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WORKERS & THE CONTROL OF PRODUCTION

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Cover: Steel workers, Pittsburgh, around turn of the century

Back Cover: Homestead, Pa., steel mills after 1892 strike

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The Lip Watch Strike

Cahiers de Mai

translated by Arlene Pressman

Editors' Introduction: Throughout the summer and fall of 1973 the struggle of the Lip Company workers served as a rallying point for the French working class. In June, fearing massive layoffs and the eventual dismantling of the Company's watch factory, the workers occupied their factory and seized 65,000 watches as "security." They then resumed production, selling watches at their wholesale price and paying themselves from the proceeds. The workers organized production, plant management, and the conduct of their strike on a democratic basis. They also succeeded in rallying support from the entire European labor movement, sending teams of workers throughout France to explain the struggle.

The Lip Company is the largest and most prestigious watch manufacturer in France. A multi-national corpora-

tion, the company earned one-third of its profits in machine tool production and military contracts, and the remainder through its watch manufacture. According to the workers, the company was managed inefficiently and was not profitable. It was recently purchased by a Swiss multi-national corporation, Ebauches, Inc., which also owns the Longine Company.

Besancon, where the Lip watch factory is located, is the center of the French watch industry. The city, located near the Swiss border, has a population of 140,000. The area around Besancon is the second most industrialized area — after the North — in France. Almost half of the workers in the area are in industry. More than half of all wage earners work in plants employing 200 workers or more.

The Lip factory itself employs 1300 workers. There are 700 production workers, 270 technicians and highly skilled workers, 175 clerical workers, 70 middle management personnel, and 70 engineers and administrators. About half of all workers, and a majority of the assembly workers, are women. The workers are relatively young: the average age is 31. They are also paid slightly higher wages than are paid by other businesses in the area. Their working conditions are also relatively good: the recently-constructed factory is called the "garden factory," with a large lawn and no surrounding wall; and in 1968 the workers won a pre-retirement plan and a sliding scale for salaries. The Lip workers are divided about equally into the two major trade union confederations — the C.G.T. (General Confederation of Labor, dominated by the French Communist Party), and the C.F.D.T. (French Democratic Confederation of Labor — a more loosely-structured union confederation, initially tied to the christian democrats but now independent and, since 1968, often to the left of the C.G.T.). Many workers belong to neither confederation, but all workers are represented by elections to a plant-wide workers' committee.

The following selection from Cahiers de Mai situates the Lip strike within the context of the events since May, 1968. Based on interviews with Lip activists, the article shows

the strike to be not an exception, but a microcosm of the new beginning made by the French working class : the weakening of the hegemony of the French Communist Party (P.C.F.) and the C.G.T. over the working class; the attempt by capital to wipe out the gains achieved in 1968; the growing importance of multi-national corporations and the problem of "runaway plants;" the growth of popular, non-sectarian workers' organizations; and a renewal of the link between industrial struggles and popular mass movements.

A postscript by the editors recounts the course of the strike through the summer and fall.

We would like to thank Elizabeth and Stuart Ewen for their help on this article.

FB
AP

"It can be done: we manufacture, we sell, we pay ourselves"

The Lip Strike

The unity of the Lip workers grows out of the struggles waged since 1969. Since that year the workers have had to worry about the financial future of the company. Because of the management of Fred Lip, the company was continually faced with more and more serious financial crises, and progressively came under the control of a Swiss corporation, Ebauches, Inc.

In their pamphlet, "One Year of Struggle at Lip," the Lip workers date the beginnings of this period of struggle in December, 1969. After the Christmas sales fell off, management wanted to lay off 200 watchmakers. Meetings of workers at the factory and threats of a strike forced management to end the threat of layoffs. But it was in 1970 that the struggles reached their height at Lip. Management wanted to take back certain advantages conceded in May, 1968, including, for example, the sliding salary scale.

What has characterized the struggles at Lip is that the workers have come back strongly after every attack by management, and have taken advantage of these attacks to make demands which go beyond the simple refusal to comply with management. The workers have answered management not only with demands for keeping their salaries fixed, but also with demands for more vacation time, for an end of the year bonus, and for improvements in working conditions. Each apparently isolated struggle has become an opportunity to bring to the forefront struggles which interest everyone.

They have also tried to tell as many other workers as possible about the steps taken against them by management, even if the measures concerned only a few of them. This was especially true in February, 1970, when management announced a reduction of hours for 400 watchmakers. The entire factory was immediately informed by a well-organized network between all the shops. The workers used leaflets, newsletters, posters and tape-recorded broadcasts at

coffee breaks. Because so many workers were informed, they were able to meet to discuss how to support the 200 watchmakers who refused to leave the factory when they were laid off. They decided to show their support by striking. The strike continued far longer than had been expected. Study groups formed among workers. Representatives collected everyone's ideas and tried to coordinate their action. Negotiations resumed, but now with the participation of the workers, who had passed the first stage of uneasiness and had become used to discussions with the bosses. The strike ended with a very advantageous compromise — partial payment for the hours lost, and improvements in working conditions.

During the following months, management tried to get back its hold over the factory. They accused twelve of the workers' representatives of slander. This sent the communications network going all over the factory, with posters, leaflets, and cassette tapes. Management began to feel the danger this communications network represented for them.

June 1970: A Month of Struggles and Ideas

In the beginning of June 1970 the Lip struggle was renewed. Management tried once more to lay off workers. On June 2nd a large meeting was held by the workers, who decided to block traffic leading to the factory in order to explain to outsiders what was happening in the factory. Posters were hung on trucks and cars. The workers realized that they were attacking a very sensitive area of management, who were very proud of their reputation in the community.

From June 5th to the 24th, a strong mass movement spread throughout the factory. It began in the machine shops, where the younger workers made demands for higher wages and better technical training for apprentices. This struggle soon spread all over the machine shops, with the machinists making similar demands. Every hour there would be a fifteen-minute work stoppage. The watchmakers,

recalling the aid they got from the machinists in February, joined the movement and made demands of their own.

Management tried to divide the movement and demanded resumption of work before they would negotiate. No one complied, and on June 12th the majority of workers were on strike. Management pretended to prepare for negotiations, but the workers did not return to their machines. Once again they blocked business traffic to explain their action to the community. Later, at a mass meeting, they decided to occupy the factory, particularly the offices of the managers, who had fled the premises. Just as in 1973, back in 1970 the bosses were routed by workers in struggle.

Participation by the workers in the struggle was very high. Most of the workers remained inside the factory. There were discussion groups taking place continuously on the factory lawn. A night watch was organized to guard the parts and materials. And all important decisions were discussed and voted on in mass meetings. The strikers tried to get as many outsiders as possible interested in the movement. There were large informational campaigns and outside discussions. Eventually almost 60% of the workers in the area were participating in the strike activities. Collective decisions concerning strike information were made and workers were designated to spread these decisions to neighboring factories.

At the same time, the strikers decided that there would be no "dissuasive" picketers. The picketers were encouraged to be "persuasive," that is, to discuss the situation with people who came to work, to allow them to enter if they chose to work, and to take the discussion up with them again when they left. When the strike was won on June 24th, the Lip workers were particularly proud that during the entire movement there was not a single clash between strikers and non-strikers. Instead, there had been strong efforts to communicate with the non-strikers.

The day after the end of the strike, a "Workers' Liaison Committee" was formed to try to preserve and further develop the unity which had been created among the workers.

On this committee were active members of the United Socialist Party (P.S.U.), members of the C.G.T. and C.F.D.T., and non-union workers. This committee was the forerunner of the present "Action Committee."

January 1971: Workers' Victory over Layoffs

In January 1971, the factory's management and Fred Lip himself made another attempt to regain control of the factory. They laid off fifty workers, giving economic reasons as an excuse. They chose a very opportune time to make this announcement, for the Christmas season sales were over and the factory was essentially producing to build up their stock. A strike against the layoffs would have been ineffective at that time.

The Lip workers immediately replied to the threatened layoffs with what was to be one of their rare victories over layoffs in recent years. The day following the announcement of the layoffs, groups of workers demanded an explanation from their bosses, who, of course, remained silent. But the workers were determined, and influenced the trade unions to work together, despite their divisions, to form a common front against the layoffs. They wrote and distributed a special newsletter, and began a poster campaign.

Posters denouncing the layoffs were placed all over the factory, in the most visible areas — in stairways and hallways, between shops, and in the shops themselves. A leaflet written jointly by the C.G.T. and the C.F.D.T. said, "You can be sure that new forms of action, not just normal strike activities, will begin immediately. Our posters will proclaim truth in this factory. We will continue to put posters up and to protect them once they are posted, without violence." This leaflet was also directed at middle management. "Divide and conquer is a well-known saying. Didn't Mr. Lip use it when speaking to you, his lackeys? Think about it! You are the ones who are in danger. The workers will never give up. Rejoin the ranks of your comrades in struggle and combat."

For about two more weeks the poster campaign spread

all over the factory. Every worker, in the machine shops and in the offices, was asked to make posters at home, protesting against the layoffs, and to post them in the most visible spot of his or her work place. They were instructed to defend their posters against their bosses. Many of the middle managers began to get into the poster campaign. At the bookkeeping office a manager tore down a poster and a lower-level manager called for a workers' representative, who forced the manager to replace the poster. They warned the manager that if he made another attempt to destroy a poster, many more workers would come to his office and paste posters all over his walls.

Although threats of layoffs usually tended to divide workers, with everyone out to save his or her job, the Lip workers struggled collectively against the layoffs. On January 19th, management called an extraordinary meeting and announced that they would carry out the first group of layoffs. The workers continued to exert pressure on the management, and Fred Lip finally conceded that there would be no layoffs at all for the present. He had definitely lost what he liked to call "his" workers, and stepped down from his position as head of the factory. His successor, Saint-Esprit, tried to achieve peace in the factory by using the same paternalistic politics of his predecessor and former boss, preaching that tight collaboration was necessary to save the factory.

1973: The Struggle Continues

The real movement began early in 1973. In an interview, some Lip militants described their state of affairs as follows:

"In the beginning of 1973 there was less and less work to be done in certain shops, especially in the small machine shops. Entire areas of the factory were left with no work at all for several weeks. The unions questioned Saint-Esprit about this situation. He answered evasively but confidently, 'Don't worry, it'll work out.' But on April 17th Saint-Esprit was fired and two provisional administrators were appoint-

ed. On the following day a meeting was held with one of the provisional administrators, who encouraged the workers to work hard and to trust in him. The union representatives suspected him of stalling until summer, and of trying to take advantage of summer vacations to dismantle the workers' organization. During a mass meeting of the workers, this threat was examined and two possible retaliatory actions were suggested: immediate strike (with an occupation if necessary), or coordinated slowdowns in production. After long discussion, the workers decided on the second action, which involved no loss of wages."

Following this presentation, the Lip militants explained the three phases of their movement:

1. Organizing slowdowns — In certain shops, production can very rapidly drop to 20% of the normal production. In other shops, where the discipline is stricter, production drops with much more difficulty. It is in these more disciplined shops that the intervention of the workers' factory representatives is most decisive. They advise workers who don't know how to go about slowing down production to leave their machines, to stop by the union local, or to smoke a cigarette, etc. Sometimes the representatives themselves show the workers how to make fewer pieces, while remaining at their machines. In one shop of women workers, the foremen fought the movement by singling out those who were slowing down production. The women retaliated with a poster in their shop which said, "Today, we can go to the bathroom for more than five minutes! We can even take a book!" The foremen got angry, and workers' representatives were called in. As always, they came in number. The foremen were forced to give in. On the assembly lines, the production cards which workers were supposed to fill out were no longer turned in. In this way, management no longer had any way of knowing how much was being produced, and soon they could no longer understand actual conditions in their establishment.

2. A new poster campaign against the layoffs — As in the 1971 struggle against layoffs, a vast poster campaign was launched all over the factory. Each worker was asked to

express his or her rejection of the layoffs with posters to be put up in their place of work, or even on their machines, and to defend them against the foremen. Some workers hesitated at first to participate in this campaign. Workers' representatives and members of the Action Committees came to talk with these workers, bringing along materials to make posters. A hesitant worker would admit, "Well, I'd go along with a poster that says this or that..." and the poster would be made and hung right on the spot. These posters were defended as well.

3. Popularization of the struggle in the community — This task was taken charge of by the Action Committee. As in preceding years, the Lip workers went outside of the factory, scattering themselves all around Besancon. With their posters, they were able to transform drivers of trucks, cars and buses into willing propagandists. The Action Committee arranged marches in the city itself, at which the texts of the workers' leaflets and newsletters were read. Meanwhile a support committee was being formed with the participation of the unions. Different social, cultural and political groups of the left were brought together on this committee to organize the May 24th demonstration in Besancon, which was attended by more than 5000 people. Workers from other factories participated in the demonstration and in the following movement, helping to carry the information campaign of the Lip workers to all of the Besancon region.

The Workers Seize the Factory

Since April 17th the workers have had no idea what their fate would be at the hands of high finance. When they tried to learn what was happening, they were referred from one director to another. Finally, on a trip to Paris, their union representative learned that the two provisional directors did not even know each other! The workers became worried that they would not receive their wages for the month of May. Letters from management sent to individual workers threatened them with no pay. The workers burned their

letters collectively and sent the ashes in a miniature coffin to the Board of Directors, which was meeting in Paris. The workers were paid in May but were again threatened with the loss of their wages for June.

Several incidents reinforced the workers' anxiety about their future. The most important was a meeting of factory directors and the President of the Besancon Chamber of Commerce on June 12th. A microphone was placed in the assembly hall to allow the workers, who were gathered just outside, to hear the evasive remarks of the directors. The workers could not hold themselves back and burst into the meeting, forbidding anyone to leave until they got some direct answers. A document found in the possession of one of the directors proved that they intended to proceed with many layoffs and eventually dismantle the whole factory.

The administration called the police, who gave the strikers until 11:45 p.m. to release the administrators. The strikers refused to comply, and about 200 of them grouped to block the hall leading to the office which held the administrators. All over the factory workers were preparing to resist the police forces, trying to avoid extreme violence. Most of them remained in the factory, some of them arming themselves with iron pipes and similar instruments. One group of the workers alerted people in the community who came over to the factory. The police attacked and succeeded in freeing the administrators, with little real violence.

In order to insure that the workers would receive their June wages, a small group of union activists decided to seize the stock of watches stored in the factory. When the seizure was revealed at a mass meeting, it was met with overwhelming support from the workers. Another demonstration was called for June 15th, each worker receiving a written request to participate in it. Fifteen thousand people were present on June 15th to support the struggle of the Lip workers. After the demonstration, the police attacked those who hadn't yet left, instigating protests throughout the area.

The factory was entirely in the hands of the strikers: there was no longer any trace of management. Despite the

success of the movement, however, the future looked dim for the Lip workers. The seized watches represented, at best, four months of equal salaries for everyone, plus family allowances. Because of these conditions, at a mass meeting on June 18th the union representatives and members of the Action Committee proposed to use the materials available in the factory to produce watches and to sell them at the usual wholesale price, in order to guarantee an income for the workers.

To respond to the growth of the workers' movement, an Action Committee was needed inside the factory. A small group of union and non-union workers proposed to the union representatives to establish a "work collective" which would provide more opportunity for these workers to participate in the struggle. The union representatives first said, "OK, we can discuss it after work." But these workers answered, "We will not meet outside of the factory. We are ready to sacrifice time, but we want to talk in the factory." The unions finally accepted this proposal and established an office for this internal "Action Committee", which had rapidly reached a membership of 100 people. Now the unions even called on workers to participate in this committee, which through its ideas and its practice has become the instrument of unity between the factory's workers. The Action Committee is loosely structured and very open. All interested workers are welcome, all ideas are discussed. Committee members carry out certain tasks, such as the information campaign in the factory and in other factories and businesses of the city and the region, and the organizing of demonstrations.

During the course of this struggle, the workers established a unique method for collective decision making. According to Lip workers, things happen in the following manner:

Each morning at 8 a.m. groups from both trade unions and from the Action Committee meet separately in their own offices in the factory. They discuss items on their agenda and arrive at certain proposals. At 9 a.m. there is a joint meeting of the unions and the Action Committee, who

try to agree on what actions should be proposed or taken. If there is a disagreement over an important issue, the union activists and Action Committee members go back to the shops to discuss the different viewpoints with the workers. A mass meeting follows, at which a list is made of proposals which are acceptable to both unions and to the Action Committee. If disagreement persists, the mass meeting is suspended for a certain time, to allow the workers to examine the proposals, to gather more information on them, and to discuss them in small groups. Finally, the meeting is reconvened and a decision on the proposals is announced. At the outset of this struggle, mass meetings were held every day. After a while they were still held frequently, but only when there were important proposals to discuss or a very important disagreement.

Conclusion

Despite what has been written, neither the Lip workers, their representatives, nor the Action Committee members consider themselves to be pioneers of self-management (auto-gestation). The workers are trying to use the means they consider most effective in their situation. This concept is probably the most useful to many other establishments where workers have been contemplating methods which would lead them to getting their demands met.

The unity of the Lip workers did not come out of nowhere. It was undoubtedly based on the collective struggles of the proceeding years. An important part of this unity is the balance there has been between existing forces in the factory. In the elections the two trade unions, the C.G.T. and the C.F.D.T., receive about the same number of votes. The Lip workers are very careful to maintain this balance. Because they know they have the power to avoid dangerous union disputes, workers usually vote for C.G.T. chairpeople and C.F.D.T. assistants one year, and alternate the votes the following year. What could threaten this present unity? The Lip workers are relatively discreet on this point, for fear of stirring up potential disagreements in the factory.

In any case, it seems clear that the most feared threats to their unity come from outside of the factory, from political divisions and union divisions which exist elsewhere, and from which Lip cannot isolate itself.

POSTSCRIPT

Soon after the Lip workers occupied their factory in mid-June, they began to produce for themselves. Without foremen or managers, the workers organized their own assembly system and set their own rates of work. The women workers had the key role in this new assembly system. Nearly all the assembly workers were women, and though they had been the lowest paid, they had had little contact with the unions, which were dominated by the machine workers. Though few women workers had been active in strikes before, they now assumed important jobs, like selling the watches, which was illegal.

The strikers also created a democratic system of self-government. In addition to the Action Committee, they set up commissions to supervise production, popularize the struggle, take care of visitors to the plant, and oversee the distribution of the watches and the management of the plant. Along with the daily general assemblies, the strikers have set up a day care center, a varied program of meetings and social events, a cafeteria, and a reception area to explain their struggle to visitors. One of the most imaginative of these commissions has been the "Popularization Commission." They have produced a weekly strike newsletter, Lip-Unite, which reached a circulation of 30,000 by September. The commission sent out teams of strikers throughout France, who held an average of three meetings a day to explain their strike to other workers. They have also organized a radio program, Radio Lip, and distribute tape cassettes explaining the latest developments in the strike. Through the work of the "Popularization Commission," neighborhood strike support committees have been set up throughout France, especially in Paris. The result of all these tactical initiatives has been to bring the words and

ideas of the strikers themselves directly to other members of the French working class, without the trade union bureaucracy or the capitalist press acting as an intermediary.

The great impact that the strike has had in France stems mainly from the radical tactics of the strikers, and the meaning they have to workers and employers alike. Refusing to negotiate their two demands of no layoffs and no dismantlement of the factory, the Lip workers have described their action as "self-defense, not self-management." Nevertheless, as they themselves pointed out in a manifesto, they "have shown that the bosses are not indispensable and that the workers are capable of organizing themselves, on their own, even in the economic sphere.... It is not only the management of Lip that has been challenged, but the whole employing class." * This challenge was also apparent to the employers. In an article on the seizure of the factory, an employers' magazine observed that "French society, as it is conceived by the government and the ruling classes, has rarely been so threatened in its principles as now, to judge by the Lip affair." The magazine went on to compare the strike to the events of May, 1968, saying, "The Lip affair is something else again. Calmly, and without any great distress, it is denying or transforming property rights..., and it is doing all this with the moral support of the greater part of the population."

