over a long time, then families get the benefits over a long time and know how they are going to live. When conditions are shaky, they do not know what is going to happen to them from one month to the next.

Labor wants most of all the freedom to fight for better conditions. Laws already on the books have broken the shackles of older oppressions, and Labor asks only that it be allowed to go its way unfettered by new chains. In dealing with both employers and the state, it is after the same things. Whether in a demand laid down on a conference table or in a bill introduced in Congress, the purpose is the same.

If they had a choice, American labor unions would always rather deal with employers than depend on laws passed by Congress or by state legislatures. The reason is clear. Labor takes an active part in negotiations with employers. If mistakes are made they can be corrected in later agreements. On the other hand,

Labor's relation to legislation is not so definite, not so direct, and much less open to later changes.

Labor is like life itself, changing from day to day. So we are not shocked to learn that Labor may completely reverse itself. It may seek entirely new ways of achieving an objective, or it may even change the objective as time goes on. This is the "opportunism" or shortsightedness for which American Labor has been greatly criticized. To this Labor answers: The American workers' standard of living is the highest in the world.

Because Labor does not plan too far ahead, its objectives are hard to set down in words. It might be assumed that they are to be found in the resolutions adopted by Labor conventions and in the actions of Labor executives; but this is true only in part. Many a decision reached in an official convention is later ignored. Very often, in fact, it is known at the time that it will be ignored. In other words, some things are "for the record," while others are tools for day-to-day use.

That certain decisions are meant only to be recorded and not acted upon is in no sense underhanded, because often it is desirable to set forth these viewpoints and positions, not for the sake of today, but for protection against the demands of tomorrow.

American Labor has marked out no point at which to plant a banner and say:

"Here is the end of the road."

It has never felt wise enough to determine what measure of progress or what state of society would be completely satisfactory. But it has, in a very real sense, set its eyes far beyond these goals.

It has said:

“So far as we know, there is no end of the road. We shall go on and on, striving to make each year better for humanity than the year before.”

It has said:

“There may be a better state of society and a better way of life than any we can now think of.”

It has said:

“We are not vain enough to believe that our imagination can picture the heights to which the human race may climb or the measure of benefits which the Labor movement may achieve.”

There are those who will argue that in taking this point of view, American Labor confesses that it lacks any permanent and definite philosophy. Others will hold it to be the finest and truest philosophy of them all. Certainly, American Labor has numbered in its ranks many real philosophers, and perhaps their thinking was clearer because it was done in terms of the life and conditions of the nation. Sound or not, the philosophy has developed from the soil and the tools and the resources of America.

The final objectives of Labor organizations are usually based upon movements opposed to the philosophy of the nation in which they exist. In this country, Labor has no final objective because it be-

believes that American industry fits into the practices of democracy. So it is content to set up immediate demands; and when today's have been satisfied, then it will consider tomorrow's. And it is not interested in long-range programs having to do with the overthrow of existing political control. Socialist movements in non-socialist countries, for example, have a final objective. They work for the establishment of socialism.

What happened in Russia may serve to make this clear. Under the Czar there were several movements that had final objectives and long-term programs for reaching them. When the Bolsheviks gained power the final objective which they had cherished for years ceased to exist. It had been reached; it no longer lay in the future.

So the Bolsheviks then became interested in immediate objectives. They had the kind of government and the kind of economic system they wanted, so they worked from then on in that framework. In the same way, American Labor works in the framework of democracy and capitalism.

The revolutionary objectives which formed the long-range program of Labor movements in other countries have been unnecessary in the United States because the final objective for which American workers would certainly strive—democracy—had been achieved by our people before our Labor was organized. But if ever American industry is in conflict with democracy, then something like a long-range objec-

tive will take form within the American Labor movement. Labor will fight for democracy.

Our nation has a Constitution. It has a philosophy which is expressed in the Constitution. It has an ideal. But it does not have a chart setting forth its objectives over a long term of years. Congress meets in sessions, regular or special, and deals with the issues as it sees fit at the time.

A big navy Congress will succeed a little navy Congress, and a high tariff Congress will succeed a low tariff Congress. Laws are passed and laws are repealed. Certain policies are fairly stable and certain others are extremely changeable. If a long-range program should ever be charted, any session of Congress could knock it into a cocked hat.

So, too, with American Labor. It has a constitution. It has a philosophy and it has ideals. It has policies which are fairly stable, and it has policies which may change overnight. It has principles which are enduring. But it has no long-range program or final objective. If it did, any convention, regular or special, could destroy it and put another in its place.

For this reason, no one can set down as final a statement of what Labor wants or will do this year, much less what it wants or will do next year—or the years on beyond. It will depend upon the immediate needs and how well they are satisfied from time to time. A great and vital need in 1930 was the right to organize freely. Another need was to get rid of the system that required every worker to sign a separate

employment contract. The individual employment contract and denial of the right to organize were regarded by Labor as mighty instruments of oppression. As long as these obstacles existed it was impossible to increase the number of members in Labor organizations.

Then came the government, with law after law, some written with Labor's help, some without regard for Labor's advice. But these new laws, although they brought tremendous growth in membership, gave Labor cause for worry. It sees them as a network of regulations woven by legislatures and put in force by the courts. They grant and protect rights, but it is also possible that they may restrict future progress. So no one can be sure that within another twelve months Labor will not be fighting for escape from the same legal structure which gave it freedom from old oppressions.

## CHAPTER IV

### LABOR ON THE MARCH

**L**ABOR depends upon the strength of numbers to fight its way clear of oppressions. Unions are the foundations upon which it builds; if they do not spread and multiply, the whole movement must come to a standstill. So Labor steadily recruits nonunion workers, both for unions already formed and for new ones which it plans to place in the field. These latter may represent either trades and industries not already unionized or new locals of organizations that are active elsewhere.

The going union pretty much takes care of itself. Members "sell" its advantages to friends, fellow workers, and casual drifters. But the formation of a new union is not so simple. It calls for a blend of sweat, endurance, courage, strategy, eloquence, varying methods, and such further qualities as are needed to handle the special problem at hand. It is in charge of an official organizer.

Labor organizers go about their jobs by searching out first of all the nonunion workers who may be willing to listen. Such people are found in various ways. Sometimes they write in and suggest that a new union be formed in the district where they work.

Sometimes they are located by hit-or-miss methods. Sometimes a single interested person spreads the appeal among his circle of friends. Sometimes public meetings are advertised and held—and sometimes police break up these meetings with a variety of results.

Organizers never know what lies ahead. I have met many who are marked for life with the scars of conflict. The records show they seldom run away from trouble.

Those who charge American Labor with lack of fight, as many have done, don't know the movement. No corner of the world has ever produced a Labor organization in which there was more willingness to get down to physical combat than the United States of America.

But it takes more than courage to organize a union. It takes more than even a careful, tried-and-true plan of action, which may run on the rocks without warning. If it smashes, the organizer never hesitates to try again with an entirely new approach. The truth is that almost every method by which human beings may be drawn together has been used at one time or another in forming Labor unions.

Sometimes a great deal of strategy is necessary. There are cases in which public sentiment must be stirred to a point where it will accept unions before any attempt can be made to form them. Labor has been somewhat slow in the past to adapt modern promotion methods in organizing workers, but today it misses no opportunity to reach the masses. The radio



and up-to-date printing may be listed as methods of spreading the word.

Sometimes organizers find difficulty in choosing the proper kind of appeal for reaching a particular group of workers. The problems in larger cities are different from the problems in isolated rural communities. Cities are not all alike. You cannot work in Detroit as you would in New York, and Chicago is not like either one of them. A textile mill in some remote Virginia or Carolina district requires still different methods. The problem in Alabama and Mississippi is wholly different from the problem on the Pacific Coast. And so it goes, up and down and across the whole country.

Even when a certain district has been studied at length, the organizer cannot count on conditions staying as they are. Industrial change may upset all calculations and plans. Consider, for example, the effect of inventions upon Labor. At times it has changed the problem of organizing, and at other times it has made necessary complete reorganization. Some unions, like the farmers' when the grain-binder came into use, opposed the use of machines, while others accepted them and sought to control their operation.

Cigar makers fought the coming of the machine age, but printers accepted it and lived to see it make far more work for them than older ways had ever provided. Today plastic materials threaten damage to the memberships of more than a dozen unions, for just

as steel replaced wood in construction, so plastics may replace steel on certain parts of the job. Thus inventions have "made" some unions and broken others.

Once the carriage makers were proud craftsmen in Labor's organization—but try to find their factories on your industrial map today. The automobile changed the national transportation picture; it set workers roaming from state to state looking for work, and created a nation freer to move than any in the history of the world. This, too, has brought new problems to organizers and union executives, who must try to prevent jobless armies from rushing wherever some unusual volume of work happens to appear.

But difficulties of this kind may be smoothed out with clear thinking. They are not like the physical dangers of the old days when, in setting forth to form unions, organizers risked their lives. Many of them punctuated their services with stretches in jails, some made frequent trips to hospitals for repairs, and a few were carted straight to morgues. Organizing technique is as fascinating as any human drama could be, but in the past its dark side was likely to be a solid black.

Gradually, over the years, organizers found their jobs growing a little easier. The change began with the development of company unions, which date almost from the moment when John D. Rockefeller, Sr., was converted to the idea that public opinion was something with which to reckon. An end had been put to the older Rockefeller policies by a disas-

trous strike at Ludlow, Colorado, and by the massacre of a tent colony of strikers by the state militia.

It was early in the first presidential term of Woodrow Wilson. At the President's suggestion, Congress authorized the appointment of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations, which was presided over by Frank P. Walsh as chairman.

The Rockefellers saw the handwriting on the wall. They hired Ivy Lee as public relations counsel, and brought to the United States a rising young engineer, W. L. Mackenzie King, who later was to become prime minister of Canada. As had been expected, the Commission unearthed horrible truths about industrial practices. W. L. Mackenzie King immediately set about building a structure of company unionism, and Ivy Lee developed a policy of public relations.

One of the most significant of all industrial dramas occurred as a direct result.

During a session of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations held in the City Hall of New York, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was on the stand as a witness. The late Mother Jones, long known as the angel of the miners and one of the most fiery and vigorous of all Labor organizers, was an observer in the room. She was no friend of the Rockefellers. She had berated them, in fact, from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic Coast with a biting tongue and a vivid vocabulary. In her seethed all the hatred of the miners for the Rockefeller industrial kingdom.

But Ivy Lee persuaded her, somehow or other, to

meet John D. Rockefeller. As the session adjourned the two who had been bitter foes up to this time shook hands under the eyes of a battery of reporters and photographers.

It was a signal. Perhaps it was a symbol. It was like Robert E. Lee and U. S. Grant meeting with a friendly handclasp. It was the first important step in a new public sentiment toward the interests operating under the name of Rockefeller. Thousands and thousands had the immediate feeling that, if Mother Jones and John D. Rockefeller could shake hands and talk pleasantly together, something must have changed in the Rockefellers' attitude toward Labor.

No such significance would attach to a similar meeting today, because Labor and employers are now much closer together. There is still plenty of bitterness among opponents on the industrial scene, but it is no longer the fierce hatred of that period a quarter-century ago. The Ludlow massacre, as it was called, had sent a flame of seething passion through the ranks of workers from coast to coast.

Ludlow meant Rockefeller, and Rockefeller meant Ludlow, until Ivy Lee achieved his masterpiece of diplomacy in the New York City Hall. It was the turning point. After that, W. L. Mackenzie King began to rebuild the Rockefeller structures in oil and coal, and the development of company unions began in earnest.

Labor has always condemned the company union as a tool of the employer; members in that kind of

union had little voice of their own. But the company union did blaze a trail to the formation of collective groups. It did get workers used to organizing. It did get employers used to accepting unions. And by setting these examples, it made the way easier for Labor organizers later on in some fields.

Labor's final hurdle was that it had no legal right to organize workers. In due time this was provided by the passage of the National Labor Relations Act. Under the former laws, a Labor board had been set up by Senator Wagner and the later legislation was a natural development. The real purpose of the National Labor Relations Act is to guarantee the right of Labor to organize freely and without control by employers.

This Act ended the long fight that had been waged for recognition. Its faults alarm Labor for the future, but at least it grants freedom to organize, and there is no reason to believe that right will ever be denied.

The Board made it clear that the freedom of Labor to organize must be respected by employers. It made it equally clear that the right to bargain collectively is real and will be enforced. Labor has taken advantage of these guarantees to good purpose. When the law was passed the whole movement did not include more than three and a half million workers. Today there are twice as many. This astounding growth is perhaps the most important fact in American industrial history.

