

could be solved at the bargaining table where third parties like himself could offer their expertise to help resolve disputes peaceably and thereby serve the mutual interest of both sides while promoting the welfare of the general public. Though he gained a reputation as an advocate of labor, his basic ideas were in full accord with the philosophy of corporate liberalism. Like the leading proponent of that philosophy, Herbert Croly, Commons advocated the large-scale organization of both capital and labor, distinguished between good and bad unionism, as between good and bad capitalists, and proposed that technical experts working for the government oversee disputes among private economic interests. A self-conscious opponent of revolution, Commons was an efficiency expert in finessing class struggle. His influence on the field of labor history is a fact of history and can not be discounted, but historians must recognize and weigh carefully the scholarly prejudices of his personal political orientation.

¹[Don Lescohier was a student of Commons who wrote parts of the four-volume *History of Labor in the United States* and also published an article entitled "The Knights of St. Crispin 1867-1874: A Study on Industrial Causes of Trade Unionism" (*Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin* no. 355, 1910).—Eds.]

A Theory of the Labor Movement

SELIG PERLMAN

1928

Twenty years ago the author of this book, like most of his college generation in Russia, professed the theory of the labor movement found in the Marxian classics. "Labor" was then to him—he realized afterwards—mainly an abstraction: an abstract mass in the grip of an abstract force. For, despite the copiousness of the statistical and sociological evidence adduced by Marxism for the view that the workman is bound, in the very nature of capitalism, to espouse the cause of revolution,—and despite Marxism's intense concern with concrete labor movements, from Chartism to date,—it remains true that, at bottom, the Marxian theory of the labor movement rests upon a species of faith,—namely the faith that history has appointed the labor movement to be the force which eventually will bring society to the third and final step in the Hegelian dialectical scheme of evolution.

Shortly afterwards (having in the meantime transferred himself to the American environment), by an unusual stroke of good luck, the author joined the research staff of Professor John R. Commons. Here he became acquainted with Professor Commons' method of deducing labor theory from the concrete and crude experience of the wage earners. This method is brilliantly demonstrated in his article on the *American Shoemakers*,¹ where a theory of industrial evolution as well as a theory of the labor movement were evolved from the testimony (in a series of reported conspiracy cases) given by sweat shop bosses, "scabs," strikers, merchant capitalists, and manufacturers. In this approach the Hegelian dialectic nowhere occurs, nor is cognizance taken of labor's "historical mission." What monopolizes attention is labor combatting competitive menaces—"scabs," "green hands," and the like; labor bargaining for the control of the job.

On joining in Professor Commons' pioneering undertaking of a history of American industrial society, the author started with the socialistic movements among immigrant workmen during the sixties and seventies. Here, in a field apparently of little significance, the author stumbled upon a veritable gold mine: he discovered that out of these overlooked movements among the German and other foreign wage-earners there finally emerged the non-socialistic program of the American Federation of Labor. What an absurd and topsy-turvy order of things! (For to the Marxian and to the socialist in general it is "normal" for a labor movement to "ascend" from "pure and simple" unionism to a socialistic class consciousness; never to "descend" from the second to the first.) Yet that was, clearly, the product of the genuine and prolonged experience of the Strasser-Gompers group of unionists who fell away from their original faith reluctantly indeed. This discovery gave the author another impulse in the same direction. Obviously, working people in the real felt an urge towards collective control of their employment opportunities, but hardly towards similar control of industry. The events of the day in the American labor movement—the failure of the socialists within the American Federation of Labor and of the Industrial Workers of the World without, to hold their own after auspicious débuts shortly before, added strength to the author's new convictions in formation.

When, at the outbreak of the European War, the German labor movement espoused the national cause, with the trade unions unexpectedly calling the tune to the Social-Democratic piper, the author set himself to studying the inter-relationships

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between the economic and the political movements in that country. Here he stumbled upon the idea that there is a natural divergence in labor ideology between the "mentality" of the trade unions and the "mentality" of the intellectuals; and that, given the opportunity to exist legally and to develop a leadership from among its own ranks, the trade union's mentality will eventually come to dominate. In Germany the trade unions had emancipated themselves from the hegemony of the intellectual revolutionists in 1906—with the "Mannheim Agreement." That a trade unionism so emancipated will be deaf to the call of revolutions and will think in terms of its national industry from which spring both wages and profits has been proved over again by the events in Germany since 1918.

The Russian Revolution and the ease with which the Bolsheviks seized power sent the author reviewing his Russian history to account for the weakness of the "ruling" classes of Russia—a weakness which was psychological and profoundly in contrast with the strength of German capitalists in 1918–1920 and with the fighting prowess of British capitalists in 1926.



