



BMUN LXXII



AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT



LXXII
SEVENTY-SECOND SESSION

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dais Introduction:

My name is Alex Plewinski and I will be your Head Chair for the American Labor Movement committee. I'm a senior studying Mechanical Engineering, and this is my 4th and final year in BMUN, 7th in MUN overall. Outside of BMUN, I previously worked with the Berkeley Formula Racing team on vehicle suspension. I love hiking and the outdoors, playing volleyball or spikeball, and watching UFC and basketball. I first learned about American labor history in my first semester at Cal through a course on the topic. I had no idea what to expect, but learning the struggles of the American working class was really illuminating for me because I realized that so much is missing from the traditional American history curriculum on this topic. To me, it is fascinating to see how the American working class has fought for themselves and come together in spite of constant resistance from massive powers across our nation's entire history. As this will be my final year doing Model UN, I wanted to use it to teach you about a topic that is extremely important for more Americans to understand in order to truly put into context the great inequalities that we see around the country today.

My name is Sonika Vuyyuru and I am very excited to be serving as one of your vice chairs for this year. I am a fourth-year at Cal studying Computer Science and Cognitive Science. This will be my 8th year doing Model UN and my final year in BMUN. BMUN has been an integral part of my college career, so I am sad to say goodbye soon. Outside of BMUN, you can find me rock climbing, playing tennis, or horribly playing my favorite rock song on the drums. Like Alex, I think this committee's topic is incredibly fascinating and important, and I can't wait to see what we all come out of it learning.

Hello delegates! My name is Naman Satish, and I am so excited to be your vice chair for this committee. I'm a junior studying Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. I've been participating in MUN since 7th grade, and each year MUN becomes even more FUN!! When I'm not doing BMUN, you probably would find me re-watching Wes Anderson movies, playing video games, listening to indie music, going on late night hikes, or cooking/baking.

Hi all! My name is Adriana Jaime. I am a sophomore majoring in Public Health and Theater and Performance Studies, and minoring in public policy. This is my first year being a part of BMUN and I am super excited to meet all of you and learn about all kinds of global affairs! Outside of MUN I enjoy going to concerts, like Beyoncé! I am a fan of rap, jazz music, and pop music. As an LA native I am extremely passionate about advocacy for underrepresented minorities and youth investment. As a descendant of Mexican immigrants who worked as farm workers throughout the 1940s, learning and informing others about the logistics of the ALM hits close to home.

Hi delegates! My name is Nina Sanchez and I'm a junior majoring in Political Science hopefully minoring in Public Policy fingers crossed. This is also my first year being a part of BMUN as well as MUN as a whole! Outside of BMUN I love running and playing volleyball as well as thrifting and my favorite movie of all time is Fantastic Mr. Fox! I'm super excited to meet all of you guys!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'APlewinski'.

Alex Plewinski
Head Chair for ALM
Email: aplewinski

IMPORTANT VOCABULARY

Boycott: To engage in a concerted refusal to have dealings with (a person, store, organization, etc.) usually to express disapproval or to force acceptance of certain conditions.

Company Union: A worker organization which is dominated or unduly influenced by an employer, and is therefore not an independent trade union. Also known as “yellow union”.

Closed Shop: A policy where a place of employment requires membership in the recognized union as a condition of employment. This ensured workers who worked under contracts negotiated by unions were a part of that union, and was an important inclusion in many contracts until 1947.

Craft Unionism: A model of trade unionism in which workers are organized based on the particular craft or trade in which they work (i.e. carpenters, painters).

Direct Action: The use of strikes, demonstrations, or other public forms of protest rather than negotiation to achieve one’s demands.

Free Enterprise: An economy where the market determines prices, products, and services rather than the government.

Industrial Unionism: A model of trade unionism in which workers are organized based on the industry they work in regardless of skill or trade (i.e. auto workers, railroad workers).

Picket: A person or group of people standing outside a place of work or other venue protesting something or trying to persuade others not to enter during a strike.

Real Wages: Wages adjusted for inflation, or, equivalently, wages in terms of the amount of goods and services that can be bought.

Right-To-Work Laws: Laws that states can implement making union dues optional for workers whether they are a union member or not. While claiming to protect workers from needing to pay to work a union job, in practice these laws financially damage unions massively.

Scab: A worker who accepts employment or replaces a union worker during a strike (strikebreaker).

Sit-Down Strike: A strike during which workers occupy their place of employment and refuse to work or allow others to work until the strike is settled.

Solidarity Strike: A strike by workers in support of a strike initiated by workers in a separate corporation. Also known as a sympathy strike.

Strike: A refusal to work organized by a body of employees as a form of protest, typically in an attempt to gain a concession or concessions from their employer.

Trade Union: an organization of workers intent on maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment, such as attaining better wages and benefits or improving working conditions and safety standards. Simply referred to as “union”.

Voluntarism: The principle that government and legal intervention in employment relations should be kept to a minimum, allowing employers and trade unions maximum scope to regulate their own affairs.

Wildcat Strike: Work stoppage undertaken by employees without the consent or direct approval of their respective union.

Yellow-Dog Contract: A contract between a worker and employer in which the worker agrees not to remain in or join a union.



1946 STRIKE WAVE

COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the American Labor Movement! In this committee, we will be tackling one of the most tumultuous times in American labor history from the shoes of the most important labor leaders of the time. This committee represents a fictional gathering of these leaders, but the basis and situation are deeply rooted in history. Our goal with this committee is to challenge you to use your skills of problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, and research to work with other labor leaders of the time to carve a better path for the American working class from a point in time when many forces imposed a less favorable trajectory in real life.

The goal with this synopsis is to provide historical context for the situation at hand, deeper detail on the current day situation, some useful case studies on topics of special interest, and general information to reference and jump off from in your own research. To aid in these goals, we have included some extra details throughout to help you keep in mind important questions and considerations while reading. For guidance:

Guiding Questions in blue

Notes to Reader in red

Important Vocabulary

We hope that our structure and detail will help you get a feel and interest in the topic that can translate into

great research and participation for committee! If you have any questions at all, you can reach out to our committee email: almbmun72@bmun.org

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Guiding Question: What is the historical context of the crisis at hand in 1946 (How did we get here)?

Guiding Question: How did the American Labor Movement begin, and what were some of its early trends?

While the United States became an independent republic in 1776, it was not until a couple decades into the 19th century that the American labor movement really kicked off. It developed in tandem with the Market Revolution, as the new mode of mass production of the 1820s and 1830s demanded a change in the nature and skills of workers who, until then, had mostly been artisans. Early labor activists of the 19th century fought to protect the rights of the new labor force, forming trade associations, unions, and brotherhoods to stand together and slowly earn victories like the 10 hour work day.