If we could stand again where Labor stood twenty-

five years ago, the road ahead would stretch stony and hopeless into the vague distance—so much was to be done and the pace was so painfully slow. But today, looking back over the years, it seems almost as if some kindly Fate had led the march, step by step, in an amazingly short time. Never in all the history of the world was so much accomplished by Labor, in anything like so brief a period as the last quarter-century.

## CHAPTER V

### CAPTAINS, PRIVATES, AND CAMP FOLLOWERS

**L**ABOR on the march over those years was like an army. It grew to a strength of nearly eight million workers, and it rubbed shoulders with thousands of others not in its own ranks. All these people helped make Labor the living thing it is today. Some of them were tragic, some humorous. Some were trivial, some profound. Some were serious, some burlesque. They included such figures as Eugene V. Debs, Terence V. Powderly, Samuel Gompers, Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, James Duncan, James O'Connell, Mother Jones, Frank Morrison, William B. Wilson, William Green, John L. Lewis—

Men gone to glory in mine explosions, men with fingers and arms cut off between factory wheels, men burned by flying steel, men smothered deep in the silt of rivers—

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Matthew Woll, I. M. Ornburn, Daniel J. Tobin, David Dubinsky, Victor L. Berger, Sidney Hillman, Meyer London, and pages upon pages of other names, some as illustrious, some never heard of, some standing only for treachery and defeat—

Stool pigeons, dicks, finks, double-crossers, generals of strike-breaking armies—

Andrew Carnegie, Uncle Joe Cannon—

Newspaper reporters, business agents, poets like Carl Sandburg, artists who could tell stories with paints and crayons, cartoonists like Dusty Rhodes, managing editors like Gordon Nye—

Crooks with money in their pockets to give away and crooks with hands outstretched to take it—

Good men, bad men, beggar men, and thieves, preachers, politicians, and plutocrats. Not one of them all but has shared somehow in the fight for Labor.

They helped and they hampered the movement, each in his own way, but they are a part of the story. They are a part of yesterday's story, of today's, and they will be a part of tomorrow's as it runs on toward a climax that nobody knows.

These people have been written about, but there are others, behind the scenes, of whom the public has never heard. Two personalities in particular deserve tributes. One is Rosa Lee Guard, no longer among the living. The other is Florence Thorne.

Rosa Lee Guard came to the American Federation of Labor as confidential secretary in the days of her youth. From that vantage point, first with Samuel Gompers and later with William Green, she watched Labor make history over what might be termed the adult years of its life. She saw the whole parade, the weaknesses and the petty things along with the heroic



and the tremendous. She was in the midst of it all, but she chose to remain unknown to the rank and file. Her signature on official correspondence was the masculine "R. Lee Guard."

Florence Thorne has been the intellectual force back of many important decisions. She continues in that capacity offstage, a name rather than a personality to the movement as a whole. But the great and the near-great still come from the corners of the earth to talk over Labor affairs with this quiet and cultured woman. Her desire to avoid the limelight does not lessen her stature as a mighty power in Labor. Perhaps it helps.

These two are singled out as examples. There are hosts of others behind the scenes who share grave responsibilities without asking or expecting public appreciation. Labor has managed, since the beginning, to gather to its service men and women of outstanding ability and with what Franklin D. Roosevelt has called "a passion for anonymity." That is the sign and symbol, we must suppose, of the magnetism of the movement and its importance to the people of everyday life.

Another Labor worker who needs introducing is the business agent. He gets into print often enough to be known, but usually by being cartooned and misrepresented. He isn't fat around the middle, as the pictures would have you think. He is the contact man between unions and employers, and he is too busy to

get fat. Called a "walking delegate" in earlier days, the modern business agent trudges from job to job to see that things are running smoothly, and makes adjustments where there is friction.

It is a bigger order than it sounds. The business agent has been the hero of a thousand minor struggles of which the public never heard. He has disciplined members of his own union and told employers the truth in short, ugly words that brought results. His job, as a matter of fact, is to make sure that union affairs are handled properly at all times, and particularly when there are differences of opinion between Labor and employers.

Sometimes, of course, the business agent takes it on the chin. But that is to be expected; taking it on the chin is a commonplace of Labor controversies. Many an employer, too, beaten fairly either by force of reason or by defeat through strike or lockout, has taken it on the chin like a man and then lived up to the bargain he made as a result.

Sometimes the workers, through no fault of their own, also take it on the chin. There are more than 40,000 local unions in the United States; there may be 50,000. Call it 45,000, and then remember that this means 45,000 sets of officers, to say nothing of still others at the head of national and international unions, various types of councils, and city central bodies.

Out of so many, it goes without saying, some will use bad judgment, some will exceed their powers,

some will go completely wrong. When they do, the workers themselves are the ones who take the licking. Jobs blow up in their faces, strikes are lost, and the whole union finds itself in bad odor with the public.

It is inevitable that Labor officers will occasionally make mistakes; executives in all lines of industry do, from little stores to big corporations. Consider, also, that few businesses in America today are harder to run than unions. For Labor officers there is, as a matter of fact, no eight-hour day. Their work never ends.

Business agents, whatever the cartoonists think, are too active to get fat, but union executives sometimes do. Most of them have been accustomed to hard work at a trade, and when they shift suddenly to an office job, usually in middle life, they find neither the time nor the urge to keep in good physical trim. They let themselves get fat. But their expanding girth is not, as some people think, the result of eating too well or living too easily. More often, it is devotion to the job itself. This is not defense; it is explanation, and explanation sadly needed.

Other human factors of Labor need bringing out into the light. For example, the question is often asked: Does the employer ever get an unfair deal from the executive or business agent? Of course he does. Sometimes he even gets a deal that involves crime—walls have been ruined, glass broken, products destroyed. There is no defense for such things. I think

one of the worst foes of the Labor movement is the mistaken or wrong representative who sets out to win a strike by seeing how much property he can destroy.

If these tactics are not to be excused or whitewashed, at least they can be explained in some measure. Labor conflicts are battles. Some of them naturally generate a high degree of heat. Heat and hate. Out of the heat and hate come ill judgment and license. Smash goes a window! Crack goes a skull!

But it happens on both sides of the fence. Business men, it may be pointed out, have been guilty of carelessness with the law. The courts and the Federal Trade Commission are the witnesses, and history does not accuse; history records.

Labor admits that its own slate is far from clean. There has been misconduct—and worse—within its ranks. There has been corruption. There have been cases of racketeering, when blackmail was demanded and paid to union officers for striking or for calling off strikes. For myself, I would be inclined to say “What about it?” except that no one can ever quite properly say “What about” any human’s straying from the strait and narrow.

I recall the only conversation I ever had with Calvin Coolidge. It was in the White House, and he made himself comfortable in a chair, laying aside for the moment the stinginess of words which was part of the Coolidge legend. He plumped at me, with some heat, a question which was substantially this:

“What I’d like to know is, why your unions don’t throw out the crooks and bad characters?”

I confess I found myself jolted a bit, because when the President of the United States blazes away at you like that you want to be careful with your answer. And I held no office, had no responsibility. But my answer was in this general form:

Mr. President, unions don’t like crooks, but unions are not law enforcement agencies. They are organized for an entirely different purpose. You preside over government, and government gives us the agencies for trial and judgment and law enforcement. Unions could not take over those functions. And before it can be said that a man is a crook, before any punishment can be made, it must first be proved that he is a crook.

No problem has been more baffling to Labor than how to end corruption within its ranks. It wants to seek out and punish criminals, among other reasons, because the average union is jealous of its good name. But unions are not courts of law, not grand juries, not district attorneys. They do try, convict, and punish members for violations of Labor rules, but that is the limit of their legal powers. To go further would mean putting themselves above state and federal laws; it would amount, bluntly, to anarchy.

I think Mr. Coolidge was impressed by that explanation.

Spokesmen for Labor have pointed out, also, that no union official ever took a bribe except when it was

handed to him by an employer or the employer's representative. Two people, one union and one non-union, share the crime. It is the outgrowth of conditions rather than of human depravity or union practices. Labor is not, as some critics have accused, a hotbed of corruption. If the records could be balanced, the percentage of misconduct among union workers would certainly be no greater—and in some cases much less—than that among people in other walks of life.

The man in the street knows that corruption exists in high places, but how often is a public official ever convicted? Grant that Labor has not always been as rigorous as it should have been in suppressing evil within its own ranks. Grant that suspicion frequently points an accusing finger at some union member. Grant even that evidence may be uncovered to establish his guilt.

What then? What next? Nothing, nothing at all. Labor has reached the dead end of the case, because it lacks the machinery to try, convict, and sentence criminals. That is the task of government.

So much for the legal handicap. Coupled with one more factor, it may serve to explain Labor's reluctance to take action against its members. That factor is the loyalty within unions to the institution of unionism; it runs parallel to the family tradition of brotherhood. Loyalty dug its roots deep in the earlier days of the movement, when union members were in

high disfavor with employers and were considered almost outside the pale of the law.

It goes back to the time when they met in basements, in the back rooms of saloons, and in other hide-outs. The close relationships that developed offer no excuse for whitewashing racketeering or any other crimes within the movement, but they do suggest a reason why unions are sometimes none too eager to accuse suspected members. After all, Labor is only a cross-section of humanity.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE STRUCTURE OF LABOR

**T**HE C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. are much more alike than the public has been led to suppose. Points of difference have been used as talking points by leaders struggling for supremacy, and as slogans, which means that they have been exaggerated. Nor are the real differences definite and complete, as black is different from white. And so, before describing the ways in which small groups of workers have associated themselves into the two great organizations which represent Labor, we must look more closely at the labels that have been applied to them.

The A.F. of L. is said to represent "craft" or "trade" unionism. Labor itself did not coin the term "craft" as applied to unions, and it has always fought against the word as being too narrow in its meaning, too old-fashioned and too European. Americans work at "trades"—the machinist's trade, and the carpenter's trade, for example. The A.F. of L., therefore, believes that the term "trade unions" describes more accurately the organizations of which it is composed. Theoretically, each craft union is composed of workers in one occupation: bricklayers, painters, blacksmiths, typesetters, and so on.





The C.I.O. is said to represent "industrial unionism." This term is too general and vague to be accurate. But theoretically an industrial union is one which includes all the workers in a given industry, no matter what separate trades they may follow. For example, all who work in the brewing industry are supposed to belong to a single union; all coal miners to belong to one union; all automobile workers to belong to one union.

Take, for example, two electricians. If one was a regular employee of a brewery and the other of an automobile factory they would belong to the same trade union, the local for electrical workers. But by the principle of industrial unionism they would belong to different unions, one to the brewers' and the other to the automobile workers'.

Actually, the C.I.O. does not fully represent industrial unionism, nor the A.F. of L. craft unionism. For instance, the International Association of Machinists is one of the proudest of the so-called craft

unions in the A.F. of L.; yet it includes workers who cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called machinists. The "federal unions" which the A.F. of L. organizes in various plants and communities are really industrial unions on a local scale. The Flat Glass Workers of the C.I.O., on the other hand, regard themselves as a highly specialized trade group.

All that can be said truthfully is that the C.I.O. believes, in general, in industrial unionism; the A.F. of L., in general, believes in trade unionism.

It is entirely inaccurate to describe the C.I.O. as "vertical unionism" and the A.F. of L. as "horizontal unionism." A good example of a vertical union is the International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, which reaches from the roots of the tree to the finished wood product. Its membership includes those who work in the forest and follows through to those who work on finished lumber with factory machines. This union, which is in the A.F. of L., has been bitterly attacked by those of the left wing who shouted loudest for vertical unionism, and did not seem to know a vertical union when they saw it.

The theoretical differences between the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. have had little practical effect on the way in which the two institutions are built. They are so much alike in construction, and do business in so much the same way, that they can be described together.

Locals are the foundation of Labor. They are formed according to the needs of a group of work-

ers in an area—a town, a county, a city or section of a city, or a plant. The members of each local meet together and decide on matters concerning their own affairs. Besides voting for president, secretary, treasurer, and sometimes for a local executive body, each union member votes in the election of a business agent—a paid, professional representative.

The influence of the business agent varies from local to local; he may have more power or less than any of the other officers. In smaller communities, an A.F. of L. business agent may represent several trades, in order to be able to give his full time to his profession and be paid for doing so. It is important that a business agent receive no other money than what he gets from the unions; he must be free to deal with employers in the way that best serves the workers.

Each local is more or less dependent on the national union to which it belongs. If the local cannot strike without calling on a larger organization for help in paying strike benefits, it will not usually move without having been advised to do so by the officers of the international union from which it expects financial help. If it can finance a strike on its own money, it may do as it pleases.

Above the locals are various bodies which represent groups of locals. These bodies are of two types: those which represent only locals of one trade or one industry, and those which represent all the locals in a given area.

