

## Σαμ Ντόλγκοφ, Ηθική και αμερικανικός συνδικαλισμός

πρόλογος του Δημήτρη Τρωαδίτη

Η μπροσούρα αυτή γράφτηκε στη δεκαετία του 1950 από τον Σαμ Ντόλγκοφ, με το ψευδώνυμο Σαμ Ουέινερ (Sam Weiner) και εκδόθηκε το 1958 από την Libertarian League (Ελευθεριακή Λίγκα) της Νέας Υόρκης. Επίσης, φέρει τον υπότιτλο “Και ένα βήμα μπροστά για την εργατική τάξη”.

Υπήρξε η πρώτη έκδοση της εν λόγω ομάδας και δεν είναι τυχαίο που επιλέχθηκε το ζήτημα αυτό που διαπραγματεύεται, ενώ ούτε ο χρόνος της έκδοσης είναι τυχαίος.

Για του λόγου το αληθές, αρχικά στην μπροσούρα ο συγγραφέας αποπειράται να συνδέσει το ζήτημα της ολοένα αυξανόμενης διαμάχης και έντασης των σχέσεων μεταξύ των τότε δύο υπερδυνάμεων, λέγοντας ότι ένας πυρηνικός πόλεμος είναι δυνατόν ως αποτέλεσμα αυτών των εντάσεων. Παραδέχεται δε ότι η ανερχόμενη λαϊκή δυσανεμία τόσο στις χώρες του τότε ανατολικού μπλοκ, με αποκορύφωμα την Ουγγρική Επανάσταση του 1956 και την καταστολή της, αλλά και η γενικότερη αναταραχή στην Κίνα, είχε μια τεράστια επίδραση όχι μόνο στην Ανατολική Ευρώπη αλλά και σε ολόκληρο τον κόσμο.

Από την άλλη, αναδεικνύει την ολοένα αυξανόμενη γραφειοκρατικοποίηση που διέρχεται κάθε επίπεδο και πτυχή της αμερικανικής κοινωνίας και γενικά των δυτικών κοινωνιών.

Από εκεί και πέρα στις σελίδες του εν λόγω πονήματος, ο συγγραφέας επιδίδεται σε μια σύντομη, αλλά ενδελεχή κριτική παρουσίαση του αμερικανικού συνδικαλιστικού κινήματος από την εμφάνισή του, μέχρι την ίδρυση της AFL (American Federation of Labor - Αμερικανική Ομοσπονδία Εργασίας), αλλά και την δράση της IWW (Industrial Workers of the World - Βιομηχανικοί Εργάτες του Κόσμου), της οποίας ο Σαμ Ντόλγκοφ ήταν μέλος και στέλεχος.

Άλλωστε, οι τίτλοι των Κεφαλαίων αυτής της μπροσούρας είναι ενδεικτικοί των γραφομένων του Ντόλγκοφ: “Η ηθική και τα συνδικάτα”, “Συνδικαλισμός στις αμερικανικές εταιρίες”, “Η άνοδος του κράτους πρόνοιας”(welfarism), “Μερικές σελίδες εργατικής ιστορίας”, “Η επαναστατική παράδοση” και “Το μέλλον και τα καθήκοντά του”.

Να πούμε εδώ ότι στις ΗΠΑ υπήρξαν δύο οργανώσεις με το όνομα Libertarian League. Η πρώτη ιδρύθηκε στο διάστημα ανάμεσα στους δύο παγκόσμιους πολέμους στο Λος Άντζελες και αυτοχαρακτηριζόταν ως αναρχική. Οι ιδρυτές της ήταν οι Cassius V. Cook, Charles T. Sprading, Clarence Lee Swartz, Henry Cohen, Hans F. Rossner και Thomas Bell.

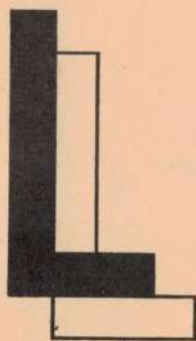
Η δεύτερη Libertarian League, που αυτοχαρακτηριζόταν ως αναρχική και συνδικαλιστική, ιδρύθηκε στη Νέα Υόρκη το 1954 και χρησιμοποιούσε ως έδρα της το Libertarian Book Club (Λέσχη Ελευθεριακού Βιβλίου). Ανάμεσα στα μέλη της ήταν οι Sam Dolgoff, Russell Blackwell, Dave Van Ronk, Enrico Arrigoni και Murray Bookchin. Εξέδιδε το περιοδικό “Views and Comments” (“Απόψεις και Σχόλια”). Τμήματα της Λίγκας ιδρύθηκαν και σε άλλες πόλεις, όπως το Νιτρώιτ και το Σαν

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# ***Ethics and American Unionism***

**by Sam Weiner**



**A LIBERTARIAN LEAGUE PUBLICATION**

ETHICS AND  
AMERICAN UNIONISM

AND THE PATH AHEAD FOR THE WORKING CLASS

by Sam Weiner

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## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Fears, tensions and insecurity are sapping our vitality; they are beclouding and twisting our lives. There is a growing realization that nuclear war may soon annihilate us all. This colossal waste of the earth's riches, this criminal perversion of human life and human labor, violate the deepest, noblest feelings of humanity. Millions of men and women everywhere are today questioning the sanity of the social systems that make such catastrophes possible.

Those who had hoped that Russia might lead the way to a better and freer world have been bitterly disappointed. Khrushchey's "exposures" of Stalin have not deterred him from following the same general course. The revolts in Eastern Europe, the unrest in China and in Russia itself, and above all, the bloody suppression of the Hungarian Workers' Revolution by the armies of 'Soviet' imperialism, have had tremendous repercussions, not only in the Russian empire but throughout the world.

Illusions have been shattered. Authoritarian solutions to social problems are no longer acceptable. Many thinking people are discarding ideas and beliefs that they had always taken for granted. A new interest in libertarian principles is developing, not only abroad, but in this country also.

In the countries of the West, governmental regimentation is increasing. Bureaucracy permeates every cell of American society and threatens to swamp all spontaneity and freedom. This is a particularly grave matter when it affects the labor movement.

We have made the labor unions the subject of our first pamphlet because we feel that the power of the organized workers represents the best hope, possibly the only alternative to the destruction of humanity by the armed might of States. The Libertarian League holds that an inspired and informed labor movement can and must do away with all oppressive and exploitative forms of social disorder; that it will, in solidarity with other movements of the people, build the free world of the future.

Our view of the aims and functions of the working class is but the reflection of our broader social concepts and the ethical values that underlie them. To define these values and these concepts in their application to labor is the purpose of this message.

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## I. ETHICS AND THE UNIONS

Ethics are the morals, the concepts and ideals that men live by. The progress of a society cannot be measured solely by the extent of its technical development. Economic realities are of fundamental importance, but if the ethical values of a society do not measure up to its technology, then this technology may become an instrument for mass suicide. The paramount problem in this atomic age is an ethical one.