Both the company and the government hesitated to act. At the end of June the company made some concessions, but the workers refused to leave the factory. In mid-July, the company was finally declared bankrupt. The terms of the bankruptcy authorized continued operation of the factory only until the end of December. The workers now turned on the government, demanding that measures be taken to guarantee no layoffs and no dismantling of the plant. The government in turn proposed that the workers themselves take over the factory as shareholders in a cooperative. The

*Quotations taken from the French Trotskyist newspaper Rouge, translated by Intercontinental Press.

workers rejected this suggestion to become petty capitalists, and demanded again that the government guarantee no layoffs. For the government Jean Charbonnel, the Minister of Scientific and Economic Development, proposed a "plan" to reorganize the factory. Negotiations on this and subsequent "plans," however, continuously broke down over the government's refusal to guarantee no layoffs. In the midst of these negotiations, the government attempted to strengthen its hand by evicting the workers from the factory.

Early in the morning of August 14th, troops from the C.R.S. (Security Corps) moved in and recaptured the factory. Coming in the middle of the vacation period, the police raid encountered little resistance. By noon, however, thousands of workers had been mobilized from the surrounding area for a demonstration outside the factory. Instead of trying to retake the factory, the demonstrators organized a twenty-four hour general strike in the city. Demonstrations and sympathy strikes occurred throughout France, and clashes between police and demonstrators continued through the next two weeks in Besancon. The Lip strikers, meanwhile, set up production again in the high school, and at the end of August paid themselves their month's wages.

The use of force by the government heightened the intensity of the struggle, and for the first time broke the unity of the workers. The representatives of the government continued to claim to be negotiating in good faith, but refused to meet the workers' demand for no layoffs and no dismantlement. The press and other media began to turn against the workers, saying that this demand was unreasonable. The government set a deadline to have the factory operating again by October 1st with a reduced workforce. To counter this, the Lip workers and their supporters increased their own propaganda efforts, organizing meetings and demonstrations intended to build up to a mass demonstration in Besancon at the end of September. The Lip workers, in calling for the demonstration, proposed "that the workers of all factories, public and private, that are faced with problems similar to ours set up stands in the

assembly area" to explain their situation to workers from other factories. The leaders of the C.G.T. and the C.F.D.T., however, began to minimize the importance of the demonstration. Fearful of successful inroads by "ultra-left" groups, especially adherents of the recently-outlawed Ligue Communiste (Trotskyists), and fearful also of clashes with the police, the leaders of the union federations began to refer to the "regional character" of the march. Despite this lukewarm support, more than 70,000 demonstrated in Besancon, and the government reluctantly abandoned its deadline.

The government renewed its offensive soon after the demonstration. They gave the workers until the 9th of October to agree to a "plan" including 159 layoffs, or they would break off negotiations. The day before negotiations were to be broken off, the General Assembly of the Lip workers voted to continue negotiating only on the basis of the original demands by a vote of 749-15. The C.G.T., which had supported a modified version of the government's plan, denounced the "irresponsible elements" among the strikers; and the government carried out its threat to break off negotiations. At another General Assembly three days later, the strikers again endorsed the original demands. The C.G.T. now denounced the vote, and refused to help the strikers further in the sale of watches. The C.F.D.T. leadership also accepted the government's plan "in principle." The government, however, rejected a compromise offered by the trade unions, which would have guaranteed the workers employment either at Lip or elsewhere. Two days later, the government's police raided the workers' strike headquarters. Fortunately, the fourth payment of wages had been secretly completed the day before.

Following the police raid, pressure against the strikers continued from all sides. The C.G.T., after having withdrawn its support of the strike in October, began pressuring its members to sign up for unemployment, in order to avoid the risk of having their wildcat paychecks confiscated by the police. This action, however, undercut the solidarity of the strikers, which had been maintained by the continued

production and sale of watches to provide for a strike fund. The government, for its part, began a determined "final effort" to settle the strike. They have been negotiating with other watch companies to rent workshops in the Besancon plant, or to buy production materials cheaply and move them to their own factories. The Minister of Industrial and Scientific Development has announced that the strike will be settled on January 15th, when his team of "experts" is expected to present "industrial and financial proposals which will permit the resumption of watch production." It remains to be seen, of course, whether these new proposals will meet the workers' demands of no layoffs, and no dismantling of the Besancon factory.

According to the French newspaper Le Monde, the slogans and posters of the workers have lost their impact, and the enthusiasm of the strikers is waning. In spite of government repression and being abandoned by the C.G.T., however, the Lip workers have continued their strike. In cooperation with the C.F.D.T., they recently organized a colloquium on work, which was held in Besancon. From the discussions on workers' control came the decision to actively support strikers in four other major French firms, including the government-owned TV network O.R.T.F., and the Larousse publishing house. On December 3rd the strikers held their fifth wildcat payday, with workers who were on unemployment receiving the difference between this and their former monthly salary.

The Origin of Job Structures in the Steel Industry

Katherine Stone

In the 19th century, work in the steel industry was controlled by the skilled workers. Skilled workers decided how the work was done and how much was produced. Capitalists played a very small role in production, and there were very few foremen. In the last 80 years, the industry has transformed itself, so that today the steel management has a complex hierarchy of authority, and steelworkers are stratified amongst minute gradings along job ladders.

This article is an abridged version of a paper presented in March, 1973, at a conference on Labor Market Segmentation, Harvard University. The entire paper will appear in print sometime this spring.

Steelworkers no longer make any decisions about the process of producing steel.

The process by which the steel industry was transformed is the process by which steel employers tried to break down the basis for unity amongst steel workers. Out of their efforts to gain control of their workers and prevent unified opposition, the steel employers set up the various structures that define work today. This paper traces that process in detail in order to demonstrate the class nature of existing job structures and the possibility for jobs to be structured differently.

The Breakdown of the Traditional Labor System

In 1908 John Fitch, an American journalist who had interviewed hundreds of steel workers and steel officials, described the labor system in the steel industry of his day.

> In every department of mill work, there is a more or less rigid line of promotion. Every man is in training for the next position above.... The course would vary in the different styles of mills, as the positions vary in number and character, but the operating principle is everywhere the same. In the open-hearth department the line of promotion runs through common labor, metal wheelers, stock handlers, cinder-pit man, second helper and first helper, to melter foreman. In this way, the companies develop and train their own men. They seldom hire a stranger for a position as roller or heater. Thus the working force is pyramided and is held together by the ambition of the men lower down; and even a serious break in the ranks adjusts itself all but automatically. (1)

Anyone familiar with industry today will recognize this arrangement immediately. It is precisely the type of internal labor market, with orderly promotion hierarchies

and limited ports of entry, which economists have only recently begun to analyze. When Fitch was writing, it was a new development in American industry. Only 20 years earlier, the steel industry had had a system for organizing production which appears very strange to us today.

Although steel had been produced in this country since colonial times, it was not until after the Civil War that the steel industry reached substantial size. In 1860, there were only 13 establishments producing steel, which employed a total of 748 men to produce less than 12,000 net tons of steel a year. (2) After the Civil War, the industry began to expand rapidly, so that by 1890, there were 110 Bessemer converters and 167 open-hearth converters producing 4.8 million net tons of steel per year. (3) This expansion is generally attributed to the protective tariff for steel imports, the increased use of steel for railroads, and changes in the technology of steel production.

The pivotal period for the U. S. steel industry were the years 1890-1910. During that period, steel replaced iron as the building block of industrial society, and the United States surpassed Great Britain as the world's prime steel producer. Also during the 1890s, Andrew Carnegie completed his vertically integrated empire, the Carnegie Corporation, and captured 25 per cent of the nation's steel market. His activities led to a wave of corporate mergers which finally culminated in the creation, in 1901, of the world's first billion-dollar corporation, the U. S. Steel Corporation. U. S. Steel was built by the financier J. P. Morgan on the back of the Carnegie Corporation. At its inception, it controlled 80 per cent of the United States output of steel.

In the 19th century, the steel industry, like the iron industry from which it grew, had a labor system in which the workers contracted with the steel companies to produce steel. In this labor system, there were two types of workers — "skilled" and "unskilled". Skilled workers did work that required training, experience, dexterity, and judgment; and unskilled workers performed the heavy manual labor — lifting, pushing, carrying, hoisting, and wheeling raw mate-

rials from one operation to the next. The skilled workers were highly skilled industrial craftsmen who enjoyed high prestige in their communities. Steel was made by teams of skilled workers with unskilled helpers, who used the companies' equipment and raw materials.

The unskilled workers resembled what we call "workers" today. Some were hired directly by the steel companies, as they are today. The others were hired by the skilled workers, under what was known as the "contract system". Under the contract system, the skilled workers would hire helpers out of their own paychecks. Helpers earned between one-sixth and one-half of what the skilled workers earned.

The skilled steel workers saw production as a coopera-

tive endeavor, where labor and capital were equal partners. The partnership was reflected in the method of wage payment. Skilled workers were paid a certain sum for each ton of steel they produced. This sum, called the tonnage rate, was governed by the "sliding scale", which made the tonnage rate fluctuate with the market price of iron and steel, above a specified minimum rate below which wages could not fall. The sliding scale was introduced in the iron works of Pittsburgh as early as 1865, and in the 25 years that followed, it spread throughout the industry.

The sliding scale was actually an arrangement for sharing the profits between two partners in production, the skilled workers and the steel masters. It was based on the principle that the workers should share in the risks and the fruits of production, benefiting when prices were high and sacrificing when prices were low.

Another effect of the sliding scale was that by pegging tonnage rates directly to market prices, the role of the employer in wage determination was eliminated. Consider, for example, the following account, summarized by David Montgomery from the records of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers:

> When the Columbus Rolling Mill Company contracted to reheat and roll some railroad tracks in January, 1874, for example, the union elected a committee of four to consult with the plant superintendent about the price the workmen were to receive for the work. They agreed on a scale of $1.13 per ton, which the committee brought back to the lodge for its approval.
>
> There followed an intriguing process. The members soon accepted the company offer, then turned to the major task of dividing the $1.13 among themselves. Each member stated his own price. When they were added up, the total was 3 3/4 cents higher than the company offer. By a careful revision of the figures, each runback buggyman was

cut 2 cents, and the gang buggyman given an extra 1/4 of a cent to settle the bill. (4)

The employers had relatively little control over the skilled workers' incomes. Nor could they use the wage as an incentive to insure them a desired level of output. Employers could only contract for a job. The price was determined by the market, and the division of labor and the pace of work was decided by the workers themselves. Thus, the sliding scale and the contract system defined the relationship between capital and labor in the steel industry in the 19th century.

The skilled steel workers had a union, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, which was the strongest union of its day. Formed in 1876 by a merger of the Heaters Union, the Roll Hands Union and the Sons of Vulcan, by 1891 the Amalgamated represented 25 per cent of all steelworkers. Through their union, they were able to formalize their control over production. For example, at Carnegie's Homestead, Pennsylvania mill, a contract was won in 1889 that gave the skilled workers authority over every aspect of steel production there. A company historian described it this way:

> The method of apportioning the work, of regulating the turns, of altering the machinery, in short, every detail of working the great plant, was subject to the interference of some busybody representing the Amalgamated Association. The heats of a turn were designated, as were the weights of the various charges constituting a heat. The product per worker was limited; the proportion of scrap that might be used in running a furnace was fixed; the quality of pig-iron was stated; the puddlers' use of brick and fire clay was forbidden, with exceptions; the labor of assistants was defined; the teaching of other workmen was prohibited, nor might one man lend his tools to another except as provided for. (5)

John Fitch confirmed this account of worker control at Homestead when he interviewed Homestead workers and managers in 1908. Fitch reported that:

> A prominent official of the Carnegie Steel Company told me that before the strike of 1892, when the union was firmly entrenched in Homestead, the men ran the mill and the foreman had little authority. There were innumerable vexations. Incompetent men had to be retained in the employ of the company, and changes for the improvement of the mill could not be made without the consent of the mill committees. I had opportunity to talk with a considerable number of men employed at Homestead before 1892, among them several prominent leaders of the strike. From these conversations I gathered little that would contradict the statement of the official, and much that would corroborate it. (6)

The cooperative relationship between the skilled steel workers and the steel employers became strained in the 1880s. The market for steel products began to expand rapidly. Domestically the railroads began to generate high levels of demand for steel, and internationally the U.S. steel industry began to compete successfully with the British and the German steel industry for the world market. (In 1890, for the first time, U.S. steel exports surpassed those of Great Britain.) The effect of this massive increase in demand was to intensify competition in the U.S. industry. What had been a stable market structure was disrupted by the new markets opening up.

Firms competed for the new markets by trying to increase their output and cut their costs. To do that they had to increase the productivity of their workers — but the labor system did not allow them to do that. For example, from 1880 on, the market price for iron and steel products was falling drastically, so that the price for bar iron was

below the minimum specified in the union's sliding scale, even though the negotiated minimum rates were also declining. (7) This meant that employers were paying a higher percentage of their income out in wages than they would have were the sliding feature of the sliding scale operative, or had they had the power to reduce wages unilaterally in the face of declining prices.

At the same time that their labor costs as a percentage of revenue were rising, the labor system also prevented employers from increasing their productivity through reorganizing or mechanizing their operations. The workers controlled the plants and decided how the work was to be done. Employers had no way to speed up the workers, nor could they introduce new machinery that eliminated or redefined jobs.

In the past, employers had introduced new machinery, but not labor-saving machinery. The many innovations introduced between 1860 and 1890, of which the most notable was the Bessemer converter, increased the size and capacity of the furnaces and mills, but they generally did not replace men with machines. Lowthian Bell, a British innovator, who toured the U. S. steel industry in 1890, reported that: "Usually a large make of any commodity is accomplished by a saving of labor, but it may be questioned whether in the case of the modern blast furnace this holds good. To a limited, but a very limited, extent some economy might be effected, but if an account were taken of the weight of material moved in connection with one of our Cleveland furnaces, and the number of men by whom it is handled, much cannot, at all events with us, be hoped for." (8)

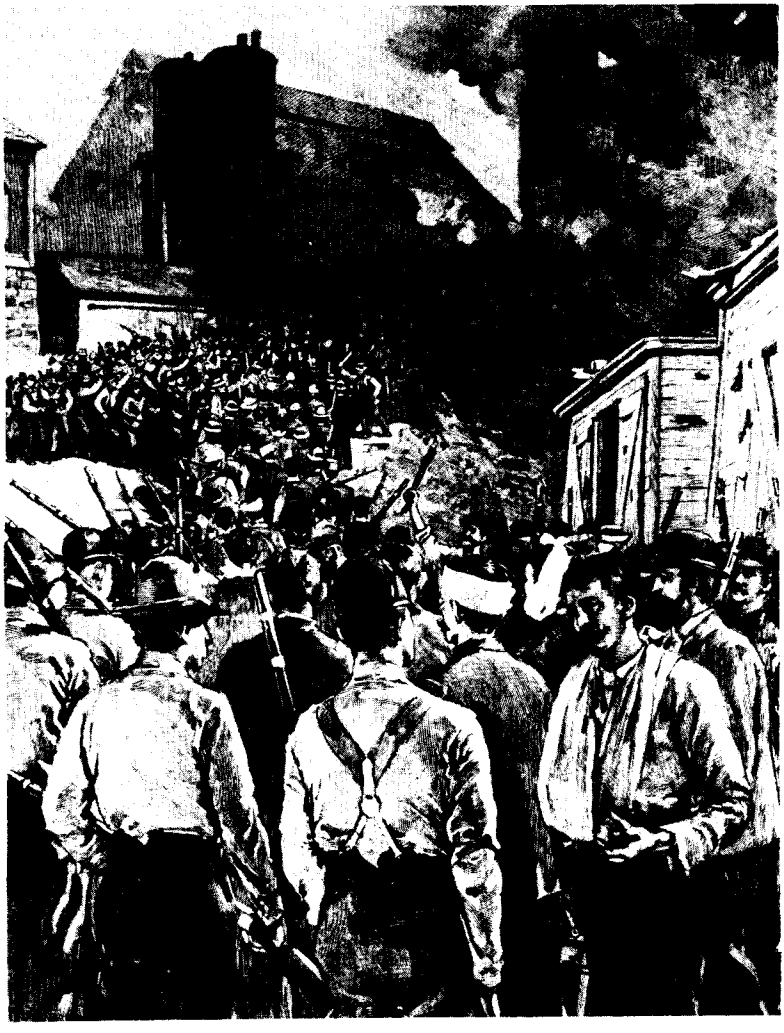
However, in the late 1880s and 1890s, the steel companies needed more than just bigger machines and better methods of metallurgy. Bottlenecks were developing in production, so that they needed to mechanize their entire operations. For example, the problem with pig-iron production — the first stage of steel-making — was that with increased demand, the larger blast furnaces could produce pig iron faster than the men could load them, so that the use of manual labor became a serious hindrance to expand-

ing output.

The steel masters needed to replace men with machines, which meant changing the methods of production. To do that, they needed to control production, unilaterally. The social relations of cooperation and partnership had to go if capitalist steel production was going to progress. The steel companies understood this well, and decided to break the union.

The strongest lodge of the Amalgamated Association was at Carnegie's Homestead mill; it is no wonder that the battle between capital and labor shaped up there. In 1892, just before the contract with the Amalgamated was to expire, Carnegie transferred managing authority of the mill to Henry Clay Frick. Frick was already notorious for his brutal treatment of strikers in the Connellsville coke regions, and he wasted no time making his intentions known at Homestead. He ordered a fence built, three miles long and topped with barbed wire, around the entire Homestead Works; he had platforms for sentinels constructed and holes for rifles put in along the fence; and he had barracks built inside it to house strikebreakers. Thus fortified, Frick ordered 300 guards from the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, closed down the Works, laid off the entire work force, and announced they would henceforth operate non-union. The famous Homestead Strike began in 1892 as a lockout by the employers, with the explicit aim of breaking the union. Dozens of men were killed in the four months that followed, as the Homestead workers fought Pinkertons, scabs, the sheriff and the State Militia. In the end, the intervention of the state and federal governments on the side of the Carnegie Corporation beat the strikers. The Works were re-opened with strike-breakers, and Frick wrote to Carnegie, "Our victory is now complete and most gratifying. Do not think we will ever have any serious labor trouble again." (9)

The Homestead Strike was the turning point for the Amalgamated Association throughout the country. Other employers, newly invigorated by Frick's performance, took a hard line against the Union, and the morale of the



Homestead strike, 1892

members, their strongest local broken, was too low to fight back. Within two years of the Homestead defeat, the Amalgamated had lost 10,000 members. Lodge after lodge was lost in the following years, so that membership, having peaked at 25,000 in 1892, was down to 10,000 by 1898, and

most of that was in the iron industry. (10) The union never recovered from these losses. The locals that remained were destroyed one-by-one by the U. S. Steel Corporation, so that by 1910 the steel industry was entirely non-union.

