LABOR'S HERITAGE

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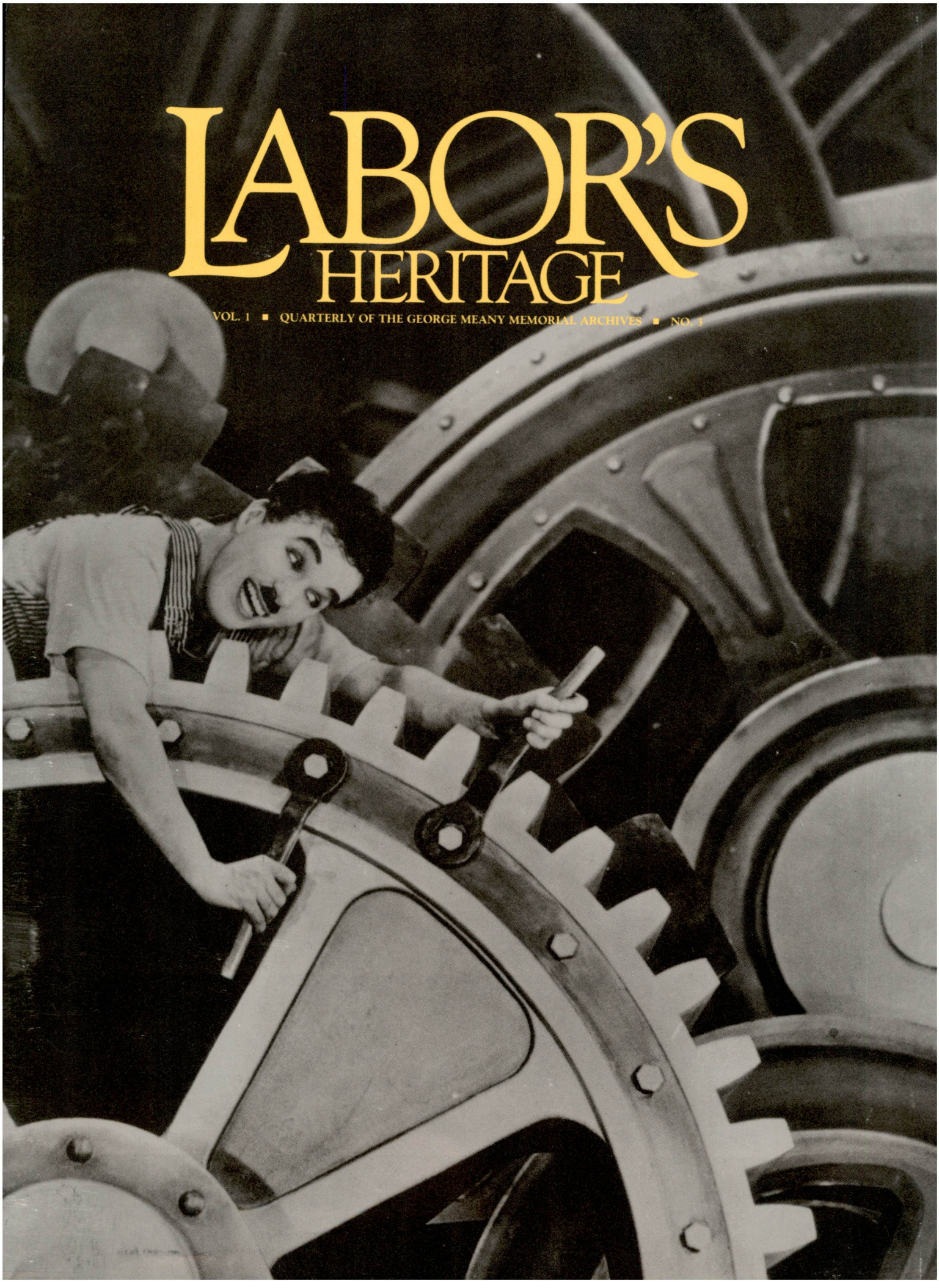

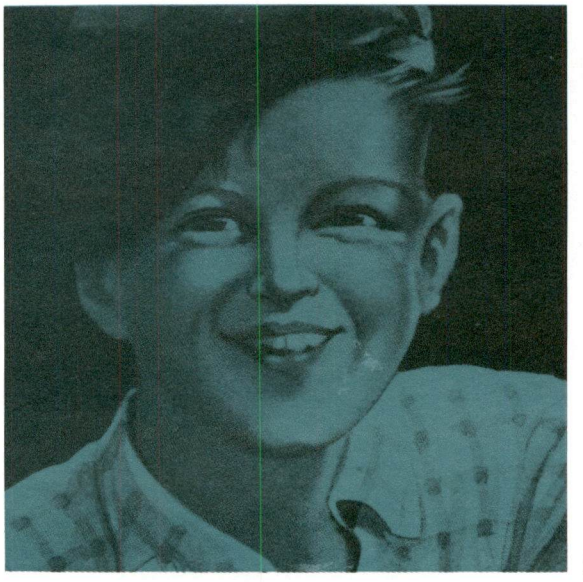

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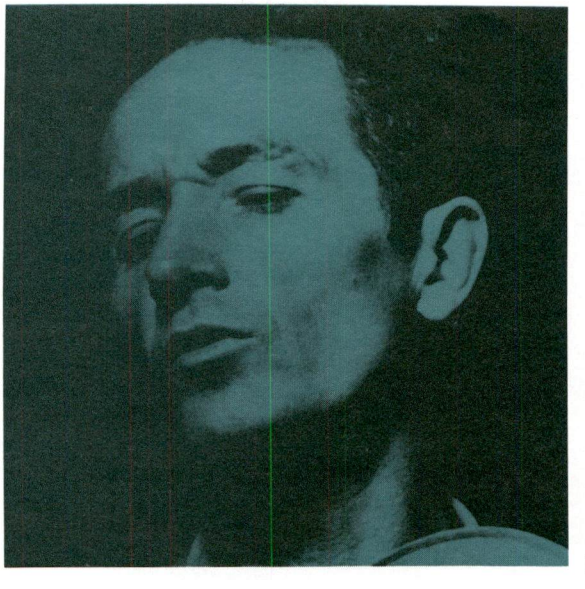

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LABOR'S HERITAGE

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COVER

In this scene from the film Modern Times *(1936), Charlie Chaplin's character, the little tramp, is swallowed up by an assembly line. Photofest*

Photo page 1: Painting the Bronx Whitestone bridge, ca. 1952. The George Meany Memorial Archives

TODD ALEXANDER POSTOL

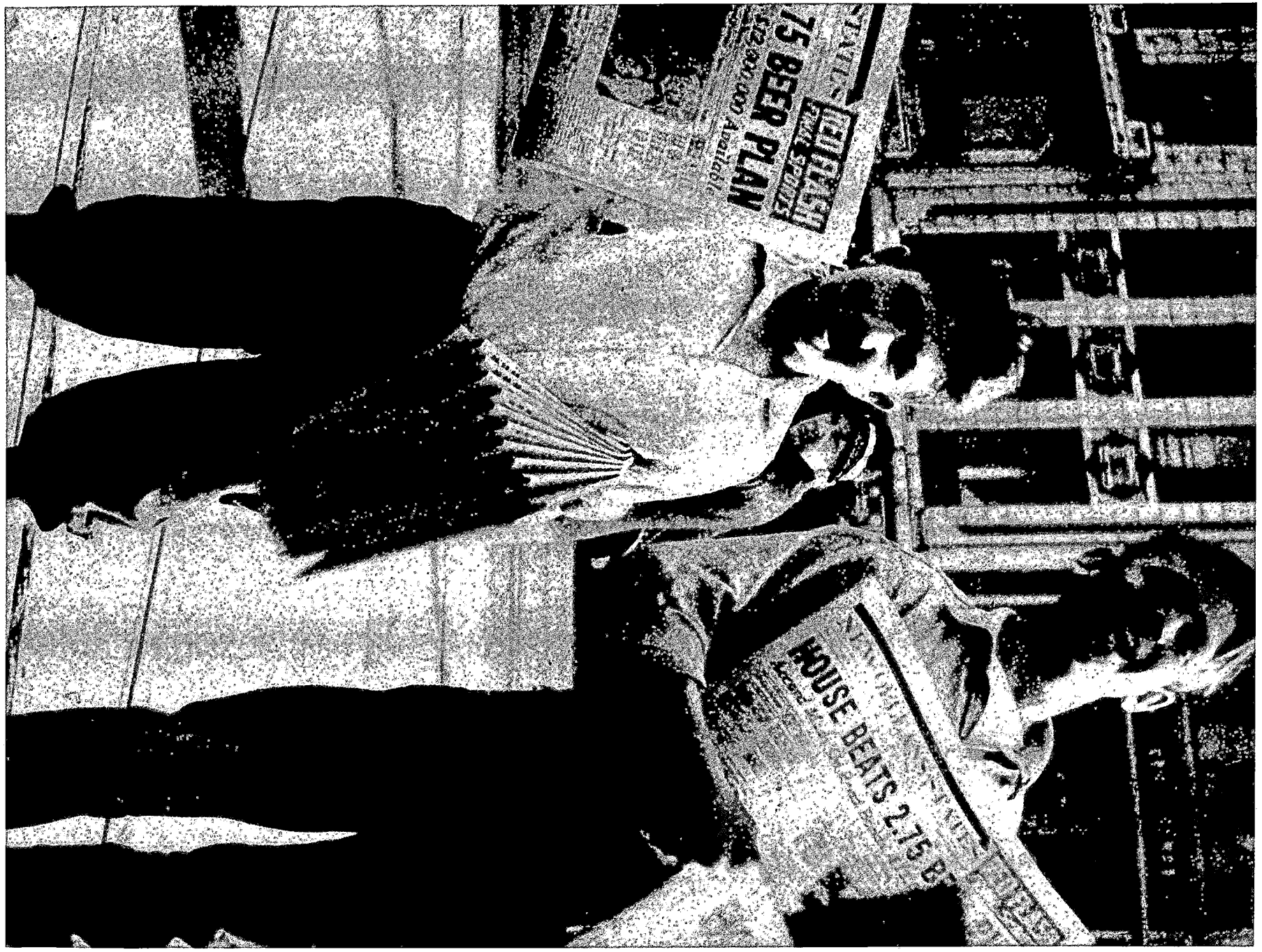
HEARING THE VOICES *Of* WORKING CHILDREN

The NRA Newspaperboy Letters

SINCE THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY selling and delivering newspapers has been by far the most popular means of juvenile money making in the United States. Whether as corner newsboys—hawking headlines on the street, or as carriers—walking the familiar length of their routes, generations of youngsters first earned money outside the home by bringing news to the American public. Despite the huge numbers of children involved, however, no complete history of these working youngsters has been written.[1]

During the first three decades of the twentieth century an impressive body of reform literature appeared on the abuses of the street trades. Child labor opponents pointed out that corner newsboys worked outside for long hours in

Courtesy of the National Child Labor Committee



Courtesy of the National Child Labor Committee

Street sellers or route carriers? Making distinctions between the two is not always possible.

unsupervised environments. Reform groups such as the National Child Labor Committee documented at length what they believed to be the physical, emotional and educational toll of such work. In contrast to these efforts stand the trade materials of the American circulation industry. Between 1915 and 1950, individual managers and professional groups such as the International Circulation Managers Association produced detailed publications outlining specific strategies for increasing productivity of and control over juvenile work forces.[2]

Reformers and managers often disagreed on the role juveniles should play in the newspaper circulation industry. Yet they had one thing in common: both wrote as adults, describing a job dominated by children.[3] Certainly child labor reformers were adept at recording the scenes they witnessed on America's street corners, and circulation managers undoubtedly knew the newspaper circulation business better than anyone else. But the children had their own agenda when they worked, and the fact remains that materials written by adult observers do not make it easy to hear the voices of the central actors in the story, the newspaperboys themselves.[4]

Fortunately, there *are* sources written by newspaperboys, although they are few in number and not always easy to interpret. In response to the advent of the Depression, Congress established the National Recovery Administration in June 1933. As its name implied, the purpose of the NRA was to get the country back on the road to economic recovery. To do this it created a system of codes regulating the rules of fair competition for every branch of the American economy. In almost all industries the NRA strictly limited child labor, setting the minimum working age for employees at sixteen.

The newspaper circulation industry was an exception to this rule. Because most states considered children in newspaper distribution to be independent subcontractors rather than employees, the NRA's first attempt to regulate juveniles under the newspaper industry code in September 1933 was bitterly contested by circulation interests. Eventually a complex set of age requirements was instituted, specifying a fourteen-year minimum age for street sellers in cities with populations over fifty thousand, a twelve-year minimum for smaller communities, and a twelve-year minimum for carriers, except for ten-year olds already working in cities under fifty thousand. Night work for children was also prohibited. Ironically, these standards were never fully

Previous page: Eighteen months before the first NRA newspaperboy code: eleven-year olds selling newspapers on the streets of New Orleans.

put into effect as the entire NRA was invalidated by the Supreme Court in 1935.[5]

The bureaucratic intricacies of the NRA newspaperboy fight are less significant for our purposes than the testimony that the debate generated. Between 1933 and 1935 hundreds of letters poured into Washington for and against child labor regulation in the newspaper circulation industry. Most of these were from educators, business people and reformers. A small number, though, were written by newspaperboys. These letters tell how many papers the children handled, the hours they worked, how much money they made, and how their family and customers viewed their jobs as newspaperboys. Some of the letters discuss the immediate question of federal regulation, but others describe in depth the kinds of problems, such as working long hours or delivering papers to inconvenient addresses, which newspaperboys of every era have had to face. Considering the fact that there appear to be few other sources produced by these working children, the NRA letters provide a unique opportunity to learn how youngsters viewed their jobs in their own words.[6]

From reading the letters it is often not possible to know whether the child writing was a newsboy (who sold papers on the street), a carrier (who delivered papers to the homes of subscribers) or someone who functioned as both. If the letter writer said he sold a certain number of papers each day, the matter is quickly put to rest: the child was a street seller. If, on the other hand, he said he was a carrier we can be reasonably sure that he had a route and did not engage in full time street selling. The difficulty arises when the term newsboy is used to refer to all working children in newspaper distribution.[7]

What is more, some of the "newsboys" were adults. Prior to the Depression newsboys had typically been children; adults who sold papers at busy stands and corners were commonly known in the trade as newsdealers. With large numbers of adult men thrown out of work in the early 1930s this distinction, never clear to begin with, began to blur. "Newspaperboys" and "paper boys" turn out to be juveniles in cases where the age of letter writers can be identified. But the term newsboy in the NRA letters has multiple meanings. It is used, of course, to describe boys who distributed newspapers. It is also used to refer to unemployed men who sold papers because no other work was available, and is even applied to newsdealers who watched their earnings and status decline as their business was ruined by a flood of cheap labor. Compounding the problem of overlapping terms was the fact that both types of adults selling papers, the professional newsdealer and the displaced unemployed adult from fields outside newspaper circulation, became known as "hustlers"—a term which traditionally was used to describe aggressive juvenile street sellers.[8]

General Hugh S. Johnson, head of the National Recovery Administration. Johnson's staff answered every piece of correspondence that newspaperboys sent in to the agency. These responses, along with the original letters, are housed in Record Group 9 of the National Archives.

A "newsboy" writing to the NRA could be almost any age and could be found in a wide variety of environments, from standing on the poorest street corner in the worst part of the city to delivering papers in a secure middle class neighborhood. In a letter to NRA head Hugh S. Johnson in September 1933, H. J. Callahan of Akron, Ohio, delineated the various kinds of newsboys. "There are three different kinds of newsboys," Callahan said:

A. The corner Hustler working on the street corner who receives a small salary in addition to his commission. Many of these are married men with large families.

B. The small newsboy working on commission only. Many of these are only 8 or 10 years old.

C. The carrier boy who delivers your paper to the home after school.

Within these categories there was clearly a broad range of experiences. William Twist, for instance, illustrated the fate of one kind of hustler. In August 1933, Twist wrote to Johnson requesting federal regulation on behalf of newsboys. What he really wanted was help for elderly newsboys who could find no other kind of work to support themselves:

> Respected Sir,
>
> I wonder if something cannot be done by the N.R.A. to help the News Boys of Portland, Ore. These *boys* a great many of them past sixty (60) years of age, a lot of them crippled, some blind, working from 10 to 16 hours a day and the majority make less than 6 cents per hour. . . . I myself am well past 60 have sold papers for about 3 Years, as it was Pretty hard to get a job of any discreptin.

More common than the deprived elderly, however, were young adult men, some supporting families on the money they made selling papers. The suffering endured by adult newsboys is recorded in a letter John Cobb of Washington, D.C., wrote to the president in late 1933, protesting;

> My Dear Mr. President:
>
> Now that industry of all kinds is raising wages, I think newspaper companies should be asked to raise the wage of newsboys.
>
> A great many of us newsboys are going hungry half the time.
>
> Most of us are forced to accept these small wages because we're unemployed. . . .
>
> I make about 6.50 a week. By the time I'm through paying rent, laundry and eating, I haven't much left to buy clothes, shoes and many other things which I need.
>
> If I did buy a pair of socks, shoes, or a shirt, I'd have to go hungry for days after.

A few months earlier George Clifford of Oakland, California, had written protesting the low wages made by newsboys in that city:

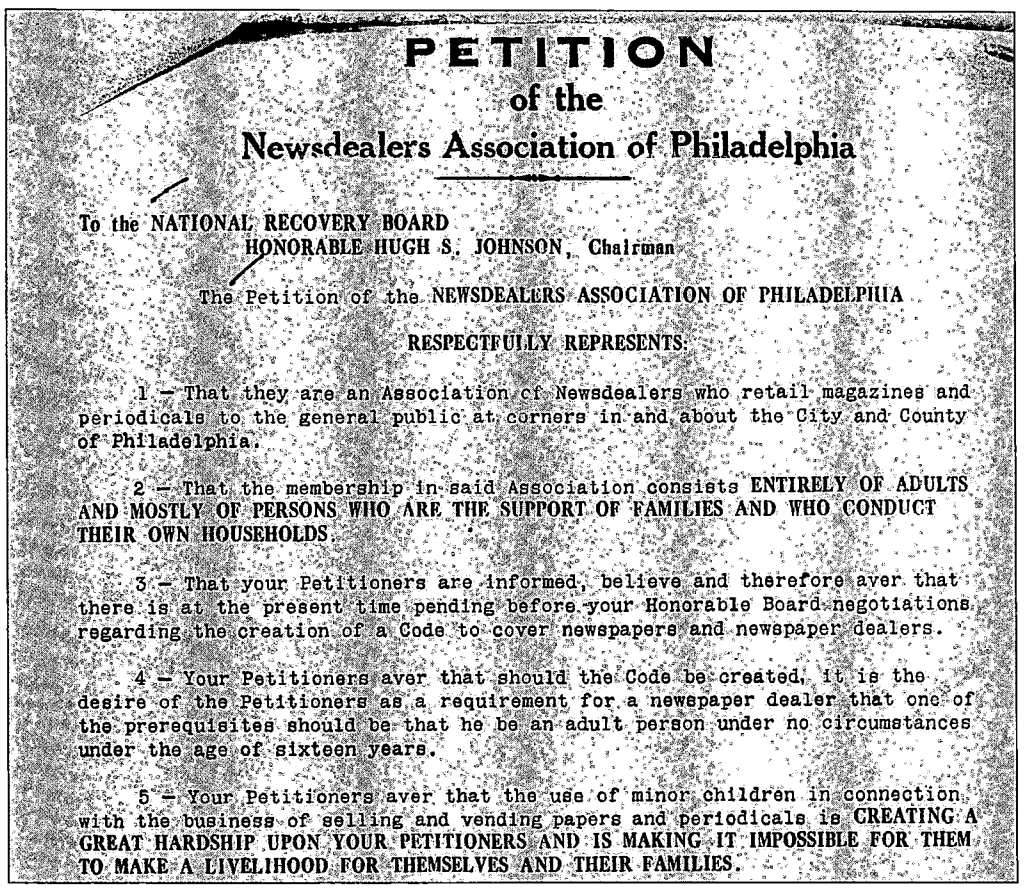
> Dear Sir:
>
> Could you please tell me what is to be done about the newsboys. At this time receiving $4.00 a week and making 30 cent a day. Which average to about $5.80.
>
> They also tax newsboys. 10¢ a hundred. All of these boys are working begin the average a eight to ten hours a day.

The low level of grammar, the meager earnings the writer received and the fact that the letter was written in the summer (when juvenile street sellers could work long hours) might indicate that this newsboy was a youngster. What comes next indicates that this was not a working juvenile but an adult newsboy:

> I my self sales newspapers and can not support my family with $5.40 a week 30¢ tax. I am not the only newsboy who is in a bad spot. There are 1000 of other who is in a worst spot.

In October 1933, Clifford signed a petition on behalf of Oakland's adult newsboys. The petition made clear that these newsboys were actually newsdealers who had been caught in a spiral of downward mobility.

> We the under signed Oakland News Boys want a fair chance for a living wage and want to be under the NRA Code. We now work from nine to nine and one-half (9 to 9½ hours a day at Three ($3.00) Dollars per week. We can not keep our families at these wages. We want an NRA Code for News Boys that will help us and our families. Our big companies are under the NRA Code, but it does not help us. We do not want to be unreasonable, we only ask for a fair wage that we and our families may live on.



PETITION
of the
Newsdealers Association of Philadelphia

To the NATIONAL RECOVERY BOARD
HONORABLE HUGH S. JOHNSON, Chairman

The Petition of the NEWSDEALERS ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS:

1 — That they are an Association of Newsdealers who retail magazines and periodicals to the general public at corners in and about the City and County of Philadelphia.

2 — That the membership in said Association consists ENTIRELY OF ADULTS AND MOSTLY OF PERSONS WHO ARE THE SUPPORT OF FAMILIES AND WHO CONDUCT THEIR OWN HOUSEHOLDS.

3 — That your Petitioners are informed, believe and therefore aver that there is at the present time pending before your Honorable Board negotiations regarding the creation of a Code to cover newspapers and newspaper dealers.

4 — Your Petitioners aver that should the Code be created, it is the desire of the Petitioners as a requirement for a newspaper dealer that one of the prerequisites should be that he be an adult person under no circumstances under the age of sixteen years.

5 — Your Petitioners aver that the use of minor children in connection with the business of selling and vending papers and periodicals is CREATING A GREAT HARDSHIP UPON YOUR PETITIONERS AND IS MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO MAKE A LIVELIHOOD FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

National Archives and Records Administration

Petition to the NRA of the Newsdealers Association of Philadelphia adult newsdealers.

Courtesy of Newspaper Boys of America

At the heart of the home delivery system: a posed photograph of a juvenile carrier from the pages of a 1932 newspaper circulation industry handbook.

> At one time our wages were as high as Eighteen ($18.00) Dollars a week, but by gradual cuts went down, first to Twelve ($12.00) Dollars per week, then to Six ($6.00) Dollars a week, till now it is only Three ($3.00) Dollars.

Alongside documents such as this were petitions from established newsdealers who called themselves newsdealers. A group named the Newsdealers Association of Philadelphia submitted a petition to Johnson in August 1933 that sought to use the code procedure to eliminate children from the newspaper distribution business. Composed "ENTIRELY OF ADULTS AND MOSTLY OF PERSONS WHO ARE THE SUPPORT OF FAMILIES," the Association stated that:

> the use of minor children in connection with the business of selling and vending papers and periodicals is CREATING A GREAT HARDSHIP UPON YOUR PETITIONERS AND IS MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO MAKE A LIVELIHOOD FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

The Association further requested:

> MINORS UNDER THE AGE OF SIXTEEN YEARS BE NOT PERMITTED TO BE EMPLOYED IN THE CAPACITY OF VENDERS OF NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS AT ANY TIME.

For these men the issue of regulating entry into the newspaper circulation industry had become crucial, but managers were reluctant to commit themselves to hiring only adult street sellers when children could be used. H. J. Callahan, quoted above, noted that, "The papers here do this When school is out the lay off the men on a salary

and hire school boys to work on commission only." The picture was even bleaker when one considered the question of using adults in home delivery of newspapers. There was no way to make the switch without raising the price of the product. A March 1934 editorial in the trade journal *Publishers Service* observed:

> The average newspaper publisher will realize that a man can deliver at least one hundred and fifty papers on an average route. At a salary of $15.00 per week, a man carrier would earn about 10¢ per subscriber per week.
>
> At present, newspapers are paying boys anywhere from 3¢ per subscriber to 7¢ per subscriber.
>
> In order to pay men carriers 10¢ per subscriber, the prices of newspapers would be increased anywhere from 3¢ to 7¢ per week.

The publication's editors believed this rise in prices would not necessarily prove prohibitive. "The public would gladly pay this increase in price," the journal suggested, and "the tens of thousands of carrier jobs given to men will help the nation as a whole."[9] This surprisingly optimistic appraisal, though, did not take into account the tremendous structural changes which would have been needed to convert from one type of labor force to another. Within the industry it is not difficult to see why many newspapers would have resisted any changes which raised prices and disrupted service to regular subscribers.[10] The proposed conversion did not occur and the nation's carrier forces remained juvenile for decades to come.

Adult newsboys writing to the NRA universally requested increased federal regulation of the newspaper circulation industry. With children the situation was not so clear. To be sure juveniles had many of the same needs as the adults: they wanted higher earnings and shorter hours and, most importantly, a court of last appeal to turn to in disputes with their newspapers. But they also feared seeing their jobs legislated away under the mantle of child labor reform, and the necessity for some to work at a young age overrode all other considerations.

This split in opinion makes the letters written by juvenile newspaperboys especially rich. Those opposing regulation presented their cases in a variety of ways. Jimmy Macios, a street seller from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, understood at least one of the reasons adult reformers disapproved of children being allowed to work—it caused poor health—and turned the argument on its head, saying he needed to work to preserve his health. In early 1934, he wrote President Roosevelt:

> I have been selling enough newspaper each week to buy my clothes but now since the code has gone into effect I can't sell newspapers.
>
> I am a strong, healthy newsboy. I need this exercise to keep me strong and healthy as well as make my spending money. Will you please allow me to sell newspapers. I will be 13 years of age April 19.

A year later, with tougher child labor amendments being debated in the nation's capital, twelve-year old Leonard Frumoutz of Chicago wrote the president to complain that the NRA had taken away his work. Like Macios, Frumoutz anticipated adult objections to the use of children in newspaper circulation. Reformers often asserted that children on street corners were robbed of happy childhoods by having to hawk. Frumoutz, for one, did not see it this way:

> My wages was a dollar and a half for 6 days each week from 8 P.M. to 10 P.M. each day which I enjoyed having the opportunity of doing. I do not think that a person of older age would stand on a corner with papers under his arms trying to sell them. Most of your N.R.A. laws are what the country needs but this law about no child labor should not have been used for I think I am old enough to work by papers and earn my weekly allowance.

NRA officials who received such correspondence addressed to the president, responded to Frumoutz's letter by stating that the code prohibited boys his age from selling papers at night. This decision, they stressed, had not been made lightly. "We have given a great deal of time and thought," Division Administrator Jack Tate wrote Frumoutz,

> to the subject of young boys selling newspapers on the streets at night, and we have found that the practice has been harmful in most cases. That is the reason that selling papers on the streets late at night has been prohibited.

SALIENT POINTS OF THE WISCONSIN STREET TRADES LAW

DEFINITION

Street trades work includes:

a. Sale or delivery on the streets of
   (1) Newspapers
   (2) Magazines
   (3) Handbills
   (4) Balloons, soap, gum, perfume, seeds, Christmas cards, and other merchandise

b. Employment as a bootblack on the streets

AGE LIMITS:

Boys must be 12 years old to sell or deliver newspapers, magazines, or handbills

Boys must be 14 years old to sell or deliver merchandise

Boys must be 14 years old to do bootblack work on the street

Girls must be 18 years of age

STREET TRADES LICENSE:

Boys 12 years of age and up to 17 years of age must have a street trades license (legal street trades badge and permit) to do street trades work

Licensed street traders must have their street trades badge with them when on street trades duty

Boys helping other street traders must have their own license

To secure a street trades license the regular blue application blank must be properly filled out and properly signed

Street trades licenses can be secured at 1111 No. 10th Street

HOURS:

Boys under 17 years of age may not do any kind of street trades work before 5:00 a.m. or after 7:30 p.m.

Boys of school age are not allowed to do street trades work during school hours

PENALTIES:

Licenses may be revoked

Parents who permit a child to violate the Street Trades Law may be fined from $10 to $50 or committed to jail for from ten to thirty days

Employers who employ a child in violation of the Street Trades Law are subject to the same penalities as parents

In case of accident to an unlawfully employed street vendor, the employer is liable to double or triple damages

Board of School Directors
Street Trades Department

Extract from the *Annual Report*, 1935–1936, of the Board of School Directors, Department of Municipal Recreation and Adult Education, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. From the U.S. Department of Labor Collection, The George Meany Memorial Archives

Dealing with children wanting to preserve their jobs was not always this easy. Attached to another letter in the NRA archives is a handwritten note from one agency official to another that reads, "Can you see how this can be answered—I don't."[11] The letter, dated June 19, 1934, raised tough questions for NRA staff members:

Dear President:-

My name is Wayne Milligan. I am eleven years old and I live in Osburn, Missouri my brother Lester who is fourteen years old lives here also. I am very sad because we have lost our job under the Child Labor code ruling.

We were carriers for the Kansas City Star and Times. We would get up between 5:30 and 6:30 each morning. My brother would take one side of town and I would take the other side and in about thirty five minutes were ready for breakfast which mother would have waiting for us. In the evening we would work about the same length of time delivering the Star. It was really fun for us. People appeared to like us and besides were saving a little money with which we expected to buy our school clothes for next term. Father is a labor and has quite a family and needs our help. We want to work and the amount of time we put in at this did not hurt us.

It is harder on me to lose this job than on Lester because he is a little older and has a better chance of getting odd jobs than I. But both want our job back. Do you think it is the intention of the N.R.A. Child Code to deny us the chance to do this kind of work? Yet a Representative of the Star and Times came one day and took our job away from us "because the code" would not stand for us working at our ages.

Won't you please do something to help us get our job back?

Milligan's letter touched a sore point in the debate over regulating minors in the newspaper industry: how important were the earnings of children to families on limited income? Lillian Wald, one of the founders of the New York Child Labor Committee three decades earlier, had written the president in September 1933 to tell him that she was "very much disturbed by the suggestion of exemption for newsboys and news carriers after school hours." Wald reminded Roosevelt that,

> I was chairman a number of years of the Newsboys Committee of the New York Child Labor Committee, and know the abuses that follow the trail of the newsboy. I found that the story of the widowed mother's help through their small sales was a fiction.

Fiction or not, there are letters in the NRA files opposing federal control of the trade on these grounds. In March 1934, D. J. Felix of Waukegan, Illinois, wrote:

Dear President

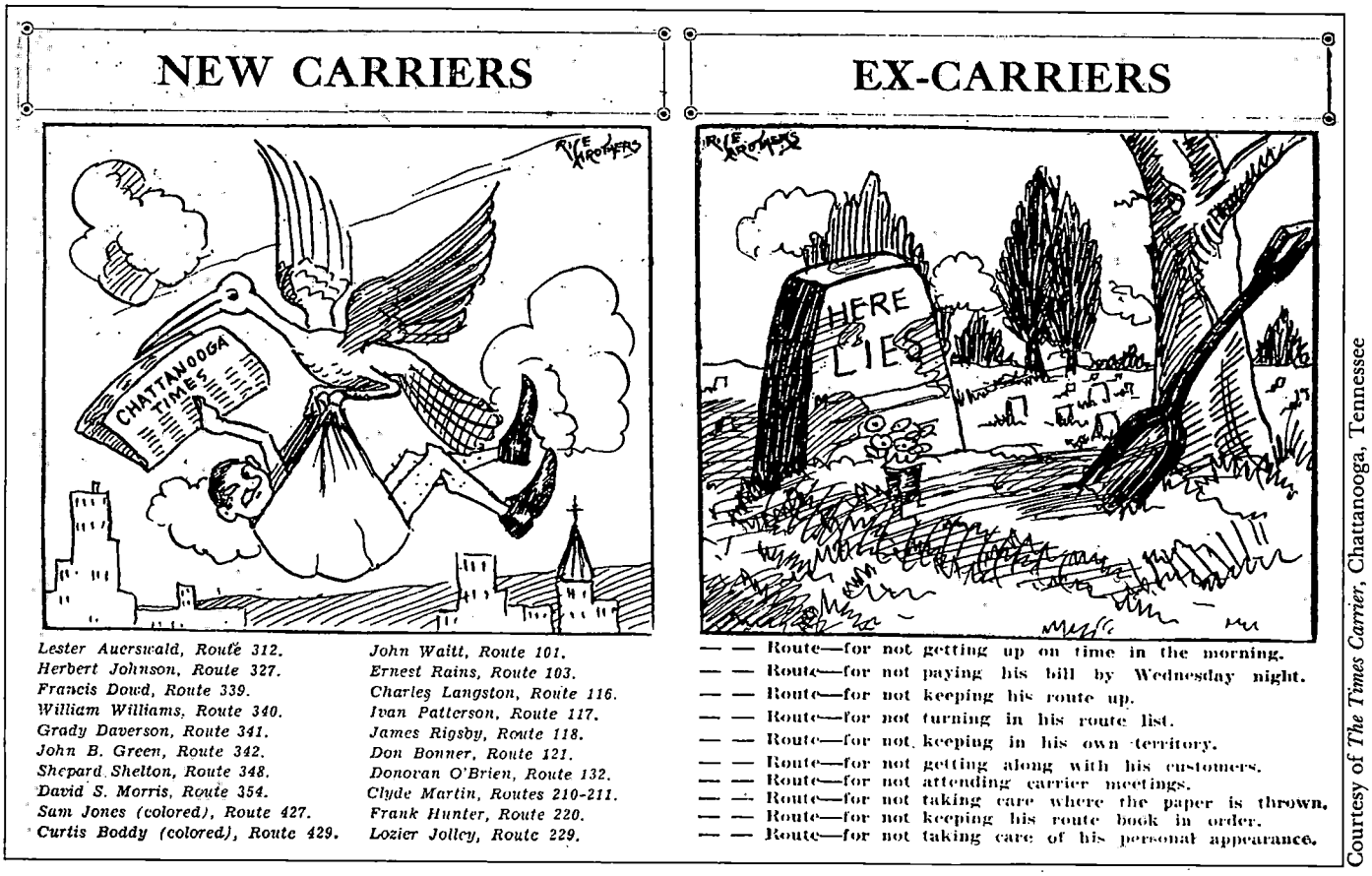
I an fourteen years of age and I wish to sell papers. The mony I mak in selling papers mean a lot to me because I have no father and the mony I make in selling I have to buy my clothing.

The new newspaper code say that you have to be sixteen years of age to sell paper after seven o'clock. Please give me a special permission to sell papers after seven o'clock. Will you please send me a answer quick as posible.

Felix did receive an answer, although not exactly the one he wanted. The code, he was informed, prevented him from selling after eight o'clock in the evening between April 1 and September 30.

Newspaperboys such as Felix and Milligan who opposed the codes often found powerful allies in parents. The majority of letters written by parents in the NRA files voice strong disapproval of federal regulation. Many echoed the children's theme that earnings from selling or delivering papers were needed by poor families to get by. Mrs. E. R. Diggs of Charlottesville, Virginia, wrote to Washington in October 1933, "in regards to our boys caring papers and selling them on the streets."

> I understand they are working against us and want to cut all the boys off under 16. It surely will be a awful blow on the mothers and smaller children that are depending on the money to buy something to eat and to keep shelter on there



Courtesy of *The Times Carrier*, Chattanooga, Tennessee

An illustration from a 1933 carrier newsletter.

heads.

I have 2 boys taking papers and 4 others at home and my husband has been cut off the Rail Road C&O for 22 months. It seems like a honest person will never get out of the depth of depression. My husband has been working for the C&O 17 years and has passed the exination 5 year a go for Engineer and now with no job

Trusting these few lines will be a help to me and thousands of other mothers that are in the same fix I am.

More powerful still was a letter the following spring from Jessie Pratt, a mother who appeared to have no other income except her son's earnings. Pratt represented herself as the kind of woman Wald believed existed largely in people's imagination:

> My boy is a paper boy and has sold paper for one year and has made very good money and brought it home and laid it in my lap and said mother here is the money I made today and gave every penny to me. He has forty steady customers that buy paper from him. bout three week ago he came back at seven thirty oclock other nights he come home a eight thirty oclock. Looking very heart broken and up stairs and lying on bed he was crying. I ask him what was the matter. He said I am not allowed to sell papers anymore because I am under sixteen years old. So I am asking you to give my boy a permit to sell papers.
>
> He has helped me with his money. I do not work at all. So if you can please help him my address is 213 Stoddard Way North Side Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. Please answer very soon.

Not all parents based their opposition to federal regulation on purely economic grounds. Mrs. L. Trumpler of Easton, Pennsylvania, wrote in October 1933 that,

> We are parents from old european familys have found the delivering of the newspapers the most beneficial work and training for any child between the ages of 11-16. . . .
>
> A newspaper job pays a boy about 25 cents an hour, and brings him in contact with all kind of poeble, gives him a responsibility as he has to see that he gets his customers satisfied and collects the money to pay the paper in time; besides all this advantages he is financially independent in his little spending money, like presents for christmas for his family and friends, and so forth.
>
> No one can say that carrying papers goes under child labor, and history of our living and dead great men show that many successful businessmen got the first training as news-boys.

Yet even Trumpler admitted that the money earned by the boys was helpful, as "we are stranded now, since the living got higher, but not the income."

The NRA newspaperboy codes directly threatened the economic interests of younger children, particularly young street sellers. For children who were slightly older and for carriers (who had a lower minimum age requirement) the issues were different: rather than seeing the NRA as a potential destroyer of jobs, they tended to view the agency as a possible ally in their fight for better pay and improved working conditions.

Many boys knew that the NRA had codes for other industries but were ignorant of how the agency's rulings might apply to them. Writing in January 1934, Joe Flatt was unaware that any code existed at all:

Courtesy of Lloyd Smith, *The Paper Route*, 1929

Carriers at a pick-up point assembling papers for their routes.

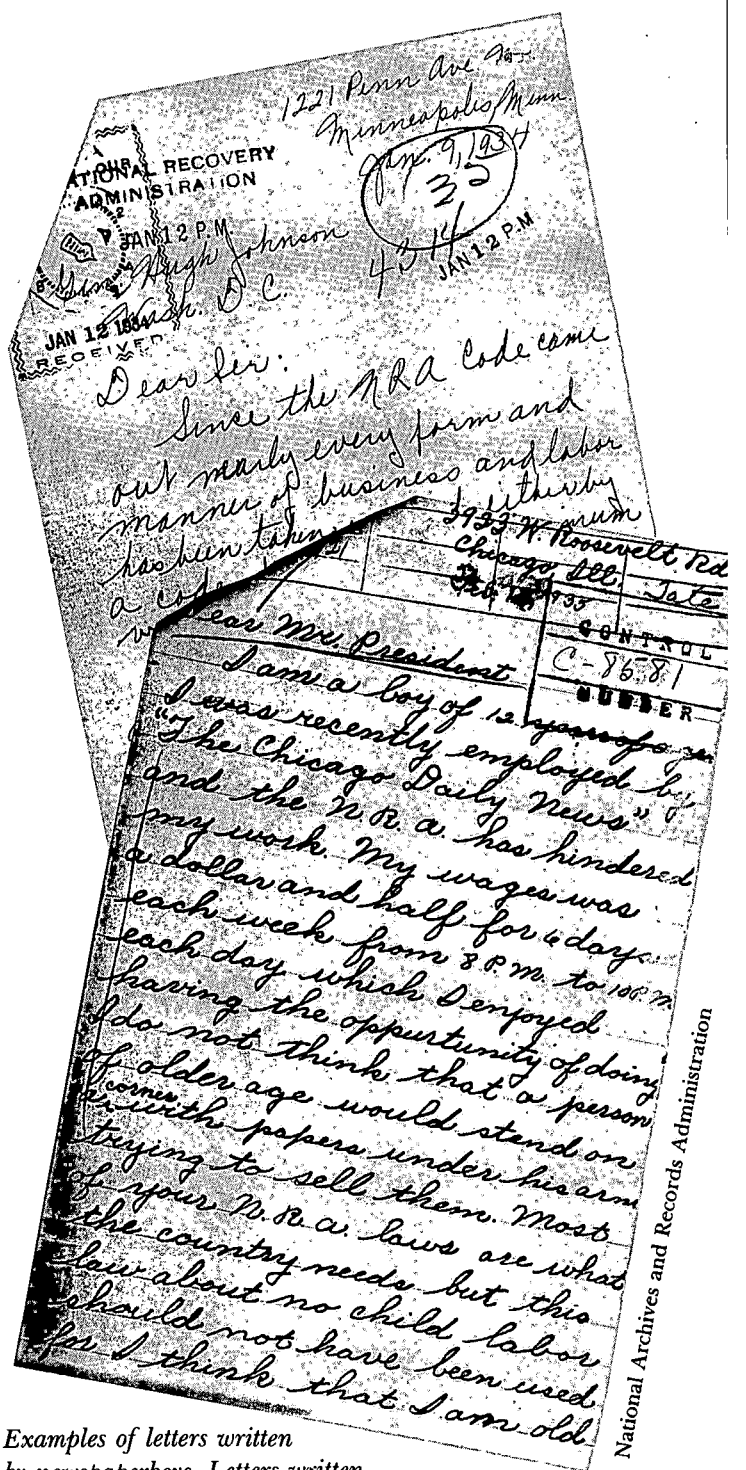
Since the NRA code came out nearly every form and manner of business and labor has been taken care of either by a code of ethics or a minimum wage.

I am fifteen years old and I am a carrier in the employ of the Minneapolis Daily Star, a Minneapolis newspaper. This may seen an unimportant occupation to you, but to us carrier boys it is a very important one as it is our only source of income.

As you may know the size of our routes determines the amount of money we make per month. The earnings of a carrier vary from $5 (Five Dollars) to $20 (Twenty Dollars) depending on the size of the route.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you to provide a code for the carrier boys which would enable us to make at least $12 (Twelve Dollars) a month.

I hope you will give this matter a little consideration in behalf of myself and my fellow carriers.



National Archives and Records Administration

Examples of letters written by newspaperboys. Letters written to the president were forwarded to the NRA.

Others knew that a code existed and wanted to know

how the NRA could help them increase their earnings. High school student Ed Sachs wrote to Johnson in February 1934:

> I wish to present to you for your kind consideration, a very important question regarding the National Newspaper Code.
>
> The Denver Post which is considered one of the most prominent Newspapers in the United States is only paying their newspaperboys ⅓% of their daily paper and ¼% of there Sunday paper. I believe under the present condition and as we can not sell very many newspapers on the street, that we are entitled to at least one half of what we sell.

Courtesy of Lloyd Smith, *The Paper Route*, 1929

A carrier making his regular collection.

> You set a minimum wage for other Industries, so why not set one for us too and come to our aid?
>
> I know you are a very busy man, but I hope you will take a few minutes of your valuable time to try and work out a plan for us newspaperboys.

At no time did any of the codes or amendments of the NRA relating to newspaperboys attempt to introduce a minimum wage. Yet boys wrote hoping that someone in Washington could help them make more money. James Meder and John Huebner sent a postcard to Johnson in May 1934, which tersely noted:

> Everybody's getting higher wages but the paper boys, why not raise their earnings Things are costing more including shoeleather. Look into this matter at once. Thank you.

What Meder and Huebner said simply, Loraine Zubrod of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, had discussed in greater depth the previous September.[12] Zubrod wrote:

> I carried 110 papers every day last week and on Saturday which is pay day I received $1.70 cents—that makes it that I carry 110 x 6 or 660 papers for $1.70—and at that I get about .0025 cents for each paper and that isn't very much when you figure I have to do all the collecting too. Now I'm not the only boy carrying papers of coarse, but I think we ought get a little raise—don't you? May be you could do some thing so that we could make a little more any way—I hope so.
>
> P.S. Thank you

Newspaperboys viewed the NRA through the prism of their own needs and wants. Some of the letter writers used the agency as a sort of general complaint bureau, describing in depth problems which had little to do with the code process but everything to do with the frustrations they felt on the job. Two grievances which fell into this category involved the recruitment of new customers and the proper procedure for delivering papers to subscribers' homes. Kenneth Cartwright exchanged a series of letters in early 1934 with NRA officials concerning the recruitment policies of his paper. In January he wrote:

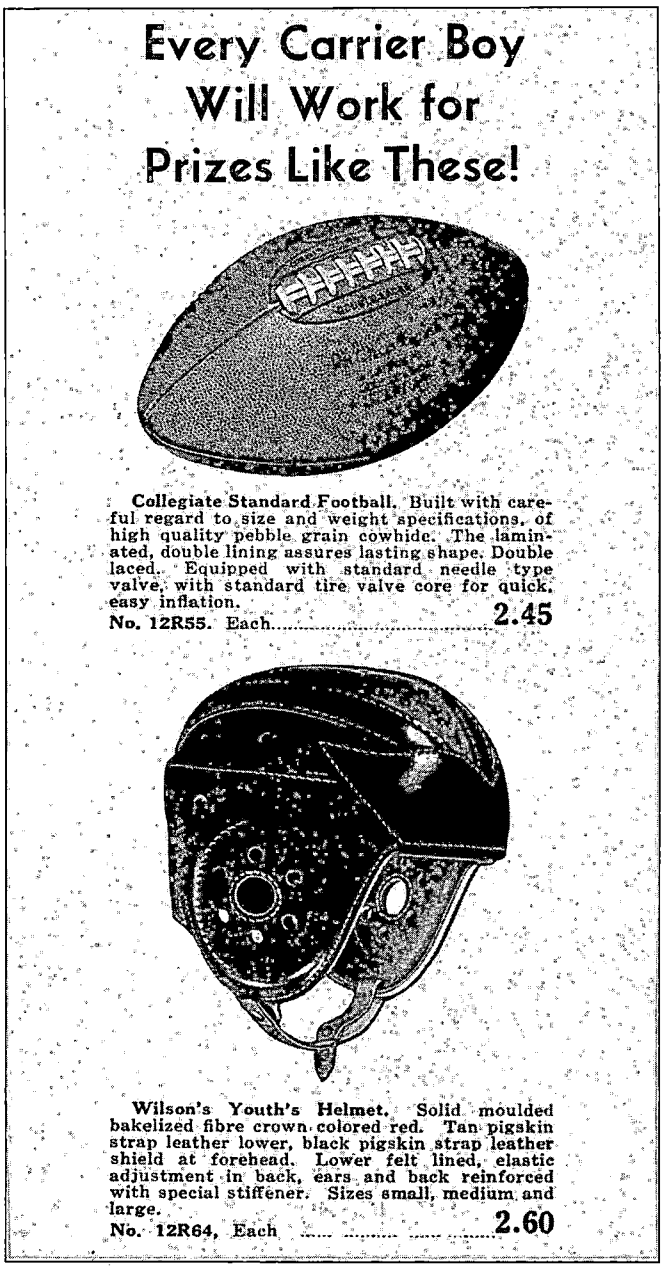
> I carry the Mobile Press, have 93 customers, but they make me carry 13 extras and pay for them, it amount to $1.38 every week and cuts my profits to the bone. I do not think it fair, I have asked the circulation manager and he said, "you can get subscribers." We must solicit two night a week, after we finish our routes. There was a report, that an auditor was checking up the circulation, the district manager told us not to report over three extras. If we did, it would be just to bad for us. I talked it over with some of the boys, and they said "well you will lose your job if you report over three extras." . . . So here I am telling you my

troubles. I know I will not lose my job, if you handle it for me. I need the money to put me through high school. I must turn in every cent I collect on my weeklies to pay for the monthly customers. I make 5¼¢ on 15 cent customers and 6¼¢ on the 18¢ customers, the former are the daily only, and the latter include the Sunday paper. The Mobile Press publishes both morning and evening papers. I should make $3.16 on my weeklies, but paying $1.30 for extras, cuts my profits over half. Please, Mr. Hugh do what you think best, but keep my route for me. I thank you so much for your kindness, and wish you luck in everything you and F.D.R. have done for this country. Dad has no work yet, that is why I am so anxious to get the paper route straight.

By March the situation had worsened for Cartwright.

Throwing the paper to expedite deliveries.

Courtesy of Lloyd Smith, *The Paper Route*, 1929

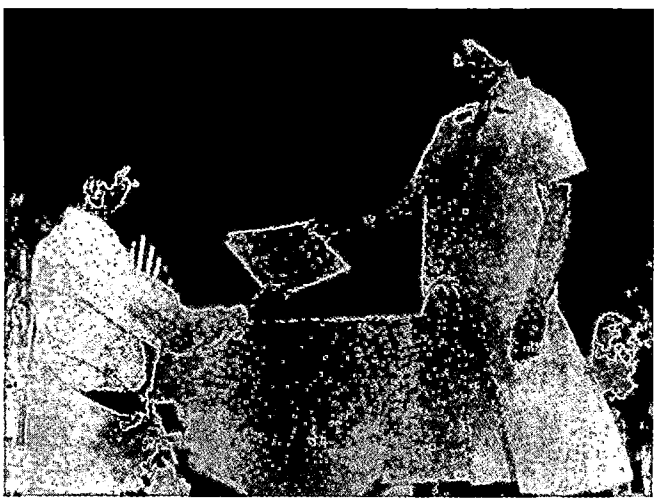


Courtesy of *Circulation Management*

Carrier prizes in a 1936 trade journal aimed at adult managers.

The *Press* had introduced "a contest and they have given every carrier a quota. They told us that if we did not get it we would be fired." Cartwright was writing, he said, "so I will know how to conduct myself."

Even without pressure from the papers to increase circulation, newspaperboys encountered routine problems in their work. Circulation managers liked carriers to deliver directly to the door of subscribers. Many boys preferred to save time by throwing the paper against the front of the house. To avoid complaints of broken windows and papers stranded on roof tops, newspapers sometimes demanded that boys walk to the rear of the customer's home and leave the paper neatly folded on the back porch.[13] This caused resent-



Courtesy of Lloyd Smith, *The Paper Route*, 1929

Delivery to the subscribers, as preferred by circulation managers.

ment on the part of the carrier. James Donohue of Hartford, Connecticut, was a carrier who also did some street selling after his afternoon route was completed. He wrote in June 1934:

> Our deliveries would be quicker and much easier if our deliveries could be made frontway. All the large department stores in this city deliver frontway and the mailmen, whose work is like a paperboys, deliver frontway, so it wouldn't be hard for the people to adjust themselves to the new deliveries. Every newsboy approached on this subject has said he wished he could peddle frontway. As it is now, the Final Edition is out before the newsboys get rid of their papers. This cuts our street business almost to nothing.

In sum, these letters indicate that juveniles, like other groups of workers, were not a monolithic block. The newspaperboy trade was divided between sellers and carriers and also split between younger boys, who tended to oppose federal regulation for fear of losing their jobs, and older boys, who wanted safeguards against the power of newspaper circulation managers.

Yet these divisions were not always clearly drawn. Commenting on the rise of middle–class route carriers after World War I, David Nasaw has written, "The work of the carriers had little in common with that of the street traders."[14] This statement is refuted, at least in part, by the sources discussed here. Sellers and carriers alike worked in an industry dominated by children—long after other branches of the American economy had abandoned the employment of juveniles. Both distributed a highly "perishable" product throughout the year in outdoor urban environments. Both contended with difficult circulation managers and heavy bundles of newspapers, and both dealt directly with the buying (or subscribing) public on a daily basis.

The distinction between working–class city newsboy and affluent suburban carrier was not as sharp in the 1930s as it seems to us today. Street sellers on average came from poorer homes than carriers, but the letters suggest there may actually have been substantial overlap in the family backgrounds of the two groups of youngsters. Wayne Milligan, the carrier whose father was a laborer, rose early each morning to deliver the *Kansas City Star* in order to buy his own school clothes. Similarly, Kenneth Cartwright was trying to work his way through high school with earnings from his route because, "Dad has no work yet." These boys were carriers, not street sellers, who worked to augment low family incomes.

Although adult newsboys generally worked longer hours than minors and were more concerned with supporting dependents, they shared common concerns with juvenile workers. Both groups wanted higher profits per paper sold or delivered and both feared losing their jobs if they protested what they believed to be the unfair practices of circulation departments. On the key issues of earnings and job security, juveniles and adults expressed themselves in parallel, if not identical, terms.

This similarity hints at what may be the most important thing to be learned from the letters: working children, like their adult counterparts, took their jobs seriously. They complained about work loads, wanted better pay, feared management quotas and alternately avoided and turned to the federal government in their struggle to protect their jobs. Hearing their voices through the letters they wrote, we can begin to explore how the work performed by newsboys and newscarriers fits into the larger world of American labor.

Notes

Todd Postol is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago. This article is based on his dissertation in progress, "On the Corner, On the Route: Newsboys, Newscarriers and the Changing World of Working Children, 1890-1950."

The author would like to thank Jerry Hess, archivist for Record Group 9 at the National Archives; Dorianne Beyer of the National Child Labor Committee; Robert Eberwein at the Tamiment Institute; Joe Lofreddo at University Photo Labs, and Joanne Goldman at Iowa State University. Biggest thanks, as usual, go to J. Gurevitch.

[1]Jeremy Felt and Walter Trattner, in their classic studies of American child labor reform, discussed the failure of adult reformers to eliminate the juvenile street trades but did not explore the economic structure of the newspaperboy trade. David Nasaw, in his pathbreaking work, *Children of the City*, examined issues relating to inner city newsboys for the years 1900-20 but did not concentrate specifically on changes within the newspaper circulation industry. See Jeremy P. Felt, *Hostages of Fortune: Child Labor Reform in New York State* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965); Walter I. Trattner, *Crusade for the Children: A History of the National Child Labor Committee and Child Labor Reform in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970) and David Nasaw, *Children of the City: At Work and at Play* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Two other secondary works which deal with the history of American newspaperboys are [6]LeRoy Ashby, "Rescuing the 'Newsies': John Gunckel and the Toledo Newsboys' Association," in his *Saving the Waifs: Reformers and Dependent Children, 1890-1917* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984) and David Whisnant, "Selling the Gospel News, or: The Strange Career of Jimmy Brown the Newsboy," *Journal of Social History* 5 (1972):269-309.

[2]A useful bibliography on the reform literature is Laura A. Thompson, "Children in Street Trades in the United States: A List of References," *Monthly Labor Review* 21 (1925):1261-72. No bibliography exists for the trade literature. A good place to begin is with William R. Scott, *Scientific Circulation Management for Newspapers* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1915).

[3]This point is made succinctly by Jay Mechling: "Historians of childhood almost exclusively use as their evidence written documents or material artifacts selected, preserved, and legitimated by adults." See "Oral Evidence and the History of American Children's Lives," *Journal of American History* 74 (1987):579.

[4]Two things should be said concerning the use of the term newspaperboy in this article. First, only street sellers are called newsboys; when referring to both sellers and carriers the term newspaperboy is employed.

Second, the use of the term newspaper*boy* is intentional. An NRA research paper found that, "Nearly 99 per cent of the carriers and 99 per cent of the street sellers are boys." See "Summary of Report on Newspaper and Periodical Carriers and Street Sellers—Made by the Department of Research and Planning, May 7, 1934," p. 93. The study can be found in Entry 44, PI 44, Transcripts of Hearings, Hearing no. 599–33, Graphics Arts Industry, "Sale and Delivery of Newspapers by Minors, June 22, 1934." Record Group (RG) 9, National Recovery Administration, National Archives.

For prohibitions against girl street traders see Nasaw, pp. 101-04. The Progressive era reformers he quotes give higher estimates of girls selling newspapers, though the dominance of boys in the trade is never in question.

[5]For discussions of the NRA newspaperboy debate see Felt, pp. 166-67; Trattner, pp. 193-95 and Whisnant, pp. 294-97. See also Alfred McClung Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America: The Evolution of a Social Instrument* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1937), pp. 245-46, 295-300 and Freeman H. Beets, "The Interpretation of Federal Regulations which Affect Newspaperboys," *Quarterly Bulletin of Oklahoma Baptist University*, Faculty Studies No. 4 (Nov. 1949):8-12.

[6]Unless otherwise noted, all letters cited in this article are classified under Entry 25, PI 44, Consolidated Approved Code Files; Daily Newspaper Publication, Code 288. Part 16. Labor, Child Labor, RG9. The letters (along with attached documents, such as petitions and agency responses to the letter writers) are alphabetically arranged in file folders by the name of the individual or group writing to the NRA. Several letters from the NRA newspaperboy debate were published in Robert H. Brenner, ed., *Children and Youth in America—A Documentary History, Volume III: 1933-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 329-34.

For a sampling of workers' letters from the Depression see Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner, *"Slaves of the Depression": Workers' Letters about Life on the Job* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). For letters written to the federal government dealing with children, see Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Raising a Baby the Government Way: Mothers' Letters to the Children's Bureau, 1915-1932* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

[7]Problems caused by inaccurate terminology are discussed in "Progress in Adoption of 'Newspaper Boy' and 'Carrier Boy' as Correct Usage," pp. 710-12. This paper is contained in Entry 44, PI 44, Transcripts of Hearings, Hearing no. 599–33, Graphic Arts Industry, "Sale and Delivery of Newspapers by Minors, June 22, 1934 (night session)," RG9.

Six years later newspaper industry officials were still complaining that the use of "newsboy" for both street sellers and carriers was confusing. See *Editor and Publisher* 73 (Oct. 26, 1940):45, where "corner salesmen" and "carrier salesmen" are suggested instead.

Courtesy of Todd Alexander Postol

Label for carton of Hustler brand pears, 1920s–1930s.

[8]See, for example, the publication of the Boston Newsboys Club from 1911-12 titled *The Hustler.*

[9]The editorial can be found in Entry 25, PI 44, Consolidated Approved Code Files; Daily Newspaper Publication, Code 288. Part 16. Labor, Child Labor, file folder O-Q, RG9.

[10]For an account of a newspaper that did use adult carriers see The *Sun*, Baltimore, *When Denny Went to Towson* (Baltimore: Baltimore *Sun*, 1922). A morning paper in Atlanta also used men carriers. See U.S. Children's Bureau, *Children Engaged in Newspaper and Magazine Selling and Delivering* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Children's Bureau Publication 227, 1935), p. 23.

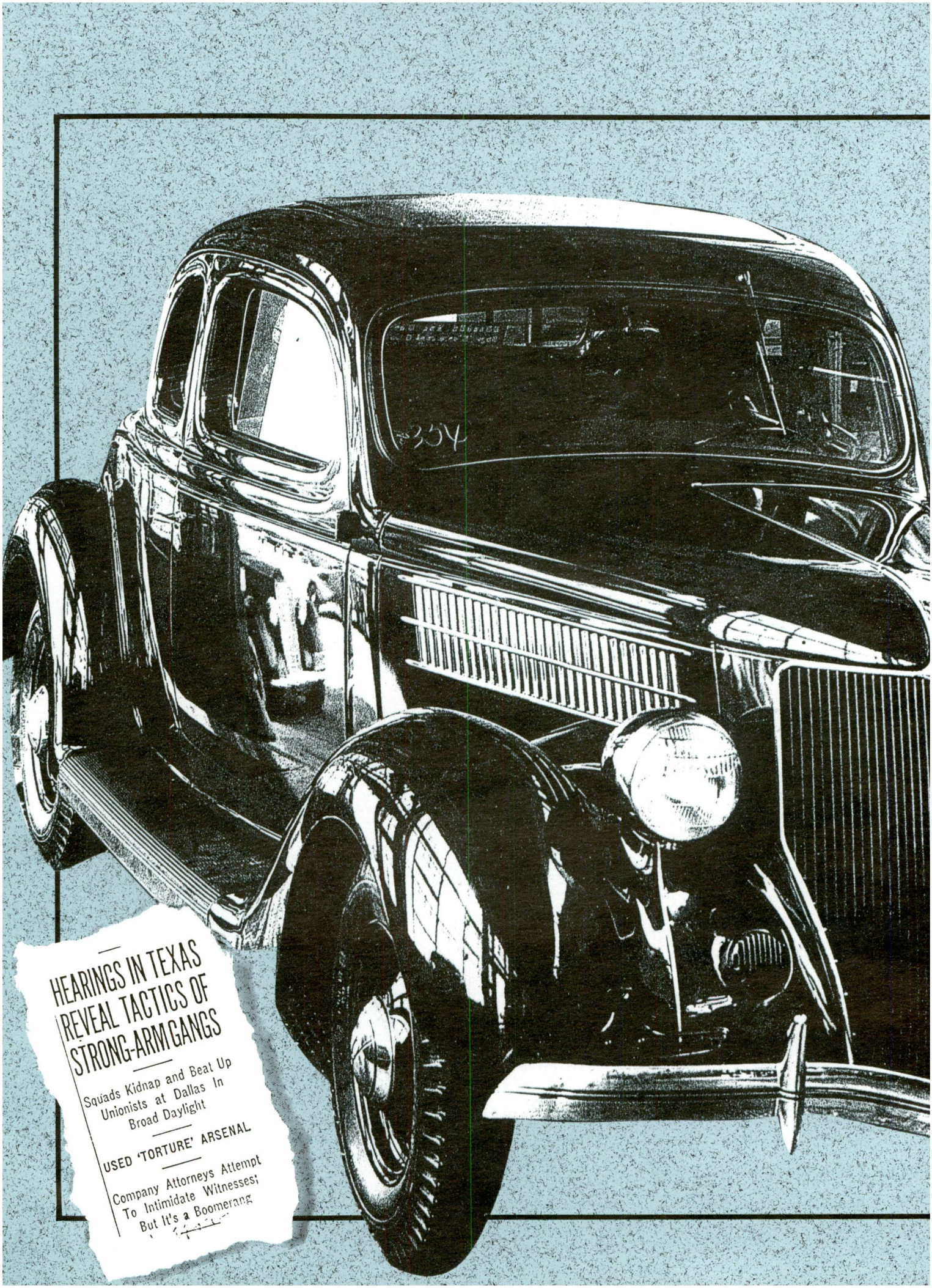
[11]NRA officials did eventually formulate a response which stated, "If you are eleven years old, and are already carrying papers at the time the new provision goes into effect . . . you may continue in your carrying job."

[12]The Zubrod letter can be found in Entry 26, PI 44, Consolidated Unapproved Code Files; Newspaper Magazine Distributors, Newsstand and Vending Trade. File folder "Newspaper Boys and Girls," RG9.

[13]John Cumming, personal letter to the author. I am indebted to Mr. Cumming for sharing his detailed recollections with me of carrying and delivering newspapers in Worcester, Massachusetts, during the 1920s.

Some circulation managers allowed boys to throw papers onto the front porch, but demanded that the paper be picked up by the carrier if it landed in the yard or bushes by mistake. See Lloyd Smith, *The Paper Route: A Training for Any Business or Profession* (Kansas City, Mo.: Burton Publishing Company, 1929), especially Chapter 5, "Delivering the Newspaper," and Chapter 6, "Prompt and Careful Delivery."

[14]Nasaw, p. 193.



HEARINGS IN TEXAS REVEAL TACTICS OF STRONG-ARM GANGS

Squads Kidnap and Beat Up Unionists at Dallas In Broad Daylight

USED 'TORTURE' ARSENAL

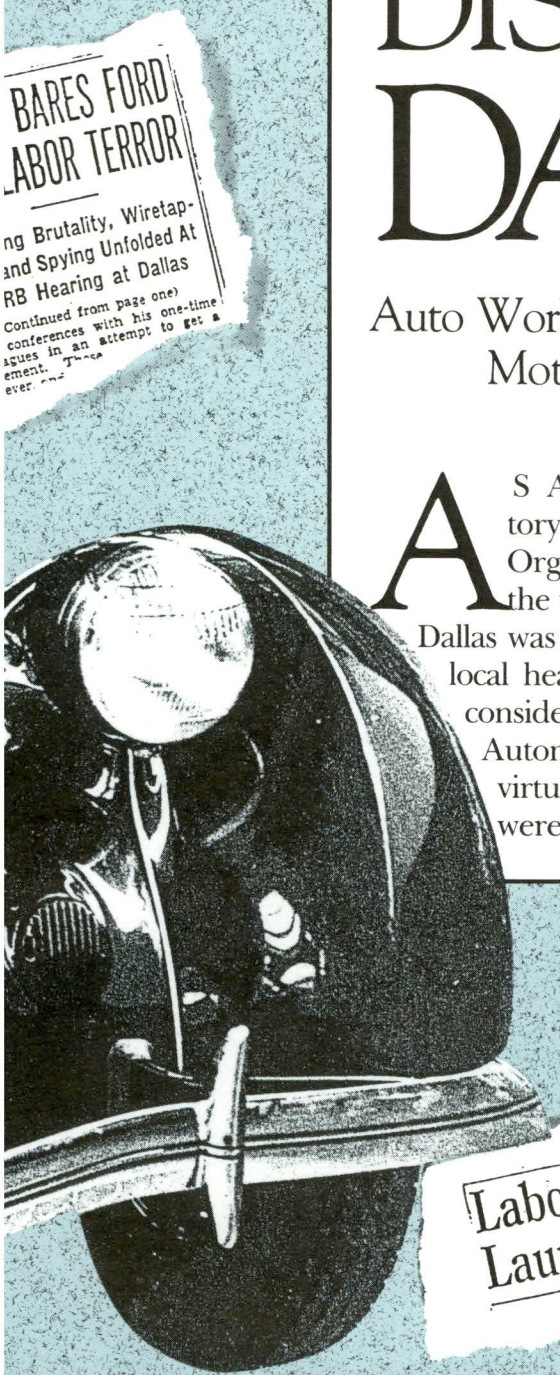
Company Attorneys Attempt To Intimidate Witnesses; But It's a Boomerang

George N. Green

DISCORD IN DALLAS

Auto Workers, City Fathers, and the Ford Motor Company, 1937-1941

AS AUTO WORKERS AND OTHER FACtory laborers joined the Congress of Industrial Organizations by the millions in the late 1930s, the work force at the Ford Motor Company in Dallas was not involved in the process—even though local headlines in 1937 indicated that there were considerable labor difficulties at the plant. United Automobile Workers' unionization efforts were virtually nil in Dallas, and the city's auto workers were unresponsive, if not hostile, to unions



BARES FORD
ABOR TERROR

ng Brutality, Wiretap-
and Spying Unfolded At
RB Hearing at Dallas

Continued from page one)
conferences with his one-time
agues in an attempt to get a
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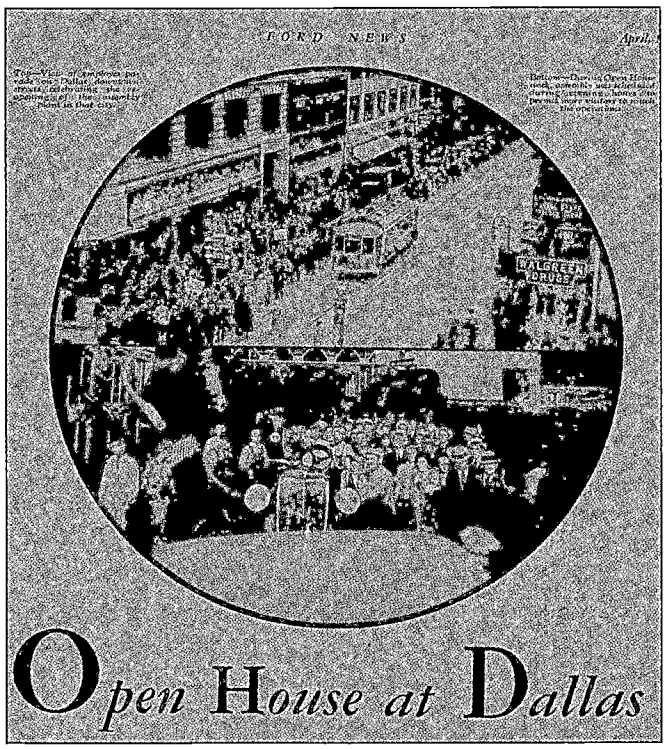
Labor Board Bares Brutal Reign of Terror Launched By Ford Against Union Workers



Ford News, April 1934

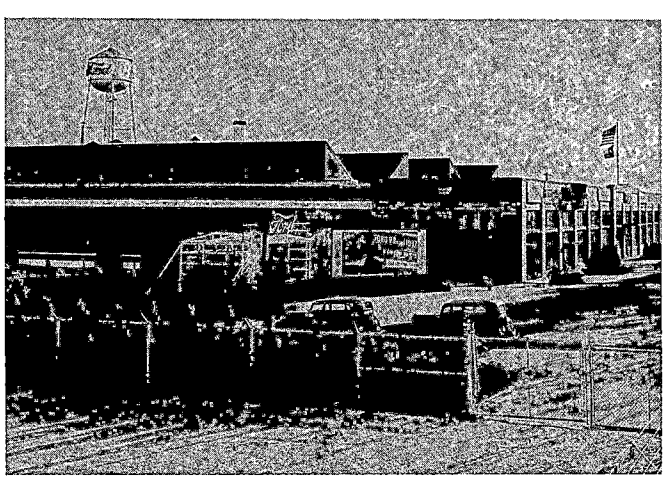
Announcing "Open House at Dallas," the Ford News *carried these pictures of the celebration at the 1934 reopening of Ford Motor Company's Dallas plant.*

anyway. Yet the city and the Ford company went to great lengths to prevent the men from organizing. Why, in the face of so little threat, did so many people act against unions? An account of Dallas' labor troubles in 1937 and the unusual context in which they occurred may ultimately reward us with fresh insights into the story of American unions.

Along with many other industries at the time, the Dallas assembly plant at 5200 East Grand abused its workers in order to maintain a rate of production that would maximize profits. The most oppressive practice was the speed-up, which forced workers to strain themselves to the limit of endurance in order to keep up. The same production was expected for the day even if the line had stopped for a few hours or some men had been laid off. Consequently, the men often toiled twelve or more hours a day, but were paid for only eight. Men often worked with injuries and illnesses, prodded by the foremen's constant threats in the 1930s to give their jobs "to a one-armed nigger" or "a guy living on a cracker." The plant also fired most workers when all orders had been fulfilled for the year. Three or four months later, when it was time for production of the new model, no one was guaranteed employment. The plant shut down for over a year in the 1932-1934 period, and no one in Dallas knew if it would ever reopen. Besides the lack of job security, there was no seniority or grievance machinery. Some foremen would fire good hands and replace them with friends and relatives. There were no rest periods, no relief from extreme heat in the summer, and often no time for a drink of water or a visit to the restroom. Half the thirty-minute lunch break was spent in preparing to go back on the line.[1]

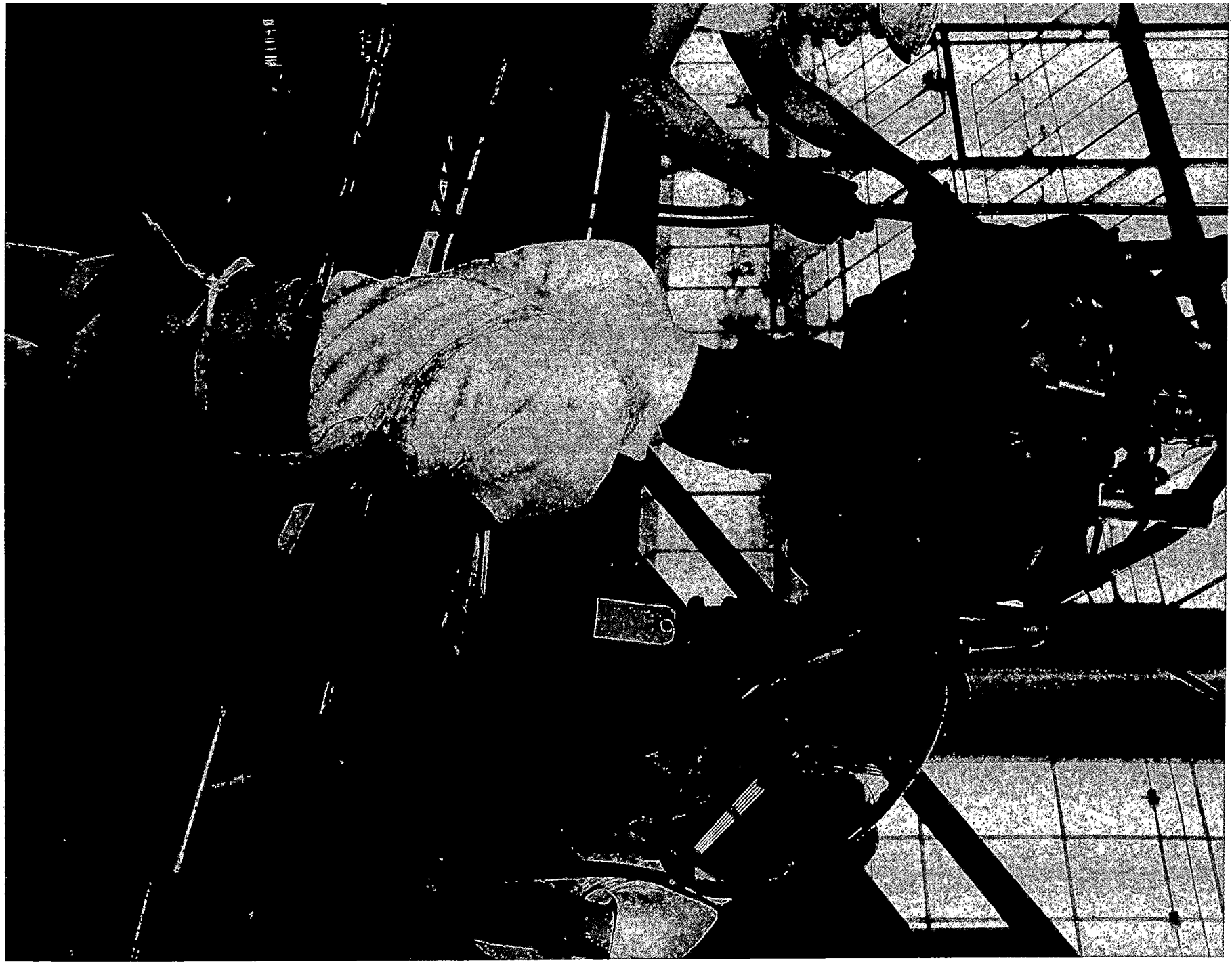
Even more debasing to the employees was the company's spy system and policy of persecution, spawned by Henry Ford's paranoia about unions. Ford tested the system at the main plant in Dearborn, then began to install it in all company plants—under the Service Department—with the express purpose of preventing unionization. The branch management at Dallas, after watching the United Auto Workers take root in Ford's Kansas City plant in the spring of 1937, took some twenty husky workers off the line (along with one sent especially from Dearborn) and assigned this "outside squad" to cruise around Dallas and neighboring areas to ferret out possible information about efforts to organize the Dallas plant. Some were assigned to bus and airline terminals and the rail stations. There is some evidence that they had a network in all the larger cities of Texas and hoped to smash unionism, especially the CIO, throughout the state. Anyone suspected of union sympathies was, generally speaking, to be beaten senseless.[2]

In May 1937, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Wagner Act, which legitimized collective bargaining and, among other provisions, forbade employers from coercing employees in the exercise of their right to organize. In June 1937, two UAW representatives from Kansas City appeared outside the factory and began talking to some of the men who were leaving, some of whom reported

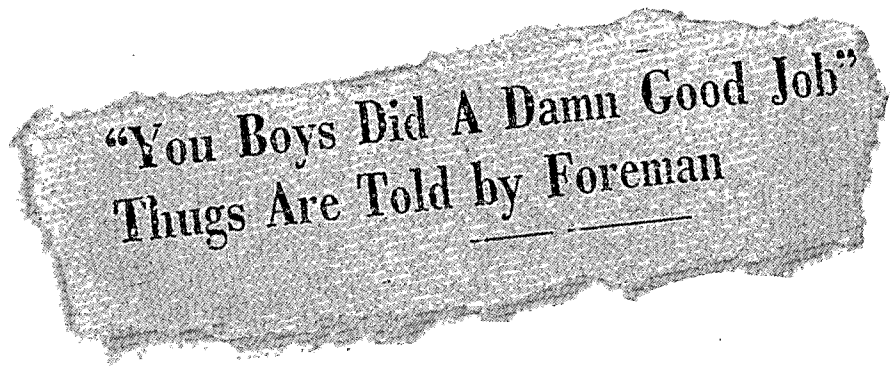


The Ford Motor Company, Dallas assembly plant, 1937. Right: Engine drop, Ford Motor Company, Dallas, 1936.

From the collections of Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village



From the collections of Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village



everything to the company. Both were soon pummeled in broad daylight, one so severely that he had several broken ribs. Anticipating more action, the plant's maintenance department then manufactured blackjacks, whips and rubber hoses for the outside squad. The company also formed the "inside squad"—mostly a spy network listening for union sentiments or just job dissatisfaction—to prevent the possibility of secret organization from within. Anti-union literature was widely distributed in the plant, and a mass meeting of Dallas Ford workers in July denounced strikes and any need for the CIO.[3]

On July 10 the outside squad searched for attorney W. J. Houston, who had been retained by the UAW, and beat him up in daylight at the corner of Elm and Akard in the heart of downtown Dallas. He was sent to the hospital. For good measure, a client who happened to be with him was also slugged. Later that month the outside squad managed to tap Houston's home phone in a vain attempt to intercept UAW strategy talks. Houston closed his law office and moved from Dallas.[4]

The next victims were twin brothers who were in business together and who were never connected with any union. One of them, however, often discussed labor matters with a Ford employee and openly stated his support of unions. After the failure of an attempt to draw the businessman into a phony scheme of signing up Ford workers for the UAW, the outside squad thought they had successfully lured him to a rendezvous, where he was bashed from behind and kicked repeatedly while lying on the ground. They had the wrong brother. Remaining under a doctor's care for the next four months, the man died from pneumonia developed while recuperating from his injuries.[5]

Other assaults in the summer and fall included the whipping and kicking of an auto worker from Kansas City, who was not a member of any union, the slugging into unconsciousness (and whipping with a cat-o'-nine-tails) of a former auto worker from Kansas City who applied for a job at Dallas Ford, and the beating of three tourists from California at the fair grounds parking lot because of a CIO sticker on their car. Dallas Ford workers were also victimized: one was blackjacked because he was suspected of not being a diligent spy against an alleged CIO man, two were kidnapped and roughed up for supposed pro-union remarks, and two were beaten for alleged pro-union sympathies.[6]

The most spectacular attacks occurred in August. On August 9 the outside squad was tipped off by Dallas police that an American Federation of Labor organizer was attempting to unionize the local millinery industry. Veteran organizer George Baer was assaulted in daylight and his face was repeatedly smashed with blackjacks until most of his teeth were missing and an eye was knocked out of its socket. Dumped into a field, he later crawled to a highway and a passing motorist took him to a hospital. He lost the teeth and the sight of one eye.[7]

That same evening of August 9, 1937, the inside and outside squads collaborated in an attack at a Textile Workers Organizing Committee meeting in a public park, where a couple of labor movies were being shown. One CIO organizer, George Lambert, was beaten severely, while the other, Herbert Harris, was knocked unconscious, tarred and feathered, and dumped on the doorstep of the *Dallas Morning News*, where a photographer awaited. Even the tar, feathers and brush were supplied by the local Ford plant.


Socialist Worker Tarred, Feathered After Riot in Park

Union Official Kidnaped, Carried to Country and Blackjacked After Fight on Downtown Sidewalk

Motion Picture Operator Kidnaped and Coated With Sticky Mess; Go Back North, He's Told

Loses Two Teeth

Another Man Cut

Organizer for Affiliate of C.I.O. Is Seized While Dozens Look On

20 Break Up Speech at Fretz Playground and Ruin Film Equipment

The *UAW Citizen*, August 1960

George Baer, from a photograph in the Dallas Morning News *of August 10, 1937, receiving treatment at Parkland Hospital.*

The Baer and Harris incidents were widely publicized around the country; Harris' picture was carried in *Look* magazine. Governor Jimmie Allred, over the protests of the chief of police, promptly dispatched Texas Rangers to Dallas, and the outside squad slowed its activities and shut down a few months later. The outside squad did not seem to be intimidated by the Rangers, however, since more assaults occurred in October. The squad shut down because the Rangers had forestalled some attacks and because the violent anti-union strategy had succeeded and was no longer necessary. In all, there were eighteen known victims of beatings, with perhaps as many as twice that number that went unreported.[8]

Non-violent discrimination was also practiced. One Ford worker was fired and threatened with a beating because his wife was a member of the milliners' union. Another lost his job and came very close to being battered after being surrounded by six thugs, because he had joined an independent electricians' association, one not affiliated with the AFL or the CIO.[9]

On the face of it, there is nothing unusual about these events. They appear typical of the management-inspired maimings of the time. Perhaps the mistaken murder and the tarring and feathering were a shade more bizarre than most, but these Dallas beatings nevertheless resemble others in 1937 in San Francisco, Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit, Aliquippa, the Yakima and Imperial valleys and other industrial and agrarian centers--with one glaring difference. There was no union movement at the Dallas Ford plant!

It does not appear that Ford's erratic policy completely explains the absence of union activity in the Dallas plant. The majority of those beaten in the eighteen documented assaults were not union organizers or members of the UAW, and seven were not members of any union. The five known attacks on Dallas Ford workers, none of whom was attempting to form a union, were the least violent and spectacular assaults. Technically, nearly all the workers at the assembly plant were members of the inside squad. The worker who was fired because of his wife's union membership immediately persuaded her to resign from the union, which the company deemed an insufficient response. The other one who was discharged quickly resigned his membership in the independent electrical union, but again the Ford management was unimpressed. After taking hundreds of thousands of words of testimony the National Labor Relations Board determined that only these two out of a fifteen-hundred-man work force were unjustly fired; their jobs, of course, were restored.

To be sure, Dallas Ford management intimidated the workers and played upon community fears with threats that Ford would abandon the Dallas plant before he would recognize the CIO or (some-

The *UAW Citizen*, August 1960

Under the headline "Socialist Gets Feather Coating," the Dallas Morning News *carried this photograph of Herbert Harris on the front page of its August 10, 1937, edition.*

what contradictorily) that the CIO would bring many blacks into the factory. But these and similar charges were spread all over the country without preventing the stirrings of unionism. One might be tempted to explain the dearth of Dallas Ford unionism on the grounds that the work force was composed of provincial Anglo-Saxon Protestants, ignorant and gullible Southern and Southwestern country boys. They were trekking to the city, making more money than they had ever known before, and were all too ready to believe whatever the company told them. But this composite picture would match those of most Sunbelt workers—mill hands throughout the Southeast, oil refinery workers in California, Oklahoma and Texas, rubber workers in Los Angeles and Gadsden, Alabama, sugar refinery hands in Texas and Louisiana—all of whom were forming unions, sometimes without much help from outside.[10]

Much of the explanation for the absence of a union spirit undoubtedly rests with the city of Dallas. At the time Dallas was more of a distributing than a manufacturing center, and most Dallas businesses were in the hands of first generation owners who greatly feared the possible loss of absolute control over their companies. The Chamber of Commerce and the Dallas Open Shop Association sought to induce industries to move to the city by advertising its cheap labor. Even a fleeting visitor in 1940 noted the city's "passionate devotion to the open shop," and in labor circles Dallas was generally recognized as the worst open shop bastion in the United States. The building and construction trades represented the bulk of AFL membership, while only the Typographers and Ladies' Garment Workers represented the CIO.

The Dallas Open Shop Association, formed in 1919, remained as one of the strongest, most tightly-knit organizations in the country twenty years later. It boasted that it kept the city free from strikes and labor disturbances in general. In 1937 National Labor Relations Board hearings on a garment strike revealed that one of the Open Shop Association's rules held that any business that was member of the association that knowingly hired a union member was subject to a three-thousand dollar fine. The association guaranteed that no member firm would be permitted to go bankrupt as result of a strike, and it reputedly had two or three million dollars to back up the promise.[11]

That same year of 1937 Dallas' leading bankers and merchants organized the Dallas Citizens Council, purportedly the nearest thing to a mercantile oligarchy since the Italian Renaissance cities. Described by a sympathizer as a "super-elite Chamber of Commerce and advisory board to the city council," many of its members served on the city council, as officials in the Chamber of Commerce, and as leaders in the Dallas Open Shop Association (whose office was in the Chamber of Commerce Building). The Chamber staff actually implemented Citizen Council projects, and it was the Chamber's board of directors that secured a charter and incorporated the Dallas Open Shop Association in 1919.

In the midst of the labor assaults, in October 1937, the Chamber reaffirmed its commitment to the Open Shop Association and its principles. These "decision makers" were good friends who almost never argued and who all thought alike on almost every subject. Certainly the interlocking directorate of these three organizations and the Ford Company all thought alike on the subject of unions, and none took any public notice of the beatings. One spokesman did. Dale Miller, associate editor of Dallas' conservative *Texas Weekly* (later hired by the Chamber of Commerce as its lobbyist in Washington, D.C.), reported that the various beatings were "unrelated incidents," that they had nothing to do with the Ford Company, that the only (slight) labor disorder in the city was in the millinery industry, and that unions were "unnatural curtailments" of capitalism.[12]

While the Citizens' Council did not completely capture city hall in the 1937 municipal elections, the city was firmly in the hands of businessmen. The upper class and business community were split in the mid-1930s over such issues as sewer taxes, the rigidity of law enforcement during the Texas centennial, and the extent of city involvement in the Levee Improvement District. There is certainly no evidence that they were divided on currying the favor of the Ford company.[13]

Few in Dallas expected the police to make more than a perfunctory gesture toward apprehending the terrorists. Various policemen abandoned the sites of beatings where they were normally on duty, tipped off the outside squad on the presence of labor organizers, connived with Ford officials in farcical arrests, and, on one occasion when three

Mural of the Ford Motor Company's Dallas assembly plant, displayed at the Dallas World's Fair, 1936.

of the outside squad were arrested, advised them to dispose of the blackjacks if they had them. Just after the tarring and feathering incident the police chief announced that he was going to stop such violence by closing the parks to meetings that were likely to cause trouble. He canceled the order after the *Dallas Journal* suggested that—following the same line of reasoning—the chief might prevent auto accidents in the city by closing all the streets to traffic. The only person arrested on that occasion was George Lambert, a victim of the mob.[14]

Dallas Mayor George Sprague denied Governor Allred's charge that nothing was done about the violence until the Rangers arrived. The mayor claimed that the police had done "a lot of good work" and that "Police Chief Bob Jones . . . had the guilty men about cornered." Jones agreed and added that the grand jury had the facts before it. Two days later the grand jury noted that it had no tangible evidence regarding the identity of Harris' kidnappers. Five men were arrested after some of the assaults, but bail was paid by Ford supervisor J. B. Moseley and there were never any trials.[15]

After the assaults on August 9 one of the victims, socialist CIO organizer Lambert, tried to persuade local liberals to stage a mass protest. Led by an Episcopalian minister, they refused to call a meeting on account of the hot weather and fear of being identified with socialism. Dallas' small band of socialists—led by George Clifton Edwards, Carl Brannin, and Lambert—appeared to be labor's leading defenders in the city. The only other group that spoke out were forty CIO printers, whose letter to the editor was published by the *News*, August 24, 1937, though the men identified themselves only as "taxpaying citizens."[16]

In such an atmosphere the split within the house of labor was painfully obvious. The AFL's *Dallas Craftsman* never even mentioned the Ford terror. The local trades assembly offered the Open Shop Association and the Chamber of Commerce its services in keeping the CIO out of Dallas. The assembly vainly tried to prevent several local clothing manufacturers from signing or renewing CIO contracts by threatening to boycott their products. AFL President William Green spoke in Dallas on Labor Day and consorted openly with members of the Chamber of Commerce while lambasting the CIO. He neglected to mention that one of his organizers had almost been killed in Dallas three weeks earlier.[17]


REWARD

Rewards totaling $1,600 have been posted for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person responsible for the *kidnapping* from Fretz Park and *tarring* and *feathering* of Herbert Harris, Socialist organizer, on Monday, August 9th, 1937.

$1600!

REWARDS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

$1,000 — Offered by the AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION — $1,000
for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person responsible for the *Harris* kidnapping and beating of *George Baer*, Hatters' Cap and Millinery Workers Union organizer.

$500 — Offered by GOVERNOR JAMES V. ALLRED — $500
for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person responsible for the *Harris* kidnapping.

$100 — Offered by SOCIALIST PARTY OF TEXAS — $100
for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person responsible for the *Harris* kidnapping.

CITIZENS OF DALLAS:

You can perform a great *public service* and at the same time receive a $1,600 reward by turning over to police any information you may have which will lead to the arrest and conviction of the persons responsible for these *cowardly* acts of mobsterism.

Let's Prove That Thugs Can't Run Dallas

$1600 REWARD $1600 REWARD

Reward poster following the kidnapping and beating of Herbert Harris.

Dallas newspapers, very much part of the city's establishment, denounced the beatings and defended free speech on occasion, but consistently played down the violence and rarely identified it with the Ford company. The city's most prestigious paper, the *Dallas Morning News*, presented a picture of Harris, tarred and feathered, and stated that the incident was carried out by twenty unidentified men. Three years later the NLRB hearings revealed that Ford's outside squad had made plans with a *News* photographer to dump the victim near the newspaper building so the photographer could get the picture. On the same day the *News*' account of the assault on Baer stated that the attackers were unidentified and implied that the incident resulted from trouble between the AFL and the CIO. At least five of the assaults, including four against Ford employees, were not even mentioned by the *News*. After the governor sent Rangers to Dallas, the *News* published seventeen telegrams criticizing him for the action, accusing him of being a socialist and a stooge of John L. Lewis. The leader of the protestors, F. M. Salas, described himself as an uninterested party. The *News* was evidently unconcerned about the veracity of these claims. Salas was the owner of the Ford plant service station next to the company. The story also reported that Leon Armstrong had called the paper to criticize the move and had sent a telegram to the governor. The paper did not point out that he was the personal secretary to the Ford plant superintendent and that his telegram was signed by Ford's

inside squad.[18]

The Dallas establishment's coverup and the Ford Company's terrorism might have succeeded had the company realized that gunmen cannot easily be fired from their jobs. Ford's outside squad returned to work in the plant in October 1937, but in the spring and summer of 1939 four of them were fired, two because of thefts they had committed in the plant. One of them began to talk to the NLRB, and the seamy story reached a wider audience. The revelations, predictably, received scant coverage in the Dallas media.[19]

When the NLRB began holding hearings on charges against the Ford Motor Company of Dallas, the *New York Times* sent its best labor reporter to cover the trial, and he remained over a week. The *Times* carried his detailed stories about the proceedings, and, after the trial was over, a complete account of the trial and the NLRB decision. The *Wall Street Journal* excerpted some of the testimony in several front page stories. Through more than a million words and over a month of testimony the *Dallas News* gave its readers 112 column inches of space, counting headlines. The minute coverage was accompanied by a continuous failure to give accurate information on the charges against the company. Not a line of testimony was presented until the twelfth day, and then much of the story was devoted to attacks on labor board procedures as being unfair to Ford. The *News*' longest account came March 10, 1940, and opened: "One of the most bitterly criticized federal agencies created by the New Deal is conducting a hearing in Dallas. . . ." After this article the *News*' coverage trailed off. The *Dallas Journal* started with better coverage than the *News*, but soon slacked off to a few small stories that were buried in the back and that ignored testimony that was damaging to the Ford company. The *Dallas Times-Herald* gave more coverage than either of the other two dailies, but just used Associated Press reports and tended to stress the Ford attorneys' complaints about the trial and their insistence that the violence was not connected to the company.[20]

There is absolutely no reason to doubt that Dallas publishers were sincere in clinging to the same attitudes toward the New Deal and the NLRB that were held by

PAGE 8 UNITED AUTOMOBILE WORKER—DETROIT, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 1940

Ford Thugs Testify in Dallas NLRB Hearing

MOTOR COMPANY OFFICIALS GAVE ORDERS TO BEAT UP UNION MEN, EX-SERVICEMEN SAY UNDER OATH

Ford Motor Co. officials in the Dallas, Tex., plant ordered servicemen, as their thugs are called, to beat up men with union sympathies.