Those bodies which represent one trade or indus-

try are all part of some national—or “international,” if Canadian locals are included—union, such as the International Typographical Union in the A.F. of L. and the United Mine Workers in the C.I.O. Each local may send delegates to the national convention of its union. The delegates elect officers who manage the union’s larger affairs, spend money entrusted to them by the locals for strikes and other purposes, etc.

The officers and committees of the national and international unions have a powerful influence over the locals because of the wealth they control and because of the power they usually have to grant or take away the charters of locals.

In order that each part of the United States may be well served there are local councils representing all the locals of a given trade or industry in a given city or other area. For instance, the painters, paper hangers, and decorators of St. Louis are served by the St. Louis District Council.

Locals of many different trades or industries are represented in communities by city central bodies which attend to such affairs as affect all the workers in that locality. There are also within both the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. state bodies, and several different types of district bodies and councils, which promote laws favorable to Labor and attend to other matters which are important to all the workers within one state or in several adjoining states.

The officers and committees of all these groups are elected by delegates sent to conventions by the lo-

cal. In their turn, all the groups representing a number of locals, and also the locals themselves, may send delegates to the national conventions, which are usually held once a year. In an A.F. of L. convention, each national or international union has as much voting strength as it has dues-paying members.

Unions with large memberships, such as the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and Chauffeurs, which cast well over 3,000 votes at the 1938 convention of the A.F. of L., are of course more powerful than smaller unions like the Machinists', which only cast 1,901 votes at the same convention.

At these national conventions the A.F. of L. elects officers and an executive council, men who will have the interests of 5,000,000 workers in their keeping for one year. In the fall of 1938 the C.I.O. adopted a constitution, and it will meet each year in regular convention to elect officers and transact business on a national scale. In other words, the C.I.O. now has a system for managing its affairs that is, in general, like the A.F. of L.'s.

In national conventions are decided matters of policy, either by special committees or by means of resolutions voted upon by all the delegates. In other words, the conventions decide, in general, what laws and legislators, what social reforms, what tactics, etc., labor will favor or oppose. It is up to the officers—this year to William Green and to John L. Lewis—to put these policies into effect.

The money that Mr. Green has to spend is a small

proportion of the dues that the union members pay each month. All of this money comes into the A.F. of L. treasury directly from its affiliated unions, whether they are internationals or local federal unions. The C.I.O. also receives monthly contributions from the national and international unions affiliated with it, as well as from the locals.

In both the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. the national and international unions are autonomous; that is, they are the bosses of their own affairs. Their affairs must be managed according to their own constitutions. However, the C.I.O. constitution imposes some sharp restrictions not imposed by the A.F. of L. As in our national government, where the power is divided, personality and political skill have a great deal to do with who has the deciding word among Labor officials.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE C.I.O. WALKS OUT

**N**O DISCUSSION of Labor today is complete without going into the conflict between the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. But I do not intend to discuss it as though it were the paramount issue of all time. It isn't. A much more vital question relates to the new Labor laws and their effect upon the life and methods of Labor unions. That is the field in which history will discover the real marker between one era and another.

But the Labor conflict came with drama. It commanded attention and continues to hold the center of the stage. We find it easier, however, to take sides than to be objective, and there has been all too little unprejudiced discussion of this great conflict and its causes. Much has been said about principles in the war between C.I.O. and A.F. of L. As I see it, the whole dispute is one involving tactics and practices. I fail to find any principle involved at any point.

It is important to understand that the same differences of opinion that finally caused the break have been setting Labor organizations against one another for a long while. Nor was the revolt of 1936 the first

time that John L. Lewis had challenged the leadership of the American Federation of Labor.

Samuel Gompers founded the American Federation of Labor on the ruins of the Knights of Labor, in 1886. From that time until his death, in 1925, he remained its president except for one term, in 1895. He was the kind of man who held strong leaders together because of their downright personal devotion to him.

“What does Sam want?” they would ask, and they did what Sam wanted because of a magnificent loyalty that carried with it the complete conviction that Gompers was right. He was the great leader who drew men to him personally, and whose mind compelled their respect.

True enough, there were sharp divisions of opinion under Gompers. There were battles and secessions, but they were over issues which no personality could surmount. Many of them were caused by disputes growing out of the use of new materials; for example, the struggle between the carpenters and sheet metal workers as to which should have jurisdiction when metal trim for doors and windows began to take the place of wood. But in good time such disputes came to an end.

Only once was Samuel Gompers seriously challenged for leadership. Some two decades ago, John L. Lewis ran against him for the presidency. The A.F. of L. convention met in Denver and, curiously enough, because William Green was a miner's



delegate, it became his duty to nominate Lewis.

The Socialist group among convention delegates had belabored Gompers for years; they said, repeating the charge that he was reactionary, that American "pure and simple trade unionism" was altogether too "simple"; that American Labor was wasting its time in playing nonpartisan politics instead of plunging into "class-conscious, working class, political action." But Gompers had stuck to his guns and, so far, fought off their attack with ease.

John L. Lewis threw his hat into the ring. When the votes were counted he picked up the hat, dusty and battered by an overwhelming Gompers majority. With a most interesting smile, Lewis said to the convention that he guessed he "must have misunderstood the call."

The issue of industrial unionism versus craft unionism also began during the days of Gompers. The I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) offered its challenge and for a time seemed to be sweeping the West. And what a cycle of up-and-down that brings out! Galloping toward Utopia came the Western Federation of Miners, an industrial union led by William D. (Big Bill) Haywood. These were the "hard rock" miners, from their stronghold in Colorado and Montana.

During a bitter strike, former Governor Steunenberg of Idaho was killed. Haywood, with Moyer and Pettibone, his fellow union officials, was tried and acquitted. William E. Borah was the young prose-

cutor. Clarence Darrow took part in the trial in his usual role as the counsel for the defense.

Haywood went free, to take leadership of the I.W.W., raging across the land "with two weapons instead of one; the red card [of the Socialist party] in one hand, the union card in the other"—taunting the A.F. of L. and proclaiming the coming of a new day.

The Western Federation of Miners lost strength; the I.W.W. went up the hill and shortly marched right down again. The Western Federation of Miners was given a new name and admitted to the A.F. of L. But it never climbed back to great strength, though there was a rise during the World War period. It was one of the original group to form the C.I.O.; but even under its present flag it is unable to assume the power and the vigor that it had in that first grand fling, that first great upswing under the banner of industrial unionism.

If the steel industry had not followed for years a practice of importing shiploads of European workers, under contract, from various countries and making a babel out of Pittsburgh, and if it had not stood solidly and effectively against unionism, the present picture of American Labor might have been quite different.

Steel held the line against the unions to such good purpose that at the time the C.I.O. came into the picture the A.F. of L. union, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers, represented

only a handful of the army of workers in the industry.

Wholesale importing of workers was partly stopped by immigration laws, although the laws of 1885 and 1887 forbidding contract labor were long evaded. The steel industry in 1922 made a strong campaign for a law that would give it the privilege of importing European labor under contract. Steel somehow fought the unions to a standstill. The A.F. of L.'s organizing drive, under William Z. Foster in 1921, ended in failure and the departure of Foster for redder pastures.

But this was merely an episode in the battle that began with Homestead and slaughter, and has not yet been ended. For while Big Steel has found a way of living with unionism, Little Steel clings to the old industrial structure. It may cling with slipping fingers, but it clings just the same.

Steel's resistance brings us again to the cleavage between A.F. of L. and C.I.O. The steel situation was a basic reason—perhaps the basic reason—for the split.

When the National Recovery Act and the Labor Relations Act established the right to organize, the United Mine Workers sailed through the coal fields like an avenging power, building membership at phenomenal speed, making up for all the years of gunfire along Coal Creek and Cabin Creek and for all the battling against heavy odds in West Virginia and

Kentucky and Alabama. There stood forth, east of Illinois, a coal diggers' union almost 100 per cent strong. Almost 100 per cent, that is, except at one critical point.

The mines owned by the steel companies could not be unionized. These mines are called "captive mines." The union could not touch them. And the union had to have them or face an ever-present threat to its security elsewhere in the coal fields. More than that, wages could only be made uniform under both free and captive mines, if the miners got Big Steel. John L. Lewis believed that Big Steel could be unionized only by breaking down every vestige of trade lines and uniting all steel-mill workers in one big union.

The A.F. of L. was making plans for a steel organizing campaign. But the plans didn't move fast enough to suit Lewis. There is nothing discreditable about any part of this. With "the woods on fire" for organization work, it was the natural and logical step for the miners' leadership to translate this need in the battle cry, "Organize the Unorganized!"

The plan to increase the executive council of the A.F. of L. brought on the fight that ended in the forming of the C.I.O. John L. Lewis led in pushing that plan from start to finish.

It may be worth while to examine briefly a delicate phase of this split. Lewis began his fight by proposing to enlarge the executive council to twenty-

five. In San Francisco, in 1934, a compromise on eighteen was reached, after a brazen trading of votes on the convention floor that shocked even some who took part in it. It is to be remembered that in that famous compromise action, John L. Lewis and William L. Hutcheson, president of the Carpenters, were arms-around-each-other co-workers, members of the same group, and agreed on the same convention action. A year later they were to engage in the most famous fist fight in A.F. of L. annals.

Other personal differences and ambitions widened the break. Always there are personalities; for the ambitions of men are right and natural. But whether Labor would now be divided had there been other personalities in leadership we cannot know. At least the characters of the men involved did have something to do with the "when" of the final split.

There is much that is alike in William Green and John L. Lewis, much that is not. Both are, more or less, men aloof. Both were miners. Both have but few to whom they feel closely drawn. Neither is much given to what is called mixing. Both make up their own minds. Both are respected by their armies. If either of them had the persuasive, disarming personality of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the course of Labor history might have been changed.

Green has less freedom of action than Lewis, because more of the A.F. of L. officials, such as international union presidents, are entrenched behind their

own constitutions. Both have timed some of their public actions excellently; both have likewise done some bad timing. There is a belief, doubtful now, I think, that Lewis has a better standing in the White House; Green is stronger on Capitol Hill.

But—and this is the thing that does have point—John L. Lewis never was popular in A.F. of L. conventions. That is a fact. It does not lessen his stature nor reflect on his personality. Different in type, given to dramatic convention operations, usually isolating himself and his delegation, he was regarded generally as a man who wanted to be let alone.

A score of other men have their friends who would go to any length in their defense or support. Such men as I. M. ("Dick") Ornburn, Matthew Woll, Thomas F. Burke, and others not less liked because they are not named here, find their friends doing things because "Dick wants it," "Matt wants it," or "Tom wants it."

Harvey C. Fremming, president of the Oil Workers, now C.I.O., had friends who went to his defense just because he was Harvey. But there was no crowd around John L. Lewis' delegation, certainly no crowd large enough to count, that would "go down the line" because, as a person, "John wants it."

In all fairness this fact must be cited as a factor having some bearing on the developments of the past three years. Men try to find ways to come into agreement with those they like warmly. They do not

try so diligently for men they respect but do not like. Lewis was respected, but outside his own union he was not liked, among leaders generally, with the warmth that make friends.

Differences of opinion as to policies also divided the two groups. For example, there had been long dispute as to whether organization in such fields as steel, automobiles, and rubber should be industry-wide, or whether skilled workers should be organized in their separate trade unions. Lewis and his associates saw quicker organizing in industrial unions. A goodly number of A.F. of L. men agreed on that, and had agreed for years. But the A.F. of L., by and large, protects a union against competition from other unions that try to take away its members; that is, it protects the "jurisdiction" of each union over the workers which that union is supposed to represent.

Lewis and his fellow miners felt that they had to go after steel, that they had to go at once, and that they had to go with a plan which made no distinction whatever between classes of steel workers—they had to get them all into one union. In November, 1935, the leaders of seven A.F. of L. unions formed a committee, the "Committee for Industrial Organization," to accomplish Lewis' purpose.

To carry on the campaign, slogans were made, weaving an idealism of industrial unionism about the whole movement. That was natural, and it would

have been done by any group doing the same job. Slogan-makers and flag-makers always do a good business when war is on.

From the first, William Green called the C.I.O. a dual, rival organization that intended to split the Federation. Through its executive council, the A.F. of L. called upon the C.I.O. to disband, and appointed a committee to negotiate peace. No compromise could be arranged, and the C.I.O. carried on. It was joined by four other unions.

In September, 1936, ten of the first twelve C.I.O. unions were suspended from the A.F. of L. But the C.I.O. had already begun its great organizing campaign in steel and other industries. The United Mine Workers and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America were the heavy contributors to a war chest of several million dollars. Within eighteen months, C.I.O. unions had obtained contracts with the United States Steel Corporation, General Motors, the Chrysler Corporation, and scores of other companies.