There is an ethos underlying every group in society, which determines in large part the manner in which it deals with its political, economic, social and cultural problems. Even common thieves, business men and hoodlums have their unwritten codes.

Within the labor movement there are - broadly speaking - two main tendencies. These are as far apart as two worlds -- the world of the slave who strives to be free and the world of the master who wants to keep him in chains. What is ethical for the one is not ethical for the other. What is right for the master is wrong for the slave. One is conservative and opportunistic while the other is dynamic and revolutionary.

The ethics of the labor bureaucrats are those of the business community of which they consider themselves a part. With its huge membership, its bulging treasuries and its political influence, business unionism, as represented by the AFL-CIO is an unhealthy movement. Since its officials are the masters and not the servants of the membership, it is essentially an anti-working class movement.

There was a time when the American labor movement was inspired by a noble revolutionary ideal -- the emancipation of the workers from wage-slavery. Union men were inspired by the vision of a free cooperative commonwealth dedicated to the happiness and free creative development of every human being. Labor was most militant when it was invigorated by these ideals. Its ethics were those of a revolutionary movement striving for a better world. These ethics and these ideals are as valid today as they were yesterday and will be tomorrow.

The contrast between the revolutionary labor movement and the capitalist-minded defenders of "business unionism" can be seen in the following quotations. In the Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) we read:

"The working class and the employing class have nothing in common...the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class has interests in common with their employers...The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with the capitalists, but also to carry on production when capi-

talism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

The self-identification of the business unionist with the rest of the capitalist system was summed up as follows by the AFL president William Green in 1935:

"The majority of employers sincerely and honestly wish to maintain decent wage standards and humane conditions of employment. They neither seek the exploitation of labor, nor the exploitation of the consuming public. They are inspired by a keen sense of justice and are influenced in all their business dealings by a spirit of fair-dealing and fair-play."

This attitude has been reaffirmed in the constitution of the AFL-CIO. It has also been expressed by David Dubinsky, who once told reporters that "Labor needs capitalism like a fish needs water." (The New York Times, June 9, 1957)

The American labor movement, as it exists today, is the result of the interaction over many decades of business unionism and revolutionary unionism. Its major defects stem from the former and its constructive tendencies come from the latter. It is necessary to examine the revolutionary tradition of the American labor movement to understand the path that must be followed for its regeneration and further progress.

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## II. AMERICAN BUSINESS UNIONISM

The American Federation of Labor -- Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) has been called the "United Nations of Labor." The analogy has considerable value especially since the "United Nations" is an association of sovereign states and not a true community of the peoples that these states are supposed to represent. As in the United Nations, the labor rulers in these unions have staked out their particular fields of jurisdiction which they jealously guard. As in the United Nations, each distinct entity tries to grab by trickery or by force, whatever it can from the others, while within the organization itself, power blocs contend for over-all control. In the AFL-CIO, behind the artificial unity imposed from above, is the struggle of bureaucratic cliques for control over the membership and for the power and benefits to be derived from that control.

Bureaucracy, graft and corruption -- all of the vices that permeate our exploitative and statist society -- are faithfully reproduced throughout the labor movement, from the smallest union local up to the supreme governing bodies of the "International" Unions. The exceptions are so rare that they can be regarded as sociological curiosities. To say that "management" is not better, or even worse, merely affirms that they are birds of a feather.

The principal business before the Second Convention of the AFL-CIO was the expulsion of corrupt unions and the adoption of a "Code of Ethics." Events at this Convention demonstrated that when the labor bureaucracy proclaims that there is no fundamental conflict between the workers and their employers, they surrender the independence of the labor movement, making it impossible for it to act as a lever for social change. The ve-



ry nature of such a movement makes it incapable of correcting its organic deficiencies or performing even the few constructive tasks that it sets for itself.

The attitude of the affiliated unions to the expulsion of the Teamsters' Union revealed the power struggles that rack the organization. A meeting of the Building and Construction Trades Council which controls three million members had voted unanimously against the proposed expulsion of the Teamsters' Union. At the Convention however, most of them yielded to pressure and reversed themselves. Of all the Building Trades, only the Carpenters' Union actually voted in support of the Teamsters.

Altogether, twenty-one International Unions opposed the expulsion of the Teamsters while four others split their votes. Another eight delegations showed their sympathy for the Teamsters by leaving the hall before the vote was called. The president of the Steelworkers, which is a key union, surprised the Convention when he walked over to the Teamsters' delegation and expressed his regrets. When there is so much disagreement on a question of such magnitude we can only conclude that the so-called "house of labor" is indeed a very rickety structure, built on shifting sand.

The organization of the Convention itself exposed the undemocratic, unethical and hypocritical character of the AFL-CIO. How democratic is an organization that permits one thousand delegates to vote for twelve and a half million members and decides crucial issues without a referendum vote? How many of the delegates had been instructed by their membership on how to vote? Very few, if any. John F. English, the secretary-treasurer of the Teamsters' Union, told the Convention that he doubted if there were even five unions that come up to the standards of the AFL-CIO Ethical Practices Committee. He predicted that many of those who voted against the Teamsters will soon be facing the same charges and getting the same treatment from the Senate investigators. In effect, Mr. English was telling the judges that they were a bunch of hypocrites. *No one contradicted him.*

There is every reason for believing that the accusations against the teamsters' Union were true. As long ago as 1937, this union, then under the administration of Dan Tobin, was considered one of the most corrupt in the country. It was the main support of racketeering in the trucking, laundry, poultry, and in the cleaning and dyeing industries. Dave Beck was trained for his job by Dan Tobin, who appointed Beck as his successor.

But the Teamsters were by no means alone in this corruption. In 1932, the AFL admitted that 28 of its Chicago unions were controlled by gangsters of the Al Capone type. Of the fifteen members of the AFL Executive Board in 1937, six of them headed admittedly corrupt unions. The colossal corruption in the Building Trades was common knowledge. Racketeering and corruption were greatest in the very organizations that in numbers and resources, constituted the backbone of the Federation - the Teamsters and the Building Trades.

The Teamsters' Union was in the AFL for 54 years. Without its support no one could sit on the all-powerful Executive Council. Nor could Meany have become president of the AFL without their backing. It is inconceivable that Mr. Meany, who had long been an official in one of the Building Trades organizations (the Plumbers' Union) was unaware of these things. Now Meany pretends that he is "shocked" by the scope of the rackets!

In view of the fact that the leaders of the AFL-CIO knew that the Teamsters and other unions were and are corrupt, why did they admit them into the "new", unified labor movement in the first place? Why did they wait until the labor-baiting Senate Investigating Committee took the steps that the "labor statesmen" had failed to take? Only when their hand was forced, was an "Ethical Practices Committee" appointed. It is obvious to any thinking person that the labor bureaucrats are afraid to do more than scratch the surface. They shrink from making a thorough and honest investigation into the corruption in the American labor movement because such an investigation would prove that business unionism is rotten to the core and that the AFL-CIO as a whole must share responsibility for the character and conduct of the accused unions.