Three dominant factors are emerging from the seeming medley of contradictory turns and events in recent labor history. The first factor is the demonstrated capacity, as in Germany, Austria, and Hungary, or else incapacity, as in Russia, of the capitalist group to survive as a ruling group and to withstand revolutionary attack when the protective hand of government has been withdrawn. In this sense "capitalism" is not only, nor even primarily, a material or governmental arrangement whereby one class, the capitalist class, owns the means of production, exchange, and distribution, while the other class, labor, is employed for wages. Capitalism is rather a social organization presided over by a class with an "effective will to power," implying the ability to defend its power against all comers—to defend it, not necessarily by physical force, since such force, however important at a crisis, might crumble after all—but to defend it, as it has done in Germany, through having convinced the other classes that they alone, the capitalists, know how to operate the complex economic apparatus of modern society upon which the material welfare of all depends.

The second factor which stands out clearly in the world-wide social situation is the rôle of the so-called "intellectual," the "intelligentsia," in the labor movement and in society at large. It was from the intellectual that the anti-capitalist influences in modern society emanated. It was he who impressed upon the labor movement tenets characteristic of his own mentality: the "nationalization" or "socialization" of industry, and political action, whether "constitutional" or "unconstitutional," on behalf of the "new social order." He, too, has been busily indoctrinating the middle classes with the same views, thus helping to undermine an important prop of capitalism and to some extent even the spirit of resistance of the capitalists themselves.

The third and the most vital factor in the labor situation is the trade union movement. Trade unionism, which is essentially pragmatic, struggles constantly, not only against the employers for an enlarged opportunity measured in income, security, and liberty in the shop and industry, but struggles also, whether consciously or unconsciously, actively or merely passively, against the intellectual who would frame its programs and shape its policies. In this struggle by "organic" labor² against dominance by the intellectuals, we perceive a clash of an ideology which holds the concrete workingmen in the

center of its vision with a rival ideology which envisages labor merely as an "abstract mass in the grip of an abstract force."

Labor's own "home grown" ideology is disclosed only through a study of the "working rules" of labor's own "institutions." The trade unions are the institutions of labor today, but much can be learned also from labor's institutions in the past, notably the guilds.

It is the author's contention that manual groups, whether peasants in Russia, modern wage earners, or medieval master workmen, have had their economic attitudes basically determined by a consciousness of scarcity of opportunity, which is characteristic of these groups, and stands out in contrast with the business men's "abundance consciousness," or consciousness of unlimited opportunity. Starting with this consciousness of scarcity, the "manualist" groups have been led to practising solidarity, to an insistence upon an "ownership" by the group as a whole of the totality of economic opportunity extant, to a "rationing" by the group of such opportunity among the individuals constituting it, to a control by the group over its members in relation to the conditions upon which they as individuals are permitted to occupy a portion of that opportunity—in brief, to a "communism of opportunity." This differs fundamentally from socialism or communism, which would "communize" not only "opportunity," but also production and distribution—just as it is far removed from "capitalism." Capitalism started from the premise of unlimited opportunity, and arrived, in its classical formulation, at "laissez faire" for the individual all along the line—in regard to the "quantity" of opportunity he may appropriate, the price or wage he may charge, and in regard to the ownership of the means of production. "Communism of opportunity" in the sense here employed existed in the medieval guilds before the merchant capitalists had subverted them to the purposes of a protected business men's oligarchy; in Russian peasant land communities with their periodic redivisions, among the several families, of the collectively owned land, the embodiment of the economic opportunity of a peasant group; and exists today in trade unions enforcing a "job control" through union "working rules."

But, in this country, due to the fact that here the "manualist" had found at hand an abundance of opportunity, in unoccupied land and in a pioneer social condition, his economic thinking had therefore issued, not from the scarcity premise but from the premise of abundance. It thus resulted in a social philosophy which was more akin to the business men's than to the trade unionists' or guildsmen's. Accordingly, the American labor movement, which long remained unaware of any distinction between itself and the "producing classes" in general,—which included also farmers, small manufacturers, and small business men,—continued for many decades to worship at the shrine of individualistic "anti-monopoly." "Anti-monopoly" was a program of reform, through politics and legislation, whereby the "producing classes" would apply a corrective to the American social order so that economic individualism might become "safe" for the producers rather than for land speculators, merchant capitalists, and bankers. Unionism, on the contrary, first became a stabilized movement in America only when the abundance consciousness of the pioneer days had been replaced in the mind of labor by a scarcity consciousness—the consciousness of job scarcity. Only then did the American wage earner become willing to envisage a future in which his union would go on indefinitely controlling his relation to his job rather than endeavoring to afford him, as during the anti-monopoly stage of the labor movement, an escape into free and unregulated self-employment, by winning for him a competitive equality with the "monopolist."

In America, the historical struggle waged by labor for an undivided expression of

its own mentality in its own movement was directed against the ideology of "anti-monopoly." But in Europe the antithesis to the labor mentality has been the mentality of the intellectual.