To get a complete understanding of why C.I.O. could drive ahead with such vigor and speed, we need to understand its objectives. Steel was the first goal of C.I.O. That led naturally and along direct economic lines to automobiles, which in turn led to rubber and glass.

The effort to organize steel led to oil and textiles, too, but there were other and more compelling reasons for relating those fields to the new drive. In the



case of textiles, Mr. Hillman, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, impressed the executive committee of C.I.O. by reasoning along the same lines as those used in launching the drive on steel. Organization of the textile industry, especially the cotton mills of the South, was of prime importance to the cotton-goods department of Mr. Hillman's union. Many of the cotton garment factories of the South were "captive" to the cotton mills, just as coal mines were "captive" to steel companies, some through outright ownership, others through influences about as potent as ownership.

Of course, cotton is also related to rubber, since it is an important material in making tires. So we see that the main line started with steel and went back through steel's largest customers and on into connected industries.

What next? Are there to be any more spectacular victories? Where are they? There are several possibilities for the near future, not all of them involving the glory of victory.

By July, 1938, the Automobile Workers were torn asunder by an internal conflict more serious and involving more fundamental issues than the big division between A.F. of L. and C.I.O. The Rubber Workers of Akron are in an economic tailspin, partly because much of the industry has moved away from that former rubber capital. Those two situations trace their ancestry directly to general C.I.O. policies. That is a fact.

Even so, C.I.O.'s record of gains is impressive. In the fall of 1938, with a claimed membership of 4,000,000, it felt strong enough to stand alone as a permanent institution. There were important reasons for adopting a constitution. So the letters "C.I.O." now stand for "Congress of Industrial Organizations."

In giving you the outlines of the battle between the two dominant groups in Labor, I have tried to point out some of the factors so frequently overlooked. I have not touched on the fact that, whereas the A.F. of L., under its constitution, must make a public detailed report of money raised and spent, the C.I.O., as long as it was a committee and had no constitution—that is, up until the fall of 1938—was not required to report to its membership at all.

I have not touched the issue of Communism, which is more important than even most Labor men realize and likely to be a long-time plague to some of the C.I.O. unions. Nor have I touched upon the excursions into political action. Around the issue of Communism a book could be written—and should be written, but from a factual point of view. Possibly another is called for by the political operations that have been recorded in the past year.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BROTHERS UNDER THE SKIN

**C**HARGES have flown thick and fast. C.I.O. has said that A.F. of L. is near death. A.F. of L. has said that C.I.O. is dual unionism. By all the standards generally applied in Labor ranks, the C.I.O. is a dual or rival organization. But neither of them is dying. Within a year the A.F. of L. had built its membership to a total as large as it was before the ten unions that actually withdrew took their departure. That is hardly a sign of being dead on the feet, or a sign that the A.F. of L. is a rigid and reactionary organization, unfit for the modern industrial world.

Warriors have to have their slogans. They have to make their verbal charges. They have to wave flags. And the loud talk has screened the fact that the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. are brothers under the skin.

In the first place, nine of the present C.I.O. unions grew up within the A.F. of L. I do not know of one that has changed a single principle of its constitution since it left the Federation. The clear meaning of this is that these unions are going on in fundamentally the same way as before the division.

There are four unions that may be said to have changed somewhat in structure—the United Textile

Workers, the Automobile Workers, the Rubber Workers, and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers. But none of these has changed its constitution. There has been no change in such unions as the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Oil Workers, and the United Mine Workers.

In other words, the substantial, veteran unions in the C.I.O. have found it possible to live in the C.I.O. under precisely the same constitutions they lived under while in the A.F. of L. I repeat this fact as proof that the difference between the two groups is not one of principle.

The union leaders who helped John L. Lewis to form the C.I.O. felt that the lines that marked one union off from another should be broken down. Yet I do not know of a single union among the ten that originally formed the C.I.O. that has given up any of the jurisdiction it held under the A.F. of L.

Let us look at the enlargements of jurisdiction. The United Textile Workers had industry-wide jurisdiction under the A.F. of L. There has been no broadening there. Nor in the jurisdictions of the United Mine Workers, or the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

The jurisdictions of the Automobile Workers, the Radio and Electrical Workers, the Rubber Workers, and some others, as originally defined by the A.F. of L., have been broadened. There had been a challenge to the jurisdiction of the Oil Workers before the split,



and this union felt that its future development could be better protected within the C.I.O.

A map of C.I.O. industries would fit almost line for line with the nation's basic industries—coal, steel, copper, oil, electrical manufacture, automobiles. In this field the C.I.O. went to work with practically a clean sheet; that is, when the original ten organizations went to work, they could issue charters as they chose without interfering with other unions having established charter rights of long standing such as one finds within the A.F. of L. C.I.O. went to work with no constitution to limit its actions.

In the steel and textile industries, organizing committees were set up with practically unlimited jurisdiction. No organizations within the C.I.O. came into conflict with these committees.

New charters issued by the C.I.O. have usually

been on an industry-wide basis. Whether these charters would have granted such wide jurisdictions if there had been within the C.I.O. other organizations with established authority and membership in the newly organized fields, is hard to tell. For instance, the jurisdiction of the Radio and Electrical Workers within the C.I.O. covers the entire electrical manufacturing industry. Just what problems there would have been, and how they could have been solved if organizations with established membership in this industry had gone into the C.I.O., is an open question.

However, the theory that jurisdictional disputes can be avoided under a system of industrial organization has long since been exploded. As a matter of fact, that idea had been proved a mistake before the Committee for Industrial Organization came into being. The C.I.O., in spite of starting with a clean sheet, has developed within its ranks a number of very serious jurisdictional disputes. This is not said in criticism. It is merely recording a fact.

No form of organization has yet been discovered by Labor which eliminates disputes between organizations as to which shall have the right of way in certain fields. Streamlining of one kind or another does not eliminate collision. Free human beings do not lend themselves to arrangement in patterns on request.

It is an interesting fact that in the printing trades, where there now are five trade unions, there once was but one industry-wide organization. The workers in the printing trades decided that it did not meet their requirements. They separated, therefore, into the respective trades, which are Compositors, Pressmen, Stereotypers and Electrotypers, Photo-Engravers, and Bookbinders. Moreover, until shortly before the organization of the American Newspaper Guild, the International Typographical Union claimed and had jurisdiction over news writers. This jurisdiction was surrendered voluntarily. This is the outstanding example of the breaking down of an all-inclusive organization into parts.

As I have said before, you cannot pigeonhole the facts about Labor, nor expect Labor to do anything but change. Unions have to meet the terms and conditions created by industry itself. And Labor has to follow, at least in part, the line created by industrial developments, changes in industrial output, and a dozen other factors, including the desires of the membership.

There are in the C.I.O. some unions that go far beyond the borders of an industry and include in their membership workers in many industries. For instance, the United Mine Workers seems to have developed the theory that all who are employed on property owned by the owner of a mine, or who work in related industries owned by the same corporation,

shall be members. Thus there are barbers and beauty parlor operators in the United Mine Workers, because the towns in which they are employed are owned by the mining company.

In the A.F. of L. the lines that mark off one union from another are becoming looser with the passing of each month. I doubt whether you will find today a single union called a "craft" union that does not have within its membership some workers whose duties take them far outside the boundaries of a single craft. In many fields the unions are all-inclusive.

The formation of the C.I.O. has helped in breaking down the old rigidness of jurisdictional lines. They still hold, in the main, but in both the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. unions are saying to one another, "If we can't organize them, you organize them."

Thus the United Automobile Workers have organized workers in plants that have nothing whatever to do with automobile making. Within the A.F. of L. the Electrical Workers have organized telegraph operators in some of the Pacific Coast cities; and the Commercial Telegraphers' Union, which has jurisdiction over telegraph operators, does not object. Drivers of bakery wagons are found in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and Chauffeurs and also in the Bakery and Confectionery Workers International Union.

These facts are well known, and there is no protest made. Both of the great labor groups are out to get



all the members they can, and both have adjusted themselves to the needs of the hour. The real difference between them is, at bottom, one of age. The C.I.O., just starting out in life, has been able to do very much as its leaders chose. The A.F. of L., with laws and traditions reaching back to the founding of the first American unions and beyond, with a tried and tested constitution and a body of unwritten law to govern its actions, and the long-established rights of its member unions to be considered, has had to move more carefully.

And not to be forgotten are the differences in the men who lead the two groups. No matter how much alike two armies may be, in action they take on much of the character of their staff officers.

## CHAPTER IX

### PARTY LINES

**F**OR many years Labor presented a solid and unified political front. When it split into two groups, the division made itself felt in unfortunate ways. In the campaign to reelect Franklin D. Roosevelt, for instance, some of the leaders formed Labor's Non-Partisan League under the chairmanship of Major George L. Berry. It was a compact and united backing. Major Berry belonged to the A.F. of L. His two principal associates, John L. Lewis and Sidney Hillman, belonged to the C.I.O. State chairmen and committee members throughout the country came from both groups.

Roosevelt was elected. But no sooner had the ballot boxes been stored away for another year than Major Berry resigned, leaving the League in the hands of Lewis and Hillman. Then Labor began its political division, and in the end the A.F. of L. denounced the League and called upon all its members to withdraw from it.

The division between A.F. of L. and C.I.O. ran a political course almost parallel to the industrial, or strictly union, course. As the split continues, it will extend to every possible field. The two groups will

not work together on any issue, although at times they may have the same goal in sight.

Whether the C.I.O. will go on as an independent political organization, selecting its own candidates and supporting them through a Labor party, remains to be seen. But the signs seem to show that it will do so. The American Federation of Labor will continue its policy of keeping out of parties while still being active in politics.

It may take several years for the two groups to establish their final lines of action. The C.I.O., for example, may for some time find it necessary to follow one political policy in one part of the country and another elsewhere, assuming, of course, that the Labor warfare continues.

It is understandable that the present tendency of each group is, somewhat, to do the opposite of what is done by the other. Bear in mind, however, that no matter what means either group in Labor may choose for action in politics, both groups will be working for substantially the same principal objective, so far as American industry is concerned. Undoubtedly there will be differences in details; but, for the next few years at least, the real objectives will not differ materially. Up to this time, both wings of the Labor movement hold to the capitalist or profit system of production and distribution. As long as that is the case, the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. will have the same general objectives, though the ways in which they try to reach them may be quite different.

Under the pressure of what is, I believe, admitted to be a larger radical membership, the C.I.O. may, in time, develop a definite political philosophy at odds with the capitalist or profit system. If it does, we shall have a new picture, and new forecasts will have to be made. But the platform of the American Labor party does not offer any signs of an immediate rush to embrace a radically different social and economic order in place of the one we have. It is, at best, a platform of vigorous reform.

At this point, however, we have an important factor. If the C.I.O. turns definitely to independent political action, through a Labor party, a Farmer Labor party, or a Progressive party, it will need to develop a political program of its own. Such a program must differ enough from all others to set it apart and give it appeal. That of itself will mark a new and sharp line of division between the two groups of Labor, and the split will be sharper and less easy to close.

As yet the breach between the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. could be healed without compromise of principle on either side. I say "could," not "may." As unions, the organizations in both groups have substantially the same practices, strive for the same objectives, write the same kind of agreements with employers, talk the same language, and spring from the same philosophical source.

There is no important difference between them in principle. There are only differences in practice. The

cry of industrial unionism versus craft unionism has nothing essential about it that keeps the two movements apart. There are industrial unions and craft unions in both groups, provided we substitute the term "trade" union for "craft" union.

If the dispute is carried over into the political field with the C.I.O. acting as a party, or through a party of its own making, something definitely new will come into the picture. There will then be an issue that may revive some of the old feeling of antagonism that set the American Federation of Labor and the Socialist party against each other. It would result in a definite split in the matter of belief, and we might have something that could not be settled by compromise. Compromise can find a way through and around policies and practices, but it ceases to be effective where principles are concerned.

Still another factor may enter the picture to upset students and reporters and wreck all predictions. That is the lack of unified purpose within both Labor groups as to political action and objectives. In this connection, the fight on the Wages and Hours bill in the latter part of April, 1938, is worth recalling. Labor's Non-Partisan League, representing the C.I.O. in politics, brought to Washington a large group of its leaders and members in an endeavor to force action in Congress. At the same time the Oil Workers' Union, which had already won hours of work shorter than the maximum stipulated in the bill, fought to keep it from passing.

There were equally sharp differences in the American Federation of Labor. Officially, the Federation proclaimed its support of the bill, but it is a fact that some leaders in the A.F. of L. secretly hoped it would not pass. They let it be known that they could not conscientiously support the wage rate of 23 cents an hour then written into the bill.