In the latter half of the century, unions had become more common and some organizers thought to work together across unions and sectors. The first attempts at national labor organizations were the National Labor Union (NLU) and Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor (KoL); both began in the 1860s and sought to unite workers under common interests (“Knights of Labor”)(“National Labor Union”). Around the same time, labor activism began to pick up, leading to large and sometimes fatal confrontations with employers and law enforcement, such as the Southwest Railroad Strike of 1886 and the

Haymarket Affair (**worth looking into!**). Workers of the time fought for rights like better workplace protections and the eight hour work day. Unfortunately, these organizations could not effectively leverage their power across the nation. Additionally, female, African-American, and immigrant workers were often excluded from unions despite being important parts of many sectors and workplaces. As the century came to a close, the NLU and KoL did not survive, but a new organization, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), rose to prominence (Montgomery).



Labor rally in Haymarket Square, Chicago organized by labor activists turns violent when an unidentified individual threw a bomb at police. Police opened fire, and 7 policemen and 1 civilian died in the ensuing violence. In the aftermath, 7 anarchists were sentenced to death or life in prison without any evidence connecting them to the bomb, 4 of them were hanged (“Haymarket Riot”).

The Labor Movement in the Early 20th Century

Guiding Question: How did the Labor Movement grow, change, and react to opposition in the early 20th century?

As the 20th century began, the AFL had become an established force in the labor movement guided by its principles of pure and simple unions and craft unionism and its nature as a federation of affiliated unions (“American Federation of Labor”). Craft unionism was a model of labor unionism focused on organizing workers based on skills or crafts, such as carpenters or bricklayers (“Craft Union”). The AFL was described as “a constant seeking of more and more” for its members and engaged in a variety of tactics to achieve its goals (“Taft”). After the chaos of the end of the century, the AFL focused on “prudent” unionism to preserve the union movement in an unfriendly environment, turning away from unskilled labor and advocating for less disruption in the workplace such as using the boycott over the strike (Laurie). In 1905, another union organization, dubbed Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), sought to unite independent unions across the nation. The IWW was organized around direct action and the creation of a working-class movement seeking emancipation. While they incorporated many elements of leftism and antiracism which the AFL lacked, they did not have the necessary unified vision to survive the first decade of the 1900s (Taft).

The First World War created unique circumstances for the labor movement. The war caused labor shortages which in some instances increased union power and contributed to continuing union recruitment (such as the addition of clothing workers to the

union movement). It also saw many labor activists face government opposition when their actions were perceived as defiant of the war effort or espionage. A Supreme Court ruling against the use of boycotts based on antitrust law (an early example of a major blow to labor dealt by the judicial system) and the use of federal injunctions against unions led the AFL to end its policy of labor voluntarism and enter into politics (Taft).

This period also saw a massive reduction of immigration to the US coinciding with the Great Migration of black working-class Americans to the north. This changed the dynamic of race in the labor movement, which in the post-war period would lead to companies often using black workers as scabs and building hostilities between races (a very important tactic used by employers to create tension between working-class people to weaken labor power) (Taft). One example of this was in the stockyards of Chicago in the late 1910s, where many black workers hesitated to join the local unions dominated by white European immigrants. Employers leaned into this, playing friendly with their new black workers to discourage them from joining the union while using them as scabs to undermine union strikes. This fomented significant tension between white immigrant union workers and newly arrived black workers throughout the city. A multitude of additional factors contributed to the Chicago Race Riots of 1919, which saw white mobs invading black neighborhoods to inflict senseless, horrific violence. When the riots ended, over 15,000 black workers could not return to work due to continued violence near the stockyards and the apparent tension between the workers. This led management to ban them from returning for another 10 days, after which the workers returned with security to the chagrin of the white workers (“The Killing Floor”)



White Chicagoans looking for African Americans during the race riots of 1919 (“Chicago Race Riots of 1919”)

The post-war Roaring 20s were a difficult time for the Labor movement. While worker production rates doubled, union membership declined as a multitude of forces coincided against the labor movement. Besides the aforementioned racial tensions, corporations significantly weakened organized labor movement through their new brand of corporatism. One feature of this corporatism was the company union, which organized workers within one company under leadership partnered with the employer. Another was the company town, like that of Ford, where workers were given housing and specific benefits by the employer to discourage challenges against them by exercising control over most of a worker’s life. Additionally, the first Red Scare was hugely detrimental to the labor movement through the arrest, censure, and persecution of leftists in America who were important, dynamic forces in labor activism. The decade saw a decrease in union membership and a weakening of worker power which would prove disastrous for Americans in the coming economic catastrophe (Taft).

The Great Depression and New Deal

Guiding Question: How did the New Deal drastically change the American Labor Movement and labor law?

Overproduction and under-consumption in the 1920s led to the stock market crash of 1929 and a subsequent cascade of bank failures which kicked off the Great Depression. As unemployment skyrocketed and states ran out of aid, Congress failed to forward workers’ rights other than passing the Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932, which restricted court injunctions against union activity and prohibited the yellow-dog contract (contractual pledge to not join labor unions) (“Norris LaGuardia”). At the time Franklin Delano Roosevelt was sworn in, unemployment (on which data was not formally collected at the time) is estimated to be around 25% of the working population.



Franklin Delano Roosevelt is sworn in for his first term in the midst of American economic crisis (“First Inauguration...”)

FDR immediately began taking action, creating programs to create jobs and reinvigorate businesses such as the Civilian Conservation Corp, Civil Works Administration, and the National Recovery Administration. Of key importance was the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) which sought to revitalize businesses by implementing industry codes and fair practices to curb overproduction and cutthroat competition, raise prices and profits, and ensure safeties for workers. Section 7(a) of the NIRA, supported by the AFL, Senator John Wagner, and FDR, provided likely the most important union protections in America to that date:

“SEC. 7. (a) Every code of fair competition, agreement, and license approved, prescribed, or issued under this title shall contain the following conditions: (1) That employees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and shall be free from the interference restraint, or coercion of employers of labor, or their agents, in the designation of such representatives or in self-organization or in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection; (2) that no employee