And the thugs did it, cheerfully and effectively. In one case they used a lash braided out of electric light wires.

They also beat up the union lawyer on the main street of town. The telephone company obligingly installed a phone for a Ford labor spy that connected with the union lawyer's phone.

All this was testified under oath in a labor board hearing in Dallas beginning Feb. 25 that is still under way. The board through Trial Examiner R. N. Denham is hearing charges that the Ford Dallas management violated the Wagner act when the union drive in the auto industry was at its height in 1937.

Not since the labor board hearings on the mass attack by Ford thugs on union men and women in front of the Rouge plant in Dearborn, Mich. has there been such a complete factual picture of the brutality of Ford labor policies.

FORD LAWYERS VICIOUS

Ford lawyers did their utmost to prevent airing of the charges. They tried to intimidate one of the main witnesses, James R. Longley of Houston, former serviceman.

They tried to tell him that if he testified he might be prosecuted under the Texas laws because of the assaults he would confess to on the stand. This effort to silence the witness failed when the labor board examiner ruled that the Wagner act gives witnesses immunity from state as well as federal prosecution in such cases.

POLICE WERE FIXED

Jack George, still an employe of Ford, as he was in 1937, testi-

Ford employes was given by Leonard Guemplein and Baron de Louis, Kansas City auto workers, and G. W. Chandler, local union sympathizer.

Chas. D. Elliott, a member of the Ford company union in Kansas City, told of being whipped and slugged while on a visit to Dallas in the summer of '37, even though his membership was delinquent and he was not sympathetic to the CIO.

FOREMEN GAVE ORDERS

Government witnesses, present and former Ford employes, testified to meetings held on company time in the "dark room" in the plant in 1937 at which instructions were given by foremen and heads of departments to a selected group to watch out for union organizers and CIO sympathizers. They were to report to a certain man in the plant over a special phone.

Two witnesses told of the distribution of blackjacks, which were made in the maintenance shop of the Ford plant. J. R. Longley, one of the strongarm squad in 1937, testified that Claud Dill, an assistant foreman, had charge of a collection jar near the time clock to receive contributions from the workers to pay fines for slugging.

Ford attorneys are contending that whatever acts of violence may have occurred were done on the personal initiative of the individuals named, and the company had nothing to do with them.

HAD OTHER WORK

After being promised immunity Longley testified he worked for Ford in Dallas from 1934 to 1939 as "trouble-shooter on the chassis line," as sub-foreman, and on "other work."

The other work included his activities as captain of a squad "to beat the union (UAW-CIO) out of the plant." He said he and other Ford employes beat up union members, beat a CIO lawyer and broke up a union meeting in a public park. He watched for union men at the railroad station, and he spied on the union lawyer. "Sailor" Barto Hill and "Pat" Walsh were some of the people who worked with him for Ford, he said.

Warren Worley, who was in the Ford personnel department, had advised him what line of talk to take against the UAW-CIO, Longley said.

SLUGGER SQUADS FORMED

Rutland, the assistant Ford superintendent, said Longley, superintendent, called a meeting of some employes at which the CIO was discussed. The men were later paired off in teams and told to go about Dallas to watch union offices and activities.

Lawyer Houston, Longley said, was located at a drug store. By a phone call to the Ford plant, a squad was rushed to the scene. In the attack on Houston, "Sailor" Hill knocked Houston down. Some of the Ford sluggers were arrested, but Rutland said they would be released "in a little while."

Telling of the attack on the union meeting in a public park, Longley said that Hill outlined plans to smash up the meeting. When the Ford thugs arrived, however, a man about 50 or 60 years old was talking and Hill said "he thought it did not look like he could stand the tar and feathers," so they just pushed over the platform.

Further testimony is expected to link the Dallas assaults directly to the Ford higherups at Dearborn headquarters of the company.

Running Boards on Autos Mean Jobs, Local Shows

Not only are autos with running boards cleaner and safer than cars without them, but it also means a lot more jobs in the auto

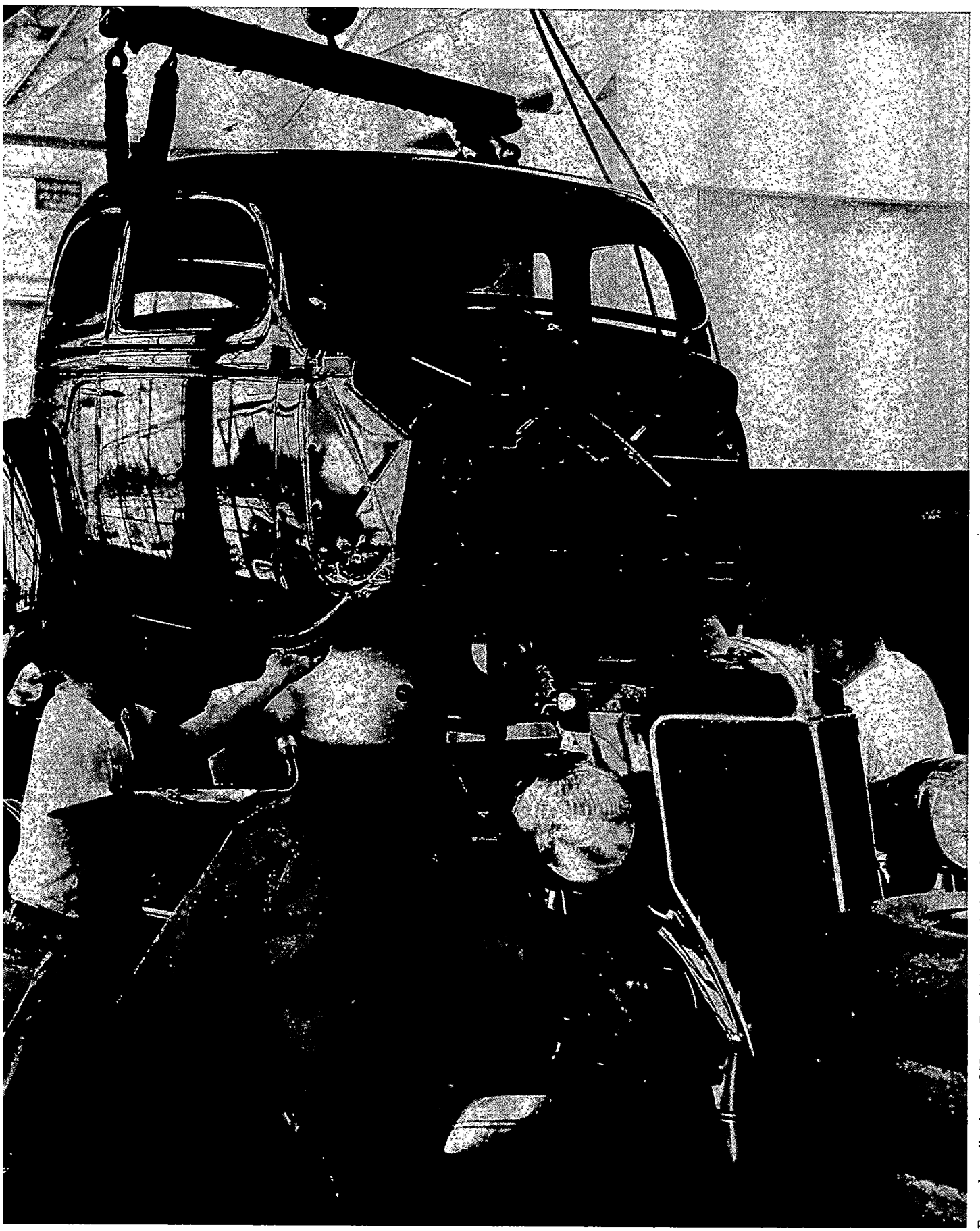
tional on some cars. But in the future they may be displaced. Your demand for them today will keep us at work in the future.

the Ford company. In any event, no one in the city's power elite was inclined to criticize local manufacturers. Had there been any contrary notion, however, it doubtless would have been crowded out by the advertising of car dealers. The Ben Griffin and Ed Maher Ford dealers were consistent advertisers in the *Dallas News*, often placing three or four ads per day. They sometimes combined with other area Ford dealers to buy almost a full page ad. Griffin and Maher also advertised in the *Times-Herald*.[21]

To a degree the Dallas Ford tactics were emulated in other branch plants (and in Dearborn itself). In Memphis the threat of removing the huge Ford payroll was sufficient to make the city officials cooperate in the suppression of unionism, but they managed to do so without precipitating much violence. Much the same was true in Kansas City, where the company closed its plant and announced that it would not reopen until the city could guarantee "proper protection" to Ford employees. The Kansas City plant reopened only after the city manager journeyed to Dearborn and gave the guarantee. Thereafter, the city police were used as strikebreakers, though apparently there was little or no violence there either. At the mighty River Rouge plant in Dearborn the local outside squad ambushed and slugged Walter Reuther and another UAW organizer at the famous Battle of the Overpass in 1937, while the company fired at least twenty-nine workers for union activity. In 1941 the River Rouge management fired more union activists and deliberately fomented racial violence between groups of white pickets carrying baseball bats and black strikebreakers armed with knives and bars. Even this violence did not quite equal that in Dallas, and, of course, the assaults in Dearborn occurred in the midst of strong and successful unionization efforts.[22]

Historians, particularly those of the "new left," have asked what it was that led four million people to join the CIO and half a million to stage sit-down strikes in 1936 and 1937. Some of them believe that hidden in the labor history of the 1930s is a strain of rank-and-file militancy with a genuine, if unfulfilled revolutionary potential. More conventional labor historians have noted that even in the great strikes in the mass production industries only a minority of rank-and-file workers were involved.[23] What can either camp say about the Dallas Ford workers? Clearly

Assembly body drop, Ford Motor Company, Dallas, 1936.



From the collections of Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village

there was no revolutionary sentiment whatever. More surprising, as of 1937, not even a minority of the workers—beyond perhaps a few individuals who certainly kept their thoughts to themselves—favored unionism at all, much less militancy.

One of Henry Ford's biographers concluded that the Dallas tactics "approached a degree of savagery that was extreme even for Ford Service."[24] Yet the public revelations of the Dallas terror in August 1940 did not have a national impact. Dallas Ford workers played no role in forcing unionism on the company. It was the hearings and orders of the NLRB in the River Rouge case, the rulings of various courts, and the actions of Michigan auto workers that brought the unions into Ford plants nationwide.[25] To be sure, Ford's Dallas employees voted for UAW representation in 1941 by the customary thumping majority, but the men were told that their jobs depended on it. It was more in keeping with the Dallas-Ford heritage that the first local union chairman was a "Chamber of Commerce type" who opposed the UAW until Ford signed the national contract.[26]

Once the Dallas Ford workers were in a union, however, the men soon perceived the advantages of it. The UAW had an effective education program. In three months the original chairman was replaced by an elected president, executive board and committeemen. Well attended departmental meetings informed the entire membership about grievance procedures. Wages and working conditions soon improved. Within six months, in December 1941, Local 870 was dispatching a telegram to Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn noting its opposition to all anti-strike and anti-labor legislation. Over the years the local produced two Southwest Area Directors of the UAW and played a vigorous role in community, CIO and UAW politics until Ford closed the aging plant in 1970.[27]

Clearly, though, the particular combination of Dallas and Ford was a poisonous blend for working men until 1941. It was a unique situation in some ways, but also an illustration of the obstacles faced by Texas unionism. In 1941 Texas unions represented less than fifteen percent of the work force, while the U. S. average was twenty-three percent.[28] Certainly the Dallas-Ford intermixture was one reason for the weakness of unions in Texas, even while they were expanding in most of the rest of the nation in the late 1930s.

Notes

George Norris Green, professor of history at the University of Texas at Arlington, has written numerous articles, booklets and essays focusing on labor and the American Southwest. In 1979 Greenwood Press published his book, *The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957.*

[1]United Auto Workers Local 870 brochure and Travis Polk interview with Hiram Moon, Area Director of UAW, 16 July 1965, cited in Travis Polk, "The Ford Motor Company's Resistance to the Labor Movement in Dallas, Texas" (M. A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1966), pp. 8-10; Allan Nevins and Frank Hill, *Ford: Decline and Rebirth* (New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1963), p. 153; Robert Dunn, *Labor and Automobiles* (New York: International Publishers, 1929), pp. 88-91, 108, 136-37; author's interviews with Dallas Ford workers of the 1930s, Roy Alexander, Claude Cawthon, R. C. Stubbs, E. H. Veach, Rufus Fleming, Earl Edwards, Jim Gathings, and W. M. Shields, Dallas, Texas, 1-29 April 1988.

[2]National Labor Relations Board v. the Ford Motor Company, No. 9679, Transcript of Testimony, 1:173-75, and 4:2603-04 (5th Cir., 1940), Dallas Ford Motor Company Collection, 89-1-5 and 89-4-1, Texas Labor Archives, University of Texas at Arlington; author's interview with Edwin Elliot, Regional Director, NLRB, 7 April 1975, Oral History Project, Texas Labor Archives; Irving Bernstein, *Turbulent Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), pp. 735-40.

[3]Transcript of Testimony, 1:180-82, and 3:1673-80; in re Ford Motor Co., *Decisions and Orders of the National Labor Relations Board*, 26 (hereafter *NLRB Decisions*), p. 338; author's interview with Edwin Elliot; author's interview with H. C. McGarity, Ford worker, 22 April 1987, Oral History Project, Texas Labor Archives; Nat Wells, "The NLRB at the Dallas Ford Plant," unpublished manuscript, pp. 5-7, Dallas Ford Motor Company Collection, 89-1-1; Dale Miller, "Message to the CIO," *Texas Weekly*, 3 July 1937, p. 9; Lloyd Morris, *Not So Long Ago* (New York: Random House, 1949), pp. 366-67.

[4]Transcript of Testimony, 1:197-201, 227-29; Wells, "The NLRB at the Dallas Ford Plant," p. 12.

[5]*NLRB Decisions*, p. 362; Transcript of Testimony, 1:208-13.

[6]*NLRB Decisions*, pp. 353-54, 361-62; Transcript of Testimony, 1:195-97, 237-50.

[7]*NLRB Decisions*, pp. 363-65; Transcript of Testimony, 1:214, and 3:1710-13.

[8]*NLRB Decisions*, p. 366; Transcript of Testimony, 1:191, 219-20; Miller, "Message to the CIO," p. 4; George Clifton Edwards, Jr., *Pioneer-at-Law* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), pp. 170, 172-73; Wells, "The NLRB at the Dallas Ford Plant," p. 9; author's interview with George Lambert, union organizer, 6 Feb. 1972, Oral History Project, Texas Labor Archives; author's interview with Carl Brannin, socialist journalist, 12 April 1967, Oral History Project, Texas Labor Archives; Doug Flamming, "Labor and the Press in Dallas, Texas: 1937 and 1940," *Essays in History*, E. C. Barksdale Student Lectures, 7 (Arlington, Texas: University of Texas at Arlington Press, 1982), pp. 131-36; *Look* (12 Oct. 1937):9.

[9]*NLRB Decisions*, pp. 385-86; Transcript of Testimony, 1:273-78; Polk interview with Nat Wells, labor lawyer, 9 July 1965, in Polk, "The Ford Motor Company's Resistance," p. 57; Wells, "The NLRB at the Dallas Ford Plant," p. 8.

[10]Nevins and Hill, *Ford: Decline and Rebirth*, p. 142; *NLRB Decisions*, p. 386; Transcript of Testimony, 1:275-76; Polk interview with Moon; *UAW Citizen*, p. 5, UAW brochure quoted in Polk, "The Ford Motor Company's Resistance," p. 26; author's interviews with

Alexander, Cawthon, Stubbs, Veach, Fleming, Edwards, Gathings, Shields and McGarity; Edwards, *Pioneer-at-Law*, pp. 163, 173.

[11]Author's interview with George Lambert; George Lambert, "Dallas Tries Terror," *Nation* 145 (9 Oct. 1937): 376-78; Miller, "Message to the CIO," p. 5; *Dallas Typographical Union, #173, Minutes*, 25 July 1937, pp. 41-43, in 41-3-2, Texas Labor Archives; "open shop" quote in David Cohn, "Dallas," *Atlantic Monthly* 166 (Oct. 1940):454; "cheap labor" quote in Wells, "The NLRB at the Dallas Ford Plant," p. 1; author's interview with Andrew DeShong, Dallas Chamber of Commerce, 23 April 1987, Oral History Project, Texas Labor Archives. DeShong, who edited the Chamber's magazine in the late 1930s, denied that either the Chamber or the Open Shop Association recruited cheap labor.

[12]Author's interviews with George Lambert and Andrew DeShong; John Rogers, *The Lusty Texans of Dallas* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965), pp. 346-50; *Southwest Business* (Oct. 1937):25; Miller, "Message to the CIO," pp. 4-5; E. C. Wallis, "After Dallas Threw Off the Shackles of the Closed Shop," *Manufacturers Record* (13 Feb. 1930):53. The lack of public notice was apparent in the Chamber's magazine, *Southwest Business*, in the minutes of the city council, and in the newspapers for 1937.

[13]Harold Stone, Don Price, Kathryn Stone, *City Manager Government in Dallas* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1939), pp. 52-57, 64-71, 79, 81.

[14]Transcript of Testimony, 1:199-201, 213-20, 414, 652, 655, 658; *NLRB Decisions*, p. 370; *Dallas Morning News*, 23-25, 27 Aug. 1937; Lambert, "Dallas Tries Terror," p. 377; author's interview with Carl Brannin; Edwards, *Pioneer-at-Law*, p. 169. The *Dallas Police Department Time Book, 1937-1939, No. 103*, Dallas Police Archives, Dallas Public Library, shows that a traffic policeman was on duty at Elm and Akard and Main and Akard throughout every day in October 1937, but this is the earliest time that such records were kept. There are no records for July 10, when W. J. Houston and his client were beaten there. A policeman did arrive to break up the assault, but only after Houston was reeling.

[15]*Dallas Morning News*, 23, 25 Aug. 1937; Edwards, *Pioneer-at-Law*, pp. 157-67, 169.

[16]*Dallas Morning News*, 24 Aug. 1937; Flamming, "Labor and the Press in Dallas," pp. 133-34; Edwards, *Pioneer-at-Law*, pp. 157-67, 169; George Lambert to American Civil Liberties Union and Workers Defense League, 19 Aug. 1937, in Workers Defense League Papers, Series I, Box 40, File 2, Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan (hereafter Reuther Library).

[17]Carl Brannin to Workers Defense League, n.d., and George Lambert to American Civil Liberties Union and Workers Defense League, 19 Aug. 1937, Workers Defense League Papers, Series I, Box 40, File 2, Reuther Library; Lambert, "Dallas Tries Terror," p. 377; *Dallas Morning News*, 1-3 July 1937. There is no indication, however, of the extent to which Green actually knew of the Ford terror. According to The George Meany Memorial Archives, no correspondence on the matter appears to exist in the pertinent extant files.

[18]*Dallas Morning News*, 10-11, 15, 20-22 Aug. and 7, 27 Oct. 1937; Flamming, "Labor and the Press in Dallas," pp. 128-29, 132-33; Polk, "The Ford Motor Company's Resistance," pp. 46-47; Vance Sumner, "Labor Policy of the Ford Motor Company at Dallas, Texas" (M. A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1942), pp. 67-75.

[19]Polk, "The Ford Motor Company's Resistance," pp. 68-73.

[20]Carl Brannin to Roger Baldwin, 5 Mar. 1940, American Civil Liberties Union Papers, Vol. 2246, Seeley Mudd Library, Princeton, New Jersey; Carl Brannin column, *Emancipator*, April 1940; Sumner, "Labor Policy of the Ford Motor Company at Dallas, Texas," pp. 75-86; Flamming, "Labor and the Press in Dallas," pp. 138-42.

[21]Flamming, "Labor and the Press in Dallas," p. 143.

[22]George Lambert, "Memphis is Safe for Ford," *Nation* 146 (22 Jan. 1938): 93-94; Bernstein, *Turbulent Years*, pp. 570-71, 740-45.

[23]See David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 134-35, 157, 165.

[24]Keith Sward, *The Legend of Henry Ford* (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1948), p. 398.

[25]John Forsythe, "The Effect of Federal Labor Legislation on Organizing Southern Labor During the New Deal Period" (M. A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1962), pp. 147-48; Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 180-81.

[26]Author's interview with Lambert.

[27]*United Auto Workers #870 Minutes*, 24 July, 2 Sept., 16 Oct., 11 Nov., 22 Dec. 1941, in 15-1-1, Texas Labor Archives (originals in Reuther Library); author's interviews with UAW International Representatives Garland Ham and Roy Kinney, Arlington, Texas, 12 Feb. 1988, and with Alexander, Cawthon, Stubbs, Veach, Fleming, Edwards, Gathings and Shields.

[28]Robert Christopher, "Rebirth and Lost Opportunities: The Texas AFL and the New Deal, 1933-1939" (M. A. thesis, University of Texas at Arlington, 1977), p. 106.

The original Ford Motor Company, Dallas, 1914, prior to the move to East Grand.

From the collections of Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village

SYMBOLS & IMAGES OF AMERICAN LABOR

Dinner Pails and Hard Hats

HARRY R. RUBENSTEIN

IN OUR DAILY LIVES WE ARE BOMBARDED with visual images of American life that stereotype virtually all aspects of our society. Many of these portrayals are intended to entertain, to entice us to buy, or to support a candidate or cause. The producers of these images employ a symbolic shorthand of visual stereotypes and clichés to simplify their messages and make their point as directly as possible. We are all familiar with advertisements that associate the image of a "successful" businessman with a luxury car or a "typical" housewife with a kitchen appliance. The characters are not based on the lives of real figures but are developed out of society's prevailing attitudes and the advertisement producer's own biases and goals.

The aim of these advertisements is not to document reality but to sell products. However, if they are to be successful they must not run counter to the popular attitudes held by their audience. As Roland Marchand wrote in his book about advertising in the 1920s and 1930s, "advertising leaders recognized the necessity of associating their messages with the values and attitudes already held by their audience. They sought to strike only those notes

National Museum of American History

Fig. 1. In this political cartoon seven unemployed workingmen state their opinions on the political and financial policies surrounding the panic and depression of 1837. Not only are the cartoonist's political views revealed, but also a common conception of what occupations typified the working class.

that would evoke a positive resonance."[1]

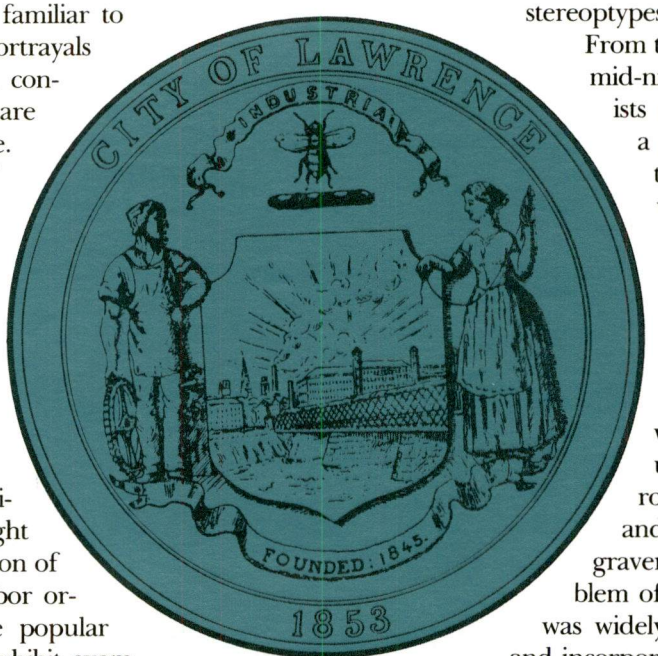
The use of these stereotypical symbolic figures is of course not unique to the twentieth century. Although many of these images are short-lived and limited in use, those stereotypes that are recurring and widely employed are successful because they are based on the popular biases of their time. These visual portrayals serve as evidence for charting changes in popular attitudes over time and can be useful in analyzing values held in the popular culture.

Prevalent throughout American history are stereotypical images of workers. Although how labor has been defined has changed, graphic artists traditionally have depicted the community of workers as a distinct group or class within society. By repeatedly presenting figures with specific attributes and objects, such as a leather apron, dinner pail or hard hat, artists established visual stereotypes of workers

that became recognizable and familiar to the general public. While the portrayals are an artistic contrivance and convenience, expressed in them are the popular attitudes of the time. Reflected in these depictions of labor are the artists' own motivations and the sensibilities and political climate of their eras.

This is the second of two articles drawing upon the research and images assembled for an exhibition "Symbols and Images of American Labor" at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.[2] The exhibition brought together a representative selection of labor imagery produced by labor organizations and found in the popular culture. The first half of the exhibit examined how workers expressed their sense of identity through images and symbols. This essay presents the material from the second half of the exhibit, which traced how workers as a distinct group have been characterized in cartoons, magazines, campaign memorabilia, advertising, television, movies and on product labels from the 1800s to the present.[3]

Although graphic artists have produced many images of workers and work scenes, the exhibit included only those depictions of workers that were designed to be symbolic portrayals of labor as a group and were found repeatedly in the popular culture. At no time in American history has the general society considered everyone who worked to be part of the working class. Throughout most of our history labor has been presented as being primarily white and male. Some kinds of workers such as farmers and "professionals" were thought to belong to separate classes. Generally, minorities and women were excluded, either considered outside the mainstream of labor or simply ignored. The exhibit attempted to capture the dominant



City of Lawrence, Massachusetts

Fig. 2. Lawrence, Massachusetts, was established as a textile manufacturing town.The city seal honors the industry's work force.

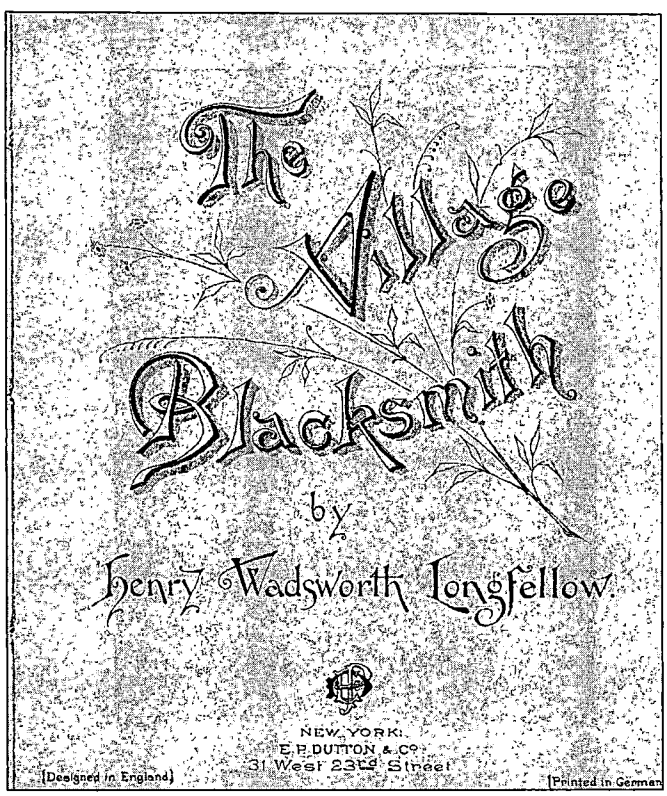
stereoptypes during successive periods.

From the late eighteenth and into the mid-nineteenth century, graphic artists most often presented labor as a group of skilled artisans. Each trade was pictured with its own unique identifying symbols, and presented as sharing collective interests. Common in prints, on banknotes and occasionally on city seals were portrayals of an idealized blacksmith wearing a leather apron with hammer in hand or an unidentifiable craftsman surrounded by symbols of industry and commerce.[4] Artists and engravers borrowed the traditional emblem of the arm and hammer, which was widely used by artisan associations, and incorporated it on material to associate it with labor or to attract labor's support.

In these images artisans usually appeared dignified, imbued with the ideals of egalitarianism, republicanism and industry and were presented as integral parts of their community. Rarely were their precarious economic position or the growing conflicts between journeymen and shop owners revealed in graphics. And even rarer are popular graphics that presented a negative portrayal of workers.

Some of the earliest graphics of artisans appeared in books of trades. First printed in sixteenth century Germany, these books became popular throughout Europe and later, America. By the eighteenth century these illustrated volumes contained information on a variety of crafts, serving as guides for selecting apprenticeships and as general references. Although not directly stated, the underlying message of the text and accompanying images is that there is dignity and value in all trades.[5]

Virtually all the figures that were used to represent labor were white. The graphics do indicate a greater acceptance of working women than would be true for later periods. Included in general work scenes and drawn as idealized symbolic workers, women appear in prints, on banknotes, in the book of trades and on city seals. These graphics present both women and men as equally belonging in the



National Museum of American History

Fig. 3. Title page and illustration from an early undated edition of The Village Blacksmith *by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.*

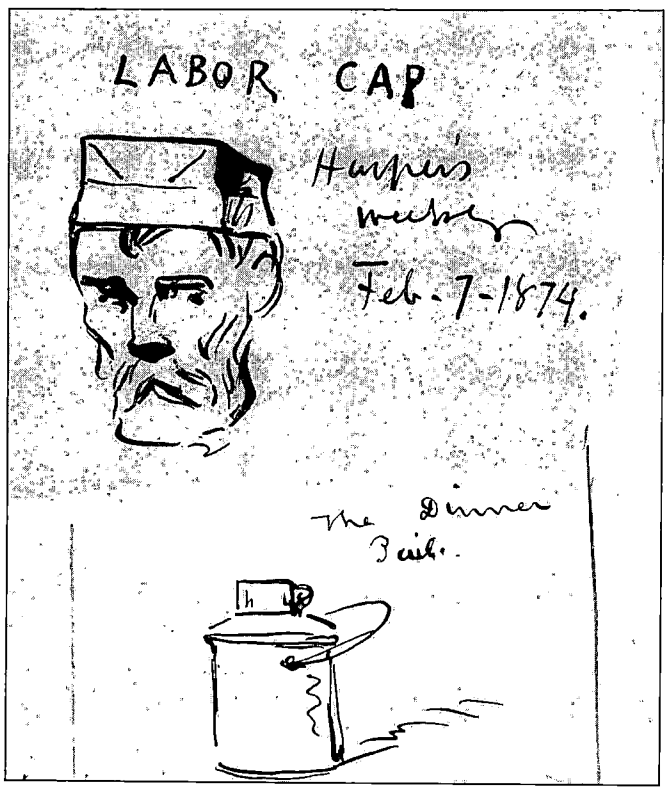
work place. This of course is not the same thing as having equal opportunity and receiving equal treatment. Women, with few exceptions, were restricted to a limited number of occupations, such as spinners, seamstresses, shoe binders, teachers, domestic servants or unskilled workers in the mills of New England, and in return received much lower wages for comparable work.[6]

By the mid-nineteenth century graphics of workers were beginning to reflect the major changes that were occurring in the economy. Established practices in craft organizations and work place relations were dramatically being transformed as the nation developed a modern capitalist economy. Production increasingly moved out of the small artisan craft shop that served the local community and into factories and sweatshops that produced goods for the national market. Labor itself was being transformed into a market commodity.[7]

Publishers of prints and magazines were introducing more drawings of the new factory life. Engravings such as Winslow Homer's depiction of textile workers streaming from a New England factory at bell time, appearing in *Harper's Weekly*, July 25, 1868, made the economic transformation familiar to many readers.

Independent artisans were less frequently portrayed as central parts of the economy; instead, they were often romanticized as a relic of a by-gone age. In Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *The Village Blacksmith*, written in 1840, the blacksmith became not only a representative of his trade but a symbol of the artisan class. Widely distributed in illustrated editions, images of the independent craftsman became part of American culture and countless numbers of engravings were made of a blacksmith "under the spreading chestnut-tree."

Towards the end of the 1870s, artists and cartoonists adopted a single figure to personify their conceptions of the working class. They represented labor as a single white male figure wearing a paper mechanic's hat and apron, and carrying a dinner pail or assorted tools. Although this



Library of Congress

Fig. 4. Early sketch of "Labor" by Thomas Nast for a political cartoon.

figure at times was still presented with the same degree of independence shown in earlier graphics of artisans, he was often shown as a victim, struggling against the consequences of industrialization.

Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly* cartoonist, has been credited as the creator of this figure, which was widely copied by other cartoonists and artists.[8] Although Nast, and others, used it to represent the entire working class, the motifs were emblems that were most associated with traditional skilled craftsmen. This image ignored important changes in the work force towards the end of the nineteenth century as machine production replaced skilled artisans and semi-skilled and unskilled laborers came to dominate the working class.

Negative portrayals of workers, which earlier were extremely rare, became common. Labor unions and workers were often shown as obstacles to progress and at times conspiratorial and dangerous. Widely published and distributed were prints of the labor unrest of the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Brick-throwing railroad strikers, plotting miners and wild-eyed anarchists filled the pages of the nation's illustrated magazines.[9] Usually exaggerated and biased against labor, these depictions shaped public opinion against workers' protests. Cartoonists' treatment of organized labor also subtly indicated their own prejudices. They often drew labor organizers as outside agitators or union bureaucrats. Artists almost always showed them as separate figures, outside the laboring class, a practice that continues today.

Also new to this period was the abundance of labor symbols and images in marketing and campaigning to attract working class support of a product or candidate. This increased marketing along class lines is further evidence of the growing identification and polarization between the social classes that took place during the late nineteenth century. Everything from tobacco companies to national politicians created advertising directed at the working class. Typical of this trend was Labor's Choice

National Museum of American History

Fig. 5. United States President William McKinley instituted the Full Dinner Pail campaign as a direct appeal for labor's support in his second successful presidential bid. Judge, *10 November 1900.*

Scott Molloy Labor Collection

Fig. 6. Print of Chicago railroad strikers battling the militia, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, *11 August 1877.*

National Museum of American History

Fig. 7. Cigar box label, ca. 1900s.

cigars, Arm and Hammer baking powder, and William McKinley's Full Dinner Pail campaign of 1900.

As mentioned above, not everyone who worked was considered by these artists to be part of the larger stereotypical group defined as labor. Most noticeable, though not surprising, is the absence of immigrants, blacks and women from these portrayals.

During the late nineteenth century, when waves of immigrants were dramatically changing the composition of the working class, most artists continued to depict the typical laborer as white and male. At times workers might have certain ethnic attributes, but most often they were portrayed as native-born Americans. Artists often presented ethnic and racial groups as separate classes, usually shown as racial stereotypes and virtually never shown wearing a paper hat or carrying a dinner pail, the most common symbols of labor at that time.

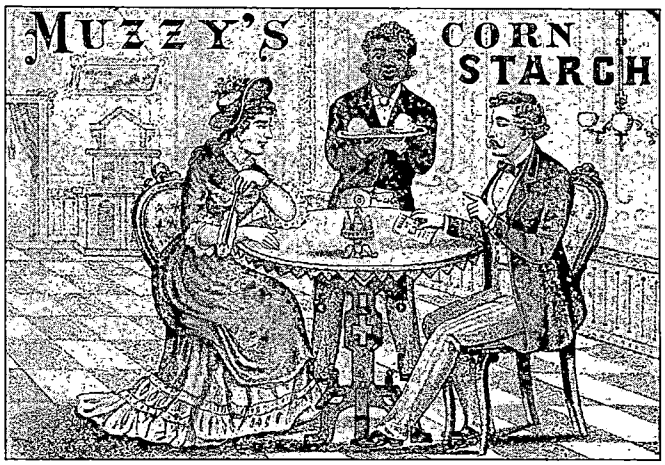
Black figures bearing the symbols of labor seem to be nonexistent. When most graphic artists presented African-Americans in work scenes they were almost always shown as agricultural field hands or as service workers such as waiters, porters, cooks and maids. Rarely were their contributions in mining, manufacturing, trades or professions recognized. This did not begin to change until the modern civil rights movement put political pressure on advertisers in the 1960s.

The Victorian America of the late nineteenth century was ambivalent, if not schizophrenic, about its attitudes and portrayals of women, especially married women, working for pay. The family ideal was for the husband to work for money and the wife to tend the home. A woman's work was to be confined to her own sphere of household

National Museum of American History

Fig. 8. Trade card for Bell's Buffalo soap with depiction of "typical" Irish worker, ca. 1890s.

chores and child rearing. Women's work was considered different in all respects from what men did for wages. Nonetheless, many women chose to or needed to find paid



National Museum of American History

Fig. 10. Trade card for Muzzy's corn starch, ca. 1890s.

Southern Labor Archives

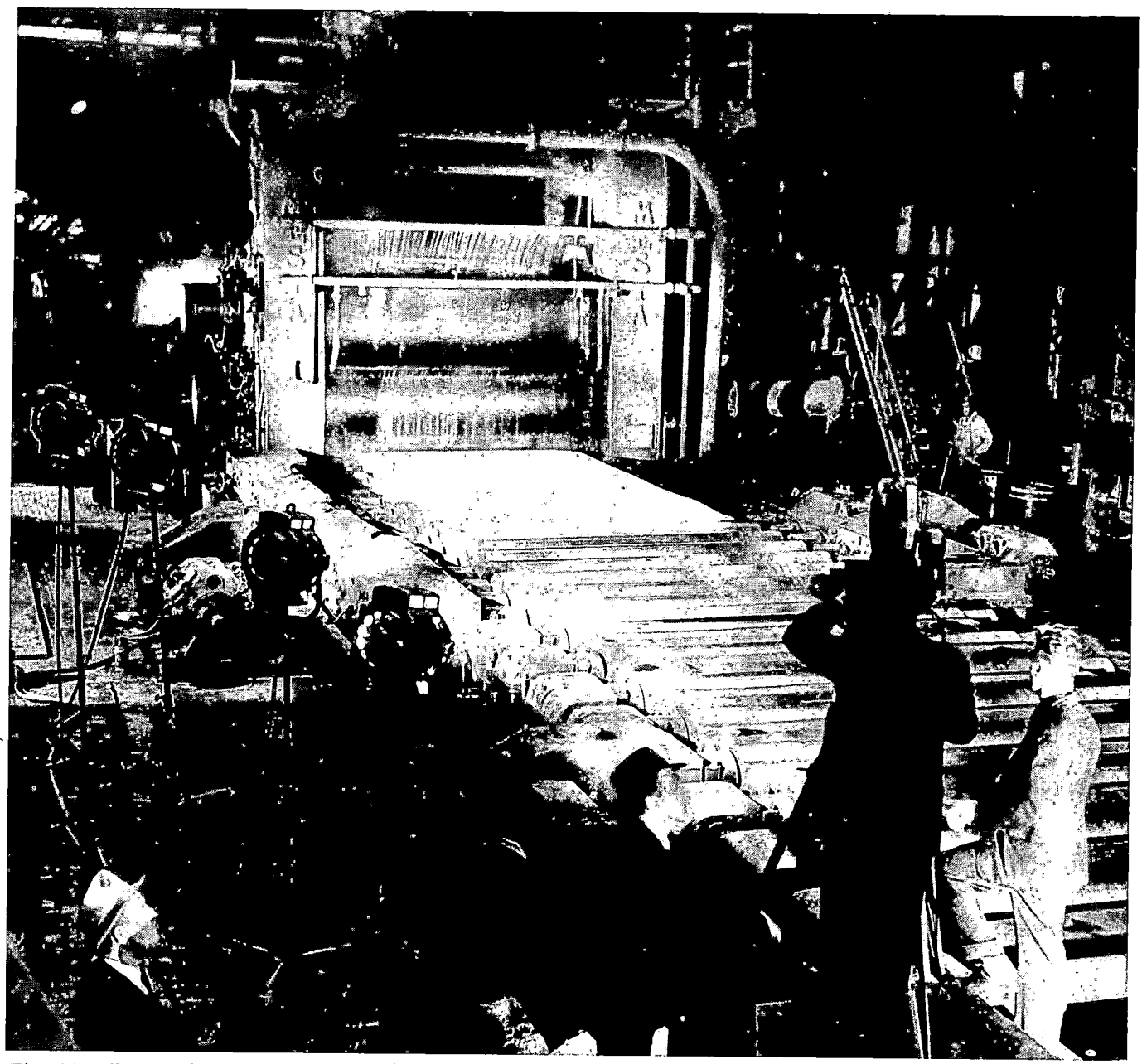
Fig. 9. Horrors befalling women in the work place were presented in this illustrated article of "Female Slaves of New York," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, *3 November 1888.*

employment. In many graphics, women were typically shown in one of two disparate ways. Images calling for social reform presented women suffering under oppressive working conditions, while graphics promoting manufacturing depicted women in ease and comfort.

The poor working girl subjected to the crushing world of factory life and cruel bosses was a common character found in graphics and literature. The message was clear. In an ideal world women would not work. If circumstances compelled them to seek employment, then they would need extra protection from the harshness of the work place.

Graphics produced by manufacturers or by sympathetic publications presented a very different picture of work. Women appeared well-dressed and worked effortlessly. One aim of the artist was to indicate that the machinery virtually ran itself, while another was to show that women could be as comfortable in the work place as in their own parlors, thereby making work outside the home appear more socially acceptable. By the 1920s, the general laborer, and in particular the factory worker, replaced the skilled workman as the symbol for the entire class. The character of the American "working stiff" dominated the period. Struggling against his lot in life, he was often presented as just a part of the faceless mass of industrial workers.Workingmen's wool snap-brim caps and lunch pails, along with time clocks and factory whistles, became labor's most typical symbols.

In part this shift reflected the reality of the changing work force. By 1920, 11.2 million workers were employed in manufacturing, increased from 2.5 million in 1870.[10] Equally important in causing this cultural change in the popular image of labor was the success of several corporations in promoting their industries and their vision of the nation. Corporations such as Ford Motor Company and United States Steel led the way in promoting the wonders of mass production. Ford's films such as *Rhapsody in Steel,* made in 1934 for the Century of Progress exposition in Chicago, *Symphony in "F"* for the 1939 New York City World's Fair, and United States Steel's *Men Make Steel,* filmed in technicolor in 1937 set the form and standard of industrial films. Other manufacturers and publishers followed suit, producing films and photo essays that made scenes of factory life and production lines in the



National Museum of American History

Fig. 11. Filming of United States Steel's To Each Other *(1943) at its subsidiary, the Fairfield Works, Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Co., Birmingham, Alabama.*

1930s familiar to most Americans.[11]

A few films, such as Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, produced in 1936, reflected a growing distrust and fear of the depersonalizing effects that industrialization had on labor (see front cover). However, the overwhelming majority of the portrayals of the new industrial world found in the popular media expressed an unquestioning and optimistic outlook.

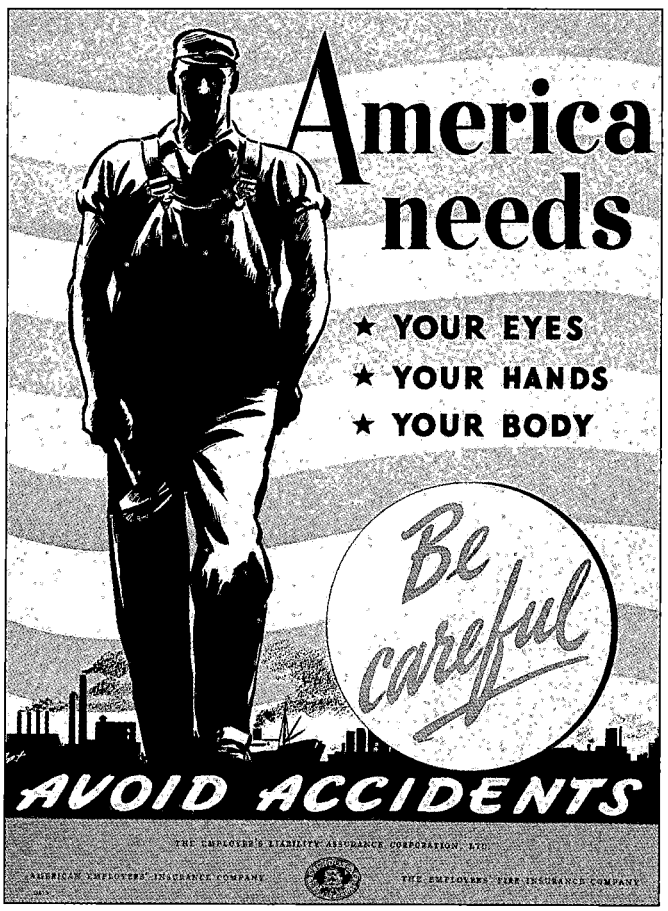
Millions of Americans saw the beauty of hot steel tamed by massive machines that shaped and cut it into useful components, and armies of automobile workers tightening and securing engines and fenders onto cars that flowed by their station. These popular portrayals of expanding industry and assembly lines promoted corporations' achievements in creating and organizing production. What is missing from these dramatizations was the role and skills of individual workers. The millwrights, die cutters and rollers and countless other skilled workers were largely ignored in favor of the machinery and the process. This in turn projected a positive image for managers, who purchased, organized and controlled the machinery, and a diminished status for the workers who made it function.

An important exception to this general stereotypical worker of the period could be found in murals produced under various New Deal arts projects. The Roosevelt Administration during the 1930s Depression established a series of programs designed to provide employment to painters and sculptors and to promote the nation's arts. Under the auspices of the Treasury Department, which had responsibility for constructing and decorating federal buildings, thousands of murals were commissioned for post offices and federal office buildings.[12]

The Section of Painting and Sculpture in the Treasury Department established a competitive system of selecting murals. The process increasingly involved local community members who often had advisory and even veto power over the murals to be placed in their town. The attitudes about American life expressed in the murals, as a result, indicate a shared acceptance of these values in the community, rather than values that were solely the artist's.

Although officially no school of painting was excluded, contemporary realism was in fact the only acceptable style. Local and national history, landscapes and vignettes of community life and industry were the predominant themes of muralists.[13] Artists included in many of their paintings images of labor that emphasized the strength of the common people. The muralists

Fig. 12. The Riveter *by Ben Shahn. Study for the Bronx, New York, central postal station, 1938.*



National Museum of American History

Fig. 13. World War II advertisement stressing what America needs from workers.

chose to celebrate workers' individual skills and to instill in their subjects an air of thoughtful dignity. Additionally, unlike other depictions of workers, these portrayals often focused on the roles of minorities and women in the work place. While this "New Deal art" differs in its portrayal of labor from most commercial art of the 1930s, it does reflect a continuing and important strain in many Americans' attitudes toward workers—that of respect and recognition of their contributions and sacrifices.

The entrance of the United States into World War II brought an end to the federally financed arts projects. At this time of national crisis all resources were to be directed in support of the war effort. As part of this drive the government, civic organizations and businesses produced a series of posters designed to encourage increased productivity and employee loyalty. The graphics produced for these posters appear stylistically similar to the contemporary realist art of the muralists; however, the emphasis of the work was quite different. Although many of the images created were of workers with heroic attributes, showing labor as a muscular giant, the underlying message was that labor's role in the work place was to serve management. Workers were to shut up and produce. The contribution workers were to make was to supply their brute strength. Rarely did the messages on the posters recognize workers' skills, special knowledge or ideas.

The figure of the "working stiff" persisted through the war years and into the consumer culture of the 1950s. Jackie Gleason's sympathetic portrayal of Ralph Kramden, a New York bus driver, in the television show *The Honeymooners* was one of the last major contemporary depictions of this. During the mid-1950s, *The Honeymooners* was one of television's earliest and most popular shows dealing with working-class life. The characters' often desperate attempts to escape their working-class life was a repeated theme of the show. Ralph Kramden and his neighbor and friend Ed Norton, a sewer worker, played by Art Carney, were constantly embarking on new get-rich-quick schemes, seeking shortcuts to the material wealth that was denied them by their station in life. Each new attempt only met with further frustration, and ended with poor Ralph forever destined to remain in his two-room Brooklyn flat.

By the 1960s labor's image was undergoing another transformation. The character of the working stiff was being displaced by the hard hat. The post-World War II construction boom that changed the face of America was finally catching up with the image of labor. The construction worker replaced the factory employee, and the hard hat supplanted the workman's cap as the central symbol for American workers. Most images that appeared in the general media still showed the worker as white and male, only now he was most likely to be wearing a round hard hat when posing in beer advertisements. A more substantive change in labor's image, however, was occurring. No longer viewed by

New York Times

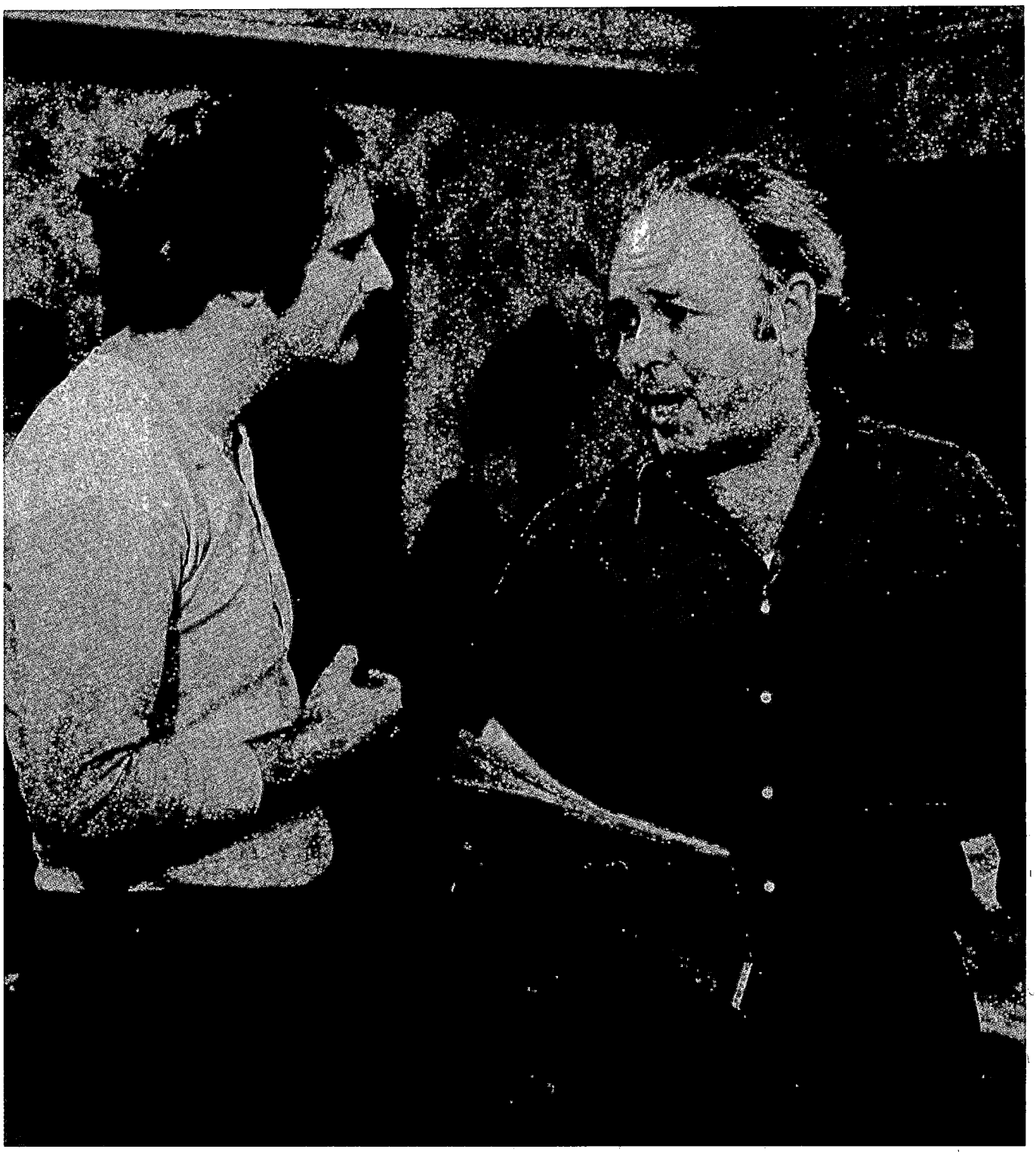
Fig. 14. "Hard Hat Riot," May 8, 1970.

many as radical or possibly subversive, by the 1960s many images depicted labor as middle-class and ranging politically from conservative to reactionary. The stereotype simply ignored large impoverished sectors of the work force and the very politically diverse nature of the labor movement and workers in general.

On May 8, 1970, a group of two hundred construction workers and longshoremen, wearing hard hats and armed with lead pipes and waving American flags, left their downtown New York work sites and attacked a group of students who had gathered in memory of the students killed at Kent State University. The event seemed to confirm the stereotype of the white reactionary blue-collar worker. The media proclaimed the riot as the birth of the "Hard Hat Movement," further reinforcing the image and associating the action of a small group of workers with the entire working class.[14]

In truth, labor was as politically and socially divided as the country itself. The image that was being established ignored the diversity within the working class and the progressive elements in the labor movement.

Further embedding this stereotype in the American psyche was the very popular and influential television series, *All in the Family*, which debuted in 1971. The growing rift between conservative, blue-collar workers and liberal student protesters was a major theme of



CBS Photography

Fig. 15. Carroll O'Connor and Rob Reiner in a scene from All in the Family.

the show. Archie Bunker, as played by Carroll O'Connor, was a bigoted shipping foreman who frequently came into conflict with his radical son-in-law, Mike, played by Rob Reiner. The character of Archie, though becoming more endearing as the show progressed, was originally the embodiment of the ignorant, narrow-minded, reactionary blue-collar worker of the post-war era. This image dogged labor for the next fifteen years and shaped public attitudes against workers and their organizations.

Today, labor's image is undergoing another major transformation. In the early 1980s the most significant aspect of labor imagery was the general lack of it in the commercial and popular culture. This absence was often interpreted as a reflection of the declining influ-

National Museum of American History

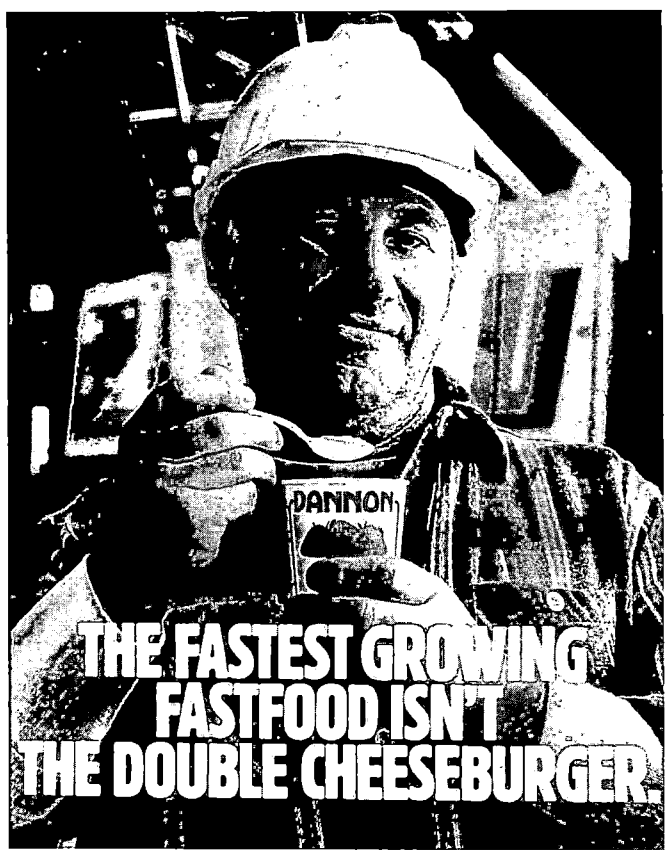
Fig. 16. Movie poster from 9 to 5, *1980.*

ence of labor unions and the diminished status of many manual trades. In a mass culture dominated by such television series as *Dallas* and *Dynasty* there seemed to be little room for the life and toil of workers. A few movies, such as *9 to 5* (1980)—a comedy about the frustrations of secretarial work and the struggles of working women, or *Norma Rae* (1979)—a drama about organizing a southern textile mill, stand out as notable exceptions. Nonetheless, in the 1980s visions of upper- and middle-class life dominated the media.

However, in the last few years there seems to be a minor resurgence of labor imagery, most notably in advertising. After almost disappearing in the early 1980s, the stereotypical hard hat has reappeared in advertisements for such items as Dannon yogurt and California raisins. No longer considered a politically reactionary figure, he is now more acceptable for selling products. Other new images are also being established. The Gap clothing stores introduced a line of "Workforce" jeans and casual clothing and produced a series of advertisements coupling romantic photographs of Depression-era work scenes with contemporary views of the clothes. Both Lee jeans and Esprit clothing have followed suit and introduced similar advertisements.

Also breaking down is the image of labor as solely white and male. Without a clear definition of the working class our preconceptions and our image of labor is widening. No longer focused on just white males, it generally includes minorities, women and many more professions. Although the use of women in hard hats, and blacks and Hispanics in work scenes is really aimed at selling to those groups generally, rather than creating a working-class figure, the introduction of these images does influence our views of labor today.

This new interest, though relatively minor, reflects a greater appreciation, or at least acceptance, of the role workers play in society. The advertisements gen-



The Dannon Company

Fig. 17. Advertisement for Dannon yogurt, 1987.

erally treat their subject with respect, giving the workers an air of dignity. After satiating the American public with a steady diet of the rich and famous, advertisers seem ready to try to sell their goods with the salt of the earth.

This sketchy overview of labor imagery of the last two hundred years reveals a considerable change. Labor, from being portrayed as one of the essential pillars of society, has generally suffered a steady deterioration in image. The road from noble artisan, to struggling craftsman, to poor working stiff, to ignorant hard hat, is a reflection of society's diminishing respect for manual work. With the increase in semi-skilled and unskilled labor in the production of goods, the status of all manual labor has declined. There is a tendency in a capitalist economy to treat labor as a commodity, and unfortunately for most workers, a commodity that is unappreciated. It is apparent from this survey that labor's image has generally not served the interests of workers and often has resulted in depreciating their contributions.

In this highly media-shaped society, the question of labor's image is central to the labor movement. The status of workers and their perceived contributions will be crucial in determining whether unions are able to strengthen their current position and gain wider support. How a worker is portrayed in a soup commercial may seem insignificant in the larger struggle between labor and management; yet, these images reflect and shape society's attitudes. Public support has always been a key element in unions' successes and failures. In the world where public opinion is so greatly influenced by the images we are presented, labor's standing is affected by the popular stereotypes of working people.

The current advertising trend of portraying positive new images of workers, although relatively minor, should be seen as an encouraging sign for unions. In recent years several unions such as the United Automobile Workers, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees have also produced image-oriented television commericals aimed at shaping public opinion. Similar is the recent "Union Yes" campaign of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. Admittedly, unions have limited resources to spend in this extremely expensive arena. Nonetheless, there is a growing awareness that they can not concede this area to others. What new images will emerge is impossible to predict. What seems certain is that future portrayals will be shaped by our attitudes toward different types of work and the people who perform it.

Safeway Stores, Inc.

Fig. 18. Advertisement for Safeway, 1987.

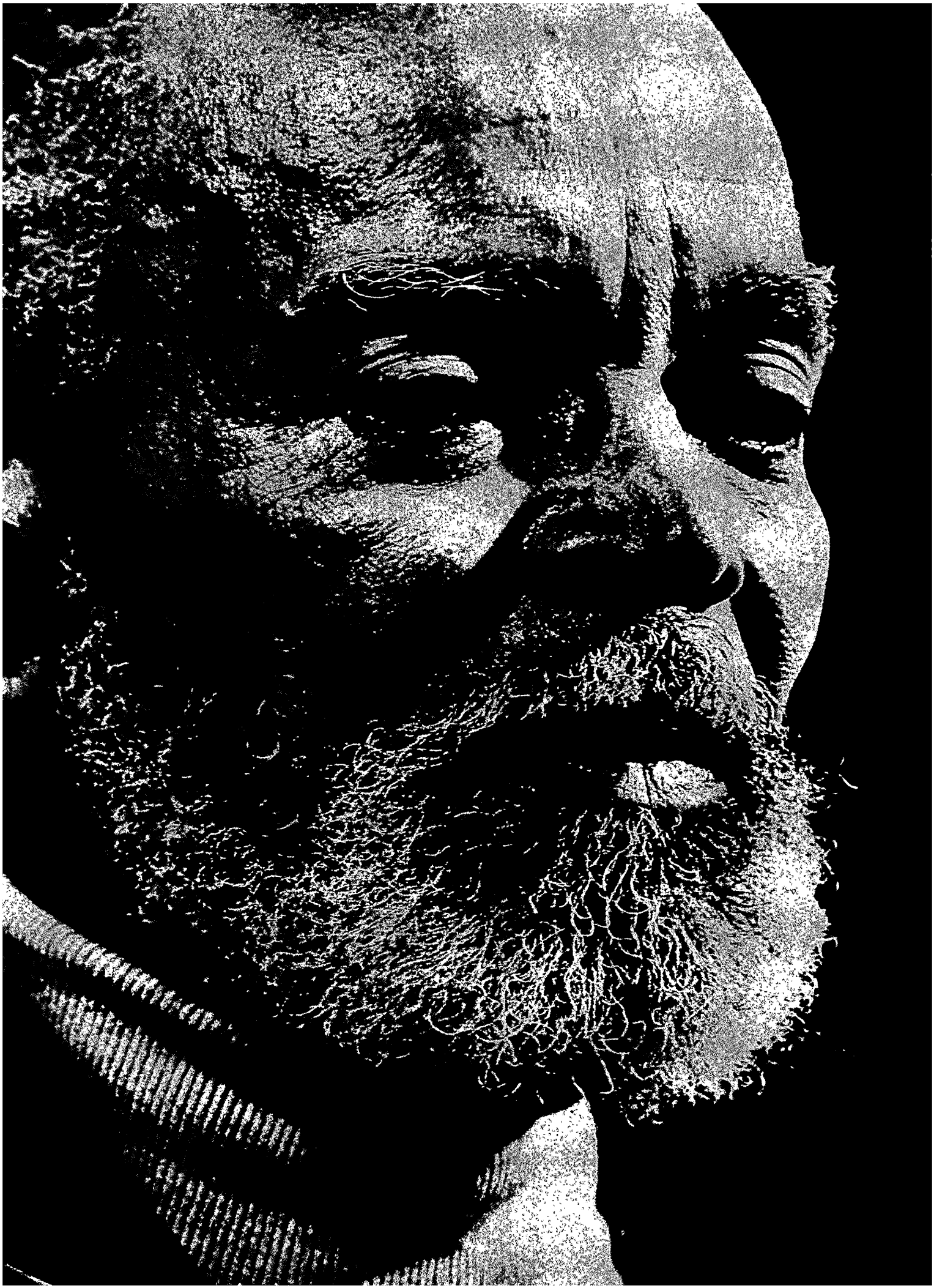
Notes

Harry R. Rubenstein is collection manager and museum specialist for the labor history collection in the Division of Political History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. He is the author of several articles on labor history and museum policies and served as curator for the "Symbols and Images of American Labor" exhibition.
In March 1989 the travelling exhibit "Badges of Labor: Symbols and Images of American Labor" began a three-year tour of the United States under the sponsorship of the SITES program of the Smithsonian Institution.

[1]Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. xix, 235-38.
[2]Harry R. Rubenstein, "Symbols and Images of American Labor: Badges of Pride," *Labor's Heritage* 1 (Apr. 1989):36-51.
[3]The exhibition and the traveling exhibit were made possible in part by generous grants to the National Museum of American History's Labor History Fund from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union; American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; the Gap, Inc.; Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union; International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades of the United States and Canada; International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union; International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Technical, Salaried and Machine Workers; Joseph Anthony Beirne Memorial Foundation of the Communications Workers of America; National Association of Letter Carriers of the United States of America; Service Employees International Union; United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America; United Food and Commercial Workers International Union; United Steel Workers of America; and The Newspaper Guild.
The ideas and themes of the exhibit were greatly enhanced by the suggestions and criticisms of many individuals within and outside the Smithsonian Institution. The author would like to thank especially Russell K. Cashdollar, Nanci K. Edwards, Gary B. Kulik, Edith P. Mayo, Anne L. Pierce, Jonathan Prude and Alfred F. Young.
[4]James A. Haxby, *Standard Catalog of United States Obsolete Bank Notes, 1782-1866* (Iola, Wisc.: Krause Publications, 1987), vols. 1-4.
[5]Peter Stockham, ed., *Little Book of Early American Crafts and Trades* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1976), pp. v-xi.
[6]Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 20-44.
[7]Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 107-42.
[8]Thomas Nast St. Hill, *Thomas Nast: Cartoons and Illustrations* (New York: Dover Publications, 1974), p. 124.
[9]M.B. Schnapper, *American Labor: A Pictorial Social History* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1972); William Cahn, *A Pictorial History of American Labor* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1972). Although presented uncritically, both works contain excellent samplings of prints from this period.
[10]Melvyn Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker, 1865-1920* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: AHM Publishing Corporation, 1975), p.3.
[11]William L. Bird, "Enterprise and Meaning: The 'New Vocabulary' of Sponsored Film, 1939-1949," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, March 25, 1988, Reno, Nevada, and to be published in *History Today*, 1989.
[12]The degree of public involvement and exposure to these murals distinguishes these paintings from other works of fine art of the period, in that they were part of the visual popular culture of the time. For this reason they were included in this general study of popular labor images.
[13]Virginia Mecklenburg, *The Public As Patron: A History of the Treasury Department Mural Program Illustrated with Paintings from the Collection of the University of Maryland Art Gallery* (College Park, Md.: University of Maryland, Department of Art, 1979), pp. 10-22.
[14]*New York Times*, 9 May 1970.

Credits

Fig. 1. Harry T. Peters Collection, Division of Domestic Life, National Museum of American History
Fig. 3. Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Fig. 7. Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Fig. 5. Division of Graphic Arts, National Museum of American History
Fig. 8. Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Fig. 10. Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Fig. 9. Special Collections, Southern Labor Archives, Urban Life Center, Georgia State University
Fig. 11. Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources, National Museum of American History
Fig. 13. Division of Political History, National Museum of American History
Fig. 16. Division of Political History, National Museum of American History



Robert E. Skinner

The Black Man in the Literature of Labor

The Early Novels of Chester Himes

IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT MANY STRUGGLES IN the history of the United States have been as turbulent or as dramatic as those having to do with labor. Both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are shot with fiercely contested strikes and hard-fought negotiations between labor and business leaders.

Because of the often conflictive nature of American labor, it was inevitable that labor struggles would become the subject of many literary and dramatic presentations. For example, in 1970, a motion picture entitled *The Molly Maguires* chronicled the efforts of a Pinkerton detective to infiltrate a gang of Irish miners who were terrorizing coal mine owners in nineteenth century Pennsylvania. An early twentieth century labor dispute was the subject of the recently released motion picture, *Matewan*. James Lee Burke, a distinguished Southern novelist, wrote a moving coming-of-age novel entitled *To the Bright and Shining Sun*, which was set against the backdrop of labor unrest in the Kentucky coal mine country. The tension in Dashiell Hammett's first novel, *Red Harvest*, is derived from the conflict between a ruthless industrialist, crooked city officials, gangsters and union organizers.[1]

An aspect of labor history that has received scant attention in fiction is the experience of the Negro in industry. Because of this, the early works of Chester Himes are

Chester Himes—promotional photo for Cotton Comes to Harlem, *March 11, 1972.*

particularly important to the scholar who is interested in the experience of the black worker. In his first novel, entitled *If He Hollers Let Him Go*,[2] Himes starkly portrayed working conditions in a California shipyard during the early years of World War II and the tragic decline of hero Bob Jones as he fights against bigotry and his own self-destructive tendencies.

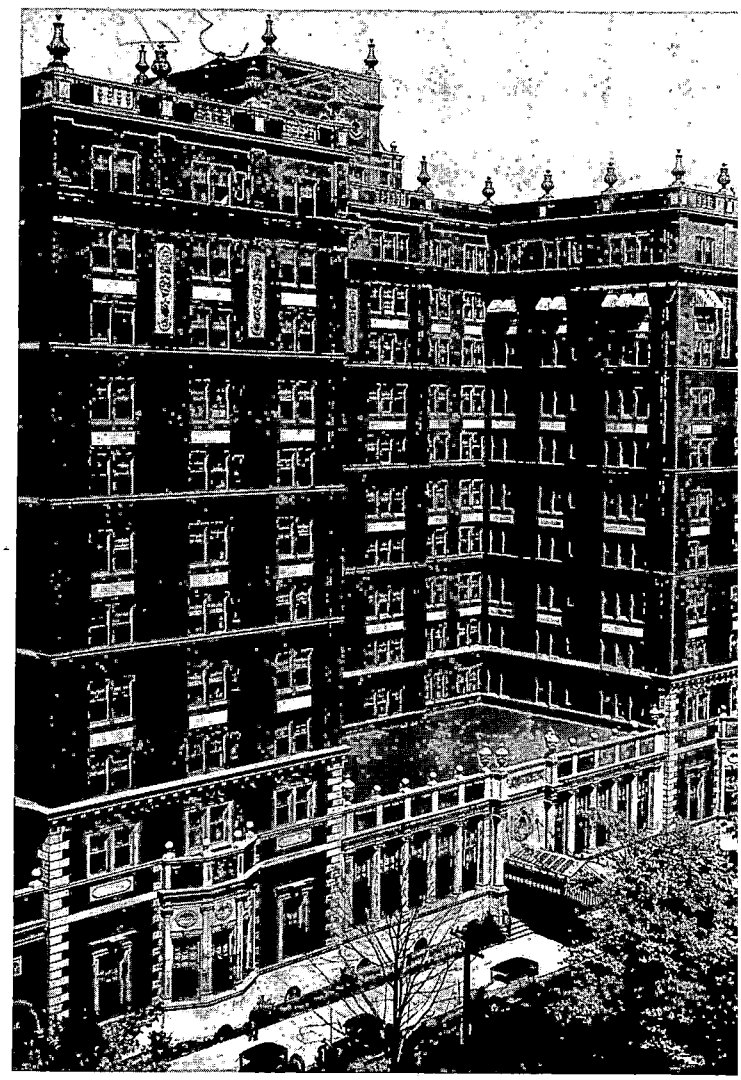
In Himes' second work, *The Lonely Crusade*,[3] we see the efforts of a labor union to unionize black aircraft workers through the eyes of Lee Gordon, a black union organizer. Both works are searing proletarian novels that point up the social stresses under which the protagonists suffer and the turbulent atmosphere brought about by the constant tension between industry, laborers and unions.

Himes was born in Jefferson City, Missouri, in 1909 to Joseph Sandy and Estelle Bomar Himes. The younger Himes had an unusually hopeful start in life for an American Negro in the early part of this century. His father was a college professor who surrounded his family with opportunities for cultural enrichment that were uncommon for people of either race in those days. Himes was in many ways fortunate that he had an ambitious mother who pushed all three of her sons to better themselves. Possibly she realized that the only chance for a black man to improve his standing in life was to get the best education possible. Her ambitions bore fruit in all her children, as each one went on to distinguish himself in his chosen field of endeavor. Eddie Himes, the eldest, became an official of the waiters' union in New York. Joseph Himes, Jr., became an internationally famous sociologist who is still active today.[4]

The family's fortunes began to take a downward turn during Chester's childhood. Estelle Himes was a combative personality who kept her husband in trouble with his colleagues and also with white residents of the semi-rural areas in which they lived. Eventually, Joseph, Sr., was unable to get work as a college instructor and was forced into a series of low-paying menial jobs. When Joseph, Jr., was blinded during a school chemistry accident, their meager resources were stretched even further and tension between the husband and wife began to build toward the breaking point.

By the time the family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, in the early 1920s, Chester had become a teenager and was having a great deal of trouble adapting socially. An especially shy and sensitive boy with a loner instinct, he was often sullen and hostile in school.

In 1926, while working as a busboy at Wade Park Manor, an exclusive hotel in Cleveland, he inadvertently stepped into an open elevator shaft. The resulting fall broke several bones, injured his back, and shattered all of his teeth. He found himself treated with extreme generosity on all sides. The Ohio State Industrial Commission awarded him a pension and arranged for all of his hospitalization and subsequent treatment.



The Wade Park Hotel in Cleveland, Ohio, 1923.

Himes' employer agreed to continue his salary throughout the course of his treatment. This settlement appealed to his father, who preferred not to make waves where disputes with white persons were concerned. With his father's encouragement, he signed a waiver by which, in return for the award, he gave up rights to additional claims.

Unfortunately, his mother believed that he had been cheated of the opportunity to sue the hotel for a much more substantial award. She got into a fight with the hotel management, as a consequence of which the hotel withdrew its offer to pay Chester's salary. He eventually recovered from his injuries, although he was to be plagued by back troubles for the rest of his life.

Chester Himes enrolled at Ohio State University in 1926. Like many another youngster his age, he was immature enough to be more interested in having fun than in working on his studies. This was complicated by his feelings of inferiority which were accentuated by his entry into a predominantly white world for the first time. He was also resentful of the proper, light-skinned middle-class black youngsters he met in school. He began searching for a place where he fit in, making friends with prostitutes and gamblers, and spending much of his time in the tough part of Columbus.

His college education ended rather abruptly when a prank went awry. In an effort to embarrass some of the middle-class black students whom he felt had rejected him socially, he took a group of them to visit some of his seedy friends. A sojourn at a brothel climaxed in a brawl that upset a number of the young women in the group. When word of his prank got back to the dean of men, Himes was forced to withdraw from the university.

Free to follow his own desires, he left the world of respectability and entered one where he felt more at home. He began working for a gambler and learned all of the tricks of the trade, associated with bootleggers and prostitutes, carried a gun and was easily provoked into using it. Before a year had gone by he had already been arrested for stealing guns from a National Guard Armory and for passing bad checks.

Himes finally stepped too far over the line when he robbed a wealthy Cleveland family of a large sum of money and jewelry and attempted to escape the country. Ironically enough, he was arrested by Chicago police for a crime that he did not commit. During a brutal interrogation, he was forced to admit to the Cleveland crime in order to keep the detectives from beating him to death.

In December of 1928, an unforgiving judge sentenced the young man to the Ohio State Penitentiary for a term of twenty to twenty-five years. For almost anyone else, this would have been the beginning of the end. During his confinement, however, Himes began to write. His early educational experience was a thorough one and it had instilled in him a love of language and literature.

Himes claimed in his autobiography that he turned to writing in prison because it protected him from abuse by both guards and hostile prisoners. His brother, Dr. Joseph S. Himes, Jr., in a letter to the author of this article dated September 23, 1988, explained:

> I, too, have speculated about Chester's seemingly mysterious going into writing. I think there is no single factor, but a cluster of experiences, influences, and his own internal drive. First, I think Chester was shocked into maturity by his succession of disasters. . . . I think, at this point, Chester took himself in hand and decided that he had to do something with his life. The alternative was too ghastly to consider. Even at this time he may have thought of writing as what he would like to do.

The ever-faithful Estelle Himes knew that writing was a way for her son to cope with his imprisonment. She pleaded with prison officials to excuse him from hard labor because of his back injuries and persuaded them to assign him a place where he could develop his talent. Supplied with a typewriter, paper and endless time, the young man set to work.

By 1932 his hard work began to pay off. He published numerous short stories and one book-length work in the pages of Negro periodicals such as *Abbott's Monthly* and the *Atlanta Daily World*.[5] By 1934 he was selling stories to *Esquire*. Most of the stories are vivid, sharply worded pieces with vibrant, colorful characters. Since the underworld was the thing that he knew best, it is perhaps not surprising that most of them concern criminals and convicts.

His hard work paid off in other ways as well. In April of 1936, after serving seven and a half years of his sentence, Himes was paroled from prison. A year later he married Jean Johnson, the sweetheart who had waited for him,

Esquire magazine

Illustration for "To What Red Hell," published in Esquire *magazine, October 1934.*

and began trying to support her with any work he could find. His first job was digging ditches with the Works Progress Administration in Cleveland. Anxious to escape this demanding and exhausting work, he applied for and got a job as a WPA research assistant.

He began by writing vocational bulletins for the Cleveland Public Library. At the same time he became active in the Congress of Industrial Organizations[6] and worked with the union newspaper, the *Union Leader*.[7] He is also supposed to have written a brief history of the CIO during this period. A historical pamphlet entitled *CIO: What It Is . . . And How It Came To Be* (October 1937) may be the history that Himes wrote; it bears a marked similarity in style to essays on racism in World War II that Himes wrote for magazines such as *The Crisis* in the 1940s.

In 1940 Himes was introduced to Louis Bromfield, a Pulitzer-prize-winning white writer who wrote numerous novels, short stories and screenplays during the 1930s and 1940s. Bromfield liked Himes and his wife and tried to help Chester get a book published. He also took both of them to Los Angeles in the fall of 1941 when he went there to write the screen adaptation of Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.[8] Subsequent introductions to politically active blacks such as Loren Miller and Welford Wilson gained for the young writer a firsthand view of the intellectual communist life in Southern California but did little to help him find any remunerative work.

Eventually Chester and Jean moved to San Francisco where he worked for a time at the Henry J. Kaiser-owned Richmond Shipyards. At various times he also worked at an aircraft company and at several other institutions in the Bay Area. Later they moved back to Los Angeles where Chester found work as a shipfitter at the San Pedro Harbor Shipyard.

This was a particularly depressing time for Himes because, with the war in full swing, he found himself working side-by-side with Southern whites who had moved to California to take advantage of the war production boom. Nothing in the experience of these uneducated rural workers had prepared them for working with blacks and consequently, racial tensions ran high. Himes' natural sensitivity to racial injustice only tended to make the experience excruciating for him.

Probably in an attempt to resolve the frustration and bitterness he felt at living in such a world, in 1944 Himes began writing *If He Hollers Let Him Go*. He received a fellowship from the Rosenwald Fund, an organization whose stated concern was "the betterment of the condition of Negroes with a view to their full participation in American life." The fellowships were granted to blacks and white Southerners each year who showed "exceptional promise," and they included support for academic study, music, literature, the arts, labor, business, the ministry "or any other field in which the individual gives promise of some special contribution to American life." According to the Fund review for 1942-1944, Himes was granted his fellowship for the production of a "sociological novel about Negro life."[9] It allowed him to finish the book and it was published in 1945 by Doubleday, Doran and Company.

Labor history substantiates the grim realities of Negro labor that Himes depicts in the story. Negroes had been prevented from entering the shipbuilding industry prior to World War II because the powerful unions in the shipbuilding trades had systematically excluded them from their ranks. During World War II, Negroes were usually placed in deadend, unskilled jobs which prevented them

The Visiting Hour

The words a man really means to say to his wife can't come out in those few caged moments

by **CHESTER B. HIMES**

▪ FICTION ▪

HE SAT hunched forward on his stool, taut nerves drawing his body into a tense question mark, chin out. Muscles were shadowed roots, springing from the open collar of his blue prison shirt to his jutted chin. White skin drew away tightly from his hot eyes. Smoke streamed thinly from the end of his forgotten cigarette, clung for a moment to his fingers, drifted up into the glare of yellow light. Stone-gray trousers, drawn tight by the bend of his knee, cut his groin.

voice: "Good morning, Mr. Caperon." He saw the tan shoes walk ahead; saw the bluchers falter off; saw gray concrete, a dull-colored plane under yellow light, the faint shadow of bars . . .

He said: "Damn!" under his breath and looked up at his wife across from him.

He heard her slightly protesting voice saying: "But you'll have to control yourself, Harry. Where's all that control you're always boasting about?"

His white fingers threaded his black hair, neck arching like a cat's back under the motion of his hand. He felt air collecting in his lungs. Nerve tension jerked his words: "Dammit, Hazel, it ain't a matter of control. I can control myself. Hell, it ain't that . . . I just want—*out.*"

She said: "I know, I know," wearily. "We're doing the best we can do. I sent the letters to the governor like you asked and your mother was over to see him Wednesday. She didn't get to see him so I saw his secretary yesterday. He said your case was being considered . . ."

He said: "*Being considered . . .*" flatly, then his voice took life: "Damn, Hazel, that's what they tell *all* of them, I don't want to be *considered.* I want to be *par-*

"We're doing the best we can do," she said like she was chanting a litany.

Her words rocketed through his brain for a full minute while he just stared at her. Then he choked. Heat exploded in his head. He felt the hot, sticky wetness of sweat on his scalp, under his hair. He felt sweat breaking out on his face, all over his body . . . She wilted under his glare . . . Damn you! Damn you! Damn you!—the curses spun in his mind. His right hand began motion . . . A heavy key in a lock made clicking sounds.

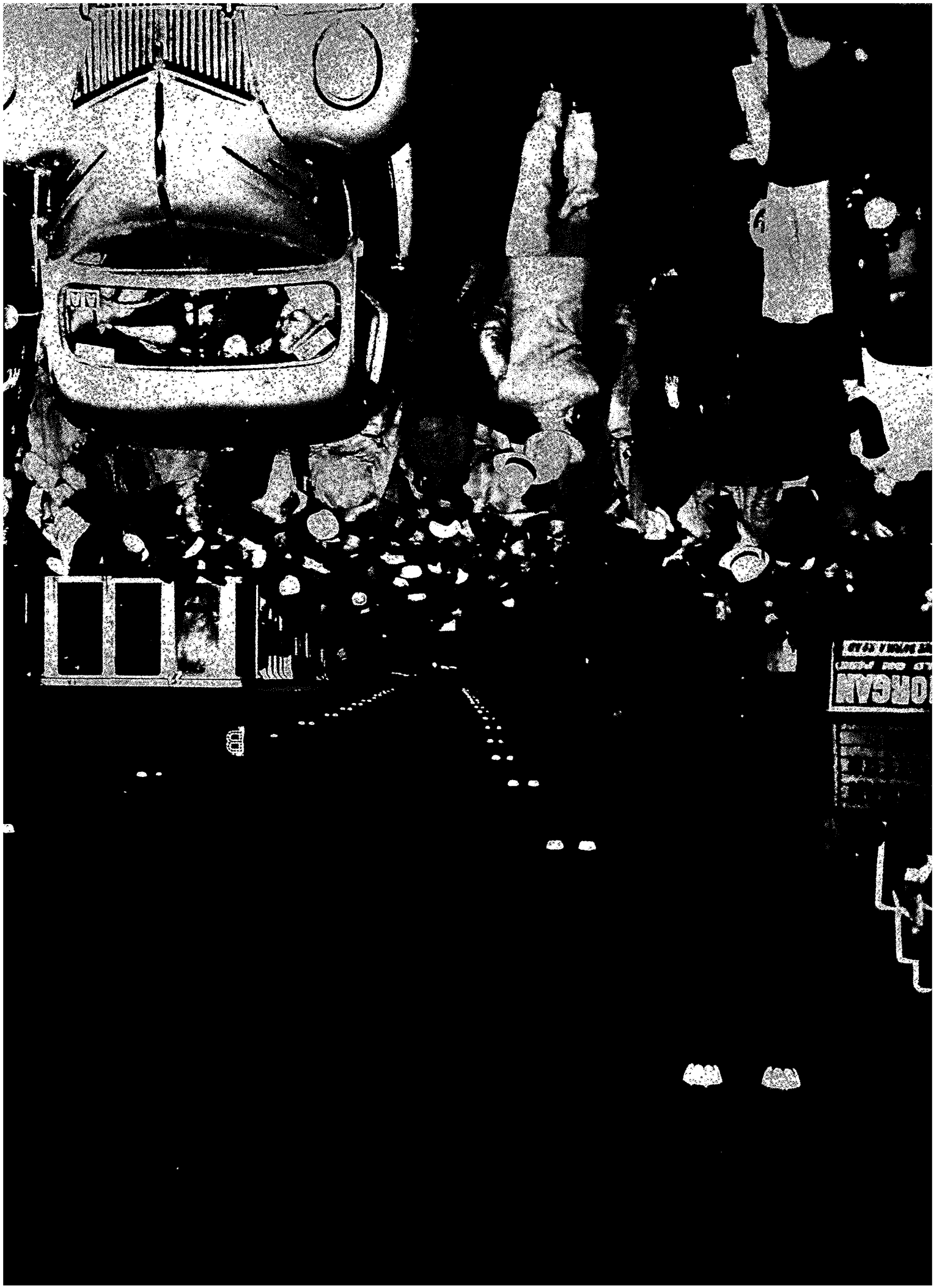
Esquire magazine

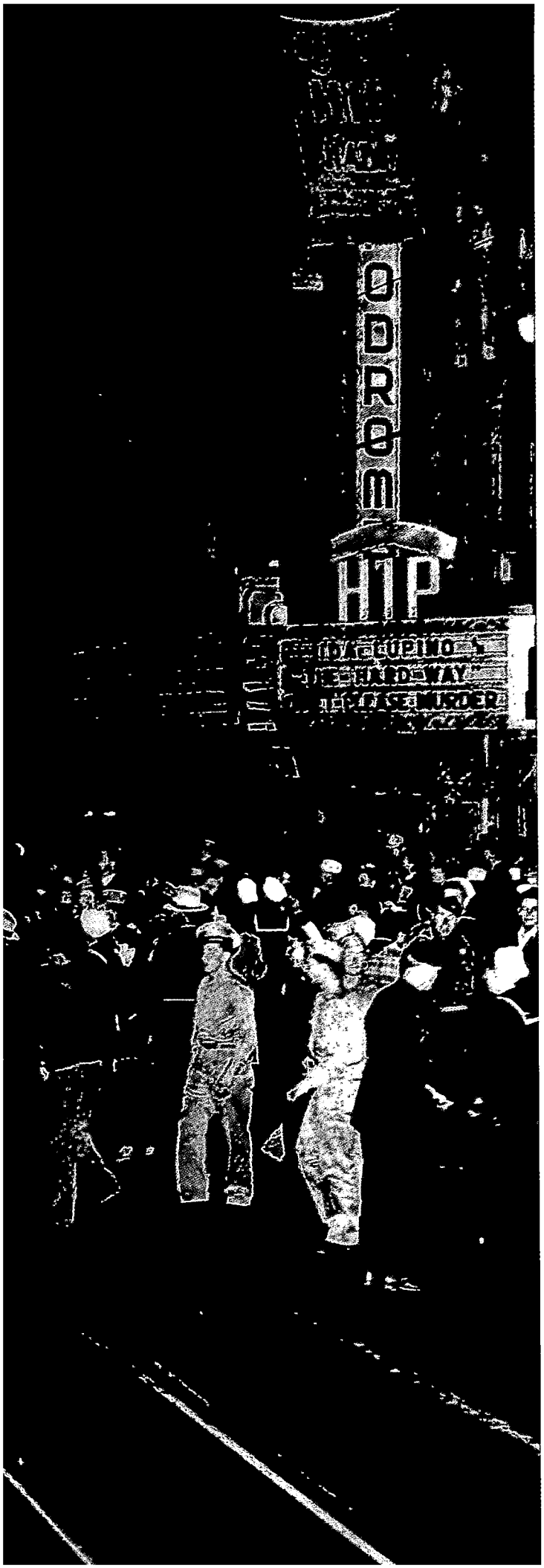
Illustration for "The Visiting Hour," with segments of the story, published in Esquire *magazine, September 1936.*

from learning anything that they could use in another craft. This also minimized the number who could move from one department to another. Even where blacks could make the move to another department, they would lose the accumulated seniority that they had gained within their original department. In such cases, they would be victimized the first time that it became necessary to fire or lay off employees. These barriers prevented blacks from taking any real advantage of the shipbuilding war boom prior to the intensification of labor shortages in 1943, when the war was half over.[10]

The same spirit that condoned unfairness in labor was easily found abroad in Los Angeles during the war years. One of the most dramatic and tragic events on the home front in the early days of the war were the Zoot Suit Riots, where an altercation between servicemen and Hispanic youths who wore the flamboyant "zoot suits" erupted into full scale violence. On the night of June 7, 1943, a mob of several thousand servicemen and civilians attacked, stripped and beat every Mexican, Filipino and black youth that they could find in the downtown area wearing a zoot suit. The police ignored or joined in the violence with the tacit approval of city officials. Although military police eventually broke up the downtown riots, the violence spread to the suburbs and continued for two more days.[11]

Himes' story is set in Los Angeles around 1943 and covers four days in the life of protagonist Bob Jones, a leaderman of sheetmetal workers at the Atlas Shipyard. The story is primarily concerned with Jones' preoccupation with the racism he encounters at every level of his existence, but Himes draws heavily on his own wartime experience to provide a realistic and dramatic backdrop. For example, early in the story we see Bob come on the job and enter





Los Angeles Times

The Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles, June 1943.