With the power of the Amalgamated broken, steel employers were left to mechanize as much as they needed. The decade that followed the Homestead defeat brought unprecedented developments in every stage of steel making. The rate of innovation in steel has never been equaled. Electric trolleys, the pig casting machine, the Jones mixer, and mechanical ladle cars transformed the blast furnace. Electric traveling cranes in the Bessemer converter, and the Wellman charger in the open hearth did away with almost all the manual aspects of steel production proper. And electric cars and rising-and-falling tables made the rolling mills a continuous operation. (11) These developments led the British Iron and Steel Institute to conclude after its visit in 1903 that

> the (U. S.) steel industry had made considerable advances in the ten years ending with 1890. It is, however, mainly since that year that the steel manufacture has made its greatest strides in every direction, and it is wholly since that date that costs have been so far reduced as to enable the United States to compete with Great Britain and Germany in the leading markets of the world. (12)

One British economist, Frank Poppelwell, was particularly amazed by the degree to which new innovations were labor-saving. He concluded:

> Perhaps the greatest difference between English and American conditions in steel-works practice is the very conspicuous absence of labourers in the American mills. The large and growing employment of every kind of both propelling and directing machinery — electric-trolleys, rising and

> falling tables, live rollers, side-racks, shears, machine stamps, endless chain tables for charging on the cars, overhead travelling cranes — is responsible for this state of things. It is no exaggeration to say that in a mill rolling three thousand tons of rails a day, not a dozen men are to be seen on the mill floor. (13)

In this way, the steel masters succeeded in eliminating the bottlenecks in production by replacing men with machines at every opportunity. This mechanization would not have been possible without the employers' victory over the workers at Homestead. Thus we can see how the prize in the class struggle was control over the production process and the distribution of the benefits of technology. As David Brody summarizes it:

> In the two decades after 1890, the furnace worker's productivity tripled in exchange for an income rise of one-fifth....At bottom the remarkable cost reduction of American steel manufacture rested on those figures.
>
> The accomplishment was possible only with a labor force powerless to oppose the decisions of the steel men. (14)

The victory of the employers in 1892 allowed them to destroy the old labor system in the industry. They could then begin to create a new system, one that would reflect and help to perpetuate their ascendancy. Specifically, this meant that they had three separate tasks: to adapt the jobs to the new technology; to motivate workers to perform the new jobs efficiently; and to establish lasting control over the entire production process. The next three sections of this paper will deal with each one of these in turn.

II: Effects of the New Technology on Job Structure

Unlike earlier innovations in steel-making, the mechanization of the 1890s transformed the tasks involved in steel production. The traditional skills of heating, roughing, catching and rolling were built into the new machines. Machines also moved the raw materials and products through the plants. Thus the new process required neither the heavy laborers nor the highly skilled craftsmen of the past. Rather, they required workers to operate the machines, to feed them and tend them, to start them and stop them. A new class of workers was created to perform these tasks, a class of machine operators known by the label "semi-skilled."

The new machine operators were described by the British Iron and Steel Institute after their visit in 1903 as men who

> have to be attentive to guiding operations, and quick in manipulating levers and similarly easy work... the various operations are so much simplified that an experienced man is not required to conduct any part of the process. (15)

Similarly, the U.S. Department of Labor noted the rise of this new type of steelworker in their report of 1910:

> The semi-skilled among the production force consist for the most part of workmen who have been taught to perform relatively complex functions, such as the operation of cranes and other mechanical appliances, but who possess little or no general mechanical or metallurgical knowledge... This class has been developed largely within recent years along with the growth in the use of machinery and electrical power in the industry. The whole tendency of the industry is to greatly increase the proportion of the production force formed by this semiskilled class of workmen.

> They are displacing both the skilled and the unskilled workmen. (16)

The semi-skilled workers were created by the downgrading of the skilled workers and the upgrading of the unskilled. These shifts proceeded throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, as more and more plants were mechanized. Although there are no hard data on these shifts in job categories, they are reflected in the change in relative wage rates. Between 1890 and 1910, the hourly wages of the unskilled steelworkers rose by about 20 percent, while the daily earnings of the skilled workers fell by as much as 70 per cent. Also after 1892, the wage differential between the various types of skilled workers narrowed substantially. (17) Thus, the British Iron-masters reported in 1903

> The tendency in the American steel industry is to reduce by every possible means the number of highly-skilled men employed and more and more to establish the general wage on the basis of common unskilled labour. This is not a new thing, but it becomes every year more accentuated as a result of the use of automatic appliances which unskilled labor is usually competent to control. (18)

The following table of wage rates for selected positions at the Homestead plant mill between 1892 and 1908 illustrates the fate of skilled workers throughout the industry. Bear in mind that during this interval, their productivity was multiplying and wages throughout the nation were rising. Also, their workday was increased from 8 hours to 12 hours, so that the decline in daily earnings understates their reduction in real wages.

These reductions were part of the steel companies' policy of reducing the wage differentials between the classes of workers to make them more consistent with differentials in skill requirements for the different jobs. An official of one Pittsburgh steel company put it this way:

"...the daily earnings of some of the most highly paid men have been systematically brought down to a level consistent with the pay of other workers, having in mind skill and training required and a good many other factors." (20)

TABLE I: WAGES IN PLATE MILLS, HOMESTEAD, 1889-1908 (19)

	Decline in Tonnage Rates			Decline in Daily Rates		
Position	1889-92	1908	% decl.	1892	1907	% decl.
Roller	$14.00	$4.75	66.07	$11.84	$8.44	28.72
Heater	11.00	3.99	63.73	8.16	7.21	11.64
Heater's Helper	7.50	2.09	72.13	5.80	4.09	29.48
Hooker	8.50	2.40	71.76	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Shearman	13.00	n.a.	n.a.	9.49	5.58	41.20

The other side of the picture was the upgrading effect that the new technology had on the unskilled workers. Their wages were increased considerably during that same period. In part this was accomplished by a raise in the hourly rate for unskilled labor, from 14 cents per hour in 1892 to 17.5 cents in 1910, and in part it was the result of the steel companies putting more men on tonnage rates, enabling them to make higher daily earnings. (21)

Many unskilled workers were put in charge of expensive machinery and made responsible for operating it at full capacity. Fewer and fewer men were hired just to push wheelbarrows and load ingots, so that, as an official of the Pennsylvania Steel Company said, "While machinery may decrease the number of men, it demands a higher grade of workmen." (22) Thus, the effects of the new technology were to eliminate the distinction between skilled and unskilled workers and create a largely homogeneous workforce.

III: Solving the Labor Problem

Having become the unilateral controllers of steel production, the employers created for themselves the problem

of labor discipline. When the skilled workers had been partners in production, the problem of worker motivation did not arise. Skilled workers felt that they were working for themselves because they controlled the process of production. They set their own pace and work load without input from the bosses. When this system was broken, how hard workers worked became an issue of class struggle.

The introduction of the new technology introduced in the 1890s narrowed the skills differentials between the two grades of workers, producing a work force predominantly "semi-skilled". This homogenization of the work force produced another new "problem" for the employers. That is, without the old skilled/unskilled dichotomy and the exclusiveness of the craft unions, the possibility that workers might as a class unite to oppose them was greater than ever. Frederick Winslow Taylor, the renowned management theorist who began his career as a foreman in a steel plant, warned employers of this danger in 1905:

> When employers herd their men together in classes, pay all of each class the same wages, and offer none of them inducements to work harder or do better than the average, the only remedy for the men comes in combination; and frequently the only possible answer to encroachments on the part of their employers is a strike. (23)

Ultimately, however, both the problem of worker motivation and the problem of preventing unified opposition were the same problem. They both revolved around the question of controlling worker behavior. To do that, employers realized they had to control their perceptions of their self-interest. They had to give them the illusion that they had a stake in production, even though they no longer had any real stake in it. This problem was known as "the labor problem".

To solve the labor problem, employers developed strategies to break down the basis for a unity of interest

amongst workers, and to convince them that, as individuals, their interests were identical with those of their company.

Out of these efforts, they developed new methods of wage payments and new advancement policies, which relied on stimulating individual ambition. They were designed to create psychological divisions among the workers, to make them perceive their interests as different from, indeed in conflict with, those of their co-workers. Employers also began to use paternalistic welfare policies in order to win the loyalty of their employees. The effect of all these new policies was to establish an internal labor market in the major steel companies, which has lasted, in its essentials, until today.

1. Development of Wage Incentive Schemes

With the defeat of the Amalgamated Association, the entire complex traditional system of wage payments collapsed. The sliding scale of wages for paying skilled workers and the contract system for paying their helpers rapidly declined. Employers considered them a vestige of worker power and rooted them out of shop after shop. Thus, the employers had the opportunity to establish unilaterally a new system of wage payment. Initially, they began to pay the new semi-skilled men day wages, as they had paid the unskilled workers. Soon, however, they switched to the system of piece work, paying a fixed sum for each unit the worker produced.

The most obvious function of piece work was, of course, to increase output by making each worker drive himself to work harder. Employers also contended that the system was in the workers' best interests because it allowed each one to raise his own wages. However, the employers soon found that straight piece work gave the workers too much control over their wages. That is, when it succeeded in stimulating workers to increase their output, their wages soared above the going rate. Employers would then cut the piece rates to keep the wages in line. Once they did that, however, they had reduced the piece rate system to simple

speed-up — a way of getting more work for the same pay. Workers responded to the rate cuts by collectively slowing down their output, so that the system defeated itself, leaving employers back where they had started. "Wage Payment Systems: How to Secure the Maximum Efficiency of Labor", gives an interesting account of this process:

> It is in the administration of the piece work system that manufacturers, sooner or later, make their great mistake and over-reach themselves, with the result that the system becomes a mockery and the evil conditions of the old day work system reappears. Regardless of the continually increasing cost of living, the manufacturers decide among themselves, for example, that $1.50 for 10 hours is enough for a woman and that $2.50 a day is enough for the ordinary workingman and a family. The piece work prices are then adjusted so that the normal day's output will just bring about these wages... Immediately throughout the entire shop the news of the cuts is whispered about... with the result that there is a general slowing down of all producers. (24)

Thus, employers began to experiment with modifications of the piece rate. They developed several new methods of payment at this time, known as "premium" or "bonus" plans. These differed from piece work only in that they gave the workers smaller increments in pay for each additional piece.

The Halsey Premium Plan, developed in 1891, served as a model for most of the others. It called for establishing a base time period for a job, and setting one rate for workers who completed the job in that period. If a worker could finish the job faster, then he received a bonus in addition to the standard rate. The bonus was figured so that only a part of the money saved by the worker's extra productivity went to him, the rest going to the company. Different plans varied according to how they set the base time period and

the base wage, and how they divided the more efficient workers' savings between the worker and the company. Iron Age recommended one particular variation, called the Half and Half Premium Plan, in which the rule was "to pay the more efficient workman only one-half what he saves by speeding up." The article described one example where, under the plan,

> for every extra $1 the man earned by his extra effort, the manufacturers would gain $7. Not a bad investment, this premium system. It betters the workingman's condition materially, and, best of all, improves his frame of mind. (25)

TAYLORISMS

"My system is simply an honest, intelligent effort to arrive at absolute control in every department, to let tabulated . . . fact take the place of individual opinion; to develop team play to its highest possibility."

"One of the very first requirements for a man who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation is that he shall be so stupid and phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles an ox than any other type of animal."

From *American Labor,* by M.B. Schnapper

Frederick Winslow Taylor's Differential Piece Rate is basically another variation of the Halsey Premium Plan. Under Taylor's system, the employer established two separate rates, a low day rate for the "average workman" and a high piece rate for the "first class workman", with the stipulation that only the fast and efficient workmen were entitled to the higher rate. He suggests setting the high rate to give the worker about 60 percent increase in earn-

ings, and for this, the employer would demand of him a 300-400 percent increase in output. Like the Halsey Plan, it was simply the piece rate system modified to give the worker diminishing returns for his extra effort.

In order for any of the output incentive plans to work, management had to be able to measure each worker's output separately. All of the premium plans stressed the importance of treating each worker individually, but only Taylor gave them a method for doing so. His great contribution was systematic time study — giving employers a yardstick against which to measure an individual's productivity. The emphasis on individual productivity measures reinforced the fragmenting effect of the plans. As Taylor said about his experience implementing the system at the Bethlehem Steel Works:

> Whenever it was practicable, each man's work was measured by itself...Only on a few occasions and then upon special permission (...) were more than two men allowed to work on gang work, dividing their earnings between them. Gang work almost invariably results in a falling off of earnings and consequent dissatisfaction. (26)

Output incentives were designed to increase individual worker output. Employers understood that to do that, they had to play upon individual worker's ambitions, which meant breaking down workers' collective identity. They gave each worker inducement to work harder, and also divided the workers into different groups, according to their output.

Thus, output incentives served as a lever to prevent workers from taking collective action. As one manufacturer explained in 1928, he had originally adopted output incentives

> To break up the flat rate for the various classes of workers. That is the surest preventative of strikes and discontent. When all are paid one rate,

> it is the simplest and almost inevitable thing for all to unite in the support of a common demand. When each worker is paid according to his record there is not the same community of interest. The good worker who is adequately paid does not consider himself aggrieved so willingly nor will he so freely jeopardize his standing by joining with the so-called 'Marginal Worker'. There are not likely to be union strikes where there is no union of interest. (27)

Quite explicitly, then, the aim of the premium plans was to break up any community of interest that might lead workers to slow their pace (what employers call "restriction of output") or unite in other ways to oppose management. They were a weapon in the psychological war that employers were waging against their workers, and were, at least for a while, quite successful.

Between 1900 and World War I, piecework and premium plans became more and more prevalent in the steel industry.

Steel workers opposed the new methods of payment, and the residual unions in the industry raised objections at every opportunity. In one instance, at Bethlehem Steel's South Bethlehem Works, opposition to the bonus system exploded into a major strike in February, 1910. Approximately 5,000 of the 7,000 workers there went out on strike spontaneously. The strike lasted several weeks, during which time one man was killed and many were injured. Strike demands were drawn up separately by each department or group of workers, and every single one called for uniform rates of pay to be paid by the hour, and time-and-a-half for overtime. Several added to that an explicit demand for the elimination of piecework and a return to the "day-work" system. A U. S. Senate investigation into the strike found that the " 'Time-Bonus' System in use was one of its major causes." (28)

However, worker opposition proved ineffective in preventing the use of output incentive schemes. Since 1892, the

employers had held the upper hand in the industry, and they used it to perpetuate their power. The wage incentive schemes were aimed at doing just that.

2. New Promotion Policies & The Development of Job Ladders

As we saw above, the new technology diminished the skill requirements for virtually all the jobs involved in making steel. Charles Schwab himself said in 1902 that he could "take a green hand — say a fairly intelligent agricultural labourer — and make a steel melter of him in six or eight weeks." (29) When we realize that the job of melter was the most highly skilled job in the open hearth department, we can see how narrow the skill range in the industry really was. The employers knew this, and put their knowledge to good use during strikes. For example, during a strike at the Hyde Park Mill in 1901

> it was resolved that the works should be continued with green hands, aided by one or two skilled men who remained loyal. The five mills thus manned were started on the 3rd of August, and up to the date of my visit, near the end of October, they had not lost a single turn. (30)

Around the turn of the century, employers began to recognize the dangers inherent in the homogenization of the work force. They formulated this problem as worker discontent caused by "dead-end" jobs. Meyer Bloomfield, an industrial manager who in 1918 wrote a textbook on factory management, summarized their discussion on this subject:

> A good deal of literature has been published within the last dozen years in which scathing criticism is made of what has come to be known as 'blind alley' or 'dead-end' jobs. By these phrases is meant work of a character which leads to nothing in the way of further interest, opportunity, acquisition of

> skill, experience, or anything else which makes an appeal to normal human intelligence and ambition. The work itself is not under attack as much as the lack of incentive and appeal in the scheme of management. (31)

Bloomfield says right off, then, that the problem of "dead-end" jobs need not be solved by changing the jobs themselves. The better solution is to change the arrangement of the jobs. To do this, he says,

> a liberal system of promotion and transfer has therefore become one of the most familiar features of a modern personnel plan, and some of the most interesting achievements of management may be traced to the workings of such a system. (32)

The response of employers to the newly homogenized jobs was to create strictly demarcated job ladders, linking each job to one above and one below it in status and pay to make a chain along which workers could progress. As Bloomfield remarked, "what makes men restless is the inability to move, or to get ahead." (33)

The establishment of a job ladder had two advantages, from the employers' point of view. First, it gave workers a sense of vertical mobility, and was an incentive to workers to work harder. Secondly it gave the employers more leverage with which to maintain discipline. The system pitted each worker against all the others in rivalry for advancement and undercut any feeling of unity which might develop among them. Instead of acting in concert with other workers, workers had to learn to curry favor with their foremen and supervisors, to play by their rules, in order to get ahead. As one steel worker described the effect this had on workers during the 1919 organizing campaign, "Naw, they won't join no union; they're all after every other feller's job." (34) This competition also meant that workers on different ladder rungs had different vested interests, and that those higher up had something to lose by offending

their bosses or disrupting production.

As early as 1900, Iron Age was advising employers to fill production work vacancies from inside the firm. They advocated a policy of hiring only at the lowest job levels and filling higher jobs by promotion — what contemporary economists refer to as limiting the ports of entry.

The principle of internal promotion was expounded by Judge Gary, the President of the U. S. Steel Corporation, in his dealings with the subsidiaries. For example, in a speech to the presidents of the subsidiary companies in 1922, Gary said:

> We should give careful thought to the question as to who could be selected to satisfactorily fill any unoccupied place; and like suggestions should be made to the heads of all departments. Positions should be filled by promotions from the ranks, and if in any locations there are none competent, this fact should be given attention and men trained accordingly. It is only necessary to make and urge the point. You will know what to do, if indeed any of you has not already well deliberated and acted upon it. (35)

These policies explain the rigid lines of promotion that John Fitch found in each department. He described the work force as "pyramided and . . . held together by the ambition of the men lower down." (36)

In this way, the steel companies opened up lines of promotion in the early years of the century by creating job ladders. Employers claimed that each rung of the ladder provided the necessary training for the job above it. But the skilled jobs in the steel industry had been virtually eliminated and production jobs were becoming more homogeneous in their content. If, as Charles Schwab said, one could learn to be a melter in six weeks, then certainly the training required for most jobs was so minimal that no job ladder and only the minimum of job tenure were needed

to acquire the necessary skills.

While technological development made it possible to do away with distinctions between skilled and unskilled workers, employers introduced divisions to avoid the consequences of a uniform and homogeneous work force. The minutely graded job ladders were developed as a solution to the "labor problem", rather than a necessary input for production itself.

IV: The Redivision of Labor

While employers were developing new systems for managing their work forces, they also altered the definition of jobs and the division of labor between workers and management. They did this by revising the training mechanism for skilled workers, retraining the foremen, and changing their methods of recruiting managers. The result of these changes was to take knowledge about production away from the skilled workers, thus separating "physical work" from "mental work". This further consolidated the employers' unilateral control over production, for once all knowledge about production was placed on the side of management, there would be no way for workers to carry on production without them.

Frederick Winslow Taylor was one of the first theorists to discuss the importance of taking all mental skills away from the worker. In his book Principles of Scientific Management (1905), he gives a description of the division of knowledge in the recent past:

> Now, in the best of the ordinary types of management, the managers recognize the fact that the 500 or 1000 workmen, included in the twenty or thirty trades, who are under them, possess this mass of traditional knowledge, a large part of which is not in the possession of the management. The management, of course, includes foremen and superintendents, who themselves have been in most cases first-class workers at their trades. And yet these

> foremen and superintendents know, better than anyone else, that their own knowledge and personal skill falls far short of the combined knowledge and dexterity of all the workmen under them. (48)

Taylor insists that employers must gain control over this knowledge. In his manual Shop Management, he says quite simply, "All possible brain work should be removed from the shop and centered in the planning or laying-out department." (49)

Taylor suggested several techniques for accomplishing this. They were all based on the notion that work was a precise science, that there was "one best way" to do every work task, and that the duty of the managers was to discover the best way and force all their workmen to follow it. Taylorites used films of men working to break down each job into its component motions, and used stop watches to find out which was the "one best way" to do them. Taylor also insisted that all work should be programmed in advance, and co-ordinated out of a "planning department". He gives elaborate details for how the planning department should function — using flow charts to program the entire production process and direction cards to communicate with foremen and workmen. These were called "routing" systems. One historian summarizes this aspect of scientific management thus:

> One of the most important general principles of Taylor's system was that the man who did the work could not derive or fully understand its science. The result was a radical separation of thinking from doing. Those who understood were to plan the work and set the procedures; the workmen were simply to carry them into effect. (50)

Although most steel executives did not formulate the problem as clearly as Taylor, they did try to follow his advice. Around 1910, they began to develop "dispatching systems" to centralize their knowledge about production.