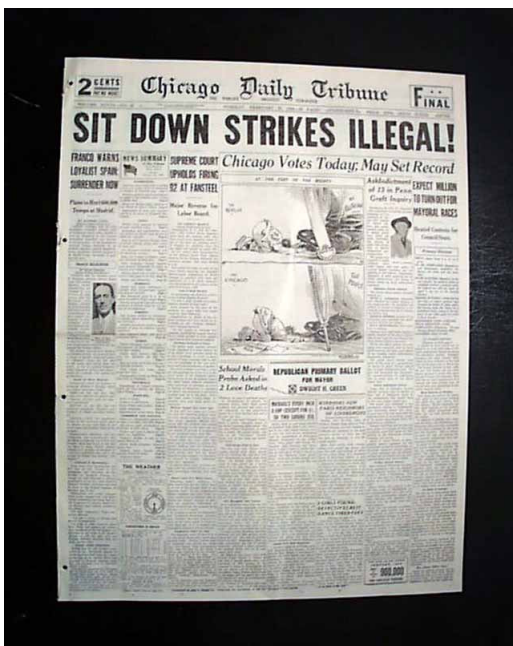
and no one seeking employment shall be required as a condition of employment to join any company union or to refrain from joining, organizing, or assisting a labor organization of his own choosing; and (3) that employers shall comply with the maximum hours of labor, minimum rates of pay, and other conditions of employment, approved or prescribed by the President.” (“National Industrial Recovery Act”).

Section 7(a) led to a massive increase in union membership in 1933 but also significant opposition. The National Labor Board (NLB), an informal board created by FDR to handle 7(a) disputes, was effectively shut down by employers in 1934. Additionally, the Supreme Court shut down the NIRA in 1935 with the case of *Schechter Poultry Corp v. United States* (“National Industrial Recovery Act”). At the same time, massive union action followed the vast recruitment, as huge strikes took place across the country. This chaos led to John Wagner advocating for the passing of possibly the most impactful piece of labor legislation in American history: the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) ([See Case Study: The National Labor Relations Act on page 20](#)). In short, the NLRA codified the protections of 7(a) and solidified union protections into enforceable federal law through the National Labor Relations Board, the NLB’s successor with teeth.

Continuing the wave of major federal labor legislation, the NLRA was followed by the Social Security Act of 1935, the first unemployment insurance initiative in the US (“Social Security History”). At the same time, FDR combatted the resistance of the Supreme Court through the threat of court packing (increasing the number justices from 9 to 15), and the court suddenly changed its tune and made landmark decisions to uphold the NLRA and the Social Security Act (Bernstein). In 1938, Congress passed the Fair

Labor Standards Act, which put into law many of the labor protections we still have today, including the 40 hour work week, overtime pay, minimum wage, and prohibition of child labor (Bernstein).

There were still some losses for the labor movement in the midst of all of this success. One example is that of NLRB v. Fansteel Metallurgical in 1939, a Supreme Court decision regarding a 1937 sit-down strike which resulted in the firing of 90 workers. The NLRB ruled that the company had to reinstate the fired workers, however the Supreme Court disagreed. They ruled that the sit-down strike was an “unlawful taking of property” and was not protected under the NLRA. Additionally, they ruled that the NLRB did not have the authority to force the company to reinstate fired workers who participated in taking of property (“NLRB v. Fansteel Metallurgical Corp”). This, in practice, ended the sit-down strike, one of the most prominent and powerful tactics of organized labor.



Chicago Daily Tribune headline on results of NLRB vs Fansteel Metallurgical Corp. (“Sit Down Strikes Goes to Supreme Court...”)

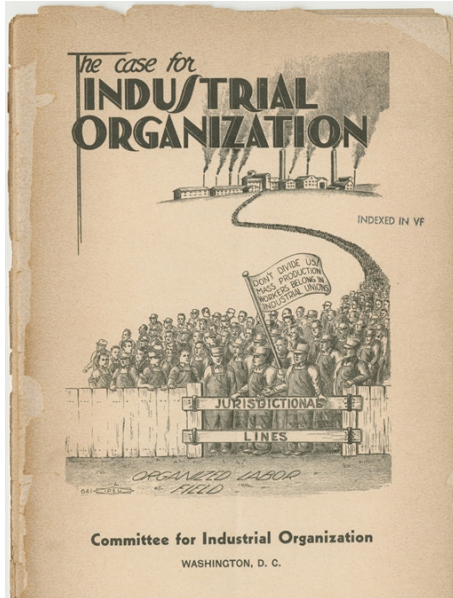
The AFL-CIO Split

Guiding Question: How did different ideologies on union organization manifest and clash in the New Deal Era?

While the labor movement saw incredible victories in federal legislation during the New Deal, a long-brewing confrontation between ideologies on labor organization came to a head at this time as well. The AFL, still the nation’s largest and only predominant national union federation, faced an internal dispute over their policy of craft unionism. While AFL had historically focused on skilled laborers and organizing unions based on a particular craft, a growing sect of the labor movement saw the future as industrial unionism. Industrial unionism focused on semi-skilled and unskilled labor across industries as a whole, such as automobile workers or coal miners. In 1935, John L. Lewis, leader of the greatly successful and active United Mine Workers, worked with other industrial union leaders to establish the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), a sub-committee of the AFL to focus on the burgeoning industrial labor sector. A feud brewed between Lewis and William Green, the head of the AFL, and as the unions affiliated with the CIO were expelled, the CIO declared itself an independent organization in 1938 and rebranded as the Congress of Industrial Unions (Bernstein).

The CIO took much more direct action than the AFL, winning huge victories for its affiliated and nascent unions. These included the United Auto Workers (UAW), United Rubber Workers (URW), and the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (STOC). Those three all won massive settlements and recognition from massive corporations after large strikes that were met with violence from employers and police, but backed by the NLRB. A key trait of the CIO was its desire to unionize everyone in industry, regardless

of race or ethnicity, making it significantly more inclusive than its rival (Bernstein). The early CIO also saw notable membership and influence from communists compared to the AFL (Nelson).



CIO pamphlet, 1937 (“Teaching CIO Maps...”)

World War II

Guiding Question: How did the Second World War impact the now booming labor movement.

Leading up to the Second World War, union membership was once again high as the war in Europe began to increase employment in the US, leading to 20-25% of the non-agricultural working population to be part of a union. Strike activity was at an all-

time high with a variety of different tactics; because of this, in 1941, over 4,000 strikes were organized (Bernstien). Black workers were still the most disadvantaged group of workers with continued discrimination from many craft unions affiliated with the AFL. Federal relief did not discriminate based on race but could not provide a much needed job.

As US involvement in the war became quite significant, FDR created the National Defense Mediation Board (NDMB), consisting of members of industry, the AFL, and the CIO to settle labor disputes in defense industries. However, the NDMB collapsed in the midst of a major dispute involving John L. Lewis and the UMW as Lewis sought to secure union shops in the coal mines which powered the entire steel industry (Bernstein).