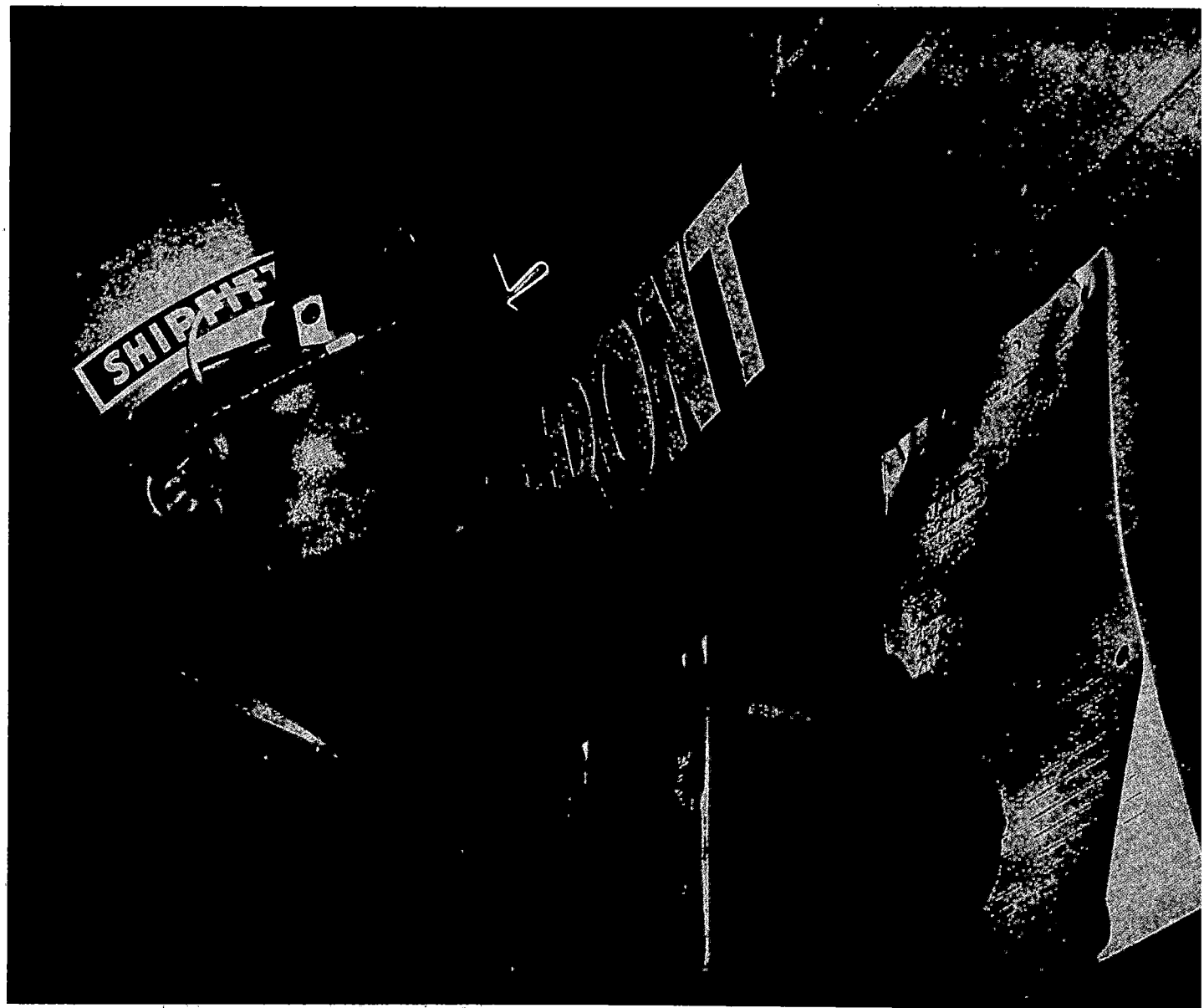
the Navy floating drydock on which he and his crew are working:

> The compartment I entered was the machine shop; forward was the carpenter shop; aft were the various lockers, toolrooms, storerooms, and such, and finally the third-deck showers and latrine—all a part of the ship itself—where my gang was working.
>
> The decks were low, and the tools and equipment of the workers, the thousand and one lines of the welders, the chippers, the blowers, the burners, the light lines, the wooden staging, combined with the equipment of the ship. . . . I had to pick every step to find a foot-size clearance of deck space. . . . Every two or three steps I'd bump into another worker. The only time anybody ever apologized was when they knocked you down.[12]

As he directs his crew in the installation of ventilation in the shower compartments and heads of the floating drydock, it is obvious that he is intelligent, hardworking, and knows his job. He remarks at one point that "the fellows in my gang looked up to me; whenever they had trouble with the white workers they looked to me to straighten it out."[13]

Bob, however, finds it increasingly difficult to contend with the racism that he experiences at every turn in his personal and professional life. He tells us that when he came from Cleveland a couple of years earlier, he was proud and carried himself with confidence. After a while, though, the increased race hatred that was released by the bombing of Pearl Harbor has worn away his ability to carry himself like a man and planted the worm of fear in his heart. The removal of the Japanese-Americans from their homes and their subsequent internment has destroyed any complacency that he may have felt. "It was like taking a man up by the roots and locking him up without a chance," he observes.[14]

In working his background into shape, Himes also does a credible job of showing the undisguised racism that was so much a part of that era. From the time he enters the plant, Bob is continually subjected to racial slurs and other insults by everyone with whom he



Courtesy of the Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University

Shipfitter adding his name to a sign-up sheet at the Richmond Shipyard, San Francisco, ca. 1942.

comes into contact. The white girl who supervises the blueprints subjects him to subtle discrimination when she hesitates to let him see the print for his area of responsibility. Later, a white leaderman refuses to lend him someone to help complete a job. The refusal is made in spite of the fact that a number of white crewmen and women are idling nearby.

A sympathetic white supervisor finally lends Bob a female tacker from his crew, a kindly act that ultimately leads to Bob's downfall. Madge, a voluptuous peroxide blonde from Texas, refuses to work with Bob's crew and calls him a "nigger." Momentarily overcome with humiliation and hatred, Bob calls her a "cracker bitch." MacDougal, the department supervisor, refuses to recognize the insult to Bob or to discipline Madge for it. To compound the injustice, MacDougal demotes Bob for having insulted a white woman.

Later Bob goes to see Herbie Frieberger, the union shop steward, in the hopes of getting some help. Bob feels that it is the union's duty to tell Madge that she must work with Negro crews or lose her job. Predictably, Frieberger refuses to admit that Bob has been dealt an injustice:

> "Jesus Christ, Bob you know the union can't do that . . . this is dynamite. If we tried that, half the workers in the yard would walk out."

Angered by this pusillanimity, Bob exclaims:

> ". . . to hell with you and this lousy Jim Crow union too! . . . When I came to this lousy city in '41 all I did was bump my head against Jim Crow shops that were organized by your union . . . this lousy local never fought for Negroes to be hired—probably

fought against it—"[15]

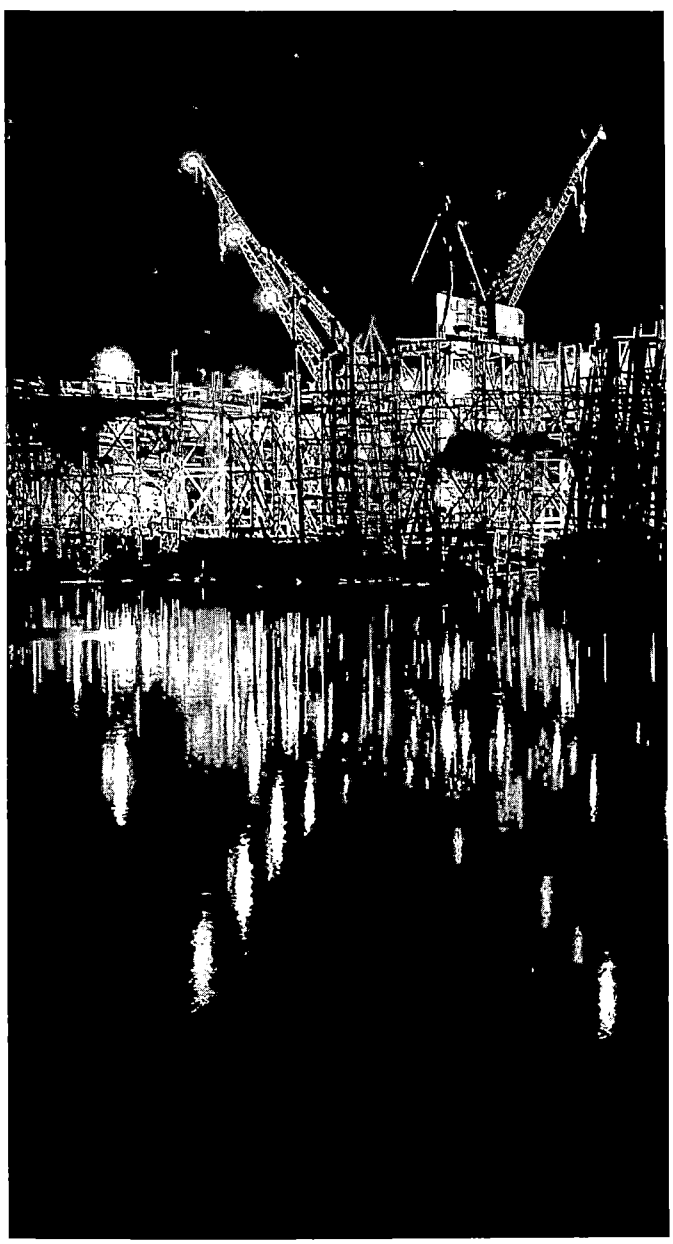
Bob's personal life provides him with no relief from the daily anguish he experiences. He is engaged to be married to Alice Harrison, a wealthy, light-skinned woman whose life has been one of privilege. She cannot understand Bob's resentment and his inability to accept a second-class status. Later in the story her complacency is badly shaken when she and Bob are humiliated first by the waiters in an exclusive night club and then by a white policeman. Bob comforts her ironically by saying "Don't let it get you down, baby. You're not just finding out you're a nigger?" But even these experiences fail to convince Alice that the forces destroying Bob are real. She counsels him to accept his lot and strive to improve the system from within.

Bob's life is eventually destroyed by Madge, a venomous "cracker" woman. She plays a strange game with Bob, attempting to seduce him while she pretends to fear and hate him. Eventually she traps him into a circumstance where he is accused of rape. In spite of his frantic efforts to explain the truth and then escape his pursuers, Bob is arrested and badly beaten by police. Brought before a judge without any time to prepare a defense, Bob is given the choice of going to prison or joining the army. Robbed of his job, his girlfriend, his self-respect and even his future, Bob decides to join the army and the curtain falls on his tragic story.

In some ways *If He Hollers Let Him Go* is reminiscent of Richard Wright's *Native Son*.[16] Probably the first black novel to gain the widespread interest of the white literary establishment in the twentieth century, *Native Son* examined the effects of racism on Bigger Thomas, a lower-class black youth living in Chicago. Both Bigger and Bob Jones are subjected to widespread racism that frightens, maddens and brutalizes them. They become trapped in a web of hatred and misunderstanding which ultimately destroys both progatonists.

Himes' story is actually more tragic than Wright's because Bigger Thomas is a lost cause when his story opens. He is already a borderline criminal whose ability to believe in his own future or work towards any personal redemption is nonexistent.

Bob Jones, on the other hand, is a man with a future. He owns an expensive new car and is engaged to a beautiful woman with wealth and position. It is clear that he is a cut above the average because he has already achieved supervisory status at the shipyard and



Shipbuilding for war production in the San Francisco Bay area, 1943.

The George Meany Memorial Archives

is in charge of a crew of fifteen people.

Jones has been working within the system to improve his life, but the system fails him badly. Circumstances have conspired against him to destroy the future he has worked for. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor has taken the casual bigotry that already existed in Southern California and charged it with a dense hatred directed at all people of color. The war industries have attracted scores of undereducated rural whites to the area, and the heightened racism brought on by the war has legitimized the race hatred that Himes believes is natural to the "cracker." The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent fears that the West Coast would be invaded has exacerbated existing racism and resulted in the disenfranchisement and internment of Japanese-American citizens and the attacks upon blacks and Hispanics in the Zoot Suit Riots.

Trade unions, as Himes depicts them, have been tainted by racism from their earliest days. Unions have attempted to thwart full membership by blacks because of accusations that such membership represents Bolshevism (the fact that the radical Industrial Workers of the World afforded blacks full membership would lend credence to such a claim). At the same time, since blacks have been so often used as strike breakers, they are not popular with unions anyway.[17]

Thus the already compromised unions find their ranks being swelled by rural Southerners and the racism becomes two-edged. In order to keep the strength gained by the huge influx of Southern white workers, the unions will not want to alienate these new members by making concessions to Negro workers. Facing all of these historical factors, it is clear from the beginning that Bob cannot overcome the odds against him.

If He Hollers is a powerful proletarian story which benefits from Himes' intimate knowledge of the wartime shipbuilding industry and the policies of the trade unions that were involved. His descriptions of the crowded, foul-smelling compartments and of the language and attitudes of the "working-stiffs" of both races produce an accurate and believable picture of a time and a place.

Himes' second work of fiction, *Lonely Crusade* (1947), is also set against the backdrop of California war industries. His main focus in this story is on unionism and the struggle to unionize black workers in a defense plant. His protagonist is Lee Gordon, a college-educated black man just beginning a job as a union organizer at the Comstock Aircraft Corporation. Himes stresses that this low-paying union job is not considered much to the average white worker:

> But to Lee Gordon it meant a new lease on life. Not only did it mean the end of a long and bitter search for dignified employment, but also vindication of his conviction that a man did not have to accept employment beneath his qualifications because his skin was black.[18]

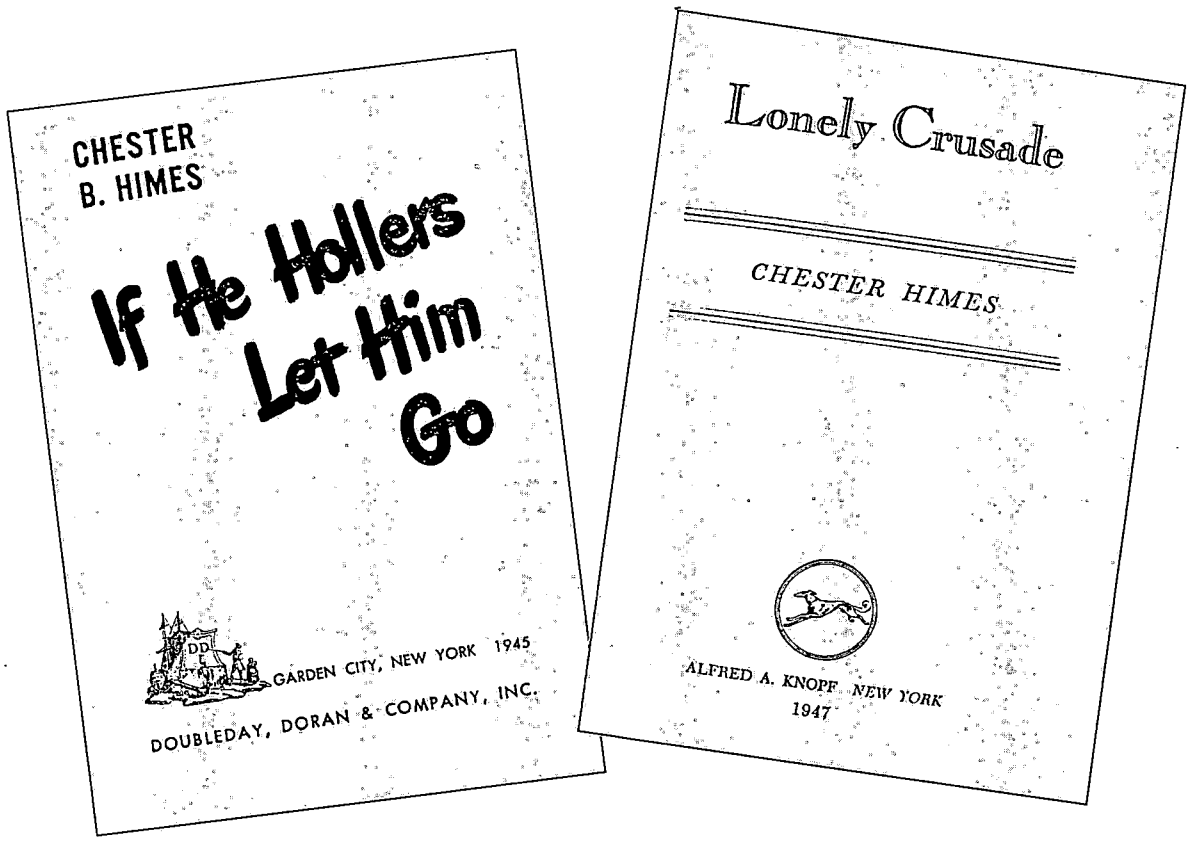
Like Bob Jones before him, Lee Gordon is being suffocated by the racism that he finds at every turn. Also like Bob Jones, Lee has discovered that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor has heightened racial tensions. As he lays awake the night before he is to start his new job, he realizes that he is frightened because "he had once again crossed into the competitive white world where he would be subjected to every abuse concocted in the minds of white people to harass and intimidate Negroes."[19]

His fears are compounded by the frustration he has felt at being unable to support his wife, Ruth. Worse yet, she has been supporting him. She has a job as a counselor at another war industry in the city. She has everything Lee does not: prestige, respect, even a white secretary. His frustration has made him impotent and brutal with Ruth.

On his first day on the job, Lee realizes that by becoming a union organizer, he has thrust himself into a war between the union and the war industries. When he is picked up on his first morning by Smitty, a white organizer, Smitty asks him:

> "Have you every stopped to think, Lee, that ninety percent of the people are workers? . . . Any person who does not own the business from which he derives his income is a worker."
>
> "That sounds like Marx," Lee commented.
>
> "I don't give a damn what it sounds like. . . .

Title pages of If He Hollers Let Him Go and The Lonely Crusade.



Unionism is the only answer," Smitty declared dogmatically. "All the rest is so much crap."[20]

When Lee arrives at the union's office outside the aircraft factory, he finds more problems waiting for him. He is subjected to prejudice by Marvin Todd, acting chairman of the local union. Then he is taken aside by Joe Ptak, the professional organizer from the national union headquarters. Ptak is a hard-bitten former worker with an immigrant's accent and two fingers missing from his left hand. He greets Lee matter-of-factly and lays things out for him:

> "This is how it is. We got mostly new workers here—new to industry, that is. Most of 'em are from the South, against the union on general principles. They been taught the union is a part of Russia; they believe what they read in the papers. On top of that, they're making more money than they ever made. And they're working under better conditions. The company keeps 'em hopped up on patriotism. Some of them are so ignorant they believe it's treason to join the union. They got recreation rooms in the joint, bands to play while they eat; and they even have dances. . . . They don't even have to buy newspapers anymore; the company gives 'em one free. . . . You read it and you'll learn what a son of a bitch I am.[21]

Joe explains to Lee that his specific job is to work on the "colored" workers at the plant. He does not give Lee a great deal of hope about the job:

> "There's about three thousand colored workers. . . . Most of 'em are new workers, hired after the others. . . . Just enough been upgraded to prove there ain't no discrimination. From what I know about the colored workers, discrimination is most of what you got to work on. So I know your jobs ain't gonna be easy. . . . On a job like this, the union can't show any special interest in your people or we antagonize the Southern whites. Don't look for none."[22]

Joe's final word of advice to Lee is to watch out for communists. They will try to recruit him in order to use the union for their own purposes. Joe warns Lee that they will be sending someone to see him soon, most likely another Negro or a white woman.

Joe's warning is a timely one because Lee is soon joined by Luther McGregor, a brutal, profane black man whom Lee eventually begins to suspect is a communist pawn. During their acquaintanceship, Luther subtly attempts to win Lee over to the communist cause as the pair ride all over the city of Los Angeles trying to recruit Negro workers and enlist their help in convincing others to join them.

Lee finds little enthusiasm for the union among his fellow blacks. Some believe that unions are connected with communists and that if Negroes become part of that, the wealthy whites who have championed black

equality will turn against them. Others are fearful that white unionists will cause trouble if they attempt to join. All are suspicious of Lee, whom they see as a '"black Greek' bearing 'white Greek' gifts."[23]

Eventually Joe Ptak holds a meeting and both black and white prospective members attend. The workers segregate themselves according to color and the room is filled with tension. This disappoints Smitty who does not understand why the blacks segregated themselves or why they remain skeptical of the union's ability to help them better their lives.

In an important passage, Lee patiently explains to the white man that the average Negro accepts discrimination as a way of life. Unionism will not help them that much because they will still be subjected to discrimination after the plant is organized. The lack of Negro supervisors will be attributed to seniority. In such a system, white workers will be promoted to the higher paying jobs and blacks will be hired to fill their places in the lower paying jobs.

Since the basis of unionism is seniority, unionization will ultimately defeat them. Blacks as a group will continue to be the last hired and, in bad times, the first fired. Prejudice, combined with lack of experience, will continue to insure that the black worker never achieves any large degree of success. Lee points out that "under the company merit system Negroes could at least hope that by application and hard work, superior acumen and Uncle-Toming, they might get a better job than they would by the process of seniority."[24]

Worse yet, the union is misleading the black worker with promises of equality. Lee argues that the black man has no hope of equality under any circumstances. For the union to argue that unionization will bring equality is to promise something that cannot ever be delivered. Smitty, who is a particularly naive and obtuse man, fails to understand Lee's thesis and insists that the Negro worker is no different than anyone else. Smitty's inability to understand that a real difference does exist completely defeats Lee.

At the same time, the reader sees that Lee is defeating himself. While his education helps him to analyze and understand the situation of the black worker, he lacks what Himes depicts as the average Negro's ability to numb himself to the realities of life and therefore survive them.

To further complicate Lee's life, he suddenly finds himself invited to Sunday dinner at the home of Foster, general manager of the aircraft plant, as well as vice-president of the board of directors and a major stockholder in the corporation. Foster embodies every trait of the Republican businessman of this period. Handsome and dynamic, he radiates confidence. He is an "America Firster," and an anti-Roosevelt man to the core. Foster articulates the opinion that Franklin Roosevelt is Joseph Stalin's tool and that his leftist policies have endangered the entire fabric of American life.

Foster attempts to manipulate Lee by having his personal secretary engage Lee in a conversation about the union. The secretary is bitterly anti-union, contending that all unions are run by communists and criminals. After he believes that Lee has been softened up by his denigration of the union, the secretary leaves. Foster attempts to soft-soap Lee by insisting that he has no bias against the union. He points out that Negro workers always have gotten a fair shake at Comstock Aircraft. Finally he expresses deep admiration for Lee's integrity and fortitude and offers him a $5,000 job in Comstock's personnel department. He also promises, "I'll see that you get the breaks."

Lee is overwhelmed by the offer and momentarily considers taking it. The integrity that Foster has praised, however, takes over and Lee refuses because of his loyalty to the union. Foster is overcome with rage. He calls Lee a "black bastard" and threatens to get even with him. To compound the misery of the moment, Ruth's momentary pride in Lee gives way to anger at what she sees as his selfishness in not taking the job and freeing them from their penury.

Emotionally distraught over the experience and his wife's inability to understand his motives, Lee is propelled into an affair with Jackie Forks, a white woman whom the communists are using to compromise him. This affair sends Lee into a nightmarish downward spiral. The vindictive Foster spreads rumors among the black factory workers that Lee has sold out to the company. Soon after that, Lee and Luther McGregor are waylaid by sadistic sheriff's deputies in Foster's employ. They first attempt to bribe Lee away from the union and then brutally pistol whip him when he

Used with the permission of Professor Joseph S. Himes, Jr.

Chester Himes, ca. 1944.

refuses to be bought.

After he recovers from the beating, Lee learns that Luther has been playing both ends against the middle. Besides working for the communists, Luther also has been in Foster's employ, taking money regularly for his betrayals. Defeated by the duplicity he sees on all sides, Lee quits the union and goes with Luther to receive a payoff from one of the policemen who had beaten him. During the meeting, however, Luther gets into an argument with the deputy and murders him.

When Luther is later killed resisting arrest, Lee finds himself accused of complicity in the crime and Jackie Forks betrays him to the police. The police also take Ruth into custody as a material witness and attempt to trick her into giving testimony that will confirm Lee's guilt.

Joe Ptak and others in the union do not want to help Lee since he resigned. They see him as a turncoat. But Smitty still believes in Lee and engages a lawyer to help him fight the case. Smitty also uses his influence to get a number of other union people to swear that Lee was with them during the time of the murder and gets him temporarily off the hook with the police.

Smitty then explains to Lee that the organization of the black workers at the Comstock plant is not going well. Both Smitty and the union feel that Lee is partly to blame for this. He offers Lee a proposition: they have six days until the National Labor Relations Board holds an election to decide whether or not the union will represent the workers at Comstock. They need the Negro vote to win. Smitty promises Lee that if he can organize the Negro workers in time to win the election, the union will back him up against Foster and any trouble that the industrialist may throw his way. Smitty lays it on the line for Lee, telling him that when he decided to sell out the union, he lost the goodwill of most union people. This is his only chance to redeem himself from Foster's hatred.

In the six days he has left, Lee works steadily to gain the support of black leaders and citizens' groups. He realizes in this interim that his fear of white people and their bigotry has robbed him of the dignity of his manhood and he strives to win it back. During this period he finds his love for his wife renewed and begins to rebuild his relationship with her.

On the day of the election, feeling none too hopeful about the results of his efforts, Lee goes to the plant and finds that Foster has blocked the entrance with thugs and sheriff's deputies. Worse yet, Smitty tells him that a warrant has been issued for his arrest. Many workers and union people are lined up, ready to march on the plant, but most of them fear the violence they know will come.

Smitty attempts to exhort them forward from a sound truck as Joe Ptak goes out and tries to get lines of workers moving by main force. Joe eventually marches alone towards the line of deputies carrying a union banner. He is brutally beaten to the ground for his efforts. The sight of this combined with the recognition of Ruth's anguished face on the sidelines energizes Lee. Heedless of his own safety, Lee grabs

the fallen banner and breaks the line alone, opening it to the other workers' advance.

Chester Himes never wrote a more demanding novel than *Lonely Crusade*, nor a more ambitious one. In this one book he treated the multiple themes of race hatred, black anti-Semitism, interracial sex, and communist manipulations of the Negro.

If the book is noteworthy for anything, it is in Himes' depiction of the precarious balancing act that the union must perform. The union's primary interest is, of course, to unionize the aircraft plant. To do that, it needs the full support of the white workers, most of whom are transplanted Southerners, and also the black workers. Each group is hostile towards or suspicious of the other. The union organizers must successfully court both without giving the impression to the whites that blacks are receiving special consideration.

To complicate matters, the union must negotiate a tricky path around the communists. The communists support the union, but only insofar as it will advance their own cause. They support Negro rights for the same reason. The union is faced with the necessity of steering clear of any direct association with the party because both white and black workers are suspicious or fearful of being associated with it.

Himes' experiences among the intellectual communist elite of Southern California in the 1940s enabled him to get a first-hand look at how the party operated.[25] Himes is skillful in his depiction of their ruthless manipulations, showing how the leaders systematically utilize anyone who will further their ends and then dispose of them as a calculated sacrifice or when they become inconvenient.

Himes' portrait of Foster, the plant manager, is particularly fine-drawn. Foster is as ruthless as the communists. He calculatingly gives his workers, white or black, just enough to make them feel fortunate. He realizes that having come from disadvantaged backgrounds, their loyalties can easily be gained with token concessions.

Foster also recognizes the connection between the union and the communists and skillfully plays the connection up to his workers to keep the union on the defensive. Like a chess player, Foster constantly surveys the playing area for threats and attempts to neutralize

Cleveland Press

Chester Himes—promotional photo for Pinktoes, *July 16, 1965.*

them. Recognizing Lee's potential to hurt him, Foster shows a willingness to use both bribery and physical violence.

Even though this was not a popular book in the 1940s, the very virulence with which it was attacked by critics on all sides suggests how close to home it came to its various audiences. Arna Bontemps, for instance, writing in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, described Lee Gordon as a negative character with nonproductive attitudes who experiences minimal growth during the course of the novel. Milton Klonsky delivered a stinging rebuke in *Commentary* in which he criticized not only Himes' skill as a writer but virtually every aspect of the book. He concluded by comparing *Lonely Crusade* with the graffiti on a bathroom wall. In the *Atlantic Monthly*, Christowe Stoyan called the story too melodramatic and said that it was over-ambitious, over-generalized and over-simplified.[26] Communists, in particular, were stung by Himes' depiction of their ruthless machinations. Himes quoted a review in the communist paper *The Daily Worker* as comparing the book to the "foul words that came from the cankerous mouth of Bilbo."[27]

Chester Himes did not write again about the Negro in labor after *Lonely Crusade*. He followed this book with *Cast the First Stone*, a novel based on his prison experiences, and two protest novels, *The Third Generation* and *The Primitive*.[28]

Like several other American Negro writers and intellectuals, Himes exiled himself to France in the early 1950s in an attempt to escape the racism which he felt made it impossible for him to realize his ambitions. While in France he began writing a series of innovative crime novels set in Harlem, of which *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, published in 1965,[29] is the best known. Combining the elements of the protest style with the traditions of the American hard-boiled crime story, Himes became an instant sensation and finally achieved the success that had eluded him in his own country.

In the light of changing attitudes, many critics believe that *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and *Lonely Crusade* are among Himes' finest works. In each novel he skillfully portrayed the forces in labor and industry that were arrayed against black workers and brutally exposed the racism that stood in the way of economic progress for the Negro. Both novels deserve to be considered in the front rank of the literature of labor.

Notes

Robert E. Skinner is the University Librarian at Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana. He has written several books and articles about American popular culture and has recently finished a book about Chester Himes' Harlem crime series, entitled *Two Guns from Harlem: The Detective Fiction of Chester Himes*, that is being published by Bowling Green Popular Press.

[1]*The Molly Maguires* (1970, produced by Martin Ritt for Paramount Pictures, suggested by a book by Arthur H. Lewis); *Matewan* (1987, produced by Peggy Rajski and Maggie Renzi, from a story by John Sayles); James Lee Burke, *To the Bright and Shining Sun* (New York: Scribners, 1970); Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929).

[2]Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1945).

[3]Chester Himes, *Lonely Crusade* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947).

[4]Chester Himes, *The Quality of Hurt: The Autobiography of Chester Himes*, Vol. 1 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1973), is the source of information on Himes' early life.

[5]For example, Chester Himes, "His Last Day," *Abbott's Monthly* 5 (Nov. 1932): 32-33, 60-63; Chester Himes, "Prison Mass," *Abbott's Monthly* 6 (Mar. 1933): 36-37, 61, 64; 6 (April 1933): 20-21, 48-56; and 6 (May 1933): 37, 61-62 (a book-length serial); and Chester Himes, "A Modern Marriage," *Atlanta Daily World*, 2 Aug. 1933.

[6]Chester Himes to John A. Williams, 31 Oct. 1962, in possession of Michel Fabre.

[7]Information provided by Michel Fabre.

[8]Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (New York: Scribners, 1940).

[9]Edwin R. Embree, *Julius Rosenwald Fund Review for the Two-Year Period 1942-1944* (Chicago: The Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1944), p. 23.

[10]Lester Rubin, William S. Swift and Herbert R. Northrup, *Negro Employment in the Maritime Industries: A Study of Racial Policies in the Shipbuilding, Longshore, and Offshore Maritime Industries* (Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 1975), p. 21

[11]For more information on the riots consult: Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1949); Chester Himes, "Zoot Suit Riots Are Race Riots!" *The Crisis* 50 (July 1943), 200-01, 222; Mauricio Mazon, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984). The riots have also been fictionally depicted in James Ellroy's *The Black Dahlia* (New York: Mysterious Press, 1987) and in the motion picture *Zoot Suit* (Universal, 1981), which was based on a play by Luis Valdez.

[12]Himes, *If He Hollers*, p. 16.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 24.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 3.

[15]*Ibid.*, pp. 113-14.

[16]Richard Wright, *Native Son* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940).

[17]See Herman Feldman, *Racial Factors in American Industry* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931), pp. 27-34.

[18]Himes, *Lonely Crusade*, p. 3.

[19]*Ibid.*, p. 4.

[20]*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

[21]*Ibid.*, p. 23

[22]*Ibid.*, p. 24.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 61.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 139.

[25]Himes to Williams, 31 Oct. 1962, *op.cit.*

[26]Arna Bontemps, *New York Herald-Tribune*, 7 Sept. 1947; Milton Klonsky, *Commentary* 5 (Feb. 1948): 189-90; Christowe Stoyan, *Atlantic Monthly*, 180 (Oct. 1947): 138.

[27]The reference is to Senator Theodore Bilbo, the Mississippi Democrat who was a notorious opponent of civil rights during the 1940s. See John A. Williams, "My Man Himes," in John A. Williams and Charles F. Harris, eds., *Amistad I* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 37.

[28]Chester Himes, *Cast the First Stone* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1952); Chester Himes, *The Third Generation* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1954); Chester Himes, *The Primitive* (New York: New American Library, 1955).

The term "protest novel" is used to describe a particular genre of fiction. The type was really created by Richard Wright when he wrote *Uncle Tom's Children* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938) and *Native Son* and was carried on by the likes of Himes, Ralph Ellison, Ann Petry, and other black writers. Such fiction was labeled "protest" because it was written with an eye towards confronting and denouncing racism within the context of a fictional presentation.

[29]Chester Himes, *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965).

By Archie Green

Working with Laborlore

Reva Luvaas, Robert McCarl and Sid Jones (left to right) standing at the entrance of the Om-Paul Mine in Burke, Idaho. The mine has been

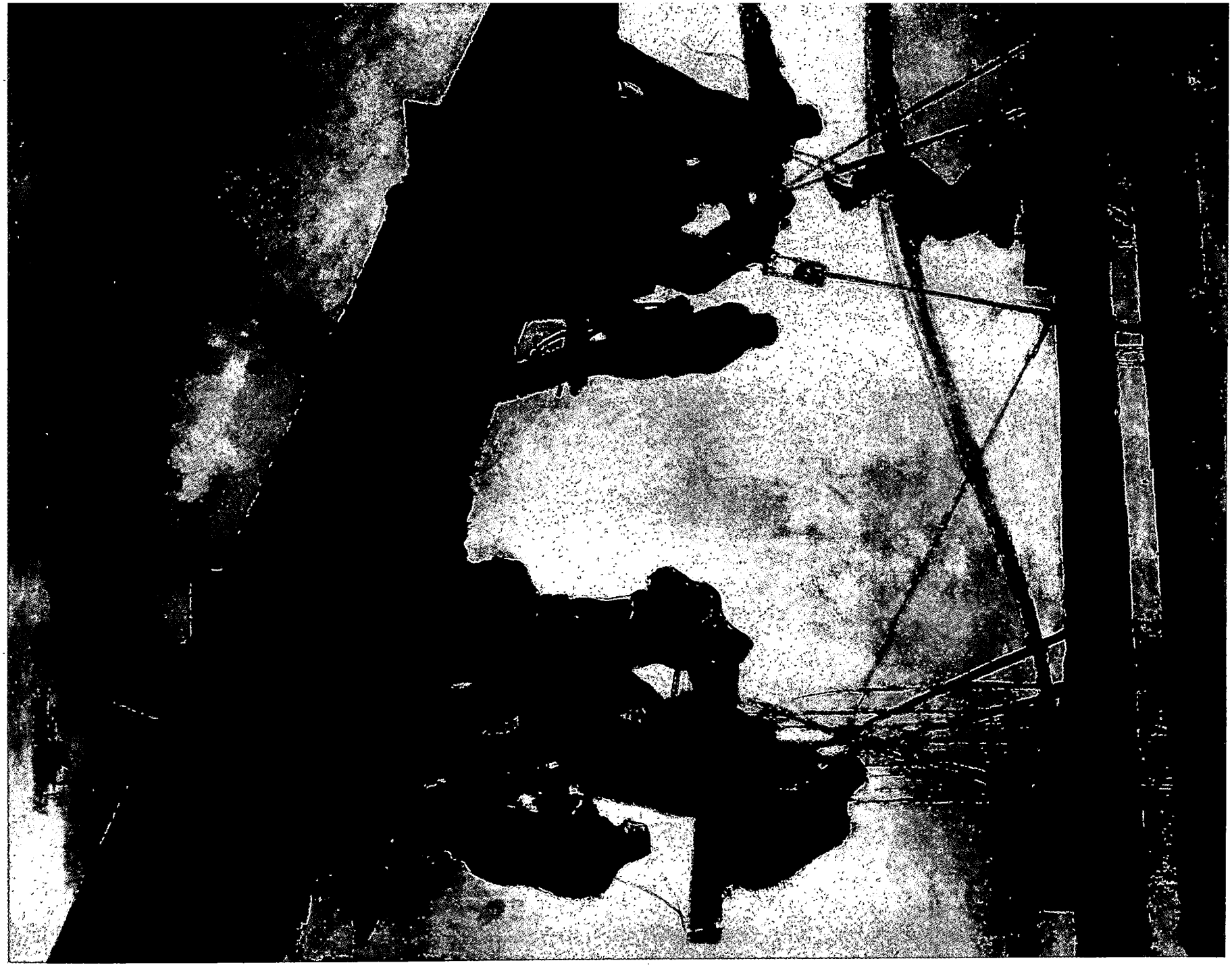
worked by three generations of the Jones Family. Luvaas, Sid Jones' daughter, and McCarl are producing a documentary film on the mining traditions in this family and region.

Photograph by Jan Boles, courtesy of Robert McCarl

SOME OF THE MOST CREATIVE AND ACcomplished individuals in American life have been fascinated by worksites and the host of experiences flowing from them. The philosopher William James recalled, in 1898, his observations while staring out of a train window on his way to Buffalo:

> . . . The sight of a workman doing something on the dizzy edge of a sky-scaling iron construction brought me to my senses very suddenly. And now I perceived, by a flash of insight, that I had been steeping myself in pure ancestral blindness, and looking at life with the eyes of a remote spectator. . . . Heroism . . . was before me in the daily lives of the laboring classes. . . on every railway bridge and fireproof building that is going up to-day. On freight-trains, on the decks of vessels, in cattle-yards and mines, on lumber rafts, among the firemen and the policemen, the demand for courage is incessant; and the supply never fails. . . . As I awoke to all this unidealized heroic life around me, the scales seemed to fall from my eyes; and a wave of sympathy greater than anything I had ever before felt with the common life of common men began to fill my soul.[1]

Photograph of "Bridge Builders," a painting by Fred Dana Marsh, 1906.



Photograph by Peter A. Juley & Son, copy in The George Meany Memorial Archives

Many artists, moved by a vision similar to William James', have attempted to capture that relationship between workers and work—or the lack of it. To name but three: Fred Dana Marsh, a forgotten Chicago-born realist painter, depicted ironworkers on high steel in his turn-of-the century oil paintings, "Bridge Builders" and "Towers of Manhattan." Ronald Debs Ginther, a Seattle cook and Wobbly (Industrial Workers of the World member), before his death in 1969 painted eighty-five watercolors of skid row misery. Ben Shahn's posters for the CIO Political Action Committee became beacons for a generation of activists; he mastered calligraphy, photography, lithography and painting to depict both workers' aspirations and workers' distress.

Before beginning work for an academic institution as a teacher and folklorist, I was a shipwright and union secretary. Through early experiences I began to see that shipwrights, piledrivers, longshoremen and building tradesmen constituted folk societies with their own occupational folklore. By 1962 I spoke of this subject as "laborlore," a term which gradually broadened in my mind to encompass the myriad of ways that people relate to, and express themselves about the world of work. Along with cultural anthropologists, sociologists, historians and archivists, I fell into a special job classification—"laborlorist," a term still new and demanding refinement.[2]

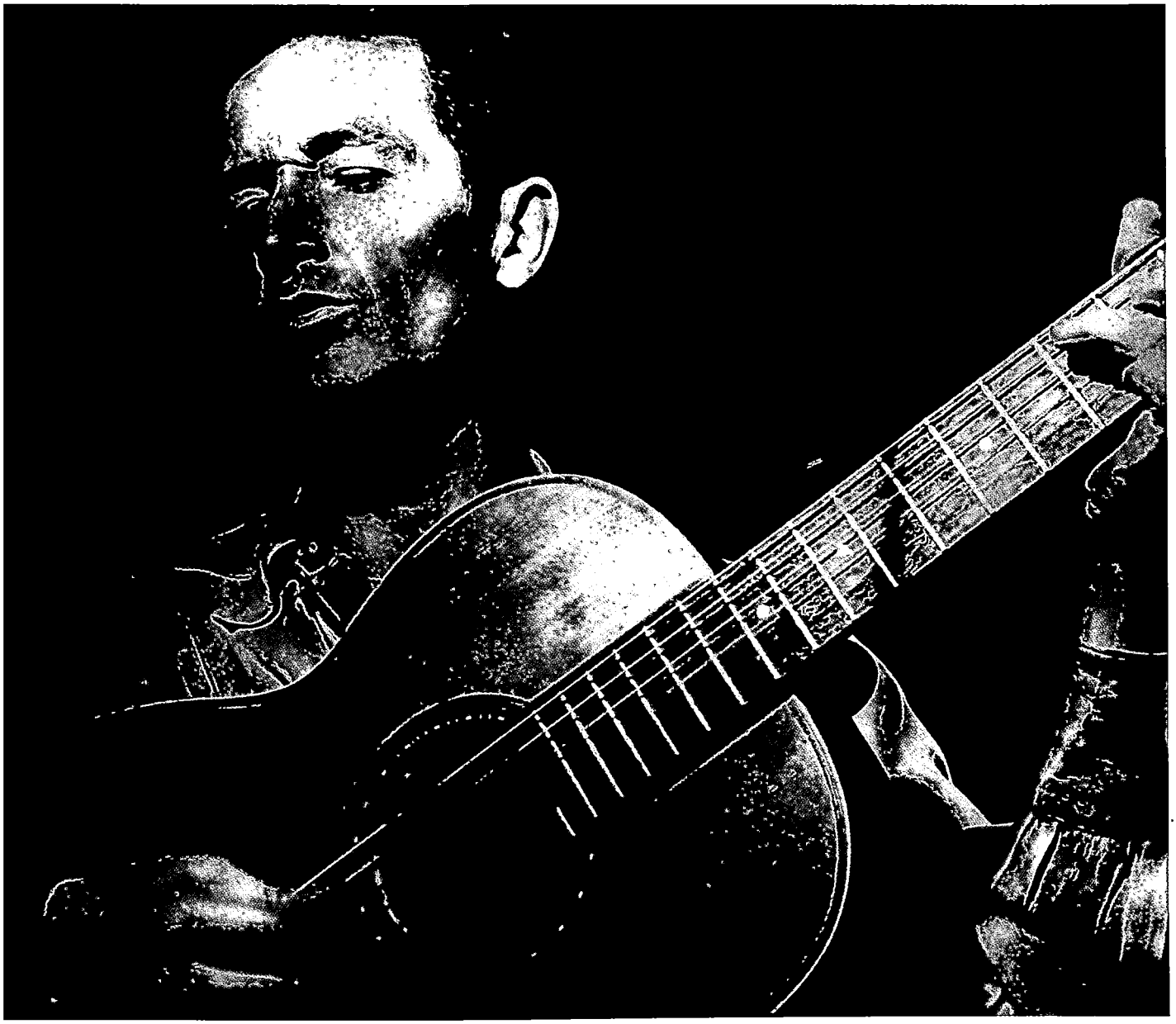
Those scholars, today, who study the "expressive culture" of work refer to their subject in a variety of ways: workers' culture, occupational folklife, anthropology of work, trade-union tradition and, yes, laborlore. They are interested in the ways working people cope and communicate in the world of work, with such familiar forms and means as songs, singers, singing, yarns, skits, jokes, pranks, players, goofing off, scuttlebutt, shooting the breeze, pickup time, deadhorsing, working to rule, eyeballing, bootstrapping, by guess and by God. Their interest in recent years has drawn them to dens, attics or garages in search of personal collections that capture utterances, representations, symbols and artifacts of the work place or union hall. These interests define the field of laborlore.

In the study of laborlore the worlds of scholarship and work come together, as they had for me in my personal career. We see this typically in conversations between folk artist and museum curator, mechanic-in-overalls and university ethnographer, waterfront storyteller and literary critic. The easiest path to knowledge of laborlore remains direct experience: to linger at a water cooler or photocopying machine when a coworker gossips; to plan an apprentice's "topping-out" ceremony; to carry a parade banner; to join in a picket-line chant; to sing along with favorites such as "Joe Hill," "Roll the Union On" or "Solidarity Forever," or perhaps "John Henry," "Sixteen Tons" or "Blow the Man Down," but also to be alert to new songs and the worlds of experience they reveal.

For instance, during 1983, more than twenty-four hundred organized copper miners at Phelps Dodge Corporation (Morenci, Ajo, Douglas and Bisbee in Arizona and El Paso, Texas) struck in a bitter dispute. Despite considerable support, the United Steelworkers of America's effort failed, leaving unhealed community scars. Marta Lopez—living in Clifton, Morenci's twin city—at the start responded by composing "El Corrido de la Huelga" (ballad of the strike).

Marta's *corrido* deals directly with cowards who cross picket lines, unionists who exchange neighborly respect for dishonor by accepting scab jobs. Her motif, cowardice, is ancient; her style, traditional; her message, muted in a period of high technology and mass-culture hits. Nevertheless, her song poses vital questions to the laborlorist, among them: Who allots power and powerlessness in present communities geared to extractive industry? How does an isolated singer use modern techniques to amplify a voice in commentary upon corporate decisions?

Fortunately, Lopez journeyed to a Phoenix studio to turn her composition into a "single" (45 rpm disc). There, studio owner-engineer Albert Chavez added guitar-track accompaniment to the *corrido*. Lopez paid for the pressing of a few hundred copies and distributed them personally to family members, strikers and nearby radio stations. Arizona folklorist Jim Griffith alerted me to this valuable broadside disc. In turn, I reached Lopez by phone and mail (we have never met) and secured permission to reissue the *corrido* within a multi-volume set, *Work's Many Voices* (JEMF 110-111). Thus, the song can now be heard far beyond its original Gila River Valley home. These albums, however limited



Courtesy of Office of Folklife Programs Archive, Smithsonian Institution

Photograph of Woodie Guthrie, n.d.

in distribution, are available to academic institutions and private collectors by virtue of listing in nationally circulated sales catalogues. Each LP in *Work's Many Voices* includes a printed insert sheet with both Spanish- and English-language texts for Lopez' composition.

Not only the song but the singer as well is the subject of laborlore study. Consider the late Woodie Guthrie. I ask: What gives Guthrie so great a hold on today's union activists? We find great contradictions in his music and life: protest and affirmation in the content of his songs, free soul and chauvinist in his life style, Franklin Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin in his politics. Fans connect Bruce Springsteen to Guthrie. At times, some equate Woody with Joe Hill, ignoring vital differences between Hill's left libertarianism and Guthrie's totalitarianism. Is it, as labor publicist Larry Rubin has suggested, that Guthrie's music is an antidote to "fatalism, bewilderment, and powerlessness?"[3]

Laborlorists know that though certain aspects of workers' experience receive regular coverage, such reporting is often inadequate. For example, no one knows how many Americans have been honored in formal retirement ceremonies during this century, nor how much has been expended to purchase pins, plaques, watches or other physical tokens of longevity. Occasionally, a country-western song emerges which inverts the cheerful formula: a worker uses the farewell party to "punch out" a boss or, at least, to express a desire to do so. Such cynical or negative commentary only highlights the usually positive—and incomplete—reporting of retirement events.

Consider several recent examples. The *New York Times* carried a feature article on Govan Brown, "Praised Bus Driver, 53, to Get a Rare Farewell." A Transit

New York Times, 13 April 1988

Bus Operator Govan Brown on his retirement from the New York City Transit Authority, April 1988. Brown was recognized for his "Ambassadorship" to New York in his twenty years as a bus driver for the Transit Authority.

Authority publicist noted that his was to be the first retirement party ever held in the bus depot at 100th Street and Lexington Avenue. Brown—who had racked up enough miles to reach the moon—was slated to receive a model bus with his name inscribed on the destination signs; his fellow drivers and mechanics would sample six-foot hero sandwiches.[4]

The reporter, Douglas Martin, interviewing the star driver before the party, learned that Brown, anticipating leisure, had already enrolled in an acting class to prepare for television commercials. Among Brown's first exercises, he had to improvise a "Honeymooners" episode playing Jackie Gleason's Ralph Kramden, the surly, forever frustrated bus driver. (Life does indeed mimic art!) The *Times* photo of a smiling Brown at the wheel of his own bus revealed a union button on his neat collar. However, the article failed to mention Brown's affiliation with the Transport Workers Union of America. Should we believe that *Times*' readers are unaware of transit unions, or that unionism played no part in Brown's life?

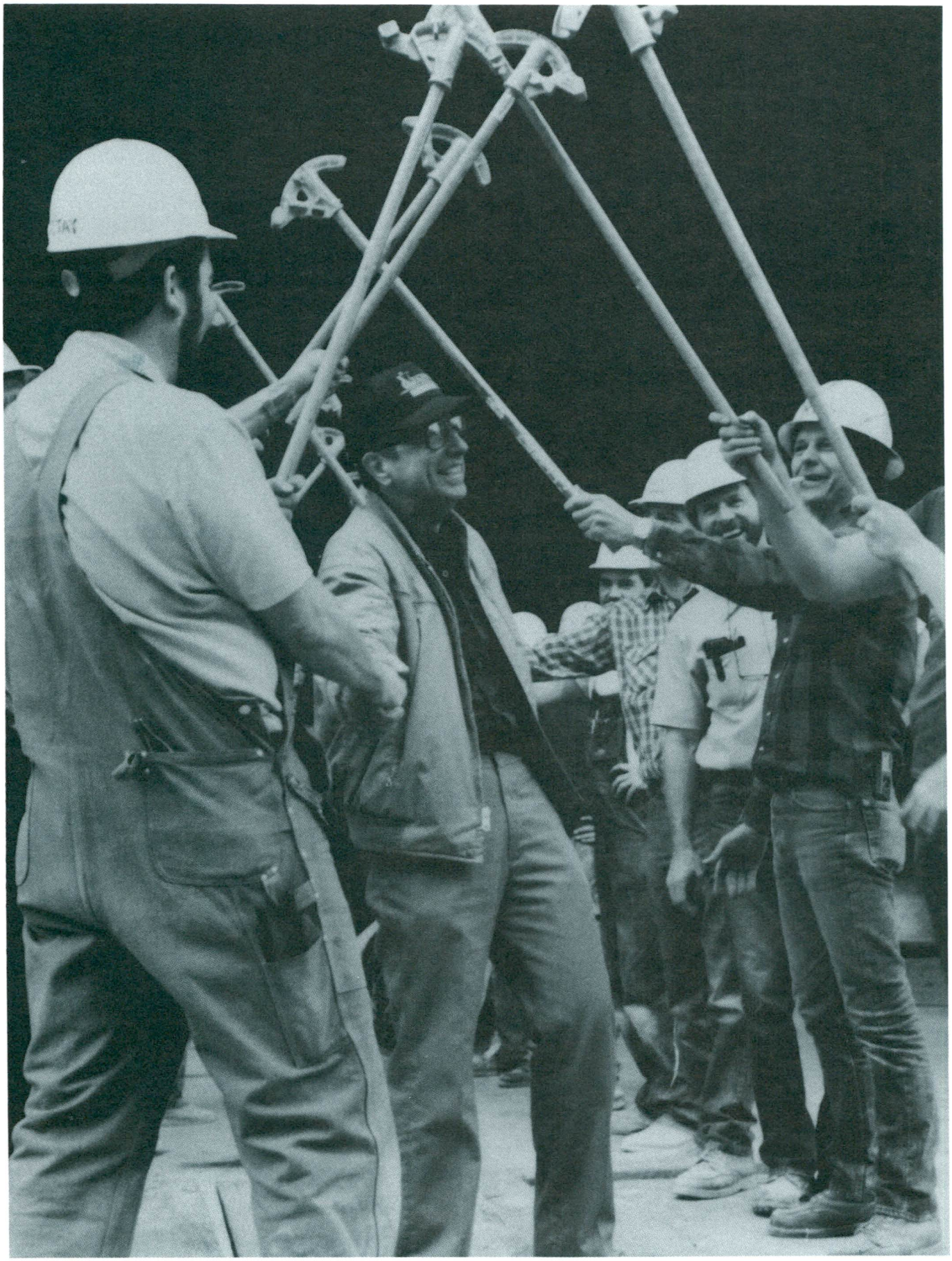
A continent removed, a *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist, Herb Caen, offered another retirement report: "Some sight at the Nordstrom dept. store [construction] site at Fifth and Market: 35 electricians holding their pipe benders aloft in an arch under which Al Tura walked as he departed the job for the last time; retiring after 40 yrs., 'born and raised' [in San Franscisco] Al then went outside to find his wife waiting in a stretch limo for a tour of his favorite spots."[5]

As in the New York story, Herb Caen did not mention Al Tura's union, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 6. Nor did he mention Al's employer, Rosendin Electric. Furthermore, Caen's description of hard hats holding "hickeys" (pipe benders) aloft as if they were flashing sabres makes us wonder about this ceremony's origin. Was it newly "invented" by one of Tura's fellow workers, or did it come to the crew traditionally? If new, will it move from job to job, trade to trade? In short, will this retirement happening catch on and persist over time?

The *Progress* serviced San Francisco neighborhoods and stressed local-color stories. On February 17, 1988, it ran a photo by Jim Kelly with an extended caption:

> SO LONG, JOE—Who says the waterfront is dead? You couldn't prove it by this mob, especially Joe Jones, the guy shown being patted down by. . . could that be a cop? The action happened Friday at Pier 30, on the bulkhead fronting Red's Java House. To explain. It was nice day, see, too good to waste indoors. So, as they've been doing off and on for years, the work crew from Lera Electric Co. on lower Brannan Street dropped by Red's for a beer or two, a tradition observed on special occasions like the World Series and Joe's last day on the job. An electrician for 40 years, the last 10 with Lera, the Pacifica resident was retiring. Big Mike Voss bought the Bud, and more or less everyone chipped in to bring Lisa to the scene, Lisa Kay—her working

Thirty-five electricians hold their pipe benders aloft in an arch under which Al Tura walked as he departed the job for the last time after forty years, April 1988.



Eldon Swanson, Rosendin Electric Co.

name—model, dancer and, on days like Friday, an all-in-fun impersonator. Scene Two moved inside where, with Tom "Red" McGarvey presiding, Jones was favored with, among other things, a plaque framing his last Lera paycheck. Then everyone but Joe went back to work. Or more beer'n'burgers.

The laborlorist might want to know more. Did photographer Kelly just happen to be at Red's Java House when Lisa Kay "patted down" retiring Joe Jones? Who on Lera's crew of skilled construction and marine electricians hired Lisa, or alerted the *Progress* to this special occasion? Some observers, today, will see this photo as representing a sexist scene; others will see it as documenting a traditional act. Who sees fit to mention Jones' long membership in IBEW Local 6? We do learn that Jones worked for Lera and that his last paycheck had been "plaqued." Did Jones get to cash it before framing? Have any such first or last paychecks ended their lives in labor archives?

The breadth of our interests is best captured in two recent works. Robert McCarl (1988) referred to his interest as "occupational folklife.": "The entire range of expressive behavior in work settings from the techniques required to survive and advance on the job, to the customs marking passage through the work culture, to the verbal arts that comment on all aspects of the work experience, both on and off the job." Patricia Cooper focused on "work culture" which she defined as, "The patterns of daily work into which any newcomer would become initiated after a time—the unwritten rules, the ways of doing the job, and how one thought about his or her work. . . a coherent system of ideas and practices, forged in the context of the work process itself, through which workers modified, mediated, and resisted the limits of their jobs."[6]

These definitions by McCarl and Cooper constitute an umbrella that both shelters and displays laborlore. My limited remarks in this article on a few retirement rituals, and a copper strike ballad, therefore, do not constitute the sum of laborlore. At best, this introduction can only hint at hidden tales which await retelling—lore widely known across lines of craft and calling; lore emerging within new work settings.

As with other scholars, laborlorists are dependent upon archivists and collectors to respond to mutual

San Francisco Progress photograph, courtesy of Jim Kelly

Retirement party for forty–year veteran electrician Joe Jones, who's treated to a "pat down" by Lisa Kay at Red's Java House, February 1988.

interests. A song text (print/disc/cassette) fits easily into a library bin. Where does one place an entire parting ritual? How many ceremonies deserve full archival documentation? For a century, unionists have orated on both the dignity and degradation of labor. Seemingly, a dozen retirements filmed might serve well to note the mixture of pain and pleasure most Americans have actually experienced in their working lives, symbolized by toy bus, raised hickey or framed check.

One wonders when a unionist, sensing a banner's or charter's emblematic role, carried either or both home after a local disbanded? What library first placed "labor question" ephemera into a special collection? Which museum accepts credit for the first formal exhibit of work depiction? Who first assisted workers to present their job skills as public or festive events?

I do not have ready answers, but one starting point can be named: the visit famed social worker Jane Addams made a century ago to Toynbee Hall, a London settlement house founded by students of Tolstoy and Ruskin. In Chicago during 1889, she established a similar "mission," Hull House, to assist immigrants to

Transcribed and translated (right) by Jim Griffith and Celestino Fernandez.

EL CORRIDO DE LA HUELGA

El dia treinta de julio,
A media noche paso;
Ha terminado el contrato,
Y la huelga comenzo.

Son unas mananas tristes,
De ver a muchos entrar.
Lo que a sus padres pelearon,
Van a ver todo rodar.

Pues no era tanto lo que
Las uniones pedian,
Y con el mismo contrato
Ellos se conformarian.

Pobrecita mucha gente;
Casa y mas perdera;
Pero le tienen respeto
A una union solidaria.

Ah, que lastima de pueblo;
Como quedo lastimado
De ver parientes y amigos
Cruzar por ser desconfiados.

El corrido fue compuesto
A los mineros de cobre
Para que todos se acuerden
Y que los tengan presente.

Yo les canto este corrido;
Ay que tristeza me da
Der ver que hay tantos cobardes
Que el respeto perderan.

Ya me voy a despedir;
Las, gracias les quiero dar.
Aqui se acaba el corrido.
Viva una union solidaria!

THE BALLAD OF THE STRIKE

On the thirtieth day of July,
At midnight it happened;
The contract has ended,
And the Strike had begun.

It is a sad morning,
Seeing so many enter (the mine).
What their parents fought for,
They are going to see roll away.

Well, it wasn't much that
The unions were asking of them,
And they would have been satisfied
With the same contract.

Many people are unfortunate;
They are going to lose houses and more;
But they have respect
For an undivided union.

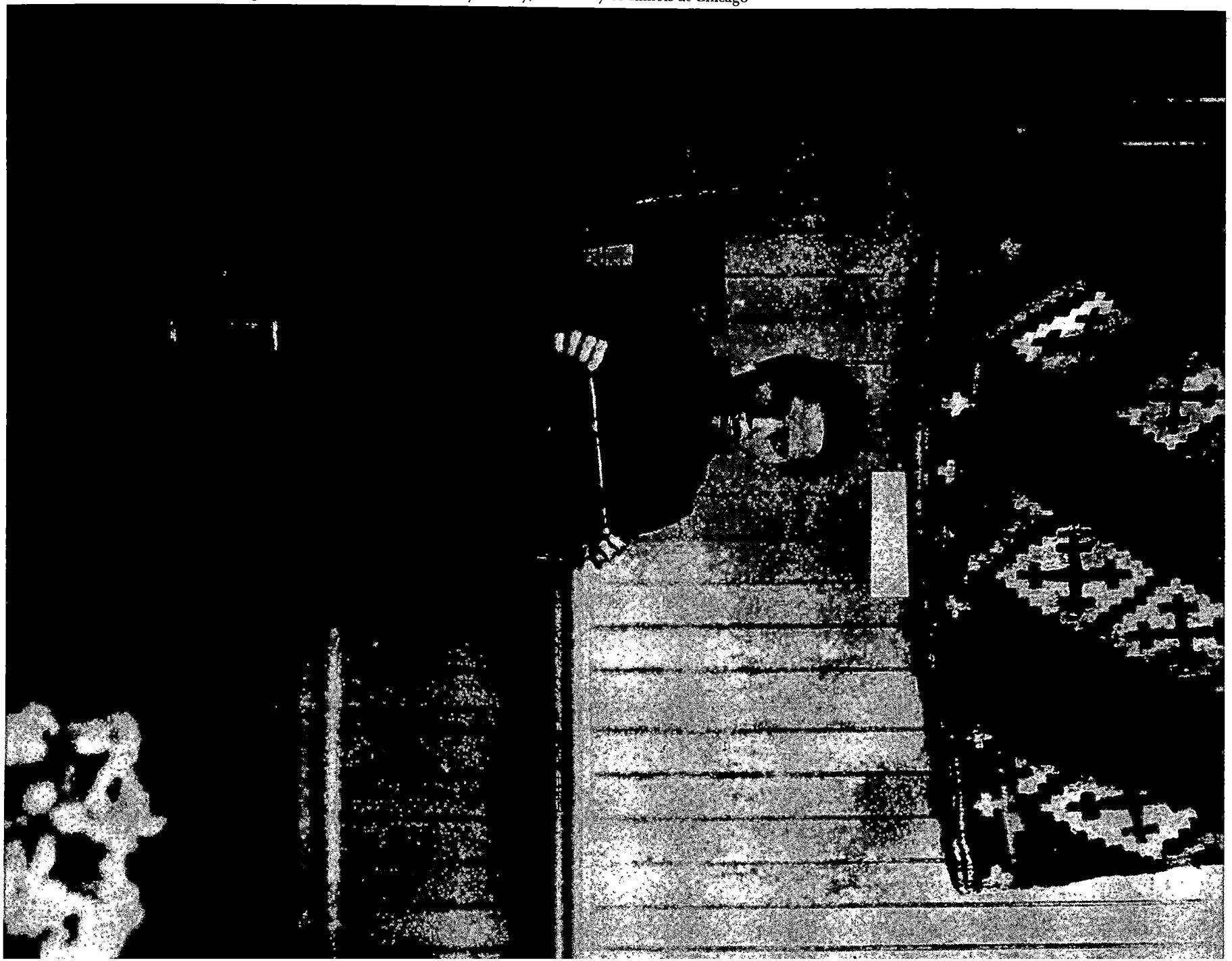
What a shame for the people;
How hurt they are
To see relatives and friends
Crossing (the picket line) because
They have not trust (in the union).

The ballad was composed
For the copper miners
So that all would remember them
And bear them in mind.

I'm singing you this ballad;
Oh how sad it makes me
To see so many cowards
Who will lose respect.

I'm going to say goodbye;
I wish to thank you all.
The ballad is ended.
Long live an undivided union!

Jane Addams Memorial Collection, Special Collections, The University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago



assimilate and working people to cope with raw exploitation. By 1900, Addams added a labor museum to Hull House—not to guard union artifacts, but rather to heal rifts between "foreign" parents and their American children. The trauma of trans-Atlantic passage, the trapping of whole families in slum sweatshops, often led to children without knowledge of their parents' traditional skills.[7]

The labor museum opened with textile craft demonstrations (spinning, weaving, carding, dyeing) and exhibitions, for example, Navajo looms on loan from the Field Museum. Parents from many European lands displayed their family crafts; children sang textile folksongs. Visiting lecturers expounded on Roman slave labor, modern labor conditions, and other topics of the day. Addams carefully pulled together strands from two movements, arts-and-crafts and social reform. As well, she anticipated the rise of community and neighborhood museums. We honor Jane Addams as reformist, feminist and peace advocate. We need also laud her imaginative turning of an old gymnasium into America's first labor museum; we seek to follow her lead.

I should in all candor warn that collectors have not met with universal approval for their efforts. The story of Charles Sotheran suffices. During 1894, Daniel DeLeon's Socialist Labor Party members had joined Knights of Labor New York District Assembly 49, thereby breaking Grand Master Workman Terence V. Powderly's grip on the Knights. Buoyed by temporary victory, the DeLeonites divided on the matter of whether to build an industrial union or try to "convert" AFL craft unions to their cause. In the course of this dispute Sotheran, a dissident Socialist Labor Party member, challenged DeLeon's right to membership in the Knights. Sotheran happened also to have a reputation as an inveterate collector. DeLeon, not one to resist going for the jugular, seized upon this oddity, unceremoniously expelling him with the judgment that the SLP had no room for "this 250 pound perambulating scrap book and historic junk shop."[8]

In present-day language, we tag Charles Sotheran a bibliophile, pack rat, curiosity shopkeeper, or now, laborlorist. His antiquarian passion is, after all, akin to the spirit of Jane Addams' first labor museum and William James' flash of insight on sensing the "daily lives of the laboring classes." And Sothern, Addams and James in their era responded to those very expressions of American work sites we now see as connecting American workers' past experiences to their present demands and their future dreams.

A Hull House Labor Museum instructor demonstrates spinning.

Notes

Archie Green has been a member of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America for almost fifty years. He has taught folklore at the University of Illinois, the University of Pennsylvania, Ohio State University and the University of Texas. In the 1960s and 1970s he lobbied for the American Folklife Preservation Act. Among his many publications is *Only a Miner* (University of Illinois Press, 1972). Currently he is editing a series of LP re-releases under the title *Work's Many Voices*.

[1] William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1899), p. 274. This is the first book printing of James' 1892 lecture, "What Makes a Life Significant?"

[2] Archie Green, "American Labor Lore: Its Meanings and Uses," *Industrial Relations* 4 (1965 Feb.):51-68.

[3] Larry Rubin, "Thinking Out Loud," *Art Works* 1 (1988 Spring-Summer):4. For alternate views of the contemporary folksong revival see Todd Smith, "I Dreamed Joe Hill Was Playin' Rock and Role," *Labor Notes*, No. 111 (June 1988):2; and Jesse Lemisch, "I Dreamed I Saw MTV Last Night," *Nation* 243 (1986): 361, 374-76; also letters reacting to this article in *Nation* 243 (1986):658, 672-74; and Lemisch's response in *Nation* 243 (1986):700, 701-03.

[4] *New York Times*, 13 Apr. 1988.

[5] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 Apr. 1988.

[6] Robert McCarl, "The Folk as Occupation Group," in William Clements, ed., *100 Years of American Folklore Studies: A Conceptual History* (Washington, DC: American Folklore Society, 1988), p. 42; Patricia Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p. 2.

[7] Karen Cushman, "Jane Addams and the Labor Museum at Hull House," *Museum Studies Journal* 1 (1983):20-25.

[8] Howard Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), p. 155.

NEWS

AMALGAMATED CLOTHING AND TEXTILE WORKERS UNION

An observance of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the creation of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America was held during the middle of May in the founding city of Nashville, Tennessee. The week long celebration included an anniversary dinner featuring early ACTWA organizers.

MUSEUM OF AMERICAN TEXTILE HISTORY

The museum, in cooperation with the National Museum of American History, Clemson University, and the Pasold Research Fund, will sponsor the third Textile History Conference in September 1990, marking the bicentennial of Samuel Slater's successful attempt to manufacture yarn with water-powered machinery.

Topics include events in Great Britain and North America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that led to the establishment of the factory system, trends in eighteenth and early-nineteenth century manufacture in North America, and proto-industrial and early industrial development in other nations.

Prospective participants should contact Thomas W. Leavitt, Director, Museum of American Textile History, 800 Massachusetts Avenue, North Andover, MA 01845, not later than October 1, 1989.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Editors thank the following for their assistance with this issue of *LABOR'S HERITAGE* : Laura Bowen, Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority; Paul Burnsky, President, Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO; James Cole, Treasurer, International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers; Ellen Fair, *Esquire*; Averil J. Kadis, Enoch Pratt Free Library; Susan Kaplow, *Esquire*; Michael McCormick, Western Reserve Historical Society; Candace Main-Rush, National Association of Letter Carriers; Ann Sindelar, Western Reserve Historical Society; Marty Tobin, Judson Retirement Community, Judson Manor.

THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

On September 22, the archives will hold a one-day symposium on "North American Labor and World War I" featuring papers by eight scholars currently working on various facets of the subject.

The minute books of the Executive Council of the AFL (1893-1955) and the Executive Board of the CIO (1942-1955) were recently transferred to the archives and are open for research. Contact Katharine Vogel, Chief Archivist, The George Meany Memorial Archives, 10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20903, (301) 434-6404.

HOMESTEAD 1982 CENTENNIAL LABOR COMMITTEE

The committee has been formed to commemorate in July 1992, the 100th anniversary of the lockout of steelworkers at the Carnegie Steel works in Homestead, Pa. The co-chairs are United Steelworkers of America District 15 Director, Andrew V. Palm; Service Employees International Union Local 585 President, Rosemary Trump and Allegheny County Labor Council President, Paul Stackhouse.

The committee is seeking to save the so-called "Hole-in-the-Wall" site at Homestead where three generations of steelworkers were paid, which is now in danger of destruction by the firm that is leveling the plant for development. USX Corporation sold the site in 1988 after closing the historic facility two years earlier. A Pinkerton Landing Site is among those selected for historical designation by the Steel Industry Heritage Task Force, which has labor representation. For more information contact the 1892 Centennial Labor Committee, 120 East Ninth Avenue, Homestead, Pa. 15120, (412) 237-2774.

LABOR HERITAGE FOUNDATION

The D. C. Community Humanities Council awarded

the foundation a grant to create a documentory, "Public Art, The New Deal Murals."

LANCASTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Lancaster United Labor Council recently donated $150 to the society to microfilm the years 1897-1917 of *The Labor Leader*, a weekly labor newspaper of Lancaster County, Pa. For more information contact the Lancaster County Historical Society, Wilson Memorial Building, 230 North President Avenue, Lancaster, PA 17603, (717) 392-4633.

JOHN L. LEWIS COMMISSION

On April 1, ground breaking ceremonies were held for the John L. Lewis Memorial and Labor Museum at Lucas, Iowa, birthplace of the labor leader. The museum is to be built with donated union labor.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, MANUSCRIPT DIVISION

The division has accessioned *Massachusetts Textile Strike List*, ca. 1900-1926, a labor spy report of unknown origin regarding an unidentifed textile strike in Massachusetts.

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS–AMHERST

The university library's new acquisitions include: International Union of Electrical Workers, Local 278 Records (1942-1986, 2.5 l.f.) and Local 36 Records (1940-1985, 5 l.f.); American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Local 1776 Records (1966-1986, 1.5 l.f.); Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, New England Joint Board Records (1974-1987, 4.5 l.f.); United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local 549 Records (1909-1969, 3.5 l.f.) and Local 351 Records (1899-1941, 1 l.f.) and Massachusetts Society of Professors Records (1976-1986, 15 l.f.).

An exhibit entitled "Conditions of Labor: Work and Organization in Massachusetts" is currently on view at the university. In April 1990 the Institute for Massachusetts Studies will publish the papers presented at the April 15 symposium, "Labor in Massachusetts, 1787-1957," which was held at the university. Contact Ken Fones-Wolf, University Library, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Amherst, MA 01003, (413) 545-2780.

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The society has opened for research the Fred J. Blum Hormel Study Records (1933-1958, 5 boxes, 4.25 c.f.), containing notes, interview diaries and extracts of interviews conducted by sociologist Blum from 1947 to 1954 with workers, foremen, management and supervisory personnel at the George A. Hormel plant in Austin, Minnesota. Topics include relationships with work and other workers, the union, community activities, politics and religion. Contact Hampton Smith, Minnesota Historical Society, 1500 Mississippi Street, Saint Paul, MN 55101, (612) 296-6980.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The society announces a cooperative agreement with the Montana State AFL-CIO for transferring the state federation's records to the society as they are retired from active use. Currently held by the society are Montana State AFL-CIO Records (1895-1966, 6 c.f) which include correspondence, subject files, financial records, yearbooks and convention booklets. Contact Sue Jackson, Montana Historical Society, 225 N. Roberts, Helena, MT 59620, (406) 444-4775.

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK GRADUATE CENTER

The University's Association for Worker Education was formed in 1987 to advance the cause of higher education for trade unionists and to serve as an advocate for worker education within the City University of New York. It represents a combined effort of the American Social History Project, the Borough of Manhattan Community College Center for Worker Edu-

cation, The City College Center for Worker Education, the Brooklyn College Graduate Center for Worker Education, the Queens College Labor Education Advancement Program, and the Queens College Labor Studies Program.

In October 1988, the association initiated a monthly program on CUNY-TV (Cable Channel 14 in Manhattan; Channel 33 in the other four boroughs) called "Labor at the Crossroads." For information contact the American Social History Project, c/o the CUNY Graduate Center, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036, (212) 944-8695.

NORTH GREAT PLAINS HISTORY CONFERENCE

Among the topics covered at the October 5-7 conference will be "I.W.W. and Finnish Culture in the Mesabi Range Strike of 1916." For more information contact Donald Winters, Minneapolis Community College, Minneapolis, MN 55417, (612) 341-7547 or 727-3319.

OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Ohio Labor History Project of the Society has recently published *The Unceasing Struggle: A Chronology of Ohio Labor History, 1803-1987*. Copies may be purchased for $3.50 each, plus $0.20 tax and $1.30 postage and handling from the Sales Office, Ohio Historical Society, 1982 Velma Avenue, Columbus, OH 43211.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

The Historical Collections & Labor Archives announces the opening of records of the Office of Secretary-Treasurer, United Steelworkers of America (1965-1977, 104 c.f.), including office correspondence, speeches, files on conventions, mergers, negotiations and arbitration of incentive pay disputes.

Recent accessions include the papers of George P. Firth, Vice President of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (ca.1943-1984, 5 c.f.); the personnel records of the Standard Steel Car Company, Butler, PA, shops (1915-1929, ca. 200 items); views of organizing activities in Aliquippa (1937, 30 items)—photographs from United Steelworkers of America Local 1211, Jones & Laughlin Aliquippa Works. Contact Peter Gottlieb, Historical Collections & Labor Archives, W313 Pattee Library, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802, (814) 863-2505.

RADCLIFFE COLLEGE

The Schlesinger Library announces the acquisition of Clara Goldberg Schiffer's collection of engravings, woodblock prints and other images of women working in the United States, Great Britain and other European countries from 1825 to 1987. The collection also includes clippings, pamphlets and books. Contact Eva Moseley, Curator of Manuscripts, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, 10 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 495-8647.

THE FANNIE SELLINS MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

The committee has been formed in the Western Pennsylvania area, with the support of the central labor council presidents of Allegheny, Butler, Beaver, Armstrong-Clairon, and North Westmoreland counties as well as other labor, civic, political and academic leaders. It has established a fund to finance a marker for Sellins, the St. Louis garment workers' organizer murdered during a battle between sheriff's deputies and striking coal miners in Brackenridge, Pa., August 28, 1919. The marker has already been approved by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and will be dedicated in a ceremony sponsored by the committee and United Steelworkers of America Local 1196 on Saturday, September 2, 1989, at the Union Cemetery, Arnold, Pa., northeast of Pittsburgh. For further information contact Russ Gibbons, Sellins Committee Secretary-Treasurer, Philip Murray Institute, 808 Ridge Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15212, (412) 237-2774.

UNITED STATES SENATE HISTORICAL OFFICE

The office recently completed an oral history interview

Letter carriers outside station S., Brooklyn, N.Y., ca. 1888. The National Association of Letter Carriers was founded the following year in Milwaukee, WI.

with F. Nordy Hoffmann, former Senate sergeant-at-arms, who during the 1930s and 1940s was a CIO organizer and aide to Philip Murray. Later he served as legislative director of the United Steelworkers of America. The 264–page interview, with index, is available for research at the Legislative Records Center in the National Archives or the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, and on microfiche from Scholarly Resources, Inc., Wilmington, DE 19805.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

The Texas Labor Archives has recently accessioned the Fred H. Schmidt Collection (1888-1904, 1940, 1947-1971, 1.1 c.f.), papers of the former executive secretary of the Texas State CIO Council (1955-1957) and secretary-treasurer of the Texas State AFL-CIO (1957-1961); records of Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, Lodge 671, Irving, Texas (1929-1952, 1 c.f.) supplementing two processed collections for Lodge 671 totalling 5.5 c.f; the United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America, Local 638, Pecos, Texas (1961-1988, 5 c.f.); and one minute book of the International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers, Local 481, Dallas, Texas (1954-1958) which, added to an existing collection, completes the span of minutes from 1940-1961.

The Archives also has twenty-two oral history interviews conducted by Dr. George Green, labor historian at the University. Among those interviewed were:

Fred Schmidt, whose career included the Textile Workers and the Oil Workers international unions.

Edgar Berlin, long-time member of Pipe Fitters Local 195, who served in the Texas legislature for three terms beginning 1951.

Bill Petri, secretary for twenty-six years of the Stereotypers and Electrotypers Union and president of the Allied Printing Trades in Austin.

Willie Yager, activist in International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 583 in El Paso.

Contact Mrs. Jane T. Boley, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Texas Labor Archives, P. O. Box 19497, Arlington, TX 76019, (817) 273-3393.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

The annual meeting of the Committee of Industrial Relations Librarians (CIRL) was held at the university's Hart House, on June 8 and 9. The agenda included "Sources of Information in Industrial Relations," "In-House Automation," and "CIRL Automation Survey-Discussion." Contact Elizabeth Perry, Centre for Industrial Relations, University of Toronto, 123 Saint George Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1A1, (416) 978-2928.

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

The Modern Records Centre announces a major addition to the personal papers of Sir Victor Gollancz, a publisher specializing in left-wing topics. It includes a file on Left Book Club libel proceedings (1937-1940), most issues of *Left News* (1936-1943) and other literary and personal material. Contact Richard Storey, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick Library, Coventry, Warwickshire, CV4 7AL, England.

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Rockefeller Foundation Residencies in Humanities at the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs for the academic year 1989-1990 have been awarded to Arizona State University professor Brian Gratton, Catholic University historian Nelson Lichtenstein, California State Bakersfield historian Margaret Rose, and University of Michigan Economic Department member Warren C. Whatley.

On October 19-21, 1989, the eleventh annual North American Labor History Conference will be held at the library with sessions dealing with nineteenth and twentieth century labor history, American, Canadian, European, and South American labor history, along with sessions on labor songs and labor theater, and other featured speakers and events.

Recent accessions at the library include the records of the Michigan Quality of Work Life Council, a labor-management-government education coalition established in 1979 (48 l.f.); Patrick Henning, State of California Agricultural Labor Relations Board member, pertaining to ALRB cases involving farm workers and growers in the 1980s (10 l.f.); the Detroit Alliance for a Rational Economy (DARE), founded in 1978 by supporters of Kenneth Cockrel's bid for a seat on Detroit's city council to identify and mobilize community involvement around issues of health care, economic development, education, and criminal justice in Detroit (13 l.f.).

The library has also obtained virtually an entire run (1940s-1980s) of the *Daily Worker* (later the *Daily World*), national publication of the Communist Party of the U. S., and significant additions to the collections of the Association of Flight Attendants, San Francisco Federation of Teachers, Coalition of Labor Union Women, UAW Region 9A, labor journalist Harvey O'Connor, and UAW Recreation Department official John D'Agostino.

Contact Philip P. Mason, Director, Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, 5401 Cass Ave. Detroit, MI 48202, (313) 577-4024.

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

The society and the University of Wisconsin-Madison announce a March 9 and 10, 1990, conference entitled "Perspectives on Labor History: The Wisconsin School and Beyond." Subjects include labor and civil rights; industrial unionism; academics and unions; labor and radicalism; women and the labor movement; labor and social action; labor and the state. Proposals for papers or entire sessions must be submitted by October 1, 1989. Contact R. David Myers, Library Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State Street, Madison, WI 53706, (608) 262-0586.

Labor's Heritage invites information to be included in this section. Topics of interest include notices of meetings, exhibits and other events; collection accessions and openings; and related matters. Deadlines for copy are February 15, May 15, August 15 and November 15. Send to News, *Labor's Heritage*, 10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20903.

A welder in the process of arc welding a collar, possibly for a steam pipe, in the shipbuilding industry during World War II. Photograph by Margaret Bourke-White.

Labor's Heritage is a scholarly-based journal of original work published quarterly by The George Meany Memorial Archives, official archives of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and part of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies. Its primary purpose is to bring public attention to the rich and varied heritage of American workers, and to resources and exhibits for the further exploration of this subject.

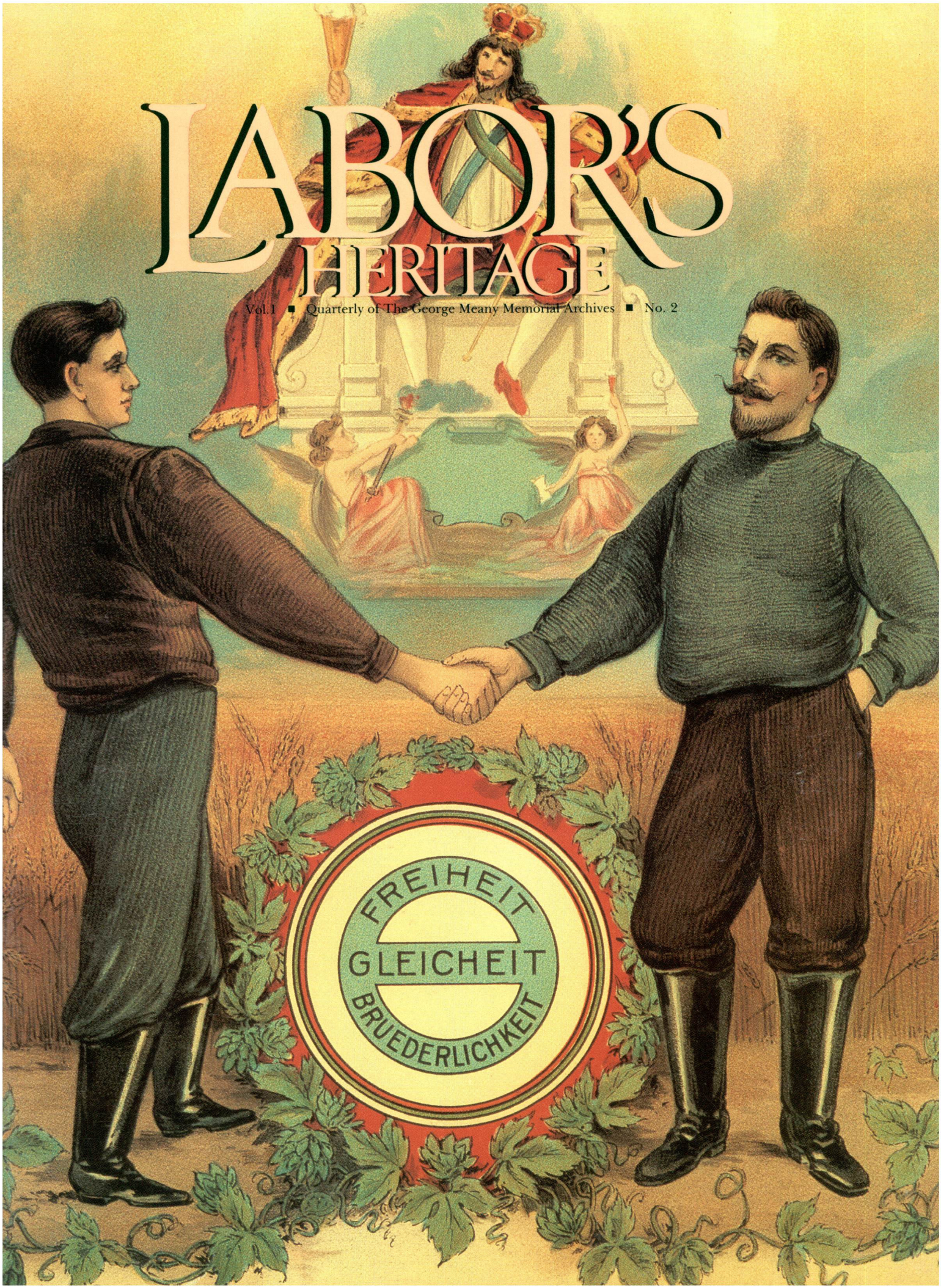
The historical focus and general audience of *Labor's Heritage* precludes accepting articles that deal primarily with contemporary issues or that are partisan or polemical in style or content. While the editors will consult with experts as required in selecting articles for publication, the responsibility for selection lies with the editors. Published articles reflect a wide range of perspectives and do not necessarily represent the views of The George Meany Memorial Archives or the AFL-CIO.

Labor's Heritage relies in general on *Webster's Dictionary* and the *Chicago Manual of Style* for guidance in matters of form, grammar and spelling. Articles, with notes at the end numbered consecutively, should be double-spaced. The editors welcome inquiries from prospective authors prior to submission of articles. Articles appearing in *Labor's Heritage* are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*.

Correspondence regarding contributions and all other editorial matters should be sent to the Editor, *Labor's Heritage*, The George Meany Memorial Archives, 10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20903. Subscription rates are $15.00 for one year, $28.00 for two years, and $40.00 for three years. Rates for subscriptions outside the United States are $18.75 for one year, $35.00 for two years, and $50.00 for three years. Checks should be made payable to the George Meany Center for Labor Studies. Charges (MasterCard, Visa, American Express) must include card company's name, the card number and expiration date, and card holder's signature. Subscriptions begin with the subsequent issue; back issues may be purchased for $5.00 each while quantities last. Allow six to eight weeks for receipt of first issue. Notice of nonreceipt of an issue must be sent within six months of issue publication date.

LABOR'S HERITAGE

Vol.1 ■ Quarterly of The George Meany Memorial Archives ■ No. 2



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LABOR'S HERITAGE

Vol. 1 No. 2 ■ Quarterly of The George Meany Memorial Archives ■ April 1989

COVER

Detail from a tray produced by Beer Drivers Union 132, Philadelphia. Scott Molloy Labor Collection. Photo by Ricardo Vargas, Smithsonian Institution. *See full photograph on page 50.*

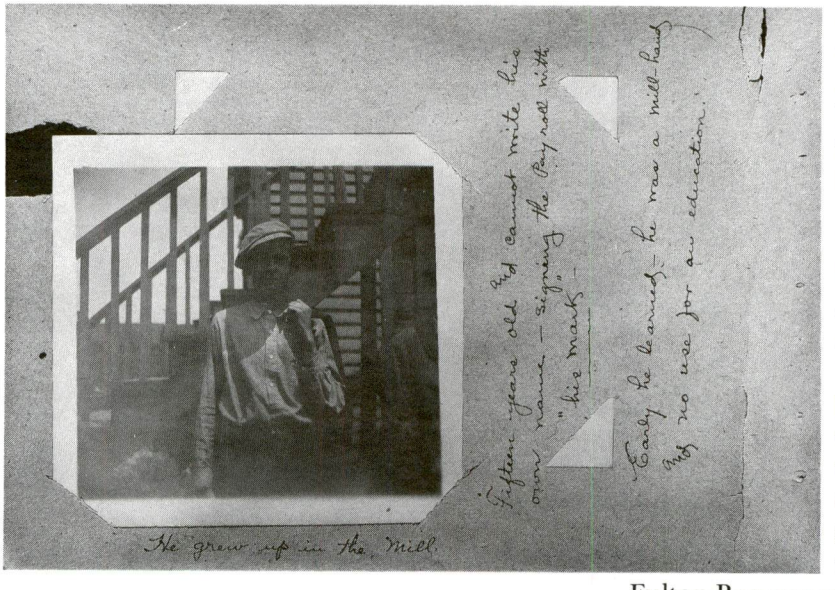
Photo page 1: Road building in Greenville, Mississippi, n.d. National Archives and Records Administration

Robert C. McMath, Jr.

HISTORY *by a* GRAVEYARD

The Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Records

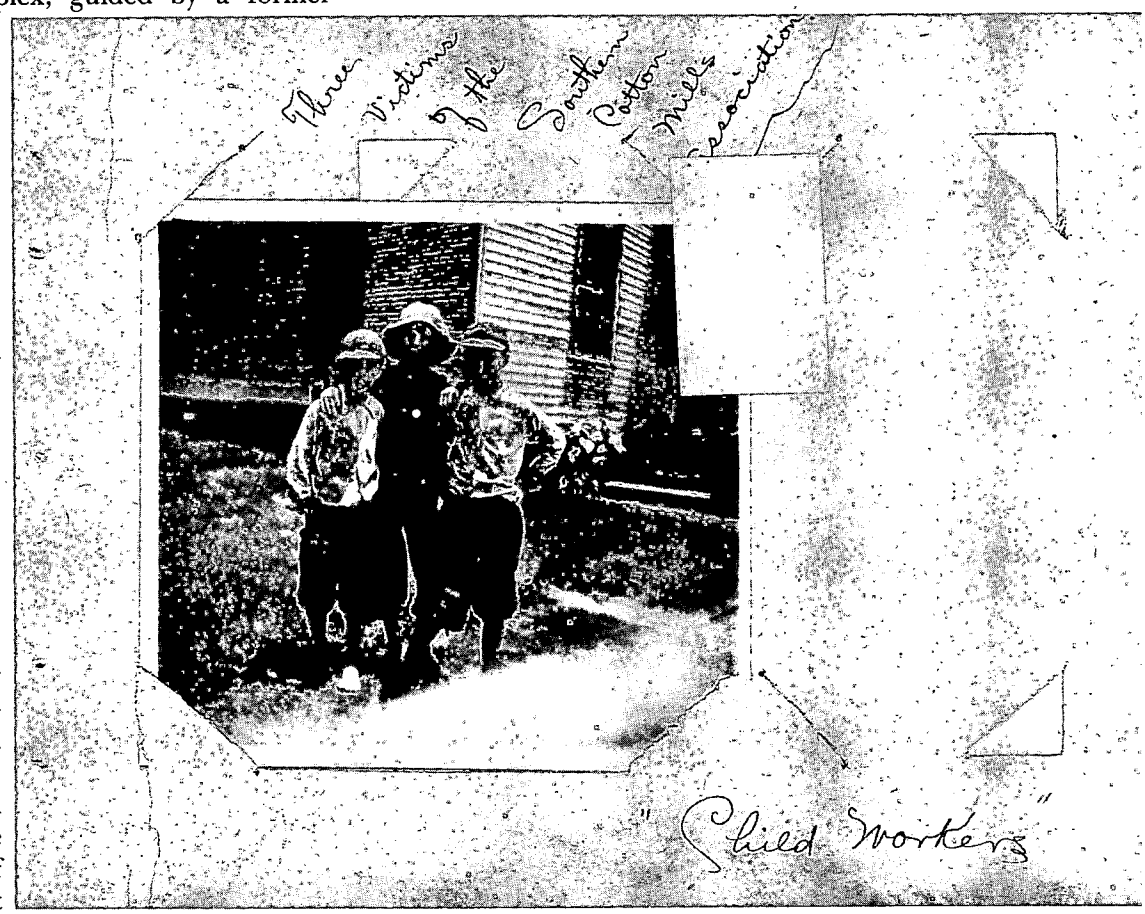
PASSENGERS HEADING EAST FROM downtown Atlanta, Georgia, on the rapid rail line are, without knowing it, retracing the arch of the city's nineteenth century industrial crescent. Following the curve of the main railroad corridor, the MARTA train glides past Oakland Cemetery, where lie buried many of the city's illustrious citizens—among them novelist Margaret Mitchell, golfer Bobby Jones and industrialist Jacob Elsas. Just beyond Oakland Cemetery is another graveyard of sorts, the massive red brick remains of the textile complex which Jacob Elsas built, the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills.



The sprawling complex of turn-of-the-century mill buildings, flanked by frame houses which once comprised a mill village known as Cabbagetown, stands vacant and in disrepair. Most MARTA passengers would be surprised to know that less than two decades ago Fulton Bag employed two thousand workers and every *week* consumed one thousand bales of cotton and produced two million yards of textile goods. For almost a century Fulton Bag was one of Atlanta's largest industrial firms. Now it shows no more signs of life than Oakland Cemetery.