Not all American unions are totalitarian or infested with racketeers and other corrupt elements. A few organizations, such as the International Typographical Union, can be considered free of this taint. The United Automobile Workers (UAW) and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) do not compare with the Typographers in this respect although they do meet the standards set by the AFL-CIO Code of Ethics.

But the problem is really much deeper, since the concept of ethics held by even the best leaders of the best unions is not a genuine working class ethical concept. These leaders, almost without exception, identify themselves and their interests with the business and bureaucratic world around them.

In the Preamble to the Code of Ethics written by the Executive Council and adopted at the Second Convention of the AFL-CIO, it is stated that; "Freedom and democracy are the essential attributes of our movement... Authoritarian control, whether from within or without the labor movement or imposed from without by Government, is contrary to the spirit, the traditions and the principles of our movement."

But the behaviour of the Executive Council and the Convention has been in flat contradiction to these fine sentiments. Without consulting the membership, these leaders have imposed their own "Code of Ethics." The Executive Council tells the affiliated unions and the members what they may do and what they may not do. If the leaders can force the members to obey their arbitrarily imposed rules, they have a free hand to run the unions to suit themselves. This can only serve to reinforce one of the root causes of corruption - the monopoly of power. Permitting such a monopoly is clearly unethical because it makes possible the domination of man over man.

At the aforementioned Second Convention, delegate Randolph of the International Typographical Union and delegate Gorman of the Meatcutters' Union emphasized these points. (These two unions are among the most ethical and democratic in the country.) Randolph accused the Executive Council of imposing its tailor-made codes on the whole organization, and interfering with the autonomy of the affiliated unions. He said:

"Now I call to your attention that the scope of these codes is not only wide. I say that it is complete in its attempt to control the internal affairs of the International Unions and the National Unions. It is a complete reversal of the basic and fundamental right of the International Unions to control their own internal affairs.... They (the Executive Council) undertook to set up a dictatorship of thirty men over the American labor movement that you will never get out of if you



adopt it here. The point is this, that any reformation that can last at all in any circumstances where reformation is needed, that reformation will have to come from the bottom and not from a mandate at the top that will skim off a few crooks, allowing opportunity for more crooks to grow up underneath it..."

To illustrate our point - Article Eleven of the code perpetuates "authoritarian control...from within the labor movement." it reads:

"The AFL-CIO and affiliated National and International Unions shall have the power to institute disciplinary and corrective proceedings with respect to local and other bodies, including the power to establish trusteeships where necessary."

Nothing is said of the power of the members to discipline the elected or appointed officials. This is not mentioned because no such power exists.

Every dictator rides into power under the banner of freedom. He promises to correct abuses and punish offenders. History demonstrates that this power is then almost invariably used to choke off all opposition. In the labor movement this pattern has been repeated with disgusting regularity. In coping with one glaring abuse, the guardians of righteousness create a hundred new ones.

What the Code of Ethics does not mention is more important than what it does. Nothing is said about narrowing the gap between the big salaries of many union officials and the low wages of the dues-payers. Nothing is said about the reaching of binding, long-term agreements with the bosses without the opportunity of a referendum of the membership. Nothing is said of the power to call or forbid strikes or of the general attitude of "buddy-buddy" between the bosses of the unions and the bosses of industry. Nothing is said about the endorsement of political candidates or the support of the foreign policies of the State.

It is little wonder that such spokesmen of big business as the New York Times have enthusiastically praised the AFL-CIO Code of Ethics as a model of "labor statemanship." This is a capitalist code. It is unethical for labor, because its ethics are the ethics of capitalism.

Two of the prominent "labor statesmen" who helped draw up this Code of Ethics are David Dubinsky, President of the ILGWU and Walter Reuther, President of the UAW. Erring unions and erring union leaders have often been urged to emulate the high ethical standards of these two men. A few examples will serve to bring out the ethical concepts of the two outstanding business unionists.

The New York Post of May 1, 1957, carried the following dispatch:

"LAMAR, MO. - The white frame house where Harry S. Truman was born on May 8, 1884, was purchased yesterday by the United Automobile Workers which plans to make it into a shrine."

The gentleman who gave the word to drop the first atomic bomb in history on defenceless civilians; who, in a sense, inaugurated the period of greatest danger and insecurity ever known, is thus honored by the leadership of the UAW. What are the ethical implications of such expenditures of union funds?

A "Public Review Board" Has been created by the UAW leadership. This board is supposed to be a public watch-dog over the union, and it is controlled by outsiders with authority to render full and final judgement and prescribe penalties for alleged offenders. Its powers would in certain respects be greater than that of the General Executive Board of the Union. One of the members of this Review Board is Monsignor Higgins of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy. At a recent Convention of the UAW, this "impartial" character stated that the leadership of the UAW "...is a little bit better than the rank and file deserve."

The official organ of the UAW, "The Automobile Worker" (May 14, 1957), said that, "He (Monsignor Higgins) called for a 'profound renewal of moral and spiritual values in all workers.' This, he said, 'will never come about unless the rank and file get down on their knees with regularity and say their prayers.'"

Reuther opens the door and the "servants of the Lord" step right into a workers' organization and make themselves at home. From this sort of thing can come the gradual penetration and eventual control of the unions by the Church. It has happened frequently in Europe and could happen here.

The alternative to democratic self-rule--in unions as well as in society at large--is the dictatorship of a minority. Every leader is a potential dictator, and once they get sufficient power they will not let it slip from their hands. They create a "machine" to help them stay in office. No matter how bad a situation may be they do not want the members to do the house cleaning, as it might go "too far" and sweep them out of office. They much prefer to share the power with a "Public Review Board," with the government or with some other outside agency.

The relations between the members and their leaders in these centralized business unions is a disrupted, unhealthy one. In the beginning, when a union is young, this may not be noticed; the seeds of degeneration need time to sprout and grow. Gradually the union develops something resembling a military-type caste system. Any organization where decisions are made at the top, transmitted through a chain of command, and obeyed by the ranks below as in an army, is essentially totalitarian. It is not a community of labor which implies an association of equals making decisions and carrying them out jointly.

Union leaders themselves are neither better nor worse than other men. They may have the best of intentions, but the exercise of power over others corrupts them; it erodes their personalities. The original leaders may still retain some honesty and principles, being still emotionally attached to the rank and file from which they have lately emerged. But as time goes on they --or in any case, their successors-- become decisively influenced by the company they keep. They improve their economic status; they enter into friendly personal relations with the employers, and they unconsciously absorb the ideas and the ethics of capitalist society. Very few individuals are able to resist the temptations of power and prestige, and these few never become good business unionists.