Twenty-five years ago, Nicolai Lenin clearly recognized the divergence which exists between the intellectual and the trade unionist, although not in terms of an inevitable mutual antagonism, when he hurled his unusual polemical powers against those in the Social-Democratic Party, his own party at the time, who would confine their own and the party's agitational activities to playing upon labor's economic grievances. He then said that if it had not been for the "bourgeois intellectuals" Marx and Engels, labor would never have got beyond mere "trifling,"—going after an increase in wage here and after a labor law there. Lenin, of course, saw labor and the trade union movement, not as an aggregation of concrete individuals sharing among themselves their collective job opportunity, as well as trying to enlarge it and improve it by joint effort and step by step, but rather as an abstract mass which history had predetermined to hurl itself against the capitalist social order and demolish it. Lenin therefore could never have seen in a non-revolutionary unionism anything more than a blind groping after a purpose only vaguely grasped, rather than a completely self-conscious movement with a full-blown ideology of its own. But to see "labor" solely as an abstract mass and the concrete individual reduced to a mere mathematical point, as against the trade unionists' striving for job security for the individual and concrete freedom on the job, has not been solely the prerogative of "determinist-revolutionaries" like Lenin and the Communists. The other types of intellectuals in and close to the labor movement, the "ethical" type, the heirs of Owen and the Christian Socialists, and the "social efficiency" type, best represented by the Fabians—to mention but English examples,—have equally with the orthodox Marxians reduced labor to a mere abstraction, although each has done so in his own way and has pictured "labor" as an abstract mass in the grip of an abstract force, existing, however, only in his own intellectual imagination, and not in the emotional imagination of the manual worker himself.

A theory of the labor movement should include a theory of the psychology of the laboring man. The writings of socialists, syndicalists, anarchists, communists, and "welfare" capitalists abound in embroideries on the theme of "what labor wants" or "what labor aspires to." But the safest method is to go to the organizations of labor's own making, shaped and managed by leaders arisen from labor's own ranks, and to attempt to discover "what's really on labor's mind" by using as material the "working rules," customs and practices of these organizations. A study of such "rules" and customs, the products of long drawn out, evolutionary developments, will aid in distinguishing fundamental from accidental purposes. No such certainty can attach, of course, to the formulations by the "ideologists" of labor, just because these latter, being intellectuals and without the workingman's shop experience, are unable, for all their devotion, to avoid substituting their own typical attitudes and wishes for the genuine philosophy of the laboring man.

There are, by and large, three basic economic philosophies: the manual laborers', the business men's, and the intellectuals'. Werner Sombart, in his definitions of "handicraft" and of capitalism, offers the best clue to an explanation of the essential psychologies of the "manualist" and of the business man. He points out in these definitions the wide gulf between economic motives in the mediæval economy and in modern business. A secure livelihood for everyone was the aim of the guilds, but the business man has from

the first been inspired by a boundless desire to amass wealth. This thought, which is one of Sombart's many illuminating contributions to economic history, can be made the starting point of a more comprehensive theory of economic group psychology. It can be done by showing, first, how the psychological contrast between the two historical epochs, the guild and the capitalistic, continues in our own day, in the contrast between the psychology of trade unionism and the psychology of business, and second, how each and every type of such group psychology, past and present, can be explained through a common theory.

In an economic community, there is a separation between those who prefer a secure, though modest return,—that is to say, a mere livelihood,—and those who play for big stakes and are willing to assume risk in proportion. The first compose the great bulk of manual workers of every description, including mechanics, laborers, farmers, small manufacturers, and shopkeepers (since petty trade, as Sombart correctly points out, is also a manual occupation); while the latter are, of course, the entrepreneurs and the big business men. The limited or unlimited purpose is, in either case, the product of a simple survey of accessible economic opportunity and of a psychic self-appraisal. The manual worker is convinced by experience that he is living in a world of limited opportunity. He sees, to be sure, how others, for instance business men, are finding the same world a storehouse of apparently unlimited opportunity. Yet he decisively discounts that, so far as he is himself concerned. The business man, on the contrary, is an eternal optimist. To him the world is brimful of opportunities that are only waiting to be made his own.

The scarcity consciousness of the manualist is a product of two main causes, one lying in himself and the other outside. The typical manualist is aware of his lack of native capacity for availing himself of economic opportunities as they lie amidst the complex and ever shifting situations of modern business. He knows himself neither for a born taker of risks nor for the possessor of a sufficiently agile mind ever to feel at home in the midst of the uncertain game of competitive business. Added to this is his conviction that for him the world has been rendered one of scarcity by an institutional order of things, which purposely reserved the best opportunities for landlords, capitalists and other privileged groups. It may also be, of course, that the manual worker will ascribe such scarcity to natural rather than to institutional causes, say, to a shortage of land brought on by increase of population, or, like mediæval merchants and master workmen, to the small number of customers and the meagre purchasing power of these. At all events, whether he thought the cause of the apparent limitations to be institutional or natural, a scarcity consciousness has always been typical of the manual worker, in direct contrast to the consciousness of an abundance of opportunity, which dominates the self-confident business man.