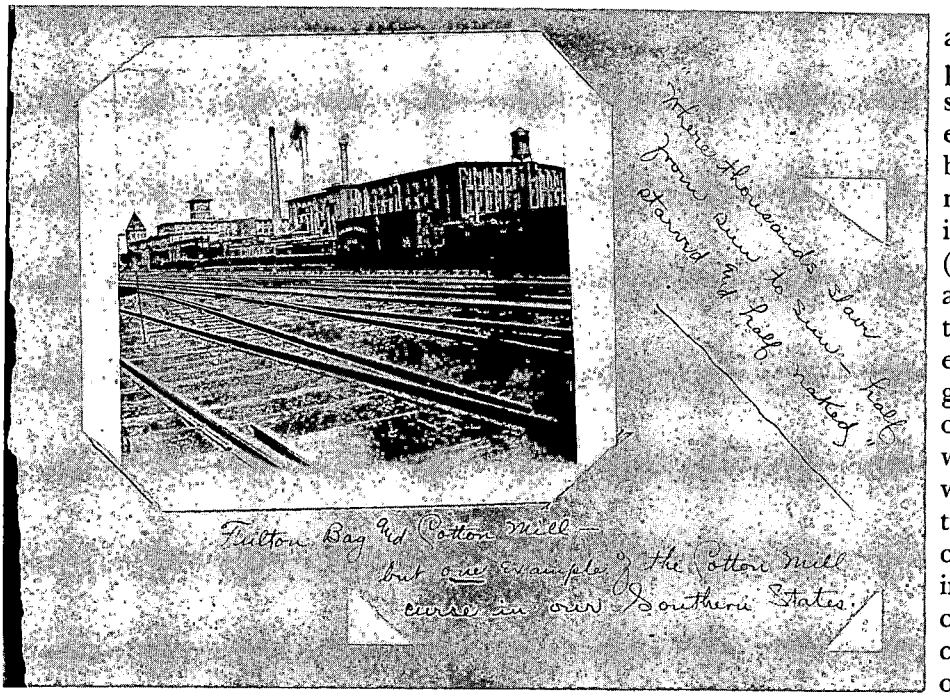
Sometimes archivists and industrial historians must,

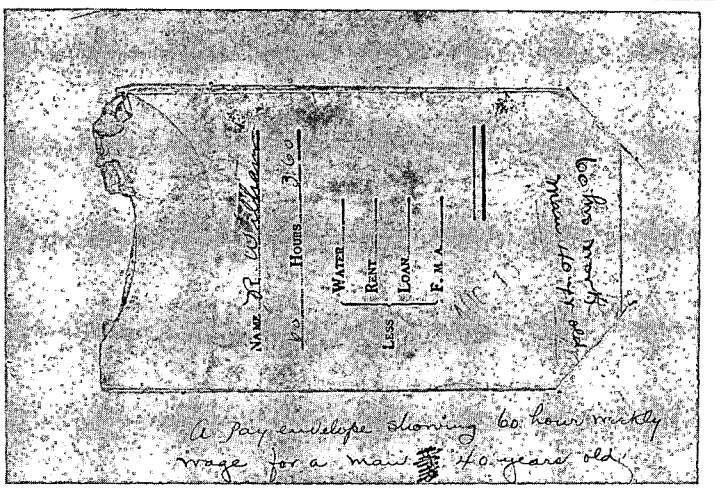
like undertakers, practice their craft just after a death has occurred—a mill closing or the takeover of a family-owned business by a conglomerate. It was in just such a situation that my colleague Jim Brittain and I began our association with Fulton Bag. In the late 1970s, soon after the mill closed, we used it as a research site for a class in industrial archeology. Along with our students we toured the mill complex, guided by a former president of the firm (a grandson of Jacob Elsas) and the company's last plant engineer, who was employed by the successor firm to keep an eye on the property. Visual inspection of the buildings and machinery, interviews, examination of public records, and research in the small collection of Fulton Bag records at Emory University provided the students with material for papers on the technological, economic and labor history of the mill. However, no one seemed to know where the bulk of the company records were, although filing cabinets of some description had been seen in a dark basement of the mill.



In 1985, when the mill property was about to be sold again, an official of the firm which had bought the company from the Elsas family called me to say that the company was interested in donating Fulton Bag records to the Georgia Institute of Technology. Although Georgia Tech had only a small archival facility, university officials agreed to accept the papers, process them for scholarly use, and use that collection as the foundation of a larger archival program focusing on industrial and technological history.

When our crew of librarians and historians arrived





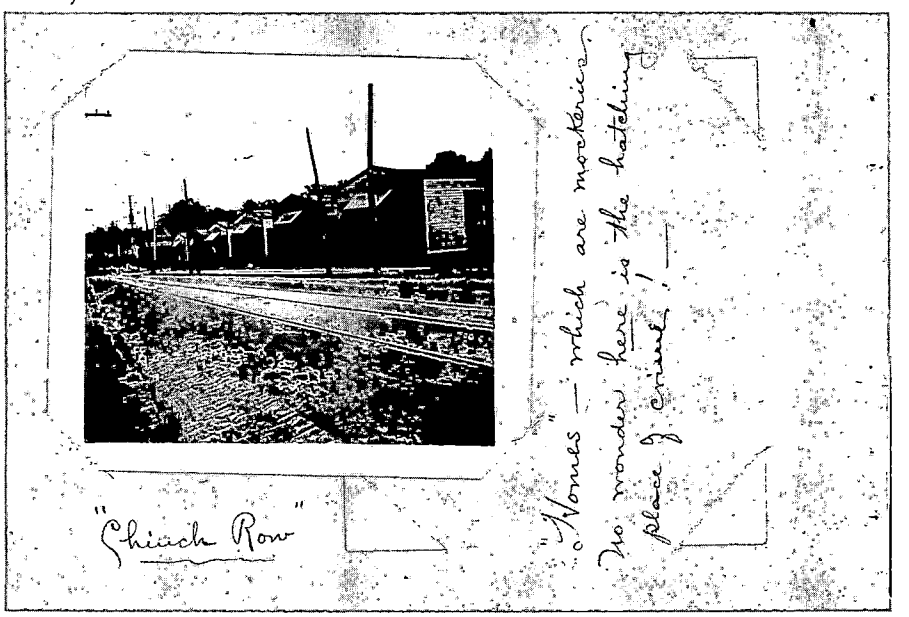
at the mill to pick up the papers, officials proudly showed us to the former executive offices where bound ledger volumes were neatly stacked. After loading these business records (257 volumes in all), we asked about the other materials which we had seen earlier in the basement. Our guide expressed surprise at our interest, but said we were welcome to whatever was down there. We retrieved a large set of architectural and engineering drawings, five file cabinets full of personnel cards, and an assortment of other materials. Not until the materials were out of the basement and in temporary storage at Georgia Tech did we fully comprehend their significance. Despite some serious gaps, the Fulton Bag papers provide an unusual and in some regards unique view of life inside a southern textile mill and mill community.

The business records are themselves unusually rich by southern standards, though scores of such collections have survived for northern mills. Concentrated in the period between the 1890s and the 1930s, they include payroll records, ledgers and journals, accident reports and property inventories. While most of the records pertain to the Atlanta facility, there are some records for the company's branch plants in New Orleans, Brooklyn, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Denver and Dallas.

The architectural and engineering drawings are unusual among surviving mill records. Though not yet catalogued, there are approximately twelve hundred drawings, including elevations, floor plans and mechanical and electrical systems—which, taken together, document the evolution of the mill complex and power systems.

The personnel records are, so far as I know, unique among the collections of southern mill records under

archival control, consisting of approximately fifty thousand personnel cards, and covering the period from 1915. Similar to the cards for the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company in Manchester, New Hampshire, used by Tamara Hareven,[1] the Fulton Bag personnel records provide a wealth of data on employment and family history for each worker, along with medical and other personal information. We have plans for converting all of the personnel cards to machine-readable form, but for the foreseeable future scholarly use of these records will be restricted so as to maintain confidentiality.

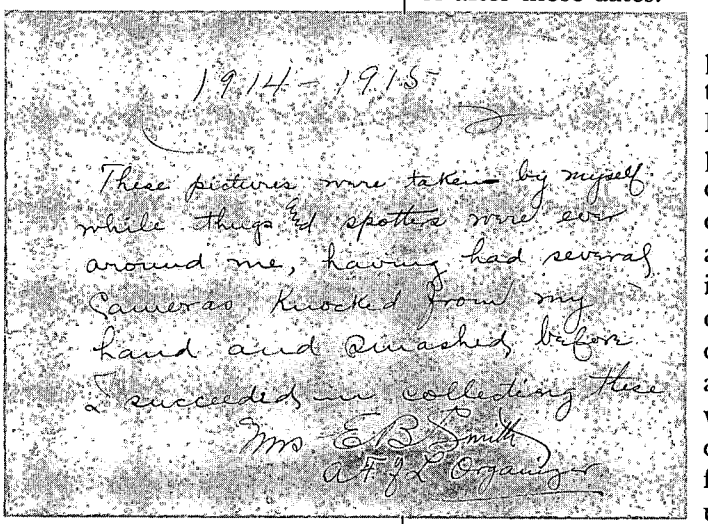


The Fulton Bag records include very little in the way of executive correspondence. However, the one cache of executive material that did find its way into the archive is the most remarkable sub-set of the collection: approximately five linear feet of correspondence to and from Oscar Elsas, president of the firm between 1913 and 1923. Approximately two-thirds of the material relates to the strike at Fulton Bag in 1914–15 and to other aspects of labor relations in the period 1913–15. The balance of the material relates to labor relations at Fulton Bag's Atlanta mill and its branch houses in Dallas, New Orleans, New York and St. Louis in the period 1918–23.

During 1913–15 Elsas carried on extensive correspondence with other mill presidents, trade association officials, editors of textile journals, Atlanta governmental and civic leaders, and private security agencies concerning the strike and other aspects of labor relations. During and after the strike Elsas contracted with security companies to place agents in the mill and the surrounding community to pose as workers and infiltrate the union. During and even after the strike, operatives reported to Elsas on a daily basis concerning the mood of the workers, union organizing activities

MRS. E. B. SMITH

Mrs. E. B. Smith was a labor activist in the Atlanta, Georgia, area who was deeply involved with the strike against the Fulton Bag Cotton Mills in 1914–15. AFL records for the period indicate that for the weeks ending June 27 through November 21, 1914, Mrs. Smith was paid a weekly salary of $20.00 (plus $2.45 for expenses) out of funds the AFL had raised through an assessment on affiliates for the National Campaign to Organize Women Workers. There is no record that she received any compensation before or after those dates.



Smith and three other photographers documented the strike against the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Company, both to publicize conditions and to provide evidence for federal mediation and conciliation efforts during the strike. Their images depict the workers, housing conditions, union and management strike activities, worker evictions, and the tent city that housed the strikers from September 1, 1914, until the following May.

Smith collected many of the photographs in three albums she carefully captioned, titling the books "Conditions," "Evictions" and "Tent City." They, with 20 additional prints, form a unique collection of 149 images from which most of the illustrations in the articles by Robert McMath and Gary Fink have been drawn. As illustrations they not only enhance the narrative of the Fink article, but also provide a counterpoint to it, presenting Mrs. Smith's view of the strike. The albums are in the photograph collection of The George Meany Memorial Archives.

and working conditions and technical problems in the various departments of the mill. Some of the reports bear pencilled notations in Oscar Elsas' hand on actions to be taken as a result of the reports.

As with any other historical source, one must approach these operatives' reports with a healthy skepticism. The operatives did, after all, have their own agenda which no doubt colored their reporting. But, when used with care, these documents provide a rare look inside a major strike, and provide new insights into a situation that was both volatile and complex.

In part, Elsas resorted to using labor spies because he did not trust city officials or the Atlanta police, nor did he believe that the commercial elite of the city were

sympathetic to him. Many leading Atlantans were then involved in a social gospel organization, the Men and Religion Forward Movement, which was intent on reforming factory working conditions, and which contained, in Elsas' view, an anti-Semitic streak.

Furthermore, the Fulton Bag strike coincided with an outbreak of mass hysteria in Georgia surrounding the trial, conviction and lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish pencil factory manager, for allegedly murdering a teen–aged employee, Mary Phagan. Cabbagetown was a center of anti-Frank sentiment, and some of that animus was transferred to members of the Elsas family because they too were Jewish and, perhaps, because workers connected the labor practices of Fulton Bag with the system of industrial efficiency which Frank had been installing at the pencil factory.

The Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Papers reveal intimate details of the lives of both workers and owner—more intimate, no doubt, than either would wish to have revealed. But these are the kinds of records from which an honest reconstruction of southern textile history can be drawn. Unfortunately, for every Fulton Bag story there are many other archival stories with an unhappy ending—records lost, or destroyed or rotting in an unknown location. The family-owned mills which sprang up in the decades between the 1880s and 1910s are either closing or being swallowed up by conglomerates with no interest in the preservation of someone else's history.

We are now at a point in the preservation of the documentary and artifactual remains of post-Civil War southern industrialization which is analogous to the preservation in the 1920s and 1930s of records of antebellum plantations and Afro-American slavery. This part of our heritage will be preserved soon or not at all. If we wish the dry bones of southern industrial and labor history to rise up and take on flesh and blood, the time to act is now.

Notes

Robert C. McMath, Jr., is a professor of history at Georgia Institute of Technology and is author or co-author of five books, including *Populist Vanguard: A History of the Southern Farmers' Alliance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1975) and *Engineering the New South: Georgia Tech, 1885–1985* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985). He is presently working on two books: a social history of American Populism (to be published by Hill and Wang); and a book about William Raoul, who grew up in Atlanta's high society before the turn of the century, set out to become a mechanical engineer, held a variety of industrial management jobs, and ended up being converted to socialism and moving to Greenwich Village (to be published by Louisiana State University Press).

[1] See Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); and Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

GARY M FINK

Labor Espionage

Photograph by Duane A. Russell

The Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Strike of 1914–1915

10 APRIL 1989

IN THEIR EFFORT TO EXPLAIN ORGANIZED labor's limited inroads in the South, students of American labor history point to such influences as the legacy of slavery and racism that divided black and white workers, the relatively homogeneous and parochial character of white workers, and conservative anti-union religious influences. They also refer to the hostile southern political environment in which the labor movement operated and the manner in which the economic elite used local and state police power to break strikes and brutalize labor organizers. In his study *Labor in the South,* Ray Marshall emphasized the predominance in the region of single plant, low-capital industries that bred company towns and industrial paternalism. According to Marshall, this condition insulated workers from union influences and also prevented labor from using what had been a highly successful tactic elsewhere: that of organizing workers in one locale by applying pressure against a company's unionized plants in another locale.[1]

While all of these factors help explain the difficulties of southern unionism, their explanatory power is limited. Just how limited is illustrated by a strike at Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, Inc., in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1914–15. It would be difficult to create a more favorable scenario for a successful southern organizing effort. The Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills strike did not occur in a company town located in the rural, Piedmont back country but rather in Atlanta, a thriving, emerging metropolis of the New South. The Atlanta economy at the time was relatively sound and the mills were running at nearly full capacity.

Moreover, at that time, Atlanta was somewhat of a union town. The labor movement had substantial influence in the city council, and a member of the Atlanta Typographical Union was the city's dominant political figure, having been elected mayor on four different occasions. As many as 50 percent of the registered voters in the city may have been union members.[2] This no doubt helps explain why, to the extent that government intervened in the strike, it largely favored labor. Both the U. S. Commission on Industrial Relations (CIR) and the U. S. Conciliation Service of the U. S. Department of Labor sent agents to Atlanta to investigate the strike and both issued reports highly critical of Fulton Bag's management.[3] Similarly, the chief of police and many members of his department actively sympathized with organized labor, thus reducing the likelihood that the police power of the city or state would be used to crush the strike.

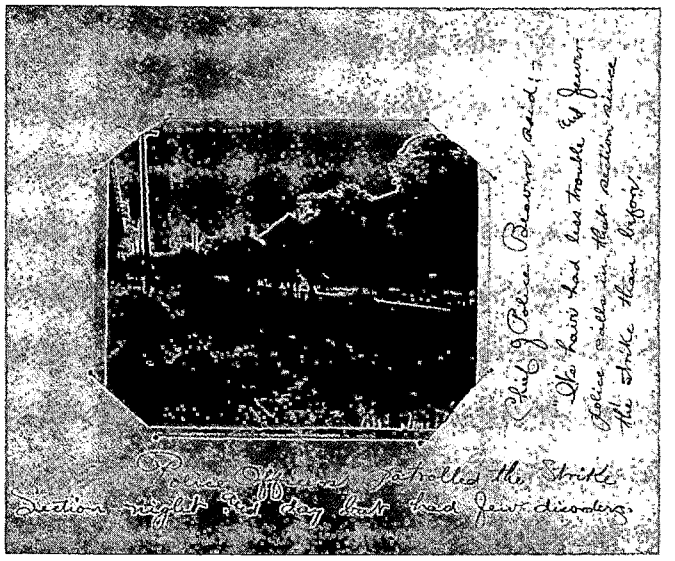
Police attitudes reflected those of the community. Most Atlantans sympathized more with the workers than with their employers, a situation that annoyed and affronted Fulton Bag's management. Protestant church leaders, through the reformist Men and Religion Forward Movement, actively proselytized in favor of the workers' cause, and several of the city's churches passed resolutions urging company officials to recognize the union and negotiate their differences. Fulton Bag's owners, who were Jewish, took this as further evidence of the anti-Semitic tide that had swept through the city in the wake of Mary Phagan's murder on April 26, 1913, and the subsequent accusations against her Jewish employer, Leo Frank, which ultimately led to his lynching.[4] While there is no conclusive evidence that anti-Semitism had any direct bearing on the outcome of the strike, other textile firms in the city, although they helped Fulton Bag recruit new workers, remained highly critical of Fulton Bag's labor policies and discussed the possibility of expelling the firm from the Cotton Manufacturers' Association. Given community attitudes at the time, the religious faith of Fulton Bag's ownership and management clearly worked to the advantage of the striking workers.

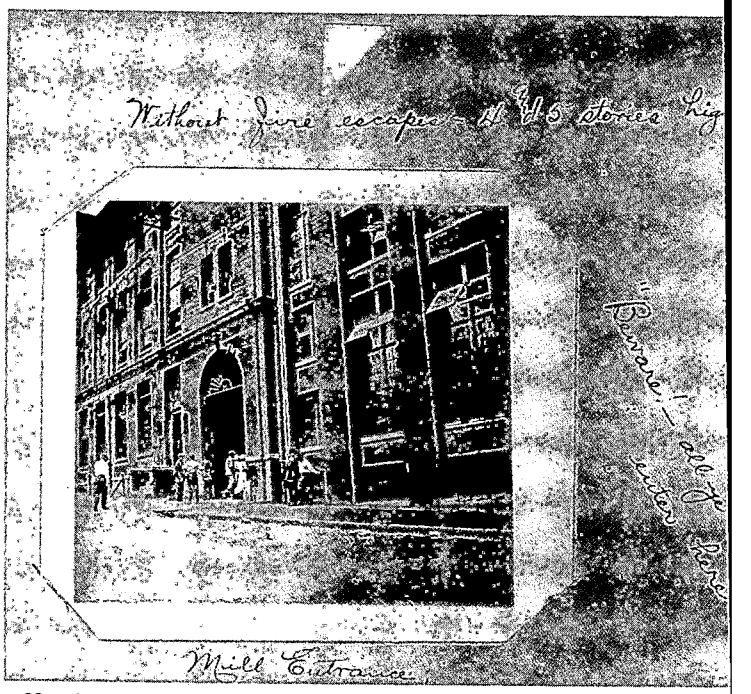
Finally, both the United Textile Workers of America (UTW) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) saw this strike as the opening skirmish in a campaign to organize the South. Consequently both organizations, along with numerous affiliated local unions, poured thousands of dollars into Atlanta and committed some of their most effective organizers to the cause.

On the other hand, what the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills strike also illustrates is the determination of southern employers to avoid collective bargaining at all costs and the lengths they were willing to go to do so. The literature on southern industrial relations contains numerous examples of the wide range of anti-union tactics used by southern employers. Among the best known but least understood of such devices was the hiring of anti-labor detective and employment

agencies to gather labor intelligence, supply strike-breakers, and, when necessary, to act as provocateurs. Although the presence of undercover agents in the South is widely acknowledged, little is known about how they operated to disrupt organizing efforts. Fortunately, the recently opened records of the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills company provide an unusually revealing glimpse of the activities of such undercover operatives in the textile industry. Among the more common activities, these agents identified union members and leaders, sought to turn public opinion against striking workers, fostered division and discord within the union movement, promoted worker discontent with union leadership, sabotaged union tactics and strategies and engaged in a variety of other activities that greatly complicated union organizing efforts in the South.

Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, Inc., was a family-owned concern founded in Atlanta, Georgia, by Jacob Elsas in 1868 when he opened a small bag manufacturing plant. The business grew and expanded steadily and was incorporated in 1889. Fulton Bag was not destined to remain the isolated, single plant firm so typical of the southern textile industry; even before World War I, it had become a large interstate corporation with plants located in several cities inside and outside the South. Jacob Elsas remained the nominal head of the company until 1914, although by 1889





effective management of the enterprise was in the hands of his son, Benjamin. In 1914 Benjamin's son, Oscar Elsas, assumed the presidency and took over the firm's management. Several of Benjamin's other sons were active in the business as well, including Louis, who served as company secretary. Benjamin Phillips, a son-in-law, had a seat on the board of directors and was the general counsel. Phillips was then a law partner of John M. Slayton, the governor of Georgia at the time of the Fulton Bag strike. Slayton later became a national figure when he commuted Leo Frank's death sentence to life imprisonment on June 20, 1915.[5]

Destined to become a Fortune 500 company, Fulton Bag had capital stock of $600 thousand and property valued in excess of $10 million at the time of the strike. The mills produced sheetings, cotton bagging, tarpaulins, cotton, linen, flax, jute, hemp and sisal twines and cordage, cotton crash and cotton duck. Powered by electricity, the Fulton Bag complex in Atlanta consisted of four mills which when running at full capacity employed twenty-one hundred workers. The mills had twenty boilers, twenty-five hundred looms, and one hundred thousand ring spindle dyes. The products were sold directly from the firm's Capitol Avenue address and at outlets in New York, St. Louis, Dallas and New Orleans.

Much of the labor force of this large Atlanta operation consisted of southern Appalachian mountain people lured to the city by the appeal of industrial jobs and steady work. Approximately 53 percent of the workers were male, 35 percent female and 12 percent children; skilled work, however, was predominantly a male preserve. Fulton Bag had a reputation of being a "hobo mill," and workers in the city's other textile mills seem to have had a low opinion of its work force. The average

term of employment at Fulton Bag was only six weeks, as a consequence of which turnover rates ranged as high as 500 percent a year.[6]

On May 20, 1914, several workers walked out of the Fulton Mills initiating what was to become one of the longest strikes in the history of southern textiles. The immediate cause of the strike at Fulton Bag was the discharge of several employees who had joined Local 886 of the UTW. The workers vowed to remain on strike until mill management recognized the union and agreed to adjust several grievances. It quickly became apparent, however, that worker complaints rather than the demand for union recognition had generated much of the discontent that fueled the strike. Among the grievances identified by the striking workers was the requirement that workers, as a precondition of employment, sign a contract agreeing to provide one week's notice of intention to quit. To enforce this contract, Fulton Bag withheld one week's pay from employees, which was forfeited by those who failed to provide proper notice. Employees also objected to an extremely arbitrary fining system, child labor abuses and the excessive brutality practiced by supervisors and foremen in the mills.[7]

Because of the anticipated importance of the Fulton Bag strike in labor's campaign to organize southern textiles, the UTW and the AFL both pledged to support striking mill operatives financially, and the UTW assigned three of its most talented organizers to Atlanta—Charles A. Miles, Sara Conboy and Lillian Kelleher. Locally, the Atlanta labor movement was committed to the strike, and an Atlanta AFL voluntary organizer, Mrs. E. B. Smith, along with Miles, became the principal strike leaders.

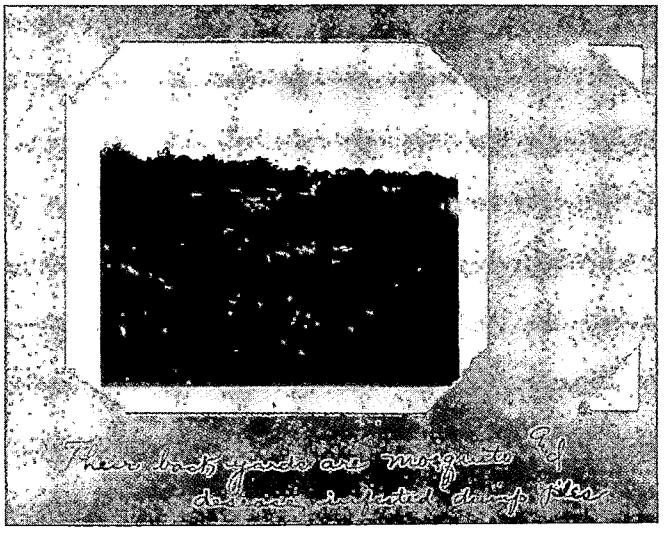
With labor problems looming on the horizon, Oscar Elsas had responded with interest a few weeks earlier, when H. N. Brown, vice-president and general manager of the Railway Audit and Inspection Company, Inc., of Philadelphia, contacted him about putting experienced operatives inside his Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills plants to carry out "secret service work." RA&I was one of several such firms operating in the South prior to World War I. While not as notorious as the Pinkerton or Burns agencies, Railway Audit was, nevertheless, a large interstate business whose agents were involved in such industrial disputes as the great coal field wars of Colorado, hosiery worker strikes in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and textile disputes from Maine to Georgia. It specialized in supplying strikebreakers and in undercover intelligence and "efficiency" work. Its agents were bright, relatively well-educated people who could perform a variety of espionage activities.[8]


All operatives must serve ONE WEEKS NOTICE before quitting.
Machinery MUST NOT be CLEANED while in motion, as same is dangerous.
PAY CHECKS are given out every Saturday morning in the mill and if operative is absent at such time, check can be secured Saturday morning at office of Company, otherwise check can not be had until Monday.
Sulphur matches not allowed. Safety matches furnished without charge.
Payment CAN NOT be made without check.
All complaints or suggestions gladly investigated at the office.
Fulton Bag & Cotton Mills.

Rules of employment of the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, Inc., printed on one side of a pay envelope.

The activities of one such agent, Harry Preston, during the Fulton Bag strike provide a dramatic illustration of just how insidious and effective such tactics could be in the defeat of union organizing efforts. Preston was one of several agents assigned to that task during the strike. Like many other such agents in this line of espionage work, he was an experienced textile operative who could perform most of the skilled tasks in a mill, but he usually listed his occupation as a loomfixer, a job permitting him to roam freely through the mills without arousing suspicion. Only Fulton Bag President Oscar Elsas and General Manager Gordon A. Johnstone were aware of the labor agent's true identity. Preston was a bright, energetic and articulate fellow with middle-class, professional attitudes and values and an apparent contempt for most of the working-class representatives with whom he lived and worked.

The Philadelphia labor agent arrived at Atlanta's Union Station on a warm, humid June afternoon posing as an English textile worker in search of employment. He asked for directions to the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Company, which he had been told was hiring skilled hands. Union pickets stationed at the railroad depot immediately informed the seemingly innocent newcomer of the strike and asked him to stay away from the Fulton mills. Preston quickly agreed on the condition he be assured of a job once the strike was won. This done, he signed a union card and the following day joined pickets at the entrance to the mills.[9]



FULTON BAG & COTTON MILLS.

Report of Opr. #115 Sunday, June 21st, 1914.

I reported around Mills at 7:30 this A.M.; found everything quiet. Spent time from then till 12:30 among pickets. Nothing of interest to report in connection with conversations among them.

Attended a meeting at White City. Meeting addressed by Conboy, Kelliher, Smith, Miles and a representative of Local Union, whose name I could not learn.

All arguments used were same as previously used: Say strike is all over; say they are backed by organized labor from all over country, and have unlimited financial support. Mrs. Smith pictured mills and houses of Company as pest houses. Said that Cholera was being bred there, and that condition of mills was absolutely filthy. Also pictured Company as turning into streets, sick and dying people, and setting into street a woman with new born baby. This all done evidently to create ill feeling against Company, and gain sympathy.

I have been in company of Conboy, Smith and Miles. I find that the policy they are following is as follows: to keep up agitation, by any means; to gain sympathy of general public; to keep employees in good spirits, by "jollying" them; to get support of City Officials by picturing filthy and unhealthy conditionsof mills, hoping to get an investigation, I find no evidence of violence being agitated, except individual expressions against Officials of Company, and these are discouraged by Organizers.

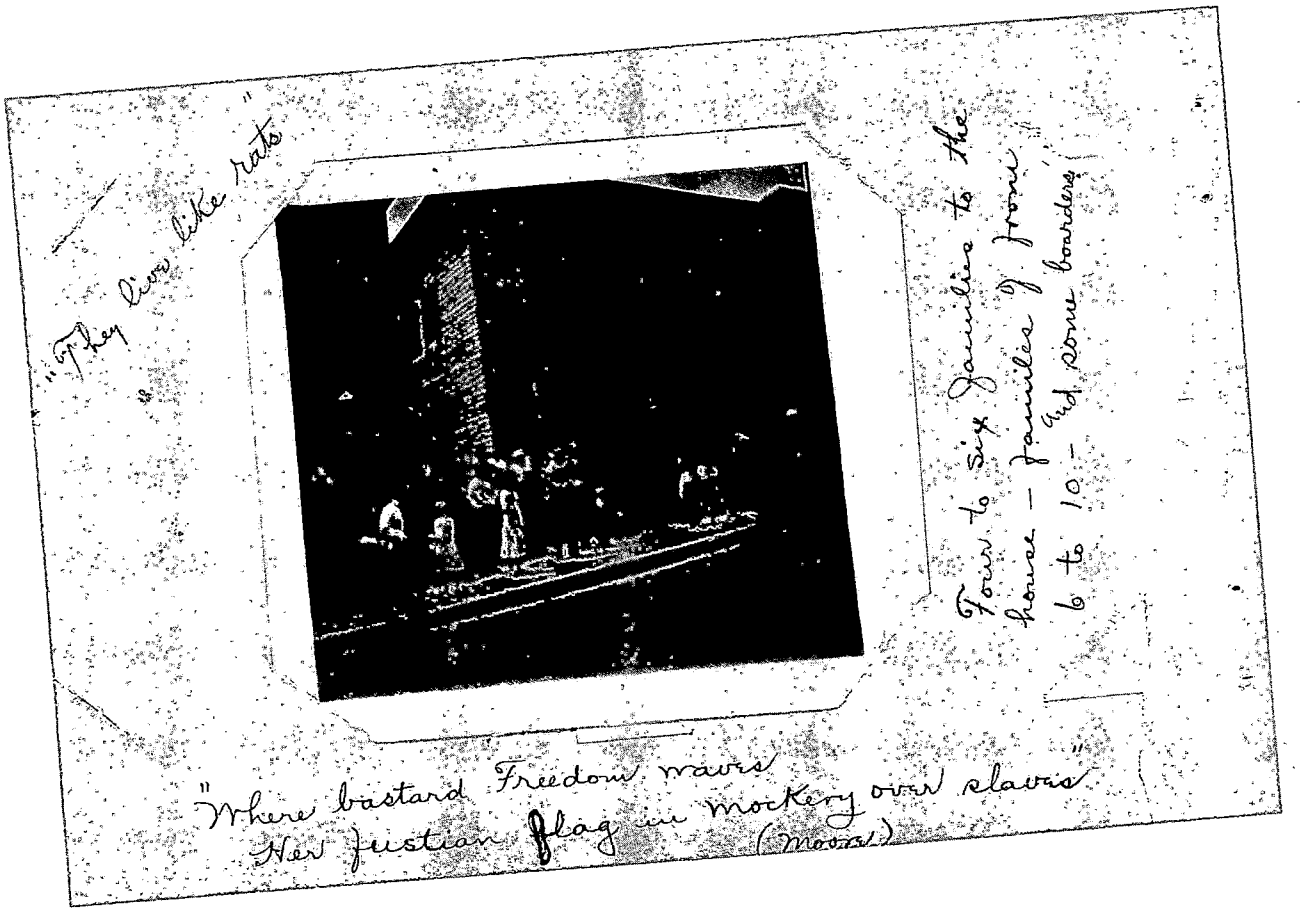
I find that strikers are so completely dominated by these organizers, that the ones who would return to work are afraid to express an opinion publicly.

It seems to me that in a little while this will wear off, and some break will be made. I have carefully felt this out, and feel sure that there are a number who will get together when chance offers itself. I am doing all I can to help this along, but have to use extreme caution, as it is absolutely necessary for me to keep covered, as I am in confidential relations with a number of the men, and am aiming for Smith, Miles and Conboy.

One page of the report of Operative 115, Harry Preston, describing his activities at Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, 21 June 1914.

Preston's initial assessment of the striking textile operatives and of their union leaders was scathing. Most strikers, he reported with obvious distaste, were bums and "hangers on" who probably had not done a legitimate day's work in years, and the strike itself was poorly organized and inadequately funded. His reports included graphic descriptions of the clutter left after union meetings, and he suggested that the unfortunate habits reflected by this behavior were the real source of the filthy conditions in the mills and company housing about which union organizers so piously chastised mill management.[10]

In discussing a union meeting he attended, Preston observed that no business of any kind was conducted. Matters of a financial nature were never discussed, and the time normally was taken up with optimistic speeches and exhortations about keeping faith. Ironically, Preston seemed somewhat surprised that union leaders were a bit paranoid. All their organizing and strike plans, he declared, are done under strict lock and key. They evidently have been warned "to keep anything they want secret, strictly to themselves." He reported

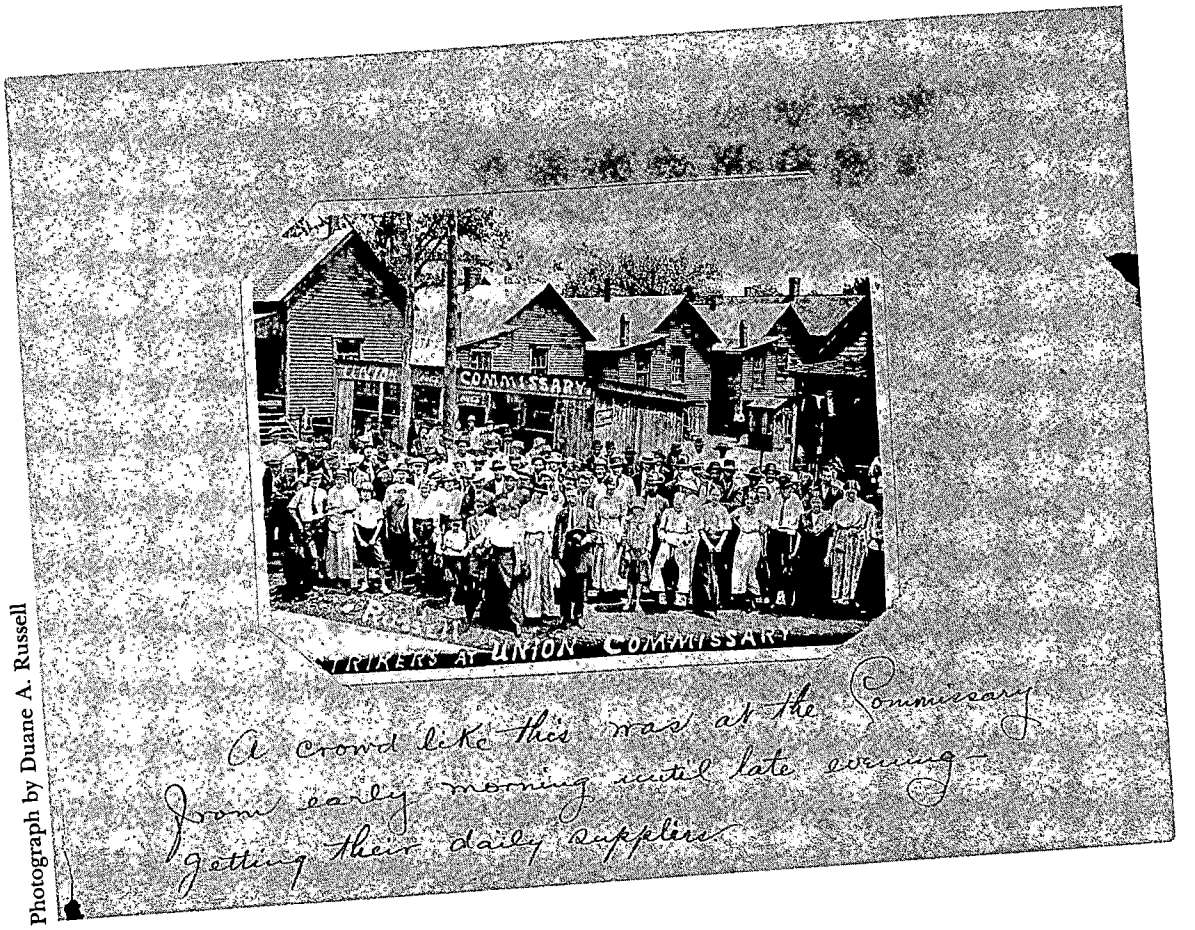


on a speech in which Mrs. Smith claimed that she and union organizer Charles Miles were being followed everywhere, but "it would do no good," she said, "as they discussed their plans in absolute secrecy, and it was no use for Mr. Elsas' men to try to get anything on them." Suspicions harbored by Smith, Miles and others made Preston's work more difficult. "They are extremely wary," the agent wrote in his June 25 report. "I am making every effort to get into their confidence. But Smith and Miles alone know what is being done; Conboy, Kelleher, Fleming, Sweat and all the rest, just take whatever orders they get and blindly carry them out."[11]

Preston reported that the union's strategy revolved around securing public sympathy for the strikers while creating ill will for the company by picturing filthy conditions in the mills and in company housing as a public health menace. Union leaders hoped to enlist both city officials and church leaders in their campaign to eradicate these "pest houses." Meanwhile, efforts were made to keep striking employees in good spirits by "jollying" them with frequent prophesies of success.[12]

Knowing that any hint of violence or property destruction would jeopardize their public relations effort, Smith and the other union leaders worried constantly about provocateurs planted among the strikers by management to instigate trouble. At a union meeting near the end of June, Smith declared that the company paid its "pimps" 52 cents a day to create disturbances that could be blamed on the strikers. She strongly counseled against any type of violent activity, suggesting that such actions could well identify one as a company agent.[13]

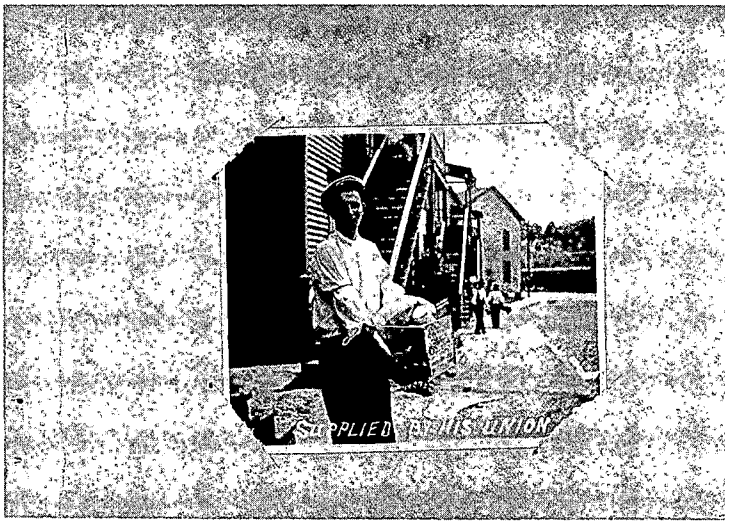
The company, however, was not the only party



Photograph by Duane A. Russell

engaged in secret service work. Preston believed union loyalists were still working in the mills and that the union had an informant in company offices. "I am positive there is a leak somewhere in your office," Preston wrote Fulton Bag's General Manager Gordon Johnstone. "Smith is always so positive of her information regarding how many notices have been put in on the morning of a meeting." He later tried to coax some information from Conboy and Smith on this matter, but found them "very wary, and they would not say anything that would give a clue to information they are getting." Preston's concern about this matter continued to grow, and on July 9 he took the extraordinary precaution of writing a personal letter to Oscar Elsas urging him to instruct operatives working in the mills to be extremely careful. Union leaders, he said, were determined to find out how management was obtaining its information. "They are much worried over this and I fear some of your people are indiscreet." Occasional references in Smith's speeches to her "inside man" continually spurred feelings of anxiety in this rather vulnerable undercover operative. "I would advise a careful watch on any telephone conversation in mornings," he wrote. "I suspect some one to be advising Smith in this manner."[14]

While union leaders attempted to rally support for the strike, Harry Preston set about his nefarious task of sewing seeds of discord among the strikers and their leadership. Inevitably, perhaps, the union's efforts to provide material support for striking workers—as well as those company recruits who had refused to cross picket lines—attracted substantial numbers of "bums and hangers-on." It was virtually impossible to differentiate between legitimate strikers who were staying out of the Fulton mills in support of the union and those who had no intention of working but proclaimed their loyalty as a means of acquiring provisions from



the union commissary that had been established to provide necessities for striking workers.

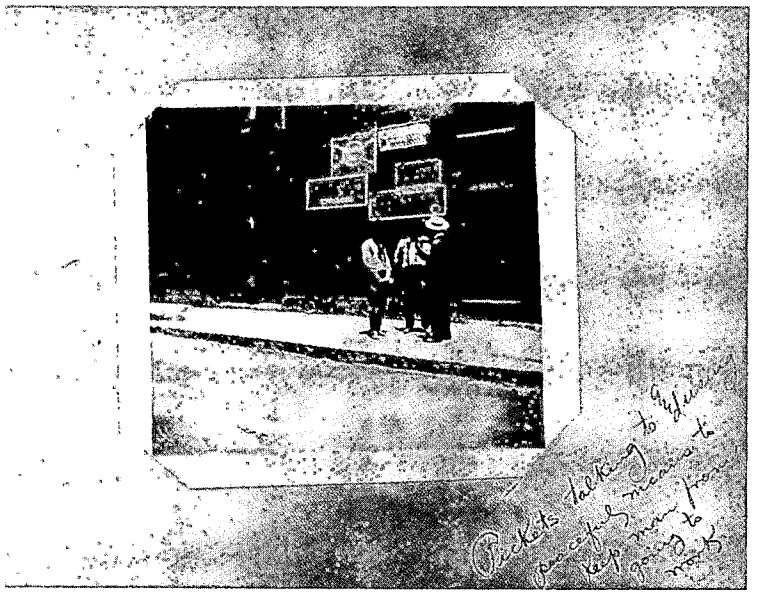
Understandably, legitimate strikers grew increasingly annoyed with the substantial numbers of such transients who had "joined" the strike and who were being housed and fed at union expense. On July 1, for example, in a rather typical report, Harry Preston commented on the dissatisfaction over the number of vagrants who were drawing supplies from the commissary. Some of these people, he reported, are getting goods and converting them into cash to buy liquor. As the dissatisfaction over such practices grew, Preston recognized a golden opportunity to promote antagonism between striking workers and union leaders, and he did everything he could to foster such discontent without compromising his cover. "I have been quietly agitating this for several days, by talking to a number of sensible people and showing them where these bums were getting more than their share of provisions and selling them," he informed company officials. "I wish you would get your own men to work on this same line; it may be the opening wedge to getting some sensible people to express their opinion on floor of meeting."[15] Always concerned about being detected, Preston waited for someone else to bring up the matter either in private conversations or at union meetings before chipping in with his own biting and often provocative observations.

Viewing the workers' willingness to walk the picket lines around the mills and at the railroad stations as a measure of their dedication to the strike and the union's ability to maintain discipline, Preston's reports to management usually included comments about picketing. In fact, all parties agreed about the significance of the picket line. Union leaders also viewed the picket line as a measure of solidarity and made every effort to preserve this visible symbol of a strike in progress. Maintaining the picket lines, however, was not easily done. "They beg for volunteers for picket duty," Preston reported, "and pickets will not stay on the job, being too lazy." A trial board was created by union leaders to hear charges against undesirables and those who refused to fulfill picket line responsibilities. Despite a more vigorous effort to enforce union regulations, problems on the picket lines continued. On July 2,

Photograph by Duane A. Russell

Preston reported: "pickets are evidently getting tired of jobs as from 5:30 till 6:30, I only saw one of strikers on picket duty."[16] At the regular morning meeting two days later, union organizer Sara Conboy angrily chastised strikers for neglecting their picket duties, and J. B. Hewitt of the Atlanta Federation of Trades pleaded with them to maintain the line.[17]

Meanwhile, Preston (who at one time had worked as a professional musician under the stage name Henry Greenhough) used his singing talent as a means of ingratiating himself with striking workers and union leaders. Shortly after his arrival in Atlanta, he became the union's song leader, frequently opening the meetings with a rousing chorus of "Onward Christian Soldiers."[18] Using the entree provided by his singing,



Preston attracted the attention of the leadership and soon gained recognition as a union activist. After being placed in charge of musical arrangements for a huge rally at the state capitol, Preston believed "my singing work has enabled me to get exactly where I have been aiming to get, and I am in a position now to counteract all of Smith, Miles and Company's lies and false statements."[19]

On July 9, only a few short weeks after his arrival in the city, Preston, at the invitation of Local 886's president, addressed a union rally, pleading with strikers to demonstrate their loyalty by doing their duty on the picket line.[20] During the following weeks, Preston continued working hard to gain the confidence of union leaders, including the secretary of a union that had been organized at the nearby Exposition Mills. He also developed a cordial relationship with Albert Sweat, the newly elected president of Local 886.[21]

A division between strike leaders generated unexpected problems but also created exciting new possibilities for this ingenious anti-union agitator with an English accent. Principal antagonists included strike leaders Mrs. E. B. Smith and Charles Miles on one side and Sara Conboy and Lillian Kelleher, UTW international organizers, on the other. The cause of the squabble is unclear, although Preston speculated that Smith was jealous of Conboy's growing popularity among striking workers. Preston, who had largely failed to gain the confidence of either Smith or Miles, soon aligned himself with the Conboy/Kelleher faction. When UTW International President John Golden called the two female organizers back to New York, Preston, along with Seth Marks of the Atlanta Federation of Trades and President Sweat of UTW Local 886, was assigned to escort the two women to the train station. In the absence of Conboy and Kelleher, Preston became the de facto spokesman for the anti-leadership faction in Atlanta.[22]

The visit to Atlanta of an investigator from the U. S. Commission on Industrial Relations in late July 1914 to review the situation at Fulton Bag provided the opportunistic labor agent an ideal occasion to prove his worth. In fact, the U. S. Conciliation Service earlier had sent out two investigators shortly after the outbreak of the strike, and they had written an account highly critical of Fulton Bag's management and employment practices. Preston was determined to undermine this earlier report.

Thus, shortly after federal investigator Alexander Daly arrived in Atlanta, Preston, who earlier had infiltrated the Men and Religion Forward Movement, used one of his contacts there to finagle an early introduction to the government representative at a Sunday morning church service. Preston quickly recognized Daly as a fellow Mason and the two, striking up an immediate friendship, spent the rest of the day together. While visiting Daly in his hotel room later that evening, Preston established his credentials as a union activist and began his perfidious task of discrediting the union and its leadership. First he reviewed the history of the strike in a way that was as "fair to both sides as it is possible for me to be." Preston's "impartial" account, however, tilted generously toward management while presenting a scathing denunciation of the strike leadership provided by Miles and Smith. He warned Daly that these two leaders were trying to get in touch with him and that he would be well advised to avoid them. They would "pester him to death," as they had the two previous U. S. Conciliation Service representatives. Preston implied that the work of the previous government agents had been compromised because Smith and Miles had managed to feed them

Southern Labor Archives

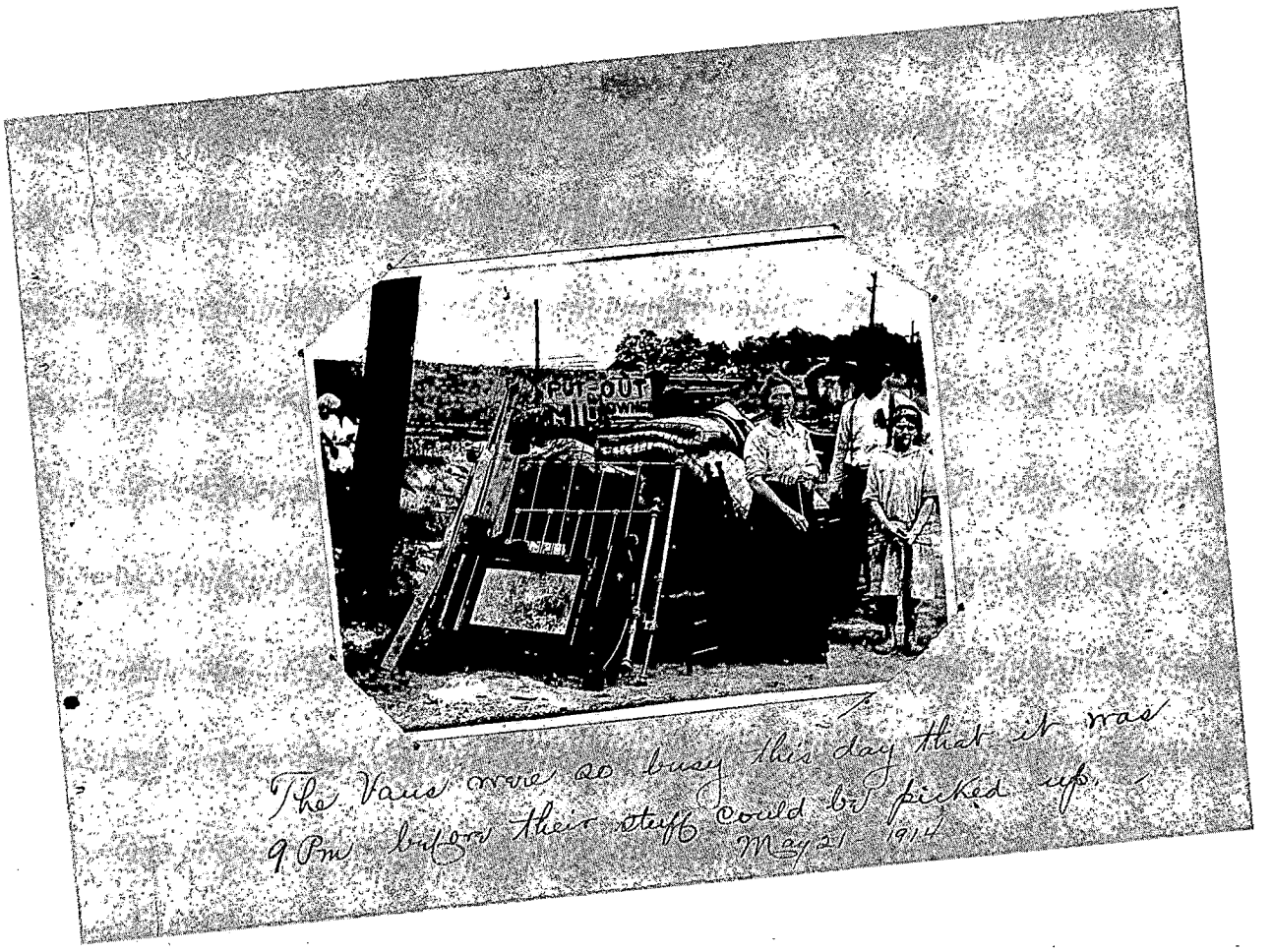
Workers stand outside the commissary of the United Textile Workers of America Local 886 at Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills in Cabbagetown in 1914. Photograph by Duane A. Russell.

false information about the strike, the union and the actions of Fulton Bag's management.

Preston then began his own program of disinformation. He estimated total union membership at not more than two hundred textile operatives of which only about eighty to one hundred were legitimate strikers. He said that the union took in every "Rag Tail" and "Bobtail" that applied. When asked what the commissary supplied, he said that to the best of his knowledge it always had "plenty of snuff." Preston portrayed the striking workers in the worst possible light. He characterized union headquarters after a meeting as a pigsty and told of helping to move a striker's goods: "When I took the bed apart, I was so sick I had to go home and brush my clothes and take a bath, for fear of bed bugs getting on me." Asked how Smith and Miles counselled strikers on violence, Preston replied that "they did not openly sanction it, but I know they secretly advocate it." He relayed how Mrs. Smith boasted of "laying a man's skull open" and of "carrying a pair of knucks."

Obviously somewhat suspicious about the character of the information he was receiving from his loquacious new friend, Daly quizzed Preston at some length about his own background. Preston reported that he was a loomfixer who had previously lived in Philadelphia but suffered from bronchitis and was advised to move south until his condition was fully cured. He said that he was making enough to live on by singing until the strike ended. Then he expected to get a job in the mills.

Preston believed he had proved convincing. Daly "candidly told me that all my statements [about the strike] coincided with the conclusion he had arrived at, and he thanked me, and asked that I keep in touch with him as he was a stranger here." According to



Preston, Daly reported that Oscar Elsas and the management of Fulton Bag had treated him very cordially, and he questioned the veracity of the report submitted by the previous federal investigators. He agreed with Preston that these agents must have been duped by Smith and Miles.[23]

As Harry Preston prepared to return to Philadelphia on July 29 to take up other duties, he provided Elsas and Johnstone something of a "state of the strike" assessment. The commissary, he reported, continued to cause strike leaders no end of trouble. Moreover, it was the source of a growing chorus of criticism from strikers as well as many union allies in the community. In part because of the information he provided, Preston claimed, those associated with the Men and Religion Forward Movement, for example, had lost their enthusiasm for the union cause and no longer had anything to do with the strike. He predicted that a break in the strike would occur soon. Many of those associated with the affair he found to be discouraged and increasingly critical of strike management. He speculated that fear of Smith and Miles was the only thing holding strikers back, but even that problem, he predicted, would soon resolve itself. He anticipated an open break between Smith and Miles, as the wily Mrs. Smith used every means at her disposal to take over strike leadership.

Meanwhile, the bitterness of the recently returned Conboy and Kelleher continued to grow, and Preston expected these women to influence UTW President John Golden to remove Smith. Preston concluded: "I leave here absolutely uncovered and with the good will of strikers and other people, and in case I am compelled to return at any time, my work will be much easier. . . ."[24]

Returning to Atlanta nearly a month later, Preston explained his absence by saying that he had been on a concert tour of the South. Greeted warmly by union officials and striking workers, Preston was prevailed upon to make a speech and lead the singing at the union meeting. Later, in his dispatch to Elsas and Johnstone, the labor agent reported that conditions were pretty much as he had left them. Strike leaders still confronted frustration and discouragement within the ranks, declining attendance at union meetings and a picket line that had pretty much disintegrated. Meanwhile, R. H. Wright, one of the more conservative strike leaders (and a friend of Preston's) had replaced Albert Sweat as the president of Local 886. Even more significant a change was John Golden's decision to leave

his Fall River union offices to take personal charge of the strike in Atlanta.

Two items were very much on the minds of union leaders as the strike entered its fourth month. The first involved plans to establish a tent colony to feed and shelter striking workers, who had been evicted from company housing as early as May. Unrelated but also of great concern were rumors that Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) organizers were infiltrating the Fulton Bag work force—much as they had done earlier in Lawrence, Massachusetts—with the intention of instigating violence and taking over leadership of the strike.

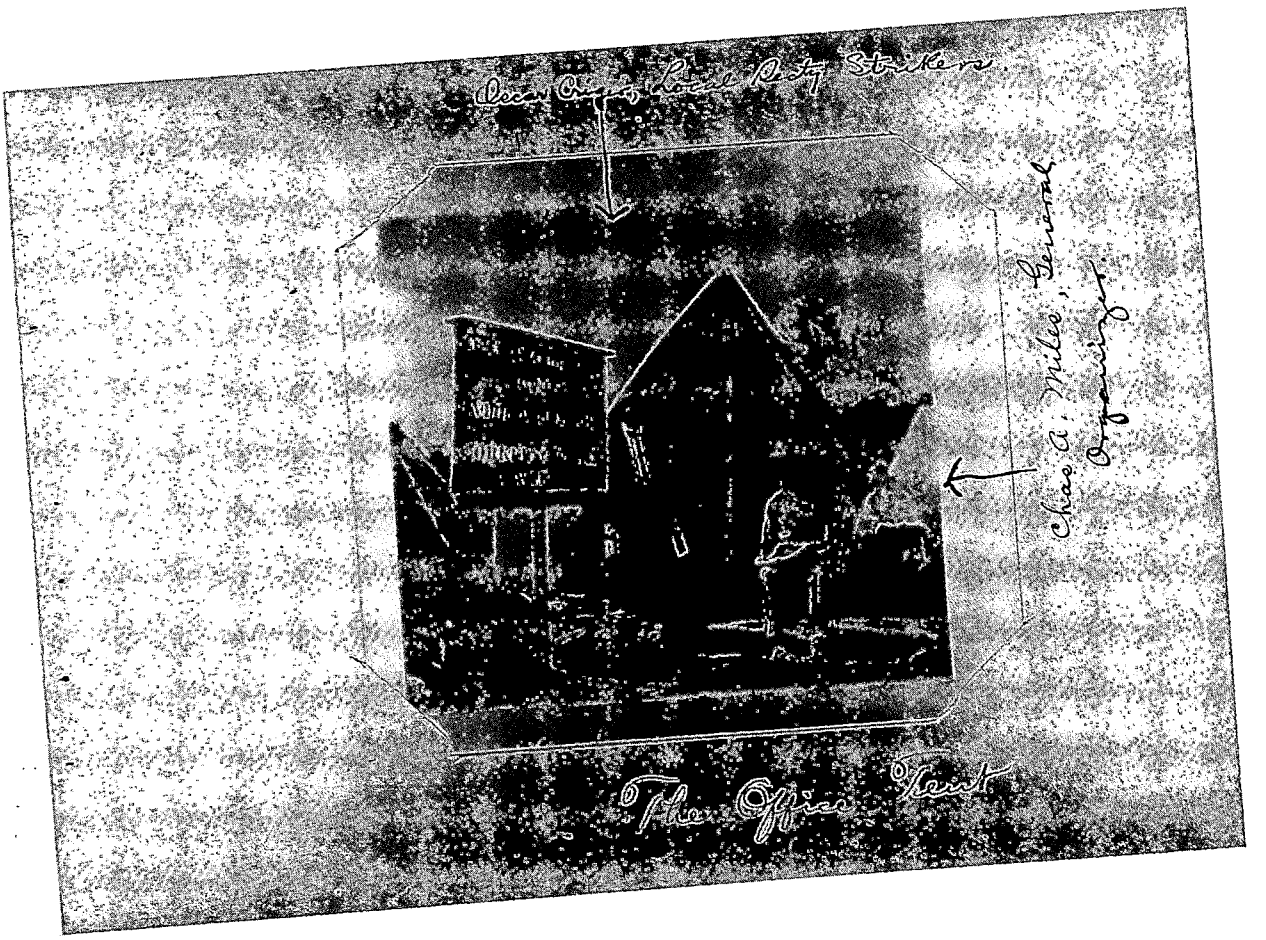
After spending a few days in Atlanta, Preston concluded that Golden's actual mission in Atlanta was to prevent an open rupture in strike leadership and in that connection to investigate charges made by Conboy and Kelleher that Smith and Miles were engaged in an "illicit relationship" that threatened to undermine public support of the strike. Ultimately, however, Golden simply exacerbated those tensions by showing Smith and Miles correspondence he had received from various Atlanta critics of their leadership.[25]

Preston never really came to grips with the relationship between Smith and Miles. First he concluded that Smith was secretly attempting to seize control from

Miles; when that failed and they continued to work together harmoniously, he reached exactly the opposite conclusion—that their relationship was "entirely too friendly." At his urging, an agent of the Railway Audit and Inspection Company was assigned to maintain a twenty-four-hour watch over the suspected adulterers, but after several days of fruitless surveillance, the agent was reassigned. Now, Preston concluded, Miles was simply looking for some way of turning the strike over to Smith and making a graceful exit from Atlanta.[26]

Miles, Preston concluded, realized the strike was lost. The Philadelphia labor agent was positive the tent colony would not survive the first heavy rain, and Miles did not want to be around when the strike finally collapsed. The squeamish Preston was appalled by conditions at the tent camp. "The tent colony is really a joke as it stands now, and I have a deep sense of pity for the poor misled creatures out there now. There are absolutely no proper sanitary conditions, and the place must certainly be condemned by the health authorities. They have no water, there are no toilet accommodations, the garbage is thrown around everywhere, and the way the meals are cooked as I saw them today, was filthy beyond description."[27]

As their financial problems grew, the leadership insisted that any striking worker who wanted to draw supplies from the commissary must reside in the tent colony. Resistance was widespread, in part, Preston speculated, because of questions about the moral conduct of many of the campers. "I have not observed anything in support of these statements," Preston wrote, "but it has been common talk." Nevertheless, questions about the moral conduct of those associated with the strike persisted, and Preston only too willingly passed along any rumor of misconduct that came to his attention. "While I have no proof of the following statement," he wrote Elsas and Johnstone, "I report it as I heard it, as being of interest: That Secretary Miller is afflicted with a loathsome, transmittable disease, and that he has caused several girls to be afflicted with the same disease. It is also reported that there are a number



of loose women who are at the camp. . . . "[28]

On the evening of September 2 it rained. A heavy thunderstorm passed over Atlanta, and as Preston had predicted, it left the tent colony in shambles. The tents, previously condemned by the Georgia National Guard before being purchased by the union, leaked porously and everyone and everything underneath them was soaked before the rain subsided. The strikers, however, did not fold their tents and steal off into the night as Preston had predicted. Instead, early the next morning they began the task of drying everything out, patching leaks and cleaning up the grounds. Once again Preston had misjudged the tenacity and resilience of the strikers. As it became obvious that the tent colony was not going to disappear, Preston investigated the ownership of the land upon which the tents had been pitched. He discovered that deed to the land was held by an Atlanta policeman sympathetic to the union who would probably resist pressure to evict the strikers. Thereafter, Preston returned to his original assumption that health authorities provided the best chance of closing down the tent colony, and he continued to feed Fulton Bag's management information that could be used to that end.

Shortly before Labor Day rumors circulated through the tent colony that R. H. Wright was planning to resign as president of Local 886. In the event that occurred, Preston was asked if he would accept the presidency. It would have placed the devious labor agent in an awkward position, but it also provided great opportunities to undermine the union's cause, and he informed his supporters that "they could depend on him for anything."[29] In fact Wright was not yet ready to resign, and Preston's deteriorating relationship with Smith and Miles made his election to such a position increasingly unlikely. Due to the coincidence that he had left Atlanta shortly after the departure of Conboy and Kelleher and returned at about the same time as John Golden's visit to Atlanta, Smith and Miles suspected Preston of being an agent of either the AFL or the Atlanta Federation of Trades. Because such assumptions protected him from any overt retaliation by Atlanta strike leaders, Preston subtly fed those suspicions whenever possible.

His participation in a Labor Day parade and a deepening estrangement from the Smith/Miles faction aroused an unusual emotional outburst in the normally impassive and somewhat detached labor agent. "It is surely a despicable, and I may add, a criminal action on the part of Smith and Miles," he wrote his employers, "to mislead in such a manner, the poor ignorant creatures who were such pitiful objects, and such a ridiculous spectacle to-day. I heard so many expres-

Digging sanitary ditches for the tent city.

Cooks in the kitchen tent.

sions, not of commendation for them, but of the deepest and most sincere pity, and the poor creatures have no better sense than to believe the lying, dirty, malignant, misleading actions and statements, of the two dirty wretches who care no more for them than the dirt in the street, and are only using them to further their own personal spite and greed."

By Labor Day, if not before, Preston had become so deeply committed to one side in the factional dispute that it clouded his judgment and sometimes confused his purpose for being there. Increasingly, he referred to the people in the Conboy/Kelleher faction as honest, sincere and, however misguided, devoted to the cause for which they were fighting. Conversely, as evidenced above, Preston spared no epithets in maligning the character of those on the other side. Clearly, Preston's ego had become engaged in the intra-union conflict, and he was emotionally committed to the effort to destroy Smith and Miles. As a consequence, it apparently never occurred to Preston—as it did to Oscar Elsas—that supporting one faction over another might not be in the best interests of his employer, especially if the Smith/Miles leadership was as discredited among legitimate strikers as Preston had suggested.[30]

Regardless, Preston was hatching a plan that would finally subdue his crafty adversaries. With hopes of assistance from Sara Conboy and others, he set out to gather evidence of wrongdoing which would then be presented to the AFL. "With the knowledge Mrs. Conboy has, which I know she will be glad to use, Mr. Miles and Mrs. Smith will vanish." Given his extravagant indictment of the honesty of Smith and Miles, however, Preston's charges were surprisingly trivial, the most serious being that a side of meat was rumored to have been taken from the commissary and sold for cash. There were other charges: a beer bill of $25 at the German Cafe had been paid for out of union funds; cans of peas had been traded for Coca Colas, and Mrs. Smith had been seen drinking beer in a wood yard near the union commissary.[31]

Meanwhile, based on a mutual contempt for Smith and Miles, Preston and Local 886 president R. H. Wright became close allies. Wright was sure that Preston would be appointed a delegate to the UTW national convention meeting later in the month, where he could

air the charges of corruption against Smith and Miles. Preston had learned that all local sources of financial assistance for the strike had dried up; if the AFL and UTW could be convinced their money—$5 hundred a week—was being wasted in Atlanta, then "Good bye Smith, Miles, & Co." Because of her bitterness toward Smith, Preston believed that Sara Conboy was the key to this strategy. He wrote her a steady stream of letters hoping she would be able to convince the AFL or the UTW to investigate the manner in which Smith and Miles had conducted the strike.[32]

Shortly before leaving for Boston to attend the annual meeting of the UTW, Preston and his allies circulated a petition among Atlanta strikers supporting the charges he intended to present against Smith and Miles. The petition contained forty-five signatures, including those of Wright and Preston, although for reasons not entirely clear, Preston used his stage name, Henry Greenhough, when signing the petition. Preston devoted much of his September 18 communication to Elsas and Johnstone to a description of the sorry state of union finances. He said Miles had incurred debts everywhere

Union label of the United Textile Workers of America.

he went, and that the creditors—many of whom had sympathized with the union cause—were now extremely bitter and demanding cash for any new purchases. Preston reported that grocery wholesaler Fain and Stamps was owed more than $6 thousand. "It is criminal the way Smith and Miles have been lying, and breaking the people who trusted them. Everywhere I went, I heard of money owing and people in poverty."[33]

Preston believed that the strike was collapsing everywhere. Conditions at the tent camp were deteriorating badly, and it was being openly said that many of the tents were little more than a collection of "bawdy houses." He suggested that if the arrest of a few pickets could be arranged, it would effectively end picketing. In fact, the strike "was smashed to pieces." There is no strike, he concluded, "only a collection of misled, ignorant creatures; some fools, some thieves, all without good sense." Once again, Preston's strike obituary was premature.[34]

The labor agent arrived in Boston on a late September morning and immediately set out in search of Sara Conboy, who could provide access to union officialdom. He was especially anxious to secure Conboy's assistance in arranging a conference with the AFL executive council which would be meeting later in Scranton. He also wanted an opportunity to tell his disingenuous story to President John Golden of the UTW. When Preston finally reached Conboy, she greeted him warmly and arranged to meet with him later that evening along with Golden and UTW Secretary Albert Hibbert.

The conference went pretty much as Preston had hoped. He explained that the labor movement was wasting its money as a result of Smith and Miles' mismanagement of the strike, and that legitimate strikers were going hungry because they refused to live in the unsavory tent colony. The rabble, meanwhile, was being fed and clothed. The meeting lasted for over two hours, during which time Preston said Conboy supported his charges against the strike leadership. After the meeting broke up, Preston spent several hours with Golden discussing the Atlanta situation. When asked for his advice about the strike, Preston replied that he saw no reason to continue it. The mills were running at full capacity and Smith and Miles' conduct of the strike had so offended the owners and managers of

RULES OF CAMP,
—and they must be obeyed.

1. All tents must be kept in sanitary condition inside and out. Especially scrap buckets.
2. Saturday must be general cleaning-up day with everybody.
3. All tents must be cleaned inside and outside, on saturdays. *This Rule applies to all.*
4. All cans must be emptied into the box prepared for same, and hauled off by the Garbage Wagon.
5. All parents are requested to instruct their children not to throw the empty cans in the ditches.
6. All tents will be inspected daily and the findings reported to the Executive Board.
7. *3* Blasts of bugle calls all pickets to headquarters for duty, and must report for duty. "None excused without permission at 5.30AM, 11.30AM and 5.15PM. Roll will be called and absentees noted.
8. All people assigned to mess-tent and kitchen duty must be prompt and attentive.
9. The 2 gangs to wash dishes, and the waiters must be prompt.
10. Bed-time at 10PM—Saturday night excepted.
11. No one except the Chief Cook and his assistants are allowed in the kitchen. This applied to all.
12. No one must go to the table until the three gongs are sounded.
13. Profane language will not be tollerated in camp under any conditions. Those found guilty of using profane language will be brought before the executive board and dealt with according to the laws of the City.
14. After morning pickett duty, all men must report to the Executive Board for duty, which may be assigned to them.
15. All roads and walks must be put into the best of condition from the wash place to the mess-tents and kitchen, in case of bad weather so that all will be protected from the mud in the tents, and the protection of the women and children who have to do the washing.
16. There is no one allowed to use the telephone only by the permission of the one in charge. This telephone is for business only. All court-ships must be stopped over this Phone. This is final and applies to all.
17. The Executive Board will see these rules are carried out to the very best of their ability.

B.F. McIntyre, Org.

Fulton Bag that they would never meet or have anything to do with them.[35]

The meeting and the later discussions, even by Preston's account, made several things quite clear. First, that the AFL and the UTW were still solidly committed to the strike. The Fulton Bag strike continued to be viewed as the opening thrust in an effort to organize southern textiles, and the AFL leadership believed its credibility and prestige would be severely damaged if it withdrew support. Moreover, Preston learned that union officials were having little difficulty raising money. Preston, however, did succeed in introducing serious questions about the quality of strike leadership in Atlanta, and the UTW president called a special meeting of the union's executive board in Fall River the next afternoon to hear Preston's first-hand account of the Atlanta situation. In closing his report on the meeting, which he wrote later that evening, a gleeful Preston noted: "I leave for Fall River Mass. tonight. Tomorrow Smith gets hers and Miles gets some also."

Before leaving for Fall River the next day, however, the irrepressible Preston accepted an invitation to attend a morning session of the annual convention of the Massachusetts Federation of Labor, where he was seated as a delegate and honored guest. As was his wont in such situations, Preston made "a large circle

of friends among Mass Labor Officials." In reporting this meeting to his Atlanta employers, the opportunistic labor agent could not resist using the strength of the Massachusetts labor movement as an object lesson for southern employers: "Believe me, if you ever have such labor conditions in Georgia as here, Lord help you!"[36]

The next day, after a railway depot conference with Gordon Johnstone, who was in Boston on other business, Preston went to Fall River where, for over two hours, he met with President Golden, Secretary Hibbert and other members of the UTW executive board. He first explained how he had come to be there. He said that when some of the Atlanta strikers learned he was returning to his home in Philadelphia they pleaded with him to contact nearby UTW and AFL officials and put them "in touch with the real facts" in Atlanta. Using notes he had previously compiled, he then recounted his perverse version of the history of the strike. He began by providing a highly provocative account of how the union commissary had been mismanaged and followed with an equally distorted version of conditions at the tent colony. Charging that union funds had been misappropriated by strike leaders for their own aggrandizement, he told of the large number of unpaid bills and threats of lawsuits that existed despite the generous strike assistance provided by the UTW and the AFL. Finally, converting a suspicion into a fact, he recounted how Smith and Miles' adulterous relationship along with the moral misconduct of the rabble which had attached itself to the strike and to the tent colony had so offended the local citizenry, including the leadership of the Atlanta Federation of Trades and the Men and Religion Forward Movement, that all local support of the strike had dried up.

Preston spent much time answering questions raised by various members of the board, many of which

Children in the mess tent.

concerned Smith and Miles. After the meeting the UTW president thanked Preston for his testimony and hoped he would return to Atlanta and keep an eye on the situation. The prospect of becoming a double agent appealed to Preston, as he envisioned an even larger scope for his activities. He reported to his employers a supper conversation with Golden later that evening during which the UTW president revealed that the textile union's southern organizing strategy was going to be mapped out in a few weeks during the AFL convention in Philadelphia. "I think it would pay the Southern Manufacturers to have me be there to watch for anything that may be done against their interests."

Upon his return to Philadelphia, Preston assessed the results of his Fall River activities for his Atlanta employers: "Smith will be fired bodily out; and without any ceremony. I am almost sure that Miles will also be dismissed from the U. T. of A., in any event, he will very shortly be removed from the south in disgrace. Next some one will approach you probably trying to make some kind of settlement." Obviously pleased with his performance and optimistic about the results of his nefarious activities, Preston was doubly shocked to learn that Oscar Elsas was dismissing him because "his assignment had been completed." Preston demurred; after all, the UTW meeting in Scranton and the AFL convention in Philadelphia were still upcoming.[37]

An aggrieved and disappointed Harry Preston wrote his Atlanta supervisor, E. G. Myers, urging him to speak to Oscar Elsas about this unfortunate decision. "I think they are making a serious mistake, which will result in their disadvantage later, as things are going to happen here [in] which I am sure they will be vitally interested." Preston was clearly confused as to why his services had been terminated. He realized his expenses had been higher than usual but believed he had been "extremely successful" and had exercised "utmost dispatch" in carrying out his mission in the Northeast. "I think that considering the results I have already obtained, and the prospects for still better results . . . it is very unwise at this time to dispense with my work." The multi-talented labor agent suggested that Myers also remind Elsas of his capabilities as an "Efficiency man and Systematizer" as well as his skill as an investigator and provocateur.

The George Meany Memorial Archives

Sara Conboy, photographed in 1919.

Preston evidently prevailed, as a week later he was again submitting reports, this time from Philadelphia where he was trying to contact Sara Conboy and stay in touch with other UTW officials prior to the AFL convention. "I am doing the very best I can in your interests," Preston wrote Elsas. "It may seem that I have not a great deal to do here, but I am sure the results later will show the value of the plan I am following."[38] Frustration accompanied Preston's efforts to make contact with Conboy, Golden and other UTW officials, and he began to worry that his cover might have been blown.

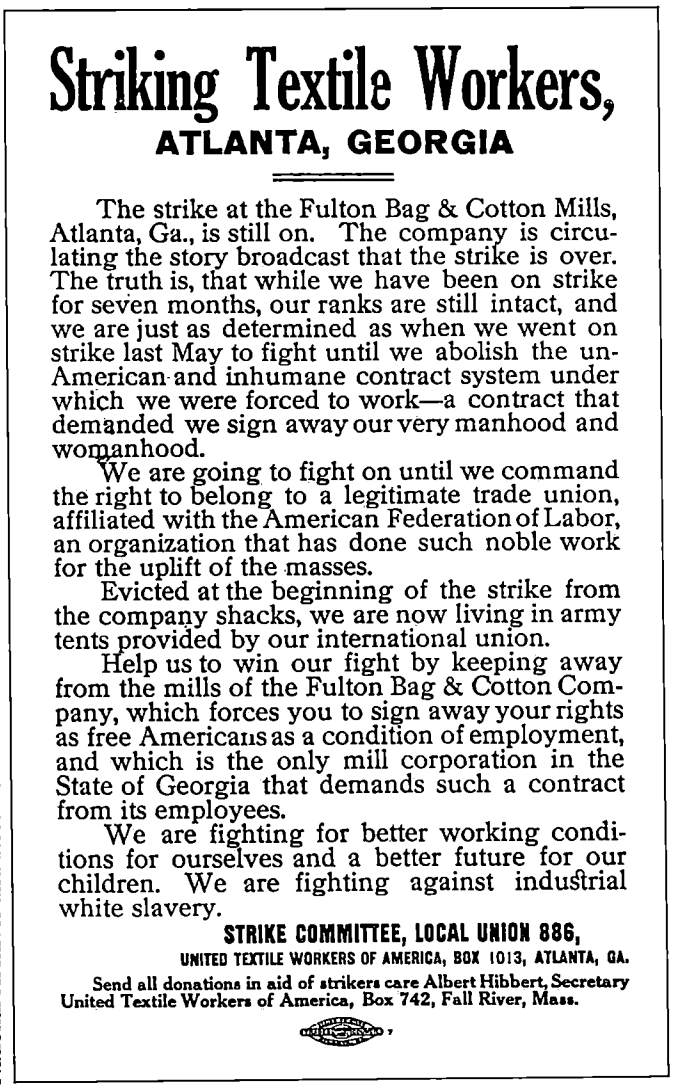
Then, on October 19, he finally managed to arrange a meeting with Conboy, Golden, Kelleher and other union officials. By this time one of his primary missions was to keep his old ally, Sara Conboy, from going to Atlanta to reorganize the Fulton Bag strike. Preston and Fulton Bag's Gordon Johnstone both agreed that Conboy had been one of the most popular and capable organizers involved in the Atlanta strike. During her stay in Atlanta, Conboy and Preston had become good friends, in part at least as a result of their mutual disdain and dislike of Smith and Miles. Recognizing obvious advantages for his own work, Preston cultivated that friendship. Yet he also seemed genuinely fond of the dedicated female organizer. She had been a good ally, and he admired her leadership ability and her determination to succeed. To this point there had been

no real conflict between his job and his attempts to undermine Smith and Miles by manipulating Conboy into a leadership position in the strike. Now, however, Smith and Miles had been discredited and Conboy had become the most important threat to Fulton Bag. "I am trying hard to keep Conboy away," he wrote Oscar Elsas, "as I agree with Mr. Johnstone, that she is by far the most dangerous person that could be sent down by them."[39]

Elsas and Johnstone's next communication from their ubiquitous labor agent came from Scranton where the UTW's national convention convened on Wednesday, October 21. Preston reported that no decision had yet been made on whom the executive board would send to Atlanta to reorganize the strike, but he speculated that it would be Conboy and Kelleher, since they knew the situation. "Miles arrived here to-day," he reported. "It is very evident that he has heard something that he did not like, as he had little or nothing to say. Smith has been trying hard to receive the recognition of the A. F. of L., but Golden will have nothing to do with her. This will put an end to her activities, and also her vilification around the Fulton Mills." Preston, however, by now quite sensitive to the tenuous nature of his employment, emphasized that the end of Smith and Miles did not mean an end to Fulton Bag's labor troubles. The UTW had decided to concentrate on winning over those workers now in the mills, he reported, since most of the original strikers had either returned to the mills or secured employment elsewhere. He advised Fulton Bag's management to keep a close eye on new employees, as the union would endeavor to plant its own organizers in the mills. It would be advisable "to refuse employment to anyone with a Northern accent; male or female." Always sensitive to opportunities to expand his company's field of activities, Preston gave Elsas a message for other southern manufacturers. He did not want to be an alarmist, he said, "but there is an abundance of money at the bank of this movement, and there is longing eyes [*sic*] on the organization of the 100,000 operatives in the South, and there is also fear that the I.W.W. will get into the field and create a strong rival organization."[40]

Preston's reports from Scranton contained much information related to the Fulton Bag strike. He noted that a representative from the Atlanta Federation of Trades reported to convention delegates that the federation had accumulated a huge debt supporting the strike on promises from Charles Miles that it would be reimbursed. Indeed, Miles was being "condemned" on all sides and probably would "cause no more trouble in the South." Nevertheless, he found no hope that the Fulton Bag strike would soon be abandoned. To the contrary, UTW officials were determined to reinvigorate the strike and elected a delegation to attend the Philadelphia convention of the AFL in November to plead for assistance. "There is not the slightest doubt that the American Federation will endorse the action of the U. T. of A. and pledge their support in every plan that had been made for the organization of the cotton mills in the entire South." He reported that after the adjournment of the national convention an emergency executive board meeting would be held in Fall River to plan the Atlanta campaign. He anticipated that Luther Monday of Louisville, who had been extremely successful at such work, would be assigned to infiltrate the Fulton Mills to organize from the inside. Meanwhile, Conboy and Kelleher were also being sent to Atlanta. President Golden would assume direct supervision of the strike, thus "things will never again get in the same state as Miles and Smith got them into." He also expected Sara Conboy to be a formidable adversary. "Conboy is an extremely likable person, and will be able to work herself into the confidence of the help, far more than Miles or Smith ever could."[41]

Shortly after the UTW convention adjourned, Preston began expressing concern about Conboy's uncharacteristic "coolness" toward him, and a few days later it was clear that he had become persona non grata in union circles. The circumstances of Preston's fall from union grace were not reported, and formal charges against him were never filed. Moreover, it is unclear whether, at the time, union officials knew he was an undercover operative or simply considered him a troublemaker. Nonetheless, Preston's disgrace did not prevent him from continuing to stir up trouble for the bleaguered Atlanta textile union. After Preston's fall, his closest Atlanta ally, President R. H. Wright of Local 886, was charged with treason and put on trial by the union. Filled with injured but ignorant innocence, the



Striking Textile Workers,
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The strike at the Fulton Bag & Cotton Mills, Atlanta, Ga., is still on. The company is circulating the story broadcast that the strike is over. The truth is, that while we have been on strike for seven months, our ranks are still intact, and we are just as determined as when we went on strike last May to fight until we abolish the un-American and inhumane contract system under which we were forced to work—a contract that demanded we sign away our very manhood and womanhood.

We are going to fight on until we command the right to belong to a legitimate trade union, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, an organization that has done such noble work for the uplift of the masses.

Evicted at the beginning of the strike from the company shacks, we are now living in army tents provided by our international union.

Help us to win our fight by keeping away from the mills of the Fulton Bag & Cotton Company, which forces you to sign away your rights as free Americans as a condition of employment, and which is the only mill corporation in the State of Georgia that demands such a contract from its employees.

We are fighting for better working conditions for ourselves and a better future for our children. We are fighting against industrial white slavery.

STRIKE COMMITTEE, LOCAL UNION 886,
UNITED TEXTILE WORKERS OF AMERICA, BOX 1013, ATLANTA, GA.

Send all donations in aid of strikers care Albert Hibbert, Secretary
United Textile Workers of America, Box 742, Fall River, Mass.

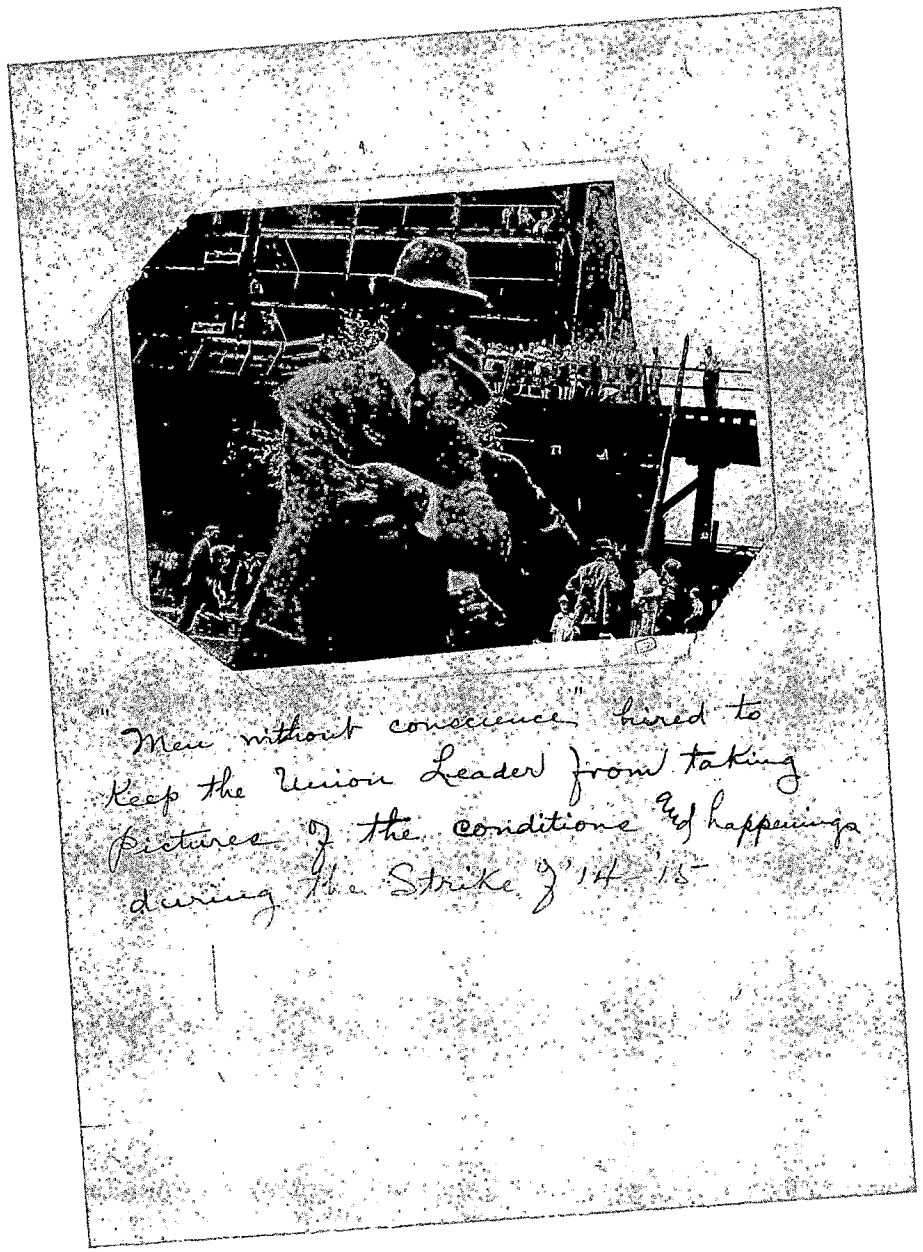
National Archives and Records Administration

slow-witted Wright unexpectedly confronted his accusers at the union meeting. UTW leaders, apparently convinced Wright did not knowingly betray his trust, reduced the charges against him to creating "a division of the union" and being "misled by Mr. Greenoff [*sic*]." Assuming that Preston, like himself, was being persecuted by vengeful union officials, the bewildered Wright poured out his frustration and bitterness in a letter to Preston. At the urging of Elsas and Johnstone, Preston suggested to Wright that he write a letter to the newspapers telling the "true story" of the strike (à la Harry Preston), but no such account ever appeared in Atlanta newspapers.[42]

In the end, the optimistic plans of UTW leaders to reorganize the Fulton Bag strike came to nothing. The strike lingered on through the spring of 1915 before it was finally abandoned. Thus, all the favorable circumstances to the contrary, the Fulton Bag strike was just one more in a long list of failed southern textile strikes. Harry Preston later was to claim much of the credit for this outcome. While there can be little doubt that his activities caused union leaders no end of trouble, they do not appear to have been crucial to the defeat of the strike. Certainly Preston did create division and discord within the union, and he was at least partially responsible for discrediting the strike leadership of Mrs. E. B. Smith and Charles A. Miles. He also contributed to the eventual alienation of the Men and Religion Forward Movement as well as the Atlanta Federation of Trades, but much of this occurred after the strike clearly had already been lost. Preston's efforts to influence federal inspector Alexander Daly reflect the undercover operative's rather limited degree of success. In his numerous meetings with Daly, Preston, more than anything else, attempted to impress the federal agent with the corruption and immorality of the strike leadership in Atlanta. Nevertheless, in his lengthy report to Charles McCarthy of the Commission on Industrial Relations, Daly, who "endeavored to keep everything out of this report except actual conditions and facts," never mentioned the union or strike leadership. Preston's influence was obvious in Daly's analysis of the state of the strike, but the report was sympathetic to labor's position and highly critical of Fulton Bag's labor policies.[43]

The significance of the labor espionage activity at Fulton Bag, however, extends beyond whatever it may or may not have accomplished, to what it reveals about the mentality of textile employers. Considerable evidence exists in American labor history to suggest that, where employers are determined to avoid union organization and collective bargaining, they are able to do so, short of forced unionization by the federal government. This was as true of "little steel" and Henry Ford in the North as it was of textiles in the South. This, of course, does not explain why some employers relented and accepted unionization while others did not.

For the South, at least, two influences appear to have been particularly important in strengthening the resolve to resist organization at all costs. One influence was concrete and is easy to document; the other is abstract and elusive. The first revolves around the highly competitive nature of most southern industries, especially textiles. The resulting narrow profit margins eliminated the possibility of passing higher labor costs on to consumers, thus strengthening the resolve of southern manufacturers to retain absolute control of



the means of production. Southern textile manufacturers, of course, were all too aware of the important role cheap labor and managerial dominance over the work place had played in giving them a competitive advantage over the textile manufacturers of the North. Consequently, they were determined to avoid losing that edge to others.

Although more difficult to illustrate, the second, related condition appears to have been almost as significant. This involved the persistence throughout the South, but most notably among the region's economic elite, of what may be described as pre-industrial attitudes toward property rights. For many southern manufacturers, employer control over their property and the work place was a class obligation that in some instances even transcended self-interest. As a consequence, the organization of one mill became a threat to all.

Oscar Elsas' determination to exercise absolute control over his property was obvious when he told federal investigators he would rather close down the mills than change the labor policies he felt necessary to maintain discipline in the work force. He viewed criticism of those policies by other mill owners as a class betrayal that could only be explained by anti-Semitism, and such criticism only strengthened Elsas' determination to resist. His state of mind was clearly revealed in an interview with CIR investigator, Inis Weed. Weed, who was posing as a magazine journalist, reported the following conversation with Elsas:

WEED: It is quite evident that since the Industrial Workers of the World directed the Paterson textile strike, the American Federation of Labor intend to organize the southern mills and the I.W.W. are also watching their opportunity in the same field. If you

break this A. F. of L. strike don't you fear I.W.W. violence?

ELSAS: I wish the government would take hold of those people and do with them as [Mexican rebel leader Pancho] Villa did with his enemies.

WEED: At present every employer seems to have his own Villa. . . . What do you consider the most effective way to break a strike, call in a regular strike breaking agency like the Waddell-Mahon? A former member of the Michigan legislature told me he thought the quickest way to break a strike was the method used in the dock strike on the great lakes. The strike breaking agency had eleven of the leaders in the hospital in a week, and the strike was ended.

ELSAS: I'd like to do that. I don't want to use such methods, though, on women and children. I'd close the mills first. Besides, I couldn't win that way. Public opinion in Atlanta wouldn't stand for it. But in an acute situation where I had only men to deal with I'd just as soon get guns and mow 'em down as not.[44]

In the end, of course, Elsas prevailed without the necessity of such drastic measures. Nevertheless, the strike had been very expensive both in terms of lost production and the extraordinary expenses incurred in breaking the union. Perhaps Elsas was mollified by the knowledge that his union adversaries fared even less well. The Fulton Bag strike apparently proved the last hurrah in southern textiles for Mrs. Smith. Before the strike ended, she was charged with adultery by her husband and was tried in an Atlanta court before reportedly running off with another man. A few years later she reappeared in Portland, Oregon, as a telegrapher. Conboy and Kelleher were reassigned; Miles, his reputation damaged, remained with the UTW for a few more years before resigning; Wright was disgraced, and his predecessor, W. E. Fleming, was in jail, charged with assault and robbery. Only Harry Preston appears to have profited from this episode. He returned to Atlanta a few years later as the southern district manager of the Railway Audit and Inspection Company.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MRS. SMITH?

Mrs. O. D. Cook Retires at 70; Was Once Great Organizer in Labor Movement in Atlanta

Portland, Ore., March 30, 1950

Journal of Labor
Peters Building
Atlanta, Ga.

Dear Editor:

Having been for a number of years Assistant Editor of *The Journal of Labor* during Jerome Jones' life time, in the early 1900's, thought you might like to have this clipping from the *Oregon Daily Journal*, upon my retirement.

Was known among the older members of Organized Labor in Atlanta as Mrs. E. B. Smith, and it was under that name I served in many capacities there in the South. There are not many of the old people living now with whom I worked and fought in those turbulent years, among them being Jerome Jones, S. B. Marks, Joe Hewitt, and all of the old men and women who were on the battle-lines in those days. Being a subscriber to *The Journal of Labor* (for old time's sake), I have taken note of most of my old fellow-unionists, as they passed on—one by one.