As the original leaders die out or retire, they are succeeded by professional careerists and union politicians who are promoted from the lower ranks of the officialdom or brought in from outside. These are even further removed from the men on the job and are still more cynical. The process of degeneration continues until it is interrupted or broken by a revolt in the ranks.



The careers of David Dubinsky and Walter Reuther illustrate how this process works. In 1957, the New York Post published a series of biographical articles on David Dubinsky. The fourth article in the series (May 9th) reveals that Dubinsky had been appointed Secretary-Treasurer of the ILGWU in 1929 and President in 1932, having held both of these posts ever since. The N.Y. Post interviewer, Irwin Ross, records his conversation with Dubinsky on this point as follows:

"I asked Dubinsky whether he was not troubled, at least philosophically, by such a concentration of power. It is characteristic of him that he was completely untroubled.

"Sure," he conceded, 'with a crooked president, it's good to have an independent secretary-treasurer. But in an honest union, what's the problem?'

"He has a similar lack of anxiety about the ease with which the General Executive Board can relieve local officers. Every paid official, prior to assuming his duties, has to submit an undated resignation to international headquarters. It can be accepted at any time by a two-thirds vote of the GEB. The purpose of this provision is to simplify the ouster of dishonest officials - and it has been so employed.

"One need not be a legal expert to see that this provision could easily be misused to victimize a dissident faction in the union. The fact that this has not happened under Dubinsky does not relieve apprehensions about the future.

"Dubinsky says he was not concerned: 'Can it be misused? Sure, sure! I agree with you, I concede the point! But I'm not worried about my successor - I'm worried about my successor's successor!'

Dubinsky, it appears, has already picked his successor!

In the October 1957 issue of the Auto Worker, official organ of the UAW, there appears, on page one, a photo of Reuther holding a diagram, contrasting the huge profits of the industry with the low wages paid to the workers. On page two of the same issue, in heavy type, is found an interesting item which we quote in part:

#### "PROPHET OF CAPITALISM

"Blackpool, England: Newspapers of every shade of opinion agreed that Reuther had roused a normally unemotional audience to cheers with an exposition of the virtues of American private enterprise in implied contrast with British socialism."

Then, in still heavier type and in a separate paragraph:

"THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS MUST BE FLABBERGASTED!!!!"

In the same issue of the Auto Worker, on page 3, there appears the digest of an article by Monsignor Higgins which had appeared originally in a Detroit Catholic publication. In this article, Higgins went out of his way to defend Reuther against charges that the latter is a socialist. He de-

monstrates that Reuther's policy of peaceful co-existence among "management," government and labor is good Catholic labor doctrine. The charge that Reuther is a socialist is unjust and he deserves the respect and cooperation of every Catholic priest and layman!

Both Dubinsky and Reuther were at one time socialists. Together with scores of their fellow workers they were beaten up by paid company goons and were persecuted by the police and the courts. In the earlier period of the UAW, Walter Reuther had even been shot. These two leaders both emerged from the rank and file. They attained leadership of their unions because their fellow workers felt that they would in fact and in spirit carry forward the aspirations of the membership. It was essentially their socialist ideas that brought these two men to the top in the labor movement, but once there they have become capitalism's staunchest supporters. The examples of Reuther and Dubinsky could be multiplied a thousand-fold. On the one hand their individual capitulation reflects the logical degeneration of authoritarian socialism; on the other it illustrates the manner in which power corrupts the individuals who exercise it. Herein lies much of the tragedy of the world labor movement.

### III. THE RISE OF WELFARISM

The Great Depression of the early thirties marked the collapse of the system of "private enterprise." It also sparked the spontaneous uprising of the workers which culminated in the sit-down strikes of 1936-37. The whole system of human exploitation was threatened. The political State saved itself, and all that was essential to capitalism by doing what "private enterprise" could not do. Concessions were made to the workers, farmers and middle-class groups and the private capitalists were deprived of some of their power.

In regulating the relations between the classes, the State increased its own power and the foundations of state capitalist "welfarism" were laid. The State could not have done this alone; it had to overcome the resistance of old-line capitalism and hence needed the cooperation of a mass labor movement in order to control the restless masses. The government of Franklin Delano Roosevelt enacted "favorable" labor legislation and gave the "progressive" labor leaders a chance to fill their treasuries with the dues and assessments of the newly organized workers.

At first the labor fakers of the craft unions would not cooperate. They resisted change because they shared the economic and social ideas of private enterprise capitalism. On the other hand, the conservative unions could not undertake an effective program of organizing the unorganized because of their antiquated organic structure and the jurisdictional problems it created. A split took place and the CIO was born.

Time is a great healer and twenty years blurred the differences between the rival factions. The CIO was now firmly established and the conservative unionists had adjusted themselves to the fact that "welfarism" was here to stay. They must learn to live with it, and those who could not would be eliminated. Both cliques of labor mis-leaders came to see the advantages and the need of peaceful co-existence. There were, after all, no fundamental differences between them. The CIO admitted craft unions and the AFL would accept dues from industrial unions. They were as two thieves who had long fought over the loot and who finally worked out a



settlement. The united AFL-CIO is the result. Rival capitalists will also form a trust when it pays them to do so. Greed and jurisdictional conflict may divide them but enlightened self-interest draws them together. Wolves may hunt either alone or in packs according to circumstances. The "ethics" of expediency are flexible.

The character and function of the North American unions have changed greatly. A State-regulated economy needs a State-regulated labor movement. The government will help the unions so long as the leaders can assure the smooth cooperation of a docile labor force. The "Welfare State" has come to assume ever greater social functions and has intervened on an ever-greater scale in the control of economic and social life. It regulates, and shows an increasing tendency to dominate the whole field of social security, business, labor, crop and price supports, public power, housing, etc.

This process was expanded and accelerated by World War II, the Korean war, "defense" spending, foreign aid programs, and the prosecution of the "cold war." The bureaucratic administrative apparatus kept pace with the expansion of governmental power. Individual liberty and local initiative have diminished as the State domination of society has increased. The individual has had less and less to say about his own life and interests as the Government prescribes, to an ever greater degree, the conditions under which he must live. This process continues inexorably, regardless of the political party in power.

A similar development has been going on in the labor organizations. As the unions have increased in membership, as they have converted themselves into job trusts and gone into the field of welfare, they have established a similar system within their own domain. The administrative machinery has grown in proportion. The labor bureaucracy--by itself or jointly with the employers--controls an estimated 35 billion dollars in welfare funds, which it uses to reinforce its positions and render the membership ever more dependent upon them.

The dictatorship of the leaders over the workers has been further increased by the vicious practice of industry-wide "collective bargaining" on a national scale, long-term contracts and the power to discipline dissidents among the members.

Just as the citizen's rights are curtailed by the growing power of the bureaucracy of the State, so the workers' rights are curtailed by the ever greater usurpation of power by the labor bureaucracy. Subjected to the triple exploitation and suppression by the employers, the State and the union bureaucracy, the worker has ever less to say about his wages and his working conditions. Instead of fighting for shorter hours and to wrest better conditions of life for himself and his family, he is forced to seek more "overtime". Or else he sends his wife out to work... or both.