By correlating economic types, as we do here, with an abundance or a scarcity consciousness, respectively, we are enabled to throw a bridge between our own time and earlier periods. The mediæval craftsman and guild master, notwithstanding his economic "independence," was of the same economic type as the wage earner of today. The guildsman maintained his independence solely because his rudimentary business psychology sufficed for an age when the market was limited to the locality, and the tools of production were primitively simple. Put the average wage earner back into the Thirteenth Century, and he would set up as a master; transfer a guild master into the age of modern business, and he would fall into the ranks of wage labor. While, to be sure, the economic historian was justified in refusing to see any historical continuity between guilds and trade unions, he often overlooked their common fundamental psychology: the psychology of seeking after a livelihood in the face of limited economic opportunity. Just as, to the

gildsman, opportunity was visibly limited to the local market, so, to the industrial wage earner, it is limited to the number of jobs available, almost always fewer than the number of job seekers.

The economic pessimism of the manual group is at the bottom of its characteristic manner of adjusting the relation of the individual to the whole group. It prompts also the attitude of exclusion which manual groups assume towards those regarded as "outsiders." Again the manualist's psychology can best be brought out by contrast with that of the fully developed business man. Basically the business man is an economic individualist, a competitor *par excellence*. If opportunity is plentiful, if the enterprising person can create his own opportunity, what sane object can there be in collectively controlling the extent of the individual's appropriation of opportunity, or in drastically excluding those from other localities? Nor will this type of individual submit to group control, for he is confident of his ability to make good bargains for himself. If, on the contrary, opportunity is believed to be limited, as in the experience of the manual worker, it then becomes the duty of the group to prevent the individual from appropriating more than his rightful share, while at the same time protecting him against oppressive bargains. *The group then asserts its collective ownership over the whole amount of opportunity*, and, having determined who are entitled to claim a share in that opportunity, undertakes to parcel it out fairly, directly or indirectly, among its recognized members, permitting them to avail themselves of such opportunities, job or market, only on the basis of a "common rule." Free competition becomes a sin against one's fellows, anti-social, like a self indulgent consumption of the stores of a beleaguered city, and obviously detrimental to the individual as well. A collective disposal of opportunity, including the power to keep out undesirables, and a "common rule" in making bargains are as natural to the manual group as "*laissez-faire*" is to the business man.

Does this opportunity theory explain the business man's conduct through the several stages of economic society? His individualism shows up clearest during periods of great economic expansion. When markets are becoming rapidly extended and technology revolutionized; in other words, when opportunity is expanding by leaps and bounds, then his competitiveness approaches the ruthlessness of a Darwinian struggle for existence. The elder Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie, moral men who raised competitiveness to an ethic, are indeed excellent examples. This is not to say that business men will not form "rings" even in the midst of economic revolution, nor that they cannot be taught to abate their competition in the common interest. Yet, on the whole, the "new competition" or "co-operative competition," may be said to have been given its chance only after the rush for new opportunities had already subsided of itself, due to a slackening in the opportunity-creating economic expansion.

Furthermore, notwithstanding this "new competition" on the modern commodity market, there always remains a vital difference between a business men's group, with the characteristic consciousness of abundance which is normal to that economic type, co-operating to a common end, and the solidarity in action manifested by genuine "scarcity" groups. When a business men's group has been led, through fear of cutthroat competition and price wars, to resort directly or indirectly, to the rationing of market opportunity among its members, this movement has always sprung from the "head," but never spontaneously nor from the "heart," as it were, in contrast with the guilds, peasant land communities, or trade unions, which have usually taken to sharing opportunity even long before

becoming formally organized. For the same reason, we never find individual business men anxious to emulate the manualist's willingness, nay, even burning zeal as shown during strikes, literally to sacrifice his own interest for the good of his group as a whole.

What relation has this opportunity theory of the labor group psychology to the plans of the socialists, to "workers' control," to the "abolition of wagery," and so forth?

Socialism, in its many varieties, while correctly grasping a part of the true psychology of the worker—his desire for solidarity—overlooks his unwillingness to become completely merged with his own class. Whenever and wherever full "workers' control" has been tried, by "self-governing workshops" and like organizations, history shows that sooner or later the workers have, consciously or unconsciously, opposed the creation of a solidarity exceeding a common control of opportunity and common "working rules,"—that is, if the undertaking did not die at birth, or, surviving, experience a conversion, materially prosperous but spiritually degrading, into a capitalist enterprise owned by a few of the "smarter" co-operators. For, the workers, it seems, will cheerfully submit to an almost military union discipline in their struggles against the employer; they will be guided by the union working rules in seeking and holding jobs; but they will mistrust and obstruct their union leaders who have become shop-bosses under whatever scheme of "workers' control." Perhaps in abstract reasoning, the wage earner might be expected to envisage the whole of the economic organization of society as the ultimate source of his job opportunity; and therefore wish for a complete "workers' control" of industry. Actually, however, the typical wage earner, when he can express himself in and through his trade union free of domination by intellectuals, who are never too bashful to do his thinking for him, seldom dreams of shouldering the risks of management. Ordinarily he traces the origin of his opportunity not much farther back than the point where it materializes in jobs, and will grasp and support only such union policies as will enable or force the employers to offer more jobs, equally available to all fellow craftsmen, and upon improved terms.