These systems consisted of a series of charts showing the path of each piece of material as it made its progress through the plant and how much time each operation took — enabling the supervisors to know exactly where each item was at any point in time.

At the same time that they systematized their own knowledge about production, the steel companies took that knowledge away from steel workers. Previously, the skilled steel workers, acting in teams, possessed all of the skills and know-how necessary to make steel. They also had had authority over their own methods of work. Now employers moved to transfer that authority to the foremen and to transfer that knowledge to a new strata of managers. This section will describe and document that process, in order to show that this redivision of labor was not a necessary outgrowth of the new technology, but rather was an adaptation by employers to meet their own needs, as capitalists, to maintain discipline and control.

1. The New Skilled Workers

As we have seen, the mechanization of production largely eliminated the role of the traditional skilled worker. However, the steel industry still needed skilled workers. Machines required skilled mechanics to perform maintenance and repair work. Also, certain skills were needed for specialized production processes which had not yet been mechanized. However, these skilled workmen were very different from the skilled workmen of the 19th century, who collectively possessed all of the skills necessary to produce steel. The new skilled workers had skills of a specific nature that enabled them to perform specific tasks, but did not have a general knowledge of the process of production. This new type of skilled worker had to be created by the employers.

One would think that finding skilled men should have been no problem because of the huge numbers of skilled workers who were displaced and down-graded in the 1890s. However, by 1905, employers' associations began to complain

about the shortage of skilled men. The reason for this paradox is that when the employers destroyed the unions and the old social relations, they destroyed at the same time the mechanism through which men had received their training.

Previously, the selection, training, and promotion of future skilled steel workers had been controlled by the skilled craftsmen and their unions. After the union was destroyed, the skilled workers were no longer able to hire and train their own helpers. Within a few years, employers, realizing that no new men were being trained, began to worry about their future supply of skilled workers.

Pouring cast iron in a steel foundry

In order to create new skilled workers, employers set up a training system that was an alternative to the union-controlled apprenticeship system of the past, known as the "short course". The "short course" involved a manager or superintendent taking a worker who had been in a department for long enough to get a feel for the process, and giving him individualized instruction in some specialized branch of the trade. By using the short course, employers could train men for specific skilled jobs in a limited period of time.

In this way, a new class of skilled workers was created during the first two decades of the 20th Century. These workers were selected by the employers, trained in a short period of time, and then set to work with their job-specific skill. These workers had skills which were only good for one job. They did not have the independence of the 19th Century skilled workmen, whose skills were transferable to other jobs and other plants. Nor did they have the generalized knowledge of the production process that skilled workers previously possessed. The knowledge they had was that which could serve their employer, but not that which could serve themselves. As Iron Age advertised in 1912:

> Make your own mechanics... The mechanics that you will teach will do the work your way. They will stay with you, as they are not sure they could hold jobs outside. (51)

2. Changing Role of the Foreman

As the employers expanded their control over the process of production, they realized they had to develop an alternative means for exercising control on the shop floor. Just as they had taken knowledge about production away from the skilled workers, they also took away their authority over their own labor and that of their helpers. Now, the task of regulating production was transferred to the foremen, who previously only had authority over the pools of unskilled workers. Foremen were now seen as manage-

ment's representatives on the shop floor. To do this, employers had to redefine the job of foreman and retrain the men who held those jobs.

In order to transfer authority to the foremen, the employers had to distinguish them from the skilled workers. This distinction had to be created; it did not evolve out of the new technology. Foremen were recruited from the ranks of the skilled workers — foremanship being the highest position to which a blue-collar worker could aspire. Once there, however, steel employers had to re-educate them as to their role in production. The re-education began with convincing them not to do manual work, which was no easy task. An editorial in Iron Age in 1905 quotes one superintendent lecturing an audience of foremen as saying:

> 'You men have no business to have your coats off when on duty in your shops unless you are warm. You have no business to take the tools out of a workman's hands to do his work. Your business is to secure results from other men's work.'

The editorial goes on to say why this is important:

> A man cannot work with his hands and at the same time give intelligent supervision to a gang of men, and a foreman who does this is apt to lose the control of his men while he is weakening the confidence of his employers in his ability as a general. (52)

The foreman's job was to direct and correct the work, but never to do the work himself. His authority depended upon that. Foremen, as the lowest ranking "mind" workers, had to be made distinct from the manual workers. One steel company official likened the organization of authority to that of the "army, with the necessary distinction between the commissioned officers and the ranks." (53)

The companies had to give their foremen special training courses in order to make them into bosses. These courses were designed to teach the foremen how to "manage" their

men. One such course, at the American Steel and Wire Company, a U.S. Steel subsidiary, spent most of its time on that subject with only a few sessions on production techniques or economics.

This development was not unique to the steel industry. Throughout American industry, special foremen's training courses were becoming prevalent. Dr. Hollis Godfrey, President of the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, the first private institution concerned solely with foremen's training, said that the purpose of foremen training was to

> make the skilled mind worker. The skilled mind worker is a little different proposition than the skilled hand worker, and a great many people are still wandering around in the differentiation between the two . . . . From the foreman to the president right straight through, you have got one body of mind workers, and they do but two things: they organize knowledge and then they use the knowledge as organized. (54)

Although foremen did little work, they also did little thinking. Most of their training was designed to teach them how to maintain discipline — techniques for handling men, developing "team work", deciding who to discharge and who to promote. They were the company's representative in the shop, and as the companies consolidated their power over the workers, the strategic importance of the foremen increased.

3. New Types of Managers

Just as the authority that the skilled workers had previously possessed was transferred to the foremen, their overall knowledge about production was transferred to a new class of managers, recruited from the public and private schools and their own special programs. These managers became the bottom rung of the management hierarchy.

Before 1900, most managers in the steel industry were

men who had begun at the bottom and worked their way all the way up. Andrew Carnegie had insisted on using this method to select his junior executives. As he once said, boastingly, "Mr. Morgan buys his partners, I grow my own." (55) Carnegie developed a whole partnership system for the management of his empire based on the principle of limitless upward mobility for every one of his employees.

Around the turn of the century, employers began to choose college graduates for their management positions. As one prominent steel official told a member of the British iron and steel institute in 1903: "We want young men who have not had time to wear themselves into a groove, young college men preferably ...." (56)

This was not mere philosophy; the British visitors found on their tour that, of the 21 blast furnaces they visited, "18 were managed by college graduates, the majority of whom were young men." (57)

Employers used publically-funded technical colleges to train their new managers. Technical colleges were new, established with the support of the business community and over the protest of the labor movement. As Paul Douglas wrote in 1921:

> Employers early welcomed and supported the trade-school, both because they believed that it would provide a means of trade-training, and because they believed that it would remove the preparation for the trades from the potential or actual control of unions. (58)

Some steel employers also set up their own schools.

Technical training alone, however, was not sufficient to produce competent managers for steel factories. The young men also needed to know about steel-making. To meet this need, the steel companies developed a new on-the-job training program to supplement the formal learning of their young college graduates. This program consisted of short rotations in each mill department under the supervision of

a foremen or superintendent, which gave the men experience in every aspect of mill work before they were put in managerial positions. This program was called an "apprenticeship", and although it trained managers instead of workers, it was an apprenticeship by the original meaning of the word. It gave the apprentices knowledge of each stage of the production process.

By the 1920s, such methods were nearly universal throughout the industry. Charles Hook, the Vice President of the American Rolling Mill Company, a U.S. Steel subsidiary, described his method for selecting and training managers in a speech of 1927 to the International Management Congress:

> The condition as outlined respecting the selection of the 'skilled' employee is quite different from the condition governing the selection of the man with technical education....
>
> Each year a few second- and third-year (college) men work during the summer vacation, and get a first-hand knowledge of mill conditions. This helps them reach a decision. If, after working with us for a summer, they return the next year, the chances are they will remain permanently... Some of our most important positions — positions of responsibility requiring men with exception technical knowledge — are filled by men selected in this manner. (59)

The prospective managers, in short, were increasingly recruited from the schools and colleges, not from the shops.

In these apprenticeship programs, a distinction was often made between different types of apprentices, distinguished by their years of schooling. Each type was to be trained for positions at different levels of responsibility. For example, at the Baldwin Works, there were three classes of apprentices, such that:

> The first class will include boys seventeen years of age, who have had a good common school (grammar school) education... The second class indenture is similar to that of the first class, except that the apprentice must have had an advance grammar school (high school) training, including the mathematical courses usual in such schools... The third class indenture is in the form of an agreement made with persons twenty-one years of age or over, who are graduates of colleges, technical schools, or scientific institutions.... (60)

Thus, formal education was beginning to become the criterion for separating different levels of the management hierarchy, as well as separating workers from employers.

During this period, employers redivided the tasks of labor. The knowledge expropriated from the skilled workers was passed on to a new class of college-trained managers. This laid the basis for perpetuating class divisions in the society through the educational system. Recently several scholars have shown how the stratification of the educational system functions to reproduce society's class divisions. It is worth noting that the educational tracking system could not work to maintain the class structure were it not for the educational requirements that were set up at the point of production. These educational requirements came out of the need of employers to consolidate their control over production.

Within management, the discipline function was divided from the task of directing and coordinating the work. This is the basis for today's distinction between "staff" and "line" supervision. We might hypothesize that this division, too, had its origin in the desire of steel employers to maintain control over their low level managerial staff.

The effect of this redivision of labor on the worker was to make his job meaningless and repetitious. He was left with no official right to direct his own actions or his own thinking. In this way, skilled workers lost their status as partners, and became true workers, selling their labor and

taking orders for all of their working hours.

Pittsburgh steel workers

V. To The Present

The labor system set up by the steel employers early in the century has not changed significantly since 1920. The essentials of the system — wage incentives, job ladders, welfare schemes, and a division of labor that kept skills highly job-specific — have lasted to the present.

The only major change in the industry's labor relations has been the union organizing drive of the 1930s, culminating in the establishment of the United Steelworkers of America, affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The union brought steelworkers job security and raised wages. For the first time, it gave workers a voice in the determination of working hours, working conditions, and fringe benefits. However, the presence of the union did not change the basic mechanisms of control that

employers had established. Although the union was able to alter the manner in which employers exercised control, it never challenged the heart of this control as institutionalized in the labor system.

The effect of the union was to re-rationalize the wage structure which employers had set up earlier. By the 1930's, small changes in the content of different jobs had eroded the earlier system and left the wage structure exceedingly complex and chaotic. What the union did, under the direction of the War Labor Board during the 1940's, was to work with the employers to streamline the old hierarchical system through a mammoth effort to re-evaluate and re-classify 50,000 job titles. The result was that they pegged every job to one of 30 job classifications, which they put in a strict order with a 3.5¢/hr. differential between them. This structure remains today, except the differential is now 7¢.

The impact of the union on promotion policies was to do away with favoritism and insist that seniority be used to regulate promotion and bumping. This also served to rationalize the old structure, by giving it a basis in fairness rather than the foreman's whim. However, it did not get rid of the divisive effects of the job ladders themselves.

Unionization failed to change the redivision of labor through which employers took knowledge about the production process away from the workers. The union did demand a say in the establishment and operation of training programs, but it did not question the content of the training courses.

In contrast, the American Federation of Labor, in 1940, adopted a position on training that insisted on the use of apprenticeship instead of skill-specific training. The difference between the steelworker's union and the AFL position on training no doubt stems from the fact that the AFL was composed of craft unions, who were ever conscious of the monopoly-power of their craft skills, while the former was composed of steelworkers whose craft skills had been taken from them long ago. The steelworkers probably did not consider the possibility that their skills could be other than job-specific. Such was the success of the earlier re-

division of labor.

The other side of this coin, as we saw earlier, was the transferring of generalized knowledge to the managers, and the use of educational requirements to distinguish managers from workers. A study by the International Labour Organization in 1954 found that in the United States

> More often than not, future supervisors are taken on by the companies as soon as they leave college and they start their careers with a spell of six months or a year as workmen in one of the departments in the plant. (61)

The International Labour Organization in another study found that the steel companies were still concerned with the problems of establishing status relations between supervisors and workers, and solved it by giving "supplementary training which is essential once supervisors have been appointed in order to raise and define their status in relation to their subordinates and to ensure that their activities and those of the management are fully coordinated." (62)

The presence of the union did, however, make some difference regarding the authority of the foremen in the steel industry. The establishment of formal grievance procedures and seniority as a basis for promotion undercut the power that foremen had held on the shop floor.

VI. Conclusions

The period between 1890 and 1920 was a period of transition in the steel industry from a labor system controlled by the skilled workers to a labor system controlled by the steel employers. In that transition, the breaking of the skilled workers' union, which was the institutional expression of their control over the production process, was only the first step.

Once the union was destroyed, labor discipline became a problem for the employers. This was the two-fold problem

of motivating workers to work for the employers' gain and preventing workers from uniting to take back control of production. In solving this problem, employers were creating a new labor system to replace the one they had destroyed.

All of the methods used to solve this problem were aimed at altering workers' ways of thinking and feeling — which they did by making workers' individual "objective" self-interests congruent with that of the employers and in conflict with workers' collective self-interest. The use of wage incentives and the new promotion policies had a double effect on this issue. First, they comprised a reward system, in which workers who played by the rules could receive concrete gains in terms of income and status. Second, they constituted a permanent job ladder so that over time this new reward system could become an accepted fact by new workers coming into the industry. New workers would not see the job ladders as a reward and incentive system at all, but rather as the natural way to organize work and one which offered them personal advancement. In fact, however, when the system was set up, it was neither obvious nor rational. The job ladders were created just when the skill requirements for jobs in the industry were diminishing as a result of the new technology, and jobs were becoming more and more equal as to the learning time and responsibility involved.

The steel companies' welfare policies were also directed at the attitudes and perceptions of the workers. The policies were designed to show the workers that it was to their advantage to stay with the company. This policy, too, had both short-term and long-term advantages for the steel employees. In the short run, it was designed to stabilize the work force by lowering the turnover rate, thus cultivating a work force who were rooted in the community and who had much to lose by getting fired or causing trouble. In the long run, the policies were supposed to prevent workers from identifying with each other across company and industry lines, thus preventing the widening of strike movements into mass strikes. (63)

Employers also sought to institutionalize and perpetuate their newly-won control over production by redividing the tasks of production so as to take knowledge and authority away from the skilled workers and creating a management cadre able to direct production. This strategy was designed to separate workers from management permanently, by basing that separation on the distinction between physical and mental work, and by using the educational system to reinforce it. This deterred workers from seeing their potential to control the production process.

Although this paper has concentrated on the steel industry, the conclusions it reaches are applicable to many other industries in the United States. The development of the new labor system in the steel industry was repeated throughout the economy in different industries. As in the steel industry, the core of these new labor systems were the creation of artificial job hierarchies and the transfer of skills away from workers to the managers.

Technological innovations in every major industry around the turn of the century had the effect of squeezing the skills levels of the work force, turning most workers into semi-skilled machine operators. Paul Douglas, writing in 1921, found that the skill requirements were practically negligible in most of the machine building and machine using industries, especially the steel, shoe, clothing, meat-packing, baking, canning, hardware, and tobacco industries.

While jobs were becoming more homogeneous, elaborate job hierarchies were being set up to stratify them. Management journals were filled with advice on doing away with "dead-end" jobs, filling positions by advancement from below, hiring only unskilled workers for the lowest positions, and separating men into different pay classes. This advice was directed at the problem of maintaining "worker satisfaction" and preventing them from "restricting output" — i.e., fragmenting discontent and making workers work harder. Thus, the creation of the internal labor market throughout American industry was the employers' answer to the problem of discipline inherent in their need to exert unilateral control over production. Were it not for that, a

system of job rotation, or one in which the workers themselves allocated work, would have been just as rational and effective a way of organizing production.

At the same time, employers began a process which they called the "transfer of skill". (64) This meant giving managers the skills and knowledge that workers had previously possessed. They began to use technical colleges and set up their own programs to train managers in production techniques. This development was aided by the methodology of scientific management, as Paul Douglas pointed out:

> The amount of skill which the average worker must possess is still further decreased by the system of scientific management. The various constituent parts of the system, motion study, the standardization of tools and equipment, the setting of the standard task, routing, and functional foremanship, all divest the individual operative of much of the skill and judgment formerly required, and concentrate it in the office and supervisory force. (65)

Likewise, Samuel Haber, a historian studying the progressive period, says

> The discovery of a science of work meant a transfer of skill from the worker to management and with it some transfer of power. (66)

Like the creation of job hierarchies, this transfer of skill was not a response to the necessities of production, but was, rather, a strategy to rob the workers of their power.

For the skills which were still needed on the shop floor, employers instituted changes in the methods for training workers that reduced their skills to narrow, job-specific ones. The basic social inefficiency of this policy should be obvious. In an era of rapidly changing products and production techniques, jobs and industries are constantly changing, causing major dislocations in the work

force. Therefore, the rational job training policy would be to give people as broad a range of skills and understanding of modern technology as possible, so that they could be flexible enough to weather the shifts in technology and the economy through their capacity to change jobs. Instead, the system of job-specificity creates one aspect of what economists label "structural unemployment" by molding workers to single skill-specific occupations. This policy wastes both individual lives and socially-useful labor power.

To varying degrees, the labor movement was aware of these developments while they were occurring. Many unions in the American Federation of Labor developed an early opposition to piece rates, and especially to bonus systems of Halsey, Taylor, and others. In 1903, the International Association of Machinists expressed their opposition to "work by the piece, premium, merit, (or) task", and prohibited its members from accepting such work. In 1906, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers successfully refused to accept the bonus system on the Sante Fe Railroad. In 1907, the Molders Union, the Boot and Shoe Workers, and the Garment Workers all resisted the bonus and premium systems. In general, unions opposed both the piece work and the bonus systems, although an opinion poll of union policies conducted in 1908-09 showed that "unions almost without exception prefer the straight piece system to premium or bonus systems." (67) In 1911, the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor passed a resolution condemning "the premium or bonus system (because it would) drive the workmen beyond the point necessary to their safety." (68)

The growing opposition to scientific management in the labor movement went beyond a critique of the speed-up aspects of the bonus system. Samuel Gompers, founder and president of the AFL, was aware that Taylor's system meant the elimination of the role of the skilled craftsmen upon which the entire AFL was based. After reading Taylor's book Shop Management, he wrote to AFL Vice-President Duncan in 1911 that "I have no doubt that it would mean (the destruction of unionism) for it would reduce the num-

ber of skilled workers to the barest minimum and impose low wages upon those of the skilled who would be thrown into the army of the unskilled." (69)

The Machinists' Union was one of the more vocal in its fear of this aspect of scientific management. According to Milton Nadworny, in his book Scientific Management and the Unions, the IAM's "Official Circular No. 2"

> revealed the craftsman's fear of a system which not only instituted a revolutionary approach to work, but which threatened to reduce his importance in the shop. The machinist, it contended, was no longer required to use his skilled judgment — the planning department provided full instructions; no longer was his 'honor' relied upon — the stop watch determined the time of his job. To complete the scheme, the possibility of organized retaliation against the system was prevented because only individual bargaining was permitted. (70)

The Industrial Workers of the World had an even deeper understanding of the new labor system that was emerging and the dangers it posed to the working class as a whole. In the Manifesto of 1905, announcing the IWW founding convention, they warned that

> Laborers are no longer classified by difference in trade skill, but the employer assigns them according to the machine to which they are attached. These divisions, far from representing differences in skill or interests among the laborers, are imposed by the employers that workers may be pitted against one another and spurred to greater exertion in the shop, and that all resistance to capitalist tyranny may be weakened by artificial distinctions. (71)

The IWW understood the full implications of the developments of hierarchy at the point of production. However,

they failed, as has every other labor organization in this century, to develop a successful strategy for countering it on the shop floor.