The merger of the AFL and the CIO was an attempt to better fit the union structure to the needs of state capitalist "welfarism," which requires a maximum centralization of control over the working class. A military commander cannot tolerate jurisdictional disputes between sections of the armed forces. The army must be firmly disciplined. It must obey as a unit. A regimented labor movement is a civilian army and jurisdictional disputes cannot be tolerated.

The State drives towards complete control of society. This is inherent

in its nature and especially so in such a period as the present. State capitalist "Welfarism" is exploitation streamlined. AFL-CIO unionism is business unionism streamlined. The groundwork is being prepared for a future totalitarian society in the United States and the AFL-CIO already plays the role of "labor front" in the embryonic set-up. When the process is completed, as it will be if not stopped by working class resistance on a massive scale, the unions will end up by being as impotent as are the unions in Russia. During the whole period of the struggle against Fascism and "Communism," the basic features common to both of them have been or are being adapted for our own country.

#### IV. A FEW PAGES FROM LABOR HISTORY

No better summary of the meaning of business unionism can be found than that given by "Mother" Jones. This remarkable woman was one of the most militant and selfless figures in the history of American labor. She devoted most of her life to the organization of the miners. She participated in the First Convention of the IWW. Her lifespan (she was well over ninety when she died) covered the most important period in the development of American unionism. Her autobiography is an excellent first-hand account of the history of that period. In her closing chapter, entitled "Progress in Spite of Leaders," she sums up her impressions:

"As I look back over the long, long years, I see that in all movements for the betterment of men's lives, it is the pioneers who bore most of the suffering. When these movements became established, when they became popular, others reaped the benefits. Thus it has been with the labor movement... Many of our modern leaders have wandered far from the thorny path of these early crusaders. Never in the early days of the labor struggle would you find leaders wining and dining with the aristocracy; nor did their wives strut about like diamond bedecked peacocks...

"The wives of these early leaders took in washing to make ends meet. Their children picked and sold berries. The women shared the heroism and privation of their husbands...

"The rank and file have let their servants become their masters and dictators. The workers have now to fight not only the exploiters but likewise their own leaders, who often betray them, who sell them out, who put their own advancement ahead of that of the working masses, who make of the rank and file political pawns."

These remarks sound familiar. If "Mother" Jones were alive today she would not have to retract any of her statements. The truth of her contentions was confirmed in 1957 by Louis Hollander, President of the New York CIO and Manager of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' New York Joint Board:

"In many unions there is little sign that the leaders are even trying to maintain contact with the membership. Some seem to feel that the union shop contract and compulsory check-offs of union dues have made it unnecessary for them to know what the members want and need. Too many such leaders live in a world apart; a world in which the badges of achievement are



high salaries, expensive automobiles, membership in country clubs, and other appurtenances of wealth."

This helps to explain why the attitude of many workers to the leaders of their unions is similar to their attitude towards the man in the White House, the governor in the State House, the mayor of the city or the boss in his office. The fact that millions of workers are so indifferent to the affairs of the organizations which involve their livelihood shows how deeply the corruption in our society has penetrated.

The evils that afflict today's labor organizations are not accidental. They have been transmitted and increased from one generation of labor fathers to another. The evils that plague the AFL-CIO can be traced to its ancestor, the old nineteenth century American Federation of Labor. The real founders of business unionism were not Dubinsky, Reuther, Meany or Dave Beck. They are only following in the footsteps of Samuel Gompers and his disciples, John Mitchell, Matthew Woll, William Green, Dan Tobin and John L. Lewis.

The AFL was founded in 1881 and reorganized in 1886. Its first president was Samuel Gompers who ruled over the organization for 37 years; his term of office expired with his death. William Green, his successor then ruled until he died and was followed by George Meany, whose term of office will probably only be limited by his lifespan. In the more than seven decades since 1886, the AFL has had only three presidents!

Many of the affiliated unions have adopted the same practice of lifetime terms of office. The American Federation of Labor was one of the main causes for the decline of the much more militant Knights of Labor. In his book, "The IWW in Theory and Practice," Justus Ebert points out that the AFL allied itself with the capitalist who:

"...feared the working-class tendencies of the Knights of Labor, scabbed the Knights of Labor out of existence. The brewing, cigar-making, railroading, coal-mining and other industries are full of the history of AFL scabbery against the Knights of Labor. This scabbery, logically, developed in the AFL until, in alliance with the National Civic Federation, the AFL was called by the Wall Street Journal, 'the greatest bulwark in this country against socialism.'" (page 42, 5th Revised Edition).

Samuel Yellen, in "American Labor Struggles," tells how the AFL sabotaged the 1894 Pullman strike of the American Railway Union, imperishably associated with the name of Eugene Victor Debs:

"Even though the workers in both Chicago and St. Louis were in favor of a general strike, many officials of the American Federation of Labor failed to respond to Debs' plea, and as a result of this conflicting authority, confusion arose. At the request of Debs, a meeting of twenty-five chief national officers of the Federation, among them Samuel Gompers, was held in Chicago. He (Debs) urged the calling of a sympathetic general strike." Gompers refused.

"He advised the workers to give up the strike and to 'seek correction of industrial and economic ailments at the ballot box.'"

Against the wishes of the rank and file, the leaders of the Chicago unions called off the general strike. On his way to the meeting in Chicago, Gompers had remarked, "I am riding to the funeral of the American Railway Union."

Thus was crushed this heroic attempt to organize all the exploited unskilled workers of a basic industry together with the skilled workers, into one union organization. It was this attitude of the AFL, expressed repeatedly in different situations, which led to the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), with Debs' participation.

In 1901, Gompers became vice-president of the National Civic Federation, an organization of the period corresponding to the present National Association of Manufacturers. It was dedicated to "the fostering of harmony, between capital and organized labor." Its leadership included August Belmont, banker; Andrew Carnegie, steel magnate; and Marcus A. Hanna, millionaire boss of the Republican Party. It was Hanna who first described the AFL leadership as the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class."

The AFL leadership fought the newly created IWW, as it had fought other revolutionary unions, with all the weapons at its command. The part played by the pro-capitalist union leaders in the Lawrence, Mass. textile strike of 1912 is discussed by Yellen, who says, "The attitude of the strikers toward the craft unions was rather mildly expressed by Mary K. O'Sullivan, who in 1892 had become the first woman organizer of the AFL." Yellen then tells us what she said:

"Nothing was so conducive to the organization of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) as the methods used by the three branches of the American Federation of Labor... Catholics, Jews, Protestants and unbelievers--men and women of many races and languages--were working together as human beings with a common cause. The American Federation of Labor alone refused to cooperate. As a consequence the strikers came to look upon the Federation as a force almost as dangerous to their success as the employers themselves, and I violate no confidence in saying that the operatives represented in the strike committee had more respect for the mill owners than for the leaders of this antagonistic element within their own ranks. A striker who went to the Federation for relief was looked upon as a recreant to his cause and before the strike ended the American Federation of Labor organizations, by openly refusing to give help to anyone who refused to return to work, came to be looked upon as a trap designed in the interests of the mills to catch any workers who could be induced to desert their cause."