In the weeks after Pearl Harbor, FDR, union leaders from the AFL and CIO, and prominent activists convened and all agreed to suspend strikes and lockouts for the duration of the war and submit disputes to the government. FDR created the National War Labor Board (NWLB) to settle these disputes with the authority to create contracts. NWLB took important and impactful actions during the war, including settling wage disputes to maintain pre-war real wages (wage to match inflation), implementing a non-discrimination policy in defense industries, and establishing equal pay for equal work to support women in industry who filled many positions of men who left to fight.



UAW workers picket outside Chevrolet, a GM subsidiary, at the onset of the strike in 1945 (“1945: UAW Initiates Strike...”)

CURRENT SITUATION

Guiding Questions: What challenges does the American Labor Movement face in the post-war era? What is the path forward?

Post-War Strike Activity

Guiding Question: What kind of action is the American Labor movement engaged in since the end of the war?

After four years of not striking, labor unions got right back to action with hundreds of thousands going on strike in the last quarter of 1945. Two examples are worth looking at in a little more detail:

UAW-GM Strike: At the end of the war, Walter Reuther of UAW led GM workers in a strike for a 30% wage increase. This wage hike was needed to counter wartime inflation which has raised the cost of living by about a third. Quite notably, however, the UAW also demanded that GM keep the price of their

cars the same in an attempt to protect consumers. Reuther believed that GM could easily afford this as the most profitable American auto company of the time. This demand was outrageous to GM, who was willing to discuss wages and benefits but not to let a union have input in managerial decisions. At the start of the committee, this dispute is still ongoing, but a special committee under President Truman has found that GM can afford a wage increase (although not the size being demanded by UAW) while maintaining consumer prices (“Strike Wave: United States”).

Stamford General Strike: During the war, the workers of Stamford, Connecticut’s Yale & Towne company joined the International Association of Machinists (IAM). As soon as the war ended, the

company sought to get rid of the union, trying to end the closed shop and rejecting their request for a 30% raise. In November, the workers went on strike, picketing until the company president asked the governor to send in the state police, resulting in the arrest of many protestors. In response, the union organized a city-wide demonstration on January 3, 1946, bringing the whole city to a standstill and forcing Yale & Towne to come to the table with their first offer of increased wages in negotiations. At the start of committee, negotiations are still ongoing (“Strike Wave: United States”).



Free Enterprise

Guiding Question: What was the perspective of employers on their relationship with organized labor throughout the New Deal Era and at the start of committee?

Of massive importance, this post-war inflection point gave employers a unique opportunity to change the national discourse surrounding labor. During the 20's, business reigned supreme in a society focused on consumption, individualism, and material possessions (Fones-Wolf, 16). During this time, American life was intertwined with business success and economic

production, even within organized labor through company unions. This situation fell apart with the onset of the Great Depression as Americans could no longer turn to ethnic communities or employers to provide for their welfare and security. Instead, workers turned away from the individualistic solutions of business and began looking towards more collective solutions of the federal government and organized labor. The idea of Americanism shifted away from individualism and consumption towards economic equality, social justice, and human rights (Fones-Wolf, 17). Over the next decade, businesses would see an emphasis on responsible unionism decrease their managerial authority, with organized labor achieving more and more power. Even during the no-strike pledge of the war, businesses felt threatened by actions like the creation of the CIO's Political Action Committee. Additionally, the bond between organized labor and the political liberal establishment had only gotten stronger as time progressed.

This period of increased labor power and influence over society deeply worried business leaders across the nation. Business leaders sought to fight these developments starting in the late 1930s. A few key organizations of business leaders formed and/or shifted their focus towards addressing the New Deal. The most conservative of these, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), distrusted the government and sought to dismantle much of the New Deal. Other organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Committee for Economic Development (CED) were less extreme in their approach, seeking to moderate the New Deal rather than destroy it (Fones-Wolf, 23). It is hard to consider these organizations as truly distinct, however, due to a significant overlap in membership and even leadership despite seemingly conflicting messages. Regardless of affiliation, these organizations all represented a

mobilization of business in response to the New Deal and increased labor power. NAM, in particular, was taking significant action before the onset of the war, with a twenty-fold increase in PR budget between 1934 and 1937 to fund the creation of films, traveling industrial exhibits, pamphlets, and experiments aimed at systematically influencing education and religion. Before the war, however, business' extremist and hostile attitude towards unions and the New Deal prevented significant success of these programs (Fones-Wolf, 25)

During the war, business began to regain a level of confidence from the American people due to their impressive wartime productivity, and industry leaders saw this as their opportunity to restore their promi-

nence in American life. Organizations like CED and NAM turned all their efforts towards crafting a post-war economy that met their visions. NAM launched the community-based program, "Soldiers of Production," in 1943 to preach cooperation with management and free enterprise in an inspirational light through talks on company time. As the war came to an end, individual corporations began following in this trend with magazine and radio ads emphasizing the need for free enterprise and rugged individualism (Fones-Wolf, 27). The CED and Chamber of Commerce—while more moderate than the NAM—still took steps to craft economic policy and establish lobbying groups in DC to mobilize their forces to reign in growing governmental and union influence in the market.



Soldiers of Production poster, 1943 ("A Good Soldier...")

Just like labor, business has the opportunity in this post-war America to change their public perception and make great strides towards their goals. At the start of committee, business leaders are seeking to make the most of this chance to reclaim their prominence in American culture. Additionally, increased strike activity is pushing more business leaders to take action, with many particularly alarmed by the UAW's desire to influence company decision making at GM. As organized labor leads the working class to action to win better conditions for their constituents, they must be keenly aware of the inevitable response from the business establishment eagerly seeking to reestablish themselves at the forefront of American consciousness.

Communism in American Labor and The Second Red Scare

Guiding Question: What part has communism played in the American Labor Movement, and how has it been resisted?

Communist parties began forming in the US after the October Revolution in Russia, with many coming, going, and merging, until a final consolidation into the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) in 1929. Throughout the New Deal era, the CPUSA became important players in the labor movement, with around 65,000 members and significant involvement as industrial union organizers. By the 1940s, they had significant importance in many CIO unions ("Communist Party of the United States").



Poster for the Daily Workers, 1935 ("Communist Party History..")