In the unionism of the printers' organization we have encountered a truly stable and mature type of collective behavior by labor. The printers' union qualifies as stable and mature, because it has been led by men risen from its own ranks, because it has evolved a complete "law of the job," but in a still deeper sense, because it has mastered the dilemma of serving simultaneously the individual member and the group as a whole. Such unionism is individualistic and collectivistic at the same time. It is individualistic in the sense that it aims to satisfy the individual aspirations of Tom, Dick, and Harry for a decent livelihood, for economic security, and for freedom from tyranny on the part of the boss. But such unionism is also collectivistic, since it aspires to develop in the individual a willingness to subordinate his own interests to the superior interests of the collectivity. It may be true, as Whiting Williams pointed out in his *Mainsprings of Men*, that the majority of workingmen are "on the fence," deliberately weighing the relative advantages from following the employer or the union leader, each one arriving at his own decision only after a cold-blooded calculation. However, such "Whiting Williams unionists" resemble real unionists no more than a resident of Upper Silesia would have resembled a true national of either country, had he stopped to weigh, on the memorable day of the

Plebiscite, the relative material advantage from voting himself either a German or a Pole. Consequently, while it is true that a union can never become strong or stable except by attaching the individual to itself through the tangible benefits accruing to him from its administration of the job opportunities of the group as a whole, neither can it be a union in the full sense of the word unless it has educated the members to put the integrity of the collective "job-territory" above the security of their individual job tenure. Unionism is, in this respect, not unlike patriotism which may and does demand of the citizen the supreme sacrifice, when the integrity of the national territory is at stake. Just as a mere pooling by forty million Frenchmen of their individualistic self-interests will not yet produce a patriotic France, so a bare adding together of the individual job interests of five million wage earners, united in a common organization, will scarcely result in a labor movement. To have a really stable unionism and a really stable labor movement, the individual members must evince a readiness to make sacrifices on behalf of the control by their union of their collective "job-territory," without stopping to count too closely the costs involved to themselves. And like nationalism, unionism is keenly conscious of a "patria irredenta" in the non-union portion of its trade or industry.

But if unionism means an idealistic readiness on the part of the individual to offer, as the need arises, unstinted sacrifices for the group as a whole, what then of "business unionism"? May even such a unionism have an "ideology"? To many, of course, any "ideology" whatsoever in a unionism which is merely "business" and which avowedly limits its objective to a mere control of jobs, is entirely and definitely precluded. However, upon closer examination, it would seem that if, by naming the predominant type of American unionism "business unionism," it was meant to bring out that it had no "ideology," then the name was clearly a misnomer. The difficulty arises from a disposition to class as idealistic solely the professions of idealistic aims—socialism, anarchism, and the like,—but to overlook the unselfconscious idealism in the daily practice of unionism. In truth, unionism, even "business unionism," shows idealism both in aim and in method; only it does so in the thoroughly unsophisticated way of "Tom, Dick, and Harry idealism." All unions sooner or later stress "shop rights," which, to the workingman at the bench, are identical with "liberty" itself,—since, thanks to them, he has no need to kowtow to foreman or boss, as the price of holding his job. And, after all, is not this sort of liberty the only sort which reaches the workman directly and with certainty and that can never get lost *en route*, like the "broader" liberty promised by socialism? For, in practice, that other liberty may never succeed in straining through the many layers of the socialistic hierarchy down to the mere private in industry. Secondly, a union which expects its members to sacrifice for the group on a scale almost commensurate with the sacrifices which patriotism evokes, cannot be without its own respectable ideology. Frequently, therefore, the "materialism" of unionism proves only the one-sidedness of the view of the particular observer.

Yet, granting that even "business unionism" possesses ideology after a fashion, might it not be that, after all, the conception of unionism advanced here could fit only a narrow craft unionism, not a unionism with a wider conception of labor solidarity? True, the more distinct the trade identity of a given group and therefore the clearer the boundaries of its particular "job-territory," the stronger are normally the bonds which tie the members together in a spontaneous solidarity. Yet, on the other hand, the specific area of that common job-territory, or of the common opportunity which a group considers its own, is seldom fixed, but is constantly tending to widen, just as the numerical size and the composition of the group itself is constantly tending to grow. When accumulated technological changes have undermined the partitions between the several grades of

labor in an industry and have thus produced a virtually undivided "job-territory" for all employed in it, the function of framing "rules of occupancy and tenure" for the job opportunities included within the now expanded job-territory will sooner or later be taken over by an *industrial* union or by an *amalgamated* union bordering upon the industrial type. And that union, when it will come to face the common enemy, will display a solidarity no less potent than the solidarity of the original craft unions, although as a job administrator the new and expanded union will endeavor to give recognition, so far as it will still remain possible, to the original particularistic job claims.