It must be added, also, that many disapproved this bill as a whole in principle, not because of its specific figures, but because of the method of attacking the situation. Within the American Federation of Labor, there is a large, influential group which views with less and less favor the thought of winning economic advantage through political effort. That feeling must lead, if it develops, to a departure from the philosophy of the New Deal. Those who lean in this direction believe that, since Labor depends upon the ability of privately owned industry to maintain itself with a profit, industry must be permitted to live and every opportunity must be given to individual initiative.

These men argue that government should not unduly burden, by improper taxation or unfair or unreasonable limitations, the industries from which the nation and the people live. Of course, they believe also that industry must realize that it has its own social obligations which it must observe, not merely by word, but by deed.

The thinking of this group leads toward cooperation between Labor and employers. Because these men are really important in the shaping of Labor

policy, their views cannot be disregarded. Their pleas for a return to what they believe to be basic American practices may well have a considerable effect upon future Labor political action. They do not ask for a return to industrial autocracy, but for an escape from control and regulation by government bureaus, boards, commissions, and tribunals. They fear the weaving of a network in which Labor will shortly find itself so enmeshed as to have lost control over its own destiny, damaging alike to unions and management.

Thus we have a great conflict of Labor thought, Labor ambitions, and Labor aspirations. It is not unlike a melting pot of ideas—or even a collection of red-hot irons which may be welded by the pounding of circumstances into a single ingot. For the moment, the picture is one of confusion. Labor itself will work out the future pattern.

## CHAPTER X

### STRIKES

**S**AMUEL GOMPERS used to say, paraphrasing Byron, "I am the mildest mannered man that ever scuttled ship or cut a throat." The Labor movement has always been filled with leaders who held to that tradition. Gompers meant, of course, that when Labor and employers clash, the first step is to get together and attempt to solve the problems with reason and logic. But if mild manners fail, then Labor does not hesitate to declare war.

Strikes do not necessarily lead to violence. Most of them, in fact, have been peaceful affairs, with the workers simply laying down their tools and stopping work until an agreement was reached. Sometimes it is a matter of hours, sometimes of long, bitter months. The usual procedure is for the union to call a strike, take its members off the job, establish a picket line, and put officials in charge to see that order is maintained. Lately the practice of using hired pickets has come in, but not all unions approve it.

The strike is Labor's weapon of last resort. It is called only when all other means of settling a serious disagreement—over wages, hours, working conditions,





union recognition, or the like—have collapsed. By shutting off production or distribution, Labor hopes to compel further consideration of its demands.

The right to call strikes generally rests with local unions, subject to approval by the national or international union. Neither the A.F. of L. nor the C.I.O. can, as an organization, call a strike. With all his power, William Green cannot. Executive councils lack the authority. Even conventions cannot call strikes, though they may advise that one should be called by the proper body. The point of all these restrictions is that strikes must be decided upon by those who will actually be affected by them. Some local unions can do so only after a vote by the members, while others permit their business agents to act when an employer violates a contract. But if the approval of the international is lacking, as in the case of spontaneous local strikes, they are called "illegal" and the unions are subject to discipline, sometimes

even to the extent of losing their charters. The international executive board may, and frequently does, order the strikes stopped and the men sent back to work. Trade-union law is strict and, by and large, strictly enforced.

Judgment, on the other hand, sometimes tempers the decision. If the cause for calling a strike is generally regarded as just, approval may be refused as a matter of record but discipline withheld. Even so, "illegal" operations in Labor unions carry a stigma that is punishment in itself.

The power of the international union to authorize or forbid local strikes is necessary because of the far-reaching consequences that are possible. A foolish local strike may spread over the whole industry and threaten the very financial structure of Labor. In the past, for example, there have developed large-scale strikes by unions with treasuries too weak to stand the strain, so that an administrative body had to raise relief funds through donations from other unions and from a sympathetic public.

When the men are called off their jobs, managing a strike is likely to become really big business. The strikers must be taken care of while they are not working. They must be paid and fed and housed. Perhaps a new law will relieve Labor of the problem of sheltering workers in the future, but stabbing memories still remain of old days when strikers in the mining and textile industries were evicted from company-owned houses. But even if the strikers are not

put out of their homes, a prolonged strike always costs huge sums of money.

Except for contributions raised during the strike, this money comes straight from the union treasury in the form of strike benefits. It has been put there, month by month, for that very purpose. Practically all union constitutions—all of them, so far as I know—provide the amount of dues to be paid and the manner in which the money shall be divided in the union's treasury. So much of each dollar collected must go for the general fund, so much for whatever benefit system the union may operate, so much for the official publication, so much for the reserve fund, and on down the list. Generally, it is from the reserve fund that strike benefits are paid.

Some unions naturally have very small reserves, while others have piled up huge sums in their treasuries. The Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' International, for instance, has a reserve running to perhaps seven or eight million dollars. Amounts of this size seem inexhaustible at first thought, particularly when it is understood that average strike benefits are small, just about enough to keep the strikers from actual suffering. But in the case of a prolonged strike involving several thousand men, the drain lowers the sturdiest union reserve at an appalling rate.

So it follows, because of the obligations it must face, that Labor is never eager to strike. It wishes to hold its strength in reserve rather than be forced to use it. But in no case—except with organizations of

government workers, which forgo the right to strike for any reason—does it abandon its final right to call out workers if negotiations and arbitration fail.

When they do, Labor turns to battle, and war begins in deadly earnest. In actual practice, strikes assume an endless variety of forms, because the tactics must be planned to fit each individual case. Two outstanding developments of recent years will make the point clear: the flying squadron and the sit-down strike. Neither is really new, but neither had ever before been applied on so large a scale nor under such dramatic circumstances.

The flying squadron came into wide use during the nation-wide textile strike of 1934. It was effective, of course, because many workers had automobiles of their own. Scores, sometimes hundreds of striking workers, operating in swift caravans, would descend without warning upon a textile mill and, more by audacity than by actual force, empty the mill of its employees and throw around it a picket line to keep them out. The method proved highly successful. Once a mill was closed by a flying squadron, it seldom reopened. The strike was as good as won.

Employers protested, of course. They said the flying squadron was illegal, but they could not prove it. The fact must not be overlooked that industrial conflict is actual warfare. Each side seeks to win, once the fight is begun; and each uses the best means to make sure of victory, often with a fine disregard of ethics.

If there was trespass by flying squadrons in the textile strike, there was also, at its conclusion, a tragic and impressive list of dead among the union workers. Somebody had broken a law other than the law of trespass.

The sit-down, perhaps the most dramatic of all strike methods, reached the peak of its force in the automobile industry. In the end, it was followed by the first general labor agreement with the automobile manufacturers. The idea of sit-down strikes seems to have been thought of first by the workers themselves, for there is evidence to show that union officials were as surprised as employers by the method and its success.

That the sit-down strike could be used to destroy union discipline was something Labor did not find out until after peace had returned. At the moment, all the leaders thought of was that the strike had been won. If it had been lost, on the other hand, there would have been no justification whatever for the sit-down tactics. Many a general in warfare runs the same risk. If he wins his battle his tactics prove themselves right. If he loses, he was wrong.

Labor admits frankly that it has won victories with a show of strength and a willingness to make a pitched battle of the issue. The eight-hour day was the first great achievement to be won on the battlefield. The determination to make it a conflict was arrived at by convention action of the A.F. of L., with the

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners chosen to lead the movement. Victory came in the end, thanks to the fighting spirit of the carpenters and the printers, by means of strike after strike.

Sometimes Labor finds itself with a strike on hand which it didn't expect at all. Across a conference table both parties to the negotiations may do what poker players often do—bluff. With neither side knowing just what reserves or will power the other may have, one of them bluffs a point too much and the fight is on. Labor has done its share of bluffing at times and has paid for it.

The boycott is a part of the strike picture. A non-union product may be on the market for years without suffering from a union boycott, but when organization takes place and a strike is called, the boycott serves its purpose. Like strikes, boycotting methods vary with conditions and with the cleverness of the people who plan them. They may be imposed by A.F. of L. and C.I.O. executives, by international unions, and even, within fixed limits, by city central bodies. In effect, they are simply a plea to the public not to buy the goods of an employer who has violated some principle of Labor.

Boycotts serve to keep possible customers away from places unfair to Labor, but they do not bar out the strikebreaker. He and his fellows were the ones in the old days who turned peaceful strikes into bloody battles. Those were the times when the opposition to Labor unions was more bitter than it is

now, and when employers protected themselves with injunctions issued by the courts. Strikebreaking was an organized business, then. It had to be licked.

Just what is a strikebreaker? Perhaps the meaning can be made more clear if the reader will think of himself as a striker. Let us say you belong to a union, for example, a molders' union. You are on strike for several things, including a ten-cent wage raise, the removal of serious dangers, and the right to a hearing before being laid off or fired. The foundry hires a "detective" agency to get things moving again, and it sends along a Bowery bum or an ex-convict to take your job.

Enough others of the same stripe are brought to fill the shop. But you spot particularly the fellow who takes your job. It is your job, even yet, because you expect to go back to it when the strike ends. But there is the stranger in your place, probably unskilled at your work, at your bench mold, literally taking the bread and butter out of your mouth.

Maybe you like that job a whole lot. Maybe you've held that job ten years and feel you have a certain preferred place in the scheme of things in that shop. Maybe you have even got a recognized seniority built up, and maybe your union protects that seniority as an actual property right, if not in law at least in fact. Whatever may be the case, one thing is sure. Another man is there, in your place, at your job. That man is a strikebreaker. By employing him the boss hopes to break down your resistance, bring you

to his terms, or else put you out for good. Now multiply that one man by the total number who have taken over the jobs of your friends and you have the groundwork for trouble. Men who watch strikebreakers doing the jobs they think of as their own are not always moved by sentiments of sweetness and light.

Regardless of what the law or the courts may say, workers have always felt they own their jobs; they have felt that they have a property right in them. Going on strike doesn't mean abandoning jobs for good. Not at all. So bringing in strikebreakers seems almost like theft, almost like taking the jobs that belong to the workers and giving them to somebody else. Naturally, the feeling kindles a lot of hate and heat which is likely to flare up in physical conflict.

There is another point to consider. Strikebreakers are usually recruited from among people who know nothing about the work they are called on to do. They have no knowledge of it and no skill to bring to it; their real job, as a matter of fact, is to make it appear that a plant is in operation, strike or no strike. Since the enlistment of strikebreakers is definitely a war measure, getting rid of them is a counter war measure. And so the history of Labor disputes, until the coming of the National Recovery Act, has been splotted with desperate conflicts between strikers and strikebreakers.

That phase of industrial disputes, however, is practically at an end. A stronger Labor movement,



coupled with a more favorable public opinion, has written into law declarations of the rights of Labor and rules for the peaceful handling of the disputes which once led to hand-to-hand battles.

But Labor still believes in the strike as a final resort in fighting for a principle. It has made definite progress through conflict. That is to say, no union ever improved conditions for its membership until it achieved the strength to compel industry to recognize its strength, until it proved able to assert itself in a voice of authority. True, Labor has lost strikes as well as won them. But not every lost strike is a mistake. Often enough, Labor has fought and lost for principles which it considered worth losing for. There is a Labor adage which says that you can compromise on tactics and policies, but that you can never compromise on a principle. And there is another which says no strike is ever wholly lost.

Labor has proceeded on the theory that it could afford to lose battles as long as the main trend was forward. It always had so little to lose that at the worst it would find itself set back only temporarily. Every war has its lost battles. Labor's place today is proof that in the large sense it has won magnificently.

## CHAPTER XI

### PEACE HAS ITS VICTORIES

THE union picture is broad. There may be strikes at one end of the great canvas, but at the other Labor and employers stand shoulder to shoulder for their common good. Few people know about the scores of technical advisers on Labor's pay rolls—statisticians, negotiators, authorities on industrial problems, men and women skilled in management and production—who keep their fingers on the pulse of business and industry. Scores? There are hundreds of them, with the number growing all the time. And their main job is to make it possible for unions and employers to cooperate.

Today, cooperation with employers through agreement is almost the gospel of the American Labor movement. It holds true particularly in the A.F. of L. and dates back to the moment when employers accepted the existence of unions. And more is meant than merely the sustained cooperation in the shops where Labor has made collective bargains, with the terms set down in black and white.

In the limited field of written agreements, of course, there is cooperation throughout the realm of industry; it is taken for granted. Countless studies, super-

vised by both sides, are made in an effort to find out how production may be made better and services more satisfactory. In the broader field, where there is no written agreement, there are also examples of cooperation to be found in every year of history since the Labor movement began to have a real effect in America.