Originally despising Hitler and fascism, the CPUSA aligned themselves with USSR foreign policy after the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 and opposed U.S. involvement in the war, calling it "The Second Imperialist War." When Germany attacked the USSR in June of 1941, however, CPUSA quickly changed their tune again to support the war against fascism, calling for an immediate U.S. invasion of Western Europe. This changed their opinion towards strikes during the war, which they now vehemently opposed, often stronger than non-communist labor leaders. As the war came towards an end, an internal struggle waged within the CPUSA over whether to continue no-strike pledges and maintain national unity or to return to its pre-war militancy. The latter won, and after V-J day, the CPUSA labor committee declared that "labor is now again free to exercise its right to strike wherever and whenever it finds it to be in its interests" (Seidman).

At the same time, the end of the war left the US with a new geopolitical enemy in the USSR, kicking off the Second Red Scare. In November 30, 1945, Soviet spy Elizabeth Bentley confessed her espionage and gave up the names of 41 soviet spies to the FBI,

significantly stoking fears of communism in the US (“Elizabeth Bentley”). At the start of the committee, the Second Red scare is only just gaining steam, but it will undoubtedly be of enormous impact to the American Labor Movement in this post-war era.

UNION ORGANIZATIONS

Guiding Question: What are the foremost labor organizations of the time, and what and who do they stand for?

American Federation of Labor (AFL)

Founding: 1886, oldest and largest federation of unions in the US

Focus: Craft unionism; Skilled labor; Union Federation

Important Details: Significant influence in the democratic party; history of racism and sexism

Leader: William Green

Composition: 102 affiliated unions; 6.9 million members

(“Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945”)

Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)

Founding: 1935 as a committee of the AFL; broke away in 1938 to form independent federation of unions

Focus: Industrial Unionism; semi-skilled and unskilled labor; direct Action

Important Details: Second largest federation of unions in the US; prominent leftist presence in leadership; currently trying to unionize the south through Operation Dixie

Leader: Phillip Murray

Composition: 40 affiliated unions; 6 million members

(“Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945”)

United Auto Workers (UAW)

Founding: 1935 under the AFL as one of the early CIO unions

Focus: Representing workers in the automotive industry in the “Big Three”: GM, Chrysler, Ford

Important Details: Currently engaged in conflict with GM

Leaders: President R.J. Thomas; VP Walter Reuther

Affiliation: CIO

Composition: 1 million members

(Boyle)

United Steel Workers of America (USWA)

Founding: 1936 as the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), an early subcommittee of the CIO; formally turned USWA in 1942

Focus: Represented workers in all forms of metallurgy

Important Details: Acquired more members through mergers throughout the early 1940s; strike beginning on start date of committee

Affiliation: CIO

Leader: Phillip Murray
Composition: ~700,000 members
("Strike Wave: United States")

United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)

Founding: 1890 out of the fall of the Knights of Labor, active and militant throughout the next 50 years
Focus: Representing workers in the mining industry, predominantly coal miners.
Important Details: Founding union of the CIO, and used as major organizing tool for industrial unionization of steel, auto, and other industries; withdrew from the CIO in 1942; staged a strike in 1943 during the war, causing the federal government to seize the mines
Affiliation: None
Leader: John L. Lewis
Composition: ~ 500,000 members.
("United Mine Workers of America")

Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA)

Founding: 1914 by socialist garment workers
Focus: Representing workers in the clothing industry; "social unionism", the idea that unions should fight for things like universal welfare programs
Important Details: Decimated by great depression, joined AFL; Founding member of CIO
Affiliation: CIO
Leader: Sydney Hillman
Composition: 240,000 members
(Molyneux)

United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE)

Founding: 1936 through the CIO
Focus: Represented workers at General Electric, Westinghouse, Philco, RCA, and other electrical appliance and machinery companies
Important Details: Very left-leaning with leaders affiliated with CPUSA; 40% female membership; third largest CIO union
Affiliation: CIO
Leader: James Matles
Composition: 470,000 members
(Molyneux)

International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU)

Founding: 1900

Focus: Representing workers who made ladies clothing

Important Details: Originally part of AFL; founding member of CIO; left CIO due to perceived communist influence and re-affiliated with AFL in 1940; organized across race and gender

Leader: David Dubinsky

Affiliation: AFL

Composition: 310,000 members; mostly women
(Molyneux)

International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT or Teamsters)

Founding: 1903 through the AFL

Focus: Representing drivers in all industries

Important Details: Originally represented teamsters (drivers of horse-drawn wagons), but aggressively recruited drivers across industries and even new “motor trucks”; one of the most influential and powerful unions by WWII; often came into conflict with other large unions, such as the Brewers or the ILWU, over who could have drivers of particular industries; Had a serious corruption problem

Leader: Daniel J. Tobin

Affiliation: AFL

Composition: 750,000 members

International Association of Machinists (IAM)

Founding: 1888

Focus: Representing machinists

Important Details: Had a significant dispute with the AFL starting in 1943 over a jurisdictional dispute over which unions would claim certain machinists; disaffiliated with the AFL at the end of the war

Leader: Harvey W. Brown

Affiliation: None

Composition: 770,000 members
 (“The Fighting Machinists”)

Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT)

Founding: 1883

Focus: Representing railroad workers in more than 14 trade classifications

Important details: Involved in the Pullman Strike of 1894 and spent many years recovering; represents workers in one of the most critical industries to the American economy; works with other railroad unions like the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers

Leader: Alexander F. Whitney

Affiliation: None

Composition: 225,000 members

CASE STUDIES

Case 1: The National Labor Relations Act

Guiding Questions: How did the National Labor Relations Act protect and empower unions in a way the federal government had never done prior? What were some of its strengths and weaknesses?

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), also known as the Wagner Act, was a landmark piece of United States legislation that shaped the role of the federal government in labor laws and transformed the power of unions. Introduced by Senator Robert F. Wagner and signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July of 1935, the NLRA guaranteed the right of employees to “self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid and protection” (“National Labor Relations Act (1935)”). Essentially, by guaranteeing the right of employees to organize into trade unions and take collective action to seek better working conditions without the fear of retaliation, the NLRA protects workplace democracy and workers’ rights. Furthermore, it obligated employers to “bargain collectively with unions selected by a majority of the employees in an appropriate bargaining unit.” (“1935 Passage of the Wagner Act.”) The act does this by establishing an independent agency, known as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), responsible for enforcing employee rights. The NLRB consists of three members who are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. (“1935 Passage of the Wagner Act.”) The

NLRB has real enforcement powers that allow it to certify that employee union elections are based on majority rule and exclusive representation, which is the right of a majority-chosen union to represent all employees in the unit, regardless of whether they are in the union. (“Exclusive Representative’s Rights and Obligations.”)