With best wishes,
Fraternally,
Mrs. O. D. Cook
Organizer
P. O. Box 322

P.S. Would be glad to hear from any of my old "Labor Skate" friends if you will give them my address.

continued on page 32

From the *Oregon Daily Journal*

by Frances Blakely

Ola Delight Cook, telegrapher, climbed a long way up the ladder of success between May Day, 1900, when she took her first job in Epes, Ala., and February 17, 1950, when she retired after 30 years in Portland as a Western Union operator. More than 100 friends—telegraphers, railroaders and labor leaders—paid tribute to her on the eve of her retirement at a banquet in the Imperial Hotel.

Toastmaster Ralph W. Coffin, night wire chief of Western Union, introduced leading guests who praised Mrs. Cook and read many telegrams from co-workers of other years. Included were messages from Walter P. Marshall, New York, Western Union president, and G. S. Paul, assistant manager of the Pacific division, of San Francisco. Then Mrs. Cook delighted her audience with humorous incidents of her life as an early-day organizer. She began:

* * *

"THAT FIRST JOB in Epes was a good one. I'd become a fast operator on the copper key fastened to a cracker box in Dad's tool shed. I was assured I would get a maximum commission of $40 a month on 'this line receipts' but that all office expenses, such as rent, telephone and messengers must be paid out of my $40."

She worked seven days a week with no limit to daily hours. She next worked relief for the Queen & Crescent Railroad company, then got a job as branch manager for Western Union in Birmingham, Ala. It was after she'd been promoted to the main office in Birmingham that she caught a man going through office records.

* * *

IN NO SOFT MANNER, she ordered the stranger out of the office and slammed the door after him. Some time later, the man returned to her office, and she was introduced to him—Belevedere Brooks, president of Western Union. Brooks congratulated her for obeying regulations.

She went back to Postal Telegraph as manager of the Gainesville, Ga., office. There, in 1904, she joined her first union, Commercial Telegraphers. She joined another, Railroad Telegraphers, in 1906. A year later she went out with other telegraphers when they struck.

Nothing much was gained by the strike, which convinced Mrs. Cook that better organization was needed. She became an organizer for ORT [Order of Railroad Telegraphers of North America], working first for complete membership among telegraphers of the Southern railroad. She traveled deadhead on passenger trains, when no "bulls" (inspectors) were in sight, by showing her ORT card. More often, she rode the caboose for long hauls and a handcar for shorter distances.

"ONE TIME I was traveling in a caboose from Atlanta to some little South Carolina town where I was to organize a union," she recalled. "We were nearing my town when a brakeman tucked his head through the cupola and told me to take cover—a bull was on his way back.

"I huddled in a corner and the conductor threw his coat and a blanket over me. I stayed there two hours. We'd passed my destination when the bull swung off. At the next section house, the freight let me off and the section foreman pumped me back to my appointment. I sat comfortably on the floor of the handcar, swinging my feet over the ties."

* * *

THE BEST WAY to discredit a woman in those days was to defame her character, Mrs. Cook said. She arrived in Toccoa, Ga., late one night and had just gone to bed in a hotel across the street from the railway station. A soft knock came on her door, and then a man's voice ordered her to "open up."

"I suspected their game," Mrs. Cook recalled. "I put on my brass knuckles, opened the door with my left hand and let the intruder have it with my right. As he went down, I saw three bulls come from behind the foot of the staircase. They were waiting to 'catch me' with a man in my room. They carried the young man out on a stretcher, and a few moments later I saw the bulls flag down the through train to Atlanta. They loaded the stretcher into the baggage car."

* * *

THE SHERIFF and newspaper editor called on her the next morning "but went away smiling when they saw her credentials."

The late Samuel Gompers, American Federation of Labor President, assigned Mrs. Cook to help manage a bag and cotton mill strike at Atlanta in 1914. She found more than 1500 families evicted from company houses and refused credit from company-owned grocery stores, she said.

"Within a short time, we had them all under tents furnished by the United States government, and at least the children were being well fed. The strike lasted a year, or until England declared war on Germany for World War I.

* * *

"I WAS ARRESTED every time I set foot on company property and had many a ride in the Black Maria but I never spent a night in jail." She went about her philanthropic work with a strong bodyguard of union members but pulled through with nothing worse than a severe sunburn, she said.

When America entered the war, Mrs. Cook went back to railroading on the Santa Fe but was with Western Union when the Armistice was signed. In May of 1920, she came to Portland—worked first for the Postal Telegraph, then asked W. E. Brooks, Portland head of Western Union, for a job. Brooks knew her record for change and demanded to know if she got the job, would she stick—or would she blow, right when she was most needed. She promised to stay "until she was kicked out."

* * *

"AFTER 30 YEARS under Mr. Brooks and his successor, Traffic Manager L. V. McCumsey (Mrs. Cook's boss since 1937), I have reached 70 and retirement," Mrs. Cook concluded. "This party is my kick-off."

Mrs. Cook always has met life courageously, her friends testify. But her lot has not been easy in later years. Since she'd suffered sunburn in Atlanta, Mrs. Cook has had frequent occurrences of rash on her face. Fifteen years ago, Portland doctors told her it

Photograph by Will F. Nelson.

was cancer and "they doubted that she could long survive."

But Mrs. Cook never gave up for a day, and in 1939 she was pronounced cured, though she had lost most of her nose. During all those years of treatment, Mrs. Cook never missed a day's work.

Last year, she bought a four-room house at 1916 NE Portland Boulevard. There she plans to keep up a garden, read and write. Many of her letters will go over the wire, for Mr. Marshall's telegram gave her the privilege of deadheading personal messages by Western Union service as long as she lives.—*Oregon Journal*, 3-23-50.

The Journal of Labor, 7 April 1950
[several typographical errors silently corrected]

Notes

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The author would like to thank Donald Sofchalk, Merl Reed and Mary Fink for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

[1] See, for example, F. Ray Marshall, *Labor in the South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913–1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), ch. 10,15; Philip Taft, *Organizing Dixie: Alabama Workers in the Industrial Era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981); Melton A. McLaurin, *Paternalism and Protest: Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Organized Labor, 1875–1905* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1971); Herbert J. Lahne, *The Cotton Mill Worker* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1944).

[2] Mercer G. Evans, "The History of Organized Labor in Georgia," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1929, p. 34; Thomas M. Deaton, "Atlanta during the Progressive Era," Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1969, p. 144, 458–64, and "James G. Woodward: The Working Man's Mayor," *Atlanta History: A Journal of Georgia and the South* 31 (Fall 1987):11–23.

[3] Memorandum from Herman Robinson and W. W. Husband to Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson, 24 July 1914, and from John B. Colpoys and Robert M. McWade to Secretary Wilson, 18 August 1915, Records of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, Record Group 280, National Archives (referred to hereafter as the Robinson and Husband Report, 24 July 1914, and the Colpoys and McWade Report, 18 August 1915); Alexander M. Daly to Charles McCarthy, 31 July 1914, and "Preliminary Report," Inis Weed, 28 July 1914, Records of the U. S. Commission on Industrial Relations, Record Group 174, National Archives (referred to hereafter as the Daly Report, 31 July 1914, and the Weed Report, 28 July 1914).

[4] See Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

[5] Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank*, pp. 126–29.

[6] Robinson and Husband Report, 24 July 1914; Colpoys and McWade Report, 18 August 1915.

[7] *Ibid.*; *The Journal of Labor*, 22 May 1914.

[8] Little consensus exists among students of labor-management relations regarding the character and effectiveness of labor spy agencies during this period. Writing in 1971, Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones argued that such agencies and the operatives they employed were simply entrepreneurs and professionals who exploited fears of impending labor troubles to make money. In so doing, they provided an important service to an industrial client. See "Profit over Class: A Study of Industrial Espionage," *Journal of American Studies* 6 (1972):233–48. While less sympathetic to such agencies, Charles K. Hyde, after examining the activities of labor spies in the Michigan copper mines, concluded that they were not terribly effective. See "Undercover and Underground: Labor Spies and Mine Management in the Early Twentieth Century," *Business History Review* 60 (1986):1–27. Darryl Holter's study of the use of labor espionage in Wisconsin provides little support for either Jeffreys-Jones or Hyde's arguments. See his "Labor Spies and Union-Busting in Wisconsin, 1890–1940," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 68 (1985):243–65. The Pinkerton and Burns detective agencies were the most famous (or infamous) agencies operating at the turn of the century and have attracted the most scholarly attention. Recent contributions to that literature are Frank Morn, *The Eye that Never Sleeps: A History of the Pinkerton National Detective Agency* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) and Gene Caesar, *The Incredible Detective: The Biography of William J. Burns* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

[9] Operative Report 115, 17 June 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Company Papers, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta (referred to hereafter as the Fulton Bag Papers).

[10] *Ibid.*, 19 June 1914.

[11] *Ibid.*, 18, 20, 21 June 1914. Albert Sweat and W. E. Fleming were local union leaders, both of whom were destined to serve terms as presidents of Local 886.

[12] *Ibid.*, 15 June 1914.

[13] For several weeks during the autumn of 1914, Smith wrote a weekly column in *The Journal of Labor* entitled, "Notes from the Strikers' Camp." See also, Operative Report 115, 29 June 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers.

[14] *Ibid.*, 4, 9 July 1914.

[15] *Ibid.*, 4 July 1914. Cf., Colpoys and McWade Report, 18 August 1915.

[16] Operative Report 115, 2 July 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers.

[17] *Ibid.*, 4 July 1914.

[18] *Ibid.*, 29 June 1914.

[19] *Ibid.*, 26 July 1914.

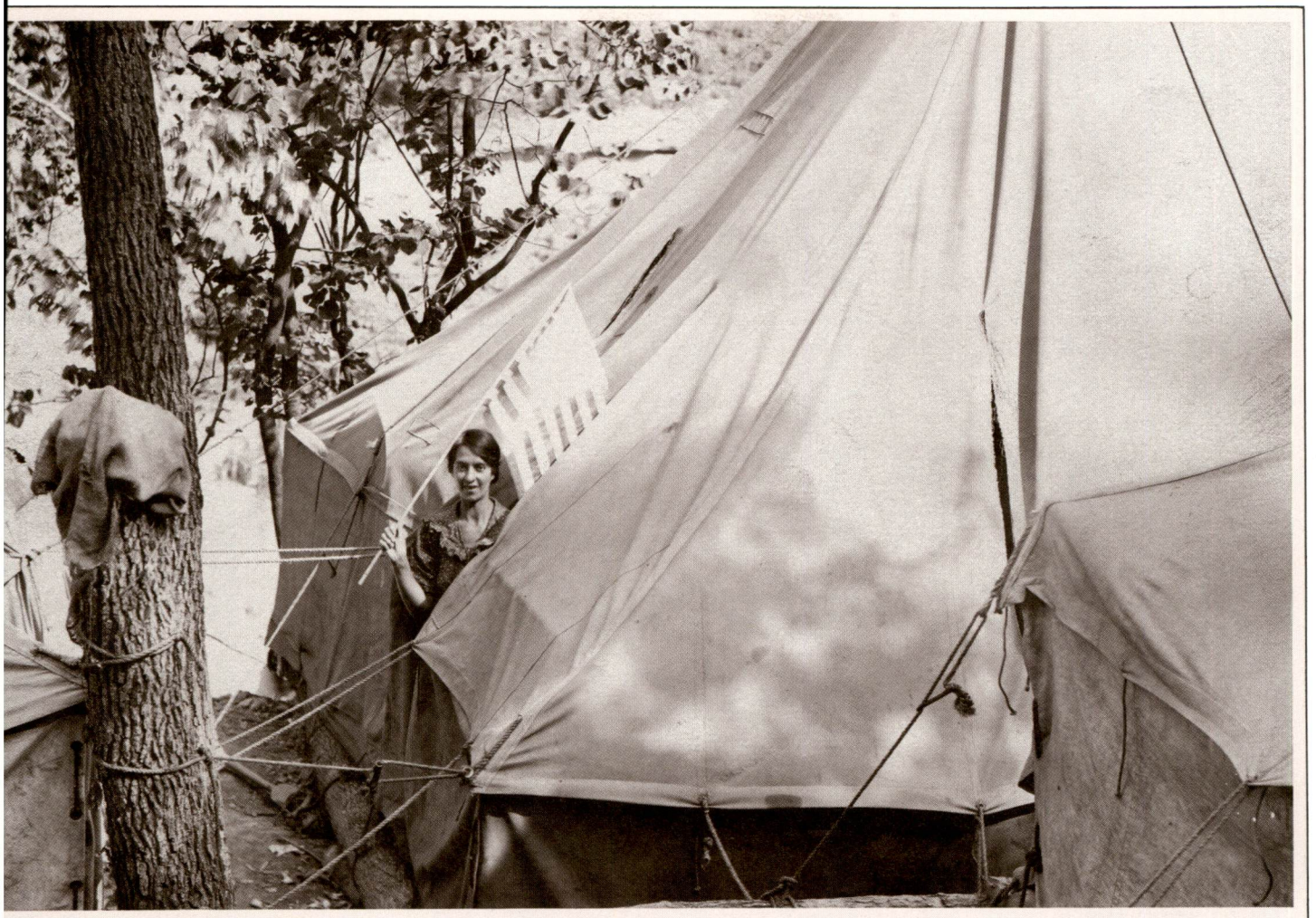
[20] *Ibid.*, 9 July 1914.

[21] *Ibid.*, 10, 26 July 1914.

[22] *Ibid.*, 22, 23 July 1914.

[23] *Ibid.*, 26 July 1914. Preston's reference is to Robinson and Husband's investigation of the strike at Fulton Bag. For a different account of the strike and the strikers, see *The Journal of Labor*, 31 July 1914. See also Daly's Report, 31 July 1914.

[24] Operative Report 115, 29 July 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers. The Daly Report, while sympathetic to the workers' cause, contains a similar assessment of the strike and appears to have been influenced by Preston, although it does not mention internal union conflict. Preston's statement that the leadership of the Men and Religion Forward Movement was disillusioned with the strike and no longer would have anything to do with it is clearly false. On August 10 the chairman of the Movement's executive committee, John J.



Eagan, wrote Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson requesting a copy of the Robinson and Husband Report and expressing support of the strike. John J. Eagan to Wilson, 10 August 1914, Records of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, Record Group 280, National Archives. For an account of the Men and Religion Forward Movement, see Martha T. Nesbitt, "The Social Gospel in Atlanta: 1900–1920," Ph.D. diss., Georgia State University, 1975, ch. 4.

[25] Operative Report 115, 26 August 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers; John Golden to William B. Wilson, 8 September 1914, Records of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, Record Group 280, National Archives.

[26] Operative Report 115, 1 September 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers. For an account of the surveillance of Smith's home, see the reports of Operatives 12 and 39, 25 July–15 August 1914, File A14-07-OP12, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers.

[27] Operative Report 115, 2 September 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers. While critical of the misuse of funds by strike leaders, Colpoys and McWade noted that the tent colony was generally well managed. They found that care was being taken to keep the camp sanitary and discipline was maintained by the adoption of an elaborate set of camp rules. Colpoys and McWade Report, 18 August 1915.

[28] Operative Report 115, 3 September 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers. See also the Colpoys and McWade Report, 18 August 1915.

[29] Operative Report 115, 6 September 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers.

[30] *Ibid.*, 7 September 1914. For a contrasting view of the Labor Day parade, see *The Journal of Labor*, 11 Sept. 1914.

[31] Operative Report 115, 10 September 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers.

[32] *Ibid.*, 13 September 1914.

[33] *Ibid.*, 18 September 1914. The Colpoys and McWade Report, 18 August 1915, also cites financial mismanagement.

[34] Operative Report 115, 19 September 1914, File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers.

[35] *Ibid.*, 23 September 1914.

[36] *Ibid.*, 24 September 1914.

[37] *Ibid.*, 25 September 1914.

[38] *Ibid.*, 2 October 1914.

[39] *Ibid.*, 16, 19 October 1914.

[40] *Ibid.*, 21 October 1914.

[41] *Ibid.*, 24 October 1914.

[42] Wright to Preston, 22 November 1914; Myers to Elsas, 30 November, 7 December 1914; Elsas to Myers, 1, 9 December 1914; Preston to Wright, 6 December 1914; File A14-06-OP115, Box 1, Fulton Bag Papers. It seems rather unlikely that Wright ever attempted to do this. Writing was obviously difficult for him, and at the time, he was desperately in search of employment.

[43] Alexander M. Daly to Charles McCarthy, 31 July 1914, Records of the U. S. Commission on Industrial Relations, Record Group 174, National Archives.

[44] Weed Report, 28 July 1914. *The Journal of Labor*, 4 Sept. 1914, printed a somewhat similar but shorter quote from Elsas. The *Journal* reported that Elsas, reacting favorably to the violent measures of Colorado mine owners in the infamous Ludlow Massacre earlier in the year, seemingly yearned for a similar solution in Atlanta: "I would take the loyal army of workers that have remained with me, supply them with rifles and mow the strikers down as you would mow hay, but I know the community would not stand for it." Although the source of this quote is unclear, it seems likely that it originated with the Weed interview.

Harry R. Rubenstein

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES OF AMERICAN LABOR

Badges of Pride

AMERICAN WORKERS HAVE EXPRESSED ideals and values not only in words, but in the imagery they have selected to represent themselves and their organizations. Because workers of the past left comparatively few written documents, their portraits, emblems, graphics and other images fill a gap in our understanding of how workers saw themselves, what concerns they had, and how their own attitudes towards their work life and their place in society have changed over time.

Beginning as early as the late eighteenth century, American workers' imagery emphasized their indentification with their craft and class. Individually, many workers chose to portray themselves as representatives of their trade. At the same time, through organizations they created to promote their interests in work places and communities, they adopted emblems and symbols that presented their ideals, inspired allegiance and celebrated their contributions as a group, to American life.

The exhibition, "Symbols and Images of American Labor," at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, January through September 1988, brought together a selection of labor imagery. This article presents material from the first half of the exhibition, "Badges of Pride," which focused on how workers expressed their sense of identity through graphic images, both individually in portraits and collectively in labor emblems and graphics.[1]

Types of materials and styles vary greatly within a given time period. For the purposes of the exhibit the aim was to determine what images were most representative, analyze their messages and see how they changed over time. Though based on several thousand examples found in public and private collections, the exhibit did not claim to be a definitive study of the subject. It was a first attempt to use this largely ignored and potentially important source for the study of labor history.[2]

Portrait of Patrick Lyon by John Neagle, 1826–1827. At the time his portrait was painted, Patrick Lyon was a successful designer and manufacturer of fire engines. He wrote to John Neagle asking the artist to show him "the size of life, representing me at the smithery, with my bellows-blower, hammers, and all the et ceteras of the shop around me." He explained, "I wish you to understand clearly, Mr. Neagle, that I do not desire to be represented in the picture as a gentleman—to which character I have no pretension. I want you to paint me at work at my anvil with my sleeves rolled up and a apron on."[3]

Division of Photographic History, National Museum of American History

Division of Photographic History, National Museum of American History

Tintype of metal worker, mid-nineteenth century.

OCCUPATIONAL PORTRAITS

Portraits are a valuable source for understanding how people saw themselves. While painters were conforming to popular artistic styles, how they depicted an individual was in most instances determined by the subjects, not by the artists.

It is clear that many workers asked to be portrayed as representatives of their trade. Common from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century were paintings and photographs of American artisans and laborers holding a saw, a blacksmith's hammer or a shuttle from a loom. These workers were making personal statements about how they wanted to be viewed and remembered. Their portraits are personal statements about self-image and occupational pride, declarations of their subjects' self-worth and their status as trades people in the community.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries few artisans could afford the cost of an artist's portrait. Those who did were likely to be the most successful, male members of a trade. Why some of these successful craftsmen chose to be painted as gentlemen, while others asked to be portrayed as artisans working at their craft, was often as much a political statement as it was a personal one.[4] Those workers who had themselves painted with their tools were identifying with the republicanism of the Revolutionary era, which linked the future of the nation to a responsible and egalitarian citizenry drawn from the producing class of artisans, farmers and manufacturers.

Tintype of textile workers, mid-nineteenth century.

The spread of photography in the mid-nineteenth century made it possible for the average worker to have an inexpensive portrait prepared. Following the pattern of earlier subjects in occupational portraits, carpenters, blacksmiths, machine operators and others—often dressed in clean work clothes—brought into the photographers' studios their tools and selected items from their shops and factories. By posing with the symbols of their occupations they were expressing their occupational pride, group identification and belief in their important role as workers in society.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century occupational portraits declined in popularity among workers. Individual and family portraits containing no references to employment or occupation became more common. In place of bringing along symbols of their trade, workers went to be photographed dressed in their "Sunday best," often accompanied by members of their family.[5] The reason occupational portraits lost favor is not clear or simple, but it is certainly not just attributable to stylistic fluctuations.

In part this choice by the working class was a reaction to society's changing values—with a new emphasis on individual status—and the declining position of the worker in an emerging capitalist industrial economy. By the late nineteenth century an individual's standing was more often measured by wealth than by occupation, and increasingly status was demonstrated by an ability to purchase, rather than to produce. For many Americans, entrepreneurs and capitalists replaced yeoman farmers and artisans as the embodiment of the nation's values. In addition, the rapid expansion of large industry and increasing mechanization of production

Courtesy of Carl H. Scheele

shifted control of the work place from employees to their managers and lessened workers' sense of personal attachment to their trade. In many instances workers no longer controlled either the pace of their work or the tools they had once so proudly displayed.

The decline in occupational portraits in the 1880s took place during a period labor historians have often characterized by growing class consciousness and coincided with the rise of the modern American labor movement. What appear as contradictory trends—the weakening of personal occupational identification and the rise of organized labor and class consciousness—may represent responses of workers to the turmoil and conflicts they experienced as industrialization challenged traditional work relationships and altered their position in the work place and society.

Although the change in portrait styles may indicate a dramatic shift in how many workers defined themselves, it certainly does not mean that they abandoned pride or identification with their work life. Rather, as a response to industrialization, many workers rechanneled their self-esteem and pride through new labor organizations.

LABOR ASSOCIATIONS AND UNIONS

Throughout American history workers have banded together to protect and advance their rights in their work places and communities. The associations and unions they formed chose emblems and imagery to express their concerns, goals and identities. Borrowing from the symbolism of medieval guilds, fraternal organizations, political movements and popular sources, they sought to communicate their ideologies and inspire allegiance.

Many of these images were simple statements of occupational pride, showing the tools and products of their trades. Some organizations adopted or created guild-like images to link themselves to a much older tradition and to encourage a sense of privileged membership. Others chose symbols proclaiming worker solidarity, celebrating ethnic makeup or promising a new tomorrow.

Photograph of carpenter Wilhelm Scheele and Minnie Scheele, ca. 1892.

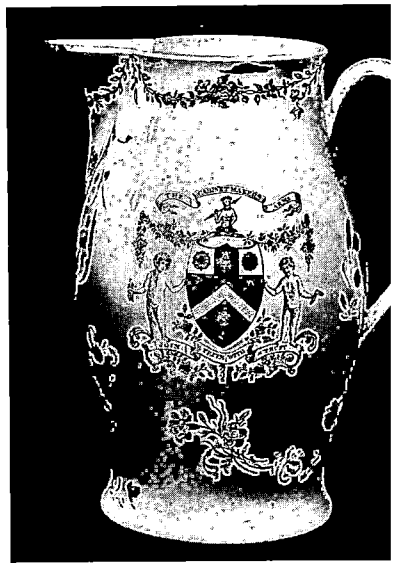
Right: Robert H. McCauley Collection, Division of Ceramics and Glass, National Museum of American History

ARTISAN ORGANIZATIONS

From the late eighteenth century, emblems and graphics of early American artisan associations reflect their belief in craft traditions and their political outlook. Workers adopted English guild emblems to tie their organizations to older movements and traditions, and national symbols to signify support of the values they saw embodied in the new nation.

Although early American artisans never established an elaborate guild system, they did follow the traditional craft structure of master, journeymen and apprentices in organizing their workshops and in training new workers. Skilled artisans learned their craft as apprentices, who gave their labor to master craftsmen in exchange for instruction in the "art and mystery" of the trade. At the completion of an apprenticeship, a worker earned the right to be employed as a journeyman in the shop of a master. The title of master was reserved only for those skilled artisans who were able to establish their own shop or enter into a partnership.

The early organizations artisans formed were designed to regulate the trades, provide benefits and protect the rights of skilled workers. Concentrated primarily in the larger eastern cities, workers organized general societies as well as associations for individual trades. In a few instances, journeymen established organizations to mediate disputes between the masters



Cabinetmakers' society pitcher made in 1795 for the American market in Liverpool or Straffordshire, England. In major American cities many artisans formed organizations to promote the interests of their individual crafts and to provide benefits to their members. The coat of arms on the pitcher is based on an English guild emblem.

Winterthur Museum and Gardens

New York Mechanick Society certificate, 1791. Artisans, also called mechanics, had formed general societies in several eastern cities by the end of the eighteenth century. Although dominated by master craftsmen, these societies originally strove to represent the economic and political concerns of entire artisan communities. By the 1820s the cooperative craft system had widely disappeared. Industrialization and a capitalist market economy led to increasing tensions and conflicts between masters and their employees. The societies that once spoke for all artisans increasingly became the voice of the manufacturing and business elite.

and themselves. Much of the symbolism used by these early organizations is relatively conservative, reflecting their general outlook. For the most part the societies did not mean to change the existing system, but to preserve it against the challenges of a developing capitalist economy which promised to transform masters and journeymen into employers and employees.

Instead of calling for dramatic changes, the graphics emphasize the traditions and contributions of artisans. The societies adopted symbols of nationalism, industry and commerce to suggest their goals and principles. The raised arm holding a hammer, an image which conveys the power and importance of productive labor, became the most identifiable single symbol to represent the artisan class, and eventually the entire working class.[6]

The workers' world was rapidly changing throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. The traditional system of reciprocal obligations between masters and journeymen that had existed since the Middle Ages was breaking down as factory production and contracted work replaced the small artisan workshop. Nonetheless, the early artisan symbols and slogans continued to dominate the imagery of labor organizations through the 1850s.

Public celebrations and parades provided labor organizations an opportunity to present their strength and to display their colors. At the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, civic leaders organized a major procession through the streets of New York City. New York artisans dominated the parade, carrying the banners and emblems of their trades. They marched by occupation, not only to show their support for the canal, but also to demonstrate unity within their crafts.[7]

Right: Scott Molloy Labor Collection. Photograph by Melissa Johnson, Smithsonian Institution

By the 1830s and 1840s workers in several industries had formed trade union societies to provide insurance benefits and mediate disputes between employers and their membership. The Glass Cutters Trades' Union ribbon is a good example of the continuing use of national symbols and craft pride that was borrowed from earlier sources to promote these newer organizations.

Ribbon of the Glass Cutters Trades' Union Society, ca. 1840.

NEW VISIONS, NEW IMAGES

Few early trade unions survived both the economic depressions of the 1860s and 1870s and the rapid transformation of business and industry following the Civil War. New economic conditions altered relationships in the work place and led to new types of workers' organizations, such as the Knights of Labor. The role of the master artisans who had worked alongside their journeymen and apprentices was virtually gone, replaced by more distant employers, whose interests were often in direct opposition to those of their employees. Unlike the artisan societies, the images of these new groups focused less on the harmony within and across the trades, and more on the dignity and contributions of wage earners.

Painters emblem that appeared on ribbons worn at the New York City Erie Canal celebration in 1825.

Organized in 1869, the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor was one of many attempts by workers to establish a new social system to elevate their status and defend their interests. The Knights of Labor combined the promise of a classless, cooperative society with the mystery and secrecy of several fraternal societies. Under the guiding principle, "an injury to one is a concern of all," the Knights opened assemblies to all "productive" members of society regardless of race, sex and creed. By the mid-1880s the Knights had become the country's dominant labor organization with branches across the nation and a membership over 700 thousand.

The Knights of Labor, however, declined almost as rapidly as it had risen. Internal conflicts, mounting corporate opposition and the anti-union hysteria following the Chicago Haymarket Square bombing in 1886 all contributed to its collapse. By the mid-1890s, with fewer than 100 thousand members, the organization lost its position as the voice of labor.[8]

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

A more permanent trade union movement also arose at the end of the nineteenth century. Although many

The George Meany Memorial Archives

Knights of Labor seal.

Scott Molloy Labor Collection

Knights of Labor trade card, ca. 1880s.

trade unionists shared some of the broader aims of the Knights of Labor, as well as various socialist organizations, by the turn of the century the main thrust of the trade union movement was "pure and simple" unionism. The prime concern among these trade unionists was to build stable organizations that could endure through both changing economic and political conditions. To do this they believed that these unions must be under the exclusive control of workers and had to first meet the immediate needs of their members by insuring fair wages, reasonable hours and benefits.

By 1886 several unions joined together and formed the American Federation of Labor. According to its president, Samuel Gompers, the AFL's goal was to secure "more and more, here and now." Unions measured their progress first, by the economic betterment

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The British-based Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners established branches in several American cities. This certificate was designed and printed in England and made available for its members around the world. Similar to other English certificates, it depicts the work and contributions of the trade along with the organization's principles. After the American locals of the Amalgamated Society merged with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners in 1914, the words "United Brotherhood" were added to the certificate.[9]

Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. Photograph by John Steiner, Smithsonian Institution

of their members, second, by the percentage of the industry they represented, and third, by the advancement of the entire working class.

These unions, like earlier craft-based organizations, chose symbols that reflected their occupational pride and the solidarity they hoped to establish among workers in their industries. But there was a significant change. Gone were the images of employer-employee unity. The focus was often on the contributions of the worker within a trade, rather than on the contributions of the entire industry.

Many of their emblems and graphics were simple statements to identify the membership with the tools and products of an industry. Some organizations adopted guild-like images both to express their appreciation of their craft's history and to foster a similar sense of an exclusive community. Others chose to proclaim proudly their ethnic makeup and cultural heritage through the images they selected to represent them, or they adopted ethnic motifs to encourage new membership in these communities.

RADICAL ALTERNATIVES

Several labor organizations, often operating in direct competition with trade unions, had as their principal purpose more than higher wages and a voice in the work place: they sought a fundamental reordering of American society. Some of these groups operated as an extension of existing political parties, as was the case of several socialist and communist labor federations. In other instances, they were independent unions, such as the Industrial Workers of the World, or independent coalitions of workers attempting to effect change within an existing union.

To create emblems for these organizations, artists borrowed the symbolism of European socialists and combined it with their own creations. The images only secondarily referred to a particular industry or product; instead, they emphasized the power of a united working class. Included in their drawings were the rising sun marking the dawn of an enlightened era, heroic workers smashing capitalism, female figures personifying truth and justice, and the traditional artisan symbol of the arm and hammer. Unlike the emblems and graphics produced by many AFL unions that stressed occupational pride, these images reflected the goals of establishing working-class consciousness and loyalty.

Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

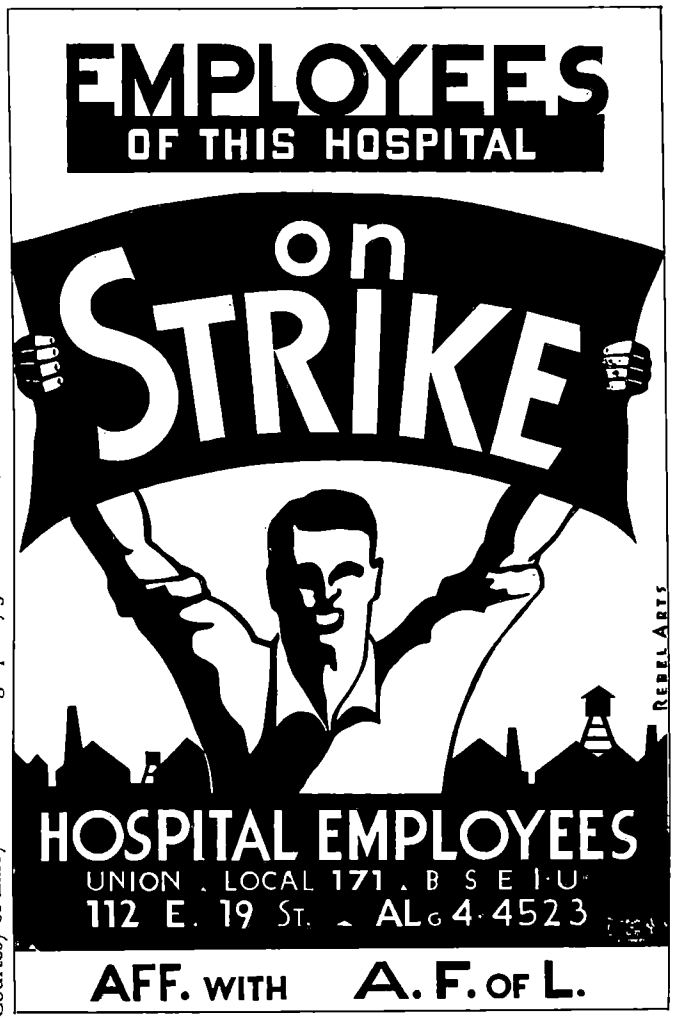
Founded in 1905 by industrial unionists, socialists, anarchists and syndicalists, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) produced some of the most powerful and enduring labor images in American history. The IWW, organized along industrial rather than craft lines, sought to bring all workers into one big union strong enough to abolish capitalism and to replace it with a cooperative, egalitarian economic system and society.[10]

THE NEW DEAL AND THE TAFT-HARTLEY ACT

The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 marked the beginning of a new era for organized labor. The passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in

1933 and the National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act in 1935 gave labor the legal sanctions it needed to build a broadly based labor movement. Not since the Knights of Labor had unions experienced such a wave of growth and support. From the mid-1930s to the early 1950s organizers enlisted workers in almost every industry. By 1954 about thirty-five percent of American workers were members of unions.[11]

Inspired by the successes and momentum of organizing campaigns, many of the graphics produced by both older craft unions and newer industrial organizations of the period expressed a renewed sense of self-confidence. To illustrate their feelings of strength and power, labor organizations adopted some of the symbolism of older radical organizations that emphasized the power of a united working class.



Courtesy of Larry Kanter. Photograph by John Steiner, Smithsonian Institution

Building Service Employees International Union 171 strike poster, ca. 1937.

Division of Political History, National Museum of American History

Cover from 1938 convention souvenir book of the United Association of Journeymen Plumbers and Steam Fitters of the United States and Canada.

The passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, imposing restrictions on unions, marked a major shift in the political climate. Since the mid-1950s labor membership has been declining due to the loss of jobs to automation, imports and industrial decline, and mounting anti-union sentiment. Labor graphics reflect this change.

THE NEW IMAGE OF LABOR

Faced with declining membership, factory closings, and issues of race, gender and ethnicity, in recent years many labor organizations have produced graphics promoting one underlying message: unions are for everyone. Posters and television commercials present union membership as diverse and all-inclusive. Although this emphasis on openness is not entirely new, since the late 1970s it has become the dominant theme of almost

United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America poster.

United Steelworkers of America poster, 1986.

all the material produced by unions which attempt to define their identity.

The range of occupations that the union represents is stressed, showing that membership is made up of blue and white collar workers, from the most technically trained professional to the unskilled laborer alike. Graphics that in the past might have shown a single representative white male worker now include groups

Portion of poster with oriental motifs from International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union 23-25 recent organizing campaign among New York City's Chinese community.

Division of Political History, National Museum of American History. Photograph by John Steiner, Smithsonian Institution

Scott Molloy Labor Collection. Photograph by Ricardo Vargas, Smithsonian Institution

Tray from Beer Drivers Union 132 of Philadelphia showing driver and brewer in traditional apparel, ca. 1900–1910. The German texts read "Hops and Malts," "Naturally Produced," and "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." German-speaking workers dominated many of the unions associated with beer making.

of young and old, male and female, and racially diverse workers.

In surveying labor imagery two major points stand out. First, the imagery adopted by workers indicates an expression of group consciousness. The examination of the material shows an identification by workers with their trade or their class, and often a combination of both. Throughout each different period the images that workers adopted to represent themselves reveal a deep-seated pride in their work life and desire to be identified with it. Much of the material also reflects a group consciousness, either for members of a trade or for the entire working class. How the group was defined depended on the era the graphics were produced and the nature of the organization. Nonetheless, the expression of group affiliation is a strong current running through the history of labor imagery.

While the theme of group identification appears to be constant, a second theme involves workers' attitudes towards changes in their status and economic position. The imagery adopted by workers reflects shifts from periods of self-confidence to uncertainty, and back again. The portraits and labor organization graphics show dramatic transformation as industrialization and a capitalist economy altered the roles of artisans and laborers. The imagery is visual evidence indicating how workers grappled with these changes and made efforts to redefine their position in society. In the graphics is an expressed desire by workers to assert themselves as a distinct group, to establish a separate identity from management, but not from the products of their labor or their contributions to society.

Union button, 1939.

Union button, 1940.

Scott Molloy Labor Collection. Photograph by Ricardo Vargas, Smithsonian Institution.
Far Right: Division of Political History, National Museum of American History. Photograph by Ricardo Vargas, Smithsonian Institution

Notes

Harry R. Rubenstein is collection manager and museum specialist for the labor history collection in the Division of Political History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. He is the author of several articles on labor history and museum policies and served as curator for the "Symbols and Images of American Labor" exhibition.

In March 1989 the travelling exhibit "Badges of Labor: Symbols and Images of American Labor" began a three-year tour of the United States under the sponsorship of the SITES program of the Smithsonian Institution. See the *News* section for dates and locations where it may be seen.

[1] This exhibition is made possible in part by generous grants to the National Museum of American History's Labor History Fund from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union; International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades of the United States and Canada; International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union; International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Technical, Salaried and Machine Workers; Joseph Anthony Beirne Memorial Foundation of the Communications Workers of America; National Association of Letter Carriers of the United States of America; Service Employees International Union; The Newspaper Guild; United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America; United Food and Commercial Workers International Union; and the United Steel Workers of America.

The ideas and themes of the exhibit were greatly enhanced by the suggestions and criticisms of many individuals within and outside the Smithsonian Institution. The author would like to especially thank Russell K. Cashdollar, Nanci K. Edwards, Gary B. Kulik, Edith P. Mayo, Anne L. Pierce, Jonathan Prude and Alfred F. Young.

[2] For additional examples of labor related graphics see M. B. Schnapper, *American Labor: A Pictorial Social History* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1972) and William Cahn, *A Pictorial History of American Labor* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1972).

[3] Ransom R. Patrick, "John Neagle, Portrait Painter, and Pat Lyon, Blacksmith," *The Art Bulletin* 33 (1951):188.

[4] Hedy Monteforte Da Costa Nunes, "Iconography of Labor in American Art, 1750–1850," Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1983, pp. 52–56, 174–77.

[5] Richard Oestreicher, "From Artisan to Consumer: Images of Workers, 1840–1920," *Journal of American Culture* 4 (1981):47–64.

[6] Howard B. Rock, *Artisans of the New Republic: The Tradesmen of New York City in the Age of Jefferson* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), pp. 8–14, 129–31; Dirk Hoerder, "Some Connections between Craft-Consciousness and Political Thought Among Mechanics, 1820s to 1840s," *Amerikastudien* 30 (1985):328–51.

[7] Cadwallader D. Colden, *Memoir, Prepared at the Request of a Committee of the Common Council of the City of New York, and Presented to the Mayor of the City, at the Celebration of the Completion of the New York Canals* (New York: W. A. Davis, 1825); John Bromley and Heather Child, *The Armorial Bearings of the Guilds of London* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1960); Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pp. 113–17.

[8] Thomas R. Brooks, *Toil and Trouble: A History of American Labor* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 56–71.

[9] John Gorman, *Images of Labor*, (London: Scorpion Publishing, Ltd., 1985), pp. 77–82.

[10] For further examples see Joyce L. Kornbluh, *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964).

[11] United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, Bulletin 2070, December 1980, p. 412.

THE UNIVERSITY *of* LABOR *vs.* THE UNIVERSITY *of* LETTERS *in 1904*

Unidentified Boston newspaper, [March 1904], in Samuel Gompers Scrapbook I, The George Meany Memorial Archives

By Joseph DePlasco

Frank K. Foster Confronts Harvard University President Charles W. Eliot

◆

IN EARLY 1904 THE BOSTON CENTRAL Labor Union (CLU) invited Charles W. Eliot, the president of Harvard University, to speak before an assembly of workers. While it was not unprecedented for educators to address workers or to support the labor movement, Eliot had a noticeable scar on his reputation. In 1896 he had referred to the "scab" as a nineteenth-century hero. When he repeated the statement during an anti-union drive six years later Boston workers responded with a roar of criticism. As if to assuage the sting of his comment and to learn more about the labor movement, Eliot met with Samuel Gompers and other American Federation of Labor officials during the 1903 Boston AFL convention.[1] Meanwhile the CLU by unanimous vote invited Eliot to address its February 7, 1904, meeting.

As the president of Harvard between 1869 and 1904, Eliot redirected the course of higher education in the United States. His concern with free choice and individual rights led him to introduce the first elective system into a college program. As a libertarian, Eliot feared American society had begun to sway from the individualism upon which it had been based. The labor movement was one of many areas to which Eliot applied his critique of collective efforts.

Eliot told the assemblage of workers that the growing tendency to restrict the liberty of individuals was illustrated by the course followed by labor and capital: "they are both fighting organizations, and all fighting abridges individual liberty—indeed, puts an end to it for the time being." Eliot believed that organized labor

Top left: Detail from a cartoon, "F. K. Foster's Reply to President Eliot," by Chickering.

had contributed to the loss of individualism not only because it created violence and hatred, but because it restricted the freedom of movement and upward mobility of workers who desired to improve their place in society. He reasoned, "democracy believes that all should have a chance to move up. Democracy must distrust labor's effort to restrict efficiency and output. The objection is moral."[2]

The Boston Globe, 8 February 1904

Photograph of the audience listening to Charles W. Eliot's speech at Faneuil Hall, from a composite cartoon, "President Eliot at the Central Labor Union Meeting."

As much as Eliot studied the labor movement (and he did so more than many other critics), trade unions remained a problem for him. While praising the scab, his desire to see industrial reforms and improved working conditions led him to value certain aspects of unionism. However, he could never completely escape his ambivalence about what he perceived as a general trend toward collectivism. The topic of Eliot's 1909 lecture at the University of Virginia was appropriately the conflict between individualism and collectivism. "All through the nineteenth century," he explained, "a conflict was going on in all civilized nations between two opposite tendencies in human society, individualism and collectivism. Till about 1870 individualism had the advantage in this conflict; but near the middle of the century collectivism began to gain on individualism, and during the last third of the century collectivism won decided advantages over the opposing principle."[3]

Eliot looked to the rapid population growth of the late nineteenth century for an explanation for this trend. American society had grown rapidly during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The population increased from twenty-three to ninety million between 1850 and 1910. Over twenty-five million immigrants arrived in America during the same years. In cities and industrial towns throughout the country, the problems of congestion and poverty reached new heights, leading reformers to introduce a host of programs and policies to solve the urban question. The self-reliance of the independent American appeared to wane under these conditions. Eliot concluded that "the necessity of collective measures and the impotency of individualistic methods are vividly exhibited wherever population concentrates itself in large cities or in closely built towns about mines or factories."[4]

Eliot believed that through both progressive legislation and responsible industrial practices society could thwart the more detrimental effects of collectivism. In education, industry and government Eliot found traces of constructive collectivism which, he noted, were "beneficent in the present, and hopeful for the future." In his address to the Boston workers, for instance, he spoke highly of increased wages, pension plans and other "welfare measures," such as better air and sanitary conditions in industrial plants. Voluntary associations which had no coercive force but worked on public opinion were the best example of constructive collective action. Education rather than force could stimulate an interest in almost any cause and through public awareness "induce governmental action, and prepare the way for it by appealing to the intelligence and moral sense of the community."[5]

Of course Eliot was not alone in his fear that America was swaying from its initial promise. In a recent study of antimodernism in American life, Jackson Lears has described a strong impulse among turn-of-the-century writers to reverse the direction of industrialism and

Cartoon, "Norman's Study of President Eliot Delivering His Remarkable Address to the Unions at Faneuil Hall Sunday."

The Boston Post, 9 February 1904

Photograph, 1904, of the office at Harvard University where President Eliot worked.

The Harvard University Archives

retreat back to a simpler and more coherent sense of the world. As Daniel Rodgers explained in his study of the industrial work ethic, Eliot, a leader in the movement for vocational training, was concerned with the fate of honest labor and skills and "with the conditions of both mind and circumstance that made work a rewarding, energizing, 'joyful' activity." The workers who assembled to listen to Eliot, however, sat silently through his suggestion that they should find joy in their labor, much as he had found in his position as a university professor and president.[6]

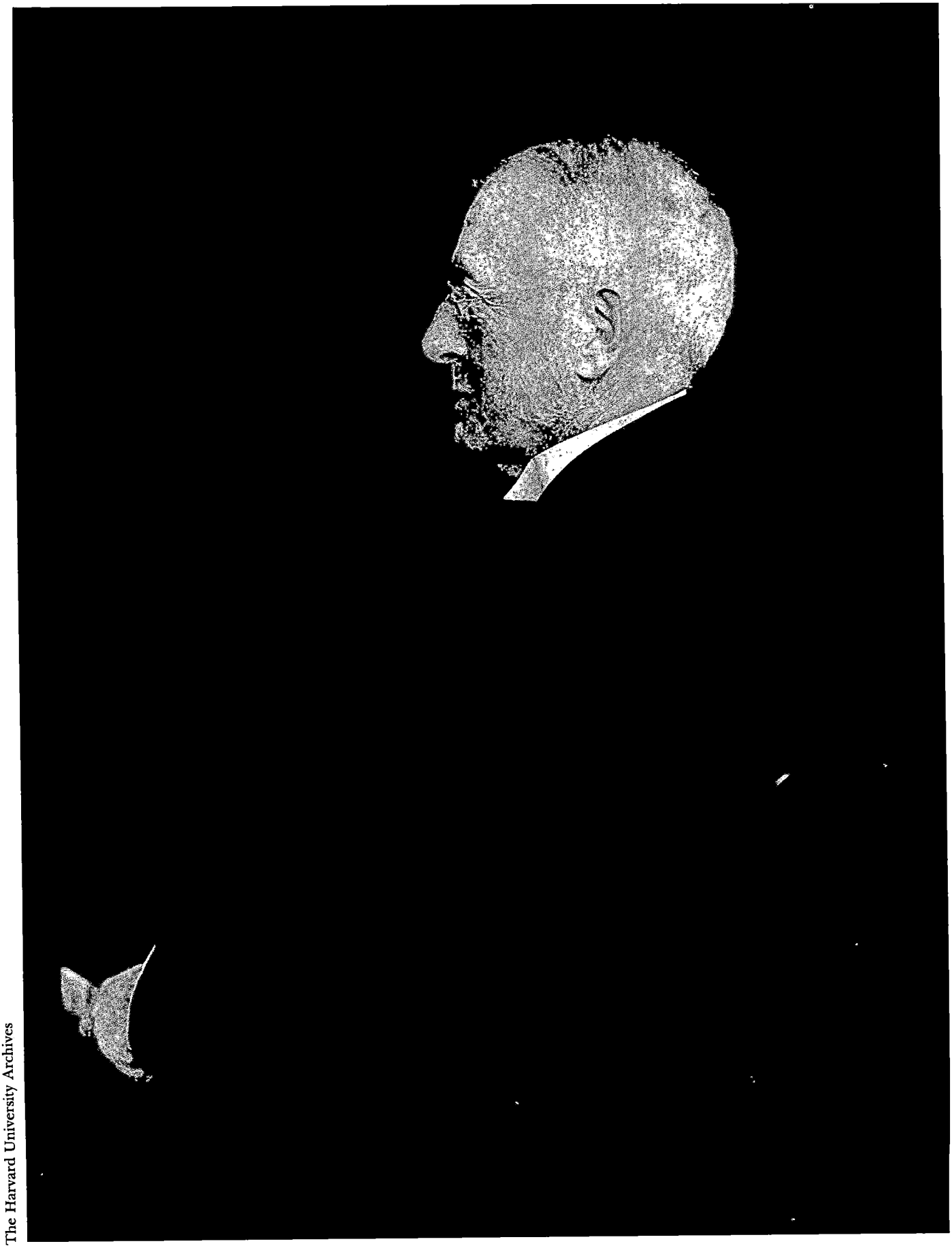
Underlying Eliot's exhortations was his concern that unless workers found satisfaction in their jobs, American society would be confronted with a great deal of discontent and, consequently, the further threat of industrial and social unrest. Society was becoming increasingly divided, Eliot noted. To reduce the conflict, he argued, workers should have "a voice in the discipline of the works and a share in the pecuniary value of the good will—[which would give each] something indispensable to a satisfactory working life, namely the opportunity and purpose to serve generously and proudly the establishment or institution with which the workman is connected."[7]

Eliot's address to the Boston workers would only be of passing interest as part of a much larger and more diverse career were it not for the response that it generated. To respond to Eliot's talk, the CLU invited Frank K. Foster, a Boston printer and one of the leading labor editors of the era, to address its meeting on February 21. There was a marked contrast between the way the audiences reacted to each speech—Eliot's with silence and Foster's with laughter and cheering throughout. Nonetheless the speeches afford us an opportunity to compare different positions on the labor movement from a somewhat similar perspective. Like Eliot, Foster held libertarian ideas relating to the role of the state and the supremacy of the individual. Unlike the university president, he believed individualism could only be maintained through collective efforts.

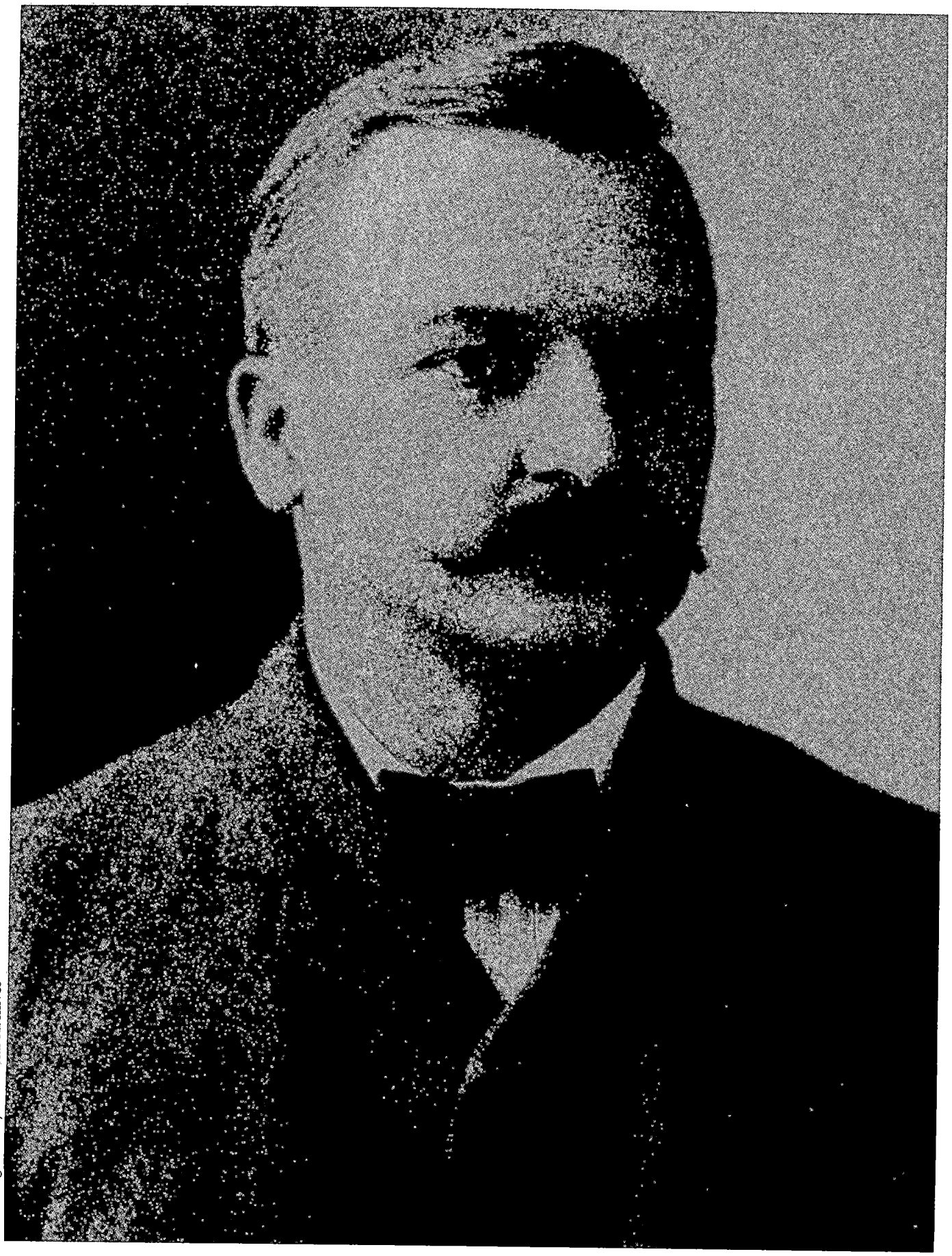
Frank K. Foster's career was that of a working-class intellectual. Whether from middle-class or more traditionally working-class backgrounds, labor intellectuals played an important role in the late nineteenth-century labor movement. Foster fit the bill perfectly. Born in Thorndike, Massachusetts, in 1855, he learned the printing trade in Hartford and settled in Boston at the age of twenty-five ready to practice his craft. By 1884 he had attained executive positions in the Boston District Assembly of the Knights of Labor and in the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (FOTLU), the predecessor of the AFL. The same year he achieved the crowning mark of a working-class intellectual when he assumed the editorship of the Knights' journal in his state.[8]

Though not much is known about Foster's personal life, his diverse writings supply us with a trajectory of his intellectual career. Most telling is the autobiographical novel he completed in 1901. Like Foster, Ernest Aldrich, the main protagonist in *The Evolution of a Trade Unionist*, moved to Boston to begin his career, passed through a socialist phase and settled on trade unionism as the proper direction for the labor movement. As the title of the novel indicates, Ernest had to evolve into a trade unionist. Upon arriving in the city, he confronted the difficulty of learning a trade in a specialized world. The values he had grown up with in the country—virtue, independence, religion—had not prepared him for the hardships of urban life. He joined a socialist organization after listening to a labor agitator expound on the future world in the cooperative commonwealth. His ideas changed during his first strike. A "constructive" trade unionist spoke to the strikers not about the future, but about wages and the reduction of hours. "The strike had had a salutary effect upon the mind of the subject of our sketch," Foster wrote. "It brought him face to face with things as they exist; set, as it were, his feet upon the solid ground of actuality. He still had dreams of the Co-operative Commonwealth, but he had gained a clearer conception

Photograph of Charles W. Eliot, 1904.



The Harvard University Archives



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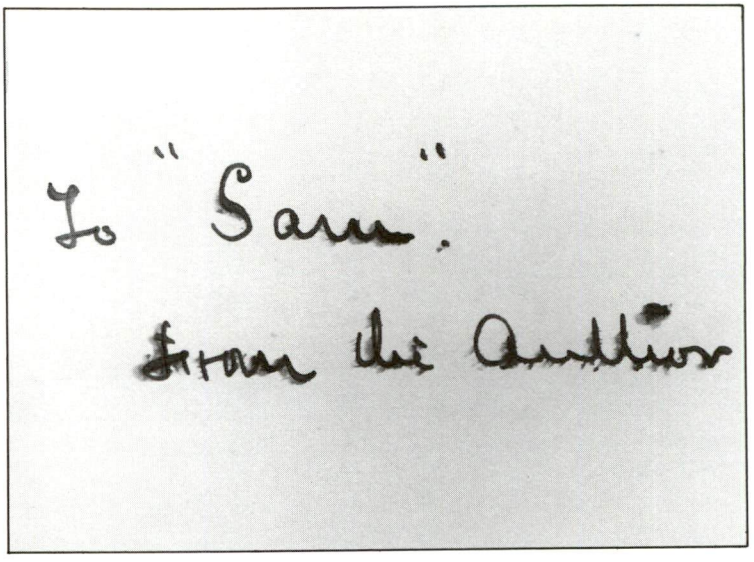
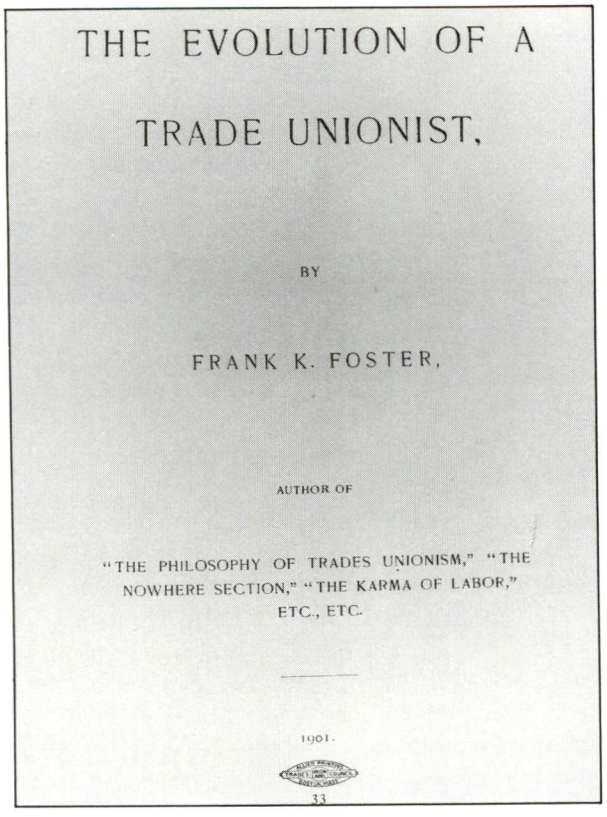

To "Sam".
from the Author


THE EVOLUTION OF A

TRADE UNIONIST,

BY

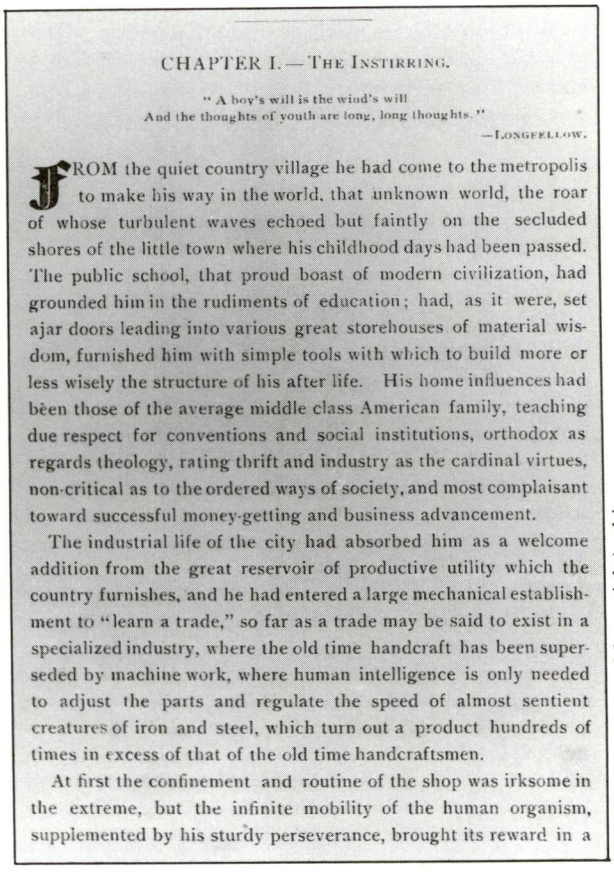
FRANK K. FOSTER,

AUTHOR OF

"THE PHILOSOPHY OF TRADES UNIONISM," "THE NOWHERE SECTION," "THE KARMA OF LABOR," ETC., ETC.

1901.

33


CHAPTER I. — THE INSTIRRING.

"A boy's will is the wind's will
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."
—LONGFELLOW.

FROM the quiet country village he had come to the metropolis to make his way in the world, that unknown world, the roar of whose turbulent waves echoed but faintly on the secluded shores of the little town where his childhood days had been passed. The public school, that proud boast of modern civilization, had grounded him in the rudiments of education; had, as it were, set ajar doors leading into various great storehouses of material wisdom, furnished him with simple tools with which to build more or less wisely the structure of his after life. His home influences had been those of the average middle class American family, teaching due respect for conventions and social institutions, orthodox as regards theology, rating thrift and industry as the cardinal virtues, non-critical as to the ordered ways of society, and most complaisant toward successful money-getting and business advancement.

The industrial life of the city had absorbed him as a welcome addition from the great reservoir of productive utility which the country furnishes, and he had entered a large mechanical establishment to "learn a trade," so far as a trade may be said to exist in a specialized industry, where the old time handcraft has been superseded by machine work, where human intelligence is only needed to adjust the parts and regulate the speed of almost sentient creatures of iron and steel, which turn out a product hundreds of times in excess of that of the old time handcraftsmen.

At first the confinement and routine of the shop was irksome in the extreme, but the infinite mobility of the human organism, supplemented by his sturdy perseverance, brought its reward in a

The George Meany Memorial Archives

Title page, inscription and first page of Frank K. Foster's autobiographical novel, The Evolution of a Trade Unionist, *published in 1901. This copy of Foster's book is in Samuel Gompers' personal library and is inscribed by the author to Gompers. The first page of text introduces Foster's central character, Ernest Aldrich. Aldrich has come to work in the city from a "quiet country village," as had Foster.*

of the real forces in the world of industry, and the nature of the obstacles which must be overcome in order that the wage-earner may make progress."

As Ernest became more involved in the labor movement he was chosen to represent his union at the city's central labor federation, which Foster clearly based on the Boston Central Labor Union. Discussion covered issues ranging from Cuban independence to collective ownership. But trade unionism was the leading cause.

Photograph of Frank K. Foster, n.d.

Born of necessity and bred in difficulty, the labor society has shaped, if not a philosophy, at least a code of belief as to economic questions altogether different to the teachings of the text books used in our colleges and universities.

FRANK K. FOSTER, 1900[10]

As Foster noted: "there were Freemasons and Hibernians, Anarchists and Socialists, Single Taxers and Co-operators, Theosophists and Atheists, Republicans and Democrats, Catholics and Protestants, but all trade unionists and in the main willing to subordinate, in their capacity as delegates, all sects and 'isms to the work at hand."[11]

Though Foster had been a socialist and Knight before moving over to the American Federation of Labor, trade unionism had remained for him the practical basis for the workers' movement. AFL leaders frequently spoke in a language that rejected any kind of theory and exalted the idea of experience to support the primacy of trade unions. Speaking before the 1883 U.S. Senate committee on education and labor, Gompers' long-time colleague Adolph Strasser explained that "we have no ultimate ends. We are going on from day to day. We are fighting only for immediate objects. We are all practical men."[12] Gompers himself often referred to the impractical methods of visionaries and theorists and the importance of trade unions, pure and simple. But for all of their criticism of theory, AFL leaders developed a substantial body of theory to define the movement they desired and the role the working class would play in social change. Labor leaders and activists discussed their principles in countless articles. Through the labor papers he edited Foster became one of the leading theorists in the early American Federation of Labor.

As the secretary of the FOTLU Legislative Committee in 1884, Foster led the trade union movement away from its lobbying efforts for the shorter work day to an understanding of the importance of concentrated economic strength, and ultimately to the call for a general strike to achieve the eight-hour day.[13] But Foster also went off in other directions. Like Ernest in his novel, Foster was attracted to anarchism. Ernest learned about anarchism from a young Russian woman who was active in the Boston reform movement. Foster's anarchism developed out of his reading of Herbert Spencer, the English writer who applied Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to the study of society. The goal, as Foster wrote in his novel, was "to evolve that growth of collective individualism which should permeate all society, defending democratic institutions on the one hand and establishing concentrated action for industrial justice on the other."[14]

When the CLU chose Foster to respond to Eliot, Foster had been vexed with the problem of individualism in an industrial society for close to twenty years. Consequently, Eliot's talk gave him the opportunity towards the end of his career (he died in 1909) to work through many of his ideas on the labor movement, and to confront the problems that had caused him greatest difficulty as a working-class intellectual.

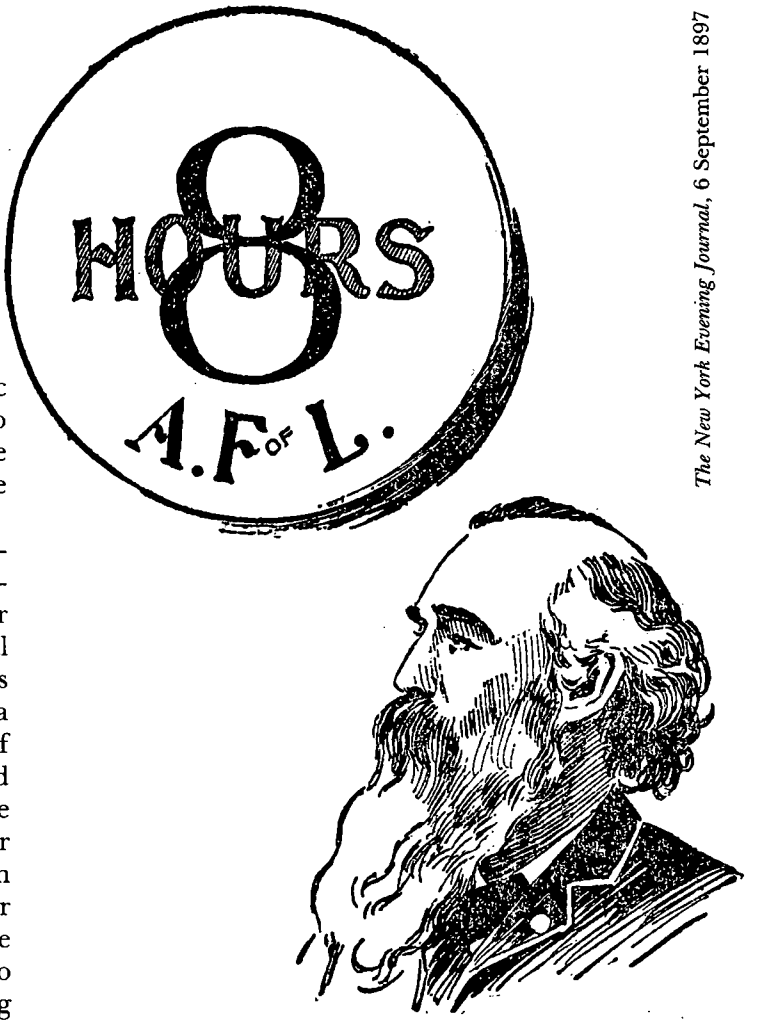
The purpose of his talk, Foster began, was not to attack Eliot. "The occasion," Foster explained, "could give little satisfaction to those who delight in the widening of the social chasm, whose policy it is to intensify class antagonism, whose every endeavor is to fan the flame of social discord. But to the citizen who hopes to find in democracy the solvent which will fuse into an organic whole the elements of the society of the future, this tentative union of the University of Letters and the University of Labor has in it the promise of untold potency."[15]

Among the different areas Foster covered in his address, three stand out as a summary of his ideas about trade unionism and the labor movement. The first challenged Eliot's ability to discuss the labor movement because of his "point of view" and lack of immediate experience with practical labor. Secondly, Foster confronted Eliot's understanding of joyful labor, and contrasted it to the labor movement's call for a shorter work day. And finally, Foster discussed how individualism was supported and expressed through collective efforts, rather than, as Eliot suggested, contradicted by them.

"The lenses of all our faculties are focused by our environment," Foster noted early in his speech. "The objective universe wears a different aspect when viewed from the tenement house window from that which it presents when seen from the home of wealth, leisure and culture." Foster was pleased that Eliot had found some positive points in trade unionism and that he conceded unions had succeeded in increasing wages. He nonetheless criticized Eliot on the most basic grounds. Eliot had admitted that his understanding of the labor movement had been derived strictly from books. For Foster knowledge began with experience. "It is the

possibility of misinformation on the part of our critic as to the vital essence of trade unionism—due not to willful error but to lack of personal touch with its nerve centres—that gives us our chief warrant to take issue with him as to some of his conclusions."[16]

He particulary took issue with Eliot's limited understanding of the wage issue. Eliot was primarily concerned that in its pursuit of higher wages, the labor movement restricted the labor market and individual freedom within it. In reality, Foster explained, it was through increased wages that workers rose above a subsistence level and freed themselves from some of the vulnerabilities of the daily competitive struggle and the ever present possibility that some new machine would displace them. Foster also found that higher wages were a better protection for individualism than the system of pensions supported by Eliot, which Foster believed was undemocratic and paternalistic. As he noted: "We most respectfully submit that we prefer to get it NOW, and we will save it or spend it according to our judgement."[17]



The New York Evening Journal, 6 September 1897

Detail of a cartoon, featuring a drawing of eight-hour leader George E. McNeill and a pin of the American Federation of Labor.

The George Meany Memorial Archives

Portrait of Ira Steward, n.d. philosopher of the eight-hour movement of which Foster was a leading proponent.

As a printer, Foster was part of a long tradition of workers who had a great pride in their craft. When Eliot referred to the joys of labor and the importance of skills, Foster, like many other craftsmen, could understand him. Foster quickly pointed to "the manifold achievements of the American artisan" as an indication of the contributions workers had made to American society. But while he understood the joy of practicing a craft, Foster proposed to take Eliot's suggestions a few steps further. With the increasing mechanization of industry and the loss of traditional skills, could workers still find pleasure in their labor? "The

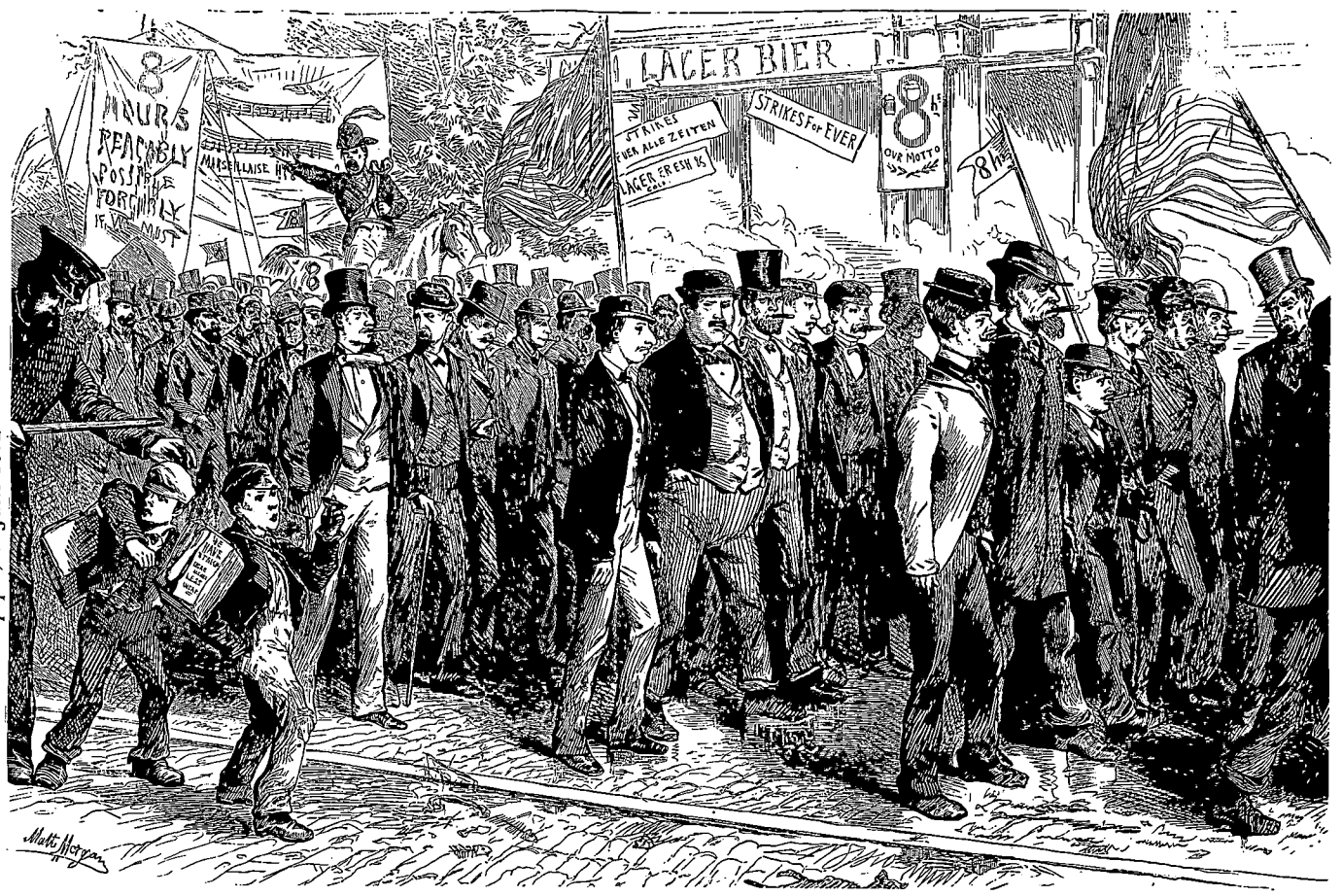
> *The instincts of the wage-workers are wiser than the philosophy of the schools.*
>
> *GEORGE E. McNEILL, 1886* [18]

actual and prevailing mental attitude of the trade unionist toward his work," Foster concluded, "is that he lives BY it, not FOR it. Self-interest, to say nothing of a sense of duty, impels him to perform his task efficiently, but he vehemently protests against being compelled to expend all of his time and all of his energy in the mere getting of bread and butter."[19]

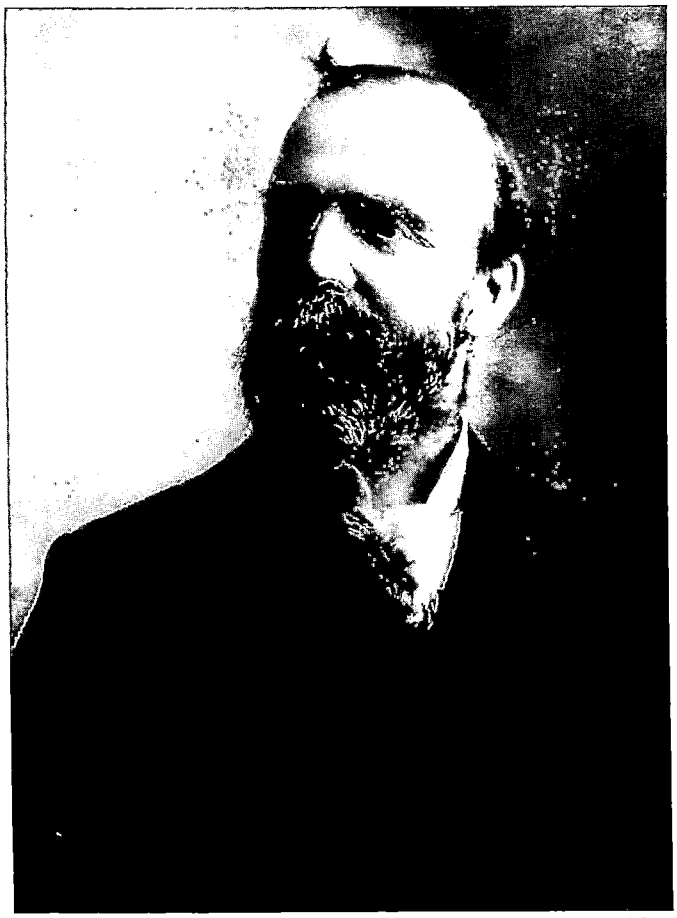
In contrast to Eliot's call for joyful labor, Foster pointed to the workers' demand for an eight-hour day. "The contention of trade unions," Foster argued, "is that reasonable leisure is an essential requisite for the production of the most efficient labor, for intelligent citizenship, and for well-balanced men." Throughout the nineteenth century workers struggled to reduce the hours of labor. New England factory hands, led by women operatives, called for a reduction to ten hours in the 1830s. During the Civil War years, labor leaders such as Ira Steward and George McNeill elevated the call for an eight-hour day into a labor philosophy. Following Foster's suggestion, the FOTLU embarked on a program to reduce the hours of labor to eight in 1884. To achieve this end, the federation called for a general strike on or before May 1, 1886, the original May Day.

Of all the labor programs of the nineteenth century, the call for shorter hours caught best the aspirations of the American working class. The promise of reduced toil certainly explains part of the appeal of the eight-hour day. But just as much, the eight-hour day dealt

Workingmen parading for the eight-hour day in the Bowery, New York, 10 June 1872. Drawing by Matthew Morgan.



Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 29 June 1872



THE

Economic and Social Importance

—OF THE—

EIGHT-HOUR MOVEMENT

BY GEORGE GUNTON,

AUTHOR OF "WEALTH AND PROGRESS;" "SHOULD AN EIGHT-HOUR SYSTEM BE ADOPTED?" "THE ECONOMIC HERESIES OF HENRY GEORGE;" "THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF TRUSTS," ETC.

PUBLICATION OF THE

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR,

21 CLINTON PLACE, N. Y. CITY.

EIGHT-HOUR SERIES No. 2.

COPYRIGHT 1889, BY SAMUEL GOMPERS.

Photograph of George Gunton, 1902, and cover of a pamphlet, "The Economic and Social Importance of the Eight-Hour Movement," by Gunton, 1889. This pamphlet was number 2 in a series published by the American Federation of Labor on the eight-hour movement. Other authors in the series were George E. McNeill, Samuel Gompers and Lemuel Danryid.

with some of the most important issues concerning working people. In Foster's home state, for instance, the annual unemployment rate in 1900 was 6.3 percent, but the frequency of unemployment (the percentage of workers unemployed at some point during the year) was 20 percent. Furthermore the average period of unemployment was close to four months. In an age when support systems for the unemployed were non-existent, the impact of four months without work could be devastating for a family.[20] Though reformers and workers had a long list of programs to solve the problem, the eight-hour day seemed to offer the best solution to persistent cycles of under- and unemployment. In preparation for the AFL's 1890 eight-hour drive George Gunton, a Massachusetts organizer and friend of Ira Steward, explained that a shortened work day would reduce enforced idleness by creating the need for more labor. With more leisure time, workers would develop new needs and desires, and consequently demand better wages. The eight-hour day would contribute to the general improvement of the entire country.[21]

Foster accepted the encompassing nature of the eight-hour call. He touched on each of the points involved: increasing employment, better wages and an improved economy. He also looked at the social side of the eight-hour day. Workers had a right, Foster argued, to all that society offered. "The trade unionist conceives that he is an equal 'heir to all the ages' with his compeers; that also for him and his, science has wrought, the artist dreamed, and the poet sung." Without access to literature, science and the arts, how could one talk of democracy or of intelligent citizenship? "It is scarcely a kindness," Foster explained, "to breed men in the faith of political equality if industrially they are forced to submit to despotism. It is highly injudicious to permit them to acquire an appreciation of the beautiful in art and nature if by the conditions of their

The George Meany Memorial Archives

Drawing of a seal adopted by the American Federation of Labor during the eight-hour movement. The same image appears in the June 1894 issue of the American Federationist, *advertising a lapel pin, "of Rolled Gold, beautifully enameled in three colors, red, white and blue. They are sold at 50 cents each, or $5.00 per dozen."*

employment the major portion of their existence must be spent in unremitting toil among base and unpleasant environments."[22]

It remained for Foster to explain his understanding of collective individualism. His earlier rehashing of the trade union program had covered familiar ground for the unionists assembled at Faneuil Hall. What separated Foster from many trade unionists was his philosophical anarchism, reflected in his predominant concern with protecting the rights of the individual in a society that had become increasingly industrialized. To achieve this end Foster drew on what he considered to be specific American traditions. In 1893, for instance, he wrote that "the 'American idea' of social reform is for less, rather than more, government, for the abolition of special privileges, for the diminution of bureaucratic power, for the development of free competition in land, labor and finance."[23]

To explain the growth of trade unionism Foster returned to his reading of Herbert Spencer. In response to Eliot's call for joyful labor, Foster noted that Spencer had given the "best definition of happiness, 'the freedom to exercise one's faculties,' " a difficult task for workers becoming automatized by the wheels of industry. Spencer had argued that as society evolved people became increasingly free to conduct their lives outside of traditional constraints. While Foster agreed with Spencer's sense of progress he saw, nonetheless, that workers were becoming less free and more dependent on the labor process. The trade union, Foster argued, is evolutionary. "It is the product of centuries and the heir of the progress made by those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brows." For workers to be free to exercise their faculties, it became necessary for them to join together to defend their rights. Only through solidarity could individualism be achieved. "The power of self-government," Foster argued in 1895, "so essential to democracy and good citizenship, is developed by organization."[24]

Foster's defense of individualism led him during the early 1890s to oppose socialist efforts to have the American Federation of Labor support an independent workers' political party and the nationalization of the means of production. In the first issue of the *American Federationist*, the journal of the AFL, Foster argued that the radical supporters of the political party were "ignorant of the fact that there is such a thing as American history." A political movement and a program calling for a strong government, Foster contended, were alien to American nature.[25]

Yet Foster's support of economic unionism over socialism was not narrow. He believed that labor had a role beyond that of merely economic improvement—that of building a society based on freedom and equal access to the fruits of industrialism. As he concluded in his response to Eliot: Trade unionism "has become an integral part of the social structure, and will so continue until its work is done. Its mobility will enable it to adjust itself to whatsoever new conditions may arise. Its ideals will mount higher and higher under the impulsion of all those elemental forces inherent in free institutions, which broaden the knowledge and increase the capacities of mankind."[26]

Right: Broadside advertising a speech to be delivered by Samuel Gompers on the shorter work day in Terre Haute, Indiana, on Thursday, June 3, 1897.

Notes

Joseph DePlasco is completing a doctoral dissertation at Columbia University on political thought in the early American Federation of Labor. He is currently working as an historian and writer at the New York City Department of Transportation.

[1] *Boston Herald*, 7 Feb. 1904. Charles W. Eliot, *American Contributions to Civilization, and Other Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1898), pp. 12-13. Eliot repeated his remarks at a talk before the Boston Economic Club on November 10, 1902. Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 235.

[2] *Boston Herald*, 8 Feb. 1904. In a 1909 address at Kenyon College Eliot argued that "the methods of the new trade unions, organized to improve the condition of the laboring people, were necessarily the methods of fighting, violence, and war." Charles W. Eliot, *The Future of Trades-Unionism and Capitalism in a Democracy* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), p. 10.

[3] Charles W. Eliot, *The Conflict between Individualism and Collectivism in a Democracy* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 11.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[5] *Boston Herald*, 8 Feb. 1904; Eliot, *The Conflict between Individualism and Collectivism*, pp. 116-17.

[6] T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), pp. 60-83; Rodgers, *The Work Ethic*, p. 235.

[7] Rodgers, *The Work Ethic*, p. 235; *Boston Herald*, 8 Feb. 1904.

[8] Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age: Social Reform in Boston, 1880-1900* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 175-200.

[9] Frank K. Foster, *The Evolution of a Trade Unionist* (Boston: Allied Printing Trades Council, 1901), p. 15.

[10] George E. McNeill, "The Hours of Labor," in McNeill, ed., *The Labor Movement: The Problem of To-Day* (Boston: A. M. Bridgman & Co., 1886), p. 470.

[11] Foster, *The Evolution*, p. 54.

[12] U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Education and Labor. *Report of the Committee of the Senate upon the Relations between Labor and Capital . . .* 48th Cong., 4 vols. (Washington, 1885), 1:460; see also H. M. Gitelman, "Adolph Strasser and the Origins of Pure and Simple Unionism," *Labor History* 6 (1965):71-83.

[13] Stuart Bruce Kaufman, *Samuel Gompers and the Origins of the American Federation of Labor, 1848-1896* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), pp. 149-52.

[14] Foster, *The Evolution*, p. 118.

[15] Frank K. Foster, *Trades Unionism: A Reply to the Criticism of Trades Union Methods, Contained in the Address of Charles W. Eliot of Harvard in Faneuil Hall, Feb. 7, 1904* (Boston: F. K. Foster, 1904), p. 2.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[18] Frank K. Foster, "Trade Unionism: Its Philosophy, Its Definition, Its Political Economy," *Labor Leader*, 29 Sept. 1888.

[19] Foster, *Trades Unionism*, p. 10.

[20] Alexander Keyssar, *Out of Work: The First Century of Unemployment in Massachusetts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 50-51.

[21] George Gunton, *The Economic and Social Importance of the Eight Hour Movement* (New York: American Federation of Labor, 1889), pp. 13-15.

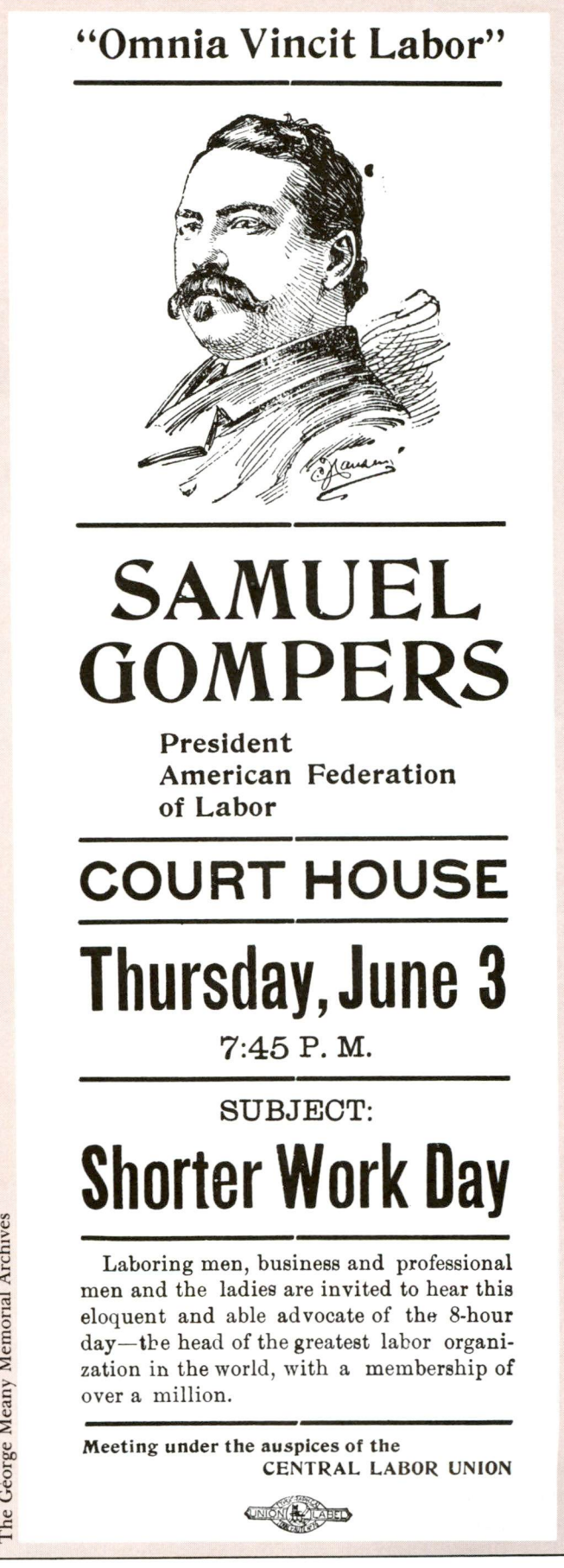
[22] Foster, *Trades Unionism*, pp. 11-12.

[23] Paul Avrich, *An American Anarchist: The Life of Voltairine de Cleyre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); *Labor Leader*, 11 Feb. 1893.

[24] Foster, *Trades Unionism*, p. 9; *Labor Leader*, 16 June 1894, 23 Mar. 1895; George Cotkin, "The Spencerian and Comtian Nexus in Gompers' Labor Philosophy: The Impact of Non-Marxian Evolutionary Thought," *Labor History* 20 (1979):514.

[25] Frank K. Foster, "Labor Politics, Policies and Platforms," *American Federationist* 1 (1894):5-6.

[26] Foster, *Trades Unionism*, p. 27.



The George Meany Memorial Archives

Lester E. Engelbrecht

Lillian Herstein

Teacher and Activist

DURING THE PAST TWO DECADES THE Chicago Historical Society and the Roosevelt University Library have acquired material related to Lillian Herstein, the Chicago teacher who became a leading labor figure on the city as well as national scene. Elizabeth Balanoff of Roosevelt University conducted interviews with Herstein in 1970 and 1971 as part of a larger project known as the "Oral History Project in Labor History." In 1980 Miss Herstein herself donated nine file folders of correspondence, news clippings and miscellaneous papers to the Chicago Historical Society, and her family supplemented these with a small additional donation after her death in 1983. Combined with the willingness of Miss Herstein's friend Leon Despres—a noted Chicago labor lawyer—to share his recollection of Herstein in an interview in 1986, these records provide the basis for recreating the career of this remarkable woman.

Lillian Herstein came from a Jewish family that emigrated to the United States from Russian Lithuania in the 1860s, her father's decision to come to America influenced by his admiration for Abraham Lincoln and the freeing of the slaves. Unlike many immigrants, her father did not start off penniless. With some money from his mother, Wolf Herstein was able to open a small Hebrew bookstore on Chicago's west side. While his growing family lived upstairs over the bookstore, he also worked as the sexton of a nearby synagogue.

On April 12, 1886, Lillian was born, the youngest of six children. Years later she recalled that her father made a very modest living. Wolf seemed more interested in talking about Hebrew books with the Catholic priests from nearby Saint Patrick's Church, than in selling them. Although money was in short supply, Lillian described her childhood "as a time of happiness and enthusiasm and unbounded faith in America."[1]

Politics was an important element in the family's life, Wolf Herstein becoming a devout Republican while Lillian's mother, Cipe, exercised the limited franchise available to women in Illinois to vote for the University of Illinois trustees. Lillian remembered being only five when she accompanied her mother to the polls. When the election clerk asked Lillian if she wanted to vote, she responded, "Oh, I'm going to vote. I'm going to be President some day."[2]

When Lillian was twelve, her father died. Her mother continued to run the shop. Lillian's brothers and sisters quit school at the age of fourteen, but she was allowed to continue her education, completing high school while working part time at Sears, earning six dollars a week. With the financial help of an uncle, she was able to attend Northwestern University, majoring in Latin.[3]

After graduating in 1907, Herstein found it difficult to find a job as a teacher because she was Jewish. "I learned the geography of Illinois by the places that wouldn't hire me," she later recalled. Failing in one instance to get a position in an East Chicago school because of her religion, she wrote angrily, "If anybody's church relations make any difference in East Chicago, East Chicago is sinking in the mire of medievalism from which I do not want to bring them out."[4]

Ultimately Herstein taught in Franklin Grove, Illinois, and Mount Vernon, Indiana, and then worked for the Jewish Charities of Chicago as a counselor. Preferring teaching to social work, however, Herstein entered the Chicago school system in 1912, holding a

Herstein, n.d. Photograph by Daguerre.