The real goal of cooperation is to keep the wheels of industry turning, good times or bad, when the country is prosperous, or when there is a depression. Labor wants jobs; industry wants steady operation. Both, in a word, want to make working conditions stable.

Wide-scale cooperation spreads slowly, keeping pace with the growth of unions and the acceptance by employers of social responsibility. Even today, it has far to go. There are still plenty of employers who say of the unions, "Let them row their own boat," and there are still plenty of unions which say of the employers, "Let them paddle their own canoe." But if they have interests in common farseeing officials on both sides will be likely to see the advantage of cooperating.

It follows, of course, that any agreement of unions and employers to work together must be along lines planned and accepted by both. A striking example of defiance of joint rights is to be found in the development and application of the Bedaux system of "efficiency in production."

Known as the "speed-up" or "stretch-out" system,

it was imposed upon the workers without consultation or consent, and left in its wake a bitter resentment which has never been overcome. The Duke of Windsor canceled his plan to visit the United States in 1937 because of feeling against Bedaux, the inventor of the system, who was to act as the Duke's unofficial host.

There can be no doubt whatever in the minds of those familiar with industry that efficiency equal to that obtained by the Bedaux system might have been developed through cooperative measures on the basis of mutual understanding and effort. Proof lies in the fact that in many industries efficiency was developed in exactly this way. Perhaps, after all, it is a healthy thing that there was resentment against a system that was imposed without asking Labor's cooperation.

There is no point in pretending that wholesale cooperation exists at the present time, but there are strong indications that it is on the way. Today, a great many persons are interesting themselves in developing large-scale cooperation between unions and industry. They call it by the more inclusive name, collaboration. Experimental steps have been taken, and possibilities of all kinds explored. The first question each side asks about the other is, "Well, what do they want?" Because the wants do not always agree, collaboration may come slowly. But to have seen the need and the possible advantages is a long step in the direction of a common understanding.

Neither union nor employer can be expected to yield to the other on matters of principle, even for the sake of achieving cooperation. That would be asking too much. But spokesmen for both sides agree that some compromise must be made, not only for mutual benefits but for the advantage of the nation itself. Going by what they have observed in countries abroad, they feel—and feel strongly—that Americans must so order the American house that American institutions will be safe against attack by either propaganda or violence.

However, threats from overseas and the welfare of the nation are not the only reasons why leaders believe that Labor and employers ought to make every effort to work together. Actual cooperation has already proved its practical value.

Suppose we consider first what has been accomplished by the railroads when the unions and the management pulled together. The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad will be remembered in industrial history as a proving ground. Efforts were made to push cooperation to the fullest extent. The union went so far as to employ engineers and set up special machinery for the purpose of working with the management to achieve better operation for the benefit of both workers and employer. An entire volume could be written about that undertaking, which has continued for more than twenty years.

There have been many other examples of cooperative efforts between unions and railroads. These at-

tempts have helped to push through special laws governing their relations. No later than the past two or three years, moreover, Labor and management have worked together at finding a way out of the financial difficulties of the railroads. Unions have thrown their splendid statistical and research staffs into the effort, working jointly with those of the railroads, and all have hewed straight toward the common purpose.

Railroad unions, it should be made clear, do not yield a single step unless they are convinced that yielding is a necessity. Their cooperation does not mean that they have sacrificed any of their aggressiveness. It does mean that, if open conflict ever does come between railroad unions and railroad managements, it will be only when every means to a peaceful settlement has failed. Perhaps, too, there is another reason for their cooperation. Unions believe that they have a right to share in the profits of the enterprise, so they accept a joint responsibility for operation.

Cooperative efforts have not been restricted to railroads, even in the solving of financial problems. Unions have dug deep into their pockets more than once to help industry. The International Association of Machinists, to cite a single example, has on at least two occasions directly financed employers whose resources were not sufficient to meet the strain of unusual times and circumstances.

The International Ladies Garment Workers Union, led by David Dubinsky, has gone as far as any union

in the development of union-management cooperation, with an enviable record of achievement and an unequaled gain in public approval.

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers, under the leadership of Sidney Hillman, has repeatedly lent assistance for the reorganization of entire schemes of production in factories that were losing money. This union took over the complete job of redesigning production methods for plants and saw them operate on the new basis to the profit of the employers.

An outstanding example of cooperation for the saving of an entire industry occurred late in 1937. Eager partisans of the Chinese, among whom were a great many left-wingers, though not the Chinese themselves, spread organized propaganda against the wearing of silk and particularly against the wearing of silk stockings. The boycott was said to be intended to cripple Japan, which is the source of practically all America's raw silk.

But it happens that the United States has almost a monopoly in silk manufacturing, and the propaganda, if successful, would have gone far toward wiping out that American industry. So the unions and employers met and formed a joint council to oppose the boycott and brought it to a standstill by this united opposition.

Sometimes Labor serves its own ends in a more material way by cooperating with employers. There was the case of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers Union, which built a factory at El Paso, Texas, to

manufacture bricks. At this time, unionized contractors in the Southwest were having trouble in getting supplies with which to build, because certain organized employers in California would not allow union-made bricks to reach union construction jobs.

The new factory solved the problem. It did more than that. For one thing, it offered a successful example of cooperation between union and employers. For another, it proved to be effective in union warfare against an antiunion employers' association in California.

In general, however, Labor's cooperation has no motive except the one which appears on the surface—to keep industry going. Unions cooperate with the entire city of Miami, Florida, to make sure that the tourist season is not marred by industrial disputes. The Oil Workers International cooperates with the largest employers in the petroleum field to determine an annual wage which the industry can afford to pay and still continue in business.

Still another type of cooperation pays dividends to both unions and employers. That is the development of apprentice education in the building trades, set up to furnish the industry with the needed number of skilled workers. Unions and employers combined to work out the problem in the first place, and their joint efforts brought about in the end a further cooperation. New York enacted a law under which apprentice training schools are operated by the state.



Unions and employers alike are consulted and are interested in their tremendous success.

The many efforts to promote health and safety are closely related to cooperation. More than that, they are the signals of a desire for a healthy democracy.

Most Labor agreements contain provisions for safeguarding health and for protection against accidents. Often these regulations have to be enforced against union members themselves, who get careless about risks they run. Public health records state that there is three times as much tuberculosis among unskilled laborers, and seven times as much pneumonia, as there is among professional men. Unskilled workers must be protected from the conditions that lead to disease by cooperation between Labor and employers, which has materially reduced disease among the organized skilled workers. It is said of the Cigar Makers International that regulations written into agreements have added as much as ten years to the average life of workers in their industry.

Health and safety for workers, pride in union products, apprentice education, stable industry, profits that warrant fair wages, joint responsibilities and benefits—the list of what Labor wants runs on and on. And when, as in these matters I have mentioned, industry wants the same things, cooperation is assured. There lies the promise for the future, for the basis of cooperative development is the discovery of purposes common to both workers and employers.

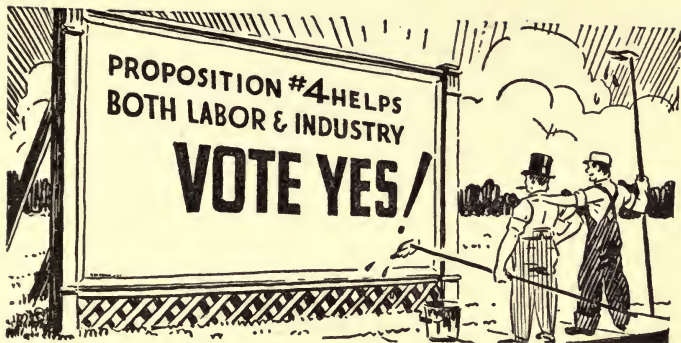
## CHAPTER XII

### LABOR AND THE LAWMAKERS

COOPERATION between unions and employers does not begin and end in industry; it also makes itself vigorously felt among the lawmakers in state capitols and in Washington. Whether the issue is a matter of principle, a threatened right, a question of control, or burdensome, unfair or diverted taxes—anything at all that may interfere with industrial stability and advancement—Labor takes up political cudgels in defense. Often it joins with employers to win a common cause.

Sometimes the aim is to get laws passed along new lines, sometimes to protect rights which have not yet been given legal guarantees. In either event, Labor will work side by side with employers if it believes the objectives of whatever the project may be are of mutual advantage.

Promotion of the "Truth in Fabric" bill in Congress may be given as an example of cooperation to secure new laws. The manufacturers of pure wool products sought Federal Trade Commission regulations requiring the truthful description of contents by labels on the fabrics. They asked, also that Congress pass a law to the same effect.



Labor agreed that it would be useful to compel proper labeling of cloth. Representatives of unions in the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. appeared as witnesses in both houses of Congress. They declared not only that they were in favor of truthful labels for fabrics, but that Labor disliked working on materials which were not genuine.

Labor went farther, arguing that if the act passed it would be better for the industry itself: truthfully labeled fabrics would sell better and provide more jobs. Labor put its shoulder to the wheel because it believed absolutely in the objective set forth by the employers.

On the protective side, Labor is equally ready to cooperate with employers. Its friends in industry are those with whom it has collective bargains, and if their rights are threatened by legislation, Labor is quick to respond.

So when Congressman Wright Patman introduced a bill to levy a tax on chain stores that would make it

hard for them to stay in business, Labor accepted the challenge. Here was a threat on its very threshold. Nearly all the construction work for chain stores is under union contract, and their clerical forces are being organized. So Labor jumped into action in a dozen places and in a dozen ways to fight the Patman bill.

A similar bill, introduced in the New York State Legislature early in 1938, stirred Labor into another cooperative political fight. Union representatives appeared on the scene and worked for its defeat in committee hearings in both houses.

Further examples of cooperation between unions, both A.F. of L. and C.I.O., and employers come readily to mind. The oil workers unions gladly assist in any constructive efforts to remove burdensome taxes on gasoline and to prevent money collected by such taxes from being used for anything besides aids to highway transportation.

The Pottery Workers cooperate with employers for the protection of the American pottery industry. And even though it may seem at times to weaken the solidarity of Labor as a whole, there is instance after instance of one union's refusing to declare a friendly firm unfair when it has a conflict with another Labor group.

There must be no misunderstanding on this score. The C.I.O. believes in cooperation between unions and employers as thoroughly as does the A.F. of L. The length to which it is willing to go through leg-

islation is well demonstrated by the combined effort of the United Mine Workers and the mine owners to bring about the enactment of the Guffey Coal Control Act. Both unions and employers participated, also, in its administration.

The A.F. of L., to cite a similar example, makes possible the enforcement of the Railway Labor Act through cooperation of its unions and the railroad management. Under this act, the relations between Labor and railroad management came under a combined administration through a governmental agency.

In both these typical cases, once Labor and employers found a common objective, they went the full route to it by legislation.

Whether all these appeals for legislative backing contribute to industrial prosperity, we may not always know at the moment. But this is a field in which unions and employers are working together toward what they believe to be steady national improvement. Once more, of course, it is Labor's opportunism in action.

There may be disagreements about Labor's methods or goals. But when Labor sets out to achieve an objective, and determines that cooperation with employers in legislation is the best means to that end, it does so because it believes most ardently that it is helping to create industrial prosperity. That is the justification for its action, and Labor has more to lose than its critics have, if that action is wrong. Economists, students, and theorists may take facts

and figures and build upon them whatever reasoning they choose. They may praise or denounce. But in the end they are responsible only for their opinions. Labor is responsible for results.

It does not follow that Labor is always right. Inconsistencies creep into the record, and occasionally Labor contradicts itself in action. It must always be that way as long as the democratic spirit dominates the movement, for there is no supreme command which can compel the rank and file to follow obediently.

You find the same inconsistency in state legislatures; some tend violently in one direction, some in another. This is democracy at work. Uniform intelligence and uniform reasoning can be neither commanded nor guaranteed. Labor has as much right to make mistakes as state legislatures.

Labor may stumble now and then along the way. But it still comes on growing in power and achieving greater benefits for workers. If the progress can be made easier or faster or more certain through cooperation with employers, by legislation or otherwise, Labor will be more than satisfied. Some day we may have a complete democracy in industry.

## CHAPTER XIII

### LABOR VOTES FOR ITS FRIENDS

**L**ABOR has achieved many of its objectives through legislation. But it has not been satisfied to sit back and hope that favorable laws would be passed. It has stormed out, instead, and fought for them tooth and nail. Its aims and methods are not like those of the labor political parties in Europe, but that does not prove that American Labor is not in politics. From the very beginning, it has been in the kind of politics it knew best how to use.

Make no mistake on that score—American Labor is in politics. It carries on its fight in Washington as well as out in the field, and its influence is felt by every senator and congressman. Exactly what it will accomplish eventually through political influence is a question that only the future can answer. But Labor will play a big part in carving out whatever may be the national destiny, and political action will be a vital means toward that end.