Through his early support of public housing, public works programs, unemployment insurance, and the Social Security Act, Senator Wagner exemplified his deep belief in the New Deal’s goal to provide economic security to lower-income groups (“FDR and the Wagner Act.”). This NLRA was also a part of that belief.

An important aspect of the NLRA was that it banned so-called “company unions,” also known as yellow unions, which are worker organizations that are dominated by an employer. Oftentimes, these company unions were used to openly disregard collective bargaining rights. Along with company unions, other unfair labor practices such as black-listing, strike-breaking, and discriminatory firings were outlawed as well. (“FDR and the Wagner Act.”) These drastic changes enabled the NLRA to leave a significant impact on the union movement. Prior to the act, in 1933, union membership sat at 3 million workers (Goldfield & Melcher). After the passage of the act and throughout the rest of the 1930s, there was a rapid growth in union membership. By 1940, there were nearly nine million union members in the United States (“FDR and the Wagner Act”). In just five more years, by 1945, union membership nearly doubled to 15 million members (“Episode 5 – Strike Wave: The National WWII Museum: New Orleans”).

Overall, the act created a system of orderly industrial relations, leading to improved working conditions, increased wages and benefits, and unprecedented productivity. It played a crucial role in empowering workers and strengthening the labor movement during a time of economic uncertainty.

However, the NLRA had its limitations. For example, it did not protect employers involved in airlines, railroads, agriculture, and government. It also excluded independent contractors and individuals employed by a parent or a spouse (“Wagner Act”). The act also faced significant opposition from Republicans and big business. It was challenged in court as a violation of the “freedom of contract” of employers and employees and as an “unconstitutional intrusion by the federal government in industries that were not directly engaged in interstate commerce” (“Wagner Act”). However, the US Supreme Court eventually upheld the constitutionality of the NLRA in the case of [National Labor Relations Board v. Jones & Laughlin Steel Corp.](#) (1937), with a narrow 5-4 decision (“Wagner Act”)

Another criticism of the NLRA is that it constrained union operations to be in accordance with the board’s criteria of efficient organization. Unions lost their freedom to choose the strategy that best suited their particular industry and individual objectives and were forced to work in ways that satisfied the board’s requirements for efficient union operation. Because of this, people such as President Paul R. Hutchings of the Office Employees International Union-AFL criticized the NLRA for interfering with union autonomy. (Tomlins)

The NLRA also opened the door for future government regulations on unions. One of the most important of these was the Labor Management Relations

Act of 1947, better known as the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. This bill was in large part a response to the massive disturbances caused by the 1946 strike wave. This amendment to the NLRA would extend the jurisdiction of the NLRB, but in an effort to regulate unions rather than empower them. It added six new unfair labor practices that unions could commit and banned the closed shop, the wildcat strike, and the solidarity strike. It also required loyalty oaths of anti-communism for union members, which kicked off the purge of leftists and communists from the American Labor Movement during the Red Scare. Additionally, it allowed states to pass right-to-work laws, which make union dues optional whether a worker is in the union or not, greatly harming unions financially despite the misleading name (28 states currently have right-to-work laws) (Hayes). President Harry Truman vetoed the Taft-Hartley Act, calling it a “slave-labor bill”, however Congress overturned the veto and the bill remains in effect to this day. Even after the Taft-Hartley Act, subsequent legislation and court decisions continued to reduce the scope of the NLRA.

Case 2 : Oakland General Strike

Guiding Questions: What kinds of powers and limitations of the American Labor movement are demonstrated by the Oakland General Strike? What does this even show about sentiments towards the labor movement of the time?

While taking place after the start date of committee (and therefore not guaranteed to happen), the 1946 Oakland General Strike provides an extremely useful case study in understanding American attitudes towards labor during the early post-World War II period. The Oakland General Strike examines the evolving dynamics between labor and capital, the

unfulfilled promises made to the American public, the growing influence of unions, and the disruptive capability of a united working class.

Setting the stage for the 1946 Oakland General Strike, the post-war promise to the American public by the UAW and CIO was that “there’ll be a job for everyone, everyone, everyone, there’ll be a job for everyone if we get out and vote” (Glass). However, this was a future that never came to the Bay Area; instead, the increase of available labor due to returning veterans meant wages stagnated, leading to a real earnings drop of 12% in San Francisco (Glass). This fall in economic power for the majority of workers in the Bay Area was not isolated to the region, rather it was a nationwide feeling. This culminating feeling of unmet needs laid the groundwork for the Oakland General Strike.

The culture of work in the 1940s was distinctly different from expectations in the modern era. At non-unionized department stores, workers were required to show up to work and wait in a room called the “Ready Room” until they were needed. Workers who were not needed were sent home in the afternoon without pay. Additionally, the Ready Room was a form of retribution from management to keep employees in line. By the end of October 1946, two department stores walked out on strike to raise their wages to the levels of unionized stores, as well as put an end to the Ready Room. However, the management refused to negotiate, fearing multiple other stores would unionize in a domino effect (Tomlin).

In order to put down the strike, on Sunday December 1, 1946, the management (Retail Merchants’ Association) colluded with the Oakland City Council and the Oakland Tribune’s publisher Joseph Knowland to use officers with shotguns and tear gas to

forcibly remove the picketing employees. The officers pushed back the employees, predominantly women, with clubs, then escorted scabs brought from Los Angeles with 12 truckloads of merchandise goods that the management had been storing in a department store in Berkeley. Yet the spark that started the General Strike was when a transit employee attempting to stop the scabs was run over by an Oakland Police Department motorcycle.

By Monday, union members in Alameda County had voted to “take a holiday” to protest the violence used by police in breaking up a strike. On Tuesday, the city grinded to a halt as over 100,000 workers walked off the job, and the entrances to both department stores were blocked by over 5,000 picketers. The printing presses of Oakland’s three daily newspapers were all halted by strike leaders. In San Francisco, the strike was reported as being “violent” and “Communist-inspired”, yet only minor incidents occurred in the following three day “holiday” (Glass). By Wednesday, negotiations began between local union groups and the RMA and city officials to end the strike if the city of Oakland promised it would never use police to interfere between issues concerning labor and management and not to escort scabs.

Although local union efforts were undermined by national union leaders, later convicted of corruption (Glass), giving the order to return to work, by late Wednesday night, Oakland city manager J.F Hassler assured local union leaders that the police would not be used in the future to escort strike breakers to stores, and they would remain impartial in future labor disputes. By Thursday morning, the general strike was over, but police escorts continued, and the department store workers were still on strike. Although workers felt invincible due to the number of industries participating in the strike, as well as the

sheer amount of employees, union leaders were afraid to damage the fragile relationships between them and management, along with the fear of being associated with the Communist leadership of other unions.