Nor need a job conscious unionism, with respect to many portentous issues, arrest the growth of its solidarity, short of the outer boundaries of the wage earning class as a whole. Many are the influences affecting union job control: the legal status of unionism, the policies of the government, a favorable public opinion, and others. Thus every union soon discovers that the integrity of its "job-territory," like the integrity of the geographic territory of a nation, is inextricably dependent on numerous wide relationships. And the very consciousness of the scarcity of opportunity, which is basic to labor's thinking, engenders in individual unions, labor's original organic cells, a wish for mutual cohesion, a common class-consciousness, and eventually a readiness to subordinate the interests of the individual cell to the aspirations of the whole labor organism. We know from history that the most craft-conscious bodies that ever existed, the mediæval guilds, left nothing to be desired so far as solidaristic action against the common overloads was concerned. There is, however, a practical limitation upon labor's solidarity, and this limitation is a very vital one, namely that, in a labor movement which has already gone beyond the emotional stage and acquired a definite *rationale* of its own, an appeal for common class action, be it through a sympathetic strike or through joint political action, will only be likely to evoke the response which is desired if the objective of the proposed common undertaking be kept so close to the core substance of union aspiration that Tom, Dick, and Harry could not fail to identify it as such.

Just as we find job conscious unionism far from devoid of idealism of a kind, so its ultimate industrial vision need not at all be limited to the job itself. In truth, such a unionism might easily acquire a lively interest in problems of management without previously undergoing mutation. It is not at all unnatural that a unionism which is intent upon job opportunities should join with management in a joint campaign to reduce the cost of operation and raise efficiency—all for the "conservation" of the current job opportunities. However, to grant so much is far from making the claim that labor might be brought to embrace "efficiency" as its primary concern instead of merely pursuing it secondarily to the primary interest in jobs. Thus it grows out of the preceding that whether one is trying to "improve" labor's "ideology," to broaden its solidarity, or to awaken its interest in "efficiency," one will indeed do well, in order to avoid wasted efforts, to steer close to the fundamental scarcity consciousness of the manual workers, which rules unionism today as it ruled the guilds of the past.

What the true purposes of unionism are (distinguished from mere verbal pronouncements, in which the preambles to the constitutions of some "socialistic" unions abound), and what a union does when it applies a scientific rationalism to its problems, have best been shown by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. Although it is the outstanding "socialistic" union in America, it has, in practice, turned its efforts not to fighting capitalism in its industry, but to securing a thorough-going job control. As an organization of quite recent origin, the Clothing Workers' union lacked the advantage which the printers' union had derived from the long, evolutionary growth of a union "common law," which enforced itself almost automatically, as it were, upon the employ-

ers, through the sheer weight of trade custom. The Clothing Workers' union was therefore obliged to acquire the same control of the job through a system of *unrestricted* collective bargaining, and to secure the upbuilding of a common law, similar to that in the printing trade, through a shrewd use of the machinery for continuous arbitration, functioning under the joint agreements in that industry. The "rules of occupancy and tenure" of the employment opportunities are in the clothing industry practically identical with the printers', and, for that matter, with the rules of the railwaymen, of the miners, and of the other organized trades,—showing the same "union control of opportunity" and the same united bargaining front. But in Chicago, the Clothing Workers' union has gone a step farther, and has taken over the employment work for the whole local industry. It has installed to that end a modern employment office, originally under the management of a former chief of the Canadian system of government employment offices.

In Chicago, too, the Clothing Workers have led the way in perfecting a new method of "job preservation," rejecting both the cruder "making work" devices of the older unions and the employer's cure-all, a wage reduction. During the depression after 1920, which has not yet ended, the union has come to the employers' aid in a way altogether novel. Without itself going into business, but letting the employer remain the risk-taker and the responsible manager, this union has contrived materially to lighten his burden by considering and helping solve the problems of each concern on their merits,—up to the point of assuming responsibility for the supervision of the work. In this manner the union, through co-operating with the employer in reducing his costs and enabling him to continue in business, has saved many jobs for its members and has substantially protected the wage scale.



In marked contrast to the actual behavior of "organic" labor groups, peasant communities, guilds and trade unions, stand the several programs for labor action mapped out by the intellectuals. This contrast is, in the last analysis, a product of two opposite ways of looking at labor. It has already been brought out how the organic groups, notwithstanding that they rigorously enforce, upon their individual members, collectively framed rules for the "occupancy and tenure of economic opportunity," yet at each turn keep in sight the concrete individual, with his very tangible individual interests and aspirations. But it has always been the main characteristic of the intellectual to think of labor as an abstract "mass" in the grip of an abstract "force." By the intellectual is meant, of course, the educated non-manualist, who has established a contact with the labor movement, either indirectly, through influence acquired over trade union bodies, or else as a leader of labor in his own right, as Lassalle was in Germany and as the leading Communists are in Russia today.