One way of looking ahead is to study Labor's political accomplishments of the past. The record sheds much light on present-day policies and shows where they are leading.

American Labor has not tied itself to a political party, nor set up a party of its own. Nonpartisan action is a tradition—a first principle of belief—followed for almost forty years. Two phrases coined in the early days of the movement have continued to live, though not always with their original meaning.

One was, “pure and simple.” It described the type of American unionism which refused to support partisan labor and political action, or revolutionary philosophies. It did not take the critics long to burlesque the “pure and simple” phrase, and the effects were sometimes humiliating.

The other slogan was, “Reward your friends and defeat your enemies.” This, too, won its share of jeers and twisted meanings, but it served in more than one campaign to rally the forces of Labor to political victory.

When the phrase was coined, Labor had practically no friends in Congress; today only a few members are regarded as out-and-out enemies. The change did not come by accident. American Labor made its first great bid for political power in 1906, when the Bill of Grievances, so called, was written in convention and presented to the administration in Washington. After the voting had been checked, all outstanding enemies in Congress were marked for defeat, and in time most of them went back to private life. Each succeeding year has seen a lower percentage of enemies and a higher percentage of Labor’s friends in Congress.





There has been much criticism of the method of applying a measuring stick to political officeholders and office seekers. But it has worked. The measuring stick is nothing more nor less than the voting record of each legislator. Labor takes its position in legislative issues and checks every vote that is cast. This record is passed on to Labor's voters in the House member's district or in the senator's state for study and future action. It clearly shows whether he is a friend or an enemy of Labor.

In spite of the fact that the A.F. of L. and C.I.O. are now often pitted against each other, and may in time develop entirely different political policies, in spite of anything that can happen, American Labor will always be a power in politics.

And now Labor looks at the large, important issues of the day and takes its stand. It does not believe that prosperity can be found in relief rolls, but it admits that they are a temporary necessity, like splints for

a broken leg. It holds to the theory that the best guarantee of prosperity lies in shortening the number of work hours per week and increasing the rates of pay progressively, as production becomes more and more efficient. That belief, so often stated, so widespread, so boldly fought for in season and out, is accepted throughout the ranks of Labor.

Labor is not so much for broadening the income-tax base as it is for increasing the tax of the higher brackets. It would not levy punishing taxes on business, but it would tax much more heavily the larger incomes of individuals.

In its attacks upon great corporations, Labor has been much less savage than some of the politicians who called themselves progressives. Whether right or wrong, the fact remains that American Labor is for its friends in political life just as ardently as it is for its friends in industry.

And why not? Labor is in politics for a plain purpose: It fights for laws that will improve the conditions of its workers and that will make the United States a better country to live in.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BARGAINING BECOMES LEGAL

**N**O LAW among the many new ones that have changed our national way of living is more interesting and important than the National Labor Relations Act. It not only makes collective bargaining legal, but compels employers and unions alike to accept it as the method for settling their differences.

To understand how much the Act means we must turn back for a quick view of Labor's upward march from conditions that made the worker's life a burden. To a great extent the obstacles in the way were laws that protected abuses of human freedom and decency. But the suffering and oppression which these laws made possible—factory fires and mine explosions, the various forms of disguised slavery that went with the company store, the "yellow-dog" contract, the labor injunction, child labor—these also goaded Labor and its supporters on to fight harder.

A quarter of a century ago, courageous pioneers were battling stoutly for factory inspection laws that would do away with some of the worst abuses. Jane Addams, William English Walling, Senator Robert F. Wagner, and Jimmy Walker were among those

who tried to get a system of factory inspection by commissioners.

When girls locked in a loft were burned to death in the Triangle fire in New York, that was an argument hard to answer. Just so, in later days, millions of unemployed offered an irresistible argument for the National Recovery Act. And just so the anti-Labor actions of Republic Steel were used to justify the National Labor Relations Act.

It is fair to wonder—and many Labor men do—what would have happened if employers and their establishments had not offered such glaring examples of injustice and exploitation.

Today, the rights of Labor are protected in many ways. We have factory inspection. We have mine-safety laws. We have abolished the Labor injunction as far as the Federal courts are concerned. We have outlawed the yellow-dog contract. We have restricted immigration almost to the vanishing point. And we have the United States Department of Labor and its various services.

Among all the political agencies set up to assist industry, the conciliation service of the Department of Labor belongs high on the list of honor. Few federal agencies have served more effectively and with less self-advertisement. I do not know how many industrial disputes it has settled peacefully and without benefit of publicity; the exact figures do not particularly matter. But I do know that the number is very large, and that the service continues to go on year

after year, winning increasing respect from both unions and employers.

This growing value of the conciliation service is an endorsement of voluntary methods. Nobody is compelled to use the service. Those who turn to it do so on their own initiative and without pressure from any source.

In the present state of the world, any real American may be pardoned for pointing to such striking evidence of the value of peaceful progress through the agencies of democracy. Great problems still remain to be solved, but other problems equally baffling have been solved in the past. Those of the future can be solved by the same method.

There are some Labor leaders who believe that the Labor Relations Act itself should be stripped down to a statement of guarantees, leaving all compulsory factors out. This would mean a definite return to what is sometimes called "the Gompers philosophy," which applies to the C.I.O. as well as the A.F. of L. For, be it remembered, nine of the unions in the C.I.O. had their birth and lived the greater part of their life within the A.F. of L. The newer organizations in the C.I.O. have scarcely had time to form a philosophy or lay down a program for the future.

Perhaps the Gompers philosophy should be explained briefly, for there are many today to whom Gompers' name means nothing, though he was president of the A.F. of L. until his death in 1924. As long as it followed his policy, Labor did not ask the gov-

ernment to do anything but clear away the obstacles to union organization and collective bargaining. Labor wanted only freedom. Having secured the right to bargain, Labor would then proceed to get what it needed for itself.

Instead, legislators passed the National Labor Relations Act, appointed a board to administer it from Washington, D.C., and set up regional boards which hear and decide cases throughout the country. Besides passing upon actual grievances and issuing orders, the regional boards decide which union shall bargain, and the employer it shall bargain with. They decide when bargaining may take place, and under what circumstances.

For help given by the National Labor Relations Act, Labor should be thankful. It is. But the law came into being without any example to go by, and in the midst of a critical period in industrial history. Some Labor leaders are wondering whether it may not prove a boomerang and strike at Labor itself.

For one thing, Thomas Jefferson's doctrine that courts and tribunals always seek to extend their own powers still holds good. In the beginning, the board set up under N.R.A., the parent of the present board, made it a principle that union officials and members could present their cases in ordinary language and get relief when it was warranted. Both in theory and in actual practice, the old board made much of the ability of the ordinary citizen to conduct his own case.

The National Labor Relations Board began in the same way. But as it handled case after case and laid down ruling after ruling, and went before the Supreme Court on a dozen issues, there developed a maze of procedures and rules governing the way in which cases should be presented and dealt with. Also, a long series of decisions spread into a network of technical propositions, all important to the board, but all beyond the understanding of anyone but a lawyer. The layman, whether employer or Labor leader, becomes lost in a labyrinth of legal language and legal procedure before he can state his case.

These things are said, not in criticism, but as matters of fact. That they are wholly unreasonable or wicked, or signals of abuses to come, is not necessarily true. But some wise Labor leaders see the possibility of Labor's interests slipping out of its own control and into the hands of lawyers. They do not like the prospect.

Employers have aired their grievances, charging the board favored the unions at the expense of management. That has been true. But there are two points that must be considered: First, the Act is Labor's law, intended to establish rights that were not guaranteed before; second, no employer has yet been able to pick a legal flaw in the Act itself. No employer has ever got the Supreme Court to reverse a ruling handed down by the National Labor Relations Board. (The Consolidated Edison decision was a victory for the A.F. of L., not for employers.)

But, though the Labor Relations Board has acted within the law, it can hardly be doubted that the regional directors have often treated employers with the harshness of arrogant bureaucrats. Witnesses have been treated in a manner totally unwarranted by circumstances.

In all fairness it must be admitted that it would be difficult for any organization so large as the N.L.R.B. to have a roll call of officials that did not include a few ignoramuses, bigots, and pathological cases. But the fact that regional boards have been prejudiced and too severe seems to have been proved in many cases.

Weight of evidence indicates that they have favored the unions of one group over those of another. The division between the A.F. of L. and C.I.O. led naturally to contests for the right to bargain. In places where there are two competing unions, the officials of the regional board must decide which is to bargain for all the workers involved in the case. It appears to be true that the C.I.O. has been favored more often than the A.F. of L.

In judging the record of the regional boards, it matters not a bit which unions have been favored. What does matter is that any should be favored above others. Representatives of a governmental agency should not side with any group, to the grave damage of another.

If it is possible to play favorites today, say the best Labor thinkers, the situation may be reversed tomor-



row under another administration. And as the authority of the National Labor Relations Board grows, Labor leaders become more alarmed over what may happen when the Board changes its point of view after a later election. To put it bluntly, if a government board can "sock" somebody, then whoever is in political control can decide who is to get socked. So the unions more and more are coming to say:

"If others can be hit today, we can be hit tomorrow."

Any power can be abused. Any agency of government can play favorites. That needs to be remembered.

The whole issue of the future value and character of the National Labor Relations Act and the National Labor Relations Board is just beginning to be debated. A great many of those on Labor's side—the winning side—are still too intent upon enjoying the fruits of victory to do much viewing with alarm. But always, in any great movement, there are those who are able to pause and take a long look ahead. Some of them now believe that the Act must be modified or else the government will completely rule Labor.

Labor must wait for developments. While it waits, it may well call attention to its own tremendous growth and present strength. Today it has nearly eight million members. At the time the Act was passed there were no more than half that many.

## CHAPTER XV

### LABOR AGAINST ITSELF

**T**HOUGH some of the obstacles of earlier years have been cleared away, suspicious public opinion, unfriendly employers, and questionable legislation still clutter the route. And then, as if these handicaps were not enough to slow progress, unions frequently stir up quarrels among themselves.

Most of these conflicts can be traced back to internal or "office" politics. Foreign labor movements expect them as a matter of course, and some of their unions have two secretaries, one for external affairs and one for internal affairs. But in American Labor, problems come finally to a single executive. He has been elected by the members, and he fights for those who elected him. He may not care so much for the opinions or the welfare of the members of other unions who cannot vote to keep him in office.

It must be admitted at the outset that unions are not perfect agencies at best, and that their officials are not perfect men. All members are men who were chosen by employers to do their work. Members, these same workers, become union officials. Industry is free to go anywhere to find executives of outstanding ability: Labor is restricted to its own membership.



The wonder is, under the circumstances, that it has developed such high standards of statesmanship and integrity in leaders chosen from industry's employment rolls.

Internal conflicts, moreover, are usually over jobs that mean bread and butter. The question of right and authority may be dumped overboard in a battle between two unions, each fighting for jobs for its own members.

The twenty-year fight between Carpenters and Sheet Metal Workers was a fight for jobs. Sheet metal came along as a substitute for wood in the windows and trim of buildings. Where carpenters had had the field to themselves, sheet metal workers invaded with a new material. One union was fighting for jobs for carpenters and the other for jobs for sheet metal workers; and the leaders on both sides fought for their men with everything they had.

That conflict was an extreme case of internal politics which had its start in the formation of two opposing blocs. For there are blocs in organized labor as well as in Congress and legislatures. Go into any convention of either the A.F. of L. or the C.I.O., and you will find blocs. We imported the word, but surely we didn't import the idea. A bloc is a group, and a group is "our crowd" or "our gang" against all the others.

In the American Federation of Labor, according to what has come to be something like a tradition, there is the "executive council crowd." In conventions it tries to hold its votes together against opposition. This executive council unity is not as real today as it was when Samuel Gompers ruled with a twelve-man council. Now it is an eighteen-man council. A lot of disagreement may creep in among eighteen men, and frequently does.

Blocs may expand into alliances. In the building trades field, for example, there has been an alliance of the Electrical Workers, the Bricklayers, and the Carpenters, standing shoulder to shoulder in a solid wall against all comers. Its aim has been largely to protect the jurisdictions of these three unions, and it has done a thorough job.

Some observers look upon blocs, groups, and alliances as wicked affairs, which is a good deal of nonsense. They spell power. All power, of course, may be abused. Unions have abused power; they have acted unfairly against one another and against employers and the public on more than one occasion. But the

same thing has been said of Congress, of the President, and of the Supreme Court.

There is another point for the critics of Labor to consider. Many things that seem against public policy, Labor welfare, or even idealistic thinking, have a basis of sound reason. Often it lies in the normal reaction of human beings to the influences which surround them. So when a union drive smashes up, as it does now and then when it goes too far in its effort to better the condition of workers, human nature may be the explanation.