However, following the general strike, grassroots organizations in Oakland greatly improved in their ability to mobilize. Four out of nine Oakland City

Council seats were filled by labor candidates in the election next May. Although this progress was hampered by the Red Scare, the Oakland General Strike is a great example of how strikes originate, the scale to which they can evolve, and how they can ultimately fail to achieve their goals due to internal issues. Nevertheless, it represents the change that strikes can bring.

COMMITTEE START, SETTING, AND FUNCTION

Today's date is January 21, 1946, and Philip Murray and the USWA have just announced that the union's 750,000 members will go on strike for a wage increase. Six days earlier, the UE began a strike against General Electric. While Murray is intently focused on this grand action, as leader of the CIO and one of the foremost labor leaders in the United States, he has also taken a broader gaze at the American labor landscape and seen the significant ramp in labor activism. After President Truman's Labor-Management conference on November 30, 1945 proved uneventful, Murray and Green began a correspondence with AFL president William Green to gauge his contemporary's assessment of the situation. While the two disagreed on many things and had no intention of giving up ground, authority, or ideology, they did agree on one thing: that the American labor movement should have a degree of cooperation during this tumultuous time. With this in mind, they have called you, the most influential and committed labor leaders in the nation together today for the first meeting of the American Labor Movement.

This meeting of labor leaders is fictional, but who

knows what fruits something like this could have borne? In this committee, we will embark on a new path of possible history that you will write, and it will be up to you to make it better for the American working class than the one you will research. This committee represents not exactly a physical gathering of labor leaders in one place for months on end, but more of a correspondence of labor leaders throughout this time of consequence. Each of you will be responsible for achieving the best possible outcome for the workers you represent, and the crisis backroom will present you with realistic situations designed to challenge you to engage in problem solving and activism to overcome the obstacles your real-life counterparts might not have.

Even though the setting is not a physical gathering, we will still be engaging in our topics through a standard crisis MUN procedure, seeking both personal and public directives and spirited discussion and cooperation. Public directives will represent joint actions across the labor movement using individual portfolio powers in tandem, whereas private directives will represent actions you take with regards to

your sphere of influence individually. While in many crisis committees your goal is to achieve great power for the individual character you represent, in this committee, we are challenging you to seek to achieve the greatest victories for the people your character represents. As you prepare for committee, make sure to think about what that would mean for your intended actions in crisis. We will leave it to you to

determine if your actions towards this goal should employ often used crisis tactics of sabotage and power hunting, or if they should focus more on traditional strategic organizing and labor activism. As long as your actions are clear in the context of furthering the prosperity of the working class people your character believes they represent, you will be on the right track.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How should labor organize and take action in the new Post War landscape?
2. How should organized labor approach, work with, and be wary of governmental regulation after the New Deal and WWII?
3. How should the American Labor Movement contend with shifting attitudes towards labor brought on by the Red Scare and Free Enterprise?
4. How should organized labor approach race, nationality, and gender in the second half of the 20th century after so many decades of unsavory and inconsistent relations?

CHARACTER PROFILES

WILLIAM GREEN:

From humble beginnings as a mine worker and local union leader, William Green worked his way to becoming the second President of the AFL through his steadfast commitment to labor and prudent judgment. Serving as president since 1924, Green has pivoted the AFL towards a strategy of cooperation over confrontation. While there are many roles he plays as the leader of the nation's largest union federation, he is at his best when seeking public support for pro-labor legislation.

("William Green")

PHILIP MURRAY:

With over 40 years of labor activism and leadership positions in the UMW, SWOC, and USWA, the CIO certainly had an experienced new President when Phillip Murray took over in 1940 after the resignation of his longtime partner John L. Lewis. When Lewis withdrew the UMW from the CIO and expelled Murray from the union, Murray was certainly distraught, but he stood by the beliefs which had gotten him to his position. As president of the CIO, Murray supported the war effort, involved the CIO in politics to push pro-labor policies, and worked to end racial discrimination within his organization. He is currently gearing up the USWA for a strike to secure higher wages.

("Philip Murray")

JOHN L. LEWIS:

Few have had the impact, effectiveness, and prominence in American labor history as John L. Lewis, the leader of the UMW for the past 25 years and founder of the CIO. His commitment to the advancement of mine workers and industrial unionism has superseded political party, international policy, and organizational affiliations. He's shown this by his resignation from CIO president in 1940 over his disagreement with FDR on European intervention and his withdrawal of the UMW from the CIO to release the union from the no-strike pledge. He has spent the last couple years leading UMW through bitter strikes in spite of the war, and intends to continue doing what he must to protect and aid those he leads.

("John L. Lewis")

SYDNEY HILLMAN:

As founder of the ACWA, Sydney Hillman's brand of "constructive cooperation" set the standard for unionism throughout the Great Depression. He continued his impact by serving as the first VP of the CIO. He strongly believes in the importance of worker involvement in politics, leading the CIO's new Political Action Committee (which helped ensure FDR's fourth term) and is still the leader of the ACWA and VP of the CIO.

("Sydney Hillman")

WALTER REUTHER:

Walter Reuther has made a big splash within the UAW in spite of only a decade of labor activism. Leading the union's General Motors department since 1939, and becoming VP in 1942, he has become one of the union's loudest voices and most skillful leaders. With the end of the war, he kicked off the ongoing GM strike with not just the intention of raising wages for his members, but using collective bargaining as a method to effect policy by demanding no price increase on GM's products. He has also opposed the Communist party influence within the union, seeking to ensure the union is prioritized over a political party. RJ Thomas is still the president of the UAW, but Reuther is positioned to take that position from him soon, and as leader of one of the largest strikes he will be representing the UAW.

("Walter Reuther")

DAVID DUBINSKY:

An immigrant who had been imprisoned for union activity in Russia at just age 16, David Dubinsky has dedicated his life to labor. He has led the ILGWU since 1932 and took it from near collapse at that time to over 300,000 members today. He has also been heavily involved in state, national and international politics, quite notably helping found both the American Labor Party and Liberal Party in New York state, as well as serving as the AFL's delegate to the Economic and Social Council of the UN. While he helped found the original Committee on Industrial Organization, he and the ILGWU have remained loyal to the AFL.