So long as the intellectual is investigating specific subjects, which have definite and calculable bearings upon the workers' welfare,—for instance, industrial accidents, unemployment, wage trends, and the like, his tendency to reduce labor in the concrete to an abstraction is restrained. But let the intellectual's thought turn from relatively prosaic matters like the above mentioned to the infinitely more soul-stirring one of "labor and the social order," and it is the rare intellectual who is able to withstand an onrush of overpowering social mysticism. Labor then ceases to be an aggregation of individuals seeking as a group to control their common economic opportunity in accord with com-

mon rules, as well as to enlarge that opportunity. Instead, labor takes on the aspect of a "mass" driven by a "force" towards a glorious "ultimate social goal." The intellectual, to be sure, is unconscious of his mysticism. On the contrary, he is generally careful to connect every move of labor towards the "new social order" which he prognosticates, with definite changes in labor conditions, with a growing wastefulness of competition, or with an equally comprehensible urge within the workingman to a greater freedom in the shop, due to an awakened self-consciousness. Yet, at bottom, the intellectual's conviction that labor must espouse the "new social order" rests neither on statistically demonstrable trends in conditions nor on labor's stirrings for the sort of liberty expressed through the control of the job, which anyone who knows workingmen will recognize and appreciate, but on a deeply rooted faith that labor is somehow the "chosen vessel" of whatever may be the power which shapes the destiny of society. The best evidence that one is here dealing with the psychological phenomenon of faith is the intellectual's persistence in that faith regardless of labor's repeated refusals to reach out for its appointed destiny and to advance materially in that direction, even when opportunity appears to beckon most promisingly. When brought face to face with evidence of this sort, the typical intellectual rather than admit that his original conception of labor's psychology was wrong, will take refuge in an explanation that what has occurred is merely a temporary "delay," and he will account for that delay by calling attention to the rise of a reactionary trade union bureaucracy, through whose machinations the grip of the "force" upon the labor "mass" has temporarily become weakened and its movement thus been deflected in an illegitimate direction.

While the concept of labor as a "mass" in the grip of a "force" is the common basis of all intellectualist theories of the labor movement, intellectuals fall into three distinct groupings, depending on what they take the nature of that "force" to be. The Marxian, who is a "determinist-revolutionary," pictures it as the ever growing force of material production, embodied in the tools of production and in technological methods. This "force," in seeking to break through the capitalist strait jacket which encases it and impedes its further growth, is inevitably hurling the labor "mass" against the political and legal régime established and defended by the capitalist class. Secondly, we have the "ethical" intellectual to whom the "force" that grips the labor "mass" is the force of labor's own awakened ethical perception. This "ethical" force causes labor to strive for the fullest ethical self-realization, which in turn is conditional upon labor's escape from the degradation of "wagery" into "freedom." And "freedom" is found either in the self-governing workshop of the Christian Socialist, in the "labor commune" of the Anarchist, or in the "national guild" of the Guild Socialist. Finally, there is the "efficiency" intellectual with his vision of society advancing from a state of disorganization to one of "order," meaning a progressive elimination of waste and the abolition of destitution. This type of intellectual, who is best exemplified by the Fabians, sees labor as a "mass" propelled by the force of its awakened burning interest in a planned economic order yielding a maximum technical and social efficiency.

Every one of these three types of "intellectuals" projects from his own abstract conception of "labor as a mass in the grip of a force" a mental picture of the workingman as an individual. Consequently, every one of these pictures differs widely from the real person whom employers and union leaders know. The Marxian pictures the workingman as a class-conscious proletarian who, at the dawn of a real revolutionary opportunity such as a world war or a similar upheaval, will unhesitatingly scorn all the gains in his material conditions and in his individual status which as a trade unionist he has already

conquered from the employers, and will buoyantly face an uncertain future—all for the sake of the dictatorship of his class.

Unlike the Marxian, who makes a virtue of thinking in terms of the "mass," the "ethical" intellectual places the highest value upon the liberated human personality and consequently is obliged to keep the individual in the center of his vision. Yet he too falls short of a true vision, since he arrives at his individual workingman by separating him out as a molecule from the abstract labor "mass." By this process, curiously enough, the individual workingman emerges bearing a very striking spiritual resemblance to his maker, the "ethical" intellectual. To the latter, industrial freedom means the complete disappearance of all authority from above, and an opportunity for everyone to participate in the total creative planning of industry. So his "workingman," too, feels that he is still being denied his rightful chance for development of personality, if he has merely been given the opportunity, under the protection of his union, to enjoy an inalienable right to his job.