Library of Congress


Women Join Convention Activities

Tampa Morning Tribune, 17 November 1936

Under the headline, "Women Join Convention Activities," Lillian Herstein appears as the only woman member of the Chicago Federation of Labor's delegation to the American Federation of Labor convention in Tampa, Florida. With her is George L. Berry, president of the International Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union of North America and, at the time of the photograph, serving as President Roosevelt's coordinator of industrial cooperation.

succession of positions at Lane Technical, Wendell Phillips and Crane Technical high schools. In 1917 she advanced to Crane Junior College. Thereafter she worked in Chicago junior colleges for the rest of her professional career.[5]

In 1915, Herstein joined the Federation of Women High School Teachers, which became Local 3 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). She represented her union in the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) and while on its executive board chaired the schools committee. From this position she prodded the CFL to take stands on numerous school-related issues. For example, in 1920 and 1921 she secured CFL support for state legislation to raise the tax rate that could be assessed for public education in Chicago, and the measure was successful. Further, she used the pages of the CFL's newspaper to criticize school policies she regarded as threatening to the welfare of the children and teachers. For twenty-five years Herstein remained the only woman on the CFL executive board, first representing the Women High School Teachers and, after its amalgamation with other groups in 1937, the newly formed Chicago Teachers Union.[6]

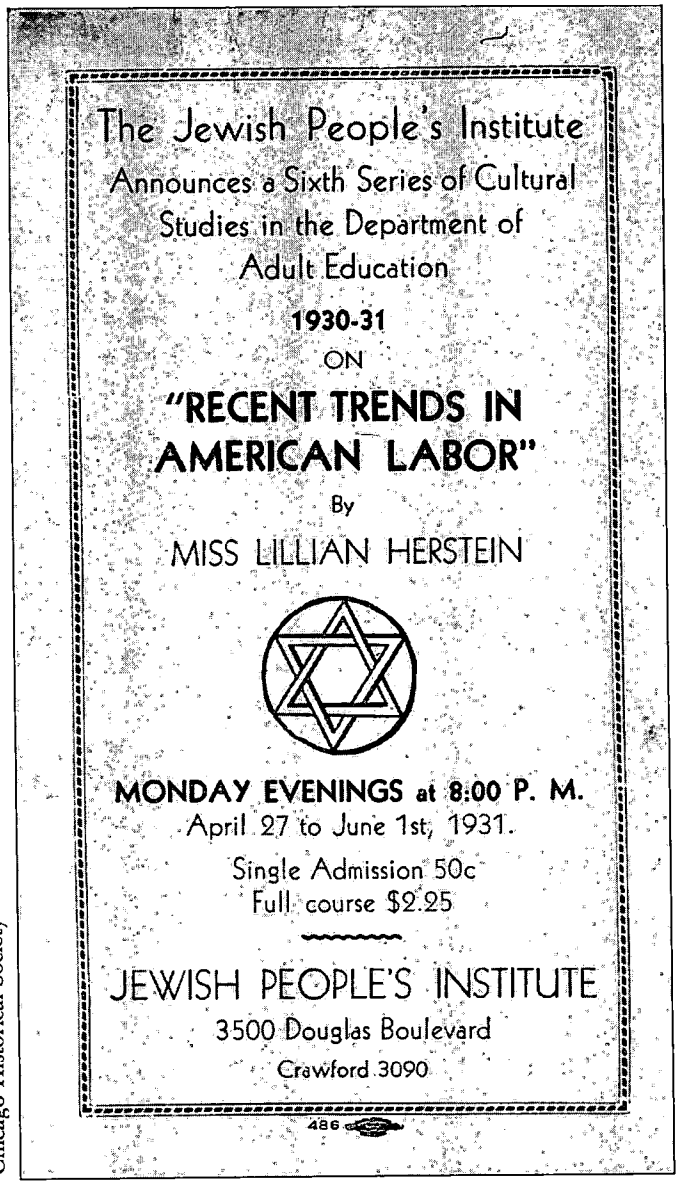
Herstein's work took her far beyond the teachers' union. As delegate to the CFL and a member of its

New York Times, 26 September 1926

Herstein photographed at the blackboard, 1926.

executive board, she began a long and friendly relationship with John Fitzpatrick, CFL president. During the miners' strike in 1918, Fitzpatrick recommended her to Tom Tippett, a union organizer in Peoria who was looking for a woman speaker. Herstein spoke to the miners, urging non-violence. At her suggestion the miners brought their children with them to the picket line to help convince scabs not to go in "and take bread out of . . . children's mouths." At least some of the scabs turned away.[7]

In the aftermath of World War I Herstein was concerned about organizing industrial workers. During the steel strike of 1919, for instance, one reporter noted that, "Throughout the strike period every evening after school hours and all weekends found her making speeches from soap boxes or in dimly-lighted union halls."[8] Representing the CFL at the 1922 Illinois Federation of Labor convention, she delivered the



Chicago Historical Society

Cover of a program for a lecture series by Herstein, 1931.

major address endorsing a resolution asking the American Federation of Labor (AFL) "to call a conference of international union officials to consider amalgamation of craft unions into industrial unions." The resolution failed to pass, however, by a vote of 148 to 119.[9]

It was also during this period that Herstein was introduced to the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) by her sister, Gusta, who had joined the organization as a worker at Mandel's and Marshal Field's department stores. In January 1920, Herstein represented the Women High School Teachers in the Chicago chapter of the WTUL. For many years she served on the CFL/WTUL joint board responsible for running the Chicago Labor College, which offered evening classes for workers, and for which she taught both English and public speaking. In 1934 she served as director of the college.[10]

As a writer for the AFT's *American Teacher*, Herstein propagated the cause of worker education.[11] Worker education programs grew rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s, and for several summers she was an instructor in such programs at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Chicago and Bryn Mawr. "The significant thing about these resident schools," Herstein explained, "was that for the first time workers were able to give their whole attention to their study."[12]

In addition to her work for industrial unionism, women workers and worker education, Herstein was an early supporter of A. Philip Randolph's organizing campaigns for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), founded in 1925, which became the most important union representing black workers. Those campaigns culminated in the achievement of signed contracts in the late 1930s. Herstein was particularly prominent as a speaker at a rally during the BSCP campaign for recognition by the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, and at the BSCP victory celebration was one of a triumvirate of early white supporters of black unionism on the platform, along with Mary McDowell from the University of Chicago Settlement House and Paul H. Douglas, future U.S. senator.[13]

According to Leon Despres, Herstein had a lifelong ambition to be a representative in Congress.[14] She was committed to third party, labor-orientated politics. "I was never a member of the Socialist Party," she explained. "It just happened I never joined the socialists, but they all liked me."[15] Her main work, instead, was with the Farmer-Labor party of Illinois and the Progressive party.

Between 1920 and 1932 Herstein ran unsuccessfully for public office four times. In 1920, with John Fitzpatrick serving on the national committee of the Farmer-Labor party, Herstein was part of its full slate of candidates running for state and local office. As a candidate for trustee of the Metropolitan Sanitary District of Cook County, she finished last in a field of twelve, receiving 3,096 votes to the 288,000 of the victorious Republican candidate. In 1922, serving as a national committeeperson along with Fitzpatrick, she ran last with 32,699 votes in the election for state superintendent of public education. She campaigned and raised funds for the Progressive party national ticket headed by Robert La Follette and Burton Wheeler

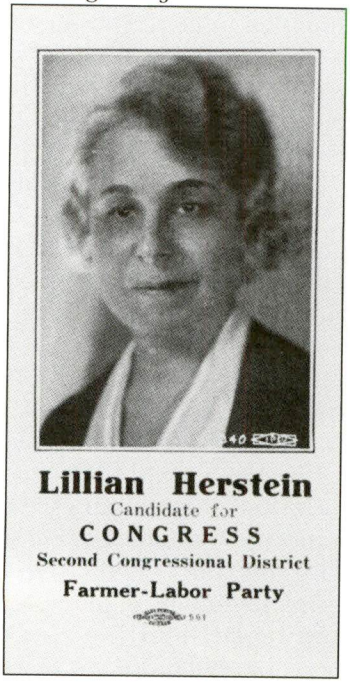
in 1924, and in 1926 started the race for state representative on the Progressive ticket, only to drop out before the election. In 1932 she was not attracted to Franklin Roosevelt's candidacy, "because I didn't see in this charming squire the courage and wisdom to do what was needed in this bleak year." She ran for Congress on the Farmer-Labor ticket in 1932, receiving 3,640 votes to Republican P. J. Moynihan's 113,000.[16]

In 1936, Herstein, along with her close associate in progressive politics and labor education, Paul Douglas, was fully behind Roosevelt. Herstein headed the speakers' bureau of Labor's Non-Partisan League in Illinois during the election. Five days a week after work she shuttled from Wilson Junior College to the League's downtown office where she worked from 2:20 until 10:00 p.m. Along with John Fitzpatrick she headed the League's parade for Roosevelt.[17]

By 1937, Herstein was nationally known. In that year she served on the twenty-two member delegation, comprised of business, labor and government members, that represented the United States at the International Labor Organization (ILO) meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. Herstein was technical advisor to the labor delegate, Bob Watt. The meetings' major issues were child labor and the forty-hour week in the textile industry.[18]

Upon returning from the ILO meeting Herstein attended the AFT convention in Madison, Wisconsin, representing the newly formed Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). The convention considered whether the AFT should continue its affiliation with the AFL or align itself with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Julia Wrigley, in her study of Chicago schools and politics, reports that Herstein opposed the idea of the AFT joining the CIO on the grounds that teachers in Chicago had the unqualified support of the Illinois Federation of Labor and the CFL. This is supported by Herstein's own explanation: "[E]ducation is a local matter in America, and in many cities when you have a strong teachers' union, like Chicago and St. Paul, you don't even have a CIO council." She also traced her opposition to CIO affiliation to her concern that it would have meant that "they accept the split as final, and that there are to be two national organizations of labor in America."[19]

Herstein played an important role in the war effort of the early 1940s, thanks to the influence of Joseph Keenan, who served as the AFL's representative on the World War II War Production Board. Keenan secured



A political card from the last of Herstein's four campaigns for public office.

Herstein, On Achieving Higher Standards of Living in Post World War II America

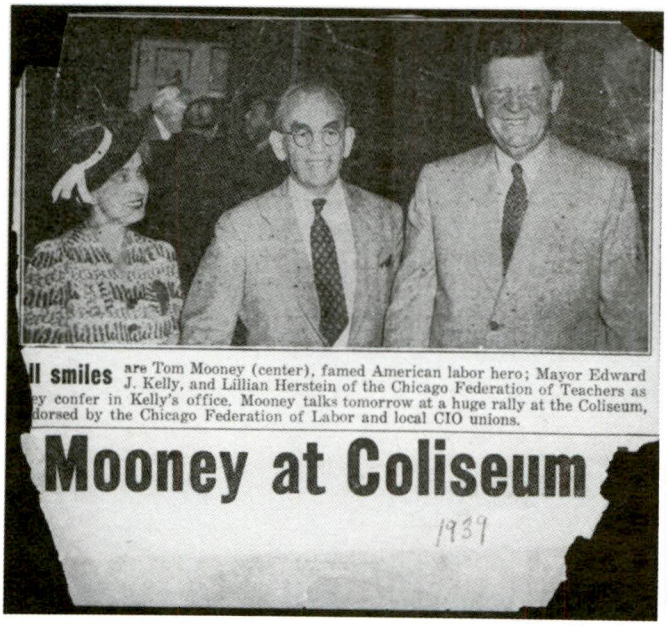
"This cannot be done if we pit worker against veteran, Gentile against Jew, White man against Negro, man against woman. . . . There will be jobs enough for all men and women who need and want to work; there will be leisure enough to enjoy the fruits of our technological development, both material and spiritual, if we work together with courage and intelligence instead of descending to a mad scramble in a jungle where each blinded by fear and insecurity jostles his neighbor and friend."

From a radio script dated February 9, 1946, in the Herstein Papers, Chicago Historical Society

John Fitzpatrick, long-time president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, with Mollie Levitas, secretary. The poster in the background is from the Labor's Non-Partisan League campaign for Franklin D. Roosevelt's reelection in 1936.

Chicago Historical Society

The George Meany Memorial Archives



Chicago Historical Society

Herstein and Chicago Mayor Edward J. Kelly (right) in Kelly's office in 1939. At center is Tom Mooney, the iron molder and organizer who had served more than two decades in prison for a bombing during San Francisco's Preparedness Day in 1916. Convicted in a trial marked by gross irregularities, Mooney was pardoned in 1939.

Herstein's appointment to the Board in 1943, her job being, as she related, "to gear community facilities to the needs of women working in the war industries so that they could stick to the job." Women's health and child care were two of her foremost concerns. By the war's end she had oversight of conditions of women workers on the entire west coast, and after V-J Day she joined Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas in fighting to keep day care nurseries open.[20]

While Herstein achieved national stature, her base remained Chicago, and here, for many decades, she lent a stubbornly independent presence to the labor scene. For instance, she became embroiled in a conflict with John Fitzpatrick in 1938. The Evanston teachers had appointed George Axtelle as a representative to the CFL. Fitzpatrick refused to seat Axtelle because of Axtelle's support of the American Newspaper Guild, which had left the AFL to join the CIO. Herstein, who herself was organizing for the Guild, went to the point of asking AFL president William Green to urge Fitzpatrick to back down. According to Julia Wrigley, Herstein saw Fitzpatrick's intransigence on this issue as indicative of a trend in the AFL "against any genuine freedom of discussion and against the use of the most elementary democratic procedures."[21]

Yet Herstein managed to hold Fitzpatrick's respect, as an incident in November 1941 illustrates. Chicago's powerful mayor, Edward J. Kelly, had developed a plan to pressure teachers to buy tickets to the Chicago Christmas Benefit Fund high school football game. The proceeds went for food baskets for the poor that were distributed by Kelly's precinct captains. At a union meeting, Herstein later related, she loudly denounced this scheme, suggesting, "Let him buy the tickets." Upon hearing of her comments, she said, Kelly complained to John Fitzpatrick that, "in view of all . . . his services to labor" it was no way for a member of the CFL's executive board to act. According to Herstein, Fitzpatrick responded to Kelly, "I don't know about what you've done for labor, but I'm certain that if Lillian said that, she probably knew what she was talking about." The ticket scheme went on, but Herstein never contributed to it.[22] In 1942, when the junior college department of lectures was abolished, Herstein attributed it to Kelly's animosity toward her. "I am sure that the 'powers that be' would like to eliminate me too," she commented, "but the Otis Law [providing for tenure for teachers] stands in their way."[23]

In 1942, Herstein took on Chicago Teachers Union president John Madison Fewkes who, for almost three decades (1937-66), was the dominant figure in the union. Herstein recalled that Fewkes was "a handsome hero and these elementary school teachers . . . just oozed admiration and he did a lot of things I didn't approve of. . . . He didn't consult the Union." When

Herstein, On Social Security

". . . back in the thirties, when the idea of social security first came up, there were some people who said it would wreck the country. A newspaper in Chicago printed a picture of old people with tags around their necks, suggesting that under social security you'd be like a dog. You'd be just a number.

"As long as I keep my health, I don't have to worry about being a burden on the young generation. Because, thank God, we didn't let ourselves be scared off about social security."

From the CBS program "Rx for a Nightmare" which aired on October 25, 1954, and featured interviews with twenty senior citizens concerning the need for Medicare

The George Meany Memorial Archives

John Madison Fewkes before the AFL's 1942 convention in Toronto. AFL President William Green introduced Fewkes to the convention as the American Federation of Teachers' new president, a post Fewkes held until the following year.

Fewkes sought to dislodge his CTU executive secretary, Kermit Eby, Herstein resisted, although eventually the CTU executive board removed Eby. In 1946, Herstein again aligned against Fewkes when she worked with the Independent Voters of Illinois and fifteen neighborhood organizations seeking the resignation of James B. McCahey from the presidency of the Chicago Board of Education. In 1951, Fewkes replaced Herstein as representative of the CTU on the CFL.[24]

At the end of the 1950-51 school year, because she had reached the age of sixty-five, Herstein was forced to retire from the Chicago school system. She used her retirement to work for a wide variety of causes and organizations, including the Jewish Labor Committee,[25] the American Civil Liberties Union[26] and the Chicago Human Rights Commission.[27] Many of her activities involved the labor movement. In 1954, she conducted classes on American government for the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.[28] In 1957, she wrote five columns for the *AFL-CIO News* entitled "Schools, Teachers, and Kids," arguing for adequate salaries for teachers, smaller class size and the need for federal aid to education.[29] She remained with the WTUL until its demise in the early 1950s, urging the unions, as the Chicago WTUL's last president, to "take advantage of women's ability; give them good positions and responsibilities in your unions."[30]

In politics Herstein campaigned for Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and for several local candidates in Chicago during the 1950s and 1960s. One of these was Leon Despres, elected Chicago alderman in 1955. When the *Sun-Times* endorsed Despres' opponent simply because she was a woman, Herstein rejected its reasoning:

> You assert that you are recommending Mrs. Morgenstern because the City Council needs a "feminine touch." Many of us women in the 5th ward feel that the City Council does not need a "feminine touch" or a "masculine touch" if indeed there be such "touches."[31]

What passed with Herstein's death on August 9, 1983, was an advocacy—for almost seventy years Herstein had stood as an advocate for children, for teachers, blacks, industrial workers, the elderly, for democracy in the labor movement and for humanity in American democracy. To her very last years she was still exercising her role as a loyal opposition, decrying the AFL-CIO's support of the Vietnam War and urging more vigorous support for unorganized workers, particularly those in agriculture.[32] In the broadest sense, Herstein's career represented a constant and uncompromising stand for her conception of human rights and a recognition that their defense required struggle. "One thing I've learned from all my years teaching," she reflected in her eighty-fifth year, "is that one can not tell where genius lies by race, color, creed, religion or sex . . . but we must fight for each individual's right for fulfillment, not just for society's sake but for the individual's."[33]

Chicago Historical Society

Herstein during Adlai Stevenson's presidential campaign. With her from left, standing: Thomas J. Haggerty, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters 753 (Milk Wagon Drivers); H. Leo Nye, recording secretary of Musicians 10-208; James Blakely, international vice-president of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Union and president of HREIU 593; Nichols Di Pietro, organizer for Chicago Typographical Union 16; and Peter Hoban, president of Teamsters 753. Seated is Stephen M. Bailey, business manager of Plumbers 130 and vice-president of the Chicago Federation of Labor.

Notes

Lester E. Engelbrecht, a teacher in the elementary and middle schools in Oak Forest, Illinois, is a student in the Ph.D. program in history at Northern Illinois University.

The author would like to thank Archie Motley, Curator of Manuscripts, Chicago Historical Society, and Professor Mary Furner of the Department of History, Northern Illinois University, for their support in the writing of this article.

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Bob Watt, 1944.

[1]Leon Despres, news release for Herstein retirement party, May 1951, Lillian Herstein Papers, Chicago Historical Society (CHS).

[2]Lillian Herstein, interview by Elizabeth Balanoff, 1970–1971, Oral History Project in Labor History, Roosevelt University Archives (hereafter, Balanoff interview).

[3]*Ibid.*

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]*Ibid.* Herstein never married, a characteristic that was quite common to women college graduates of her generation. See Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 314.

[6]*Chicago Sun-Times*, 13 Apr. 1966. Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL), Minutes, 6 Mar. 1921, CHS; *New Majority*, 12 Apr. 1924.

[7]Balanoff interview.

[8]United Service Employees Union, Local 329, AFL, *Newsletter*, n.d., Herstein Papers, CHS.

[9]*New Majority*, 28 Feb. 1922.

Library of Congress

Joseph Keenan, 1945.

[10]*Ibid.*; 17 Jan. 1920; CFL, Minutes, 3 Oct. 1920, CHS; Balanoff interview.

[11]See, for instance, Herstein, "The Significance of the Southern School for Women Workers in the Workers' Education Movement," *American Teacher* 15 (Jan. 1931):20.

[12]*Federation News*, 8 May 1926, 4 July 1925.

[13]Balanoff interview.

[14]Leon Despres, interview with author, 1 Apr. 1986 (hereafter, Despres interview).

[15]Balanoff interview. The Socialist party, according to William O'Neill, attracted thousands of women who were interested in social reform. See *Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), pp. 144–45.

[16]*The Chicago Daily News Almanac and Yearbook* (Chicago: The Chicago Daily News, Inc., 1921, 1923); *Federation News*, 8 Nov. 1924. Unidentified news article, 27 May 1926, Herstein Papers, CHS. Herstein's remarks on Roosevelt's candidacy are in an interview in the *Topeka Daily Capital*, 17 Nov. 1971.

[17]Balanoff interview. Julia Wrigley, *Class Politics and Public Schools: Chicago, 1900–1950* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), p. 238. For an analysis of Labor's Non-Partisan League see Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1964), p. 47.

[18]Lillian Herstein, interview in *Topeka Daily Capital*, 17 Nov. 1971.

[19]Wrigley, *Class Politics*, p. 245; Balanoff interview; *Chicago Union Teacher*, Feb. 1938.

[20]Balanoff interview.

Chicago Historical Society

Paul H. Douglas, n.d.

[21]Wrigley, *Class Politics*, p. 246; Balanoff interview.

[22]Balanoff interview.

[23]Herstein to Thomas Bonner, n.d., Herstein Papers, CHS.

[24]Despres interview; Balanoff interview; unidentified news article, 29 May 1946, Herstein Papers, CHS.

[25]Despres, news release for Herstein retirement party, op. cit.; Despres interview; Herstein to Jennie, 25 July 1951, Herstein Papers, CHS.

[26]*Chicago Sun-Times*, 13 Apr. 1965.

[27]Balanoff interview.

[28]*The Black Worker*, July 1954, copy in Herstein Papers, CHS.

[29]*AFL-CIO News*, 21 Sept., 26 Oct., 2, 16, 23 Nov. 1957.

[30]Unidentified news clipping, n.d., Herstein Papers, CHS.

[31]Herstein to Editor, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 16 Feb. 1955.

[32]Balanoff interview.

[33]Herstein interview in *Topeka Daily Capital*, 17 Nov. 1971.

NEWS

AMERICAN LABOR MUSEUM

From April 15 to June 15 the American Labor Museum/ Botto House National Landmark will feature an exhibit on the 1926 Passaic textile strike which affected sixteen thousand woolen mill workers. It includes a strike relief committee film that was an early organized labor foray into modern public relations techniques. Contact Evelyn Hershey, American Labor Museum, 83 Norwood Street, Haledon, NJ 07508, (201) 595-7953.

MUSEUM OF AMERICAN TEXTILE HISTORY

Sullivan fellowships support doctoral dissertations related to the role of textile manufacturing in American history. For detailed guidelines write to: Editorial and Research Committee, Museum of American Textile History, 800 Massachusetts Avenue, North Andover, MA 01845.

ARBEJDERBEVAEGELSENS BIBLIOTEK & ARKIV

The Labour Movement Library and Archive of Denmark calls attention to articles on American labor history in the journal *Arbejderhistorie* (*Labor History*). The archive has published *Arbejderbevaegelsen: USA - en arbevaegelse uden socialisme* (*The Labor Movement in the USA - a Labor Movement without Socialism*). Contact Gerd Callesen, Arbejderbevaegelsens Bibliotek & Arkiv, Rejsbygade 1, Folkets Hus, D K 1759 Koben havn V, Denmark.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors thank the following for their assistance with this issue of *LABOR'S HERITAGE*: Arthur J. Breton, Archives of American Art; Robert Dinwiddie, Southern Labor Archives; Kenneth Fones-Wolfe, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Edwin Gabler, Samuel Gompers Papers; Irwin E. Klass, Chicago Federation of Labor; Roberta Kovitz, Harvard University Archives; Cliff Kuhn, Southern Labor Archives; Louise Legatt, *Tampa Morning Tribune*; Ralph A. Pugh, Chicago Historical Society; Peter Roberts, Southern Labor Archives

ARCHIVARIA

The Spring 1989 issue on labor archives covers the iconography of labor, descriptive standards and labor archives, and Quebec labor archives and business records as a source for labor history. To order contact Peter Robertson, General Editor, *Archivaria*, c/o National Archives of Canada, 395 Wellington Street West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N ON3.

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

As a result of efforts of the Ohio Labor History Project, the Center for Archival Collections holds collections focusing on individual unions and organizing activities in Northwest Ohio, including:

American Agriculture Movement (National Farm Strike), 1977–1978.

International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen: Local 3, 1929–1948; Local 35, 1915–1956; and Local 46, 1891–1975.

International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Ironworkers, Local 55, 1918–1973.

Northwestern Ohio Building Trades Council, 1916–1980.

Lima Building Trades Council, 1937–1966.

Cannery Workers, Local 146, 1942–1974.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America: Women's Auxiliary #2, 1913–1977; Local 372, 1917–1958; Local 1138, 1885–1974; and Millwrights Local 1359, 1948–1978.

Communications Workers of America, Local 4323, 1953–1983.

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers: Local 32, 1942–1964; Local 986, 1943–1979; and Local 1076, 1937–1972.

Aluminum, Brick and Glass Workers International Union, Local 9, 1934–1978.

Jane Gust Papers, 1950–1982.

International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers, Local 45, 1916–1978.

Edward Lamb Labor Papers, 1931–1955.

National Association of Letter Carriers, Local 100, 1896–1969.

International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, District 57, 1892–1974.

Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union: Local 7-346, 1937–1967; and Local 7-624, 1946–1974.

International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades of the United States and Canada, Local 788, 1913–1978.

Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association of the United States and Canada, Local 7, 1886–1973.

United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States and Canada, Local 42, 1909–1972; and Local 50, 1907–1970.

Sam Pollock Papers, 1910–1980.

American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, Local 534, 1912–1978.

United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Workers, Local 134, 1937–1980.

Sandusky Ohio Labor Council, 1951–1964.

Service Employees International Union, Local 3, 1939–1965.

Raymond Spitulski Papers, 1935–1983.

Ohio State Joint Textile Board, 1945–1977.

Central Labor Union, Toledo, Ohio, 1890–1963.

International Typographical Union, Local 63, 1863–1963; Local 260, 1890–1981; and Local 296, 1918–1976.

Contact Lee N. McLaird, Center for Archival Collections, Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403, (419) 372-2411.

BUTTE-SILVER BOW PUBLIC ARCHIVES

The archives has a permanent exhibit of labor artifacts including banners, picket signs, union badges, dues books, ledgers and minutes books and photographs from many of Butte's unions. Volunteers are processing a large quantity of documents including records of the carpenters, bridge and structural iron workers, blacksmiths and bricklayers. Contact Mary Murphy, Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, P. O. Box 81, Butte, MT 59703, (406) 723-8262, ext. 306.

CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Through July 9, 1989, the society is exhibiting "Profiles of Black Chicagoans: Selections from Four Collections," which features A. Philip Randolph and Milton P. Webster of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

LABOR HERITAGE FOUNDATION

The foundation announces three upcoming events: Midwestern Workers Song and Arts Exchange, May 5, 1989, 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA; Great Midwest Labor Jam, May 6, 1989, 12:00 noon onwards at Fort Madison, IA (contact Tom Cale, (319) 372-7065); and The Eleventh Annual Great Labor Arts Exchange, June 25–27, 1989, George Meany Center for Labor Studies, Silver Spring, MD (contact Laurel Blaydes, (202) 842-7880).

LATTIMER MASSACRE MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

The Lattimer Massacre Memorial is dedicated to the memory of the nineteen miners killed there September 10, 1897. An ecumenical service is held at the memorial each year in September. Contact Charles McGlynn, 205 East Broad Street, West Hazleton, PA 18201, (717) 455-2051.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Manuscript Division has opened the papers of attorney Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. (84 l.f., eight series). Researchers must seek client approval for use of attorney-client privileged communication found in the legal files. Rauh served as General Counsel and Washington Counsel for the United Auto Workers; other union clients were the International Association of Machinists, the United Shoe Workers, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the American Federation of Government Employees, the United Farm Workers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, and the

Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS

Highlighting the association's one hundredth anniversary in Milwaukee, August 27–30, will be official ceremonies, speeches, band concerts and songfests, a lakefront festival, a new theatrical production on the history of the NALC, the first day of issue of a new city delivery postage stamp, dedication of a specially commissioned statue honoring letter carriers, and an exhibit of historical memorabilia and artifacts illustrating the history of the NALC and the city letter carrier craft. Contact Candace Main-Rush, National Association of Letter Carriers, 100 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LABOR STUDIES CENTER

The center will conduct "The Art of Union Storytelling"—an elderhostel-based labor education program for older and retired union leaders and activists—at the Flint campus, July 16–22. Cost for the one week program, including room, board and tuition, will be $235. Contact Hy Kornbluh, Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, The University of Michigan, 303 Victor Vaughn Building, 111 East Catherine, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2054, (313) 764-0492.

NEW YORK STATE LABOR HISTORY ASSOCIATION

"Immigration, Ethnicity, Politics & Labor" is the theme of the association's annual conference to be held April 29, 1989, at New York University's Loeb Student Center (contact Robert Wechsler, New York State Labor History Association, 80 West End Avenue, Room 516, New York, NY 10023, (212) 873-6000, ext. 359). Entries for the $100 Barbara Mayer Wertheimer Prize for the best undergraduate research paper on labor or work history written during the 1988–89 academic year are due by June 15, 1989 (submit papers to Professor Irwin Yellowitz, Department of History, City College, New York, NY 10031). The association seeks scholarly papers on labor, work culture or the dynamics of the labor movement in New York State (suggested maximum length is forty pages) for consideration in its Occasional Papers Series (send papers to Greg Mantsios, Center for Labor & Society, Queens College D400, Flushing, NY 11367).

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

The Special Collections Department of Knight Library has opened the archives of the International Woodworkers of America (IWA) (1936–1987, 600 l.f.). Well-documented are the union's basic activities such as organizing, negotiations, litigation and strikes; the conflict between the "red bloc" and "white bloc" forces in the union during the 1940s and 1950s; Canadian softwood lumber imports; national health insurance; labor law reform; affirmative action; and occupational safety and health. The records complement the Wayne Morse Papers and the recently acquired papers of former Congressman Jim Weaver. Contact Hilary Cummings, Special Collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1299, (503) 686-3068.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST LABOR HISTORY CONFERENCE

"World War II: The Re-making of the American Working Class," will be this year's Pacific Northwest Labor History Conference to be held in Eugene, Oregon, June 2–4, 1989. Contact Pacific Northwest Labor History Association Conference Committee, c/o Labor Education and Research Center, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403.

PIERCE COUNTY (WASHINGTON) CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

Thirty-four unions and the Central Labor Council are cooperating to produce a 104-page illustrated booklet *To Live in Dignity: Pierce County Labor, 1883–1989*. The $10 booklet is available at a reduced rate prior to April 30, 1989: one to ten copies $9.00; ten or more copies $7.50. Send checks payable to the Labor Centennial

A. Philip Randolph Institute

Bayard Rustin (left) and A. Philip Randolph (right) announcing plans for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, 1963.

Booklet Committee to Pierce County Central Labor Council, 3049 South 36th Street, Suite 201, Tacoma, WA 94809. Orders will be shipped after publication in August 1989.

UNITED ASSOCIATION OF JOURNEYMEN AND APPRENTICES OF THE PLUMBING AND PIPEFITTING INDUSTRY OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

In preparation for its centenary in October 1989 the UA has established an archival program and is collecting historical records, photographs, memorabilia and recollections for a written history and exhibits. Contact Mary Ann Coyle, United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada, 901 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20001, (202) 628-5823.

RHODE ISLAND LABOR HISTORY SOCIETY

The second annual awards dinner will be held August 30, honoring Rhode Island labor leaders who have trained in the state and then gone on to serve their national unions elsewhere.

The newly created Blackstone River Valley Heritage Commission is working on a linear park system which will trace the route of the Blackstone Canal of the 1830s from Worcester, Massachusetts, to Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Research is being conducted on worker history in the area and a worker and ethnic museum is being planned for the old mill city of Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

For the society's newsletter or further information contact Scott Molloy, University of Rhode Island, Labor Research Center, Adams House, 85 Upper College Road, Kingston, RI 02881, (401) 792-2239.

ROCKEFELLER ARCHIVE CENTER

The archives of the Russell Sage Foundation (1907–1982, 30.6 cu. ft.) has material relating to its Department of Industrial Studies (1927–1948, 1 cu. ft.: program descriptions, statistical studies, publications and monthly reports) and scattered folders on employment, labor and the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations (1912–1915). The latest center *Newsletter* includes a research report by grant-in-aid recipient Priscilla Long on "The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company and Corporate Liberalism." The center published *A Survey of Sources for the History of Labor and Industrial Relations in the Rockefeller Archive Center* in December 1986. For the survey or the annual newsletter write the Director, Rockefeller Archive Center, Pocantico Hills, North Tarrytown, NY 10566.

RUTGERS UNVERSITY LIBRARY

The Special Collections and Archives division has the records of the National Maritime Union of America (1937–1979, 158 cu. ft.: national office correspondence, minutes, contract negotiations, organizing files, trial committee files, research department files and photographs); it is partially restricted for research. Contact Ronald L. Becker, Rutgers University Library, Special Collections and Archives, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, (201) 932-7006.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE

The exhibit "Badges of Pride: Symbols and Images of American Labor" can be viewed at the following locations March 1989 through January 1990:

March 4–April 16	Chemung County Historical Society, Elmira, NY
May 13–June 25	Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, IL
July 22–Sept. 3	Baltimore Museum of Industry, Baltimore, MD
Sept. 30–Nov. 12	Providence Public Library, Providence, RI
Dec. 9–Jan. 21, 1990	State Historical Museum, Madison, WI

SOUTHWEST LABOR STUDIES ASSOCIATION

The fifteenth annual association conference will be held April 28–29, 1989, at the Southeast Community College Center of San Francisco. Contact conference coordinator Barbara Byrd, 33 Gough Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, (415) 239-3090 or (415) 333-7391.

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK (GREAT BRITAIN)

The Modern Records Centre of the University Library holds primary sources of British social, political and economic history concentrating on labor history and the history of industrial relations and industrial politics, including the recently deposited records of the Trades Union Congress of Great Britain as well as records of numerous trade unions and prominant individuals. Contact the Archivist, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick Library, Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK.

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Through the Rockefeller Foundation Residency in Humanities program the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs offers one full-year and two single-semester fellowships during 1989–90.

Recent accessions include the papers of: National Maritime Union dissident James Morrissey, documenting his precendent-setting legal battle in the 1970s against union officials over diversion of union funds (26 l.f.); Trotskyist George Weissman, *Militant* editor and literary executor of the Trotsky estate in the U. S.(1930s–1970s, 10 l.f.); Archie Robinson, labor journalist and George Meany biographer (1940s–1970s, 39 l.f.); Valery Burati, U. S. government labor advisor in Asia and Africa (1948–1973, 5 l.f.); Bette Murphy, United Automobile Workers McDonnell Douglas Local 148 official (1940s–1970s, 6 l.f.); and UAW Chrysler Detroit Local 7 (1930s–1970s, 11 l.f.) and white collar General Dynamics (formerly Chrysler) Local 889 (1950s–1980s, 18 l.f.).

Collections recently opened for research include: UAW Office of the President: Leonard Woodcock (1962–1977, 122.5 l.f.); UAW Local 1112 (General Motors Lordstown plant, 1966–1977, 4.5 l.f.); Olga Hrabar and Catherine Gelles, UAW Women's Auxiliaries officials (1930s–1980s, 6.5 and 4.5 l.f. respectively); Gabriel Alexander, labor arbitrator in the 1940s and 1950s (4.5 l.f.); and Charles Hawkins, Air Line Pilots Association Pan American Airlines negotiator in the 1950s and 1960s (13.5 l.f.). Contact Philip P. Mason, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202, (313) 577-4024.

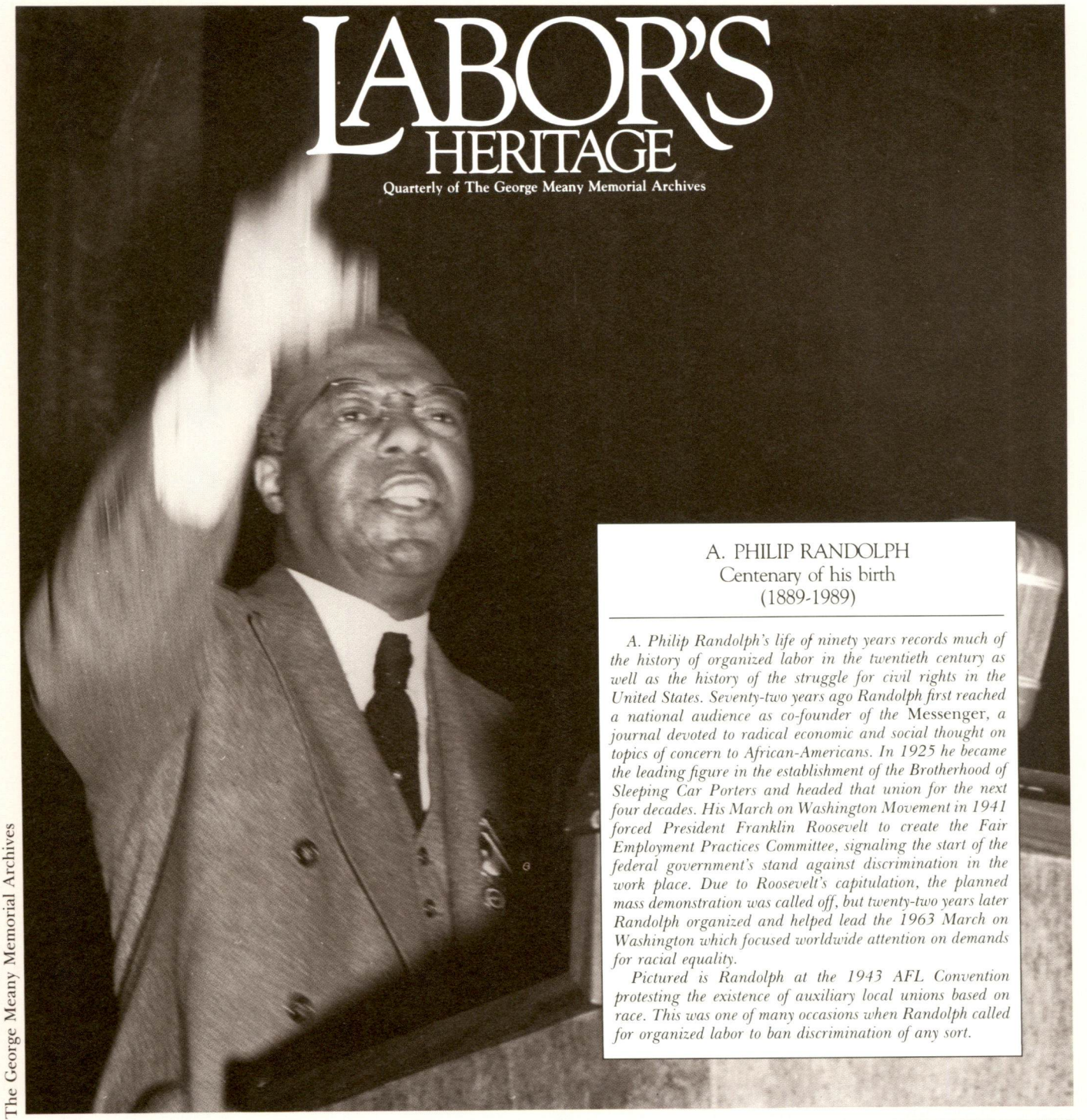
WISCONSIN LABOR HISTORY SOCIETY

The society's eighth annual conference in Milwaukee, April 22, 1989, will focus on "Black Workers and Unions in Wisconsin." Contact Darryl Holter, Wisconsin Labor History Society, 6333 West Bluemound Road, Milwaukee, WI 53213, (414) 771-0700.

Labor's Heritage invites information to be included in this section. Topics of interest include notices of meetings, exhibits and other events; collection accessions and openings; and related matters. Send to: News, Labor's Heritage, 10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20903.

LABOR'S HERITAGE

Quarterly of The George Meany Memorial Archives



The George Meany Memorial Archives

A. PHILIP RANDOLPH
Centenary of his birth
(1889-1989)

A. Philip Randolph's life of ninety years records much of the history of organized labor in the twentieth century as well as the history of the struggle for civil rights in the United States. Seventy-two years ago Randolph first reached a national audience as co-founder of the Messenger, *a journal devoted to radical economic and social thought on topics of concern to African-Americans. In 1925 he became the leading figure in the establishment of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and headed that union for the next four decades. His March on Washington Movement in 1941 forced President Franklin Roosevelt to create the Fair Employment Practices Committee, signaling the start of the federal government's stand against discrimination in the work place. Due to Roosevelt's capitulation, the planned mass demonstration was called off, but twenty-two years later Randolph organized and helped lead the 1963 March on Washington which focused worldwide attention on demands for racial equality.*

Pictured is Randolph at the 1943 AFL Convention protesting the existence of auxiliary local unions based on race. This was one of many occasions when Randolph called for organized labor to ban discrimination of any sort.

Labor's Heritage is a scholarly-based journal published quarterly by The George Meany Memorial Archives, official archives of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and part of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies. Its primary purpose is to bring public attention to the rich and varied heritage of American workers, and to resources and exhibits for the further exploration of this subject.

The historical focus and general audience of *Labor's Heritage* precludes accepting articles that deal primarily with contemporary issues or that are partisan or polemical in style or content. While the editors will consult with experts as required in selecting articles for publication, the responsibility for selection lies with the editors. Published articles reflect a wide range of perspectives and do not necessarily represent the views of The George Meany Memorial Archives or the AFL-CIO.

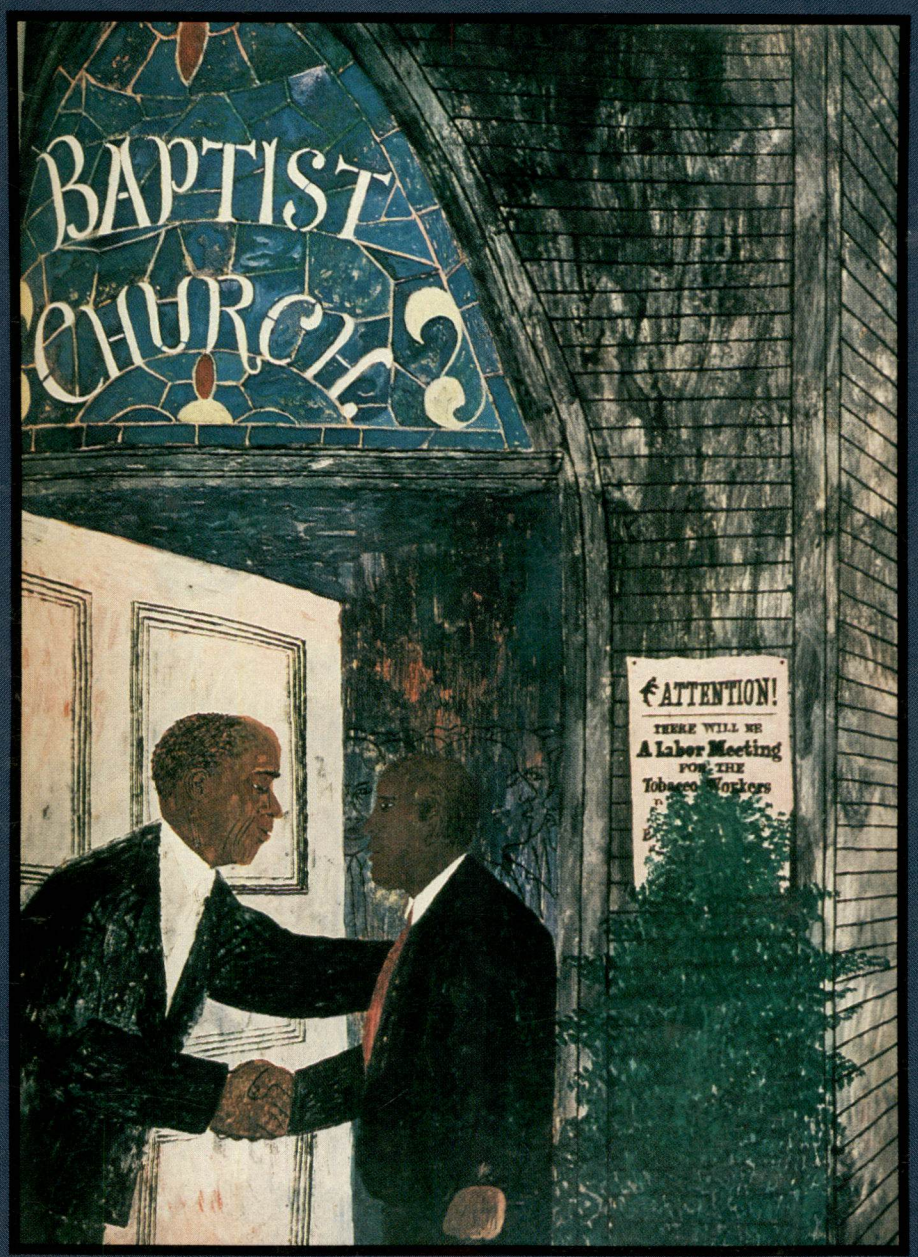
Labor's Heritage relies in general on *Webster's Dictionary* and the *Chicago Manual of Style* for guidance in matters of form, grammar and spelling. Articles, with notes at the end numbered consecutively, should be double-spaced. The editors welcome inquiries from prospective authors prior to submission of articles. Articles appearing in *Labor's Heritage* are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*.

Correspondence regarding contributions and all other editorial matters should be sent to the Editor, *Labor's Heritage*, The George Meany Memorial Archives, 10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20903. Subscription rates are $15.00 for one year, $28.00 for two years, and $40.00 for three years. Rates for subscriptions outside the United States are $18.75 for one year, $35.00 for two years, and $50.00 for three years. Checks should be made payable to the George Meany Center for Labor Studies. Charges (MasterCard, Visa, American Express) must include card company's name, number, expiration date and card holder's signature. Notice of nonreceipt of an issue must be sent within six months of issue publication date. Back issues, when available, are $5.00 per issue.

Cover of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters convention program and souvenir 1950.

LABOR'S HERITAGE

VOL. 1 NO. 1 ■ QUARTERLY OF THE GEORGE MEANY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES ■ JANUARY 1989



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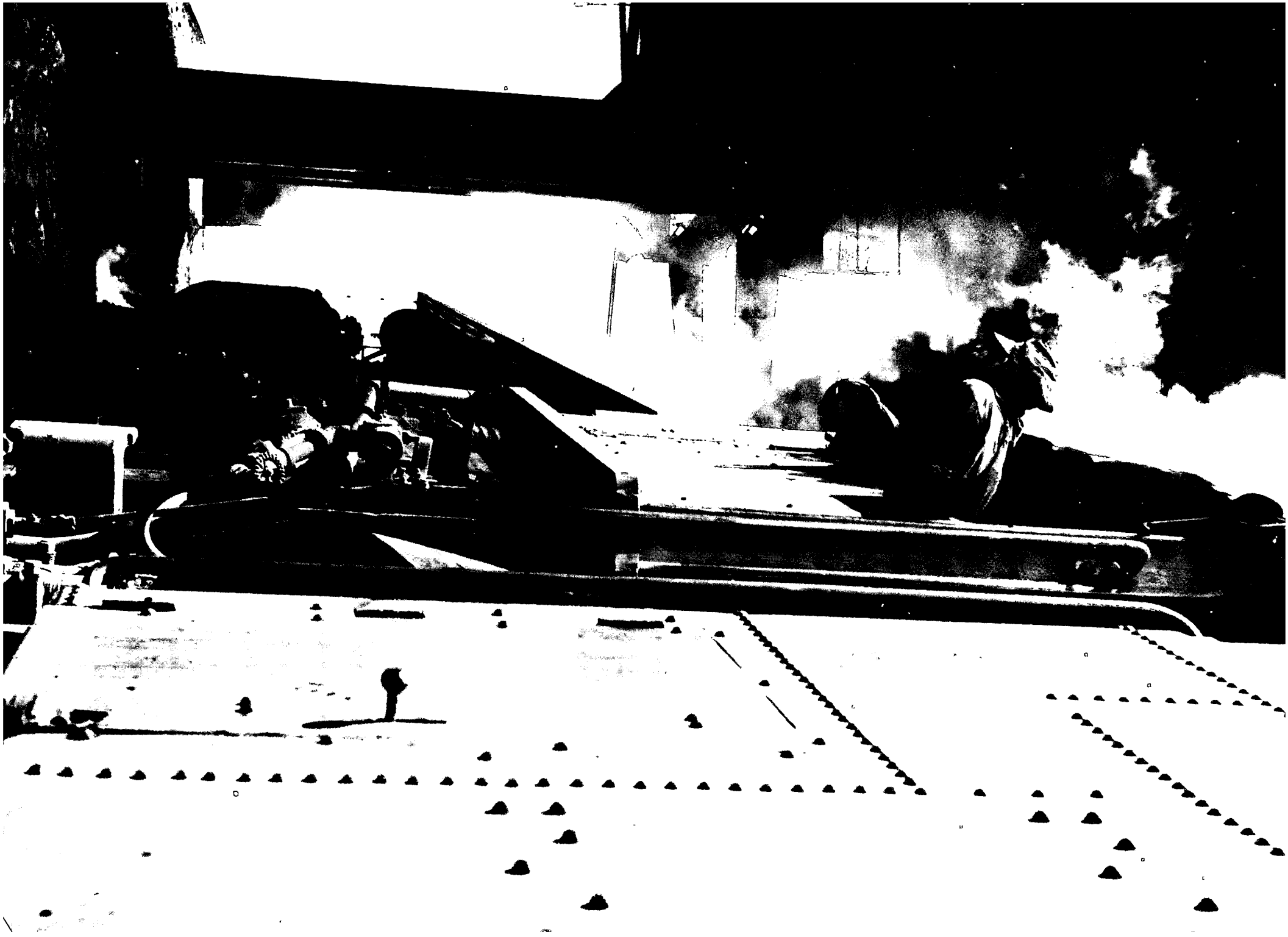

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COVER:

Ben Shahn. Fortune *Illustration: The Church is a Union Hall.* (November 1946).

Photo page 1: Work aboard the Illinois Central Railroad. Illinois Central photo.

Mark Wyman

Railroaders' Town:

Bloomington's Shopmen Look Back

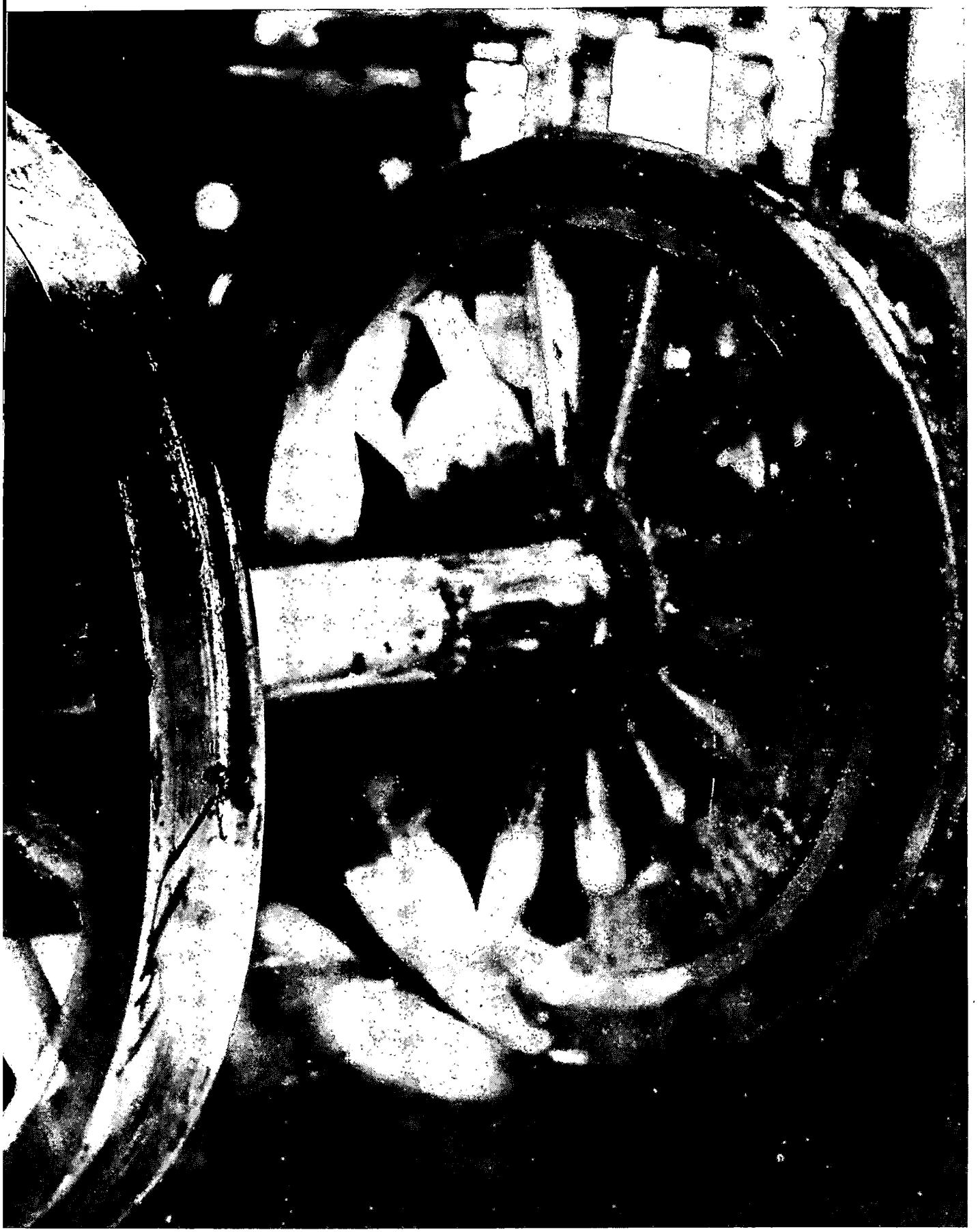
IT WAS A RAILROADERS' TOWN. IN THE central Illinois community of Bloomington the streets came alive each morning as men headed for their jobs at the Chicago & Alton Shops, urged on by the company's shrill whistle—one blast at three minutes before 7:00 a.m., carrying miles across the nearby rolling prairies.

"You could hear that anyplace," recalled Steve Tudor, looking back on his work as a painter in the Shops from 1922 to 1969. "Ten or fifteen miles. Pert' near everybody set their clocks by it."

Bloomington was a town that not only got up with the railroad, but also lived with it, boomed with it, laughed with it, suffered with it. The rhythms of the railroad were the rhythms of the city. Up to 3,000 men and women were employed in the C&A Shops, on the

Pantagraph photo

Machinist Fred Mast calipers a "journal" (the part of a rotary axle or shaft that turns in a bearing) on a freight locomotive driving wheel in 1943. Although the wheel set weighed two-and-a-half tons, these parts had to be machined and balanced to within a few thousandths of an inch to ensure smooth running.

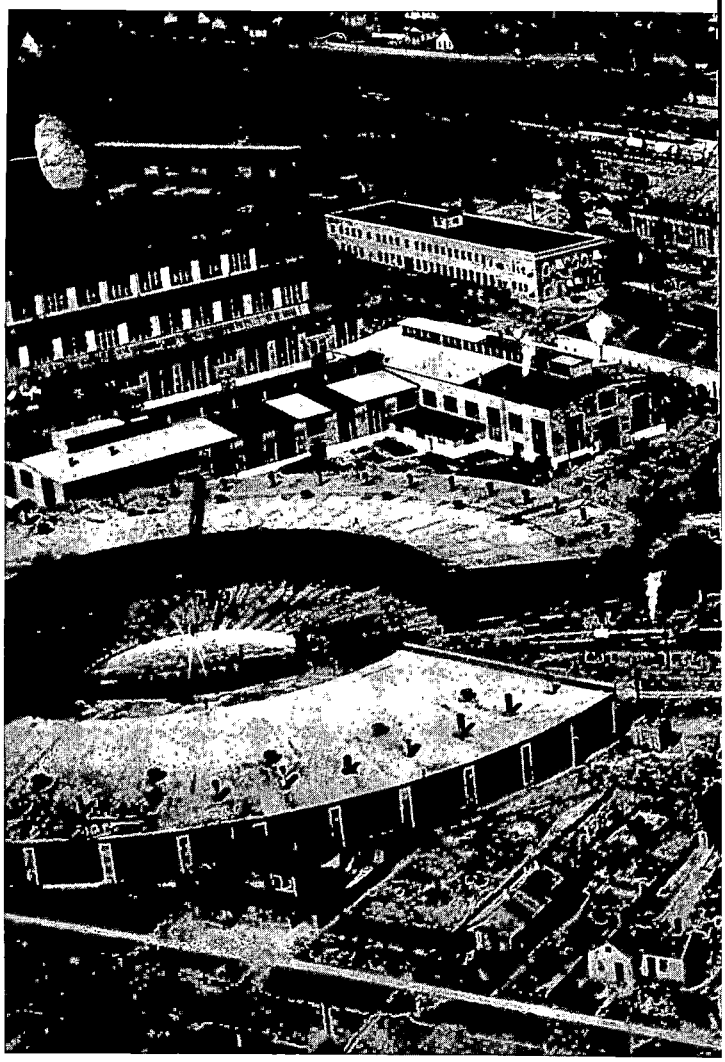


mainline Illinois Central, or on various other connecting lines, in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in a community whose population only reached 23,286 in 1900. From two thousand to three thousand railroad cars were shifted daily around the Bloomington yards while a dozen passenger trains shot by each way, headed north to Chicago or south to St. Louis, westward to Peoria or eastward to Indianapolis and beyond.

It was a railroaders' town and the men who dominated it had special ways, special skills and senses. Thomas Moore recalled from his days in the roundhouse that with the sharp crack of a steam engine's exhaust "we could almost tell from five or six miles out of town which engine was approaching." Whistles added to the identification: "The crossing had a whistle, then you have one for heigh-ho, one for back-up, one for a stop. When they were whistling for a crossing, you could tell which one that was." With one engine—the 5297—"I can tell it no matter where it was," Moore added. "It was very similar to the whistle of the Wabash; they had a different sound than the ones on the Nickle Plate or any of the other ones. We could tell which way that the engines were coming in, from the east or west, the Nickle Plate and New York Central, because they had a different sound than ours did."

Other things distinguished Moore and his fellow railroaders too. In addition to their know-how, their clothing signified to outsiders that these were railroad men: the red bandanna around the neck to keep out cinders from the locomotives, the typical railroad worker's cap, often bib overalls. Many shopworkers wore aprons or special coveralls.

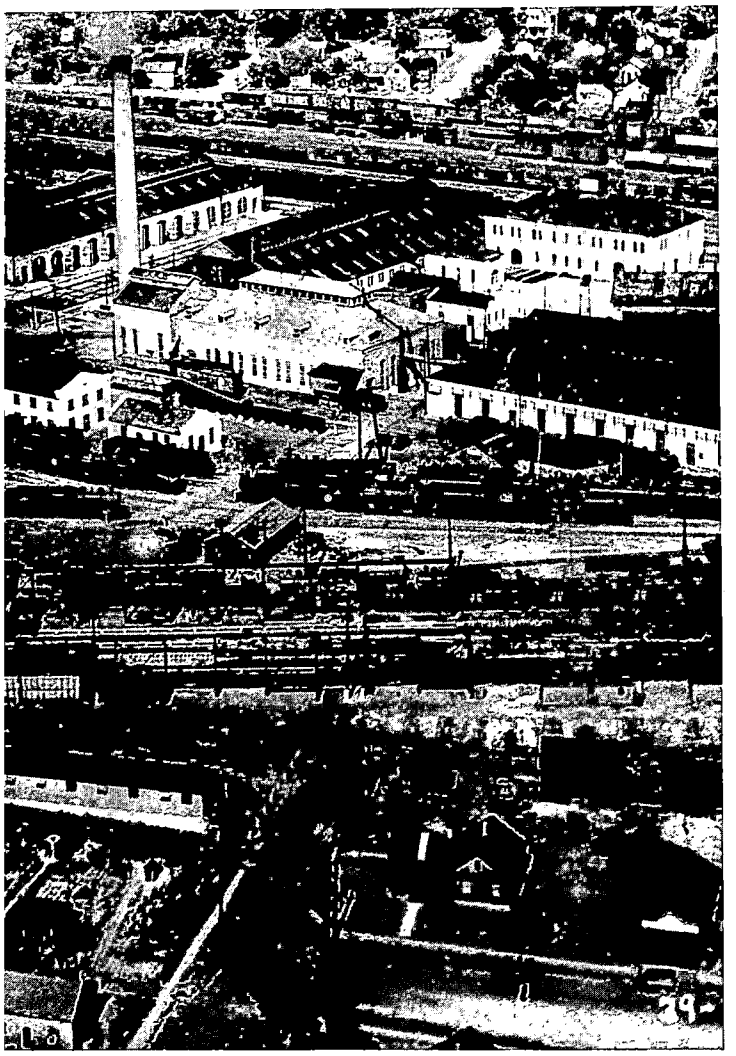
They also spoke in a separate idiom, carried coast to coast among railroad men. "Railroad language is a language all by itself," agreed Ralph Young, who eventually rose to become electrical supervisor in the Bloomington Shops. They "doubled" on a hill, argued with "McAdoo mechanics," and in the process devised a heterogeneous conglomeration of words that were a "complete mystery" to the layman, explained longtime telegrapher William K. Dunbar. He said that if he spoke with co-workers about their jobs, "the guy off the street would not know what we were talking about." Dunbar added:



Pantagraph photo

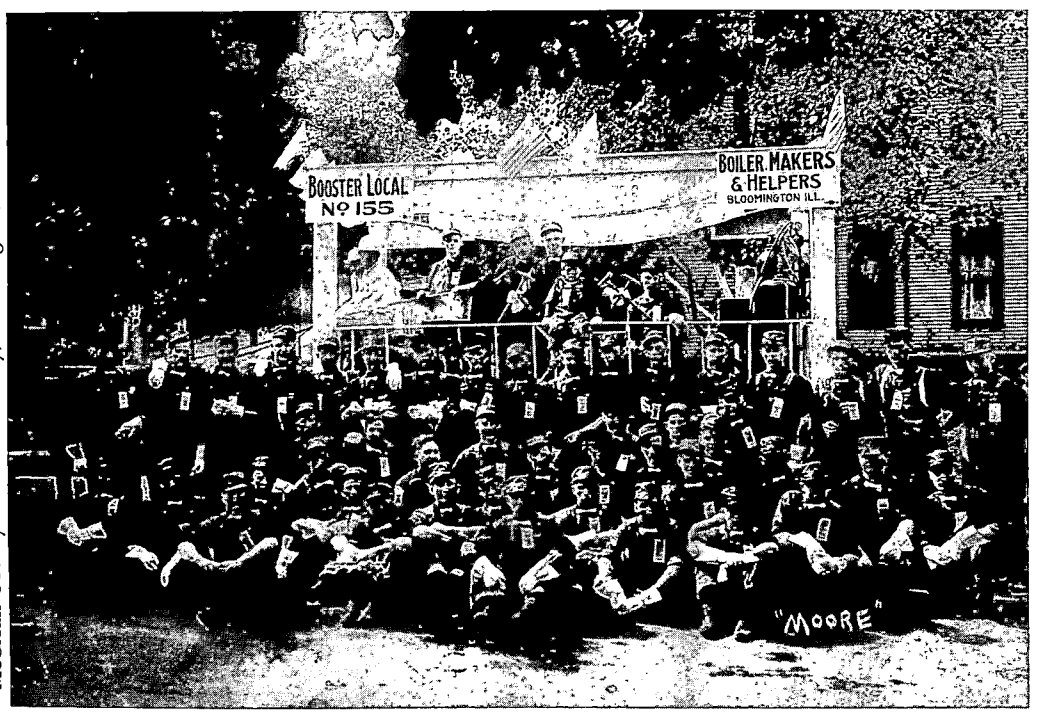
A view of the Chicago & Alton Shops in the 1930s. The forty-four-stall roundhouse with turntable is in the foreground; to the left are the machine and locomotive back shops; and in the background are the coach and paint shops. Railroad workers' homes, with lush gardens, are in the foreground—but between them and the roundhouse is the treacherous ash pit, where locomotive fires were dropped. In wet weather the pit would fill, making it indistinguishable from the ground around it, and workers sometimes took a dunk in its black waters. The rows of locomotives in the center are engines grounded by the Depression. Many would be scrapped; others were rebuilt for the war effort.

The telegraphers themselves were called "lightning slingers" or "brass pounders" . . . everybody had their own terms. A yard clerk was called a "mud hop" 'cause they had to go out and get around the mud holes or they were called "number grabbers," because this is what they did, they grabbed the number off the sides of cars, and the machinists were called "nut splitters."



The railroaders' economic power in the community often carried over into politics, and their strong unionism spread among employees in the city's other businesses and workplaces. Labor Day parades illustrated this: led by hundreds of marching men from the railroad brotherhoods, complete with floats, the events also included large numbers of other local trade unions. But it was the railroaders who highlighted those early parades, recalled George Broughton, whose lengthy career included work as a machinist apprentice, brake and stoker foreman, road diesel supervisor, and finally supervisor of the wheel and axle shop:

> They are plenty of them, they were beautiful. . . . The Carmen's Union had a whole freight train made out of wood showing those things being pulled down the street. They had engines and a tender and a bunch of little cars. The Blacksmiths' Union in there mounted presses up on hay racks, pulled them with horses, and they would be up in there heating iron and bending iron for the blacksmiths. The boiler-



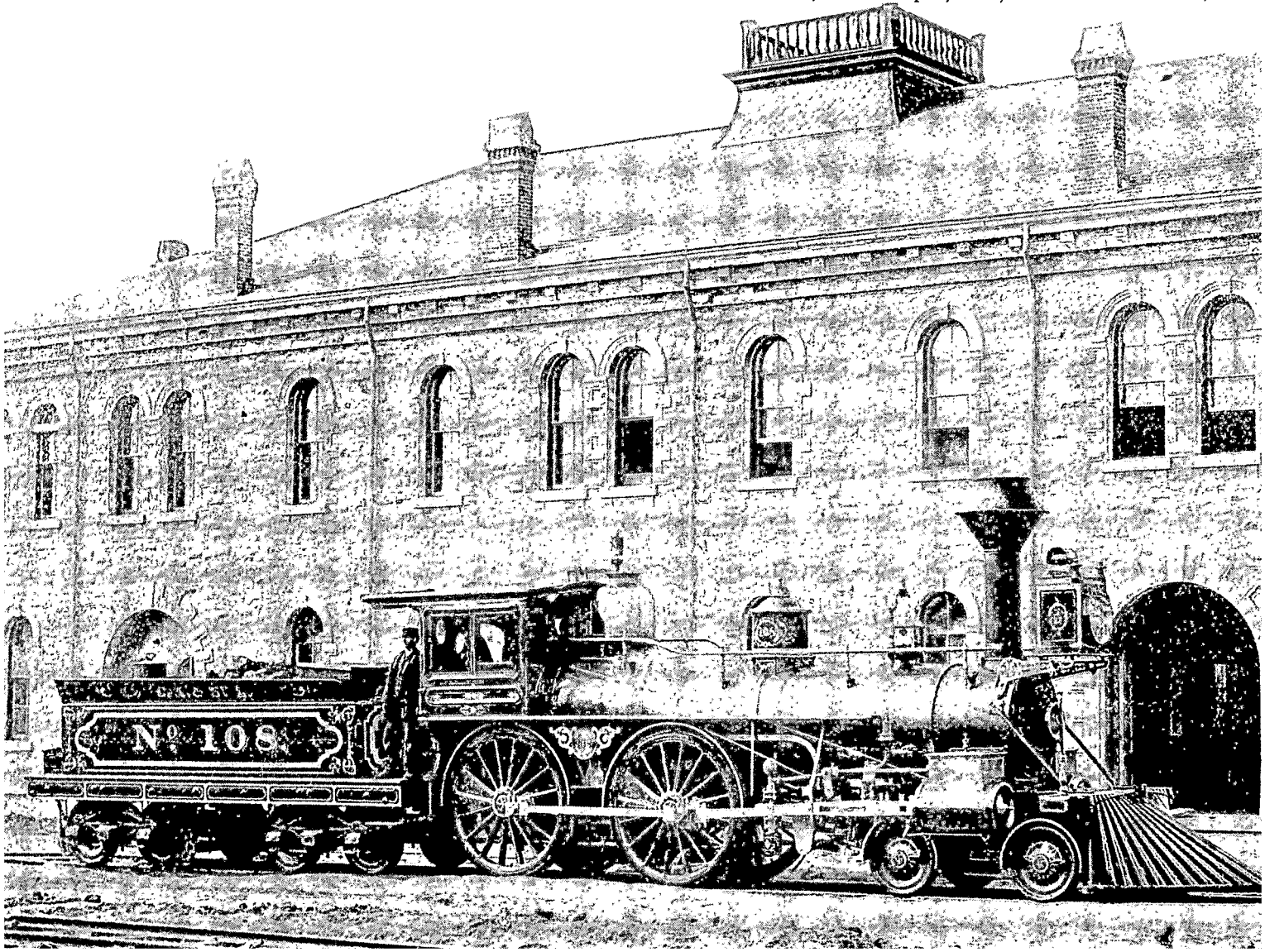
The Labor Day parade float, ca. 1917, of Local No. 155, Boiler Makers and Helpers, Bloomington, Illinois. Appropriate for the trade, the float carries welding equipment. Also typical are the matching work clothes, ties, hats and badges for the parade. The Boilermakers first organized in Bloomington in 1890.

makers would be pounding on pieces of metal that they did for the steam. Beautiful parades in those years.

The community's dependence on the railroads showed in various ways. Bloomington's store owners looked forward with high anticipation to the Shops' twice-monthly paydays, offering liberal credit to railroad men and their families. A railroad hotel, for traveling railroad workers, and the "Beanery," an eating place, were popular; there was even a C&A library stocked with books, newspapers and magazines.

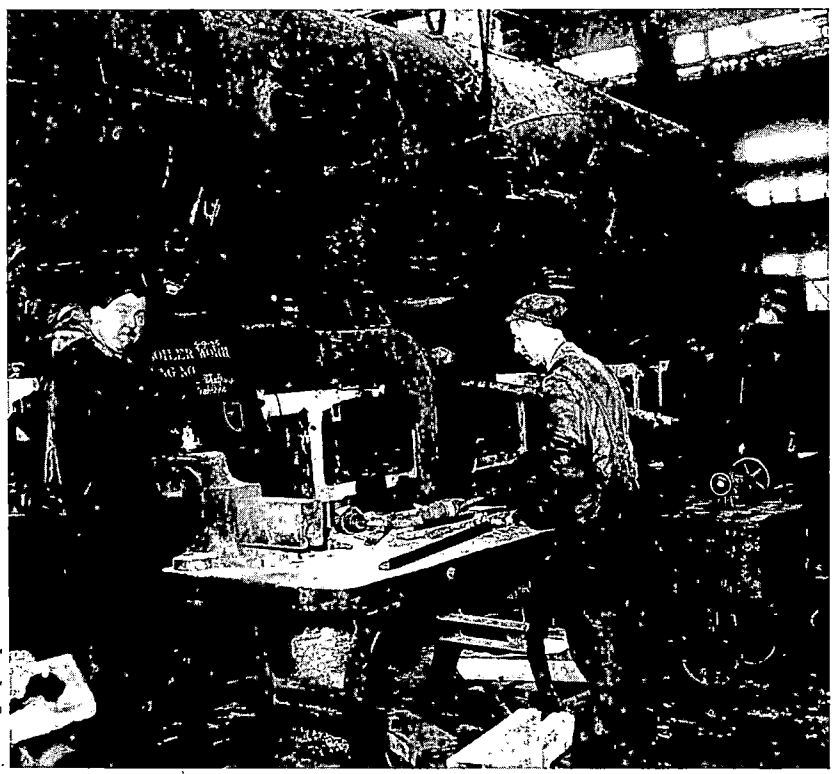
Schools on the west side were dominated by children of railroad men. Thornton Belz, longtime roundhouse foreman, noted that at St. Patrick's School, "there wasn't hardly a child in there that wasn't a son or daughter or a relative of a railroad employee."

Many boys had an even closer relationship with the railroads: they were employed by the lines as "callers,"



The Chicago & Alton Railroad's Engine #108, built in the C&A Shops ca. 1870. This American Standard (4-4-0) locomotive was built "from scratch" in the Bloomington Shops, a typical practice at the time.

going around at night to summon men for duty on the irregularly departing freight trains or filling in for absentees. Jean McCrossin, who grew up in a railroad family and later worked in the division accountant's office, recalled that her uncle got his first railroad job as a caller when he was fifteen: "His job was to go around to the engineers' and firemen's homes and arouse them when they were called out on duty because none of them had telephones." Nellie Daly, who grew up in a railroad family, said neighbors would hear boys making their rounds: ". . . you could hear them many times in the middle of the night calling 'Frank,' 'Frank,' and rapping on the window. 'Number 80 North. Two-thirty. Are you awake?'"



Pantagraph photo

Ed Twomey (left) and his helper, Guy Beeler (right), are grinding boiler checks to fit on a steam freight locomotive in 1935. The workers behind them are using the overhead locomotive crane to support a lever, which they need to set springs and hangers on the locomotive's underframe.

EARLY HISTORY. Railroads changed Bloomington from a tiny prairie village into the bustling center of a rich agricultural district. Launched in the 1830s, the town grew but slowly until the young upstart on Lake Michigan, Chicago, pushed rail connections in all directions, including south. Congress granted the state of Illinois 2.6 million acres of land in 1850, which were then given to the Illinois Central for construction of its line from Chicago to Cairo, at the conjunction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers in far southern Illinois; the line was eventually extended southward to New Orleans.

Groundbreaking for the IC was December 23, 1851, and soon officials along the twelve divisions of the line in Illinois were importing rails and calling for ties "of good white or bur oak," wagons with teams, and especially workmen—mainly Irish and Germans recruited in eastern ports. The Illinois Central finally reached Bloomington in 1853, and when completed to Cairo the IC's 705 miles made it "easily the longest railroad in the world," according to railroad historian John Stover. It was also the largest single private undertaking yet in American history.

Bloomington was also reached in 1853 by the Alton & Sangamon, later renamed the Chicago & Alton. In 1870 came the Indianapolis, Bloomington & Western (now Conrail); the Lake Erie & Western arrived in 1872 (now the Norfolk Southern), and others followed, often using existing tracks from other lines.

The economic impact was dramatic on a community which had held only 1,611 residents in 1850. Population shot up to 5,000 in Bloomington by 1855 and 8,000 by 1860. The first local millionaire, General Ashael Gridley, gained his initial wealth as a railroad land agent. Farming began to thrive on the previously

isolated prairies with the new access to distant markets.

Bloomington's advantageous location—almost midway between Chicago and St. Louis—was one of the key factors in the decision of the Chicago & Alton to place its main shops in the city, and by 1856 some 150 people were employed there. The skills, technology and materials for the most modern industry in the nation began to accumulate in Bloomington, and it was logical that when George Pullman conceived his plan for a luxurious railroad sleeping car in 1857, he turned to the Alton Shops in Bloomington to construct it. Pullman's first dining car, the "Delmonico," was also built in the Bloomington Shops in 1868. After these beginnings, Pullman's idea met unrivaled success and led to construction of his own works south of Chicago. But it was in Bloomington where he first found the expertise needed to launch his dream.

The city rallied to save the Shops at various times. After a fire in 1867, Bloomington citizens raised $55 thousand to keep the Alton Shops. In 1910 the residents collected $165 thousand to provide the company with additional land, removing houses from the new property as well; this was to counter an offer of free land in Springfield, an hour's train trip to the south.

Not only were the Chicago & Alton Railroad's steam engines and cars repaired in the Bloomington Shops, but for several decades they were also constructed there. "Over the years, way back, they actually started from scratch building steam locomotives down here, new, and passenger cars and freight cars, new," recalled George Broughton. But soon the emphasis shifted to repair. When parts were needed, "the blacksmith made one part for you, then you put it in the machine shop, you put it in a lathe and you turned up what you wanted. You made the part, you actually fabricated it."

DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS. This created a need for a large number of departments and skills. Helen Young, whose grandfather, father and husband were railroad workers, and who herself was employed as a clerk in the Shops, thought back over the variety of operations:

> We had an upholstery shop, we had a paint shop, we had a car shop. That took care of your passenger cars, then there was a freight shop where they made freight cars and repaired those. You had your pattern shop where they cut out and made the patterns for these things, they had the planing mill where they planed the wood to make whatever they were making; then, of course, in the car shop, there was a pipe and tin shop and naturally you had your power house and your foundry and your blacksmith and your fire shop and your machine shop.

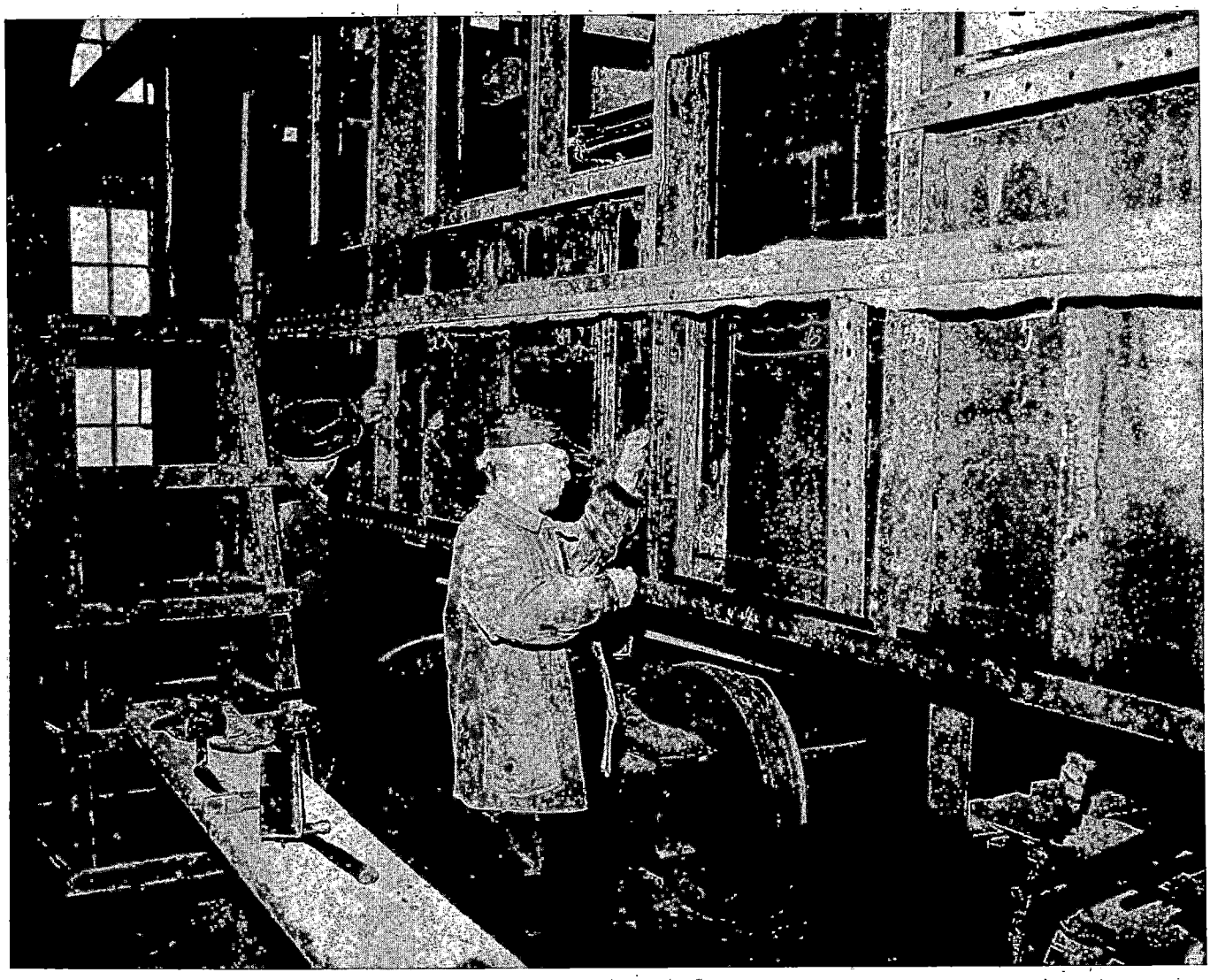
Her husband, Ralph Young, noted that the Shops made tank cars, using "the largest boiler plate in the U.S. We had machines that would take a big sheet of metal which would be about one-half to maybe three-quarters of an inch thick, which would weigh tons, and when we were done with it, it would be in the shape of a tank or a circle." Others recalled the variety of pipes made in the pipe department—water, steam, air—plus sheet metal jackets for the boiler engines.

All this required skills—and skills were abundant among Bloomington's shopmen. Steve Tudor told of a German patternmaker:

> he made every piece on an engine out of wood and made it perfect and they took it over to the foundry and they used that to make the mold for the pieces of the engine. The cabinet shop out there made every piece of an engine. They didn't order it built someplace else. They made it there and built them.

Ralph Young added a story about an elderly boilermaker, who "could beat any man I ever saw and he was a mechanic. He was a master at his trade." Once this machinist had to make a cowcatcher:

> I've seen that man take a big sheet of metal three-quarters of an inch thick and he'd have four or five people helping him. And they would all have big heavy torches and heating that iron . . . he was the one doing all of the hammering. And when he got through with that and he said to the other fellows, "Let's go try it," they took it in there and the thing almost fit in the corners. And that was all riveted



Pantagraph photo

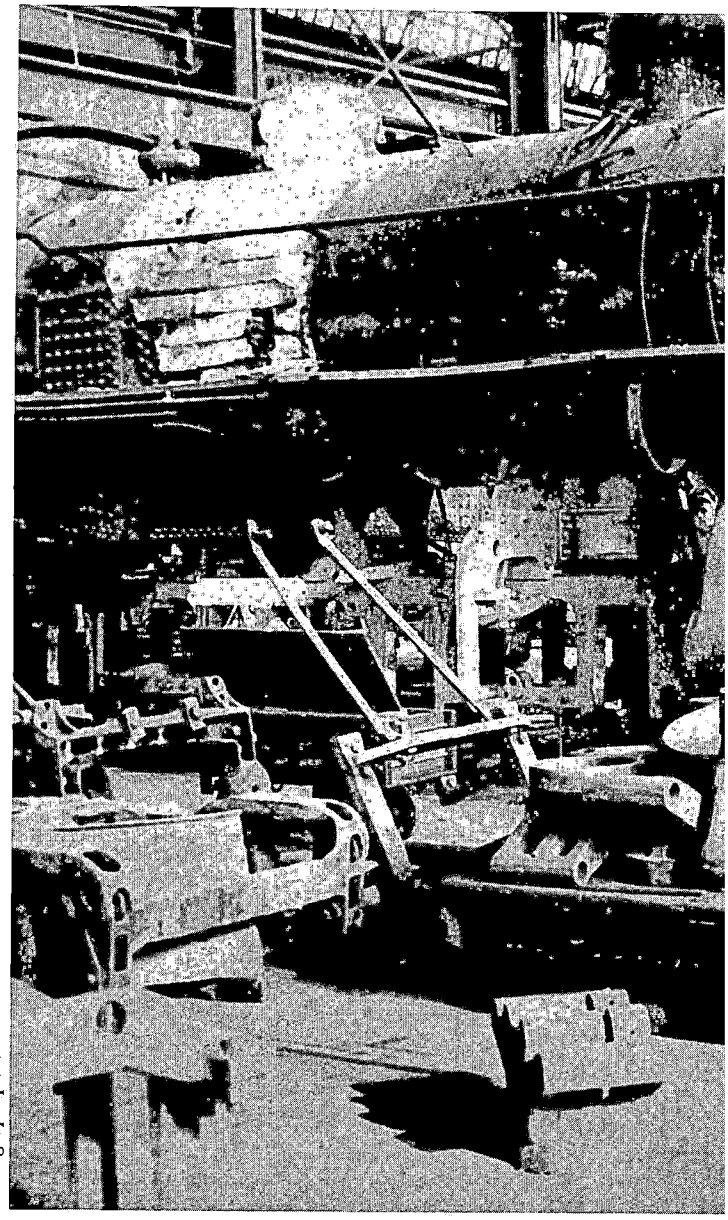
In the days of wooden railroad cars, exact standards were set for tight fits on passenger cars to ensure a quiet, safe ride. In this 1934 photo, coach carpenters are rebuilding a passenger car.

> onto the diesel trains in the front and he would measure each one of those holes, and then go back to the punch press and then punch the metal, punch a hole in that metal, take it up there and as far as I can remember, I can only remember one time that they ever had to ream out one hole out of about forty-two that was in around the front of that. They all just fit right in.

Such skills came only after a lengthy apprenticeship for most—1,180 days for a machinist at the time he began work as a tool carrier in 1919, according to Ray Eisenberg. This meant working with all the machines and processes used, and at the end having to leave the Shops. The idea remained of a journeyman "journeying" for a year after completing an apprenticeship; it would last until 1935. Joseph Dewey Penn, Sr., who worked in the roundhouse for most of his fifty years with the railroad, explained: "You couldn't jump up from an apprentice to a machinist, you had to go out and work some other railroad and come back in a year and that's what I did. I went to the Wabash and IC, Clinton, Villa Grove and Decatur." The same was true with other Shops' apprenticeships.

The skills produced through this system—or developed in Europe and carried over to Bloomington by the numerous immigrants—were impressive by any standards. Many of the former railroad men look back with awe at the capabilities of some of their co-workers. George Broughton recalled an Englishman who worked under him in the wheel and axle shop:

> He was absolutely one of the slickest machine men that they ever had in that shop down there. You would just go over and tell him what you wanted and let him alone and, boy, he would make it. He would make anything you wanted, he was real good and handy with a lathe. He could do anything.



Pantagraph photo

Painters also had a lengthy period of training, involving courses in math and drafting at the outset, then studying mixing different paints and colors, and eventually moving into the complex work of painting, varnishing and sign painting. John Ivan Tudor told of being assigned to follow Joe Gang to learn how to varnish a coach. Tudor was surprised that Gang took so much varnish, but when Tudor questioned this he was told to be quiet: "He put that varnish on there and he crossed it off and laid it up and down. I am telling you that I looked at that paint half of a day to see where the running was going to be and there never was a run in it. He sure taught me a lesson."

Lawrence Hoog described having to prime the cars, paint them, putty the holes, sand them down and put on two or three coats of varnish, followed by lettering. "We really did a good job," he concluded.

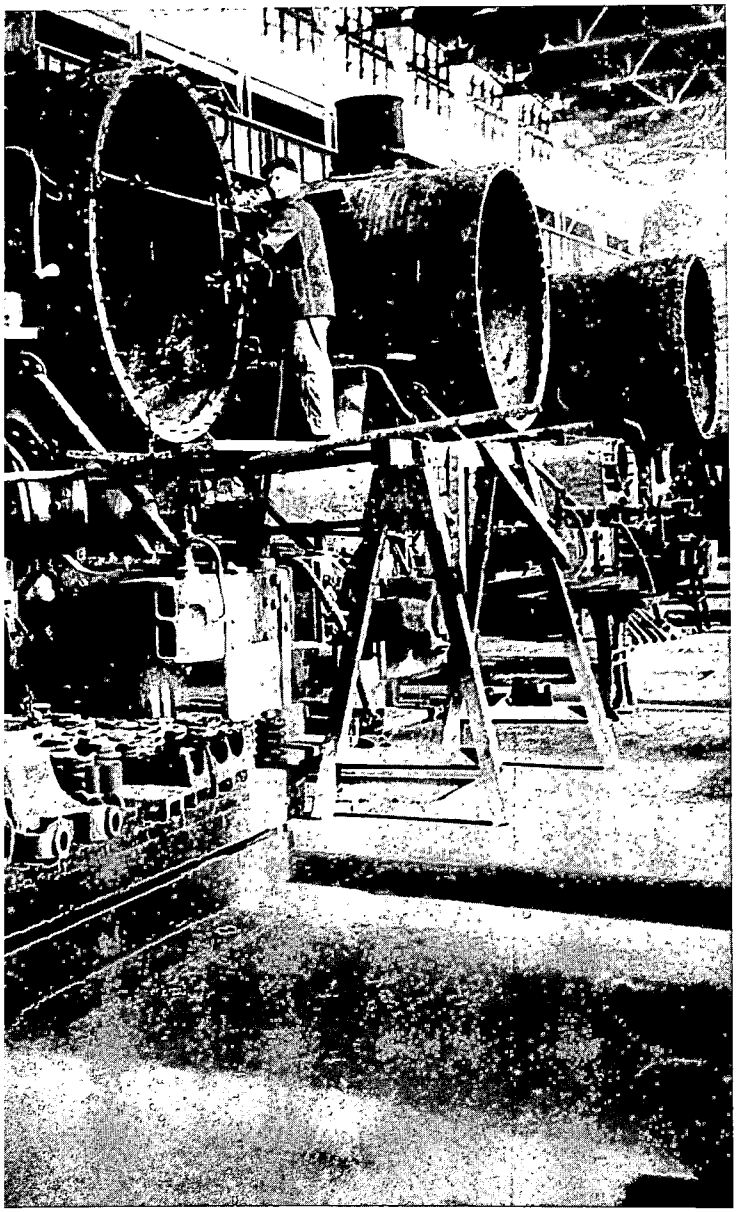
Upholstering work meant much more than padding passenger seats, according to Raymond Bennett:

> We did all the carpet work for the passenger cars and the wooden cars. We did the mattress and the seat work. We did floor work and curtain work—[the cars] had a padded roof. The upholsterer's job was to take, stretch, what we called mule hide; it was an artificial leather, and we would stretch it out along the top of the cars. . . . The upholsterer's job was to insulate all the air-conditioning pipes, all the air-conditioning units and things like that. It was interesting.

For many, these skills were developed only over a number of years, without benefit of apprenticeships or special schooling. Nick Petri looked on in wonder at his father's knowledge of metals at his job in the scrap dock: "He was able to sign his name but that was it. But he knew metals. It amazed me that he could tell one piece of metal from another. . . . To me that all looked alike until he explained what the difference was. . . . He was great at that."

From these skills came pride—personal pride and pride in the group, in the fact that you were a railroad man. It came only after years of training, years of labor alongside fellow-workers covered with honest sweat and the grime of the Shops. They saw themselves as apart from other men. Ralph Young thought back on his thirty years of electrical work in the Shops and concluded that railroading is "a special thing all on its own." He added: "And you can't read it, you can't get it out of a book, you can't pick it off the street, you just have to have the experience. And someone is dedicated, it gets in your blood."

Others echoed this, either through their own experience or their admiration for the skills of others. Anthony Koos, whose cabinet experience in the 1920s and 1930s included inlaying different types of wood in the company president's car, said the "special feeling you would have is that when you were finished, you were a true craftsman." Thomas Moore praised Jakey Moews, who "could set his air brakes and by the time he got to the depot he wouldn't drag that water crane three feet. There was about a ten-foot space there that



A boilermaker is using an air-operated flue roller to install new flues in a freight locomotive in 1943. The locomotive boiler contained dozens of flues, and keeping these steaming clean and free of sediment was a major challenge not only to Shop workers, but to the engineers and firemen who operated the locomotives.

he stopped in that we could water the tender without having to move, so he was an artist."

THE JOB SITE. But artistry could be challenged in the din and dangers of the Shops, and workers came to rely on interdependence and cooperation. William Dunbar called Shops work "a dangerous job, you can get killed in a blink of an eye out there if you don't know your Ps and Qs, and everybody looks out for everybody else." Friendship in such cases is not based on supporting the same baseball team, he added, "but on the fact that you literally keep each other from being killed."