Whatever the human weakness that brought about the failure, the record as a whole is not changed any more than failure changes records in the general business world. Bankruptcies should always be compared with successes. Union shortcomings and cussedness—even including contract violation—should likewise be compared with union achievement and uprightness.

Unions are human agencies, more human than commercial institutions, because they concern themselves wholly with the fate and welfare of human beings. They don't sell things by the pound or yard. They deal with wages, hours of work, shop rules and regulations. They express the angers and passions and fears and desires of men.

Internal politics, yes. Internal fights, yes. But what else can you expect? Union meetings and conventions often produce intense jealousies and opposing points

of view. Shall we do this, or shall we do that? Are we for this, or are we for that? Are we for Brother X, or are we for Brother K? These situations are common enough, but in spite of them the vast bulk of union business goes smoothly and in good order, with little bad feeling, and with a great deal of dignity. Count the abuses and mischief all you like, and you still have a record of achievement that is brilliant, that shines, that is a credit to the understanding and intelligence of the workingman.

Union members deserve more praise than they get. They are not college men, remember; not business men, not professors, not members of Congress. They are wage-earners, usually meeting after a day at the lathe, a day pouring hot metal, a day "on the wall," or a long hard day swinging a hammer. Certainly, they are sometimes responsible for wrongs, abuses, mistakes, and all the sources of internal dissension. But these workers—good enough for the boss to hire—are human to the core. Could the critics do a better job in a movement of millions?

## CHAPTER XVI

### LABOR AND THE WORLD PICTURE

**T**HE international Labor map of today is a sorry thing. Do as I have done lately: Take a map of the old world and divide it into parts. Color in black those nations with dictatorial or totalitarian governments. Paint in red the portions dominated by Communism. Leave white those nations in which free Labor movements still exist. The result is an area in which the white is about the same size, in proportion to the whole, as your thumb is to your whole hand.

That gives some idea of the problem American Labor faces in its international affiliations. There is precious little territory left to free Labor, and of that little some seems always on the verge of slipping into either black or red.

Now, take the map of the western hemisphere and color it in the same way, using gray instead of black for the areas in which unknown conditions exist. The United States and Canada remain white. Puerto Rico remains white. Costa Rica remains white. There are white flashes in the Argentine, in Brazil, and in Chile. Here and there, a bit of the white appears elsewhere. Mexico is white. From Mexico south, however, black and gray are dominant. Where white shows now, there

is no assurance that it will hold its own. Even Mexico is doubtful. Whether it can escape in safety from the pressure of black and red influences cannot be known at this hour.

Now, where does American Labor fit into the world picture? The answer to that question is complicated, because often it may seem that American Labor is a misfit in the scheme of things over the civilized world. That would be more nearly true if it were not for the fact that the world Labor picture has often been a crazy quilt.

There are several world-wide Labor organizations. With some of them, we need not bother. Few of them have ever had any effect upon conditions in the United States or upon the course of American Labor. Today, the organizations of principal importance are, starting from the left, the Communist International, the International Federation of Trade Unions, the International Labor Organization, and the Pan American Federation of Labor.

The Communist International reaches into the United States through the Communist Party in this country and through other organizations affiliated in one way or another, directly or indirectly, with Russian Communism. These affiliates of Communism are numerous, though often the relationship is well hidden.

The American Federation of Labor has been, off and on, a member of the International Federation of Trade Unions, since before the World War. Whether



this connection will continue is a question. Actually, the affiliation is the result of a sense of duty much more than of any emotional desire for international Labor solidarity. American Labor never has been very emotional about such things. The threat to our standard of living by immigrants and by imported products has also helped to kill any flaming desire for international labor unity.

The International Labor Organization, which is associated with the League of Nations, has a real value to American Labor. This lies in the collection of statistics and other information concerning world conditions, which are given out freely and regularly. The organization's record is one of achievement—but in Europe, not in the United States.

The labor movement of the United States has not had close relations with Labor in many of the Latin American lands, except in Puerto Rico, which is a part of this country. When the United States troops occupied Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War, they found there a person named Santiago Iglesias. Born in Spain, Iglesias would have been a "don" had he remained in his native country. But as an intellectual rebel against oppression and autocracy, he found his way to Cuba and thence to Puerto Rico, where he served as an interpreter for the general staff of the United States Army during its occupation.

Iglesias became, in time, a champion of American institutions and American freedom. Out of his passion

for such things he gave to his family of ten children such names as America, Light, Liberty, Justice, all much more musical and attractive in Spanish than in English. Samuel Gompers selected him as an organizer, and under Santiago Iglesias' guidance the Free Federation of Workers of Puerto Rico was formed, as an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, under a common flag.

Entirely apart from the amazing accomplishments of this organization of Labor for its members, no other factor has been more potent in promoting Puerto Rican understanding of United States institutions. In the records of statecraft, this factor has not been noticed. But it has been recognized by the Puerto Rican people. Today, Santiago Iglesias sits in the United States Congress as Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico.

The friendship between American Labor and the organized workers of Mexico has been cemented by the help they have given each other. During the revolution of 1914 the Mexican unions signed a contract with General Carranza, leader of the rebels, agreeing to furnish men and supplies. In return, Carranza promised to give Labor a favored place in the reborn Mexican nation.

Whenever possible, the workers of each trade formed a separate army unit. Regiments of carpenters, of masons, of printers, and so on fought in the battles of the revolution.

Carranza won, and lived up to his bargain. The

present Mexican constitution, adopted in 1917, contains what is probably the most advanced Labor code in the world.

A copy of the remarkable contract between Carranza and the unions was brought back to Samuel Gompers by a printer named John Murray, who was one of Labor's most talented diplomats. American Labor became enthusiastically interested in the movement among the workers across the Rio Grande.

Ever since that time American and Mexican Labor organizations have cooperated closely. During the World War the A.F. of L., through its Mexican friends and associates, was able to do much toward putting down the activities of German agents operating in Mexico. The Mexican workers saw clearly that their best friends were in the United States, not in Germany.

Out of this joint effort grew the Pan American Federation of Labor, which included unions from many other Latin American nations. Though this organization has not been active for six years, American and Mexican Labor have kept up their old, close association.

There are indications that the Pan American Federation of Labor may be revived. But organized Labor in the Spanish-speaking countries is divided. In the Argentine, for instance, there are at least three distinct Labor movements, with three different philosophies. The situation in other countries to the south is almost as confused. But this does not change

the relation of American Labor to these countries, because it has not been closely associated with Labor organizations in any of them except Mexico.

As for "right" or "left" in Latin America, American Labor has only said to the peoples of those lands: "We do not wish to interfere in your form of organization. What you decide upon in your own country is your own affair. Your policies, likewise, are your affair. The rights we reserve for ourselves, we hold inviolable for you." But there has been one qualification: American Labor refuses to associate with Labor movements opposing democracy.

Harsh words have been said about union leaders who sought tariff protection hand in hand with employers. But where the employers saw business menaced by large importations from low-wage countries, the unions and their leaders saw jobs being rubbed out.

Unions care little for the various schools of thought dealing with international trade. That some economists say a loss in one place may be offset by a gain in another has no appeal for them.

Immigration of workers threatened the standards of Labor in the past, and Labor fought until it checked immigration. The products of foreign low-wage countries threatened its standards again, and it fought for tariffs. There is no difference on that score between the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. The United Mine Workers have fought against coal imports as

vigorously as glass blowers have fought importation of coolie-wage glassware.

Exactly the same hostility is felt against products which come from low-wage sections of our own country. South-to-North flow of manufactured goods and the North-to-South flow of factories has caused a full share of bitterness. And the battles before N.R.A. deputies found unions lined up with all guns unlimbered to fight off differentials in wage-and-hour standards between the two sections.

Actually, of course, there can be no such thing as an American standard of living because conditions in this country range all the way from the most primitive to the most luxurious. For general purposes, however, it is customary for newspaper editors, public speakers, and Labor itself to attempt some definition. In general, this standard is probably that enjoyed by skilled mechanics. But, whatever may be thought of as the measuring stick, American Labor defends it vigorously before any attack, whether it is a wage reduction at home or the importation of coolie products from the Orient.

In its relation to world economy, Labor in the United States is not following any carefully worked-out program. It deals with these problems just as it attacks its domestic problems. It takes them as they come and adopts whatever policies and tactics seem to promise most.

## CHAPTER XVII

### LABOR LOOKS AT THE NEW DEAL

**T**HE relation between Labor and the laws passed under the New Deal is more important than any other concern, however dramatic—even the struggle between the A.F. of L. and C.I.O. The understanding of Labor's new position develops slowly. When it has fully dawned we may have a new kind of state, or a furious demand for change in the law.

Look backward for a moment, to the years just before the coming of the New Deal. Labor was fighting abuses. It felt oppressed by the courts, harried by spies and fake detective agencies. Recently the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee has been revealing the depths of spy infamy and brutality. But that story of spies, thugs, strikebreakers, is an old one to veteran Labor men. I remember how they tried to smash a new streetcar men's union thirty years ago. "Operative K reports that he followed So-and-So to his home . . ."

The ancient wrongs have been outlawed. We have laws intended to give legal approval and protection to all the rights which Labor has fought for. The National Railway Act, the National Labor Relations Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Maritime Act

with its Labor board, the Civil Aeronautics Act with its Labor board, and the Walsh-Healey Act—these are the most far-reaching and important.



Can there be any quarrel with the way in which these laws affect the country? Of course there can. Some employers are not satisfied. But has Labor a complaint? To some extent, Labor now complains. How much louder and stronger the complaints will become remains to be seen. It is possible that Labor will finally conclude that the gains are worth the cost.

But mark these facts: Before the new laws came, Labor itself could decide what its rights were. Often it could not enjoy them, but in fighting for its rights Labor was moving toward a goal of its own choosing.

Labor's own definition of its rights grew out of its experience. Its objectives were based upon history and forged in conflict. And Labor's idea of its rights changed with the changing nature of industrial life. Also, they were easy to describe and define without

benefit of legal sanction and lawyers' language.

The government has taken Labor's plain, understandable statements of its rights and spun them out into long, wordy statutes that only lawyers can make sense of. And the new laws have taken away Labor's right to decide, in future, what its rights are. Actually, they have taken away the right to define certain terms by which men live.

No one can force a government agency such as the National Labor Relations Board to protect any right until the Board itself has decided that the right exists within the meaning of the law. The Labor Relations Board may define a strike and decide whether or not one exists. The Board may decide when and if a union contract is valid. You do not know the extent or meaning of the National Labor Relations Act unless you know the rules under which its Board holds its hearings and makes its key decisions. And if you follow the development of these rules of procedure and study the decisions, you will see that the law reaches into the shop where the worker stands at his job, and may affect his way of life.

If, as happens, this great power now and then is controlled by inexperienced theorists and impractical people, it may seem to be solving Labor's problems. But it may actually be raising hob with the unions and with the lives of their members, hurting, not helping the men, who really know something about practical, workable relations between government and industry.



If we find the desire to control gradually growing out of the desire to protect, we need not think it strange. Many lessons of history show us what to expect from governments that are given power to regulate the life and work of the people. There is a real danger that the agencies set up by law to protect Labor may cut its rights down to something less than Labor thinks its rights should be.

Of course, Labor's faith in democracy is its hope. If it finds that laws—even laws intended to be good—are working hardships instead of furthering progress, its votes may be powerful enough to change them.

Anything can happen as Labor comes marching down the road with new strength. But unless it loses everything that has been bred into it by American heritage, unless it forgets all it has learned through years of struggle, unless it hauls down every flag flung to the breeze over its thousands of meeting halls, Labor will not yield its right to freedom.

That is the important thing. Internal squabbles may be overlooked, for American Labor is after all American Labor, whether Federation or C.I.O. The way of its life is about the same in both groups. There isn't a dime's worth of difference in their handling of negotiations and agreements. They all work to get for the worker groceries for his table, rent for his house, clothes for his back, hours of freedom, and a reserve for wisdom or foolishness.

But deep in the teaching of all Labor unionism in

America, except in those spots where Communism speaks, the desire for Freedom is the most powerful impulse; this impulse can be driven back, it can be hurt and discouraged; but as long as life keeps on, human freedom within a free nation will be Labor's demand upon employer or government.

The greatest obstacle to freedom is the one which gets written into law. Today the law, strangely enough, has harnessed its charter of freedom with the trappings of regulation and restraint. It may fit the needs. It may turn out to resemble accepted self-control. But unless it does, Labor's next crisis may come in the fight for freedom from the very laws which sent it surging forward in the first phase of the New Deal. There is the next point to watch along the road.



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