It has been asserted that the misdeeds of the AFL were due to its craft-union structure. This is not so. In spite of the fact that the United Mine Workers was always an industrial union it has a long record of corruption, class collaboration and disregard of the rights of the membership every bit as shameful as any of the AFL craft-unions. The miners' union was affiliated to the AFL for many years and its leadership was permeated with the spirit of Gompersism. Lewis became president of the United Mine Workers in 1920. His machine has ruled the organization ever since, ruthlessly crushing every opposition movement often with the help of the mine-owners.



A few examples will illustrate the Lewis brand of "Industrial Unionism." In the anthracite strike that began on Sept. 1, 1925 and was settled on Feb. 12, 1926, Lewis demanded the establishment of the check-off system. The latter was aptly described by Daniel de Leon as follows:

"The check-off turns the employer into a union officer. Seeing he checks off from the pay envelopes, the dues, assessments and other money obligations of the men to the union, and turns the same over to the union treasury, the employer is turned into a sort of financial secretary of the union, a self-elected one at that."

In return for the check-off, Lewis signed a five-year no-strike agreement, ignoring the demands of the members for more wages and better working conditions. While the anthracite miners were on strike, the soft-coal miners--members of the same union--were busy digging bituminous coal which was used as a substitute!

Business circles reacted enthusiastically to the strike settlement. Their organ, The New York Times, waxed lyrical:

"Strikes being virtually excluded, the operators have no objections to the check-off; throughout, they have shown a willingness to strengthen and build up the union in all its legitimate activities."

The Times also carried the following dispatch:

"PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 12--A huge basket of roses was sent to-night to John Llewellyn Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, by Major W.W. Inglis, chairman of the Anthracite Operators' Negotiating Committee. With the flowers was a card which pointed out that 'besides marking the end of the strike, it is the birthday of the miners' leader and of another great American, Abraham Lincoln.'"

Because Lewis was in the forefront of the fight for "industrial unionism" and played a key part in the launching of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), he is held in considerable esteem in many progressive and even "radical" circles. Those who thought Lewis had renounced business unionism when he founded the CIO were mistaken. At the 1935 Convention of the AFL, Lewis had tried to convince the craft-unionists that the industrial form of organization was necessary for the preservation of business unionism. We quote him:

"The American Federation of Labor stands for that (the 'protection of our form of government and our established institutions'). How much more security would we have in this country for our form of government if we had a labor movement that represented, not merely a cross-section of skilled workers, but that represented the men who work with their hands in our great industries, regardless of their trade of calling?"  
 ((All quotes relating to Lewis from JOHN L. LEWIS EXPOSED! by Eric Haas, New York Labor News Co., 1937))

## V. THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION

We have delved into the past and sketched some highlights in the evolution of American unionism because the business unionism of the AFL-CIO is the product of this evolution. The understanding of a movement requires the appreciation of the forces and events that shaped it.

To the extent that business unionism dominates there is no genuine labor movement today. Whatever vitality still exists within the unions stems from the revolutionary tendencies and it is upon the encouragement of these trends that its ultimate regeneration depends.

The labor movement in our country arose as a protest, a rebellion against the very system to which business unionism has pledged its allegiance. Its objectives were revolutionary and its methods of struggle were in accord with these objectives. The Libertarian concepts of the class struggle, direct action, local autonomy, federalism and mutual aid are all deeply rooted in American labor traditions.

Our labor movement has a long record of heroic struggles. The great railroad strikes of 1877, the movement for the eight-hour day which culminated in the hanging of the Chicago anarchists and the general strike on May First, 1886, now commemorated throughout the world as International Labor Day, the Homestead steelworkers' strike in 1892, the epochal battle of the American Railway Union (referred to above), the anthracite miners' strike of 1902, the monumental strikes fought under the banner of the IWW, "Bloody Ludlow" in 1914, the great steel strike of 1919, the Southern textile strikes of 1929, the inspiring sit-down strikes of the 1930s--these are milestones of the onward march of the working class. It is these struggles, and countless other revolts that have been responsible for every gain made by labor. Every advance was bitterly fought by the employing class in the course of titanic class struggles. The bosses were forced to negotiate and yield concessions only because the workers went out on strike or threatened to do so.

The great railroad strikes of 1877 inspired Peter Kropotkin to write two articles in the Bulletin of the Jura (Switzerland) Federation. Robert Hunter quotes him:

"This movement will have certainly impressed profoundly the proletariat of Europe and excited its admiration. Its spontaneity, its simultaneousness at so many different points, communicating by telegraph, the aid given by the workers of different trades, the resolute character of the uprising from the beginning, call forth our sympathies, excite our admiration, and quicken our hopes... Would that this flowing of noble blood prove once again the blindness of those who amuse the people with the plaything of parliamentarianism when the powder magazine is ready to take fire, unknown to them at the least spark." ((VIOLENCE AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT, The Macmillan Co., 1914))

The UAW--Ammunition of March 1957 was devoted to the twentieth anniversary of the sit-down strikes referred to above. It pointed out that in 1937 "close to 2,000,000 workers engaged in a total of more than 4,700 strikes." This was a spontaneous mass movement of the workers and Ammunition stated that:



"The workers were the dispossessed. Bitterness and hatred festered within them, until it burst forth in 1937... all the gains made by the industrial workers date from that year. Time and a half for overtime; for work on the sixth day; double time for Sunday work; call-in pay; paid vacations and holidays; control over speed-up; the right to file a grievance; night shift differentials, pension; hospital and medical insurance; all without exception--derive from 1937, from the courage of the men who sat down." (page 11)

It is on the strength of such sacrifices by the working people that the labor fakers have built up an empire. Only the strength of the rank and file can shake these new parasites off their backs.

The American labor movement has its roots in a series of revolutionary acts. Its pioneers, whether they knew it or not, were revolutionists and were so treated by the employers and by the State. The union movement began as a natural and spontaneous revolt against the employers. Revolutionary unionism and socialist ideas developed together in the course of these struggles. The workers came to realize that behind the boss stood the whole capitalist system--the State, the courts, the army, the police, the clergy, the schools and the press. Thinking people saw that the old society should be replaced by a new, free and just world.

In the course of these labor struggles and in stressing the economic demands of the workers, many radicals have under-estimated or ignored the deeper strivings of the people involved. Behind the struggle for bread lies the cry for justice. Behind the struggle for better working conditions lies the demand for individual freedom and for human rights. Solidarity on the job and on the picket line is the economic expression of man's inborn feeling of mutual aid. Union men call each other brothers.