Under the old labor market system, the capitalists reaped profits from the production process but did not direct production themselves. The transition that this paper has described is the process by which capitalists inserted themselves into a central position of control over production. As Karl Marx, in writing about this transition, put it, "In the course of this development, the formal subjection is replaced by the real subjection of labour to capital." (72)

Labor market institutions are best understood in their historical context, as products of the relations between classes in capitalist society. Labor market institutions are both produced by and are weapons in the class struggle. Technology plays only a minor role in this process. Technological innovations by themselves do not generate particular labor market institutions — they only redefine the realm of possibilities. The dynamic element is the class struggle itself, the shifting power relations between workers and employers, out of which the institutions of work and the form of the labor market is determined.

The institutions of labor, then, are the institutions of capitalist control. They could only be established by breaking the traditional power of the industrial craftsmen. Any attempt to change these institutions must begin by breaking the power the capitalists now hold over production. For those whose objective is not merely to study but to change, breaking that power is the task of today. When that is done, we will face the further task of building new labor institutions, institutions of worker control.

FOOTNOTES

I want to give special thanks to Jeremy Brecher, who helped me sift through the evidence and piece together the ideas that went into this article. Without his patience as an editor and his enthusiasm for the project, this paper would not have been possible.

1. Fitch, John, The Steel Workers, pp. 141-142.
2. Hogan, Economics of Iron and Steel, Vol. 1, p. 11.
3. Ibid., pp. 218, 224, 185.
4. Montgomery, David, "Trade Union Practice and the Origins of Syndicalist Theory in the United States", pp. 3-4.
5. Bridge, J. H., History of Carnegie Steel Corporation, pp. 201-202.
6. Fitch, op. cit., p. 102.
7. Doeringer, Peter B., "Piece Rate Wage Structures in the Pittsburgh Iron and Steel Industry — 1880-1900," pp. 266-67.
8. Great Britain, Iron and Steel Institute, Special Proceedings, 1890, p. 173.

A further description of the non-labor-saving effects of the changing technology can be found in U. S. Department of Interior, Report on the Statistics of Wages in Manufacturing Industries in the Tenth Census (1880), Vol. XX, 1886, p. 115.

9. Quoted in Brecher, op. cit., p. 62.
10. Robinson, Amalg. Assoc. of Iron, St. and Tin Workers, p. 20.
11. Brody, David, The Steel Workers, pp. 9-11.
12. Jeans, J. Stephan, American Industrial Conditions, p. 121.
13. Popplewell, Frank, Some Modern Conditions and Recent Developments in Iron and Steel Production in America (1903), p. 103. See also: Jeans, op. cit., pp. 503, 551, and Bridge, op. cit., p. 164.
14. Brody, op. cit., pp. 48-49.
15. Jeans, op. cit., p. 561.

16. Labor Conditions, Vol. III, p. 81.

17. Doeringer, op. cit. Doeringer attributes this shift purely to commodity market forces. He argues that shifts in demand for different kinds of steel products narrowed the wage differentials between steel workers. He mentions the decline of the Amalgamated after Homestead and the skilled workers' subsequent inability to hold their own against the employers, but does not relate this to the change in wage differentials.

18. Jeans, op. cit., p. 317.

19. Fitch, op. cit., pp. 153 and 156.

20. Fitch, op. cit., p. 157.

21. Fitch, op. cit., p. 159.

22. Quoted in Brody, op. cit., p. 32. From Labor Conditions, Chapter 9.

23. Taylor, F. W., Shop Management, p. 186.

24. Iron Age, May 19, 1910, p. 1190.

25. Ibid., p. 1191.

26. Taylor, Shop Management, p. 52.

27. Systems of Wage Payment, Nat'l Indus. Conf. Board, p. 25.

28. "Report on Strike at Bethlehem Steel Works", Senate Document No. 521.

29. Jeans, op. cit., p. 62.

30. Ibid., p. 62.

31. Bloomfield, Labor and Compensation, p. 295.

32. Ibid., p. 297.

33. Ibid., p. 298.

34. Williams, Whiting, What's on the Worker's Mind?, p. 152.

35. Gary, Elbert, Addresses and Statements, Volume 6, March 29, 1922.

36. Fitch, op. cit., p. 142.

Note: The footnotes skip from 36 to 48 at this point. The missing footnotes refer to a section which has been deleted.

48. Quoted in Montgomery, op. cit., p. 8.

49. Taylor, Shop Management, p. 99.

50. Haber, Samuel, Efficiency and Uplift, p. 24.

51. Iron Age, November 28, 1912, p. 1263.

52. Iron Age, July 6, 1905, p. 24.
53. Fitch, op. cit., p. 149, footnote.
54. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
55. Hendrick, Life of Andrew Carnegie, Vol. I, p. 297.
56. Jeans, op. cit., p. 500.
57. Ibid., p. 501.
58. Douglas, American Apprenticeship and Industrial Education, p. 323.
59. Hook, op. cit., pp. 15-16.
60. Jeans, op. cit., p. 351.
61. International Labour Organization, "Human Relations in the Iron and Steel Industry", p. 98.
62. International Labour Organization, "Vocational Training and Promotion Practices in the Iron and Steel Industry", p. 37.
63. The prevention of mass strikes continued to be a concern of employers well into this century. The provisions in the 1947 Taft-Hartley Law that outlaw sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts are some of the most repressive aspects of that law.
64. For example, see L. P. Alford's speech to the American Society for Mechanical Engineers, 1922, titled "Ten Years Progress in Management", and the discussion that followed.
65. Ibid., p. 120.
66. Haber, Samuel, Efficiency and Uplift, pp. 24-25.
67. Nadworny, Milton, Scientific Management and the Unions, pp. 25-26.
68. Ibid., p. 51.
69. Quoted in Nadworny, Ibid., p. 53.
70. Ibid., p. 56.
71. Quoted in Kornbluth, Joyce, Rebel Voices.
72. Marx, Karl, Capital, Vol. I, Chapter XVI.

The Colorado mining war: drawn by John Sloan for *The Masses*, 1914

Symposium on Jeremy Brecher's Strike!

Introduction

Jeremy Brecher's recent book, Strike!, describes several periods of mass strikes in US working-class history in order to show: (a) that "ordinary working people" have launched "repeated, massive, and often violent revolts" against the ruling class; (b) that the revolts were launched by the rank and file; (c) that they were usually opposed by organized trade unions; and (d) that workers have actually seized the means of production during mass strikes and, by their own solidarity, have taken actions which present alternatives to the social relations of capitalism which rendered them powerless.

The periods of mass insurgence described are the following: (a) the railroad strikes of 1873-74 which led up to the "great upheaval" of 1877 involving thousands of railway workers and their many supporters throughout the country; (b) the mass strikes of the 1880s culminating in 1886 when

almost 500,000 workers went out for many reasons including the eight-hour day; (c) the violent period of the early 1890s which began with bloody strikes at Homestead and Coeur d'Alene in 1892 and ended with the Pullman strike and the national railroad stoppage of 1894; (d) the great strike wave of 1919 highlighted by the Seattle general strike and nationwide insurgencies in coal and steel; (e) the Depression decade, punctuated by the mass strikes of 1934, involving a national walkout of textile workers and general strikes in San Francisco, Toledo, and Minneapolis, and the sit-down strikes of 1936-37, beginning at Akron in rubber and culminating in auto at Flint; and (f) the post-war strike wave involving the wildcats of 1943-45 and the nationwide insurgency of 1946 involving 4,600,000 workers. In all of these periods of mass insurgence Brecher emphasizes the power of the rank-and-file workers and the conservative influence of trade-union leaders.

Brecher also offers a brief description of more-recent rank-and-file insurgencies which, he says, differ from earlier mass strikes because workers are more opposed to authority, leadership, and work discipline. In addition, the book contains accounts of mass strikes which led to revolutions in Russia in 1917 and Spain in 1936, and were then repressed or contained by various internal and external forces.

Brecher argues that mass strikes are significant because (a) they challenge existing authorities, including the trade unions; (b) they allow workers "to begin taking over their own activities"; and (c) they encourage workers to "develop solidarity with each other". (Page 233) In American history mass strikes have usually been repressed by State and Federal troops in attacks which revealed the breakdown of "normal" ruling-class authority. But in addition, Brecher argues, mass strikes have also been contained by trade-union leaders who opposed rank-and-file militancy because it interfered with contract obligations and other aspects of collective bargaining, including their own bureaucratic control over the labor organizations. Brecher argues further that radical parties and organizations "had little significant

role in instigating the mass struggles...described" because "they have generally been preoccupied with building their own organization, whether union or party...." In fact Brecher concludes "they have done little to clarify the possible revolutionary significance of mass actions or to develop their more-radical potentialities." (Page 257)

Jeremy Brecher, Strike! The True History of Mass Insurgence in America from 1877 to the Present. (San Francisco, 1972) Available from Straight Arrow Books, 625 Third Street, San Francisco, California 94107 ($3.95 paperback). A low-cost paperback edition will be published by Fawcett in March 1974.

Artist's conception of Haymarket rally, May 4, 1886

Spontaneity and Organization: Some Comments

David Montgomery

From start to finish Strike! addresses itself to the most important single question of revolutionary theory: How do people long trained, forced and accustomed to take orders from men in the commanding positions of society, take those actions and make those collective decisions which put their fate in their own hands, for the moment or for good? Brecher concludes that " 'Individualism' keeps the individual weak, while solidarity increases his control over life." In this belief he is absolutely correct. This proposition, in fact, is the kernel of working-class consciousness, be it revolutionary or reformist. On the other hand, Brecher sees the reformist and "revolutionary" organizations which workers have created for themselves, usually at enormous personal cost, as agencies which deprive workers of the power to control their own destinies and weaken their sense of solidarity. The validity of this second point, which lumps

"the establishments of state, capital, and trade unionism" as common foes of "mass insurgence", is not so obvious.

Since capitalism first confronted men and women with its unique combination of abundance and misery, workers have struggled to impose some measure of control over their own destinies by work stoppages, by riot, by mass demonstration, by union rules and scales, by mutual insurance, by self-education, by influencing political parties or creating their own, and by mass insurrection. They have not tried to fight the class war with a single weapon, even a weapon as formidable as the "mass strike". Some of their efforts, to be sure, have taken the form of concerted refusals to live and work as the employers and the authorities tell them. Anyone who has experienced such moments knows the joy of assertion and camaraderie and the extraordinary ingenuity which well up from those taking the risks and sacrifices of the struggle. Brecher is right: That experience is freedom. He has recounted its persistent reappearance in America well.

On the other hand, workers' experience is not as episodic as Brecher's history. Many workers dare not take part in mass insurgence, or do take part, are crushed, and lapse for long periods into cynicism and helplessness. To turn Lord Acton's famous aphorism around: Power corrupts, but nothing corrupts like powerlessness. Others have been able from time to time to exert some measure of their own will on the daily routine of their existence, and in America their basic agency for doing this has been the union. For the last century the union, even in some of its worst forms, has provided a shield behind which workers of no more than average aggressiveness have found both emancipation from the bonds of subservience to the bourgeois order and a link between themselves and their more forceful shopmates.

In the late 19th Century craft organizations imposed a degree of workers' control on production which was very limited in scope, but often formidable in effect, as a glance at a rule book of the Window Glass Blowers or Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers will show. The rules which governed such trades were drafted and imposed

by the members of the work groups themselves, and therein lay their strength. The fact that only small groups of workers, albeit sometimes very poor workers like longshoremen, could control entry into their occupations sufficiently to enable them to enforce such rules was the main source of the unions' weakness. As Fred Reid put it concisely, "The strength of organized labor was held (by 19th Century unionists) to depend upon the manliness of the individual workman." (1) But when the worker who courageously refused to work below union scale or in violation of his group's rules could easily be replaced by a more pliant soul, then the control asserted by any body of workers evaporated.

20th Century employers supplemented their assaults on union rules by the introduction of more and more systematic managerial direction of work. Their schemes of rationalization removed all power of decision-making from the work group and sought to entice workers individually to co-operate with management's directives through the lure of incentive payments and the threat of disciplinary action. In large measure, they failed. Workers have continued to this day to struggle for their own patterns of job allocation, production quotas, and even quality control (as Brecher reveals in his later chapters) on a routine basis. The wildcat strike and the informal work group, which Brecher sees as "the beginnings of the mass strike process", arise naturally out of this daily conflict.

Where then do today's unions fit into such a struggle? In the building and printing trades technological advance made unions multiply like amoebas, while employers capitalized on the resulting jurisdictional rivalries to force the unions to surrender many formal job rules (informal control, of course, continuing as in other occupations) and increasingly become simply job brokers. On the railroads, an extraordinary resurgence of militancy between 1911 and 1922, neglected by Brecher, was ultimately hemmed in by elaborate collective-bargaining legislation, which previewed the developments of the '30s in other industries. Elsewhere craft organizations were simply smashed, and workers

turned to new "industrial" forms of action, in metal-working industries, textiles, clothing manufacture, meat packing, and ultimately, by 1919, almost everywhere.

This offensive was beaten back by 1923, usually with the help of employer-sponsored work councils (employee-representation plans). But within a decade the corporations' new-found security and mastery had tumbled before the titanic upsurge of the '30s, which Brecher describes so well. Faced with a militancy they could not defy, the more liberal wing of the employers (Swope, Taylor, Chrysler, Fortune magazine, and their allies) reluctantly supported legislative efforts to encourage the emergence of highly-bureaucratized industrial unions with whose leaders they might be able to deal. As Sumner Slichter pointed out in a study for the Brookings Institute in 1940, those unions most likely to be amenable to managerial authority in the work process (as distinct from wages) were industrial unions with little internal democracy. Such unions would lack craft unionism's affinity to the work group, and their leaders would soon come to think in terms of the health of the company or industry as a whole. (2) Wartime boards and regulations provided the atmosphere for completing this process.

On the other hand, there is clear evidence, some of it in Brecher's discussion of the '30s, that for most workers union recognition was a means, not an end in itself, and that recognition of their unions tended to unleash shop-floor struggles in the first instance, rather than to contain them. Early actions, even the famous sitdowns, had been the work of very small and very courageous minorities. On the day of the Battle of the Running Bulls in Flint, the cops decided to cut off the strikers' food supply because there were hardly 100 men in Fisher Body Number 2, and of the similar number outside only 12 were Flint workers. (3) It was only after the contract victory that everybody in the Flint plants started sitting down, almost daily. Similarly, it was after union recognition that Akron rubber workers commenced not only routine stoppages, but even kidnappings and beatings of supervisors. (4) The phenomenon to which

Sylvia Kopald had been so alert in her description of the 1920 unofficial strikes was here repeating itself — namely that the workers who raised such demands as to bring themselves into conflict with union leaders as well as bosses were those who felt themselves part of strong unions, unions which could realistically be aggressive. (5)

Spontaneity and organization are not mutually-exclusive polar opposites. They are dialectically inseparable. The tenacity with which workers struck in 1922 to defend the very unions in mining, meat packing, and railroading which had suppressed their insurgent risings of two years earlier revealed the workers' awareness of this relationship. So did the enthusiasm with which they struck all basic industries in 1946 under the direction of union leaders who for the previous four years had been fighting to suppress the remarkably-high levels of shop-floor freedom and control which workers had developed during the war (when cost-plus contracts had softened the companies' resistance and a mass influx of blacks, women, and students had transformed the work force). So did the more recent strikes of electrical workers and aircraft mechanics.

More significantly, the enthusiastic solidarity of Quebec workers around their unions in the last two years has shown both the importance of unions in spreading struggles spontaneously begun at various localities, and the influence of the ideology of union leaders. If, as the Quebec strikes suggest, union officials can spread struggles and give them that conscious direction against capitalism revealed in the manifestoes of the Common Front (6), then we must conclude that the ideology of leaders does make a difference, and that revolutionaries cannot afford to write off all "union establishments" as structurally part of the enemy.

It is quite true, nevertheless, that union structures, leaders, and demands have been successfully incorporated into American capitalism time and again. So have workers' parties (reformist and revolutionary alike), co-operatives, and works councils here and in Europe. Whenever a revolutionary tide is checked and workers' organizations are forced to continue functioning within the capitalist frame-

work, they become to some extent part of that framework. No one form of organization is any more immune to this process than any other. Shop committees and works councils, for example, were handily incorporated into the employers' American Plan in the 1920s. Even when shop councils arose amid a general crisis of plant closings, heavy layoffs, and employers' sabotage of production — conditions which propelled them into the most immediate exercise of workers' control — such councils quickly succumbed to what the Germans of 1919 called "factory patriotism", unless they functioned as co-ordinators of a conscious struggle against the state, as they did in Turin in 1920 or Budapest in 1956. (7)

All this suggests, first, that working-class activists and their ideas do matter. Workers are not an amorphous mass responding from the collective gut, whose reflex necessarily leads with sufficient breadth of struggle directly to a challenge to capitalism itself. The mass strikes of 1877 in San Francisco culminated in white assaults on the Chinese community, and the mass unionism of 1916-22 proved itself quite compatible with violent mass racism in Chicago, East Saint Louis, and Springfield. To put it another way, in Cleveland and elsewhere streetcar motormen struck to remove women drivers from the cars in 1919. In Kansas City, where the Syndicalist League and its successors had developed a broadly-based revolutionary consciousness through almost 10 years of strike participation, soap-boxing, pamphleteering, and endless discussion at all levels, the motormen struck to retain the women drivers and secure their working rights. (8)

It is, consequently, dangerously misleading to dismiss "Communists, Socialists, Trotskyists, Musteites, Socialist Labor, and other parties, as well as their members in the AFL, CIO, and dualist trade unions" as having "had little significant role in instigating the mass struggles we have described." (9) Concerned though each group might have been for building its own organization, the ideas of their militants provided a framework through which millions of others gained better understanding of the meaning of the

mass struggles (whoever "instigated" them) both in the 1910–22 epoch and in the '30s. Why else would so many of the rank and file activists of steel in the mid-'30s, whom Staughton Lynd described so well, have ultimately joined the Communist Party? (10) Why else does the political awareness of so many workers more than 50 years old fix on the oratory of some local SLP or SP soap-boxer as a base point? The difference between a Wallaceite and a revolutionary worker is not just a function of the intensity of the struggles each has been through.

Brecher's contention that Leftists of the '30s were so enamored of the CIO and the New Deal that they waged no struggle for socialist consciousness among their shopmates is a popular notion in the student Left today, but it rests on no evidence whatever. Many an older worker could tell him quite another story. What does he think the men talked about for 41 cold days and nights in Fisher Body Number 2? Neither he nor I has discovered the answer to that question, but my own experience in a sit-down strike 17 years later suggests that they had far more in mind than simply the militant and dramatic tactics on which our historical accounts have riveted their attention.