Lastly, the individual workingman of the "efficiency" intellectual, as we shall come to see, is a creature who has forever given up any claim to a vested right in any particular job, or, in common with the others in his group, to any particular "job-territory"; but is, on the contrary, totally indifferent as to who gets the job or jobs, so long as the employer observes the union standards of wages and hours. This "workingman" has presumably arrived at such a thorough oblivion of self and of his nearest group in the vital matter of securing his opportunity, because he has realized that, with such an arrangement, the employer would be free to select the fittest worker for the job and that hence the way would be opened to the highest "efficiency." Truly, the "workingman" of the "efficiency" intellectual should have no trouble in getting admitted to the Fabian Society or even perhaps into a somewhat reconstituted Taylor Society of America.

All intellectuals, whether of the "ethical," or the "efficiency," or the "deterministic-revolutionary" type, are alike desirous to make their own ideology also the ideology of labor. However, the methods which they will pursue to gain this ascendancy and the lengths to which they will go, generally vary with the particular ideology each professes.



Labor history cannot deny to the revolutionary intellectual a truly pivotal part in the labor struggles of the past. Only in English-speaking countries did the labor movement show the capacity to arise without his leadership. On the Continent, it was from the intellectual that the philosophy and program of the budding labor movements came, just as it was the intellectual who built up the first labor organizations and directed their first campaigns. And where, as in Germany, his hegemony was long and undisputed, he managed to leave upon the labor movement an indelible imprint of idealism and of an unquestioned class solidarity, regardless of distinctions of craft and of wage levels, a solidarity which has survived, to the great advantage of the movement, even after his predominant influence had long passed. Thus few indeed will assert that without the early leadership of Lassalle and of those intellectuals upon whom fell his mantle and the mantle of Marx, German labor would have been what it is today. English labor, which lacked the intellectuals' contribution during most of its history, long retained an ingrained narrow craft consciousness; while American labor, which has never come under his influence, largely remains even today in the stage of mere craft consciousness.

Nevertheless, the basic contradiction which exists between the mentality of organic labor and that of the revolutionary intellectual must, in every instance, sooner or

later become strikingly plain. The trade union leader sees the labor movement climbing a difficult road, beset with many pitfalls, towards a civilized level of existence for oneself and one's dependents. Some of these pitfalls are of the employers' making, while others are unwittingly dug by labor's devoted but impractical friends. With every stretch of the road that has been covered, labor is acquiring an ever stronger incentive to turn a deaf ear to the preachers of a complete upsetting of the established political and industrial order. Labor leaders know that if with such a revolution there should come a disruption of production, a consequence which to practical unionists seems not at all unlikely, the hard-won labor standards would be just as much a thing of the past as the employers' profits. Furthermore, organized labor is under no illusion as to the sort of resistance that would be offered by a capitalism fighting for its very existence. But to the way of thinking of the intellectual of the "determinist-revolutionary" category, the labor movement is only an instrument of the inevitable revolution. History has irrevocably determined that the proletariat must follow the revolutionary path. The capitalists might throw labor back, but that can be only temporary. In the end, the revolutionary proletariat must win against all obstacles. If, however, organized labor hesitates and turns from the revolutionary course, the Simon-pure Marxian will admit only one conclusion: labor has fallen under a treacherous or cowardly leadership. To remove that corrupt and corrupting leadership, by whatever expedient means lie at hand, then becomes the revolutionist's first and foremost duty. If that means an inevitable factional fight within the organization, which may threaten its very existence, the risk is still worth taking. If the revolution and the ensuing dictatorship mean a more or less prolonged period of industrial disorganization fraught with fatal dangers in the case of an industrialized country depending upon exports for its food supply, the risk still remains worth taking.

This ruthless philosophy, ruthless not only towards the "bourgeoisie," but to the labor movement and to the laboring people as well, was originally the product of the "will to revolution" of the intellectual who, like the prophet of old, has heard the voice of God and has dedicated his life to making God's will prevail on earth—except that the "God" of the "determinist-revolutionary" intellectual is not a personal God but the "law" of the development of society. But, under certain circumstances, the non-intellectual, the manualist, may be made to worship the same God, and with the same fervor. Given a Marxian training and a pronounced susceptibility to the lure of Messianism, especially when unchecked by a sense of personal responsibility for keeping one's trade union organization intact, many a young workingman or workingwoman will display the selfsame mentality. Moreover, in numerous cases, that mentality may even become permanent, showing how an early and decisive commitment to a "foreign" philosophy, reinforced no doubt by a suitable temperament, may block the growth of an "organic" labor outlook.

¹This article was reprinted as Chapter XIV in his *Labor and Administration* (Macmillan, 1913).

²Trade unionists and intellectuals use alike the term "labor," which has an abstract connotation. But, to the trade unionists, "labor" means nothing more abstract or mystical than the millions of concrete human beings with their concrete wants and aspirations. And it is in this sense that the author uses it. . . .