True socialism is much more than an economic doctrine. It is an ethical ideal. It cannot be imposed by decree from above. It grows out of the feeling of brotherhood and is forged in the common struggle for noble aims.

That the capitalist system had outlived whatever socially useful function it may have once had and was ready for the garbage can of history was understood by thinking workers over a hundred years ago. That a new social order in which the profit system, the exploitation of man by man, would be replaced by one in which the means of production would be commonly owned and administered by all and for all, was also understood by many. These ideas were not cooked up in the heated imaginations of a few "parlor pinks." They grew out of the very real experiences of the workers in the course of bitter class struggles.

Among these conscious, thinking people there was general agreement that capitalism must be supplanted by a free, classless society. But there was great disagreement as to how this might be accomplished. It was only natural that every shade and variety of socialist thought should be found within the labor movement, not only abroad but also in this country. These disagreements revolved around several fundamental related issues -- the aim and function of the workers' organizations, the unions under capitalism and their aim and function within the new socialist society. Which way for the workers--parliamentary political action or economic action--or a combination of both? Can capitalism be abolished by a majority vote in Congress or by the direct action of the unions through a general strike? When a Workers' Commonwealth is established, who will run industry--the

State or the unions?

Wherever the labor movement has allied itself with or come under the control of a political party whose goal is the conquest of State power, the statist principle has been introduced into the unions which have as a result lost their freedom. A strong case can be made for the proposition that "enlightened" political action by labor unions in support of governmental welfarism or for the election of a government that will be "friendly" to labor, constitutes a greater danger to unionism than does out-and-out racketeering. Open corruption can be seen and fought, but the illusion that a State--any State-- can be friendly to labor is hard to dispel. Governmental welfarism is a delayed action bomb that will explode with disastrous effects for the working class. This pernicious obsession led to the castration of the European labor movement and serves always to pave the way for totalitarianism.

The American workers are already beginning to pay a heavy price for allowing the union bureaucrats to lure them into the statist trap. The bait was "favorable" labor legislation. First came the "pro-labor" Wagner Labor Relations Act. This was followed by the "anti-labor" Taft-Hartley law and the "right to work laws." Now the government will enact yet another maze of laws, the final result of which can only be to strap the labor movement into the governmental strait-jacket.

The AFL-CIO and many regional and local labor bodies have accepted and even welcomed the governmental investigations of corrupt unions and are willing to accept "reasonable" legislation which will of course be enforced by the police powers of the State. Tyranny is crafty; it advances gradually but relentlessly. Step by step, the process of governmental controls proceed until labor as a whole is bogged down in legalistic quicksand. The dictatorship of the State can be imposed just as readily by a "labor party" or by "welfarism" as it can by a "dictatorship of the proletariat." The differences will in the last analysis be superficial. Monopoly of power has its own logic; its own inexorable rhythm; it is not concerned with labels.

The revolutionary direct action tendency in the American labor movement has always rejected parliamentary action in favor of action on the economic front. It rejected the idea of State control of industry in favor of the concept of workers' control of industry and oriented towards the replacement of the State by the economic organizations of the workers themselves. In his book, "The IWW--A Study in American Syndicalism" (Columbia Univ., 2nd Edit., 1920), Professor Paul Brissenden declares:

"There is no doubt that the idea of economic emancipation through economic, as opposed to political channels, and to be achieved by all classes of workers as workers, i.e. as human cogs in the industrial, rather than the political State had been very definitely formulated before the end of the last century. Indeed the conception runs back well towards the beginning of the nineteenth century. The 'one big union' of which we now hear so much was surely in existence in England in the early thirties. Robert Owen at that time outlined his great plan for a 'General Union of the productive classes.' Sidney and Beatrice Webb report the establishment in 1834 of a 'Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.'

"Under the system proposed by Owen (they say)...the trade u-



nions were to be transformed into 'National Companies' to carry on all the manufactures. The agricultural union to take possession of the land, the miners' union of the mines, the textile union of the factories. Each trade was to be carried on by its particular trade union, centralized in one 'Grand Lodge.'" (page 29)

"There is no doubt that all the main ideas of modern revolutionary unionism as exhibited by the IWW may be found in the old International Workingmen's Association. The IWW organ, the Industrial Worker, asserts that we 'must trace the origin of the ideas of modern revolutionary unionism to the International' (issue of June 18, 1910)...Many items in the program originally drafted by the famous anarchist, Michael Bakunin, for the International in 1868 were very similar to the twentieth century slogans of the IWW." (pages 36-37)

It is not to be inferred that the ideas of the IWW or of the revolutionary labor movement in general, were imported from Europe and grafted on to the American labor movement. The same principles and tactics grew out of the experiences of American workers on American soil; they were accepted because they corresponded to American conditions. Brissenden emphasized this when he pointed out that:

"In America the labor history of the seventies, and especially the eighties, teems with evidences of the industrial form and radical temper in labor organizations. The elements of IWWism were there; but they were not often co-existent in the same organization." (page 27)

The constitutions of scores of unions and of the AFL itself, reflected these radical, federalist and revolutionary tendencies of the early labor movement. Many of them still paid lip service to these original principles. The fact that they have felt forced to do so reveals the spirit of the times. Even the framers of the AFL-CIO Code of Ethics have found it necessary to say something along these lines.

Like all great popular movements the unions could be built in only one way--from below-- by the organization of the men on the job. Hence the labor movement naturally took at its inception a decentralized federated form, with the autonomous organizations of the workers in various shops, localities, trades and industries, bonded together in solidarity for mutual support. Within the local groups there was direct face-to-face personal contact among the members. All decisions were arrived at openly and by common agreement. Most of the organizational work was voluntary and the few paid officials received no more than the average wage of the members. Their terms of office were limited and they were required to go back to work in production for a definite period before they were allowed to run for office again.

Whether they were on the pay-roll of the union or not, all officials and delegates had to carry out the instructions of the membership, by whom they could be recalled. Decisions affecting large groups of workers were decided by referendum of all the members. All negotiations with the bosses, the calling and settlement of strikes, were matters to be decided by the men on the job. The terms of the agreements were enforced by the men them-

selves and grievances were settled by means of sit-downs, slow-downs, boycotts, walk-outs, or whatever other means the workers deemed advisable. These and many other safeguards against the usurpation of power were developed by the workers in the course of their struggles.

The growth of the labor movement corresponded to the growing needs of the workers for solidarity against the bosses and the boss-controlled State which opposed them at every turn. As local unions multiplied, they federated with each other to form larger bodies. The first City Central Council was set up in Philadelphia in 1827. The Mechanics Union of Trades Associations was formed to achieve greater solidarity. When the carpenters lost a strike for the 10 hour day, it was realized that all trades must cooperate if strikes were to be effective and the workers' demands achieved. Inter-city, state and national federations were formed to fill the need of greater coordination in the interests of the workers.