The nub of the matter is that the role of revolutionaries goes far beyond that of being instigators of shop floor action. To think in terms of instigation, rather than consciousness, leads all too easily to a delight with militant tactics per se, as though defiance of authority and disruption of established patterns of rule were the revolution. To refer again to Quebec, the manifestoes of the union centrals are themselves historic events of profound importance. Although The State Is Our Exploiter was drafted by the political research division of the Quebec Federation of Labor and adopted, practically without debate, by a convention swept up in the enthusiasm of the strike at La Presse, that of the CNTU, It's Up to Us, was circulated in draft form to locals throughout Quebec and discussed for several months before being adopted after extensive discussion at the 1972 convention. The CNTU document became, in short, part of the consciousness of many thousands of workers, a

Pittsburgh, 1919: Police search striking steelworkers for guns

collective conception of their plight and the path of struggle before them. (11)

This is not to say that intellectual confrontation with hegemonic bourgeois ideas is the revolution either, much less that socialist consciousness must be brought to workers from without their ranks. Socialism grows from the work and living patterns of working people. Its tap root is the mutualism spurred by their daily struggle for control of the circumstances of their lives. But that mutualism is manifested in values, loyalties, and thoughts, as well as in actions, and it can triumph only by becoming increasingly self-conscious and articulate. The struggle for workers' control advances only as it moves from the spontaneous to the deliberate, as workers consciously and jointly decide what they want and how they want to get it.

This argument implies, furthermore, that the continuous

activities and relations among workers, humble though they may seem by comparison, are as much deserving of our attention as mass insurrections. As Louis Laberge of the IAM in Quebec said in a setting of far greater mass action than this country has seen in a long time:

> It would be illusory to dream of some revolutionary cataclysm. Some people believe in effect that the collective consciousness of exploitation will unleash an irresistable liberation movement, and all we have to do is to let ourselves be carried along with it. I don't believe miracles happen by themselves. We have to organize efficiently, starting often with humble and discrete tasks. (12)

In those tasks the work place itself is of critical importance, because that is where the lines of authority and the daily enactment of class appear most nakedly. But it is not the only front. There are as many fronts of importance in the struggle for socialism as there are things men and women do during the day. In this respect those who emphasize the hegemonic quality of bourgeois ideology are right. Above all the role of the state looms so ubiquitously in today's capitalism that to scorn mass struggle around government policies is to neglect their daily impact on workers' lives and consciousness, to underrate questions which press most immediately on women and blacks, and to isolate the movement from the workers, who know that not all their grievances arise at the work place.

Furthermore, the enormous role of the public and service sectors of today's economy, all supported by taxation and other levies on workers in manufacturing; the tendency of the growing technical force to delight in science and innovation almost as much as traditional production workers fear them; and the increasing degree to which automation of production makes the desire to take it easy socially more functional than the desire to put out work, all indicate that the forms of consciousness and styles of struggle of the future will have significant differences from any of the

past experience Brecher has recounted. The same new developments also raise new lines of division and antagonism among workers, which can seriously warp the mass awareness which emerges from future struggles.

None of these considerations, however, undermine the fundamental soundness of Brecher's judgment that work itself holds a peculiarly-explosive potential under capitalism, past and present. It is also true that informal work groups hold the germ of workers' struggles for control on the job, and that such struggles in the future must create new forms of organization among workers. Some will be carried on within the union framework, because tried and trusted leaders among workers so often emerge first at the shop-steward and local-union level, and because the union itself provides a vital common bond (sometimes in the first instance the only visible one) among public and private sector workers, white-collar and blue-collar workers, white and black workers, and men and women workers. Some will call up entirely new organizational forms. Most will probably in practice do both at once. (13) But whatever the form of the struggle, the substance will be the awareness of solidarity and power which Brecher has described so well. His book itself helps shape that awareness.

FOOTNOTES

1. Fred Reid: "Keir Hardy's Conversion to Socialism", in Asa Briggs and John Saville (editors): Essays in Labour History, 1886-1923 (London, 1971), Page 29.

2. Sumner Slichter: Union Policies and Industrial Management (Washington DC, 1941), Pages 201-227.

3. John G. Kruchko: The Birth of a Local Union: The History of UAW Local 674, Norwood, Ohio, 1933-1940 (Ithaca, New York, 1972), Pages 46-48.

4. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company: What Is Happening in Akron (publicity release, May 29, 1936).

5. Sylvia Kopald: Rebellion in Labor Unions (New York, 1924), Pages 261-264.

6. Daniel Drache (editor): Quebec — Only the Beginning: The Manifestoes of the Common Front (Toronto, 1972). For a good account of the Quebec struggles, see Radical America (September-October 1972).

7. E. Mandel: Controle ouvrier, conseils ouvriers, autogestion anthologie (Paris, 1970), Pages 206-212, 233-242, 348-366.

8. I am indebted to Maureen Greenwald for the information on these motormen's strikes, but she is not responsible for the political conclusions I have drawn from them.

9. Jeremy Brecher: Strike! (San Francisco, 1972), Page 257.

10. Staughton Lynd: "The Possibility of Radicalism in the Early 1930s: The Case of Steel", Radical America (November-December 1972), Pages 37-64.

11. I am indebted to militants of the QFL and of the Montreal conseil central of the CNTU for giving me this information in conversations in the summer of 1972.

12. Radical America (September-October 1972), Page 79.

13. For an excellent discussion of this question see A. J. Muste: "Trade Unions and Revolution" (1935), in Nat Hentoff (editor): The Essays of A. J. Muste (Indianapolis, 1967), Pages 186-194.

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

James O'Brien

The American Working Class in Historical Perspective

Martin Glaberman

Strike! fills a substantial gap in the history of the American working class and brings to its material a point of view that helps considerably to counteract the almost universally bureaucratic attitudes of labor historians. It is extremely rare to find a historian who does not equate the working class with the organized labor movement, or, even worse, with the leadership of that movement. And when that rare exception is found, it is even rarer to find someone who thinks that the absence of organizational institutions is anything but a sign of weakness.

Brecher brings to his book deep democratic convictions, without which there can be no revolutionary convictions. He also brings a sense of the political and historical importance of working-class struggles that are more often dismissed with the adjective "economic". The meaning of these struggles clearly derives from the activities of the

workers themselves and the ways in which these activities threaten capitalist society. The absence of formal organizations with formal programs is not and cannot be the test of revolutionary significance.

Having said this, however, I want to deal with Brecher's book critically, to indicate its limitations and weaknesses.

The problem that pervades the whole book is the problem of organization. Strike! is a documented critique of the role of labor organizations of all types and of labor leaders in restraining and limiting the militancy and revolutionary capacity of ordinary workers. That is fine as far as it goes. But it never deals with the question of organization in a fundamental way. Unless you accept a conspiratorial theory of history — that labor organizations are everywhere introduced to restrain and defeat workers — you have to deal with the question of why labor organizations of various types arise. "Arise" is too abstract a word. Labor organizations are created by workers, by ordinary rank-and-file workers. George Rawick noted a few years ago that "The unions did not organize the strikes; the working class in and through the strikes organized the unions." (1) This was written about the formation of the CIO. The principle, however, is true of any stage of the American working class. Brecher documents the same phenomenon in relation to the 1877 strikes and the Knights of Labor. Whether it was the unions or political parties of the pre-Civil War period, the Knights of Labor, the AFL, or the IWW — and no matter what these organizations later became — they were created by ordinary workers.

There is a need to perceive the development of the American working class in terms of contradictions that are more subtle than a simple workers-versus-organizations dichotomy. Workers create organizations out of needs and possibilities, not out of principles. In the pre-industrial period of the American working class, workers created unions which were essentially local in compass. National unions were not possible, given the level of technology and transportation (although the creation of local unions was a national phenomenon). These unions were organizations of

self-defense. The idea of a new society appeared from the very beginning in embryo form. But it could only develop in activity, being shaped by continuing struggles, by victories, and by defeats. It could not develop as an ideology.

The working class is inherently revolutionary. This is not a matter of formal consciousness. "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas." (2) It is a matter of developing in practice the capacity to create a new society. That development takes the form, of necessity, of exhausting the possibilities of bourgeois society. That is, workers create organizations of various kinds in order to struggle for whatever seems useful to them. These struggles, whether they take place within the framework of formal organizations or not, win for the working class whatever it is possible to win under capitalism. Whether these victories are wage increases, or free universal compulsory education, or child labor laws, or anything else, they are never granted without struggle. That is, they are never — in the first instance — tricks to deceive the working class.

However, the victories of the working class and their organizations all become transformed. There is a dialectical process at work. So long as the struggle ends short of the socialist revolution, every codification of victory, every kind of organization, becomes absorbed and institutionalized into capitalist society. In a sense the class struggle consists of overturning past victories. This is not simply a theoretical view of past history. It bears a current reality. Unions have exhausted their possibilities in American capitalist society. But that is a one-sided abstraction. What does one say to migrant farm workers, or to hospital workers, or to workers in chicken-processing plants, all of whom earn (or earned) income for full-time work that was well under the poverty level? Is anyone prepared to say that they should wait until the socialist revolution makes bureaucratic unions unnecessary? It seems evident that workers have to go through a certain experience, if only to give themselves a little breathing space, a little elbow room. Not absolutely, not every last worker and work place, but in general.

But there is more involved than an accumulation of experience, of victories and defeats. It is in these struggles that workers develop their capacity to transform society — and they begin by transforming capitalist society. The period that precedes the point at which Brecher begins has some interesting examples. Two of the major labor demands of the period before the Civil War, particularly about the time of Andrew Jackson, were free compulsory education and objective incorporation laws. Both of these demands were won, and won largely, though not entirely, through the efforts of the working class and working-class organizations. Both demands obviously served to strengthen and expand American capitalism, by providing an educational system that trained a working class suitable to capitalism and by breaking away from the earlier, monopolistic forms of incorporation by legislative fiat. What is the significance of these victories for us today, and for the working class? Is it that workers were stupid and tricked and did the work of the bourgeoisie and were co-opted into bourgeois society? Or is it rather that workers showed and developed the capacity to transform society — to whatever extent was objectively possible? To put it another way, did these victories show that socialism is impossible, or did they show that socialism is inevitable?

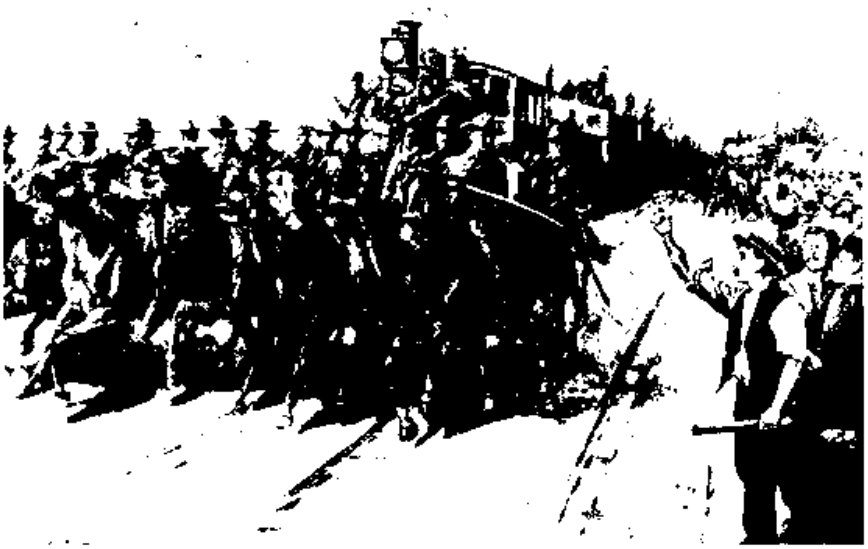
The problems raised here, or rather the failure to deal with them, leads to some awkward consequences in the last few chapters when Brecher is discussing current possibilities and future perspectives. These are compounded by a tendency, which is not apparent in the historical sections, to view consciousness in narrowly intellectual terms. For example, Brecher says that "Workers, out of their own weakness, felt the need for strong leaders . . . ." (Page 285) That is an interesting phenomenon — that workers should produce their strongest leaders (John L. Lewis, for example) when they are themselves strongest (the period of the creation of the CIO). The strength of the leaders, in fact, derives from the strength of the workers, and has to be viewed both as a creation of the workers and as an antagonist to the workers.

Brecher's failure to see the duality, the contradiction, within the working class and to see consciousness as activity leads him to re-introduce the idea of working-class backwardness. "From 1969 to 1971," says Brecher (Page 290), "workers, like the rest of the population, developed an overwhelming opposition to the Vietnam war." But that is only part of the picture, the part that deals with verbalized consciousness. The fact is that well before 1969, ordinary American workers, in the pursuit of their "narrow" class objectives, interfered with and prevented more war production than all of the anti-war demonstrations put together. In strikes at North American Aviation in Missouri, at Olin-Matheisen in Illinois, on the Southern Railway System, and on the Missouri Pacific, workers refused to succumb to patriotic pressure from politicians, union leaders, and business executives and went their own way — not because they were anti-war, but because they put the class struggle first. (It was Lenin who said, a long time ago, that "We cannot equate the patriotism of the working class with the patriotism of the bourgeoisie.")

"All historical writing," says Brecher (Page ix), "is a matter of selecting a limited number of significant facts from an infinity of others." It is curious that in discussing the current scene he should use different standards of judgment from those he uses in discussing past history. In describing the past he seeks out the events and the statements that indicate the revolutionary character of the struggles. That obviously does not mean that that was all there was. It does not take into account the millions of individual incidents of racism, of sexism, of patriotism, of plain ordinary stupidity that workers (like everyone else) are guilty of. Does that result in a distorted picture? Not at all. It is not especially significant that in their day-to-day lives workers are weighted down by what Marx called "all the old crap". It would be miraculous if it were otherwise. What is significant is the evidence that in periods of struggle workers can break out of that and overcome the limitations that bourgeois society imposes on them.

Why, then, does he revert to the methodology of academic

labor historians when he discusses the present? "It is often suggested that today's renewed labor militance differs from that of the past in that today's strikers are 'only out for themselves', rather than seeing their actions as part of a broader struggle. This is often expressed in the phrase that today's strikers are not 'socially conscious'. There is considerable truth in this view...." (Page 281)



National guardsmen break Pullman strike, 1894

I don't want to exaggerate. Brecher indicates reservations that modify this view. But basically he accepts the charges of racial and sexual division, lack of class consciousness, and so on. It leads him into the trap of economism. To reply to the charge of affluence as a conservative influence, Brecher turns to the Old Left dependence on the inevitable depression. (What depression led to the Hungarian revolution of 1956 or the French revolution of 1968?) What is more serious, he turns to a re-definition of the working class, some of it justified, most of it not justified.

He seems to accept the charge of affluence as a source of conservatism by indicating that only a small part of the working class is affluent — the unionized white male work-

ers. The majority of the working class, he says, is black, female, or young, and is not affluent. That argument simply will not do. First, if you exclude the skilled trades, construction, and the like, the best-paid and most-thoroughly-unionized areas are the basic and heavy industries. They are so crucial to society, and particularly to revolutionary potential, that they cannot be brushed aside and their place taken by service workers, migrant farm workers, clerical workers, and so on.

But the point is that this is not needed. There are substantial numbers of black workers in auto, steel, transportation, and the like. No one believes today that high auto or steel wages water down their militancy (although that was a widespread belief before the 1967 Detroit rebellion). Why should black workers be immune to the evils of affluence while white workers inevitably succumb? Obviously there is a difference rooted in racial discrimination and oppression. But how deep is that difference? Does the black auto worker with 10 or 20 years' seniority, making over $5 an hour and working considerable overtime, have an absolute empathy with the unemployed ghetto youngster? Or an absolute antipathy to his white fellow auto worker?

Black workers are likely to be more militant than their white fellow workers. Young workers are likely to be more militant than their older fellow workers (white or black). But these differences are only relative, and simply indicate where the initial sparks tend to come from. Struggles tend to be initiated by the young and the black. That was probably just as true a hundred years ago as today (if you substitute immigrants for blacks). But the rest of the working class tends to follow these more aggressive elements.

Trying to shift the discussion to the so-called new working class, Brecher falls into further distortions. First of all, he equates salaried workers with the working class. Simply because some traditional middle-class occupations have shifted from self-employed to salaried does not make them working-class. The form of payment is an insecure test of class. Objective function in relation to production or the society as a whole would seem to be a better test.

It would seem to me that professionally-trained people (such as teachers or social workers) whose basic role is to manipulate others in order to secure the smooth functioning of society are best defined as middle-class. The fact that they are also exploited and alienated and that opposition to bourgeois society appears within their ranks is evidence of the decline of bourgeois society and the ability of revolutionary impulses to appear anywhere. Their objective role remains (even when it is unwilling) social control.

Secondly, Brecher accepts too readily government statistics that seem to indicate the relative decline of blue-collar work. There is an excellent article by Andrew Levison in the December 13, 1971 Nation that points up the falsity of the government statistics. The expansion of the "public" sector and the service sector cannot be equated with the expansion of white-collar work. The majority of postal employees, for example, are not white-collar. The municipalization of urban transportation, as another example, does not turn bus drivers into clerks. The expansion of hotels and motels does not define the majority of the employees of such institutions (bell-hops, chambermaids, janitors, and so on) as white-collar. Levison indicates that the Government's own figures, when properly broken down, indicate that the majority of the working class are still blue-collar and are likely to remain that way for at least another 10 years.

The problem is that Brecher is not aware of the roots of the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, and tends, in the last chapters of his book, to fall back on "consciousness" or — what amounts to the same thing — "will" as the basis for a revolutionary perspective. "Only the will to keep in their own hands the power they have taken can protect ordinary people from losing it." (Page 308) That is nonsense, and if it were true the cause would already be lost.

What is the source of the revolutionary capacity of the working class? It is the fact that workers are at the point of production, that their work itself teaches them how to run production, and that the conditions of their work force

them to struggle against the existing relations of production, and therefore against capitalist society. The fundamental indicator of revolutionaty capacity is not political belief, much less demands and slogans, but rather the capacity to organize production and to defend the new social relations from attack. Brecher's criticism of the Russian Revolution is totally misplaced. (I disagree with the details of his criticism, but I don't see the point to raising that discussion in the present context.) What led to the defeat of the Russian Revolution was not Lenin's evil ways, but the inability of the Russian working class to take control of the means of production and run the society. This inability did not stem from lack of will. If there was lack of will, it was because "will" was obviously not enough. If you compare the Russian Revolution of 1917 with the Hungarian revolution of 1956, it becomes evident that in all the things that matter in creating a new society the Hungarian workers were far in advance of the Russian. They were not a tiny minority in a vast peasant country; they were literate and had access to and familiarity with the most modern technology and the most advanced means of communication. They took hold of the means of production and began to build a new state and a new society. Nothing in Hungarian society could defeat them. That took an invasion by a foreign power.

Brecher says that "There is a natural tendency for responsibility to re-centralize in the hands of a few individuals, accepted leaders, who then come to do more and more of the movement's thinking and deciding for it." (Page 307) There is nothing natural about it. And in any case it is not a tendency that will be countered by "will". The centralization of power is the tendency of the counter-revolution to step in to fill any gaps or lacks that are permitted by the working class. That is to say, there are two "natural" tendencies — that of workers to decentralize and democratize, and that of capital (no matter who speaks in its name) to discipline and centralize. To raise the Stalinist overthrow of the Russian Revolution in the way that Brecher does is to assume that 50 years of history have brought about no

changes in capitalist society and in the working classes of the industrial nations.