The injury record of railroad work bears out Dunbar's comments. Many of the railroaders' reminiscences center on job accidents—some capable of being fixed up by "Doctor Iodine," the Shops' medical authority, but others of a more serious nature. Many former railroaders can hold up hands with fingers not quite all intact, as Joe Penn noted in describing how a cable broke on the crane and "took that right off . . . right off you know, cut it right off . . . and then the old doctor . . . you know what he done? He just taped that on there and I went back to work."

Others recalled men whose lungs were filled with paint, or fellow workers killed in a fall, cut in two by a rolling car, or deprived of limbs. Tom McGraw saw a worker stepping off an engine "and he fell in the cinder pit and Dick Berry was comin' by there and the engine run over him and cut the hand off and one leg and Dick Berry took balin' wire and tied him up and kept him from bleedin' to death." Ray Bennett recalled his father's story:

> a fellow went down in there to clean out the oil tank and there was still some gasoline in there and with the torch. Well, this fellow came out of that opening sky-high. When he fell to the ground, of course he was dead.

Running through the railroad history of Bloomington is an undercurrent of grief. Nellie Daly, whose father suffered permanent disability from a fall in the Shops, has recollections of numerous other workers' accidents and said that, "If anybody that belonged to the Shops got hurt, why everybody that worked there felt it. . . . felt like it was part of the family. I recall so many that had only one leg or one arm or something that were hurt in the Shops." These dangers provided an added reason for cooperation, for interdependence.

The structure of work favored this also. Groups repaired parts of engines together; groups painted and upholstered; it was usually as part of a team that the Shops men attacked a problem. A local newspaper reporter took note of the complex nature of their work

when he explained why Steam Engine 5299 had been able to travel 589,571 miles in six years on a single set of flues:

> Engineers and firemen are given credit for properly blowing down of the boiler to expel sediment, prevent foaming and scale, and for proper handling of the fire.
>
> Boilermakers receive much of the credit for fitting the boiler properly when it received its last flue removal inspection, six years ago.
>
> But the chemists in the water department who treated the water and kept on the alert through those six years to vary the water treatment with each change of season, or of the water supply, receive a good portion of the congratulations.

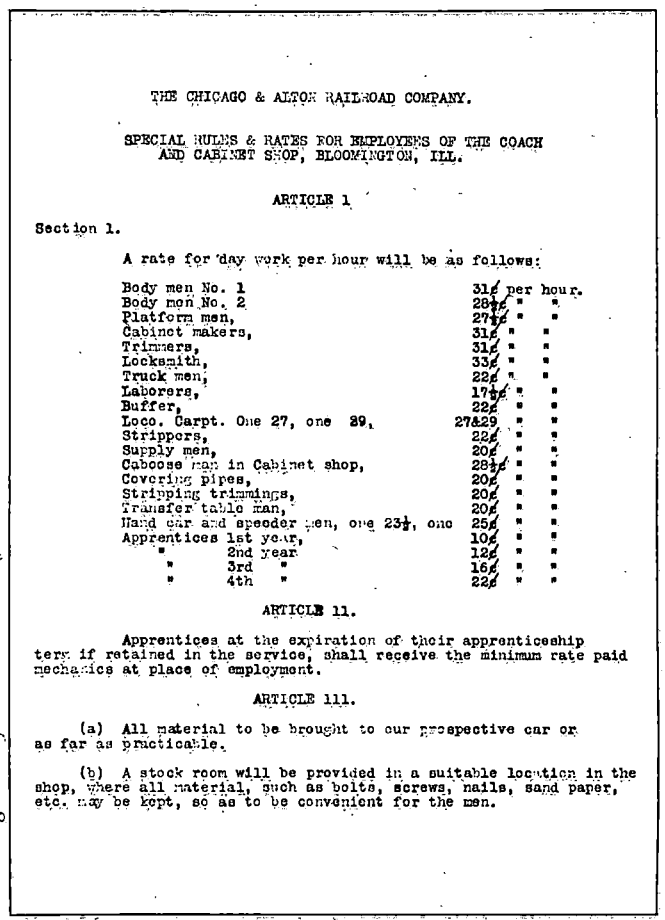
Contrasting with interdependence on the shop floor, the surrounding community had many of the ethnic and religious divisions common to American cities, and some of these occasionally carried over into the Shops. Bloomington had distinct neighborhoods that were Irish (the "Forty Acres" on the west side), German ("South Hill") and Swedish ("Stevensonville," so named because the area's coal mines were once owned by the first Adlai E. Stevenson, vice president of the United States from 1893 to 1897 and patriarch of a line of state and national Democratic politicians). Anthony Koos was aware of the different groups working around him in the C&A cabinet shop:

> there were eight benches that rotate. As an apprentice, I had one up to the front, the outside, up against the wall, and right next to me, to my left, was a German. In behind him was an Englishman, behind me was a Swede, then another German, then another Swede and the foreman was a Swede. Those men, as cabinet makers, they were real good.

The divisions were not without friction, especially during times of crisis. Nick Petri, of German-Hungarian background, noted that although he lived only two blocks from St. Patrick's School, "we couldn't go there because we were German Catholic, so we had to go to

© McLean County Historical Society, Bloomington, IL

In 1918, in the midst of World War I fever, noon hour "patriotic sings" were common at the C&A Shops. The Shops had a large population of German-Hungarians (Germans who had resettled in parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), which might account for some of the glum faces in the crowd. More likely, it's because the lunch break has been interrupted.



THE CHICAGO & ALTON RAILROAD COMPANY.

SPECIAL RULES & RATES FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE COACH AND CABINET SHOP, BLOOMINGTON, ILL.

ARTICLE 1

Section 1.

A rate for day work per hour will be as follows:

Body men No. 1	31¢ per hour.
Body men No. 2	28½¢ " "
Platform men,	27½¢ " "
Cabinet makers,	31¢ " "
Trimmers,	31¢ " "
Locksmith,	33¢ " "
Truck men,	22¢ " "
Laborers,	17½¢ " "
Buffer,	22¢ " "
Loco. Carpt. One 27, one 29,	27&29 " "
Strippers,	22¢ " "
Supply men,	20¢ " "
Caboose man in Cabinet shop,	28½¢ " "
Covering pipes,	20¢ " "
Stripping trimmings,	20¢ " "
Transfer table man,	20¢ " "
Hand car and speeder men, one 23½, one	25¢ " "
Apprentices 1st year,	10¢ " "
" 2nd year	12¢ " "
" 3rd "	16¢ " "
" 4th "	22¢ " "

ARTICLE 11.

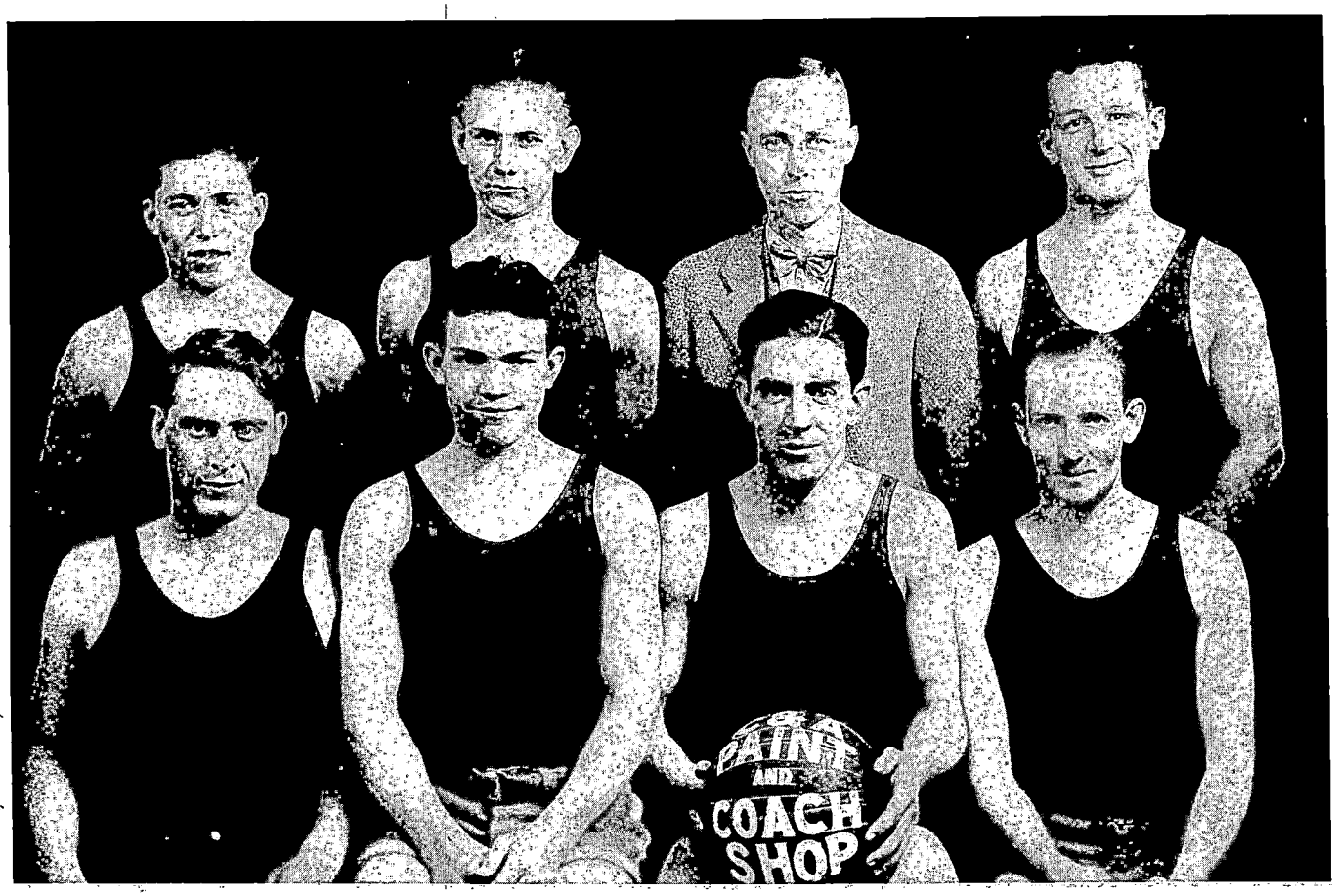
Apprentices at the expiration of their apprenticeship term if retained in the service, shall receive the minimum rate paid mechanics at place of employment.

ARTICLE 111.

(a) All material to be brought to car prospective car or as far as practicable.

(b) A stock room will be provided in a suitable location in the shop, where all material, such as bolts, screws, nails, sand paper, etc. may be kept, so as to be convenient for the men.

The George Meany Memorial Archives



Courtesy Anthony Koos

Basketball, baseball, football and horseshoes were some of the organized sports C&A Shops workers participated in, while other activities included the "Alton Chorus," the Alton band and occasional plays. The Paint and Coach Shop basketball team (ca. 1928) included: (upper row) Ed Butzirus, Tony Koos, painting foreman G. Flynn, unknown, and (bottom row) Edward Scharfenberg, Andrew Bagosy, Art Crowley and George Lesher.

the German school and we had to walk across town. . . ." But heading south to St. Mary's did not mean traveling into South Hill, whose German residents were antagonistic to the German-Hungarians: "You couldn't go across there. Especially—you could never date a girl out of your area. No way. Back in them days. Anybody that would come from the other parts of town over in our area—as we say as soon as they would cross the west side tracks—they were always dumped into the horse water trough." This is "unbelievable," Petri admitted, "but then that's the way it was."

Germans had special difficulties during World War I, when St. Mary's School was ordered to eliminate German language instruction, Bloomington's German-language newspaper was told to cease publication in German, and a city that once gloried in things Germanic eliminated outward evidences of this overnight. Petri remembered that as America entered the war his parents threw out a portrait of Franz Josef, the Austro-Hungarian emperor. Immigrants stopped using German even in their homes. When shopworkers during the war years heard other employees speaking German, recalled Frank Swibaker, they told them "to cut out the German talk and talk English or we'll put you out of here."

But it is unity, not division, that emerges from the reminiscences of these railroaders as they look back on their jobs in the Shops and their lives in the community. At one time the Shops workers had their own football team, playing in surrounding towns; volleyball, baseball, softball and basketball teams also appeared over the years. During the one-hour lunch breaks (later shortened to thirty minutes) the shopmen would pitch horseshoes, or play pranks on each other: switch lunches, insert a piece of copper in a friend's sandwich, grease wheelbarrow handles or nail shoes to the floor. Some evenings and on Sundays there were picnics and potlucks. Once the carmen put on a theatrical production.

THE UNIONS. Another unifying spirit came from the union movement.

Bloomington's railroad workers wasted little time in organizing. In 1859 shopworkers combined to secure more wages. In 1863, the same year the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers organized nationally, Local No. 13 was founded in Bloomington. Others followed

quickly: the Machinists Association in the Shops in 1865, the Iron Moulders Union No. 157 in 1874, Locomotive Firemen in 1876, Conductors in 1884, Trainmen in 1885, Boilermakers in 1890, Blacksmiths and Car Painters in 1902, Coach Carpenters in 1906.

Both victories and defeats were recorded over the years, with the result that today's retirees can look back on lifetimes that included work both with and without union protection. The contrast was sharp, and Nick Petri speaks adamantly on this point:

> If you're by yourself it makes no difference and you're just a number to the company. It's only through unionization that you will get in any better benefits. That's the reason you got your vacations, and you get sick leave, which came in after years of union because you didn't have it before. There was no such thing. You worked—if they wanted you to work seven days a week, you worked.

Ralph Young agreed: "If it wasn't for organized labor we'd all be slaves."

The greatest test for the railroaders' unions in Bloomington came with the national railroad strike of 1922. Taken over by the federal government during World War I, the nation's railways were returned to private ownership in 1920 over protests of the railway brotherhoods. However, the Railroad Labor Board (RLB) was created to provide ways to handle labor-management disputes, and in July 1920 the RLB granted railroad shop employees hourly wage increases of twenty-two percent (thirteen cents). It seemed things were going to work out all right. But in 1921 the RLB gave in to company pressures, cut wages an average of twelve percent, then worsened this in May 1922 with a wage cut of another twelve percent. In addition, the board ruled that companies did not have to pay overtime for Sunday and holiday work—a right unions had won some fifty years earlier on the C&A. Faced with these setbacks and fearing more, Bloomington's shopmen voted to join the national strike set for July 1, 1922.

It was "quit, starve or organize" for the Bloomington shopmen, who numbered almost two thousand in a city of thirty thousand. A Department of Labor study placed Americans' annual bare subsistence income at $1,400, and a "minimum comfort budget" at $2,300—but shopcraft employees earned an average of only $1,754, while common railroad laborers averaged just $1,001. Solid community support encouraged the workers, however. Local citizens were even reluctant to serve as sheriff's deputies, and one man successfully dodged the sheriff for two days before being found and deputized in his basement tailor shop.

© McLean County Historical Society, Bloomington, IL

The 1922 railroad strike, a national walkout, affected 400 thousand workers, eighteen hundred in the C&A Shops. Four hundred National Guardsmen were brought to Bloomington, where support for the strikers was strong. Pictured here is a "machine gun nest" at the roundhouse.

This lack of company support in Bloomington meant that outsiders, not local people, would have to be brought in as strikebreakers to keep the C&A running. And this in turn meant that National Guardsmen would be needed. Rumors of violence multiplied, some small incidents occurred, and the sheriff warned state authorities he was "powerless to prevent bloodshed if the railroads carry out their plans" to bring in strikebreakers.

On July 10 the troops arrived—four hundred men, including a sixty-five-man machine gun company—and a local judge issued a temporary restraining order against the union to "prevent picketing of Bloomington shops by strikers, interference with the operation of trains, intimidation of employees and conspiracy." An angry, jeering crowd formed near the Shops that night until dispersed by a heavy rain. But the soldiers were jumpy; they poured some three hundred rounds of automatic fire into a nearby gully after some shots were heard.

Then the strikebreakers began to arrive: a hundred the next day, soon followed by trainloads of others

recruited in Chicago and elsewhere. Many worked only a few days and then moved on to a different strikebound line, giving another false name there and receiving another bonus. Because of the widespread use of strikebreakers at premium wages during the national work stoppage, in August 1922 the nation's railroads employed ninety-one thousand fewer men than before the strike, but paid out over $2 million more in wages.

With troops, strikebreakers and strikers all present, Bloomington was a volatile mixture. Some cases of tarring and feathering occurred; rails were greased. There were nervous shootings during the night, accidental discharges of weapons, shouts, petitions and lawsuits during the summer of 1922. The most serious incident occurred one night when a guardsman for some reason shot at a passing car, seriously wounding a woman passenger. When the troops began to leave in late August, replaced by federal marshalls, 132 of the strikebreakers left also.

Community support for the strikers remained strong. Girls refused to dance with the soldiers, and a barber would not cut a soldier's hair; his shop was then closed. A number of west side stores extended credit to the strikers, notably a grocery store identified with railroaders since the 1850s; it gave $17 thousand in credit during the strike and eventually all was paid back.

President Warren Harding sought to end the national dispute, offering railroad workers their seniority (which companies were seeking to change) while the wage issue would be negotiated. After management rejected this plan, Harding offered to submit the seniority issue also to negotiation, which the union then refused. Finally U.S. Attorney General Harry Daugherty—later forced to resign in the Teapot Dome scandal—obtained a court restraining order which has been called "the most sweeping injunction ever issued in a labor dispute." It blocked union leaders and members from writing, speaking or telephoning to communicate strike sentiment; union meetings were banned.

While other rail lines made conciliatory gestures toward their workers, in Bloomington strikebreakers continued to be hired by the C&A, which had recently gone into bankruptcy and was operating under a court appointed receiver. A revised company offer was finally accepted October 3, 1922, creating a company union, reducing wages, and causing strikers to forfeit their seniority. The company had won.

Bitterness remained. Most strikebreakers left town quickly, and when Thornton Belz returned to his machinist's job in the Shops he was greeted by a message scrawled in chalk by a strikebreaker on the side of a firebox: "We got the dollars, now you can have the cents." One strikebreaker who stayed on was later caught in a drill and seriously injured. "Nobody went near him." And Nellie Daly, from her vantage point as member of a railroad family, recalled how the strike broke up friendships:

> My younger brother, the plumber, he had a very dear friend; they were babies together. They were almost like twins all their lives, and he went in [to work during the strike] and my brother never had any use for him after that. He did everything under the sun to get back in my brother's good graces but he never made it. It was terrible to be a *scab*.

Broken but not bowed by the experiences of 1922, the Bloomington railroad brotherhoods took several years to regroup. But by the 1930s they were back at full strength.

The thirties also brought a new surge in governmental regulations, much of it safety related. Paralleling this was an upsurge in the long–term rise in competition, from other railroad lines and increasingly also from trucks. These factors pressured the companies to cut costs, and one way to do this was to decrease the labor force whenever possible, even temporarily. "Railroads are funny places," recalled Helen Young; "they'll lay off and then will call back, then they'll lay off and call back. They are sort of erratic. . . ." Raymond B. Bennett echoed her sentiments; in fact, the unsteadiness of the work eventually drove him away from the Shops upholstering department:

> We called the men who had quite a bit of seniority, the ones with whiskers. We younger people didn't have enough seniority so we would be the first ones to be laid off. Sometimes, we would be laid off for

Shops' Whistle a Workers' Monument

Michael G. Matejka

Old-time Bloomington, Illinois, residents, whether railroad Shops workers or not, have one clear memory from the railroad's glory days—the large whistle which daily summoned the workers. Echoing across the prairies at three minutes to seven, the Shops' whistle was the first call to the day's work, it notified workers at lunch time, and it ended their day at quitting time. To area people it meant "railroad time," and they set their watches by it. Today that whistle stands in Bloomington's Miller Park, a monument to the workers it once signalled.

The large whistle sat atop the boilerhouse, which once powered the whole Shops complex. Once the boilers no longer steamed, the whistle was silent, and it eventually joined the railroad artifact collection of a former superintendent. In 1976 the whistle was donated to the McLean County Historical Society, but sat in the basement for many years, its six feet of height and three chimes too large for the museum.

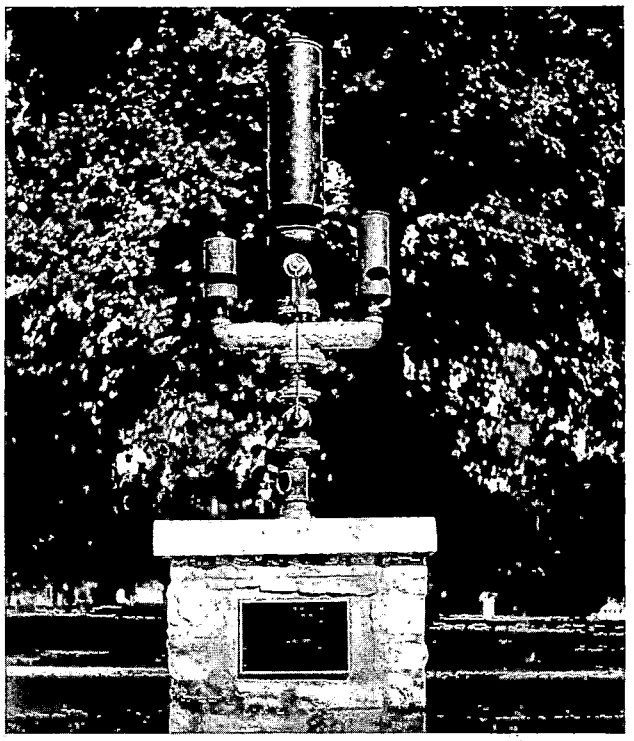
In 1982, with the help of the Livingston and McLean Counties Building and Construction Trades Council (AFL-CIO), the whistle came out of the basement and was mounted on its own stand in the park. That summer, under the then-existing federal jobs program, CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), the Building and Construction Trades received a grant to run an "Introduction to the Building Trades" program. Young people tried their hand at various trades, performing community service work in the process.

One of their projects was mounting the Shops' whistle. A foundation was poured and old limestone blocks, once the walls of the steel car shop, were salvaged for the monument's base. The whistle was affixed to the top, and a plaque was bolted to the base which reads: "Daily this whistle echoed from atop the Chicago and Alton Railroad Shops on Bloomington's West Side. This monument is dedicated to the thousands that labored there." The project was supervised by Paul Penn, retired Laborers Local 362 business agent, who had help from his eighty-two-year-old uncle, Joseph "Dewey" Penn, former chairman of the Machinists Lodge at the Shops.

The Shops workers monument was the focus of Labor Day activity in 1982. The annual Labor Day

Pantagraph photo

The City of Bloomington lived by the echo of the giant Shops' whistle. In this 1944 photo, the 3:30 afternoon shift change is being sounded. During World War II the Shops worked around the clock, keeping locomotives and cars functioning for heavy wartime traffic.



Mike Matejka photo

The Bloomington C&A Shops' whistle, resurrected as a monument to railroad shop workers under a 1982 CETA project. The plaque reads: "Daily this whistle echoed from the Chicago and Alton Railroad Shops on Bloomington's West Side. This monument is dedicated to the thousands that labored there. Labor Day 1982. Bloomington & Normal Trades and Labor Assembly (AFL-CIO); Livingston & McLean Counties Building & Construction Trades Council; McLean County Historical Society; McLean County CETA."

parade ended there and, after a few speeches and songs, three old-timers from the Shops—ninety-two-year-old carman Harry Rhoads, ninety-year-old electrician Joe Fellenz, Sr., and machinist Joe Penn—cut the ribbon on the monument.

Today the Shops' whistle stands next to a retired steam locomotive, a vivid reminder of the size and scope of Bloomington's C&A Shops.

> a month or two out of a year. . . . There was one year I was laid off more than I worked.

Layoffs were particularly hard on railroaders and their families during the Depression years. Prior to development of organized relief for the community's destitute, the Superintendent of Motive Power asked men in his C&A department to donate one day's pay for relief of Shops employees who were unemployed: $35 thousand was eventually raised, providing the jobless with two to four dollars per week for groceries.

DIESELS. But the major cause of extensive unemployment arrived in the Shops in the middle of the Depression in 1936—the diesel engine. Brought in initially for repairs by the Baltimore & Ohio (which took over the Chicago & Alton in 1931), the diesel engine was at first a disrupting novelty, according to George Broughton:

> Nobody wanted to work on it. It was just an oversized automobile engine, and I mean really oversized. . . . You could handle a part in your two hands. It was nice to work on. Well, we had the first one in the shop down there, we had several guys in there that didn't want to work on them, the boss said, "That is your job or go home." A lot of them went home. . . . We had to overhaul both engines, had it in the shop and when they got ready to go out they couldn't find anybody to run it so the fellow that was a back shop general foreman said to me, "Do you know how to run it?" I said, "Well sure I do." I didn't know any more about it than he did, but I wasn't going to tell him. I got up there and blew the whistle mightily; that alerted everybody in the place, and I sailed out the door with the darn thing waving my hands at all of them.

Many shopmen were eventually sent to school for a thirty-day course to learn diesel mechanics, and the pace of changeover to diesels stepped up, much as had occurred earlier with other technological innovations in the Shops—electric cranes, spray painting, metal cars instead of wooden ones, and the ever-larger en-

gines introduced over the years. But none of these could match the devastating impact on employment levels of the diesel engines.

Nick Petri had worked for years supplying castings, bolts, nuts and other equipment in the Shops for the steam engines. Then, in 1946, the switch to diesels meant that purchases of castings went out "because diesels were mostly electric . . . and that changed the whole operation of the railroad where you always bought a lot of coal and that and then you went to oil, fuel oil and so forth on your diesels. . . . " (Acquiring diesel parts, Broughton explained, was "just like going to the dime store and buying and putting them in. They are delivered to you in cardboard boxes.")

In the new era, fifty diesel engines pulled three times as much freight as 360 steam engines had done earlier. Soon the labor force was cut drastically, especially after the 1946 rail strike when the new owners—the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio—went to total dieselization. Former Shops Superintendent Joseph Schneeberger pointed out that a switch engine diesel could work in the yards all week without going in for "any attention whatsoever, working day and night," while a steam engine doing similar yard work needed to go in every twenty-four hours for coal and water and to have its fire boxes cleaned. Also, there was now no need for hundreds of railroad employees in outlying communities along the line: no water crews required, no one needed in coaling towers, and section crews could be cut because wear and tear on the roadbed was less with the new diesels.

An era was already ending when an old nemesis—company mergers—added to the sense of approaching doom in Bloomington. Once it had been the Harriman syndicate, which purchased control of the Chicago & Alton in 1899 and in a short time turned a profit estimated at over $23 million, saddling the line with long-term debt which crushed succeeding owners and forced extreme cost-cutting measures. Then it was the Union Pacific and Rock Island, taking over in 1904; in 1907 the Clover Leaf Line won control, followed in 1931 by the Baltimore & Ohio. In 1942 the Alton line went back into receivership, until it was purchased in 1947 by the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio, which merged in 1972 with the Illinois Central to become the Illinois Central Gulf—finally uniting the two main lines crossing in Bloomington.

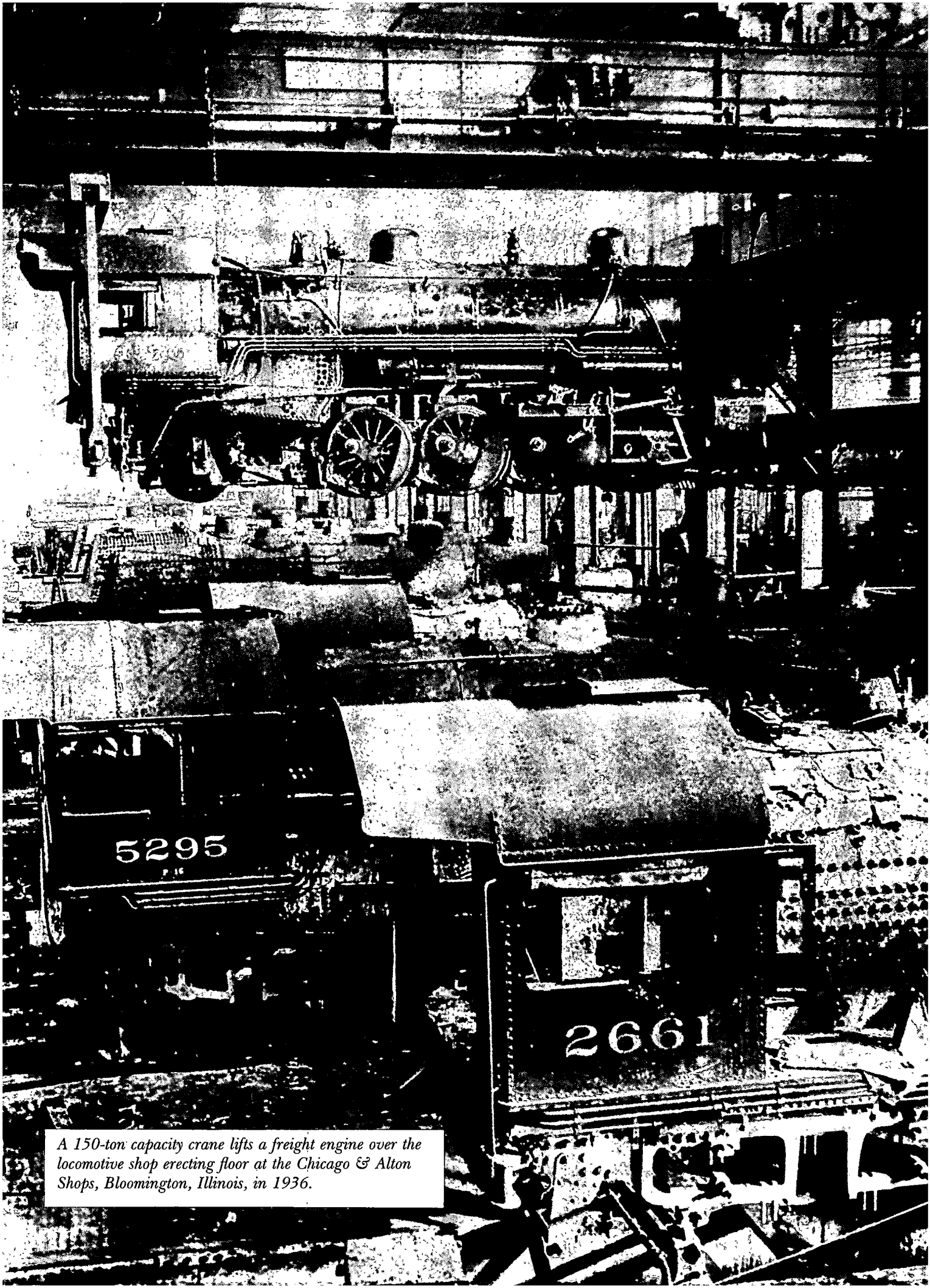
More recently, this long-term trend has taken new twists, even more disastrous for railroaders left in Bloomington. The ICG began diversifying out of railroading, acquiring more profitable subsidiaries such as Pet Milk, Midas Muffler and some Pepsi-Cola distributorships. Traffic was concentrated through the ICG's eastern Illinois route, operations through Bloomington dropped, and finally the huge Shops complex was abandoned. The ICG got out of railroading altogether in 1987. Even before that final step, according to veteran railroader Ray Eisenberger, the ICG had "literally shut this railroad down. They got all the shop buildings torn down except the little engine house. You know how many machinists they got down there now? They've got one machinist!"

LEGACIES. What is left? What is there from the past in Bloomington's Shops for former railroaders to hold on to?

The sheer joy of railroading, for one thing. Joe Penn tried to explain the emotion, the feeling a railroad man had for his occupation. "It's something you like to always be doing. You want to be around it. . . . It just was something inside you and you couldn't get it out, it stayed there. I loved it." Bill Dunbar noted that while railroad pay was good, more than that was pulling him:

> I grew up right beside the tracks. Those big engines would be rolling through town trying to get the train up the hill, and the bell would be going in a circle and the whistle tied down and the drivers rolling, and it was a sight and sound that you become addicted to . . . and there is something magnetic about the sight of the steam engine when it went by, and the sounds that they make. Many, many people have gotten smitten by this.

Over and over, they mention the steam engines. "There was just a fascination about the old steam engine that you never get out of a diesel locomotive and you never will because it isn't there, even the whistle, they can't match the old steam whistle," said



A 150-ton capacity crane lifts a freight engine over the locomotive shop erecting floor at the Chicago & Alton Shops, Bloomington, Illinois, in 1936.

Ralph Young. "They've tried with air and steam both, but they still haven't developed that old steam whistle. That was a sound all by itself."

To hear the railroaders talk is to realize that the steam engine had almost human qualities, as Bill Dunbar explained:

> you sort of felt with steam locomotives you let it tell you what to do, if it was laboring then you'd change the reverse lever little by little bit and got more steam into the cylinders, and that kind of thing. And, of course, rhythmic sounds about them, there was the clapping of the rods, of course, and the exhaust, and the boiler toiling and a different kind of machine all together.

Added to their memories of the steam engines are their recollections of fellow workers, of the camaraderie. Asked his fondest memory of the Shops, Frank Swibaker's response was immediate: "The men you're working with. You were working with the best kind. We always got along well together. . . . " Others gave supporting evidence to Swibaker's comments through their expressions of admiration for other railroaders.

Cooperative Local History Project

Michael G. Matejka

Preserving Bloomington railroaders' stories and eventually publishing them is a good example of a successful, cooperative historical project involving local labor and other agencies.

The project began in 1981, when the McLean County (Illinois) Historical Society and the local YWCA, which was directing senior citizens' programs, discussed undertaking a joint oral history project, not just to preserve memories and experiences of the elderly, but also to provide a meaningful activity for senior citizens.

Because the Chicago & Alton (C&A) Railroad had been such a dominant force in the community's economic life, the almost three thousand workers once employed by the C&A became the project's focus. Organized labor played a major role through the Bloomington and Normal Trades and Labor Assembly (AFL-CIO).

The Illinois Humanities Council funded the initial activity in 1982, with the YWCA acting as the sponsoring agency and the Historical Society and the Labor Assembly directing the project. Each partner brought a unique expertise to the project: the YWCA, its experience with senior citizens; the Historical Society, an overview of the community's total growth and the railroad's significance to it; and the Labor Assembly, the direct contact, trust and involvement with the workers.

With the help of the community's two universities, Illinois State University and Illinois Wesleyan University, a core group of history students went through orientation, with training in oral history techniques and sessions providing background on railroad and labor history—including a visit to a railroad museum and information on the community, its neighborhoods and ethnic makeup. With this introduction the students began the interviews, finding an audience of railroaders eager and excited to tell their stories. Initial interviews quickly led to contact with other retired railroaders, and the students completed over thirty interviews with former shopworkers and their families in 1982.

Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, they revealed a rich fabric of stories and memories. The railroad and the experience of railroad shopworkers were at the center, but they also included information on ethnic identity, neighborhood life, and how people coped with social change, hard times and the eventual demise of their employer.

Nick Petri described a fellow worker as, "A short guy who loved to sing and every time after work if you got any place with him in a tavern you had to stop and sing."

The feeling even extended within the clerical staff. Jean McCrossin said she felt a kinship, "sort of a fraternity," with others who worked for the Shops, who helped each other out. "It was something sort of exciting about working for the railroad," she added: "You had a feeling you were kinda special. . . . It was more than just a job." Once laid off, Thomas Moore admitted, you tried to go back, because "if you once worked for the railroad, it more or less got in your blood."

These veteran railroaders who rejoice in the camaraderie, who can describe their work with loving detail (asked what was the best job in the Shops, each invariably said it was the work he had performed for twenty or thirty years)—these men now face the bleak reality that the site of their lifetime of labor is virtually destroyed. The Bloomington C&A Shops is today a desolate wasteland of crumbling, rotting structures. Some venture to pay a visit, as Lawrence Hoog and his brother did. "We went back and looked at the old paint shops and the coach shops and it almost made me

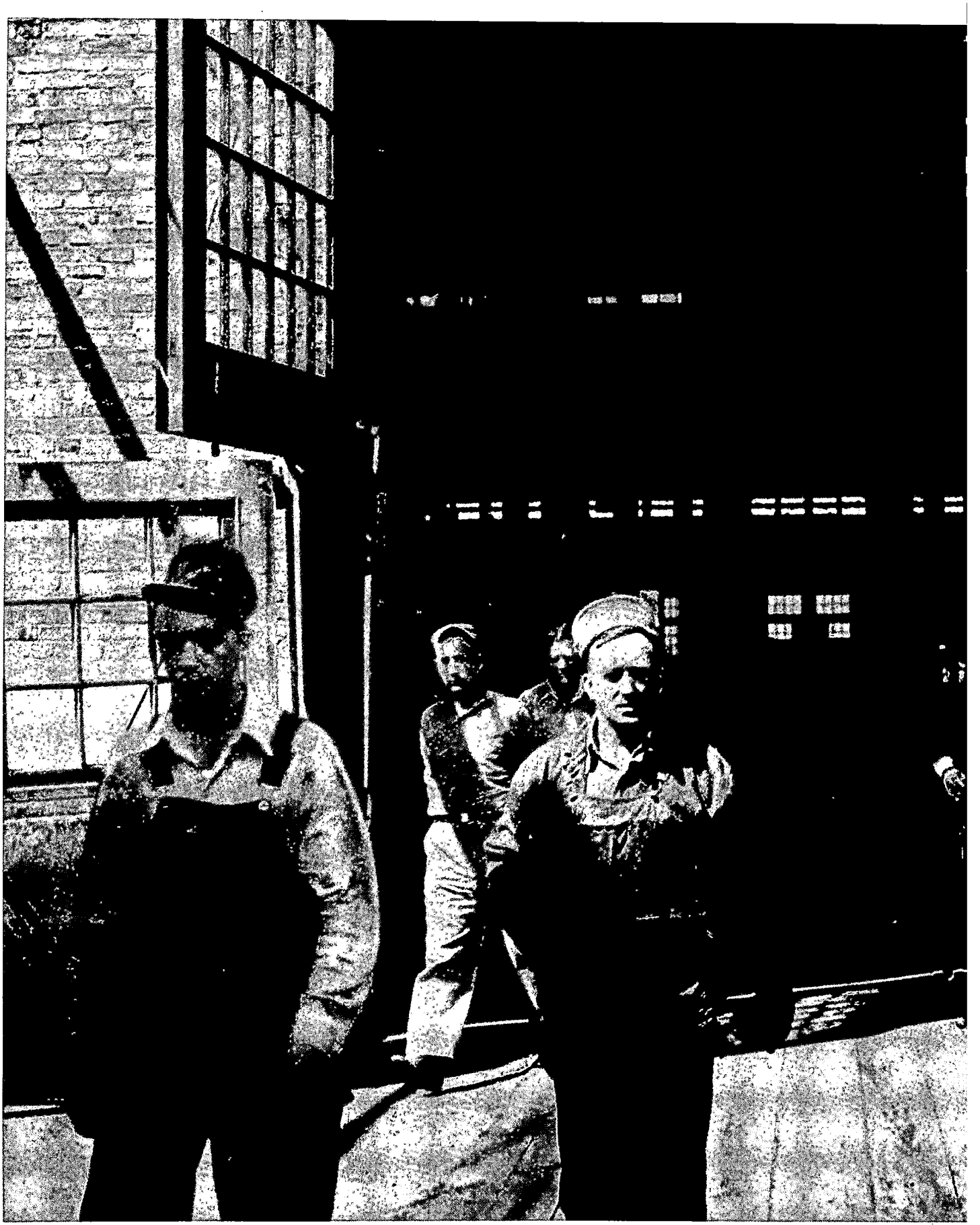
It was decided that these stories were too rich to simply be tucked away as an archival source—they needed to be shared with the community. Again, the Illinois Humanities Council was approached, and under its 1987 theme of "Inventing Illinois—Workers and the World of Work," it awarded the Historical Society and the Trades and Labor Assembly another grant, this time for publication of the interviews.

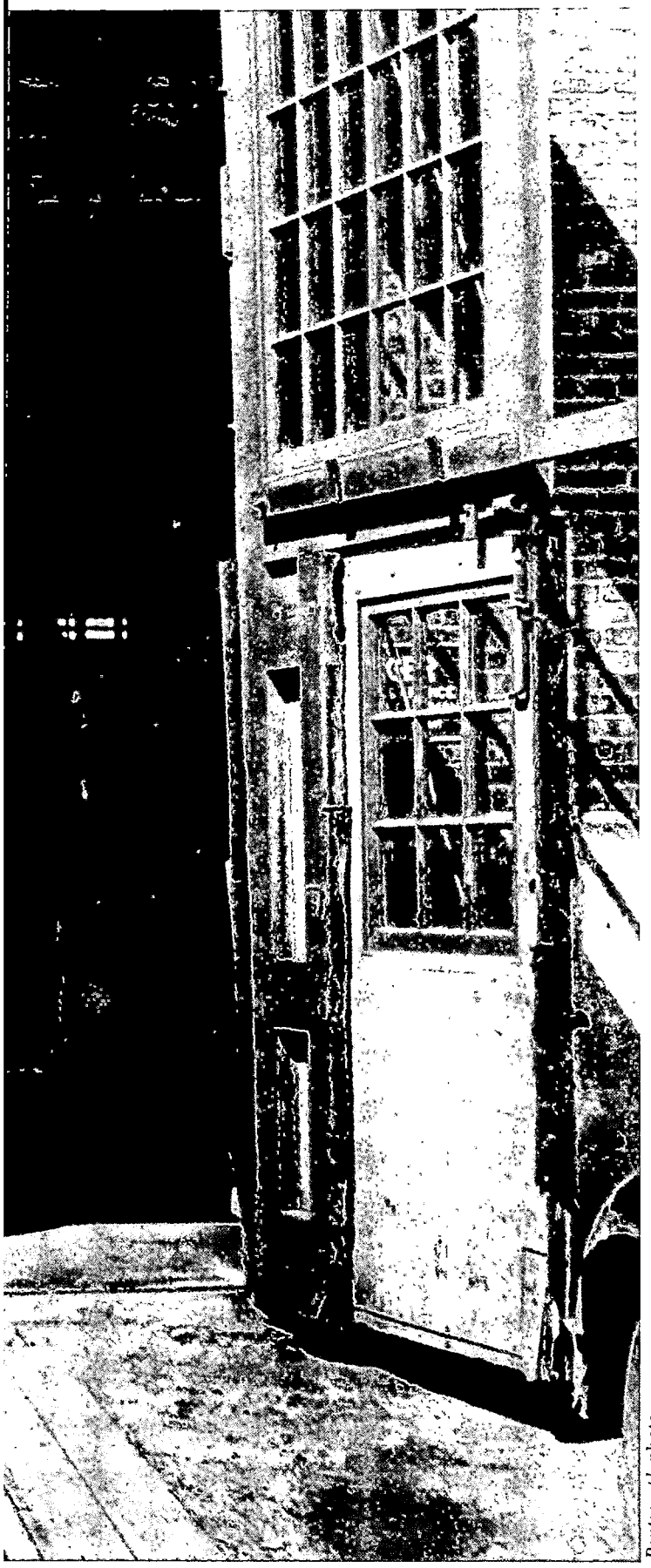
Bloomington's C&A Shops: Our Lives Remembered, edited by *Union News* editor Mike Matejka and acting Historical Society director Greg Koos, was the result. The two-thousand-book printing received an overwhelming response in the community, selling out in the three weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas 1987. Also helpful was support from WJBC-AM, the most popular radio station in the community, whose morning disk jockey, Don Munson, produced a series of interviews about the book, recreating the noises of the shops and recapturing the neighborhoods and their activity.

The Historical Society approached the project with enthusiasm. Like most local historical societies, there is an eagerness for area history, and, at the same time, a realization that most societies of this type started as social clubs of the upper crust; thus they may have little in their collections to reflect workers' lives and experiences. This society was eager (and probably most would be) for some mechanisms and contacts to round out its collection.

A lesson for organized labor from this project is that there are community resources that can be vital in keeping workers' stories alive. Since most workers operate in an oral, not a written, culture, capturing their memories and stories is critical if labor's history and perspective is to be preserved. Older workers enjoyed the renewed interest in their working lives and their contributions to community life. A younger generation of workers was educated about its predecessors' battles. Labor history was preserved in a reputable and accessible format, and labor gained renewed respect in the community. As a partner in these projects, the Trades and Labor Assembly was seen as a contributor to the community, and the radio airplay and the book in print renewed labor's image as involved for the good of all.

Already there are plans for a second volume, this time on construction workers, funded by the Livingston and McLean Counties Building and Construction Trades Council (AFL-CIO). The enthusiasm for the railroaders' book led this group of unionists to want to do the same for their forebears. And the McLean County Historical Society and organized labor are planning future projects together. Highlighting these at the moment is an ambitious restoration project that would mean a larger museum—one with a special section devoted to workers and the world of work, preserving for future generations the contributions of organized labor and its members.





Pantagraph photo

cry. . . . When I worked there it was about a thousand or fifteen hundred people working there and when you look there now it is all empty."

And so they talk—among themselves, mainly, but with any others who stop by and ask questions about the railroad. And buried within their memories of the boiler shop and the upholstery shop, making wheels or tank cars, is the realization that they were part of something very special in American history, something that was absolutely crucial for the nation's economic development. And so, as William Dunbar observed, when two railroaders meet today they talk about railroads: "That is their life, . . . it is not just a way to make a living, but it's a way of life."

And that way of life dominated Bloomington, Illinois, in the years when the Chicago & Alton Shops were booming and the city followed the rhythms of those special men called railroaders.

Workers leave the machine shop as the shift whistle blows in 1944.

Notes

Mark Wyman worked as labor reporter for the Minneapolis *Tribune* before receiving his Ph.D. in 1971. He is a professor of history at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois, and the author of three books: *Hard Rock Epic: Western Miners and the Industrial Revolution, 1860–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); *Immigrants in the Valley: Irish, Germans, and Americans in the Upper Mississippi Country, 1830–1860* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1984); and *D.P.: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951*, to be published by the Balch Institute in 1988.

Michael G. Matejka is editor of the *Livingston and McLean County Union News* and a co-author of *Bloomington's C&A Shops: Our Lives Remembered.*

Bloomington's C&A Shops: Our Lives Remembered has had a limited second printing, and copies are available through the University of Illinois Press.

Eric Arnesen

Learning the Lessons of Solidarity

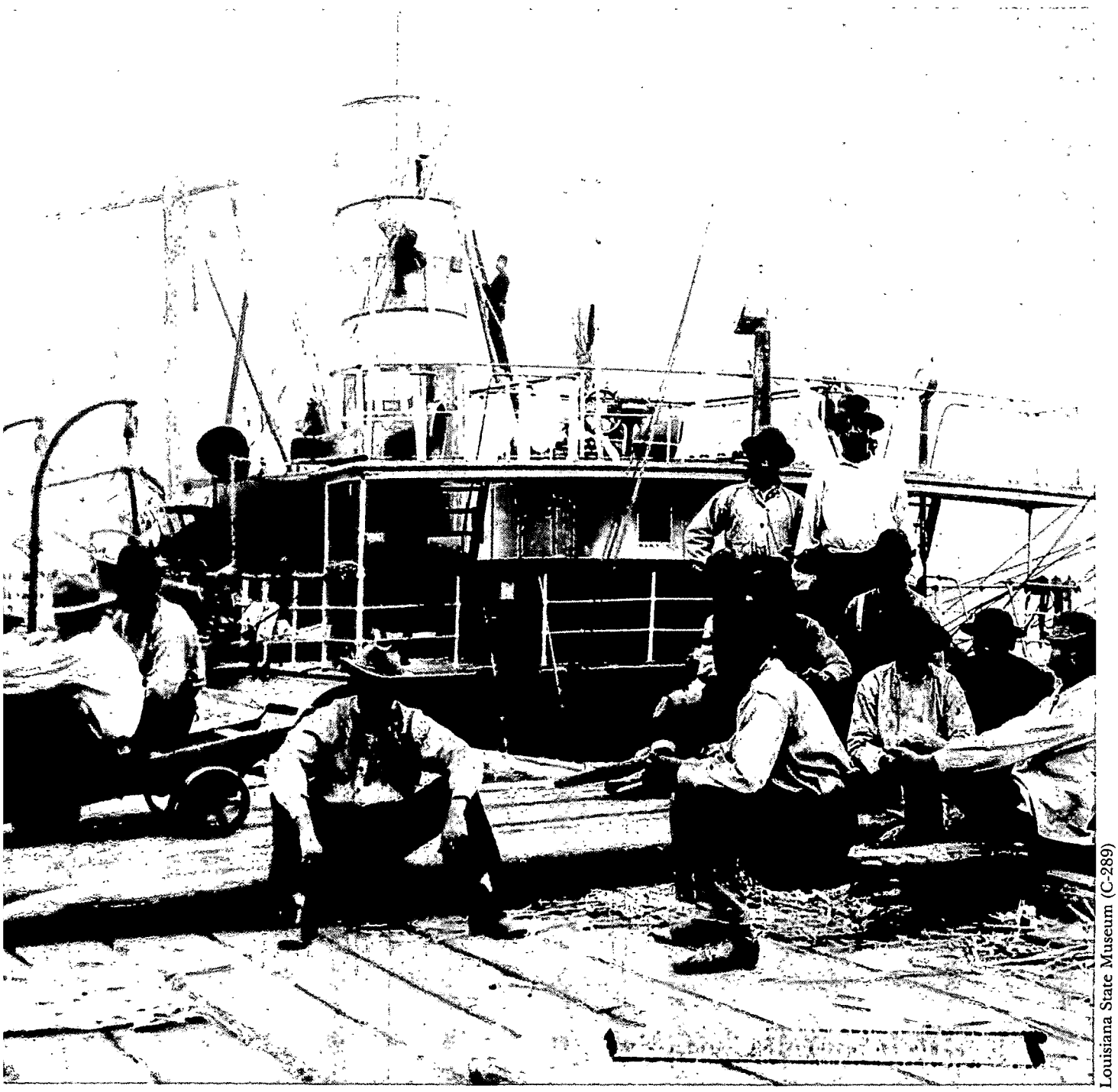
Work Rules and Race Relations on the New Orleans Waterfront, 1880–1901

In 1913 THE *NEW YORK AGE*, A BLACK NEWSpaper, reported on the New Orleans waterfront labor movement. Although "professional white politicians" sought "to make it understood that the races find it difficult to get along together in the South," it observed, "the best of feeling exists between the colored and white longshoremen . . . and a working agreement is in force between them which guarantees all a square deal."[1]

Despite some exaggeration, the paper touched upon a central feature in the history of the Crescent City's black and white working class—the development of a strong, interracial alliance that withstood the segregationist pressures of the era. Largely unskilled waterfront workers learned the hard way in the 1870s and especially in the 1890s that in a racially divided labor market, there could be no union power without interracial solidarity—work rules and race relations could not be separated. The Cotton Men's Executive Council and its successor, the Dock and Cotton Council, united various black and white trade unions involved in the transportation of cotton, mediated racial tensions and promoted interracial labor solidarity. Although cooperation across racial lines did not always characterize relations between black and white riverfront laborers, their success in minimizing racial friction from 1880 to the early 1890s and from 1901 through the early 1920s allowed them to exert a significant degree of control over the labor process. This essay explores two issues: first, the origins, collapse and reemergence of the waterfront alliance between 1880 and the turn of the century, and second, the connections between race relations and the strength of work rules.

This picture of interracial labor harmony contrasts sharply with the standard image of Southern labor and race relations. Earlier studies of Southern urban black labor, for example, described the exclusion of blacks from artisan and skilled trades over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and their inability to secure a foothold in new industrial jobs. As

Roustabouts, ca. 1895. Photo by George F. Mugnier.



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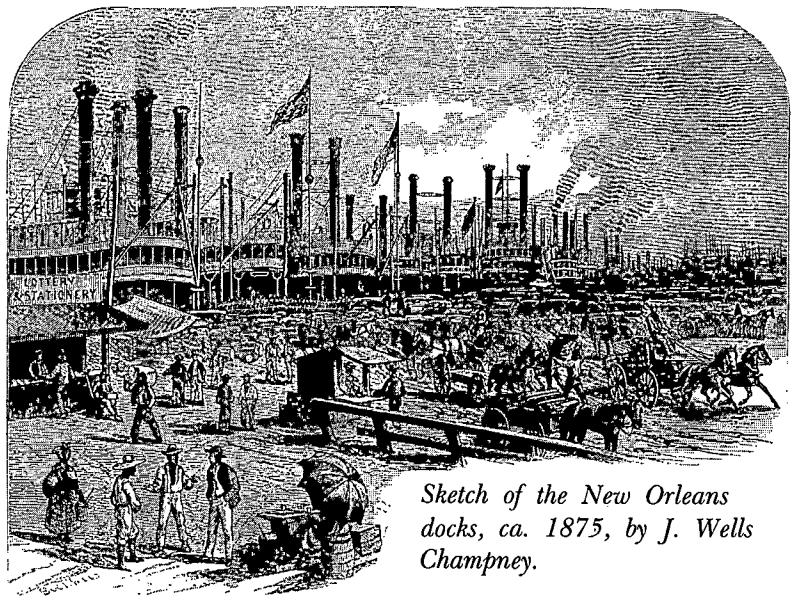


Edward King, *The Great South* (1875)

Sketch of the New Orleans docks, ca. 1875, by J. Wells Champney.

late as 1981, one historian argued that the crucial issue for Afro-American labor history "was not so much how blacks got along on the jobs but whether they got jobs at all." [2] While the themes of exclusion and discrimination illustrate important realities of postbellum Southern society, there were other patterns of race and class relations during this period.

Over three decades ago, C. Vann Woodward established a general framework for understanding the issue of race relations within labor's ranks. "Two possible but contradictory policies" toward blacks were available to Southern white labor, he noted in his *Origins of the New South*: "eliminate the Negro as a competitor by excluding him from the skilled trades either as an apprentice or worker, or take him in as an organized worker committed to the defense of a common standard of wages. Southern labor wavered between these antithetical policies from the seventies into the nineties, sometimes adopting one, sometimes the other." [3] As the late Herbert Gutman suggested in his essay on the black union organizer Richard Davis and the United Mine Workers, the interactions between black and white workers remained highly complex even after the 1890s, by which time segregation—embodied in the term "Jim Crow"—was the common pattern in Southern society and in the ranks of the labor movement in the South.[4]

How was it that Southern white workers alternated between two possible but contradictory policies of exclusion and incorporation? The attitudes held by white unionists toward blacks in the workplace or union hall depended on a number of factors: their attitudes toward organizing unskilled labor; past legacies of interracial cooperation or hostility; the dynamics of local and state politics; racial ideologies; employer practices and strategies toward labor; the pace of technological change in particular industries and firms; the structure of local and regional labor markets; the goals of the union or labor movement; and the very forms of unionism adopted by workers. If skilled white unions in the South frequently excluded blacks from their ranks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were notable exceptions that defied the specific logic of segregation and white supremacy. This essay explores one group of such workers in one, rather unusual, Southern city.

(ii)

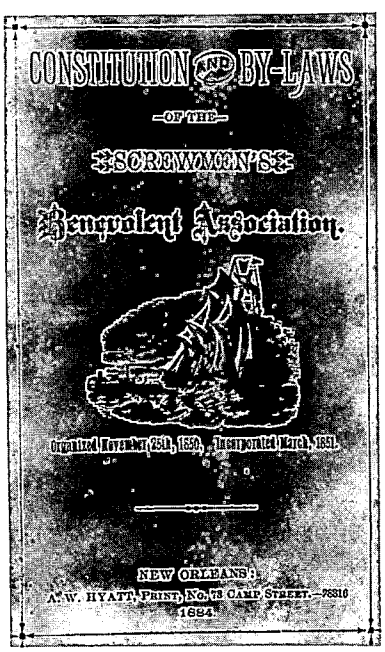
"New Orleans exists chiefly by reason of the cotton trade it controls," the *New Orleans Times* observed in 1881. "Without this trade the city would actually have no industry to support its population, no reason for such a population to live here.... Take away this cotton trade and you take away that which has created and now maintains this city." [5] Commerce was indeed at the heart of New Orleans' economic life in the nineteenth century, and it shared with other Southern port cities a dependence on "its great staples, their handling, exchange and transmission to the Northern and foreign markets." [6] The Crescent City functioned as a transshipment center for agricultural goods of Louisiana and much of the lower Mississippi Valley; as one city guide noted in 1885, the cotton trade alone "requires an army of men and furnishes occupation for nearly two-thirds of the population." [7] No other urban enterprise could compete with transportation and commerce as the Crescent City's dominant economic activities. By the 1880s, roughly thirteen thousand men worked for the steamship agents and steve-

dores, the railroad companies or for numerous middlemen who accepted contracts to produce or repair barrels, weigh goods and to transport various products between different processing points in the city.

A complex and unique division of labor characterized the work of loading, unloading and transporting agricultural staples; each step in the processing and transporting of sugar, molasses, rice and above all cotton constituted a distinct trade, or a separate class of labor, as the workers put it. Cotton arrived in the city by water or rail. By the 1880s, freight handlers unloaded rail cars at the terminals and depots of the expanding railroad lines near the river. Black roustabouts worked on board Mississippi River steamboats that carried goods from plantations to shipping points along the river. Regular dock hands on the non-railroad wharves included the cotton screwmen—the most skilled riverfront workers—who unloaded and loaded cotton and tobacco from the holds of docked river steamships or ocean vessels. On the non-railroad wharves, longshoremen accepted the cotton from the screwmen and unloaded sugar and molasses themselves. Round freight teamsters took charge of all barrelled goods, while teamsters and loaders carried cotton to the elevators and warehouses of the cotton press yards. After the cotton was weighed, classed, purchased, reweighed and compressed, teamsters would transport it to the wharves, where longshoremen and screwmen again assumed control. "So well is the handling of cotton organized," remarked Zacharie's *Guide* in 1885, that the details were "expeditiously ... carried out in a clockwork manner."

The multiplicity of tasks involved in transportation and processing and the diversity of work experiences on the docks easily could have led to a fragmentation of labor along craft or racial lines. Such had been the case during the Reconstruction years. During the depression of the 1870s, black longshoremen struggled alone and generally with little success to resist wage reductions and impose the union shop. Laborers along the docks experienced a chronic economic insecurity based on the vulnerability of their jobs to the vicissitudes of trade and shifting commercial routes. The generally unskilled character of the work and the largely artificial lines separating the so-called crafts meant that those who resisted their employers could be replaced easily. The defeats of longshore workers in the 1870s drove home the hard lesson that successful struggle required the full cooperation and solidarity of all dock workers.[8]

The emergence of a biracial union structure and a waterfront union federation by 1880 altered the situation dramatically. A flurry of union organizing on the waterfront accompanied the return of a modest commercial prosperity in the late 1870s. In 1879, white and black cotton yardmen formed separate but allied associations that agreed to abide by the same conference rules, to work for the same wages and to divide all available work between the two unions; in 1880, black cotton teamsters and loaders and black coal wheelers also established unions. Following a number of unprecedented and successful strikes by yardmen and teamsters in the fall of 1880, dock workers established the Cotton Men's Executive Council in December of that year. The new council allied all waterfront cotton union men, black and white, engaged in the cotton trade; in the words of the *Daily Picayune* this "solid organization of the labor element embracing every class employed in handling the staple from the time of its



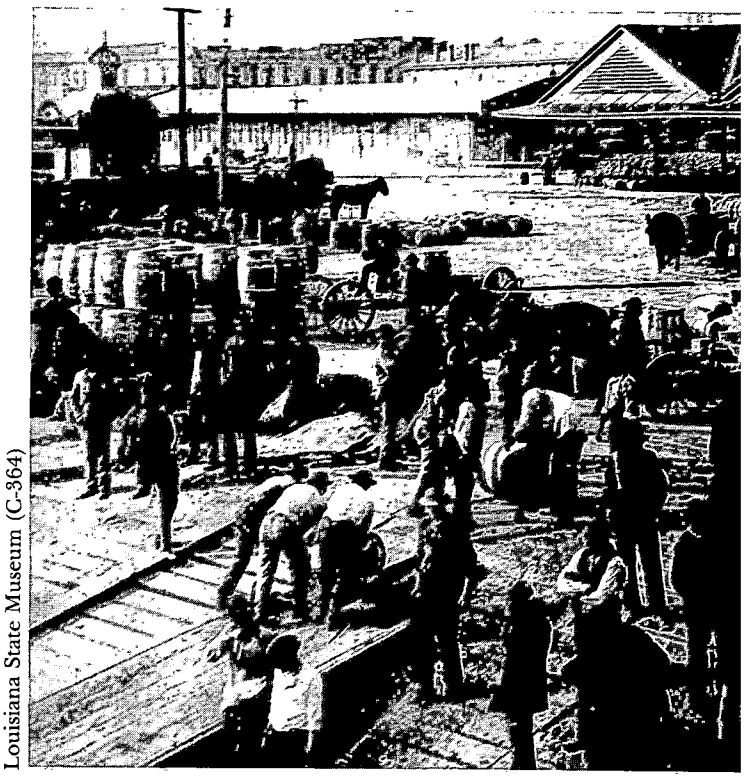
Louisiana Collection, Tilden Memorial Library, Tulane University

Constitution and By-Laws of the Screwmen's Benevolent Association, New Orleans, 1884. Using large jackscrews, screwmen compressed bales of cotton into the holds of ships.

reception until it is stored in the ship's hold" included in its initial membership the white and black unions of screwmen, longshoremen, yardmen, white weighers and classers, and black teamsters, representing approximately thirteen thousand men.[9] The unions, noted German economist August Sartorius, Freiherr von Waltershausen, in his 1886 account, "were able, despite the occasional outbreak of racial antipathy, to harmonize the opposing factions, and have undertaken, through the recognition of black labor, a problem in civilization, whose solution will probably not be witnessed by them."[10] While respecting the integrity of each constituent trade union, the Council functioned as a coordinating body. Voting delegates from each member union gave the Council considerable authority and power, and its support was indispensable to its constituent members. The Council exercised a limited veto power over the actions of its members: while individual unions formulated their own wage rates and work rules, the Council could refuse to sanction, and hence prevent, any changes in already adopted tariffs.

The new Cotton Men's Executive Council put an end to the fragmentary nature of waterfront unionism of the 1870s and made solidarity between the different dock trades a reality for the first time. Drawing together nonindustrial common laborers who sought to minimize their economic vulnerability and employment insecurity, it imposed a new order on riverfront employment and work practices by regulating the size of the labor force, mediating race relations, and outlining clear rules governing the performance of dock work. Moreover, it institutionalized a principle of solidarity that linked all cotton workers into a single chain, and employers quickly discovered that an attack upon any link had the potential to grind to a halt the transportation process. A "firm holding-together and forward-looking purpose" gave the laborers' council its strength, observed August Sartorius:

> The closely-knit connection among the workers makes it difficult for the employers to break a strike. If, for example, the longshoremen have declared a strike with the approval of the central authority, their rather simple work could be performed by workers of similar occupation; but as the latter usually belong to the "ring," the employer must renounce his intention. . . . But even if substitutions are made, the merchants are not rid of the difficulty. For even if the cotton is loaded from the river–boats by other longshoremen, there would be a lock of draymen, whose union would strike at the command of the central authority. And thus it would continue successively, and the merchant would have eight such strikes on hand, from which he would emerge victorious only with difficulty.[11]



Louisiana State Museum (C-364)

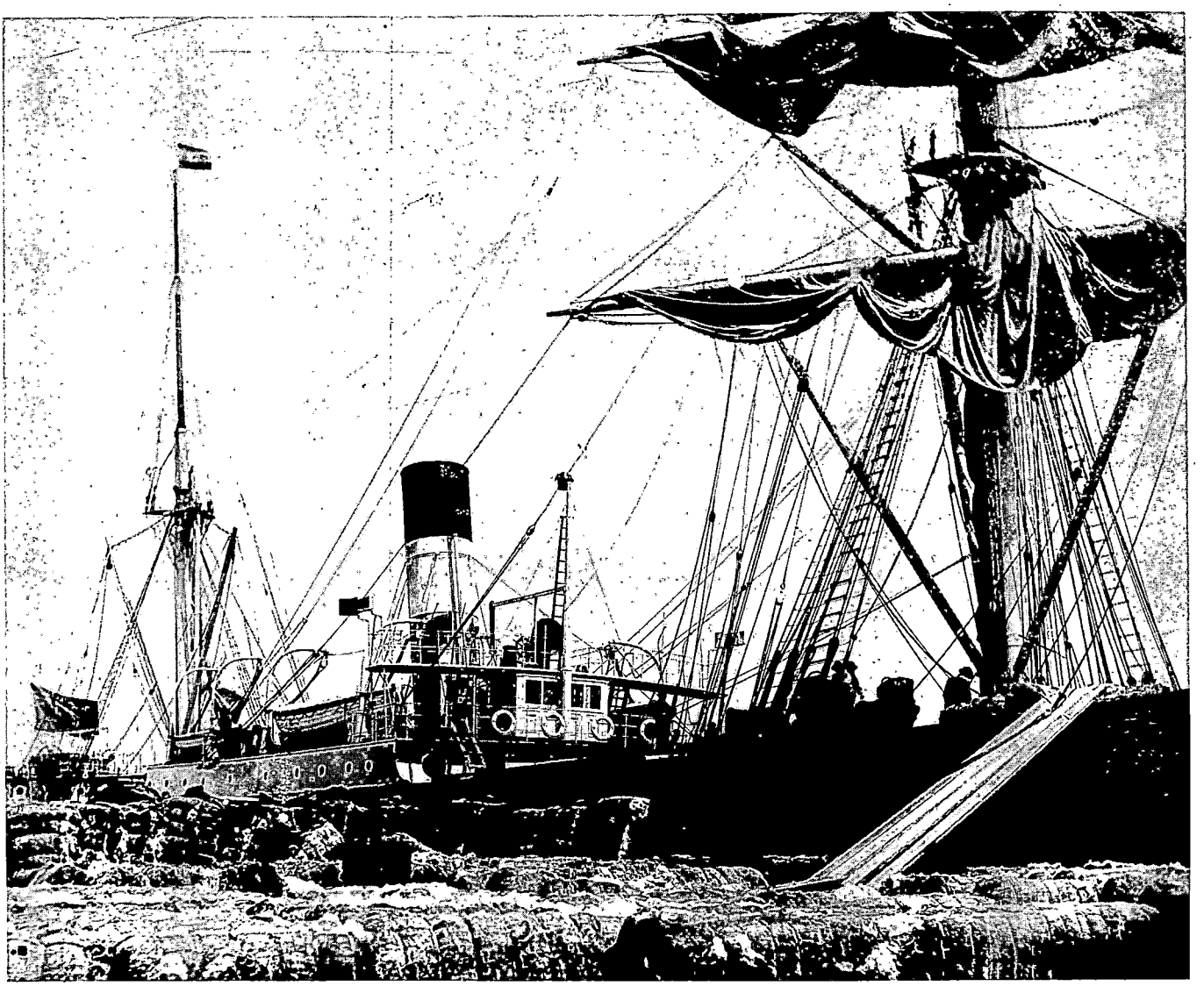
Unloading sugar at New Orleans, ca. 1895. Photo by George F. Mugnier.

In a testament to its power, the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* noted in 1887 that "[n]o such a monopoly ever existed before. Not a pound of cotton could be packed or loaded by any but a member of the cotton council."[12] The Council, of course, was not successful in wholly eliminating the insecurity of waterfront work, nor did it overcome divisions between black and white workers and between different waterfront crafts. But by promoting a limited interracial solidarity across trade lines, it brought some degree of stability and predictability to the docks by providing the framework necessary for the formulation of broad strategy and the resolution of differences.

Three factors made such an alliance feasible in the first place: the politics of the New Orleans' municipal government, the city's rather flexibile racial codes during the decade, and the existence of strong, independent black unions. The Democratic-Conservative

party machine, also known as the Ring, was a tightly-knit and well-organized political force whose power was firmly anchored at the ward level. Relying on varying degrees of violence, corruption and patronage, it dominated municipal politics—with a few exceptions—from the end of Reconstruction until the early 1920s. The city's "best men," or its "silk-stocking elite" (merchants, lawyers, professionals and cotton transportation businessmen), never failed to put up municipal reform tickets, and occasionally elected some of its candidates to public office. But it never succeeded in remaking the city in its own image and in destroying the power of the Democratic party machine. The Ring, drawing its support from immigrant and native white, and occasionally black, working class voters and from contractors who received city franchises, regularly dominated the electoral arena and carried out programs

Steamship loading with cotton, ca. 1895. Photo by George F. Mugnier.



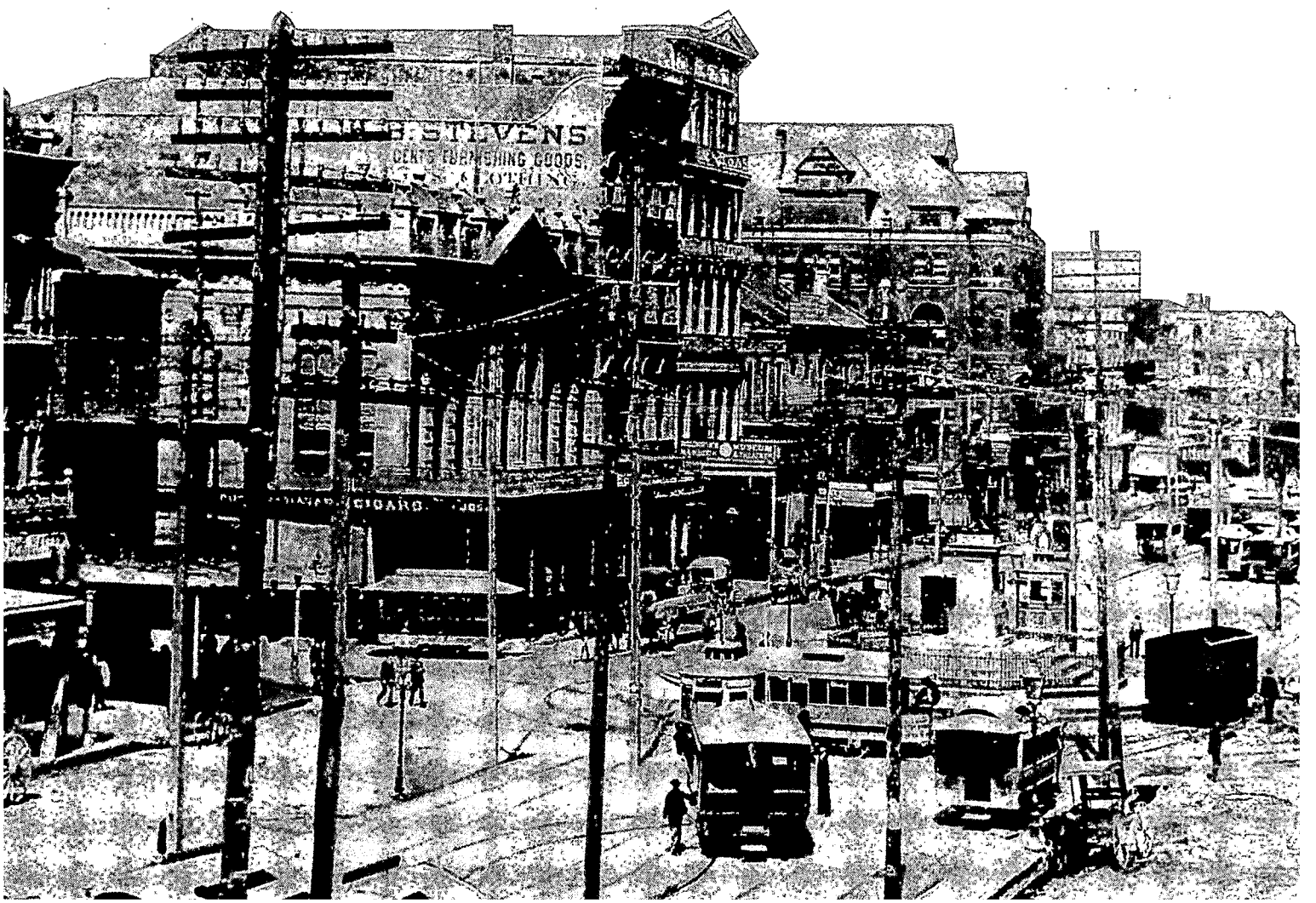
Louisiana State Museum (B-175)

that benefited its own supporters. This meant a liberal dispensation of patronage from the Department of Public Works at election time, and also meant that the city's labor movement was a direct beneficiary of the Ring's political power. Dependent upon labor's vote, the machine avoided alienating its white social base, especially on the docks, and adopted a supportive or at least a hands-off policy toward strikes and labor conflicts. In such a political environment, white and black workers in the longshore trades were able to develop their interracial movement and implement complicated conference rules and work sharing agreements with little government interference.[13]

Following the Ring's defeat at the hands of elite reformers in 1896 and the disfranchisement of black voters at the end of the century, a reorganized machine—the Choctaw Club—dominated city politics for the first two decades of the twentieth century. Although its leader, Mayor Martin Behrman, developed close ties to the city's businessmen and adopted their programs for economic modernization of the port, he maintained a longstanding tradition of respecting the power of waterfront unions, refused to break their strikes, and as an arbitrator often ruled in their favor.[14]

Despite a tendency toward increased segregation and

A view of Canal Street during the New Orleans general strike.



New Orleans *Times Democrat*, 8 November 1892

The strikers' headquarters.

racial hostility in the late nineteenth century South, race relations in New Orleans combined openness with exclusion and interracial cooperation with racial antagonisms. Historian John Blassingame's observations about the Reconstruction era hold true for the 1880s: "In New Orleans, as perhaps in no other American city, there were many cracks in the color line." For example, blacks and whites mingled freely at the 1885 World Cotton Exposition; until the mid-1880s, segregated black baseball teams regularly competed with their white counterparts; and visitors to Lake Pontchartrain's beaches shared interracial bathhouses and picnic grounds. The cracks in New Orleans' color line extended well into the ranks of labor: during the 1880s, the city's leading labor federation—the Central Trades and Labor Assembly—admitted to membership all unions regardless of race, and for most of the decade both blacks and whites marched together in the Assembly's annual parades. The General Strike of 1892 climaxed this era of cooperation across racial lines: although the major waterfront unions were not involved—they had already won the union shop years earlier—some twenty thousand workers in forty-two unions paralyzed much of the city for three days in support of the Triple Alliance, composed of two to three thousand black and white round freight teamsters and loaders, warehousemen and packers, and scalemen.[15] White workers in the Crescent City were by no means immune to the increasing racial hostility, but the white labor movement was a late convert to the crude racism and exclusionary practices developing in other sectors of Southern society. Sandwiched between a decade of Reconstruction and one of economic depression, labor and agrarian insurgency and the rise of segregation and virulent racism, the 1880s constituted, in the words of Sterling Spero and Abram Harris, a temporary and "unprecedented era of good feeling" between white and black workingmen.[16] But if codes governing race relations were flexible and overtly discriminatory legislation was absent during the 1880s, social, fraternal and most religious life followed strictly racial lines. New Orleans' black and white residents, like those of other Southern urban centers, inhabited separate worlds.[17]

If the political culture and race relations climate proved favorable to waterfront unions, the existence of powerful, independent black waterfront unions made an interracial alliance both possible and imperative. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, blacks constituted roughly a quarter of the city's population, which numbered roughly 287,000 in 1900. By the 1870s and 1880s, black New Orleans supported a solid social network which drew upon the community's resources to protect its members and to address their social, economic and political needs. Fraternal organizations, or secret societies, were a vital instrument in integrating ex-slaves or newcomers into an urban community of free men and women, and by the 1870s, many unskilled black wage earners had formed benevolent societies based on their occupations or workplaces. The Longshoremen's Protective Union and Benevolent Association was one: it aimed "to relieve the distress of their members, care for the sick by providing physicians, nurses, and medicine, bury their dead and provide for their widows and orphans" as well as "to regulate the time and fix the price of labor . . . upon the shores or levee.[18] During the 1880s, black unions offered essential social functions to working class black New Orleans: black teamsters sponsored popular annual excursions from New Orleans to Mobile, and teamsters, longshoremen, yardmen and screwmen all organized numerous parties, picnics and balls, especially during summer months when business was slow and work was scarce. Black unions contributed financially to churches and black educational institutions, and numerous black union leaders were prominent in the affairs of the small Republican party in the city.[19]

At the same time, black New Orleans could credit its

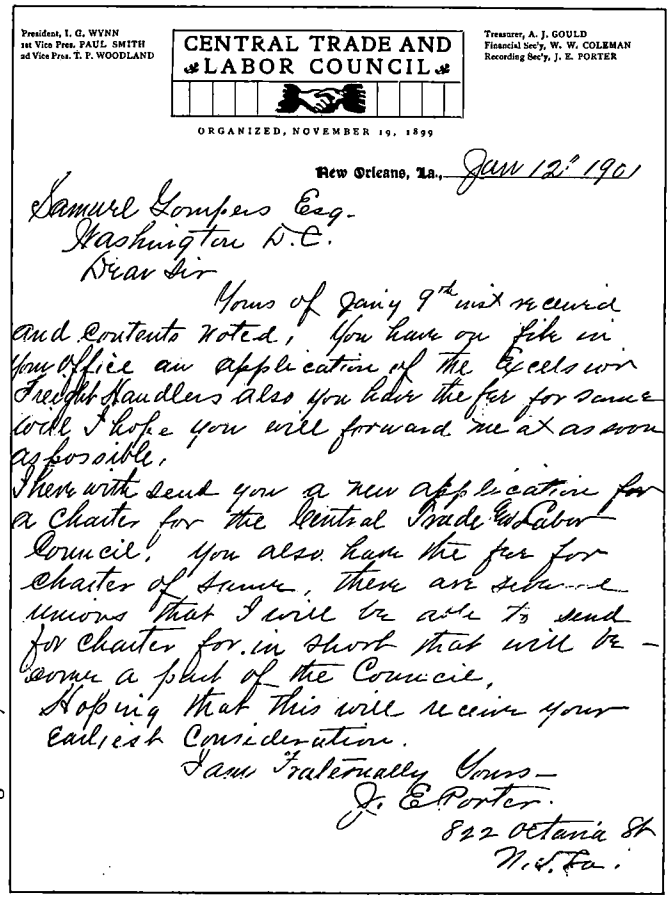
arate CLU in 1901. After the turn of the century, Porter and the black longshoremen tirelessly organized black riverfront workers.[34]

While white craft unions institutionalized the principle of segregation and white supremacy at the turn of the century, a far different dynamic was operating on the river-front. During the race riot of 1900, white longshore workers refused to participate in random and vicious attacks against New Orleans blacks. The following year, the black and white cotton screwmen, black and white longshoremen, black teamsters and loaders, black and white cotton yardmen, and black coal wheelers, cemented an informal working alliance with the founding of the Dock and Cotton Council. "The conditions on the levee are now in the most peaceable condition that they have been for a long time," one labor leader observed,

> White and colored laborers are working in harmony. They realize that opposition to each other [had] destroyed their power . . . and they have recently been combining their efforts. Every important action is indorsed by the coordinated organizations on both sides, and there are plans being formulated for an equitable distribution of the work, so that neither side shall have any complaint.[35]

The reconstitution of the interracial alliance in the age of Jim Crow reflected, to a degree, conditions unique to the world of waterfront labor as well as the recovery of the earlier principle of interracial solidarity. The upheavals of 1894–95 underscored waterfront workers' vulnerability and drove home the point to unskilled white dock workers that unlike skilled craftsmen they simply had no power to enforce a whites-only policy on employers. Indeed, strong black unions—as well as aggressive employers—had no intention of permitting whites to drive blacks from the riverfront.

The new alliance addressed a key complaint of black workers—the unfair distribution of work—and facilitated the adoption of a half-and-half agreement by the screwmen in 1902. Not only would all work be divided equally between the two unions under the plan, but each crew would be half black and half white. After two major strikes in 1902 and 1903, the screwmen



President, I. G. WYNN
1st Vice Pres. PAUL SMITH
2d Vice Pres. T. P. WOODLAND

CENTRAL TRADE AND LABOR COUNCIL

Treasurer, A. J. GOULD
Financial Sec'y, W. W. COLEMAN
Recording Sec'y, J. E. PORTER

ORGANIZED, NOVEMBER 19, 1899

New Orleans, La., Jan 12th 1901

Samuel Gompers Esq.
Washington D.C.
Dear Sir

Yours of Jany 9th inst received and contents noted. You have on file in your Office an application of the Screwmen Freight Handlers also you hold the fee for same with I hope you will forward me at as soon as possible.

Herewith send you a new application for a Charter for the Central Trade & Labor Council. You also have the fee for Charter of same. There are several unions that I will be able to send for Charter for. in short that will be - some a part of the Council.

Hoping that this will receive your earliest Consideration.

I am Fraternally Yours—
J. E. Porter.
822 Octavia St
N.O. La.

The George Meany Memorial Archives

J. E. Porter's letter to Samuel Gompers conveying New Orleans black unions' application for an AFL charter for a black city central union. On Gompers' suggestion, Porter subsequently agreed to its chartering under the name Central Labor Union, to more clearly distinguish it from the white Central Trades and Labor Council.

succeeded in imposing the new half-and-half plan on their reluctant employers, putting an end to the practice of playing blacks and whites against each other.

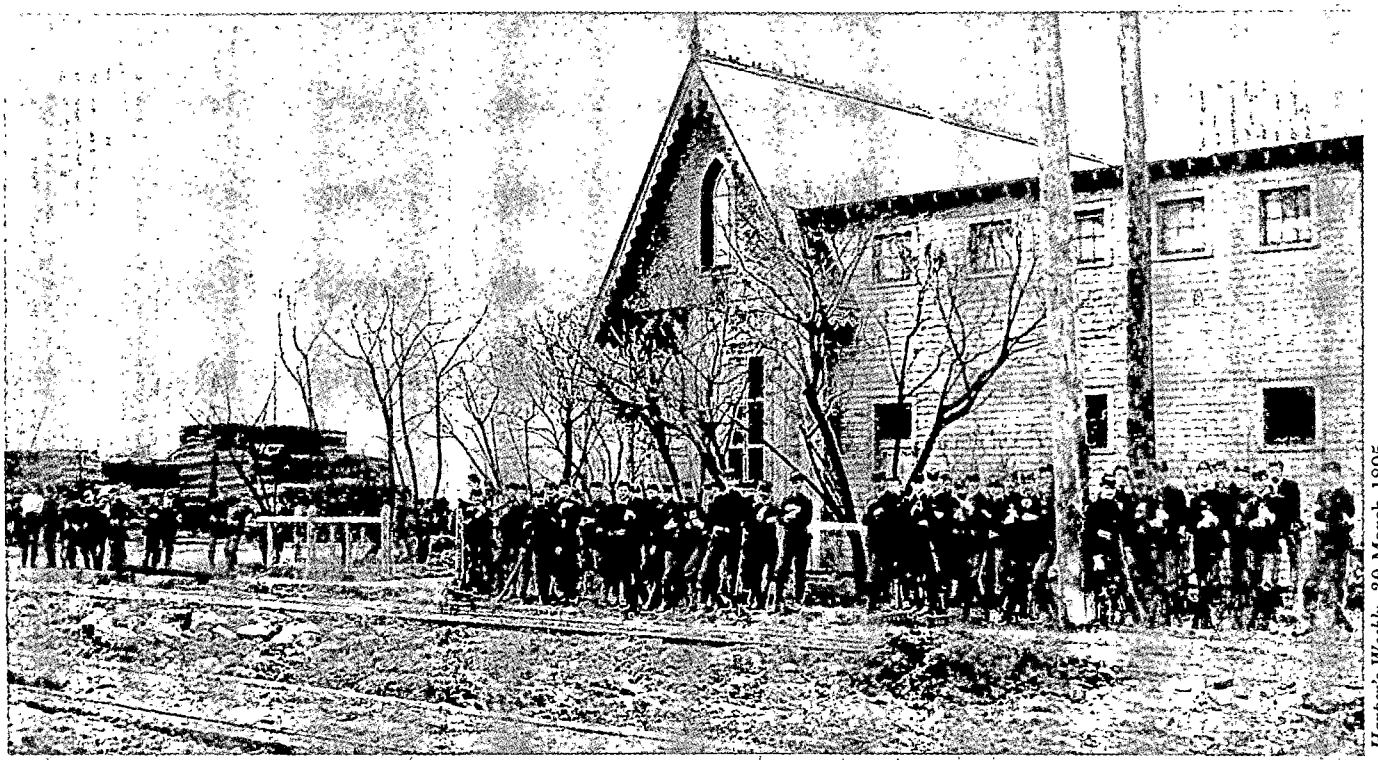
Coincidentally, the formation of the Dock and Cotton Council and the new, more equitable relationship between white and black screwmen occurred during a period of intensification of labor, whereby steamship agents and stevedores sought to speed up the work process and eliminate altogether the screwmen from the docks. More than ever before, the New Orleans waterfront resembled a battleground on which employers and workers continually struggled to define the terms under which labor would be performed.[36] In that contest, the waterfront alliance did fairly well. Between 1902 and 1908, it imposed work rules that forced employers to hire according to the half-and-half scheme; limited the amount of labor each gang would perform; established an arbitration system that favored workers; and shifted managerial authority from employers to union foremen. An indirect testament to these workers' success is found in the 1908 report of

the Port Investigation Commission, established by the state legislature to look into the causes of labor unrest on the waterfront: "One of the greatest drawbacks to New Orleans is the working of the white and negro races on terms of equality." That equality—which the five conservative commissioners agreed was a "disgrace to a Southern city"—constituted the core of waterfront workers' power and endured into the early 1920s.[37]

(iv)

The New Orleans experience in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggests that race relations on the waterfront cannot be studied in isolation from class relations between workers and employers and between different groups of workers, and that no simple formula can account entirely for the variations over time in each case. While the persistence of racial oppression and injustice certainly affected the struggles of the New Orleans black workers, black dock laborers in that city shared a strong interest with their white counterparts in regulating labor competition, in maintaining or increasing wage rates, and in extending workers' control over the labor process in an industry known for widespread abuses and commercial fluctuation. What is more, by the twentieth century, dock workers in Galveston and other Gulf ports also had developed some kind of bi-racial union structure in which black and white unions cooperated and shared available work.[38] While we know less about the working-class communities in other major Southern ports such as Baltimore, Virginia's Hampton Roads district, Charleston, and Jacksonville, it is becoming clear that the white South of the postbellum years was less unified than prevailing racial attitudes might suggest, and that white and black workers did make bi-racial efforts to further their common class interest.

Militia guarding the French Line wharves.



Harper's Weekly, 30 March 1895

Notes

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[1] "Longshoremen Draw No Line," *New York Age*, 14 Aug. 1913.

[2] William H. Harris, *The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 3; also see Nell Irvin Painter, "Black Workers from Reconstruction to the Great Depression," in Paul Buhle and Alan Dawley, eds., *Working for Democracy: American Workers from the Revolution to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), pp. 63-71.

[3] C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (1951; reprint ed., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), p. 229.

[4] Herbert G. Gutman, "The Negro and the United Mine Workers of America: The Career and Letters of Richard L. Davis and Something of Their Meaning: 1890-1900," in *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 121-208; Paul B. Worthman, "Black Workers and Labor Unions in Birmingham, Alabama, 1894-1904," *Labor History* 10 (1969):375-407. See also Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

[5] *New Orleans Times*, 28 Aug. 1881.

[6] Edwin De Leon, "The New South," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 49 (1874):555.

[7] James S. Zacharie, *New Orleans Guide: With Descriptions of Routes to New Orleans, Sights of the City Arranged Alphabetically, and other Information Useful to Travellers; also, Outlines of the History of Louisiana* (New Orleans: The New Orleans News Co., 1885), p. 81.

[8] On the character of waterfront work, see Eric Hobsbawm, "National Unions on the Waterside," in *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (New York: Basic Books, 1964); W. H. Beveridge, *Unemployment: A Problem of Industry* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), pp. 82-83. For some examples of the experiences of New Orleans black dock workers in the 1870s, see *Daily Picayune*, 18, 19, 21, 29, 30 Oct. 1872; 14, 26, 30 Oct. 1873; 2, 3 Sept. 1874; 31 Jan., 4 Feb. 1875; 4 Nov., 2 Dec. 1877; Joe Grey Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed, 1863-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), p.388.

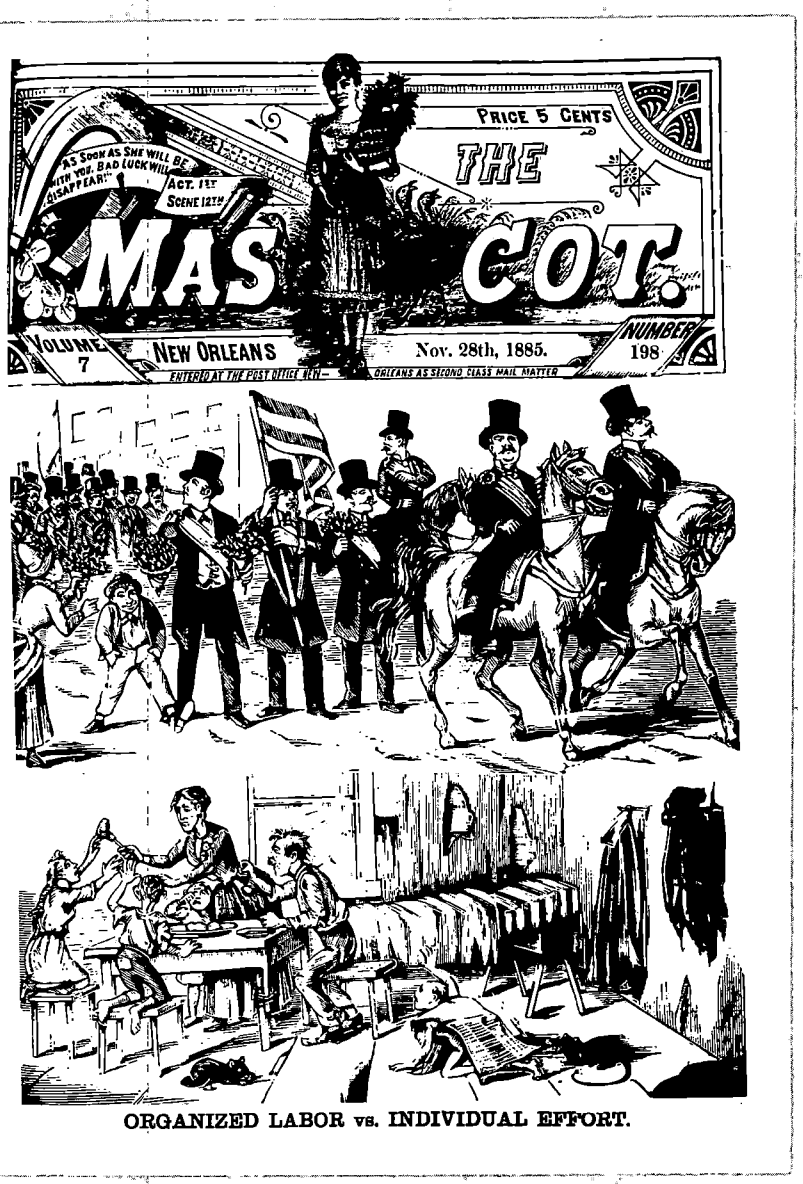
[9] *Daily Picayune*, 26 Aug. 1881; see also Arthur Raymond Pearce, "The Rise and Decline of Labor in New Orleans," M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1938, p. 25.