The labor movement grew into a vast network of local bodies rooted in the local communities throughout the country, and exercising a growing influence in every community. And this early movement did not confine itself to immediate economic issues and demands. Man is a social being. Cooperation and solidarity are necessary to his survival and development: The mutual-aid functions of the unions expanded and kept abreast of the growing needs of the union members. Neither the government nor the employers were concerned with the wants and feelings of human beings which they considered as commodities. So the workers helped themselves by helping each other.

They created a network of cooperative institutions of all kinds -- schools, summer camps for children and adults, homes for the aged, health and cultural centers, credit associations, insurance plans, technical education and housing--all these and many other services were provided by the people themselves long before the labor movement was corrupted by business unionism; long before the government stepped in; before the basic realities of the class struggle were abandoned.

As this revolutionary and libertarian spirit evaporated, as the unions became "respectable," many of them became electioneering agencies for political parties--right, left and center. Others became increasingly centralized, and with the crystallization of a bureaucratic crust, the cancer of business unionism took over. Then, as a reaction to this, the revolutionary tendency again made itself felt. The workers were compelled to establish new organizations that would fulfill their needs. It was, for example, the failure of the AFL to organize the unskilled workers, its capitulation to the employing class and its insistence on creating an aristocracy of skilled workers, thus bringing into the ranks of labor an artificial division, that led to the formation of the IWW.

The influence of the revolutionary unions of the past was not limited to their own membership. They also fought bureaucracy, racketeering and class collaboration within the opportunist, conservative unions, whose leaders were constantly being exposed and forced to make concessions to the opposition. Over their heads there hung the ever-present threat of "dual unionism."

There are many indications that the period of complacency and apathy in the present labor movement is drawing to a close. The AFL-CIO has been



obliged to take disciplinary action against some of the more flagrant violations of ethical conduct, not only because of the Senate investigations or because of the partisan desires of a part of the leadership to eliminate competitive cliques within who seek to supplant them. We are witnessing more than a simple power struggle. Hundreds of union locals have protested. Tens of thousands of letters protesting against the high-handed conduct of officials have been received at the AFL-CIO headquarters. It is evident that the old-line class collaborationist leaders will not and cannot do anything fundamental to remedy the situation and the workers are finding this out for themselves.

It is encouraging to note the increasing ferment in the ranks. There have been numerous "outlaw" strikes in open defiance of the leadership. There has been unrest in the UAW, where the skilled trades demanded and forced the leaders to grant them a measure of autonomy in the formulation of demands and calling of strikes. In the New York City transit system, the motormen and other groups of workers have been in full revolt against the autocratic clique that rules the Transport Workers' Union—all these and many other signs point to a revival of the direct action and libertarian tendencies in American labor.

## VI. THE FUTURE AND ITS TASKS

The AFL-CIO cannot be reformed from above. It must be revolutionized from below. If, as appears likely, a mass opposition movement develops, it can really succeed only to the extent that it remains true to the revolutionary principles and ideals which inspired the early labor movement. If it fails to understand and profit from the lessons of the past or if it allows itself to be guided by those so-called liberals and socialists whose efforts are largely directed at making the unions the "labor front" of the Welfare State, it will fail. Within the labor movement there are the materials for "building the new society within the shell of the old." The workers can break out of that shell when they become conscious of their power, but here, as elsewhere ethics and ideas will be decisive if a new cycle of degeneration is to be avoided.

The history of the American labor movement has been largely a history of rank and file revolts against opportunist class-collaborationist policies and the centralization of power. Without an alert membership and an active opposition, unions that were originally radical and democratic lost their dynamism and became obstacles to progress. When that happens a new housecleaning must take place. The revolutionary tendency must restore the balance to make possible further progress. Whenever and wherever this has been attempted, the progressive forces have always been slandered and maligned as "irresponsible splitters," "subversives," etc., but this must never be allowed to hinder their struggle. *An alert and articulate opposition is the conscience and lifeblood of the labor movement.*

Such a movement cannot be artificially created. It will develop out of the bitterness and discontent with union corruption and bureaucracy; the impact of automation and the sacrifices that a permanent war economy demand will rouse the workers from their lethargy and make them more receptive to militant ideas and tactics.

The task of the revolutionary minority is to apply libertarian principles to the realities of the modern labor movement. The role of the unions in

social change and in the new society which they, together with other organizations of the people will some day build, must be seriously studied by all class-conscious workers. Strategy and tactics depend on a clear understanding of ultimate objectives. No firm theoretical basis can be laid without correctly evaluating the nature of the State, the part played by ideas and ideals in shaping history, and the dynamic and creative drives which are responsible for all that is best in human life.

The immediate practical problem facing the workers is to *recapture their own unions*. This can only be done by the workers themselves from below. Every movement of the rank and file that leads in this direction must be encouraged. Revolutionary ethical concepts rooted in the natural human sentiments of solidarity must be encouraged as an antidote to the narcotic of class-collaboration which has for so long paralyzed the labor movement.

Steps must be taken for the greatest possible de-centralization of the administrative apparatus of the unions. There must be an end to industry-wide bargaining by the top leadership, to the check-off of union dues by the employers and to long-term contracts, no-strike pledges, etc. Government supervision or intervention in union affairs, the spending of union funds for political campaigns and support by labor unions of the foreign policies of the State, must be fought and eliminated.

Union welfare funds constitute one of the mainstays of present-day business unionism. By this means the labor autocracy extends its control over the workers, not only on the job and in the union but also over the private life of the worker and in many cases of his family as well. The union member comes to expect his union's welfare department to furnish medical attention, old-age pensions, accident and life insurance and numerous other necessities and conveniences. The welfare department in business unions is controlled by the labor bosses, which ties the worker to his job and to the union bureaucrat and develops a servile attitude on the part of many workers.

Thus the question of recapturing control of the unions by their membership is inseparable from demanding the independent control by the workers of their own welfare. The emphasis on welfarism within the union saps the revolutionary vitality of the working class.

Mutual aid and welfare arrangements are important, but it is advisable that such matters be handled separately and apart from the union as such. The decentralization of power and control of the union by the workers is impossible unless this issue is faced squarely.

Salaries paid to union officials must be brought down to the same level as those paid to the workers whom they represent. No paid union official should remain in his post for longer than two years before returning to his work in production. He must always be subject to immediate recall. The workers should delegate no *real power* to any of their leaders—no matter who these leaders may be; no matter how honest and selfless these leaders may be or may appear to be.

The right to strike and the correction of grievances by the direct economic action of the workers must be reasserted and re-won. Actions of solidarity and protest through strikes and boycotts must be encouraged.

The new problems created by automation must be answered by a consistent



ght for shorter working hours, rather than relying on the expansion of  
ar industries and other stupidly wasteful and socially unnecessary pro-  
duction.

long these general lines a new revolutionary labor movement can be forged.  
he building of such a movement is the great task to which the advanced  
orkers must dedicate themselves.

--THE END--



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