In this context the American working class are not less advanced than their brothers of 50 or 100 years ago, but more advanced. Better educated, better organized (not by unions, but by production), with the most advanced means of communication available to them, without the loyalty to old established labor parties that still inhibits European workers...American workers — and particularly those in transportation and heavy industry — have the capacity to transform American society. Brecher sees this only dimly, and the result is that in the last chapters of his book he departs from the methodology that sustains and informs most of what he writes. Instead of seeking out the evidence of revolutionary capacity and inherently revolutionary activity, he begins to look for substitutes for it. That is not much help to either history or the working class.

Marx and Engels wrote in their earlier days: "Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution. This revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew." (3)

It is the real, existing, American working class, with all its limitations, that will make the American revolution. But in making that revolution, it will be transformed.

FOOTNOTES

1. George Rawick: "Working-Class Self-Activity", Radical America, Volume 3, Number 2 (March-April 1969), Page 27.

2. Marx and Engels: The German Ideology (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1968), Page 61.

3. Ibid., Page 87.

Who Advocates Spontaneity?

Jeremy Brecher

This discussion is exactly the kind I had hoped to stimulate by writing Strike! Rather than boring readers with a point-by-point defense of the book, I have tried below to add my own reflections on the main issues that have been raised. I hope I have dealt with the criticisms squarely nonetheless.

"Consciousness" (1)

The "consciousness" necessary for socialist revolution consists in workers' shared understanding that they can collectively initiate and control their own action to meet their own needs. Such an understanding does not flow directly and automatically from the position of workers in production, although that position is what makes workers potentially powerful. Nor does it arise primarily from the

speeches, manifestoes, and other "consciousness-raising" activities of the Left, though they may make some contribution to it. The working class can come to understand its power to act only by acting.

It is the class struggle itself, if anything, which creates the basis for the "consciousness" necessary for socialist revolution. It is only in their own action that workers can see the evidence of their potential power. It is only because workers strike that their power to bring society to a halt seems more than a dream. It is only because workers stick together in struggles that their co-operative take-over of society is conceivable. It is only because they plan and organize their actions themselves that the planned co-ordination of production by those who produce can be imagined.

"Consciousness" is neither identical with action, nor a realm separate from it. Rather, consciousness is the basis of action and action is the basis of consciousness. People do not act by reflex; their actions are regulated by their ideas. But those ideas themselves are regulated by the experience of past action and possibilities for future action of the social group to which they belong. Strike ! focused on action, not because "consciousness" is unimportant, but because action is the real manifestation of "consciousness".

In the course of struggling within capitalism, "workers develop their capacity to transform society"; socialism grows from workers' "daily struggle for control of the circumstances of their lives". Unfortunately, socialism is not the only thing that grows from that struggle. If workers struggle within capitalism to establish job security by excluding other workers from their job market, they reduce the working class's capacity to unite to get rid of capitalism. If workers co-ordinate their actions solely through bureaucratic organizations they cannot control, their ability to control their own activity is weakened, not strengthened. It is sadly not the case that any action by workers strengthens the working class.

If the "old crap", the "backward" (2) social beliefs of the working class, were merely a matter of "verbalized consciousness", they would not be too significant. Unfortun-

ately, however, they are primarily a question of how people actually organize their social activity. "Racial and sexual division" lead some workers to exclude and if necessary physically attack other workers whom they see as rivals for jobs or neighborhoods. "Lack of class consciousness" leads some workers to co-operate with employers against the interests of other workers.

Thus, it is not because Strike ! failed to "see consciousness as activity" that it found signs of what some call "backwardness" in the contemporary American working class. (2) On the contrary, it was because it took the actual activity of the working class as its basis for evaluation that it found individualism, conservatism, racism, sexism, nationalism, and passivity to be real factors shaping working-class practice.

Fred Wright, *UE News*

Martin Glaberman's own evaluation of the working class seems to be based not on its actual activity, but rather on the objective capacity of the working class to take over and keep control of production. There is no evidence about actual working-class behavior which could affect such a view, since, after all, workers would still bear the same relation to the means of production even if they set out to exterminate all blacks and Jews, conquer Asia, or accept the lowest possible wages and fastest rates of work so as to aid their own employers against their competitors.

In normal times, most working-class behavior is an effort to adapt to the conditions of capitalism. The "continuous activities and relations among workers" are definitely important, but they are by no means always the basis for socialism. Indeed, in many cases they are precisely what has to be overcome or transformed for the fight for workers' power to advance.

Marx and Engels did not hold that the working class was "inherently revolutionary" or that "socialism is inevitable". Marx wrote that the working class is revolutionary or it is nothing, and Engels said that there is a choice between socialism and barbarism. The working class is potentially revolutionary, and socialism would be the natural result if one tendency of its development were carried to its logical conclusion. But if this were the only tendency in effect, the workers would all be revolutionaries and socialism would have been achieved long ago. To ignore the factors which currently lead workers to adapt to existing society instead of trying to abolish it is to give up the ability to understand "the real, existing American working class with all its limitations". To ignore those limitations is to lose the power to grasp the process that will be necessary to overcome them.

Radicals and "Consciousness"

The ideas on which people act are not necessarily the same as those they express verbally. The German working class before World War I, to take a classic example, was

more committed to and educated in the ideas of Marxian socialism than perhaps any other in the history of the capitalist world. In the manifestoes of the Socialist International, in which the Germans were the leading party, it was declared that workers would never slaughter workers, and that the working class would prevent the ruling class from making war. Yet when war was declared, the German workers, like those elsewhere, went to the front and toiled in the factories with little effective protest, while their "revolutionary socialist" leaders extolled German civilization and voted war credits. After the war, the "advanced" German workers were far less revolutionary than those of Russia or Italy. They passively supported their "Marxist" leaders as they wrapped the restoration of German capitalism in a mantle of socialist rhetoric. The fact that people espouse socialist ideas is by no means an indication that they possess the "consciousness" necessary for socialist revolution, any more than the conversion of Constantine's warriors to Christianity made them fit to pass through the Pearly Gates.

"Conscious" workers are not necessarily those who espouse socialism or belong to "socialist" organizations. Whoever acts on the basis of an understanding of workers' ability and need to collectively initiate and control their own activity is a "conscious" worker. If "Socialism grows from the work and living patterns of working people", then surely we should look for its development in their working and living groups, not in formal labor or radical organizations that, at least for the past 50 years, have been largely external to those groups.

Arguments for the central importance of socialist organizations in the class struggle often make the tacit assumption that without their influence workers cannot achieve "consciousness". This assumption is implicit when the fact that sit-down participants "had far more in mind than simply the militant and dramatic tactics" is used as evidence that "Leftists of the '30s waged a struggle for socialist consciousness among their shopmates". (3) Were the workers incapable of having anything but tactics on their minds

unless enlightened by the Leftists?

The presence or absence of radicals in a certain place is not sufficient to explain why workers take one approach or another. The 1877 mass strike resulted in anti-Chinese riots in San Francisco and in pronounced black-white solidarity in Saint Louis — both as a direct response to the efforts of the Workingmen's Party. Surely there were a good many radicals in Chicago to oppose the violent mass racism that arose there during and after World War I, but it happened nonetheless. In evaluating the role of radicals in the past, Leftists all too often fall into a self-flattering post hoc, ergo propter hoc form of argument: There were socialists in a certain place advocating a certain kind of action; sometime later some other people took action of that kind; therefore the socialists' propaganda caused the action. There are unquestionably cases in which this is exactly what happened, but it takes more than the fact that one followed the other to establish causation. For example, it may be comforting for radicals if Kansas City motormen reacted differently to women drivers from the way Cleveland motormen reacted because they had been exposed to Syndicalist League propaganda. But it takes evidence to know that it was not because they faced a different labor-market situation, or because the women were brought in on a different basis, or because differences in ethnic background led to different attitudes about working with women, or even because the workers had, through their own struggles, reached a perspective on class unity that they would have had if the Syndicalist League never existed.

Throughout the 20th Century, the "consciousness" of the major Left organizations has been by no means identical with the "consciousness" necessary for socialist revolution. The Socialist Party has generally defined socialism as nationalization, and has seen it arising not through the self-directed activity of the working class, but through the election of Socialist officials to the government. The various Marxist-Leninist parties, true to their Bolshevik principles, have consistently aimed for their own seizure of state power and direction of the economy, and have con-

sistently opposed the idea of its control by the workers themselves rather than the state, while they vacillated between conspiratorial and reformist tactics. The Industrial Workers of the World viewed loyalty to its organization as the definition of loyalty to the working class, thus becoming a sectarian and divisive force, as Foster and the Syndicalist League pointed out at the time.

Such organizations put themselves forward as embodiments of class consciousness, and tried, like any other political organizations, to win support from their potential constituents by advocating their interests. Many militant workers joined them because of their vigorous defense of working-class interests. As impressive as the number of militant workers who have joined such organizations is the usually-short duration of their membership.

If much of the official activity of these groups can best be understood as attempts to strengthen their own organizations in competition with others, this by no means prevented their members from ever contributing to the development of genuine working-class "consciousness". Especially in periods of heightened class struggle, their rank-and-file members — originally attracted because of their own desire to fight for their class — have tended to identify more with their fellow workers and less with their own political organizations. As David Montgomery pointed out recently, during the 1911-22 upsurge the old lines dividing revolutionary groupings tended to break down, and their once-competing local members threw themselves into the actual class struggles without regard to their former ideological and organizational hostilities. (4) This is what I had in mind when I wrote in Strike !, not that working-class activists were unimportant, but that where the members of radical organizations have played a radical role in these movements, "they have done so in response to the conditions they shared with other participants, not as a result of their organizational connections." (5)

Some workers will always be more "conscious" than others, just as some will always be more courageous, some more confident, some more ready for a fight, and some

equipped with a better sense of tactics. Their "consciousness" may influence others and contribute to the raising of the others' "consciousness". If certain individuals in Kansas City persuaded the streetcar workers to look at the world in such a way that they struck to support rather than to exclude women drivers, then they made a genuine contribution to the development of "consciousness", whether they were members of the Syndicalist League or not.

If, as David Montgomery stated recently, "What workers want is a function of what they consider realistically they can get" (6), then the contribution "conscious workers" can make to the development of "consciousness" is to point out constantly what is possible for the working class. This naturally involves pointing out the power that is opened up by widening the net of solidarity, and by using workers' real power over production; it equally involves making a critique of those attitudes, habits, and forms of organization of the working class which themselves restrict the development of that power. If "social relations determine consciousness", then we may expect the actual developing relations between workers and capital to influence the former's "consciousness" far more than any amount of radical propaganda. Nonetheless, those of us who want a socialist revolution will undoubtedly continue to advocate our ideas, whether or not our doing so will make a decisive difference in world history.

Organization

Strike ! 's approach to organization grows directly from its conception of the "consciousness" necessary to achieve socialist revolution. If socialism means the organized direction of society by the producers themselves, then socialist organization is that by which people develop their ability to initiate and control their common activity to meet their own needs. Such an organization may involve a division of labor among different functions; it may in certain circumstances require enforcing unity of action through collective discipline; but it cannot involve the direction of

the activity of one group of people by another and yet serve as the basis of a classless society. Such self-directed organization is defined by the fact that the ideas and plans out of which action comes have been discussed and agreed to by those who act. It thus reflects the fact that human activity is on one hand social, and on the other hand the outcome of a mental plan. Self-directed organization exists when people do things out of ideas and decisions they have reached together.

By such a definition, there are of course a great many "organizations" which actually embody the disorganization of their participants. In an army or other bureaucracy, for example, there is no process of discussion and agreement to plans by those who carry them out; the plans, instead, come down from above as orders to be obeyed. "Strong organization" in such a case is simply a reflection of the weakness of the rank-and-file members of the organization — their inability to co-ordinate their activity themselves.

Strike! was dedicated to describing and advocating the organization of the working class. In the Foreword it describes "the power we see rising in this book" as "the power of people directing their own action co-operatively toward common purposes". Every working-class action described in Strike! is, however imperfectly, organized action.

Why, then, is Strike! sometimes interpreted as advocating "spontaneous", as opposed to "organized", activity? This criticism grows out of a different conception of organization, one which has been much more common in the history of the socialist movement than the one I have proposed. According to this view, the working class is seen as organized to the extent that it is enrolled in formal organizations, particularly trade unions and radical parties. The possibility that such organizations might represent the disorganization of their members — their inability to initiate and control their actions themselves — is not apparent from this point of view. Any activity not originating with such organizations is by definition "spontaneous".

As David Montgomery says, the struggle for socialism

advances only as workers "consciously and jointly decide what they want and how they want to get it". This is precisely why forms of organization in which workers do not do the deciding themselves are a hindrance to that struggle. Socialism requires that workers develop their capacity to consciously direct their own action without the need for any special, separate group.

Unions

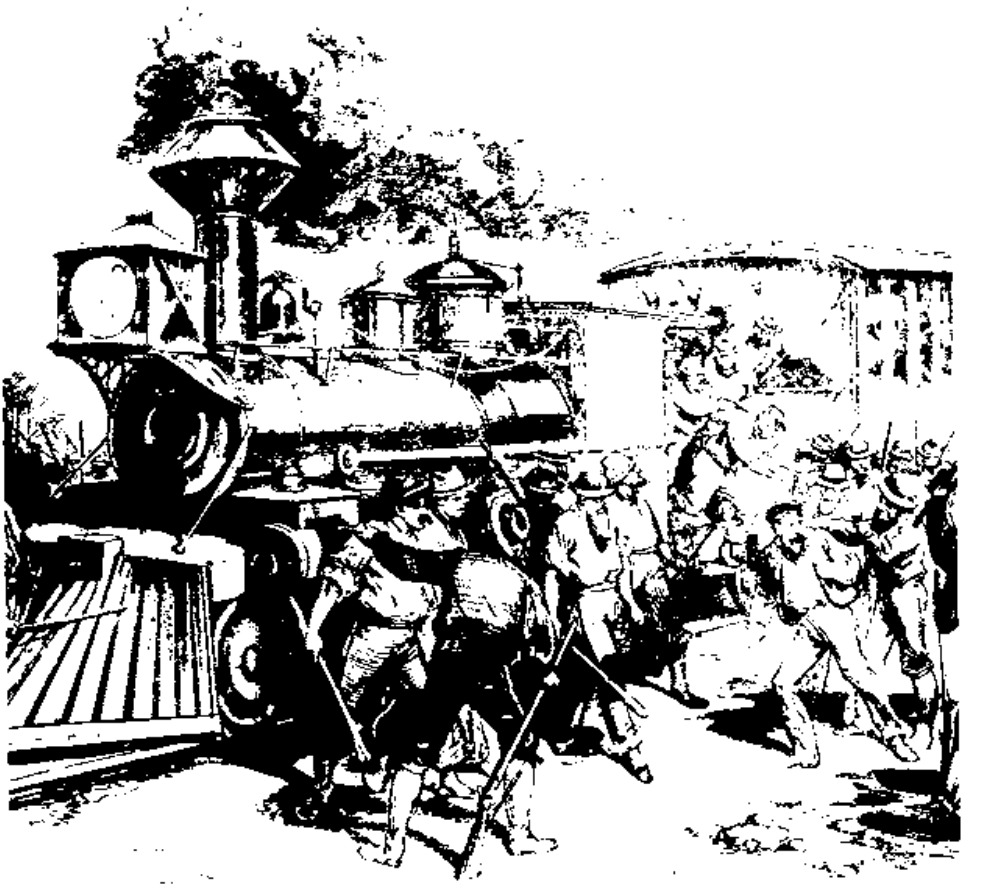
Of course, workers create organizations to struggle for "whatever it is possible to win under capitalism"; many workers "have been able from time to time to exert some measure of their own will on the daily routine of their existence, and in America their basic agency for doing this has been the union." But the relation of such organizations to socialism — the control of society by the working class — is not self-evident. Their function may just as well be to create for the working class an alternative to socialism — a channel through which the class struggle can be conducted without threatening the basic class relations of society. The possibility cannot be denied out of hand that:

> When the conflict of interest groups is legitimate, these "conflict" organizations contribute to the integration and stability of society. Trade unions should not be viewed primarily in their economic-cleavage function. They also serve to integrate their members in the larger body politic and give them a basis for loyalty to the system. (7)

Of course, unions and other organizations workers have created are not exclusively "agencies which deprive workers of the power to control their own destinies and weaken their sense of solidarity". Strike! points out that in certain situations — specifically where they have not achieved recognition — unions will "support and encourage the most militant action on the part of workers, including spontaneous strikes, violence, and occupations". (8) In such situa-

tions, unions champion "workers' acts of defiance against the employer" and "offer themselves as the vehicle of workers' self-initiative". (9)

But as John R. Commons pointed out long ago, trade unions were able to survive the staggering attacks on them precisely by their effective adaptation to the conditions of American capitalism, and by jettisoning any methods or objectives which conflicted with this adaptation. Commons's own analysis applied to the craft unions of his day, which arose in the era of highly-competitive capitalism. But the industrial unionism which arose in the 1930s can best be understood as a new adaptation to the new conditions of



Railroad strike, Martinsburg, W. Virginia, 1877

monopoly capitalism with massive state intervention. To such a situation, industrial unionism in alliance with the Federal Government was a natural adaptation.

Such an analysis makes the occasional appearance of radicalism among trade-union officials seem less significant. In the long run, unions which adapt themselves to capitalism will tend to perpetuate themselves; those which do not will tend to die out. A union may have outspokenly-radical leaders, but if it wants to survive it will try to strengthen and rationalize the industry and the economic system of which it is a part. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers and Harry Bridges come to mind as two vivid examples among many. As long as capitalism survives, unions in Quebec, for example, will have to adapt themselves to it in practice, whatever manifestoes they may issue. Faced with a choice of adaptation or suicide, few organizations will choose the latter. (By the 1930s, even the arch-enemy of contracts and government co-operation, the IWW, was signing collective-bargaining agreements and running in NLRB elections.) If the Quebec unions don't adapt, they will have to compete with other organizations which do. And if history is any indication the better-adapted organizations will win out. (10)

For those of us who want to see workers direct production, the power over production possessed by 19th Century industrial craftsmen is a point of importance. (11) But, as David Montgomery's account above makes clear, it was based on small groups of workers' creating exceptionally protected positions for themselves by excluding other workers from entry into their occupations. Their rules and organizations were directed largely against ethnic groups other than their own — blacks, women, and the mass of unskilled workers in general. It was perhaps inevitable, given the absence of a successful challenge to capitalist power, that skilled craftsmen would attempt to protect their position at the expense of the unskilled; but still socialists should not gloss over the fact that this was exactly what they were doing. The IWW, for all its organizational chauvinism, was right on target when it proclaimed AFL craft

unionism "The American Separation of Labor". The alternative facing skilled workers was the kind of solidarity with less-skilled workers which was attempted by the Knights of Labor in the 1880s and in the Pullman Strike of 1894 — a unification of the entire working class. The craft unions, with some exceptions, fought any such development with all their limited power.

As David Montgomery shows, modern industrial unions were supported by liberal employers as a way to contain working-class militancy even before they were widely established; collective-bargaining legislation was essentially a way to hem that militancy in. The real working-class struggle against management control of production developed, in the 20th Century, on the basis of informal work groups quite separate from the official working-class organizations. The unions became separate from the actual work groups and identified with the employers. Far from this being a product of the corruption of unions and the expulsion of the Left leadership after World War II, by World War II these unions were already "fighting to suppress the remarkably-high level of shop-floor freedom and control which workers had developed...."