("David Dubinsky")

JAMES MATLES:

In 1937, One year after the UE's founding through the CIO, James Matles led a group of 15,000 IAM machinists to leave the union for the UE in protest of the IAM's whites-only membership policy. In 1941, he would be elected Director of Organization of the union, making him part of a 3 man leadership team to run the now burgeoning union. While he took some time off to serve in WWII, Matles is ready to continue bolstering the tradition of rank-and-file unionism and educating his union's members on the principles they stand and fight for. He, like many in the UE, is speculated to be a communist. He is currently leading his union in a strike against General Electric.

("Remembering Jim Matles...")

DANIEL TOBIN:

As leader of the Teamsters for nearly 40 years now, Daniel Tobin has led the recruitment of over 700,000 members. As such, he is one of the most important voices and leaders of labor both within the AFL and in national politics. Unlike many of his contemporaries with similar influence, Tobin is more moderate in his approach and has always focused on creating a mainstream, American brand of labor.

("Daniel J. Tobin: Teamster Visionary")

HARVEY BROWN:

A member of the IAM since 1905, Harvey W. Brown became president of the IAM in 1940. He led the IAM to a huge membership increase, pivoted towards industrial unionism, and has added machinists from multiple new industries to the union's ranks. This expansion, however, has led to jurisdictional disputes with other unions that on multiple occasions the AFL decided against him. Due to this, Brown disaffiliated the IAM from the AFL even though he had previously served as the organization's VP.

("Harvey W. Brown")

ALEXANDER F. WHITNEY:

Member of the BRT for 50 years and president for nearly 20, Alexander F. Whitney has been one the leading voices for railway workers for decades. While his union is not the largest, the extreme importance of railroads to the American economy has made him quite important as well, a status he's used to sponsor federal legislation like the Railroad Retirement Act. While his union remains unaffiliated, he is currently fostering a partnership with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers to strengthen their collective power against the railroad corporations.

(Bibliography of American Labor Leaders, pg 582)

HARRY BRIDGES:

In 1934, Harry Bridges served as an important contributor to the dramatic Great Maritime Strike of 1934 as a rank-and-file member, but in the coming years he would found and become leader of the CIO formed International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). He held great respect amongst his union, the public, and the CIO, currently serving as the latter's West Coast Director. Legal disputes surrounding his alleged affiliation with the Communist Party and leftist ideals have plagued him, with attempts to deport him back to Australia in 1939 and 1941, the latter going to the Supreme Court in 1945 for them to rule against his deportation.

("Harry Bridges")

H. L. MITCHELL:

Long affiliated with the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU), H. L. Mitchell has just been selected by the AFL to lead the newly chartered National Farm Labor Union (NFLU). Mitchell has been a steadfast supporter of agricultural workers for years, especially in the South, even in spite of their lack of labor protections at the federal level. Mitchell's STFU had been part of the UCAPAWA (now FTA), many quarrels with the communist leadership over autonomy, ideology, and strategy of organization led to him pulling out and seeking to charter his own course for the farm workers of America.

(Bibliography of American Labor Leaders, pg 410)

DONALD HENDERSON:

Donald Henderson was the standout voice at the Committee for Industrial Organization for agricultural workers, leading to his creation of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America

(UCAPAWA). Under his leadership, the union was massively successful at recruiting in states like California, where they appealed to Mexican workers and established a significant female presence. Henderson's commitment to industrial unionism and affiliation with the Communist Party led to a falling out with H. L. Mitchell's STFU. The union is not as powerful as it once was, but hopefully the recent rebranding to the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural, and Allied Workers Union (FTA) and corresponding focus on organizing processing workers will win back some power for Henderson's organization.

(Bibliography of American Labor Leaders, pg 290)

A. PHILIP RANDOLPH:

In 1925, A. Philip Randolph began a 10 year campaign to organize and certify the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), a union of all-black service workers, which he called the "first victory of Negro workers over a great corporation". His activism over the next decade would see him build enough influence to call for a march of 100,000 African-Americans that pressured FDR to ban racial discrimination against workers in the defense industries or government and pass the Fair Employment Practices Commission. Randolph is a union leader, but also an activist, particularly concerned with racial discrimination in both the workplace and the armed services.

("A. Phillip Randolph")

LUCY MASON:

A lifelong activist not just for workers rights, but consumers as well, Lucy Mason is one of the most influential labor leaders of the South. After spending time making waves in the National Consumers League, Lucy was able to return to her passion of organizing Southern workers through the CIO as the organization's "roving ambassador". She currently works with the CIO's Political Action Committee in the South, helping recruit union members regardless of race, forging union ties with religious groups, and working to end the poll tax. ("Lucy Randolph Mason")

LEE PRESSMAN:

After a stint in the Department of Agriculture under Secretary Henry Wallace during the New Deal Era, lawyer Lee Pressman decided to work with the CIO as chief council in 1936. Since then, he has served as legal counsel for many of the organization's biggest achievements, but one of his most notable cases has been the recently settled Bridges v. Wixon, where he represented Harry Bridges in his case against deportation in the Supreme Court. He has also recently begun working with the newly formed World Federation of Trade Unions.

("Lee Pressman") ("CIO Group Urges...")

GEORGE MEANY:

George Meany is secretary-treasurer of the AFL and second in command to William Green because of his full-hearted commitment to the labor movement and outstanding leadership. In this position since 1939, he played a critical role in the formation of the War Labor Board and has also taken the lead on the AFL's inter-

national activities. His belief in the labor movement as the “people’s lobby”, the only vehicle in American life which stood for the common man, showed in his dedication to workers in not just the US, but abroad.
 (“George Meany”)

ESTHER PETERSON:

Inspired to begin working in the labor movement by witnessing her teenage students at the YWCA strike, Esther Peterson became involved with the ILGWU to help educate young working women. In 1938, she worked as an organizer for the American Federation of Teachers, but the next year she joined the ACWA to help with organizing efforts. In 1944, she began her current position as the union’s first lobbyist in D.C., where she’s been working with politicians to raise the minimum wage and getting workers in unprotected industries covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act. She is incredibly respected by her peers as not just a voice for workers, but also a voice for women and against all discrimination.
 (“Esther Eggertson Peterson”)

JAMES PETRILLO:

A musician by trade, James Petrillo found he was multitalented when he entered leadership of his Chicago local of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) in 1922. His activism landed him the role of president of the whole AFM in 1940, as which he garnered enough respect amongst his peers to call for a general strike against the nation’s record companies in 1942 over lack of payment of royalties to musicians for their record sales. Despite FDR urging that music was essential to the war effort like other industries, the union held out for 27 months before winning the concessions they sought. This action made him a well-known American figure despite leading a relatively small union.
 (“James C. Petrillo”)

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