[10] August Sartorius, Freiherr von Waltershausen, *Die Nordamerikanischen Gewerkschaften unter dem Einflus der Fortschreitenden Productionstechinik* (Berlin: n.p., 1886), p. 94 (translation by Rick Livingston, Department of Comparative Literature, Yale University). A different translation can be found in the Abram Lincoln Harris Papers [Collection 43-1] Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

[11] Sartorius, *Die Nordamerikanischen Gewerkschaften*, p. 146.

[12] Quoted in *Weekly Pelican*, 14 May 1887.

[13] For a discussion of the New Orleans Ring and political culture, see *The Mascot*, 1, 15 July 1882; 20 Mar., 30 Aug. 1884; 27 Mar. 1886; 2, 7 Jan. 1888; Charles Dudley Warner, *Studies in the South and West, with Comments on Canada* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1889), p. 61; Matthew James Schott, "John M. Parker of Louisiana and the Varieties of American Progressivism," Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1969; Edward F. Haas, "John Fitzpatrick and Political Continuity in New Orleans, 1896-1900," *Louisiana History* 22 (1981):7-29; Brian Gary Ettinger, "John Fitzpatrick and the Limits of Working-Class Politics in New Orleans," *Louisiana History* 26 (1985):341-67; Joy J. Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress, 1880-1896* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969);



Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library

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[15] On the 1892 general strike, see Covington Hall, "Labor Struggles in the Deep South," Part I, Section II, pp. 10-25, in Special Collections and Archives Division, Tulane University; U.S., Congress, House, *House Document 495*, "Report of the Industrial Commission on the Relations and Conditions of Capital and Labor Employed in Manufactures and General Business," 56th Cong., 2d Sess., 19 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900-02), 7 (1901):647; Roger Wallace Shugg, "The New Orleans General Strike of 1892," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 21 (1938):547-60; *Times-Democrat*, 25-31 Oct., 1-13 Nov. 1892.

[16] John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 210; Warner, *Studies in the South*, p. 13; Dale Somers, *The Rise of Sports in New Orleans, 1850-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), p. 286; Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (1931; reprint ed., New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 42. On labor day parades, see *Times-Democrat*, 26 Nov. 1886; 26 Nov. 1887; 26 Nov. 1888.

[17] For example: *Weekly Pelican*, 23 July 1887; Warner, *Studies in the South*, p. 13; *Report of an Inquiry by the Board of Trade into Working Class Rents, Housing and Retail Prices, Together with the Rates of Wages in Certain Occupations in the Principal Industrial Towns of the United States of America* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911), p. 290. For a general discussion of separate associational lives, see Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 226.

[18] *Weekly Louisianian*, 7 May 1881. See also the union's charter, in the William Lombard Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

[19] For examples of the numerous events sponsored by black labor organizations, see *Weekly Pelican*, 5, 26 Feb., 5, 12 Mar., 2, 23 Apr., 21 May, 1 June, 30 July, 6, 13 Aug., 1, 15, 22, 29 Oct. 1887 and 20 July 1889. For discussions of politics, see *Weekly Pelican*, 14 May, 10 Sept. 1887.

[20] *Daily Picayune*, 4 Dec. 1886.

[21] Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940), p. 199.

[22] *Weekly Pelican*, 4 June 1887; see also 8 June 1889.

[23] See *Daily Picayune*, 2 July, 27, 28 Aug., 7, 8 Sept. 1881. For discussion of the strike, see also *Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1881* New Series 6 (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1885), p. 516; *The Mascot*, 7 Oct. 1882; *Weekly Louisianian*, 10, 17 Sept. 1881; David Paul Bennetts, "Black and White Workers: New Orleans, 1880-1900," Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1972.

[24] *Daily Picayune*, 29 Aug. 1881.

[25] *Daily Picayune*, 15 Sept. 1881; *New Orleans Times*, 15 Sept. 1881.

[26] *Daily Picayune*, 22, 23, 27 Feb., 6 May, 30 July, 6 Aug. 1886; *Times-Democrat*, 23, 27 Feb. 1886; *Weekly Pelican*, 3, 4 June 1887; *The Mascot*, 4 July 1891.

[27] For the account of the strike, see *Times-Democrat*, 7-10 Sept. 1887; *Daily Picayune*, 6-12 Sept. 1887. The text of the work rules can be found in *Conference Rules of the Stevedores and Longshoremen's Benevolent Association and Longshoremen's Protective Union and Benevolent Association*, in the Louisiana Collection, Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University.

[28] *Times-Democrat*, 8 Sept. 1887.

[29] *Daily Picayune*, 8 Sept. 1887; *Daily Picayune*, 6 Sept. 1887.

[30] For a discussion of the issue of workers' control, see David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 9-31; and Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[31] *Times-Democrat*, 20 Nov. 1886; see also 2 Nov.

1894; *Daily Picayune*, 22 July, 6 Aug., 28 Oct., 11 Nov. 1894. For a detailed discussion of changing ship technologies and labor needs in cotton handling, see Eric Arnesen, "To Rule or Ruin: New Orleans Dock Workers' Struggle for Control, 1902-1903," *Labor History* 28 (1987):139-66; and Arnesen, "Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class and Politics, 1863-1923," Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1986, pp. 252-54, 333-38.

[32] See George Frederickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and Southern African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 212; Edna Bonachich, "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market," *American Sociological Review* 37 (1972):547-59.

[33] The *Daily Picayune*, *Times-Democrat* and *Daily States* gave extensive coverage to the waterfront labor and racial crisis from October 1894 through April 1895. For a fuller description and analysis, see Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans* (forthcoming). See also John Smith Kendall, *History of New Orleans* 3 vols. (New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1922), 2:515; *Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1894* New Series 19 (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1895), p. 443; *Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1895* New Series 20 (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1896), pp. 427-28; British Foreign Office, *United States Report for the Year 1894 of the Trade of the Consular District of New Orleans*, Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance, Annual Series, no. 1551 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, May 1895), p. 15; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, p. 267; Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age*, pp. 230-31; Pearce, "The Rise and Decline of Labor in New Orleans," pp. 31-37; *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, 2, 4 Mar., 23 May 1895.

[34] *Daily Picayune*, 14 Aug., 11 Sept. 1899; Philip Taft, *The A.F. of L. in the Time of Gompers* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 311; Philip Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, eds., *The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*, vol. 5: *The Black Worker from 1900 to 1919* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), pp. 120-21; American Federation of Labor, *Report of Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Convention held at Louisville, Kentucky, December 6th to 15th, inclusive, 1900* (n.p.: n.p., 1900), pp. xiii, 12-13; *American Federationist* 8 (1901):224; "Report of Vice President James E. Porter," *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Convention of the International Longshoremen, Marine & Transportworkers' Association held at Chicago, Illinois, July 14th to 19th, inclusive, 1902* (Chicago: Press of Hollister Brothers, 1902), pp. 73-74; W. E. B. DuBois, ed., *The Negro Artisan: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University; Together with the Proceedings of the Seventh Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems Held at Atlanta University, on May 27th, 1902* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1902), pp. 127-28.

[35] *Daily Picayune*, 26 Sept. 1901. See also DuBois, ed., *The Negro Artisan*, pp. 127-28; "Report of the Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana. Appointed to Investigate the Port of New Orleans," *Official Journal of the Proceedings of House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana at the First Regular Session of the Third General Assembly*, 28 May 1908, p. 200; Daniel Rosenberg, "Race, Labor and Unionism: New Orleans Dockworkers, 1900-1910," Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1985.

[36] See Arnesen, "To Rule or Ruin," and "Waterfront Workers of New Orleans," pp. 330-403. See also James Porter, "Report of Screwmen's Lockout, New Orleans," *Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Convention of the International Longshoremen, Marine & Transport Workers' Association, Bay City, Mich., July 13th to 18th, inclusive, 1903* (Bay City: The John F. Lambert Co., 1903), pp. 86-87; *Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor for the State of Louisiana, 1902-1903* (Baton Rouge: The Advocate, Official Journal of Louisiana, 1904), pp. 35-50.

[37] See Arnesen, "To Rule or Ruin;" see also "Report of the Joint Committee. . . . Appointed to Investigate the Port of New Orleans," p. 200.

[38] For example, see Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*, pp. 182-205; Gutman, "The Negro and the United Mine Workers," pp. 192-204. On Galveston, see, Allen Clayton Taylor, "A History of the Screwmen's Benevolent Association from 1866 to 1924," M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1968.

Frances K. Pohl

BEN SHAHN *and* *Fortune* Magazine

Representations of Labor in 1946

IF ONE WERE TO LOOK UP THE NAME BEN Shahn in a survey of American art, one would most likely find him listed as a social realist and included in the section on the 1930s. The same impression would be gained if one were to venture into one or two of the major museums in New York City. *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* (1932; Fig. 1) is on permanent display in the Whitney Museum of American Art, while *Handball* (1939; Fig. 2) assumes a similar position in the Museum of Modern Art.

Shahn's reputation as a social realist is not unwarranted. His most important work of the 1930s focused on themes of political or social injustice, as well as on efforts to combat this injustice. In 1931 he began a series of twenty-three gouache[1] paintings on the trial of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian immigrants charged with the murder of a paymaster and his guard in Braintree, Massachusetts, in 1920.

Fig. 1.
The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti. *(1931-32).*
Whitney Museum of Modern Art

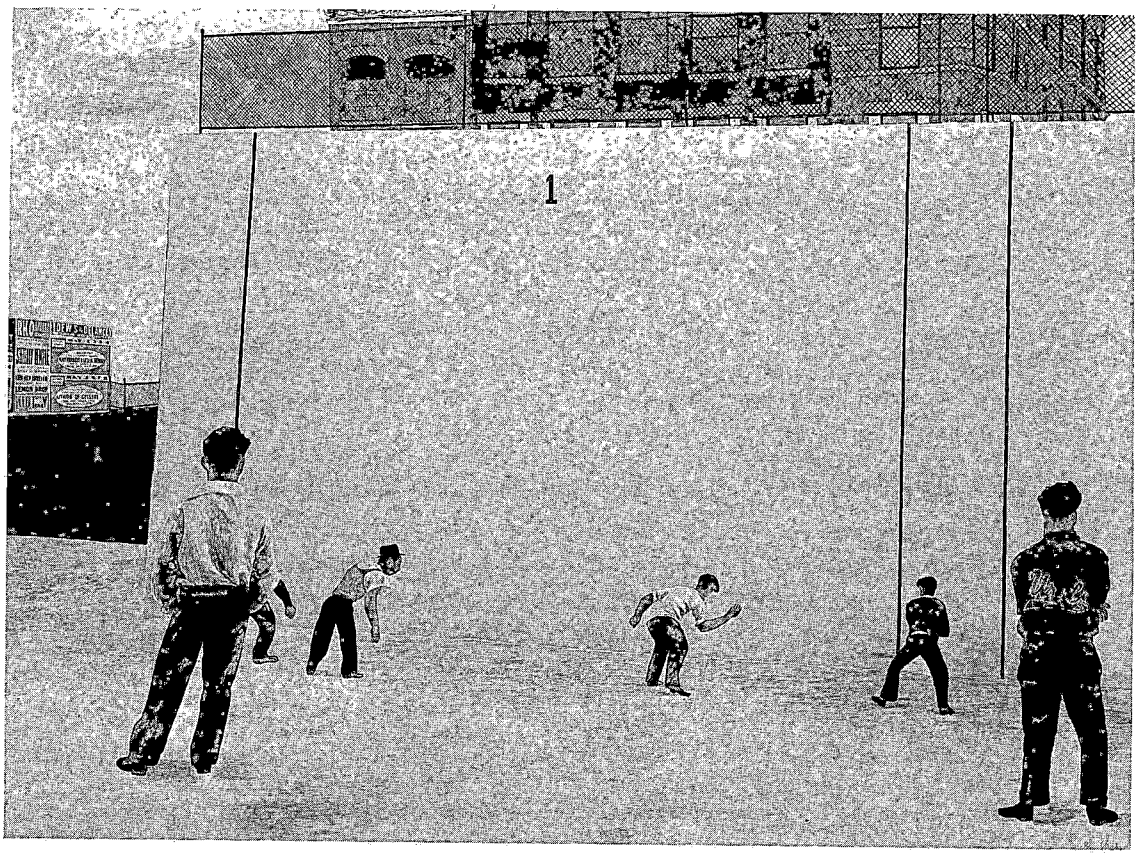


Fig. 2.
Handball. *(1939). Museum of Modern Art*

Convicted in 1921, they were executed in 1927 after a lengthy appeal process that gained international attention. Many felt the original trial, and subsequent appeal, were fraught with racial and political prejudice, and that the two men were executed for their political beliefs (they were both anarchists) rather than because they were guilty of murder.

After exhibiting the Sacco and Vanzetti series in 1932 at the Downtown Gallery in New York, Shahn began another series of fifteen gouaches on the trial and conviction for bombing of the California labor leader Thomas J. Mooney. Following the exhibition of these gouaches in 1933, Shahn, along with the artist Lou Block, worked on a series of mural designs for Rikers Island Penitentiary in New York dealing with the issue of penal reform. Unfortunately, the mural designs were rejected by the conservative Municipal Art Commission, despite the fact that they had been accepted by both the commissioner of corrections and Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia.

Shahn was more successful with his mural designs for the community center/schoolhouse of Jersey Homesteads, New Jersey, one of the first towns built by President Roosevelt's Resettlement Administration. Begun in the fall of 1937, the mural presented a history of the town's residents, mainly eastern European Jewish garment workers who had immigrated to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and had settled in New York City (Fig. 3). An important part of this history was the establishment of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and the efforts of this union to improve the working and living conditions of its members.[2]

Shahn's interest in the Jersey Homesteads Mural was personal as well as political. Like many of the town's residents, Shahn and his family had arrived in the United States from eastern Europe in the first decade of the twentieth century. Shahn's father had been a member of the Jewish Socialist party in Russia and had to flee the country because of his anti-Czar activities. In the 1930s Shahn was actively involved in the Artists' Union and its publication *Art Front*, and he helped organize the first meeting of the American Artists' Congress in 1936 to protest the rise of fascism in

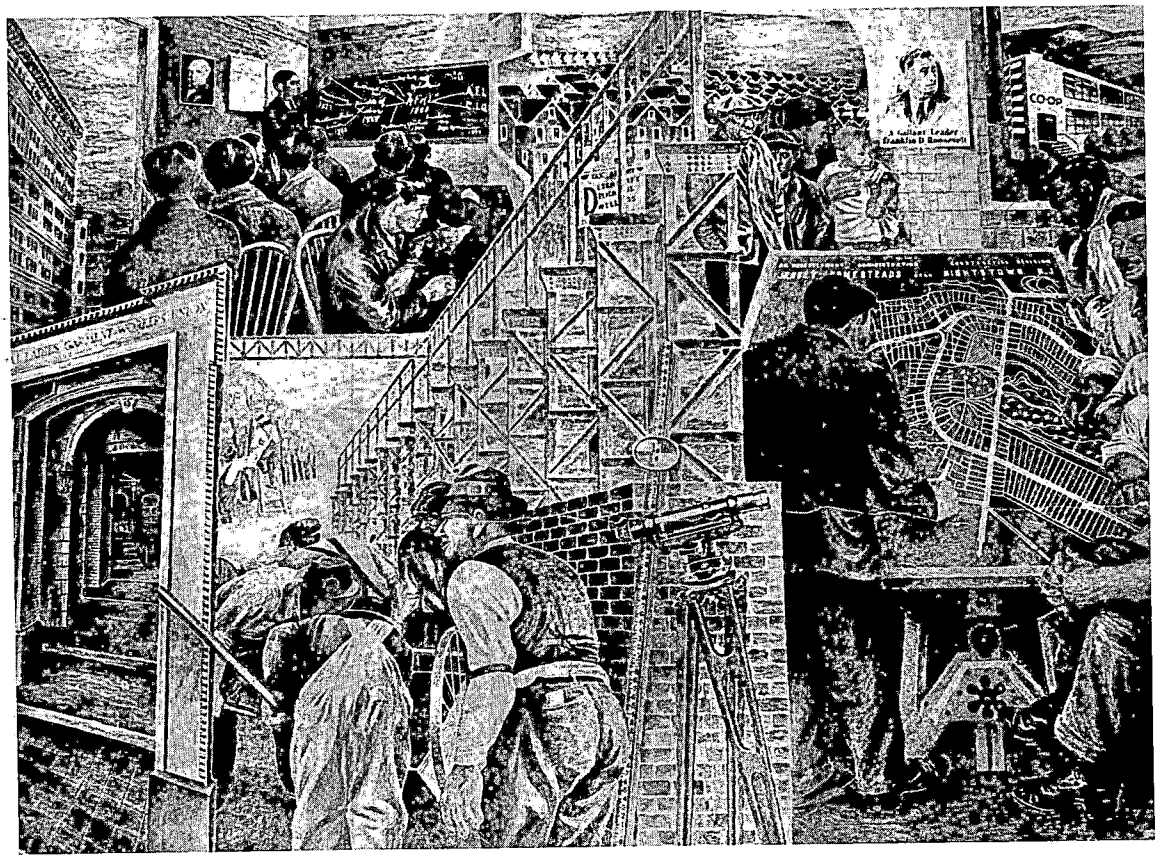


Fig. 3.
Jersey Homesteads Mural. *(1937).*

Europe and to defend the political and economic rights of artists in the U.S.

Shahn maintained his public profile throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s with a number of other mural commissions, such as the Bronx Post Office Mural, which he executed with Bernarda Bryson in 1938–39 (Fig. 4), and the Social Security Building Murals in Washington, D.C., of 1940–42. The first presented a panorama of American workers, both rural and industrial, while the latter contrasted the hardships faced by Americans before social security was instituted, and the benefits reaped afterwards. Shahn was also very active as a graphic artist during his employ with the Farm Security Administration and the Office of War Information, producing various posters and pamphlets promoting the programs and policies of the Roosevelt administration.

Shahn designed several posters for the Steelworkers Organizing Committee in the late 1930s, although his involvement with organized labor reached its peak in the years 1944–46, when he worked as chief graphic artist for the Congress of Industrial Organizations' Political Action Committee (CIO-PAC). The majority of Shahn's CIO-PAC posters focused on organizing the labor vote behind the Democratic party during the 1944 presidential election and the 1946 congressional campaign. Perhaps the best known of these posters is *For Full Employment After The War Register Vote* (1944; Fig. 5), which presents an optimistic vision of a racially integrated and politically active labor force.

There is, however, another side to Shahn's work, one that focuses on the private moments in the lives of farmers and miners and garment workers. This shift in Shahn's work, from a publicly-oriented social realism to a more privately-oriented personal realism, began in the late 1930s. Shahn himself identifies his work as a photographer for the Resettlement Administration/ Farm Security Administration (RA/FSA) as of particular importance in bringing about this shift. From 1935 to 1938 Shahn made three photographic trips throughout the South and Midwest, taking photographs of the projects set up by the RA/FSA and of the towns and farms that the projects' inhabitants had been forced to abandon. He hoped that by photographing both locales

Fig. 4.
Bronx Post Office Mural:
Picking Cotton. *(1938- 1939).*

he would convey a better understanding of the social and economic conditions in the area and of what was needed to change these conditions. Travelling through the country and meeting hundreds of people alerted Shahn to the variety of beliefs and temperaments maintained by so many poverty-stricken Americans in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. Theories concerning class struggle and political persecution debated by Shahn and others at the John Reed Clubs and Artists' Union in New York City ". . . melted before such an experience. My own painting then had turned from what is called 'social realism' into a sort of personal realism. I found the qualities of people a constant pleasure. . . ."[3]

Shahn's subsequent emphasis on the plight and pathos and ultimate surviving power of the individual in his painting was closely tied up with his growing involvement in, and support of, the Roosevelt administration and its New Deal policies. It was through reform, rather than revolution, he decided, that the

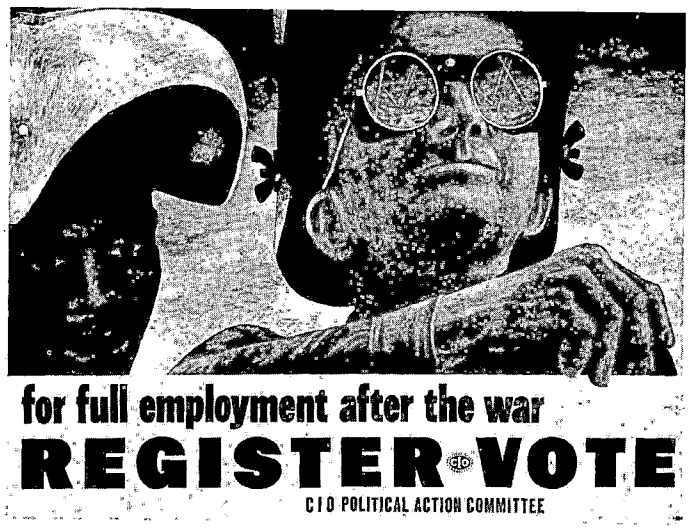


Fig. 5.
For Full Employment After the War Register Vote. *(1944).*
Museum of Modern Art

Fig. 6.
Fortune Illustration: The Confederate Soldier Looks Down on a Sign of the Times, *(November 1946).*

social and political problems specific to the United States would be solved. Shahn never abandoned his belief in the necessity and inevitability of collective struggle, but this belief was now tempered by a sense of the individual, in all his or her particularity, surviving in an environment made more humane by a government sensitive to the needs of the poor and unemployed.

This belief in both the collectivity and the individual is apparent in a series of illustrations Shahn executed for an article in *Fortune* magazine in the fall of 1946.[4] *Fortune* had begun publication in 1930 under the direction of Henry Luce. It was to be a magazine concerned with examining the "ethics of business," one that would attempt to draw the line "between the gentleman and the money-grubber, between the responsible and the irresponsible citizen."[5] To this end Luce hired writers and photographers like Archibald MacLeish and Margaret Bourke-White who often produced critical exposés that created a certain amount of animosity toward the magazine in the business world. But while Luce allowed his writers a large amount of critical freedom, he made it clear that such criticism had to work towards the improvement, not the destruction, of private enterprise.

When Shahn was approached by *Fortune* early in 1946 to illustrate an article on the efforts of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to organize non-union industries in the South, particularly the textile industries, he was working for the CIO-PAC. While there was a potential conflict of interest here—the CIO-PAC was mounting a congressional campaign against the Republican party that was aggressively anti-big-business—Philip Murray, head of the CIO, saw no harm in his accepting the commission.[6] Neither did Leo Lionni and Deborah Calkins, the art editors of *Fortune* in 1946, friends of Shahn who admired his work and shared many of his political convictions.[7] Such personal contacts were important in bringing to Shahn commissions he found politically acceptable. As an artist actively involved in labor campaigns, he was an obvious choice to illustrate the article.

Shahn himself had few qualms about doing commercial work for corporations, as long as the commission offered him a formal, personal or moral challenge

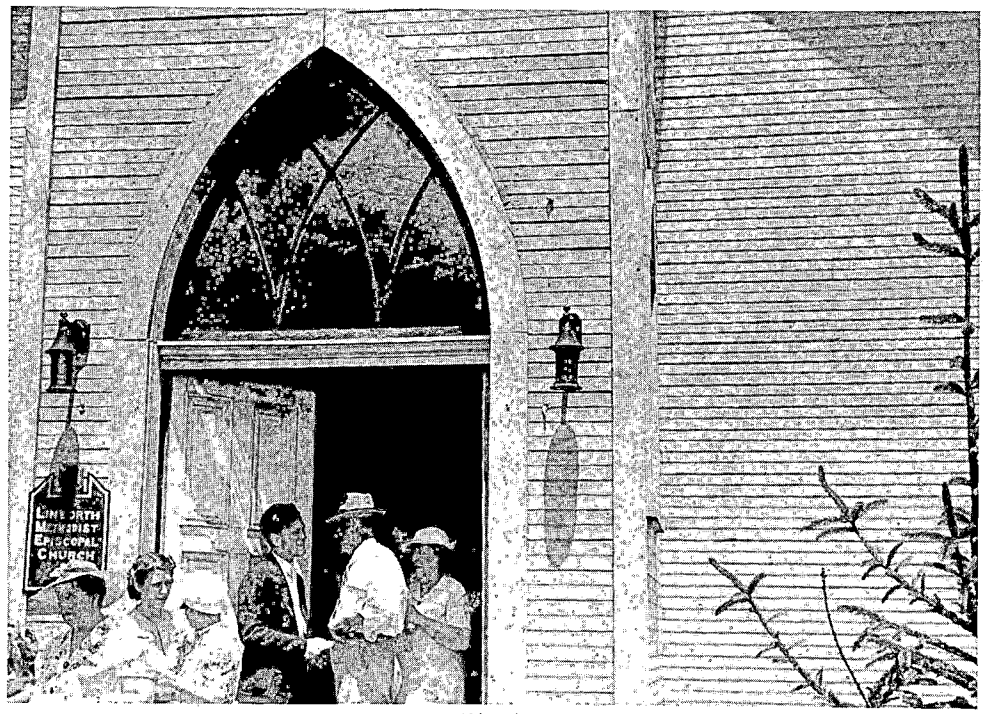


Fig. 7.
Linworth Methodist Episcopal Church, Central Ohio. *(1938). Fogg Art Museum*

and as long as the corporation gave him free rein to produce the images he felt were most suitable for the commission. As an artist concerned with the communicative aspect of art, he also appreciated the opportunity that commercial work offered to reach a broader audience.

In order to gather ideas for the *Fortune* commission, Shahn went south for a month, interviewing a variety of people—the owners of the "hate sheets," the managers of factories, workers—and executing numerous sketches. In the end, however, he drew heavily on his RA/FSA photographs. For example, the folk singer in one illustration (Fig. 6) is a composite of at least two photographs from Shahn's 1935 trip to West Virginia and the image of the men in front of a church (see front cover) is a direct reference to a photograph from his 1938 trip to Ohio (Fig. 7). Shahn's use of these photographs points once again to his belief in the importance of defining and depicting the day-to-day experiences of individuals, a belief that had been so strongly confirmed during his photographic trips across the country.

Shahn's *Fortune* illustrations depict, for the most part, quiet or congenial moments in the lives of southern workers—a man playing a guitar or sitting in a rocking chair or holding a child (Fig. 8)—rather than picket lines or clashes between workers and police. This was, in fact, in keeping with the article's presentation of the southern drive as predominantly conflict-free. In comparing it to the organizing drives of 1934 and 1937, the author commented that "there are no road barricades to halt the union flying squads, no machine guns peeping over the roofs of defiant mills, no sheriffs deputizing the members of citizens' committees, no herding of strikers into state stockade camps."[8]

Yet there is evidence that Shahn was not in total agreement with this interpretation of the southern drive. Along with his other illustrations he had submitted a drawing of a policeman with his back to the viewer, facing two men seated opposite him on a curb. The drawing was rejected because it contained a mood of tension and impending violence which, according to the editor of the magazine, did not exist.[9]

Shahn refused, however, to let the drawing go to waste. A slightly altered version, with the policeman now gazing across an empty street at a CIO organizing headquarters (Fig. 9), appeared a few months later in the January 13, 1947, issue of *New Republic*, then edited by Henry Wallace. It was the only illustration in an article that presented a less conciliatory picture of relations between unions and factory owners during the southern drive.[10] According to the author of the

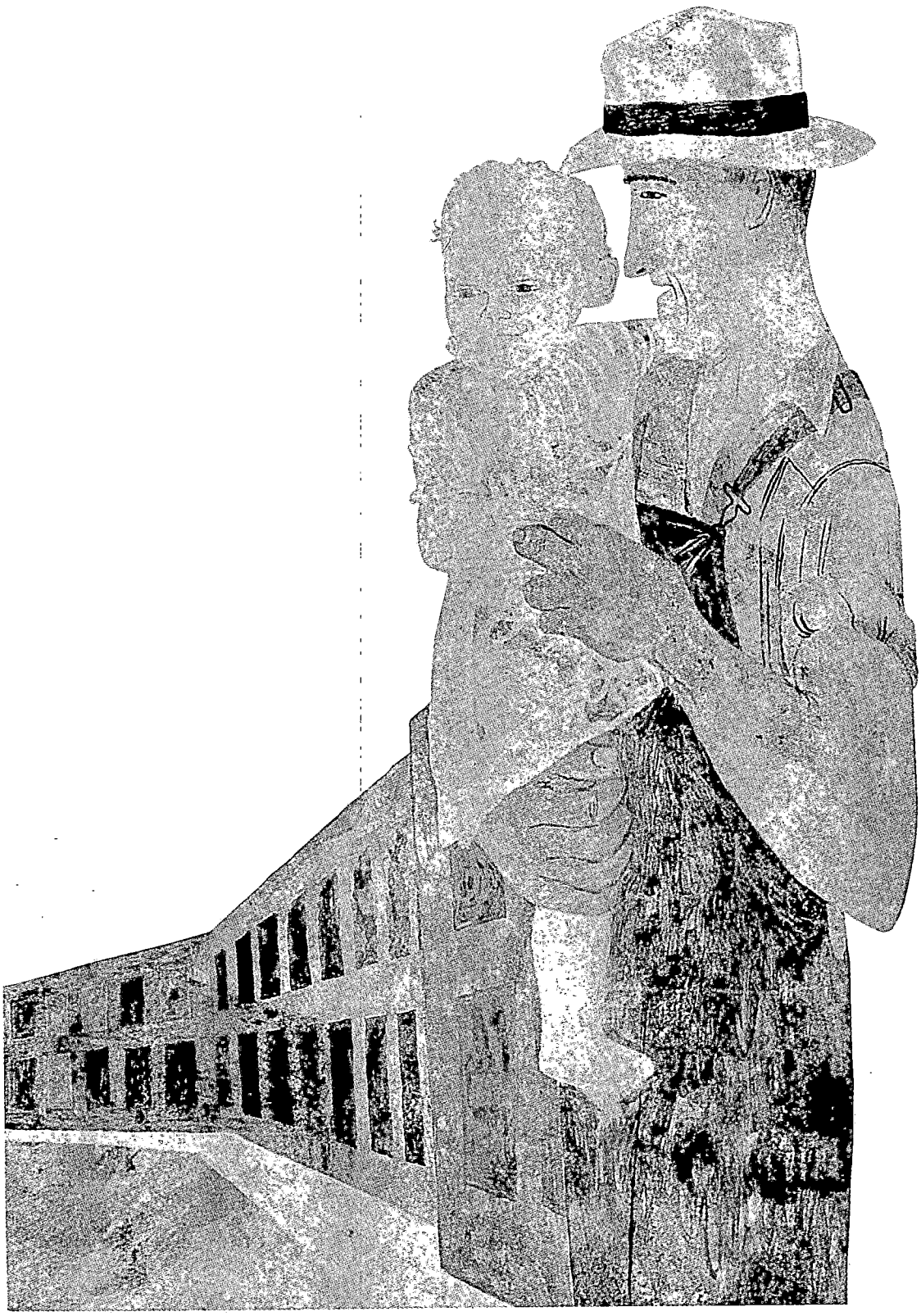


Fig. 8.
Fortune Illustration: Like His Father Before Him, the Child Will Also Enter the Mill. *(November 1946).*

Fig. 9.
New Republic Illustration. *(13 January 1947).*

Fig. 10.
Sheriff During Strike, Morgantown, West Virginia. *(1935). Fogg Art Museum*

article, Ralph G. Martin, the 1946 drive, while not as violent as those of the 1930s, was not totally free of conflict. Union organizers were subjected to continual verbal and physical harassment, and considerable pressure was brought to bear on workers who showed support for unionization. The source of Shahn's policeman drawing was, in fact, a photograph he had taken of a sheriff during a 1935 strike in Morgantown, West Virginia (Fig. 10).

Shahn's *New Republic* illustration appeared, interestingly enough, at a time when he was drifting away from the CIO. Disillusioned by the growing intolerance of the Left within the CIO, which was given added impetus by the anti-communist provisos of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, Shahn turned to the Progressive party and Henry Wallace. Wallace's presidential campaign of 1948 was the final national effort to salvage the social reform principles of the New Deal era in an increasingly cold war climate. Ironically, the CIO-PAC contributed significantly to Wallace's defeat by attacking him as a communist sympathizer.

Shahn's allegiance to the social reform principles of the New Deal era appeared, therefore, in both his political alliances and his art. In carrying out the *Fortune*

Credits

All illustrations have been reproduced through the courtesy of Bernarda B. Shahn.

Fig. 1. Ben Shahn. *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*. (1931-32). (From the Sacco and Vanzetti series of twenty-three paintings.) Tempera on canvas, 84 1/2 x 48 inches. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Gift of Edith and Milton Lowenthal in memory of Juliana Force. 49.22.

Fig. 2. Ben Shahn. *Handball*. (1939). Tempera on paper over composition board, 22 3/4 x 31 1/4 inches. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund.

Fig. 4. Ben Shahn with Bernarda Bryson. *Bronx Post Office Mural: Picking Cotton*. (1938-39).

Fig. 5. Ben Shahn. *For Full Employment After the War Register Vote*. (1944). Offset lithograph, 30 x 39 7/8 inches. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the CIO Political Action Committee.

Fig. 7. Ben Shahn. *Linworth Methodist Episcopal Church, Central Ohio*. (1938). Photograph. Courtesy of The Harvard University Art Museums (Fogg Art Museum), Cambridge, Mass. Gift of Mrs. Bernarda B. Shahn. P1976.107.

Fig. 10. Ben Shahn. *Sheriff During Strike, Morgantown, West Virginia*. (1935). Photograph. Courtesy of The Harvard University Art Museums (Fogg Art Museum), Cambridge, Mass. Gift of Mrs. Bernarda B. Shahn. P1970.1225.

assignment, Shahn did not create a set of images that were wholly "of the moment," so to speak. Instead, he drew upon a store of images created under different historical circumstances in order to represent another, highly complex moment in time, when workers' organizations and New Deal liberalism were being challenged and transformed. What stands out in these images is Shahn's awareness of the need to understand not only the public, organized demands of the labor movement, but also the private, personal moments in workers' lives. Such an understanding would help protect the gains made under the Roosevelt administration and make more effective the next phase in the struggle to extend the rights and improve the lives of American workers.

Notes

Frances K. Pohl is a professor of art history at Pomona College and the author of the forthcoming book, *Ben Shahn: New Deal Artist in a Cold War Climate, 1947-1954*, to be published by the University of Texas Press in 1989.

[1] Gouache is a type of water color composed of opaque colors ground in water and mixed with a preparation of gum.

[2] See Frances K. Pohl, "Constructing History: A Mural by Ben Shahn," *Arts* 62 (1987):36-40.

[3] Ben Shahn, "Biography of a Painting," in *The Shape of Content* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 40.

[4] "Labor Drives South," *Fortune* 34 (Nov. 1946):134-41.

[5] Robert T. Elson, *Time Inc.: The Intimate History of a Publishing Enterprise, 1923-1941* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 130.

[6] Dr. Saul Benison and Sandra Otto, interview with Ben Shahn, 1 Mar. 1957, "Reminiscences of Ben Shahn," in the Oral History Collection of Columbia University, 1960, p. 99.

[7] Selden Rodman, *Portrait of the Artist as an American, Ben Shahn: A Biography with Pictures* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p. 43.

[8] "Labor Drives South," p. 139.

[9] Benison and Otto, interview with Ben Shahn, p. 99.

[10] Ralph G. Martin, "The CIO Takes a Long Lease in the South," *New Republic* 116 (13 Jan. 1947):19-21.


FAIR PRACTICES
A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND IS HER UNION

NANCY GABIN

WOMEN AND THE UNITED AUTO WORKERS

IN THE 1940s AND 1950s:

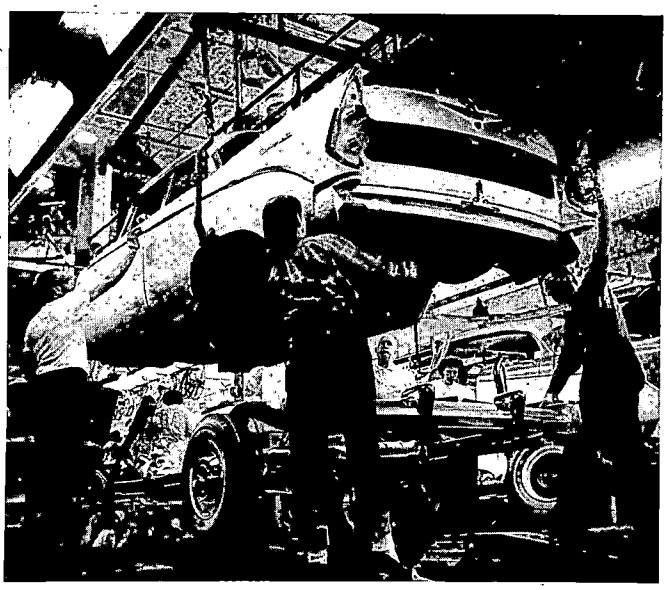
Reconstructing Their Story

SINCE ITS ORIGINS IN THE MIDDLE 1930s, the United Automobile Workers of America (UAW) has been regarded as one of the most liberal and egalitarian labor organizations in the United States. The UAW, however, would not seem to have been a setting especially conducive to or receptive of women's activism. Women historically have comprised a small proportion of the labor force in the automotive and aerospace industries. As a result, women have never represented much more than fifteen percent of the union's membership, except during World War II.

There is, however, abundant evidence that, despite the male dominance and to a certain extent the male orientation of the UAW, female activism and union efforts in behalf of women have long been hallmarks of the history of women and the union. The UAW's Women's Department, established in 1944, was the first of its kind. To facilitate and augment the work of the department, a 1962 amendment to the UAW constitution mandated the organization of women's committees at the local union level. The union also compiled a respectable record of collective bargaining in the interest of gender equity. The UAW's image as an advocate of women's rights in particular and women generally derives, moreover, from its relationship to the contemporary women's movement. Two UAW leaders were founders of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, and in 1970 the UAW became the first union in the nation to endorse the Equal Rights Amendment. Investigation of these and related topics indicates that the UAW has provided, if not a haven, then an arena for women's activism. The uses UAW women have made of that arena provide the evidence for a unique and important chapter in the history of American women and American labor.

This article discusses and evaluates some of the sources available in the Detroit area for the historical study of women and the UAW. It is not surprising that an area which is the center of the auto industry and the international headquarters of the UAW contains a plethora of sources on the history of these two subjects. Unexpected, perhaps, is the rich quantity and quality of primary sources on the history of women auto workers and auto unionists. The Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, at Wayne State University is the principal repository for this material. The UAW's historical records are at the Reuther Library; these include the papers of union officers and members, various UAW departments and regions, and many UAW local unions. The UAW collections also include the minutes of International Executive Board (IEB) meetings, UAW convention proceedings, newspapers, journals, newsletters and administrative letters, and other printed sources such as collective bargaining agreements and umpire decisions. The archives also holds the transcripts of interviews with male and female unionists; some of these are extremely useful sources for women's history.

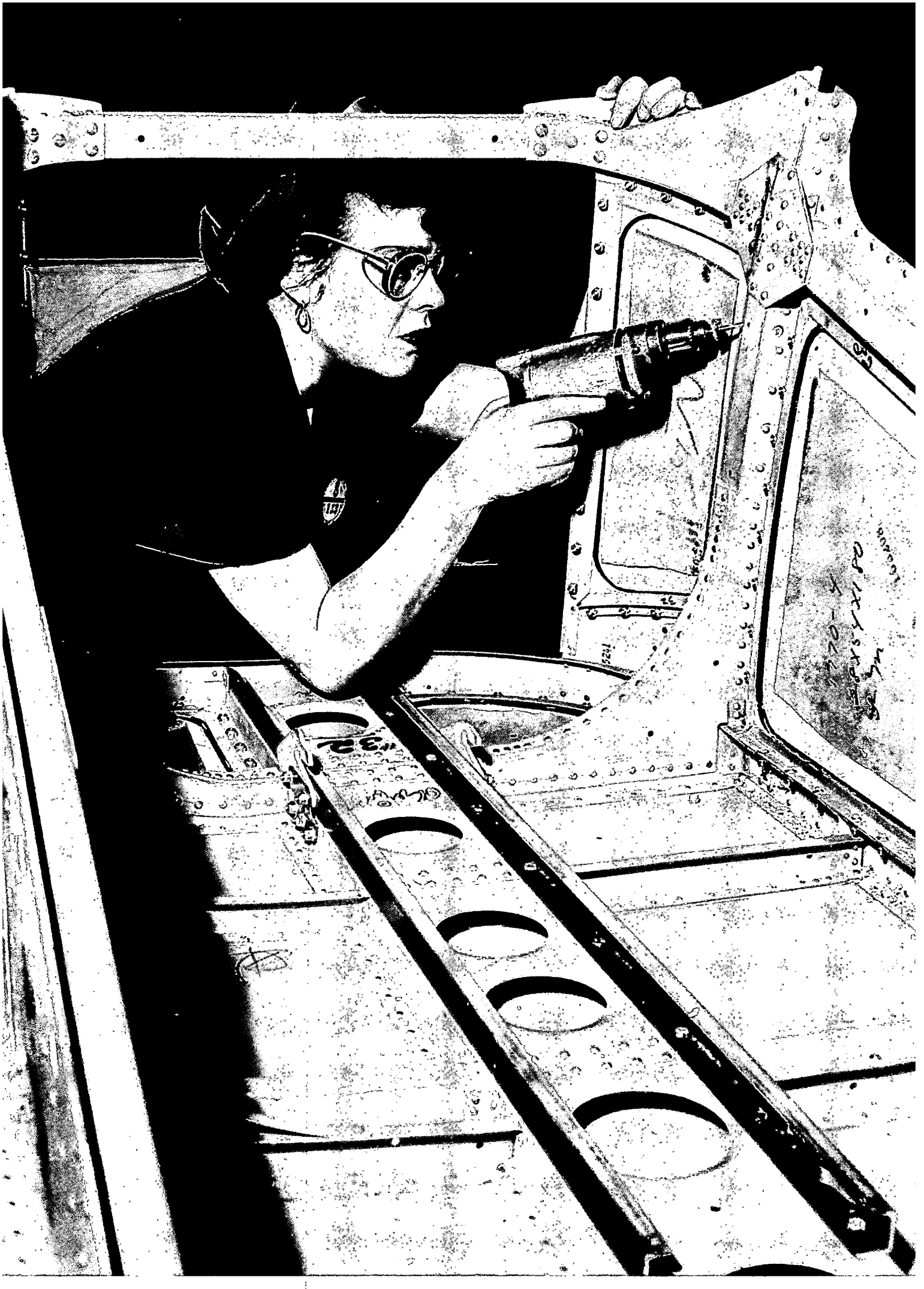
Other important sources located in the Detroit area are such managerial records as those housed at the Ford Motor Company Archives in Dearborn and the Burton Historical Collection in the Detroit Public Library. These records must be supplemented by the



The Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

Chrysler workers at a body drop on a final assembly line, ca. 1956. Previous page: Delegates to the UAW Regions 1 and 1A (Detroit) Women's Conference, 1955.

Evelyn J. W. Cacola, Pearl Harbor widow, drills rivet holes in the belly gun door of a U.S. bomber, May 1942. Office of War Information photo.



layoffs and job dislocations by the still widespread existence of sex-based seniority lists and job classifications. Where the sexual division of labor was not explicitly codified in the organization of work, *de facto* segregation in the form of departmental or noninterchangeable group seniority accomplished the same results. Restricted to an already small number of jobs, women workers would find themselves on the street while men with lesser seniority remained on or even were newly hired for jobs that women were capable of performing.

Female union activists at the national level sought to alert the UAW to the new employment crisis for women in auto plants. "Mass layoffs of women," Caroline Davis, director of the UAW Women's Bureau, told the 1955 UAW convention, "have become increasingly prevalent." She urged the union to seek the elimination of separate seniority lists in order to protect the jobs of female members. Anticipating that men would resist giving women access to men's jobs, Davis warned that gender conflict would weaken the union. "Experience has proven," she cautioned, "that when jobs are scarce management invents varied and devious methods to create confusion and disunity among our members." "Resorting to outworn prejudices against women," Davis continued, "employers seek to divide us and . . . divert our attention from the real issue at hand—that of providing for full employment."[8]

The analysis made by Davis and other leaders of women's status in the auto industry was astute. In a period generally regarded as a low point in American feminism, women in the UAW were challenging sexual inequality in the labor market. To what extent, however, did women at the local level share the perspective of those women leaders at the international level of the UAW? Did women working in General Motors plants, where the sexual division of labor was perhaps most rigidly imposed and enforced, recognize that separate sex-based seniority lists and job classifications limited their access to jobs, made them especially vulnerable in times of layoffs and job dislocations, and reinforced their separate and unequal status in the automotive

Women automobile workers wiring dash boards at the Plymouth plant in Detroit, ca 1950s.

Photos pages 62–66: The Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

Women working on a Chrysler assembly line, 1965.

labor force? Did men at the local level oppose, acquiesce in, or abet management's decisions about women's place in auto plants? What was the character of gender relations at the local level? Did a battle for sexual equality occur in UAW locals in the allegedly quiet and conservative 1950s?

The Reuther Library's extensive UAW local union collections provide answers to these questions. Including the unprocessed collections, approximately one hundred local unions are represented. The collections contain local union office files; the minutes of meetings with management; minutes of meetings of local officers, stewards and members; correspondence with the membership, the regions and the international; and grievance records. These sources are a gold mine of information about the daily operation of the locals and the plants, offering a glimpse of the rank-and-file's and local leadership's experience on the shop floor and in the union hall. The records are tremendously time consuming to sift through. To get a strong sense of continuity and to distinguish between the usual and the unusual, one must read pages and pages of monthly and often weekly meeting minutes. The results, however, are well worth the time and effort.

What emerges from the local union records for the 1950s is a complex picture of gender relations and women's experience of unionism. Women did assume leadership roles, not only as elected representatives from rooms or departments of auto plants predominantly employing females, but also as chief shop stewards, local bargaining committee members or local union officers, positions gained with votes from men as well as women. As union representatives, women were equally as militant as men in defending workers' rights. Men also represented women workers and many cared just as deeply about the rights of women, as of men, on the shop floor. The minutes of local meetings with plant managers indicate how vigorously union leaders of both sexes defended their female constituents against speed-ups, hazardous working conditions, and low wage rates or improper job classifications.

What also must be emphasized, however, is the apparent disjuncture between the views and goals of people like Caroline Davis at UAW headquarters in Detroit and those of local unionists in such places as Anderson, Indiana, and Lansing, Michigan.[9] Neither women nor men at the local level during the 1950s appear on the whole to have challenged the sexual division of labor in the industry, despite the widespread elimination of women's jobs because of outsourcing, corporate reorganization, automation and decentralization.

UAW local records demonstrate the great extent of the problem for women auto workers in this period. Yet in only a few instances do the same records show local women and men challenging separate seniority lists or sex-based job classifications in an attempt to save women's jobs. All certainly were sympathetic and pressed for delays in job elimination, transfers of displaced women to other women's jobs in the plants or to jobs in company plants located elsewhere, and generous severance pay agreements. But rarely did anyone question the validity of sex-based distinctions among workers and raise for debate the issue of sex discrimination and gender equity.[10]

The occasions when such disputes did occur are important, however, especially as they challenge historians' views of women generally and blue collar women particularly in the feminist movement's doldrums between World War II and the 1960s. Thus, one of the most significant disputes over the sexual division of labor occurred at the Dodge Main works in Hamtramck, Michigan, in the late 1950s. When the department in which eight hundred women worked was eliminated and they were laid off, militant leaders of UAW Local 3 struggled to change the basis for recall from departmental to plantwide seniority status. When the new plan was implemented on an experimental basis, women gained access to all jobs in the plant on the basis of their accumulated seniority. Male workers protested the competition from women with greater seniority and sought to undermine the agreement. In large part due to the persistence of a few female

Notes

Nancy Gabin is Assistant Professor of history at Purdue University and is currently working on a book-length manuscript on women and the UAW.

This paper originally was prepared for presentation at "Michigan in Perspective: 28th Annual Conference on Local History," Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, April 4, 1986. The author thanks Mildred Jeffrey and those who attended the session for their comments and contributions.

[1] For a discussion of women and World War II see Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981); William Henry Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); and Susan Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982).

[2] Nancy Gabin, "Women Auto Workers and the United Automobile Workers' Union (UAW-CIO), 1935-1955," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1984, pp. 56-120.

[3] For a more detailed treatment of the reconversion protests, see Gabin, " 'They have placed a penalty on womanhood': The Protest Actions of Women Auto Workers in Detroit-area UAW Locals During Reconversion, 1945-1947," *Feminist Studies* 8 (1982):373-98.

[4] Flyer, "Plantwide Meeting," May 1945, George Addes collection, box 69A, Local 400 folder, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University (hereafter cited as ALUA).

[5] *Ibid.*, and Executive Board Minutes, 1942-46, in box 62, folders 1-20; and Plantwide Meeting Minutes, 1942-47, in box 65, folders 8-21 of the UAW Local 400 collection, ALUA.

[6] See, for examples, articles in *Detroit Times*, 19,21,26,30 July 1945.

[7] The Jeffrey interview is part of an oral history collection entitled "The Twentieth Century Trade Union Woman: Vehicle for Social Change Oral History Project." The transcripts are at the ALUA. Transcripts of interviews principally with male UAW organizers and leaders also are available at the ALUA. Another useful collection of oral histories is "Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women and the World War II Work Experience." These interviews are with women who worked in aircraft plants in southern California. Several are with women who became involved in UAW locals at North American Aviation and Douglas Aircraft. This collection also is available at the ALUA.

[8] "Women's Bureau Report," *Report of Walter P. Reuther, President, United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Workers of America (UAW-CIO), Submitted to the Fifteenth Constitutional Convention, UAW-CIO, Convened at Cleveland, Ohio, March 27, 1955* (n.p.:n.p., n.y.), pp. 94D-95D; *Proceedings, Fifteenth Constitutional Covention, United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers (UAW-CIO), Cleveland Public Auditorium, March 27-April 1, 1955, Cleveland, Ohio* (n.p.:n.p., n.y.), p. 52.

[9] I analyze the attitudes and behavior of women in the UAW in this period in "Women and the United Automobile Workers' Union in the 1950s" in Ruth Milkman, ed., *Women, Work and Protest: A Century of U.S. Women's Labor History* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 259-79, and "Trade Union Feminism: Advocating Women's Rights and Gender Equity in the UAW, 1935-1975," a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Reno, Nevada, March 27, 1988.

[10] Evidence of the unique pressures on women auto workers during the 1950s can be found in the collections of UAW Locals 3, 45, 78, 410, 602 and 662 at the ALUA.

[11] The Local 3 collection is unprocessed and difficult to use; evidence of this incident was found in minutes of meetings of the Local 3 executive board and of general membership meetings.

stewards, women were integrated into formerly all-male preserves at Dodge Main.[11]

Without the local union collections available at the Reuther Library, it would be impossible to gain these insights into the history of women and the UAW. Examination of all the archival and printed primary sources in their rich variety, moreover, illuminates the still shadowy and hidden history of women and unionism and enhances our understanding of American labor.

John A. Brennan
and Cassandra M. Volpe

SOURCES FOR STUDYING LABOR

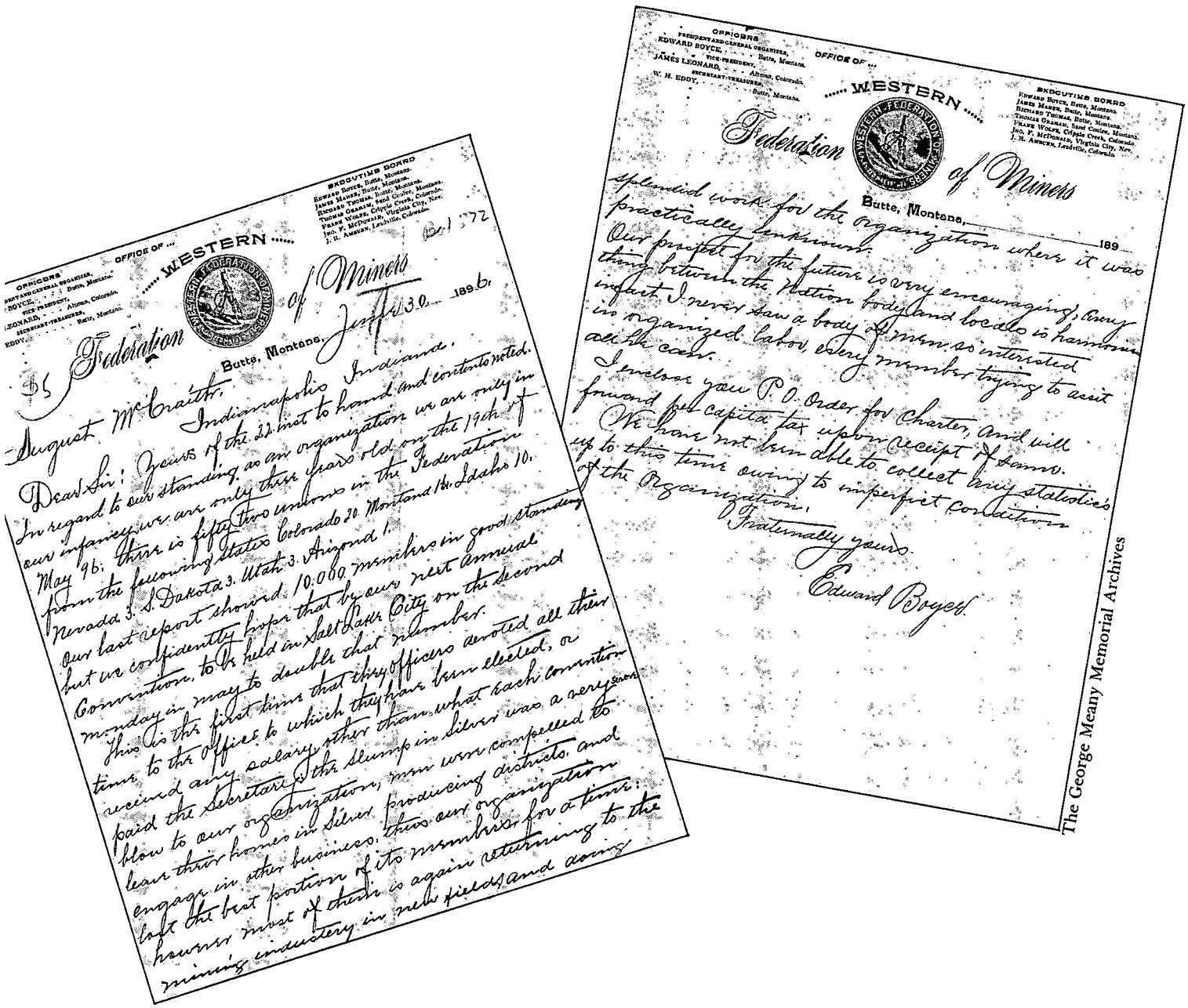
AT THE WESTERN HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER

Photos courtesy of the Western Historical Collections, University of Colorado, Boulder

HISTORIANS OF THE LABOR MOVEment generally are aware that there is a voluminous archival collection for the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) and the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (IUMMSW) available somewhere in the West. Most of them also know that the WFM was intertwined with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and that IWW leader Bill Haywood departed for the Soviet Union after World War I. Few students of labor history have not heard of the deportations of IWW copper miners from Bisbee, Arizona, in 1917 and of the bomb explosions that killed "scab miners" in 1903 at Cripple Creek and Idaho ex-Governor Frank Steunenberg in 1905 at Caldwell, Idaho. Surely many American historians, whatever their specialty, know that Clarence Darrow successfully defended WFM leaders Haywood, Charles Moyer and George Pettibone in 1907 from oppressive actions and unfounded accusations by government officials.

Comparatively few historians know that the WFM survived the World War I era as the IUMMSW, despite near extinction in the mid-twenties. Similarly, only labor specialists know that the CIO expelled IUMMSW in 1950 and that in 1959—in a telling historical replay staged in Denver—hard-rock labor leaders were tried once again for conspiracy. This time the accusation of having "falsely" signed the non-communist affidavits was the specific activity that provoked government officials to prosecute. Some will also recall that in 1967 the exonerated leadership reluctantly merged Mine-Mill with the United Steelworkers of America. That same year the IUMMSW greatly enriched prospects for labor studies by depositing its archives at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

The WFM/IUMMSW archives is supported by both



the University of Colorado and the United Steelworkers of America. From 1972 to 1979 the Steelworkers provided funds to hire a graduate student with a specialty in labor history to organize new accessions, describe them in finding aids and assist researchers, as well as to pay shipping costs for incoming materials and travel expenses required to seek out local and district union records.

The Western Federation of Miners national records include the executive board minutes (1902–1916), convention proceedings (1893–1895, 1901–1916), the *Miners Magazine* (1906–1916) and a large number of WFM financial and membership records (1894–1916). In addition, there are defense records including transcripts of the Haywood-Moyer-Pettibone trial and related cases. There are also records of the Clarence Darrow and Michigan Defense funds for the period around 1913–14.

Local union material for the WFM period is voluminous for Great Falls, Montana, Local 16, and consists of minute books, membership books, ledgers, accounts, as well as some records of the Cascade County Trades and Labor Assembly, of which Local 16 was a member. There are varying amounts of early records from a large number of local unions including selected items on microfilm acquired from the University of British Columbia. Also, newspapers on microfilm from Wallace, Idaho, and from Cripple Creek and Pueblo, Colorado, reporting WFM activity in those areas, are available to researchers.

The WFM/IUMMSW archives comprehensively documents the Mine-Mill period, 1916–67, especially the years after 1940. International union files include: forty bound volumes of convention proceedings and nineteen boxes of related material for the years 1916–67; twenty-three bound volumes plus five boxes of execu-

Three workmen stand beside their small maintenance rail car used for mine track repairs, n.d.

tive board minutes, polls and other material, ca. 1916–67; six boxes of election and referendum material, ca. 1943–65; runs of *Miners Magazine*, both before and after the WFM became the IUMMSW, 1900–21, *Mine-Mill Union*, 1942–67, *Mine-Mill Herald*, Canada, 1955–66, plus other Mine-Mill, AFL, and CIO publications; and approximately one thousand cubic feet of correspondence, memoranda and other records, 1940–67.

Local union files of the Mine-Mill period are comparatively limited. The holdings include significant amounts of historically rich material from several locals—Butte Local 1, Great Falls Local 16, Coeur d'Alene Local 18, and Anaconda Local 117—and small collections from numerous locals scattered throughout the country.

Detailed, indexed finding aids are available to assist visitors and staff exploring the Mine-Mill archives. Since 1967 investigators of many callings, at an average of six researchers per year, have made excellent use of the archives' diverse contents. Approximately ninety percent of the research in these collections has been scholarly. By vocation, forty percent of the users have been thesis students; thirty percent, collegiate faculty;

Members of WFM/IUMMSW Local 890—Amalgamated Bayard District Union, Bayard, New Mexico—attend the Southwest Area Conference in 1954.

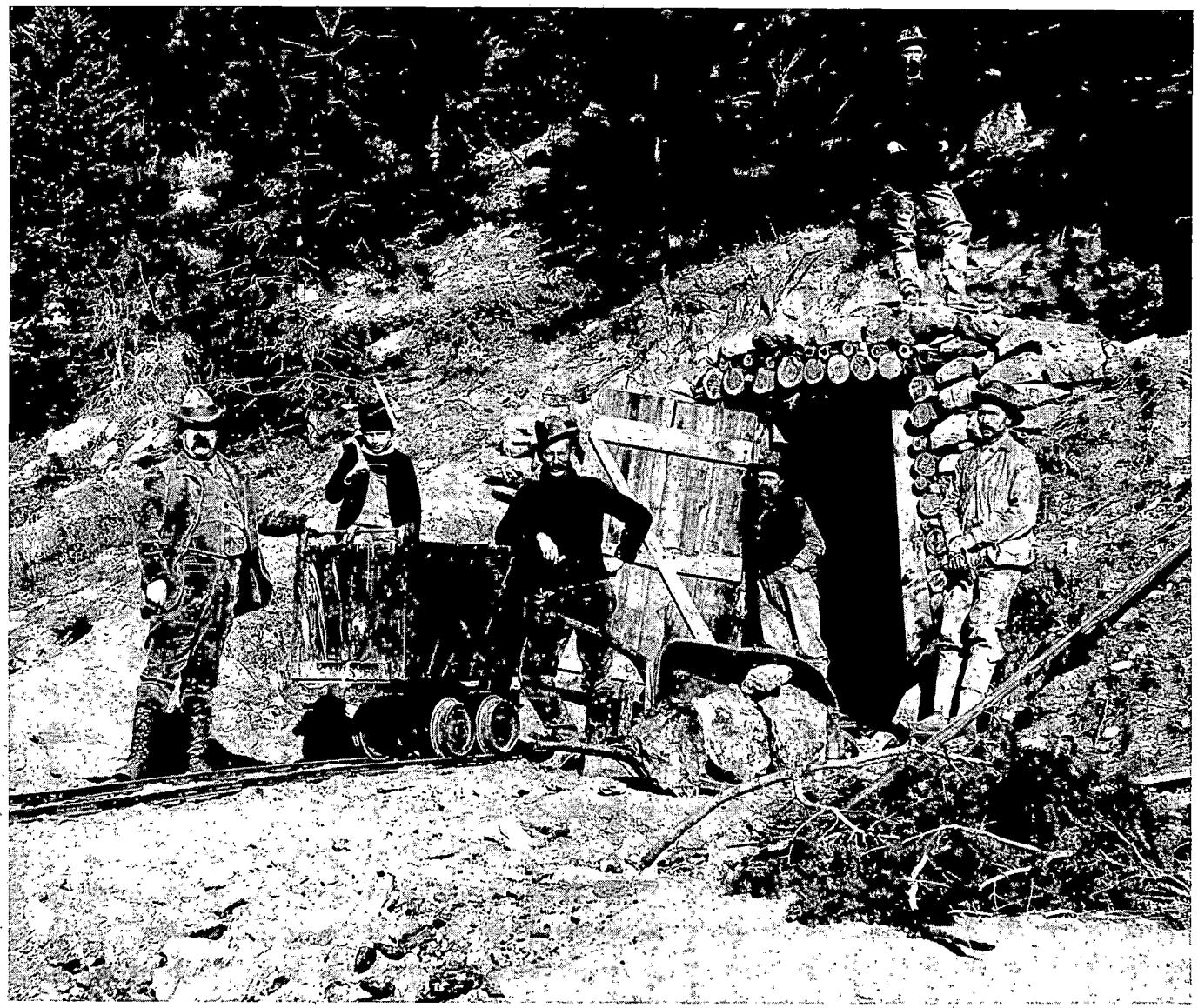
twenty percent, unaffiliated scholarly researchers; and ten percent, union-related or unspecified.

The general subjects of greatest interest to these individuals have been WFM local unions, WFM leaders, the social history of western mining camps and Hispanic themes. Specific research topics have included: ethnicity

and unionism in hard-rock mining; western labor and revolution in Mexico; Emma F. Langdon, WFM/IUMMSW organizer; southwestern Hispanics during the New Deal era; the Socialist party in Montana; and Mother Jones.

The University of Colorado's Western Historical Collections holds many other valuable collections of labor archives. The Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) has designated this repository as its archives and California's OCAW District 1 has deposited its extensive grievance and arbitration case records (1920–1970). The Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen has presented similar records pertaining to its Denver and Rio Grande jurisdiction. The

Retirees of the International Typographical Union compete in a typesetting contest at the Union Printers' Home in Colorado Springs in the 1920s.



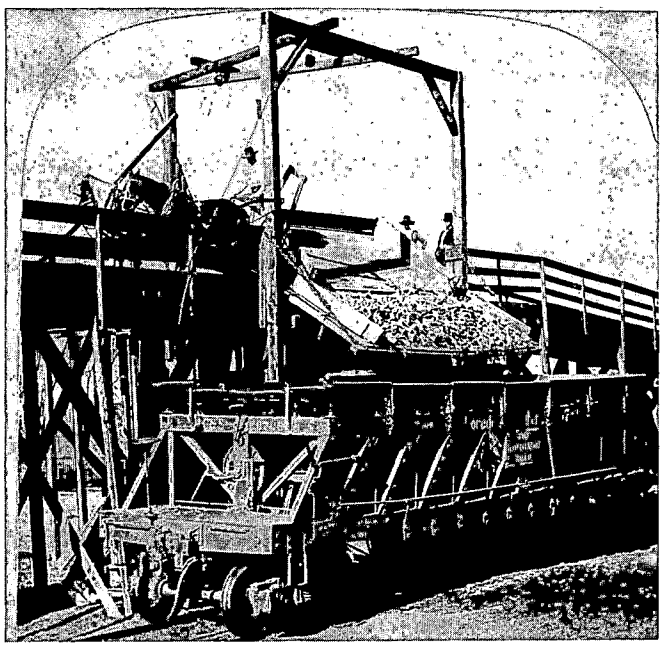
Four miners and a "boss" at the Fortune Dyke Gold Mining Co. in Boulder County, probably in the 1890s. Photo by "Rocky Mountain" Joe Sturtevant.

Colorado State Federation of Labor and Colorado Labor Council (AFL-CIO central body records, 1896–1973) and the Herrick Roth papers are available. Taken together, these collections document the post-World War II resurgence of organized labor in the state. The Coal Project archives provides visual and sound documentation about workers and their families in western coal camps (1900–1980). The Josephine Roche Collection (1910–1970) contains material documenting Roche's social, political and union interests, including her achievements as director of the United Mine Workers of America's Welfare and Retirement Fund and later as a trustee of that fund.

The papers of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Denver Local 55, document the oldest and largest UBCJA affiliate in Colorado. These records include minutes, financial and other records from 1886 to 1975. Other interrelated collections are those of the International Typographical Union (ITU—1875–1980s), the Denver ITU Local 49 (1860s–1970s), the Intermountain Typographical Conference (1941–1981) and the International Mailers Union (1943–1978). These collections all include correspondence, minutes, proceedings, legal papers and publications.

The labor holdings are further supplemented by an array of large photograph collections, including those of Charles Snow, Lachland McLean and the University of Colorado Museum. Snow was a local Boulder portrait photographer from 1915 to 1967. McLean's work focused on Idaho Springs, Blackhawk, Central City

Hard-rock driller Fred Dapp with the tools of his trade, Boulder, Colorado, n.d. Photo by Charles Snow.



A sugar beet dump in the Longmont, Colorado, area about 1907–08. This type of beet dump—located at most railroad stations in the sugar beet producing areas—began to disappear in the 1920s. By the early 1930s the advent of farm trucks required a different type of dump. Photo by Ed. Tangen.

and Georgetown, Colorado, from 1885 to 1927. Many of his views depict exteriors and interiors of mines with both miners and "bosses." The University Museum Collection contains work of the Boulder photographers "Rocky Mountain" Joe Sturtevant and L. P. Bass. Mills, mines, miners and mining towns were the subjects of their photography. The General Photograph Collection also contains material on a variety of subjects.

Western Historical Collections is also the repository for non-labor related manuscripts and photographs which contribute to the labor story. Among those are the Great Western Sugar Company Papers, which includes both photographic and motion picture material on the beet sugar industry, along with manuscript material on migrant labor. The records of lawyers, surveyors, investors and merchants from various Colorado towns can also be researched here. Some examples of these collections are the papers of James A. Ownbey, Henry M. Teller, Hal Sayre, and J. Sidney Brown.

I. W. Abel, as president of the United Steelworkers of America, asserted,

> The records at the University of Colorado Libraries form a link between today and yesterday. They can help overcome differences in memories that so often account for our so-called generation gap. The young among us need to know, even in an age of "instant" commodities, that most of today's benefits did not come ready made. Those who are older must constantly measure present efforts against past standards of excellence. Both must remind themselves that their works and actions will, in turn, become a part of labor history.[1]

Notes

It is with regret we report that Dr. John A. "Jack" Brennan died January 21, 1988. Brennan had been curator of the Western Historical Collections at the University of Colorado since 1964 and is credited with being largely responsible for developing the collection into one of national prominence. He was also a leader in assembling materials related to the history of the University. A specialist in political and western history, Brennan was the author of a book, *Silver and the First New Deal* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1969), and articles and editor of some fifteen guides to manuscript collections.

Cassandra M. Volpe has been an archivist with the Western Historical Collections for eighteen years and is presently serving as its Acting Department Head.

[1] John A. Brennan, ed., "Progress Report: Archive of the Western Federation of Miners and the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, 1967–1975," researched and compiled by Ellen H. Arguimbau, Western Historical Collections, University of Colorado, Boulder, 1975, p. *i*.

NEWS

AMERICAN LABOR MUSEUM

On August 3, 1988, the American Labor Museum/ Botto House National Landmark held a reception in recognition of the publication of *The Fragile Bridge: Paterson Silk Strike—1913* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), written by Steve Golin, Professor of History at Bloomfield College. The Museum/Landmark (the "House on the Green") was the rallying point for the strikers after they were forbidden to meet in Paterson and was the platform from which speakers such as "Big Bill" Haywood, Carlo Tresca and Upton Sinclair informed and inspired the striking workers. The book depicts these and other events of the strike, as well as the strike's signficance for later labor history. The American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark is located at 83 Norwood Street, Haledon, NJ 07508, (201) 595-7953.

AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN LABOUR HISTORY CONFERENCE

The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History and the Committee on Canadian Labour History are holding a conference at the University of Sydney during the week beginning December 12, 1988. Some papers will be comparative, while others represent the latest thinking and research in Canadian or Australian labour history. The conference sessions include: Labour History in Canada and Australia; Aboriginal Peoples; Gender and Working Class; Work Relations in Colonial Times; Employer Strategies and Worker Response, 1850-1930; Depression and War, 1929-1946; Labour and the Post-War World; Labour and Politics; and Whose History? Workshop on Sources and Methods in Labour History.

To obtain a registration form, contact Greg Patmore, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Sydney, NSW, 20006, Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors thank the following for their assistance with this issue of LABOR'S HERITAGE: Arthur J. Breton, Archives of American Art; Gay G. Craft, Louisiana Collection, Tulane University; Anita Duquette, Whitney Museum of American Art; Thomas Featherstone, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University; Edwin Gabler, The Samuel Gompers Papers; Elizabeth Gombosi, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University; Gina C. Guy, The Museum of Modern Art; Collin B. Hamer, Jr., Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library; Bert Harter, Louisiana State Museum; David Hays, Western Historical Collections, University of Colorado, Boulder; Frances Silcox, Design and Production, Inc.; Richard L. Tooke, The Museum of Modern Art; Karen Yaffe, Still Pictures Branch, National Archives and Records Administration.

BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, has recently accessioned the business records of the following companies that played a significant role in the economic and industrial development of the city:

Alabama Mineral Land Company. Records, 1880-1952. 43 linear feet.

Republic Iron and Steel Company. Records, 1885-1975. 37 linear feet.

Debardeleben Coal Company. Records, 1910-1948. 54 linear feet.

Woodward Iron Company. Records, 1910-1970. 66 linear feet.

For further information contact James B. Murray, Birmingham Public Library, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, 2100 Park Place, Birmingham, AL 35203, (205) 226-3647.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

A lively story of union organizing and negotiating on the waterfronts of the Pacific coast and Hawaii is told in a series of oral histories with International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's International Union leaders recently completed by the Regional Oral History Office of the University of California at Berkeley. The

transcribed, indexed oral histories are:

Bulcke, Germain, "Longshoreman's Leader & ILWU-Pacific Maritime Association Arbitrator," 230 pages.

Goldblatt, Louis, "Louis Goldblatt: The ILWU in California and Hawaii, 1934-1977," 1216 pages.

Leonard, Norman, "Life of a Leftist Labor Lawyer," 309 pages.

Schmidt, Henry, "Secondary Leadership in the ILWU, 1933-1966," 440 pages.

Copies of the transcripts may be used in The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley; Special Collections, UCLA; and may be acquired at cost by other manuscript libraries. Contact Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720, (415) 642-7395.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

The Labor-Management Documentation Center at Cornell University has acquired thirteen hundred feet of historical documents, photographs and memorabilia comprising the archives of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union. The archives was established as an ILGWU department in 1973. During its existence it was administered by former union Vice President Henoch Mendelsund. The arrangement and description of the record groups in the archives was accomplished under the direction of ILGWU Archivist Robert E. Lazar. Richard Strassberg, director of the Documentation Center, served as consultant to the archives. Because of numerous other demands on the ILGWU's financial resources, the union closed its Archives Department in June 1987. In addition to its gift of the archives, the union will establish an endowment to support processing of ILGWU records at the Center.

The ILGWU archives consists of fifty-six collections which include records relating to the administrations of the six past presidents of the union, ILGWU headquarters departments and many of the key locals. The largest single part of the collection is the David Dubinsky records—450 thousand items spanning the years 1932 to 1966. In addition to documenting the history of the union and the garment industry, the records are useful for the study of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the American Labor party, the Spanish Civil War, the New Deal, communism and international affairs, and Italian-American and Jewish-American affairs, among other subjects. In addition to manuscript and printed documents, the collection includes a labor photograph collection, several oral histories conducted with senior officials of the union and guides to most of the important record groups in the collection. This acquisition complements the Center's already strong holdings of records of garment industry unions, including those of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, and the International Fur and Leather Workers Union.

Richard Strassberg is the recipient of the 1987-1988 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Librarianship.

Requests for information on the ILGWU archives should be addressed to Reference Archivist, Labor-Management Documentation Center, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14851-0952.

ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL LIBRARY

The Barber-Greene Company of Aurora, Illinois, donated more than 23 thousand negatives to the Illinois State Historical Library in September 1987. The collection dates from the mid-1940s through the late 1950s, and includes images of the manufacture of machinery such as snow loaders, permanent and portable conveyors and road building equipment. Most of the collection contains negatives of machinery in use, with road construction crews and operaters of coal conveyors predominant.

Other recent accesions include:

Central Illinois Typographical Union 177 and related local unions. Records, 1862-1978. 21 cubic feet. Minutes, correspondence, reports and financial and membership records of typographical union locals in Danville, Springfield, Quincy and Decatur, Illinois, and Hannibal, Missouri.

Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen. General Grievance Commmittee Records, 1911-1970 (primarily 1930s-1950s). 12 cubic feet. Corre-

spondence, claims, legal documents, minutes, reports and financial records relating to railways, including the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad and the Alton Railroad.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local Union 633. Records, 1900-1947. 6 cubic feet. Minute books, daybooks, ledgers, membership records and reports of this Granite City, Illinois, local.

Ralph and Sarah Shaw. Papers, 1932-1936 and n.d.. 5 linear inches. The Shaws were former Communist party members who actively organized southern Illinois coal miners during the 1930s and 1940s. The collection contains ephemera (circulars, broadsides, newsletters) relating to the Communist party, Progressive Miners of America, worker-farmer parties and unemployment councils in central and southern Illinois.

For further information contact Laurel G. Bowen, Manuscripts Department, Illinois State Library, Old State Capitol, Springfield, IL 62701, (217) 782-4836.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

The Historical Manuscripts and Archives Department at the University of Maryland, College Park, has accessioned the papers of Andrew A. Pettis, former president of the Industrial Union of Marine & Shipbuilding Workers of America (IUMSWA). The 35-cubic foot collection, containing correspondence, grievance files, organizers' reports, conference proceedings, publications, photographs and memorabilia, documents Pettis's long career in the union, including his early years as president of Local 50 (Portland, Maine) and the New England Region of IUMSWA. The IUMSWA archives are also located at the University of Maryland, College Park. Contact Lauren Brown, Historical Manuscripts and Archives Department, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, (301) 454-2318.

INSTITUTE FOR MASSACHUSETTS STUDIES

The Institute for Massachusetts Studies will hold a symposium on the History of Labor in Massachusetts at Westfield State College, April 15, 1989. Papers on any aspect of labor in Massachusetts will be considered; papers presented at the syposium will be published by the Institute. Deadline for *completed* papers is December 1, 1988. Send to Dr. Martin Kaufman, Institute for Massachusetts Studies, Westfield State College, Westfield, MA 01086; or contact Ken Fones-Wolf, Program Co-chair, Archives, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003.

MIDWEST ARCHIVES CONFERENCE

On May 7, 1988, the Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, was one of the first two recipients of the Midwest Archives Conference's President's Award. Presented at the conference's annual business meeting at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago, the award recognizes individual and institutional support of the archival profession.

The Iowa Federation of Labor has provided long-standing financial support for an Iowa State Historical Society project documenting Iowa union workers and their labor organizations during the twentieth century. The project has resulted in a valuable collection of both manuscript materials and oral history interviews.

The Midwest Archives Conference, founded in 1972, is the nation's largest regional archival organization, drawing on a membership of over one thousand individual and institutional members from its twelve-state area. Contact Cheryl Norenberg Thies, Public Information Officer, Midwest Archives Conference, 1500 Mississippi Street, St. Paul, MN 55101.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Montana Historical Society holds the following collections relevant to the study of labor history that are open and available for research:

Alice Gold and Silver Mining Company. Records, 1877-1930. 10 linear feet. [MC 57] This collection consists primarily of outgoing correspondence from the Walkerville, Montana, mine superintendents to Salt Lake City, Utah, company officials concerning day-to-day operations of the mine, including the company's dealings with the miners' unions.

Helena Typographical Union Local 95. Records,

1885-1973. 4.5 linear feet. [MC 88] These records consist of correspondence, minute books, organizational records, subject files, and finanical records of the union. The union was involved with the *Helena Independent* and the *Helena Record*, as well as with several job printing offices. There is also a subgroup for the Montana Typographical Conference (1953-1973), which the Helena union helped found in 1929. Part of the collection is available on microfilm [MF 197].

Anaconda Central Labor Council. Records, 1897-1943. 1.2 linear feet. [MC 103] These records document the Council which represented a merger of the Deer Lodge County Trades and Labor Council and the Anaconda Building Trades Congress, and include general correspondence, financial records, legal documents and minutes. The collection is available on microfilm [MF 286].

Nickolas Kessler Family. Papers, 1865-1952. 40 linear feet. [MC 161] These records consist of five subroups including Nickolas Kessler, and Kessler Brewery, and document the brewery's neotiations with the brewers' unions.

Women's Protective Union/Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union. Records, 1901-1973. 9 linear feet. [MC 174] This collection contains records of these unions, including correspondence, financial records, legal documents, minutes, organizational records, subject files and miscellany.

Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way. Records, 1920. .1 linear feet. [SC 1583] This collection consists of a letter from a committee of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way to the management of the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railway asking that certain wage increases be put into effect, especially those pertaining to various types of railroad foremen.

National Newspaper Guild Local 81, Great Falls. Records, 1973-1975. .1 linear feet. [SC 1279] This collection contains minutes, strike papers, contract offers, correspondence and clippings relative to the strike during October-December 1974.

Ancient Order of United Workmen. Records, 1885-1897. .2 linear feet. [SC 1041] This collection consists of two local lodge minute books: one for the Centennial Lodge at Boulder, Montana, and the other for the Elkhorn Lodge at Elkhorn, Montana.

Julius A. Kiderlen. Papers, 1896-1899. .1 linear feet. [SC 108] This collection consists primarily of incoming letters relative to the business of the Philipsburg, Montana, Labor Union 10 of the Western Labor Union, headquartered in Butte, Montana. Kiderlen was a miner and labor union organizer who founded the Philipsburg local and AFL Local 6800 of Philipsburg.

Western Federation of Miners, Local Union 30. Records, 1894-1896. .1 linear feet. This collection consists of one volume of minutes of meetings and conventions of the Clancy, Montana, underground miners.

Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Records, 1876-1974. 415 linear feet. [MC 169] These records document the activities of the ACM and many of its predecessor and subsidiary companies and departments. The records include material pertaining to day labor, employees, employment agencies, evening schools, the Fair Labor Standards Act, industrial safety, mining accidents, International Union of Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers, labor relations, labor classification, pensions, shutdowns and curtailments, strikes and lockouts, the National Labor Relations Board, the Victory Labor-Management Committee, vocational education, wages and salaries, workmen's compensation, as well as a variety of other company-labor concerns.

Lee Metcalf. Papers, 1934-1978. 290 linear feet. [MC 172] This collection documents the political career of Montana Senator Lee Metcalf and is an excellent source for researchers interested in twentieth-century Montana and U.S. labor legislation. Included in the collection are general correspondence, bills, printed material, campaign material, speeches and writings, voting records and clippings.

Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction. Records, 1930-1971. 6 linear feet. [RS 102] This record series consists primarily of materials generated by five superintendents in their capacity as heads of the Department of Public Instruction, the Board of Education, and other duties. The records, consisting primarily of correspondence, reflect the superintendents' role in teacher-school board relations, the office's relations with the Montana Education Association, teachers'

The George Meany Memorial Archives

The George Meany Memorial Archives, dedicated August 17, 1987, and located on the 47-acre campus of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Maryland.

unions and academic freedom issues.

The Montana Historical Society Archives invites researchers to use its holdings either in person or by mail. For further information contact Montana Historical Society Archives, 225 North Roberts, Helena, MT 59620, (406) 444-4775.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

The Historical Collections and Labor Archives at Penn State University has opened two major record groups within its United Steelworkers of America Archive:

USWA President's Office, I. W. Abel. Records, 1965-1977. 58 cubic feet. Correspondence, speeches and negotiation material, convention and election files from I. W. Abel's tenure as USWA president; records from 1968 to 1977 are restricted.

USWA International Executive Board. Proceedings, 1942-1964. 10 cubic feet. Verbatim transcripts of USWA Executive Board meetings; material from 1953 to 1964 is restricted. Contact Historical Collections and Labor Archives, W313 Pattee Library, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802, (814) 863-2505.

SENATE HISTORICAL OFFICE

Twayne Publishers invites recommendations, proposals and manuscripts for its new oral history series. The series seeks to publish quality collections of oral testimonies in a broad range of topics, including labor history, women's studies and cultural history. Each book in the series will include a collection of interviews focusing on a single topic, with an interpretive essay to place the interviews into their larger historical context. The model for the series is Sherna B. Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987). Those interested in further information should contact the series editor, Donald A. Ritchie, Senate Historical Office, Washington, DC 20510, (202) 224-6816.

SOUTHWEST LABOR STUDIES CONFERENCE

The fifteenth annual Southwest Labor Studies Conference will be held on April 28-29, 1989, at San Francisco State University. This conference, sponsored by the Southwest Labor Studies Association, welcomes papers on any national or international labor topic. Send abstracts of proposed papers to conference coordinator Barbara Byrd, Labor Studies, 33 Gough Street, San Francisco Community College District, San Francisco, CA 94103, (415) 239-3090 or (415) 333-7391.

TEXAS LABOR ARCHIVES

The Texas Labor Archives at the University of Texas at Arlington has recently accessioned the following collections:

Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization, Dallas-Fort Worth Tower Group, Local 442. Records, 1969-1981. 3 feet, 5 inches. Minutes of the local and executive board meetings, correspondence, cassette tapes, grievances, Freedom of Information Act requests, newsletters and membership lists.

Dallas Building and Construction Trades Council. Records, 1914, 1940, 1948-1985. 6 feet, 6 inches. Minutes, correspondence, photographs, charters, newsletters, agreements, financial documents, constitutions and by-laws and 1914 souvenir book of the Dallas

Buildings Trades Council.

Texas AFL-CIO. Records, 1888, 1935-1985. 9 inches. Speeches, photographs, newsletters, material on labor history, right-to-work laws and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and union histories. The Texas Labor Archives has served since 1967 as the depository for records of the Texas AFL-CIO.

Five oral history interviews conducted by the University of Texas at Arlington labor historian George Green have also been recently accessioned. Those interviewed include:

Murray "Dusty" Miller, organizer for the Teamsters in Texas from 1945 until his recent retirement.

Archie Spratt, member of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, who worked for the Santa Fe Railroad for many years as a brakeman and conductor.

H. C. McGarity, member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who discusses his employment at the Ford Motor Company at a time when there was strong anti-union sentiment.

Billy Cowan, switchman for the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad, who held every elective office at the local level of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, and later became state legislative director of the BRT.

Garland Ham, employed at the General Motors Corporation plant in Arlington, Texas, beginning in 1953. He was active in the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, served as president of the local and later joined the UAW staff.

For further information contact Mrs. Jane Boley, The University of Texas at Arlington—Texas Labor Archives, P.O. Box 19497, Arlington, TX 76019, (817) 273-3393.

WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Several labor-related collections have recently been processed by the Western Reserve Historical Society through support of the Ohio Historical Society's Ohio Labor History Project. The processing is part of a three-year program to process the library's entire uncataloged manuscripts backlog (approximately eight hundred collections) and to enter data on these and an additional 2,200 already processed collections onto the OCLC database using the MARC-AMC format. The overall three-year project is funded by grants from the George Gund Foundation and the Cleveland Foundation.

The labor collections now open for research include:

National Association of Letter Carriers, Local 40. Records, Series II, 1916-1929.

National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees, Local 604. Records, 1956-1974.

National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees, Local 604, Ladies Auxiliary. Records, 1953-1977.

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Devereux Division 167. Records, 1873-1941.

United Steelworkers of America, District 28. Records, 1937-1955.

Cleveland Printing and Graphic Communications Union, Local 56. Records, Series II, 1935-1983.

Lorain, Ohio, City Federation of Labor. Records, 1932-1961.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local 11. Records, 1881-1943.

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local 105. Records, 1913-1973.

Carpenters District Council of Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga, and Ashtabula Counties of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. Records, 1914-1973.

Sheet Metal Workers International Alliance, Local 65. Records, 1907-1964.

Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers International Union, Local 5. Records, 1879-1959.

For information contact John J. Grabowski, The Western Reserve Historical Society, 10825 East Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44106, (216) 721-5722.

Labor's Heritage *invites information to be included in this section. Topics of interest include notices of meetings, exhibits and other events; collection accessions and openings; and related matters. Send to: News,* Labor's Heritage, *10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20903.*

LABOR'S HERITAGE

Correspondence regarding contributions and all other editorial matters should be sent to the Editor, *Labor's Heritage*, The George Meany Memorial Archives, 10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20903. Subscription rates are $15.00 for one year, $28.00 for two years, and $40.00 for three years. Rates for subscriptions outside the United States are $18.75 for one year, $35.00 for two years, and $50.00 for three years. Notice of nonreceipt of an issue must be sent within six months of issue publication date. Back issues, when available, are $5.00 per issue. The George Meany Memorial Archives is part of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies.

Labor's Heritage is a scholarly-based journal published quarterly by the George Meany Memorial Archives, official archives of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. Its primary purpose is to bring public attention to the rich and varied heritage of American workers, and to resources and exhibits for the further exploration of this subject.

The historical focus and general audience of *Labor's Heritage* precludes accepting articles that deal primarily with contemporary issues or that are partisan or polemical in style or content. While the editors will consult with experts as required in selecting articles for publication, the responsibility for selection lies with the editors. Published articles reflect a wide range of perspectives and do not necessarily represent the views of the George Meany Memorial Archives or the AFL-CIO.

Labor's Heritage relies in general on *Webster's Dictionary* and the *Chicago Manual of Style* for guidance in matters of form, grammar and spelling. Articles, with notes at the end numbered consecutively, should be double-spaced. The editors welcome inquiries from prospective authors prior to submission of articles.

Correspondence regarding contributions and all other editorial matters should be sent to the Editor, *Labor's Heritage*, The George Meany Memorial Archives, 10000 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20903. Subscription rates are $15.00 for one year, $28.00 for two years, and $40.00 for three years. Rates for subscriptions outside the United States are $18.75 for one year, $35.00 for two years, and $50.00 for three years. Notice of nonreceipt of an issue must be sent within six months of issue publication date. Back issues, when available, are $5.00 per issue.

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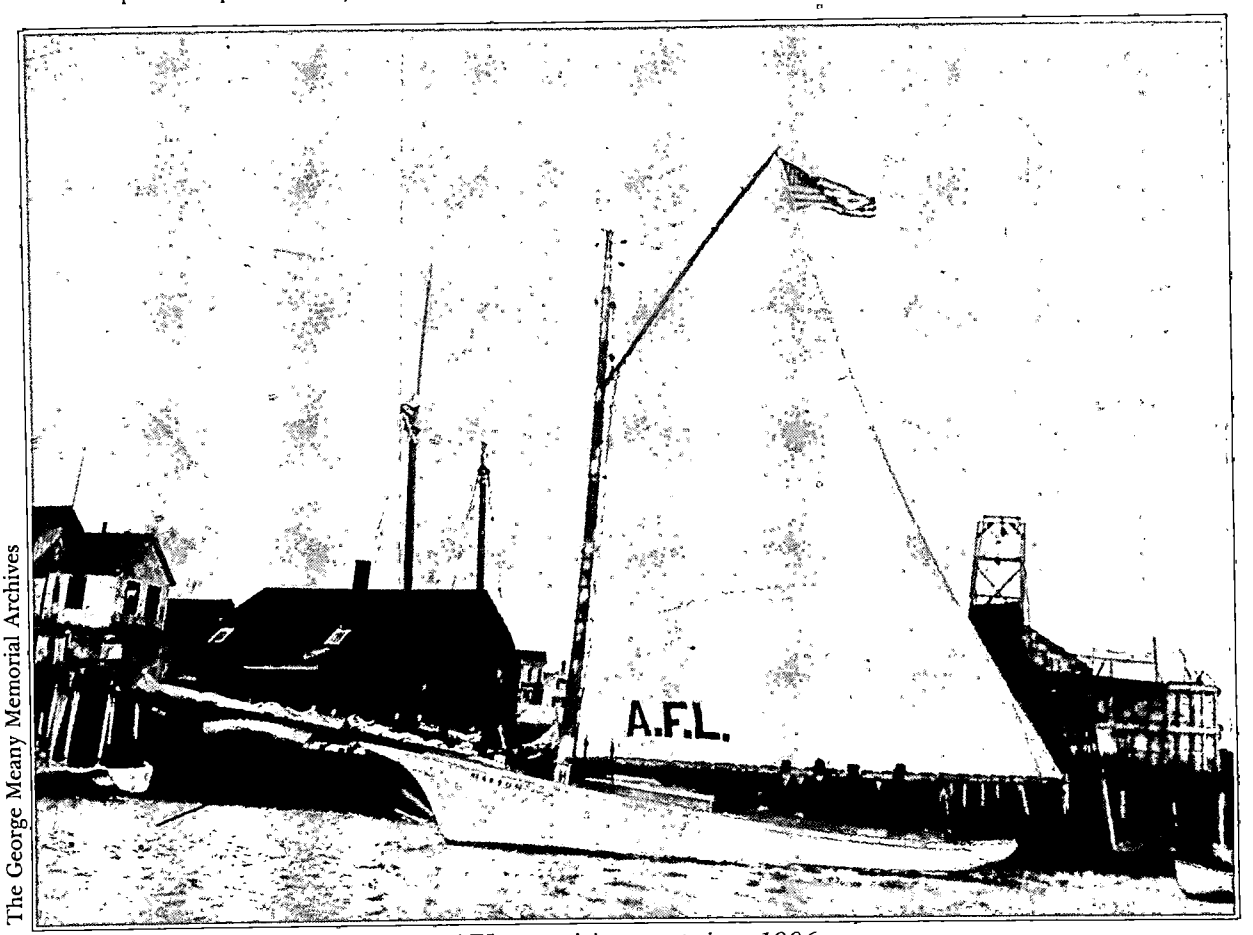

The George Meany Memorial Archives

AFL organizing campaign, 1906.