Unions at their best win for workers what they can get within the prevailing power relations of capitalist society. (The reality of unionism today is such as to make much of this discussion of exclusively-historical interest; we are talking, after all, about a "movement" headed by George Meany. Many unions in reality not only accept the necessity of capitalism, but very directly serve the interests of the employers. It is out of such situations that union reform movements grow. The arguments here, however, apply just as much to unions which are not in bed with management.) When workers revolt against those relations they generally find that unions are not a vehicle for their struggle; indeed, they often find unions fighting on the side of the employer against them. When this happens, workers have to create their own forms of organization, which, to the preexisting organizations, look like disorganization or "spontaneity". Of course, if the workers' challenge to capital's

control of production is defeated, they will return to trying to defend their interests within capitalism, and they will use the unions to do so.

Thus, as David Montgomery points out, workers struck in 1922 to defend the unions which had suppressed their insurgent rising two years earlier. But far from this being an index of their improving organization or consciousness, it was a measure of how far back they had been driven by the employers. The fact that after World War II workers lost their wartime power over working conditions and struck under union leadership to try to prevent reduction of their incomes is likewise an indication of how far backward they had slipped.

It is true that shop-floor struggles tended to explode during the 1930s after union recognition was won by sit-down strikes. But this can hardly be attributed to the unions as organizations. Strike! presents considerable documentation for the fact that the CIO unions strove vigorously to stop the hundreds of unauthorized work stoppages which spread through the plants in the wake of the victorious sit-downs. (12) (This suppression was fully supported by the various Leftist groups in the union leaderships.) It reached the point at which CIO head John L. Lewis was reported to be threatening to send in "flying squadrons of strong-arm men" from the Mineworkers Union to keep auto wildcatters in line. (13)

Unofficial strikes raising demands that bring them into conflict with union leaders often develop where there are already "strong" unions. But it seems odd to argue that workers demanded more than their union would fight for because the union was strong. Surely they fought because they felt that they were strong.

There is a "dialectic" between union leaders and rank-and-file insurgents, but I think it is somewhat different from the one David Montgomery describes. Where the workers are able to act independently of the union leadership, they constantly threaten its position and force it to function more militantly than it otherwise would. This was largely the case in the union-led strikes in basic industry

in 1946. Both the AFL and the CIO had striven for "post-war labor peace" and a continuation of the no-strike policy of the war. But it was clear by the end of the war that a massive strike wave would occur in any case. The unions therefore were forced to shift gears and "lead" the strikes lest they lose control of their membership. The radicalization of the Italian trade unions in response to the actions of the base committees in the past several years is a more extreme example. It is the old story: The threat of revolt serves as the stimulus to reform.

Working-class action which challenges capital's control of production doesn't happen every day. In normal times, the existing power relations seem as inevitable as death and taxes, and workers assume that anything which challenges them is unrealistic. In such a situation, unions do not retard revolutionary action by the working class for the simple reason that there is nothing to retard. Strike! was concerned with the unusual periods when the class struggle escaped from the normal channels and threatened to disrupt the prevailing pattern of social reproduction — what it referred to as periods of "mass strike". In such periods the unions tended to be revealed as an external force breaking the militance of workers and funneling their activity into channels more compatible with the survival of capitalism. The lesson it drew was that workers who wanted to take control of their own productive activity should organize themselves to do so, even in the face of opposition from their unions — for their unions might oppose such activity for reasons having nothing to do with the interests of the working class.

Unions and Councils

Of course workers will use unions as long as they pursue their interests within capitalism. But we are only revolutionaries because we believe that the interests of the working class are in conflict with capitalism, and can only be met by getting rid of it. For that purpose we need a form of organization which is not dependent on the continued ex-

istence of capitalism, and which is adapted to the struggle to eliminate it. Strike! described workers' councils — work groups co-ordinating their activity through their own representatives — as perhaps such a form.

All those who, like myself, advocate workers' councils should be forced to meditate on David Montgomery's point that no form of workers' organization is immune to incorporation into capitalism. Shop committees and their delegate bodies can meet this fate just as surely as unions. Workers' councils do not possess any secret quality which makes them, by virtue of their form, revolutionary. They do, however, have several characteristics which make them different from unions. First, they are based on the power of workers who are together every day and exercise continuous power over production. Second, they are directly controlled by the workers themselves, who can recall their delegates at any time. Third, they follow the actually-existing organization of the working class in production, rather than dividing it along lines that quickly become obsolete, as has happened over and over again in the history of unionism.

But most important is not the difference in form, but the difference in function. Unions by definition are agencies which bargain on behalf of workers to establish the terms on which they sell their labor power; they have to adapt themselves to the effective performance of that function. (Any organization that does not aim to perform this function is not really a union, and my comments on unionism do not apply to it.) Workers' councils, unlike unions, are able to challenge capitalists' control of production (although they do not necessarily do so) because their survival as organizations does not depend on the successful maintenance of relations between workers and management, while unions cannot survive without them. This is why, where workers have tried to take over social production, their instrument for doing so has most often been the workers' council or factory committee, and their attempts have — with the sole exception of Spain in 1935 — been opposed by the unions, even ostensibly Socialist and Communist ones.

It is precisely because no form of organization is immune to developing interests distinct from those of the working class that a constant wariness about organizations is a positive and radical, not a negative, thing. Organizations should be viewed only as a means by which workers organize their own activity for their own objectives. Organizational fetishism, in which an organization is seen as having powers of its own distinct from those of the people who make it up, is an enemy, not an expression, of "consciousness". The problem for workers is not to "build strong organizations, but to organize themselves effectively to control their own activity.

Crisis

Strike! denies "the conventional wisdom that high labor conflict is exclusively a product of depression...or any other particular part of the business cycle." (14) Nor does it mention any "inevitable depression". It merely summarizes the argument that we have not reached a stage of "permanent prosperity" (15). Given the roller-coaster course of the US economy since it was written, this section reads today like something of an understatement of the case.

However, I would willingly plead guilty to a charge of believing that their steady improvement in living conditions exercised a conservatizing influence on a protected sector of unionized white male industrial workers in the two decades following World War II. If that makes me "economistic", so be it. Those who disagree with this argument should supply an alternative explanation of the relative quiescence of the class struggle in the years following 1946.

It is not sufficient to argue that black workers are militant, even though they are receiving relatively-high wages, and that there isn't really too much difference between black and white workers. This example is evoked precisely because the level of militance among most workers was, despite exceptions, generally so unspectacular from 1947 through the mid-'60s. (It takes more than riots to prove much about the militance of black workers, too.) Indeed,

it would be mysterious if workers who have been able to buy two cars and a house in the suburbs didn't feel they had some stake in the status quo. Nor is it germane to point out that there was no economic crisis in Hungary in 1956 or in France in 1968. French and Hungarian workers were hardly "affluent". Even today fully a third of French workers make less than $240 a month. In 1968 their minimum wage was 45¢ an hour. It was not a radical, but Flora Lewis of the New York Times who reported "conditions that, with only slight exaggeration, were called medieval" prevailing in many French factories in 1968. (16) Only to people with living standards like those of the workers of Hungary might this look like "affluence".

To rule out deteriorating economic conditions for workers as a possible stimulus to working-class action is to ignore one of the factors most likely to turn the exercise of working-class power from a potentiality into an actuality. Such deterioration by no means has to take the form of a classic depression. War, government wage controls, and inflation are equally expressions of economic crisis which destroy working-class living standards. It is no accident, as they say, that the biggest wave of wildcats since World War II came in 1970 after five years of declining real wages, and that the largest mass protest in American history — the 1973 meat boycott — came in response to rising food prices and worsening diets. Indeed, I consider it one of the weaknesses of Strike! that it dealt so inadequately with the specific difficulties of capitalist society which in periods of mass strike provoked workers into forms of action which went beyond the framework of that society.

The Composition of the Working Class

Martin Glaberman proposes "objective function in relation to production or society as a whole" as the "test of class". I defined workers in Strike! as "those who do not possess society's means of production and therefore must work for others who do". (17) For me, the working class is defined by its relation to the capitalist class. As E. P.

Thompson put it, class is not a "category", but rather a "historical relationship" between one group of people and another. (18)

The "functional" view of class treats as members of different classes people who share the same objective problems and have the same basic relation to the capitalist class. The source of mass strike phenomena, with their challenge to authority, spreading solidarity, and workers' control of their own activity, results from the fact that "all workers share a subordination to the control of managers, who have the power to make decisions which shape their daily lives". (19) A preoccupation with a narrower group, such as workers in "transportation and heavy industry", seems quite arbitrary: Aren't the producers of food, of power, of communications, even of many municpal services just as essential for capitalism and necessary for socialism as the producers of steel, cars, and transportation?

Finally, this view places more emphasis on workers' role in the production process itself than on the social relations of production in explaining the "revolutionary capacity" of the working class. Of course it is only because workers can potentially run society that socialism is possible. But the problem remains of how the working class can get itself together to realize that potential. And here the organization of workers created by capital in the production process is not sufficient. It is their organization in the class struggle that might lead to socialism.

The contrast between relational and functional definitions of the working class is concretized in the issue of white-collar and blue-collar workers. The majority of the working class may well still be "blue-collar". In any case the percentage of male "blue-collar" workers has remained essentially stable for some time, the increase in "white-collar" workers being proportionate to the influx of women workers into the labor force. This hardly constitutes a transformation of the class structure. But so what? The real point is that the distinction between "blue-collar" and "white-collar" workers is becoming progressively less

meaningful. There is little fundamental difference in interest or outlook between a postal clerk ("white-collar") and a letter carrier ("blue-collar"); between a business-machine operator in an office and a production-machine operator in a factory, except as it is created by different social relations. As the majority of "white-collar" workers lose their privileges and become assimilated to the conditions of "blue-collar" workers, both groups come to be increasingly defined by their relation to capital: In short, they become simply workers.

Envoy

Workers have used many different tactics and organizations to fight for many objectives in many arenas; no doubt they will continue to do so in the future. However, it is hardly the function of radicals to simply say "Amen" to whatever the working class may do. Those who accept rather than challenge the institutions and attitudes through which workers' subordination to capital is mediated are the true "spontaneists". (20) Radicals who accept such institutions and attitudes may in a period of heightened class struggle influence "consciousness" in an altogether negative way — by presenting the tasks of the day as a "business as usual" struggle to secure workers' position within capitalism, and thereby serving as part of the mechanism which channels potentially-revolutionary movements away from a challenge to capital's control of production.

For those of us who aim for the replacement — and not merely the "humanizing" — of capitalism, the least we can learn from the past is how to avoid contributing to the perpetuation of the system we want to abolish. That requires a willingness to criticize the Left of the past, not just for one or another "incorrect line", but for its most basic principles and premises. The purpose of such a critique, however, is by no means to discourage action; it is to see that our own action actually contributes to our liberation, rather than to our firmer enslavement.

FOOTNOTES

1. I guess that for purposes of this discussion we're stuck with the traditional Leftist vocabulary for these questions, most of which — starting with the word "consciousness" itself — I find more mystifying than otherwise. That is why I have placed it in quotes throughout.

2. Strike! did not describe the contemporary American working class as backward. Those who read to the end of the paragraph on Page 281 in which I allegedly maintained this view will read that "The present renewed militance of particular groups of workers is the first step toward a broader solidarity...." The entire paragraph was designed to refute the view attributed to me by Martin Glaberman. The preceding 17 pages present the development of the class struggle in the US in the late '60s and early '70s applying a "methodology" indistinguishable from that of the earlier historical sections.

3. I recently put to Len De Caux the question that David Montgomery raises about whether the Leftist leadership of the 1937 Flint sit-down raised the question of workers' eventually taking over and running the factories themselves. He confirmed that there was no attempt to raise this question. I have read an eyewitness account of Leftist leaders' actually discouraging discussion of this subject during the Flint sit-down; I believe it was in Kraus's The Many and the Few, but have not been able to get a copy to check in time for press. In any case, the general conception of socialism of the Left was nationalization. Direct control of production by workers was hardly even mentioned.

4. Paper delivered at the Conference on Anglo-American Labor History, Rutgers, 1973.

5. Strike!, Page 257.

6. Anglo-American Labor History Conference.

7. This shrewd cynicism comes from S. M. Lipset: "Political Sociology", in R. K. Merton, L. Broom, and L. S. Cottrell (editors): Sociology Today (1959), Page 113.

8. Strike!, Page 254.

9. Ibid., Page 255.

10. This by no means contradicts the fact that the action of Quebec workers in occupying their work places and a great many radio and television stations — which, so far as I know, was never urged by the Common Front — went against the logic of unionism and of capitalism itself.

11. See, for example, especially David Montgomery's work on this subject and Katherine Stone's paper on the history of job structures in the steel industry, delivered at the Conference on Labor Market Segmentation, Harvard University.

12. See for example the New York Times article "Unauthorized Sit-Downs Fought by CIO Unions", quoted in Strike !, Page 204.

13. Strike !, Page 204.

14. Ibid., Page 244.

15. Ibid., Page 282.

16. New York Times, May 27, 1973.

17. Strike !, Page 283.

18. E. P. Thompson: The Making of the English Working Class, Page 9.

19. Strike !, Page 238.

20. Connoisseurs of irony will appreciate the fact — pointed out by Eric Hobsbawm — that Lenin's attacks on "spontaneity" in What Is To Be Done? "reflect a close and extremely critical reading of the Webbs' great defense of the 'spontaneous' British trade-union movement...," Industrial Democracy. See for example Eric Hobsbawm: Labouring Men (Anchor, 1967), Page 371. Lenin's attack on spontaneity, quoted ad nauseum against radical critics of the unions by self-proclaimed Leninists, was thus originally directed in part against the greatest paragons of intensive union organization.

A Note On Walter Reuther

Martin Glaberman

In doing research in the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University I came across some material that may be of interest to all who are concerned with the career of Walter P. Reuther, the late president of the United Auto Workers. It consists of two paragraphs, part of three typewritten pages headed, "On Bill McKie book. Sugg. by Nat Ganley May '52". The material is in folder 6-29, "Reuther Administratorship — Ganley notes — 1952," contained in the Nat Ganley Collection, a recent acquisition of the Wayne State University Labor Archives.

Nat Ganley was, at the time of writing these pages, a leading Communist Party activist in the UAW. He had been Business Agent of Local 155 of the UAW for a number of years. The three pages contain Ganley's comments and

criticism, arranged by page number, of a book by Phillip Bonosky, Brother Bill McKie, that was published by International Publishers in 1953. The book was a biography of a leading Communist Party militant in Detroit and the comments were presumably directed at either the author or the publisher. The page numbers do not correspond to the published book and it is likely that they refer to the pages of a typewritten manuscript.

The paragraphs are as follows:

> "p. 156. Propose to eliminate references to Reuther joining the CP, altho its true he was a member-at-large and I collected his dues. Reasons: We can't prove his membership, Reuther would deny it and possibly sue for libel — We take no particular pride in his membership in our Party and should avoid the charge of inverted red-baiting that Reuther would make against us.
>
> "Footnote this page should be eliminated. Its wrong factually. Reuther agreed to remain in Socialist Party and bore from within in agreement with us (course we were silly to do this)" (Typing errors as in original.)

Reuther's relations with the Communist Party in the middle thirties have long been of interest to his biographers. No serious biography, however, has ever stated that Reuther had been a member of the CP.

Irving Howe and B. J. Widick, in their The UAW and Walter Reuther, refer to "the noticeable coolness that arose in early 1938 between the Stalinists and Reuther," and to November, 1937, "when it had become apparent that Reuther could not be sucked into the Stalinist movement." (1) A footnote on the same page notes that Reuther refused an offer by Louis Budenz and others to join the Communist Party and quotes the Daily Worker on "the days of 1936 and 1937 when Reuther was in alliance with the Communists . . . ."

Frank Cormier and William J. Eaton refer to "the work-

ing alliance between the Reuther brothers and the UAW's Communist bloc." (2) They also quote Fred W. Frahn, Detroit Superintendent of Police in 1938, as testifying that "Walter Reuther 'is not a Communist, but he associates with Communists at all times, and they work together.'" (3)

Even so right-wing and irresponsible a biographer as Eldorous L. Dayton does not charge Walter Reuther with being a member of the Communist Party. "(Reuther) insists to high heaven he never was a Communist. A Socialist yes, but never a Communist, and he probably never was, in the technical sense." (4)

Cormier and Eaton quote a telegram that Walter Reuther sent to the Special Committee on Un-American Activities of the House of Representatives (Dies Committee) in 1938 declaring, "I am not and never have been a member of the Communist Party nor a supporter of its policies nor subject to its control or influence in any way." (5)

Phillip Bonosky or the publishers apparently accepted Nat Ganley's advice. All references to Reuther's possible connection with the Communist Party in Brother Bill McKie, as published, are ambiguous: "...this whatever-he-was, the red-headed young man who was tasting his first struggle." (6) "(Reuther) was dealing with Communists and, of course, knew it. In fact, boasted of it." (7) "...after Reuther had decided that none of the several horses he was riding — Communist, Socialist — would win." (8) "Walter claimed to be a Socialist, sometimes a Communist, sometimes nothing more left than a New Dealer (you paid your money and took your choice)." (9) "...Reuther's alliance with the Communists..." (10)

Two questions are raised by the paragraphs in Nat Ganley's papers: their authenticity and their significance.

Ganley's remarks, in the form of unsigned carbon copies of typewritten notes, are not absolute proof of Walter Reuther's membership in the Communist Party. But they are the first relatively "hard" evidence of such membership. The internal evidence, it seems to me, weighs very strongly in favor of the authenticity of Ganley's statement. These are notes written to fellow Communists. They are not for

publication and they remain unnoticed in Ganley's files for twenty years. And, of course, they propose that Reuther's membership in the CP not be openly stated. It would be difficult under all these circumstances to explain why Ganley might have wanted to lie about Reuther's relations to the Party. I think it is quite likely that Reuther was a member of the Communist Party in the manner which Ganley indicated. The dates of his possible membership remain unknown although it can be assumed that the period involved was no more than parts of 1936 and 1937.

The significance of this membership, even if true, is, however, rather slight. Reuther's alliance with the Communists in those years was publicly known and rather widely reported. It has often been used by right-wing politicians and the business community to charge Reuther with ex-

Flint sit-down, 1937

treme radicalism. The facts do not seem to sustain that charge. The famous correspondence of Walter and Victor Reuther praising what they saw as skilled workers in the Soviet Union in the thirties is less significant for its possible revolutionary fervor than for the fact that this was the period of preparation of the Moscow show trials and of draconian anti-labor legislation. One would have to conclude that it was not the attraction of revolution but of state planning that moved the Reuther brothers.

In addition, it would be hard to prove that Reuther's possible dual membership in the Socialist and Communist

Parties was of very great help to the Communist Party. My own recollection of the period, as a member of the Young People's Socialist League, coincides with the report of Howe and Widick that Reuther's sympathy with CP policies in the auto union at a certain period was pretty generally known among Socialists. It is not likely that "boring from within" ever meant recruiting Socialists to the Communist Party or attempting to win the SP as a whole to support of the CP line.

I would suggest that this possible proof of Walter Reuther's membership in the Communist Party indicates, at the most, a kind of free-wheeling opportunism which is quite in keeping with Reuther's public character.

Footnotes

1. Irving Howe and B. J. Widick The UAW and Walter Reuther (New York: Random House, 1949), p. 74.
2. Frank Cormier and William J. Eaton, Reuther (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 130.
3. Ibid.
4. Eldorous L. Dayton, Walter Reuther The Autocrat of the Bargaining Table (New York: Devin-Adair, 1958), p. 60.
5. Cormier and Eaton, Reuther, pp. 131-132.
6. Phillip Bonosky, Brother Bill McKie (New York: International Publishers, 1953), p. 139.
7. Ibid., p. 142.
8. Ibid., p. 142.
9. Ibid., p. 146.
10. Ibid., p. 151.

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