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## ROLE OF THE LEFT

The parties of the left participated actively in the affairs of the UAW during World War II. While the precise extent of the influence of these parties is difficult to ascertain, it is reasonable to assume that this influence was at a peak during the war years (except for the Socialist Party which was continuing a decline of many years). The organizations most involved with the struggle over the no-strike pledge were the Communist Party and the two Trotskyist organizations, the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party. The Socialist Party, although many members and supporters were involved in the situation, did not have the kind of unified trade union policy or party discipline that would have given it cohesive force and impact. The SP members and supporters acted to some degree as individuals, were sometimes on opposite sides in the anti-no-strike pledge campaign, and occasionally worked with people from other organizations to give their views effect. Because of the ambiguous role of the SP in the UAW during World War II, I will not discuss the SP in considering the left organizations.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult in the nineteen-eighties to comprehend the nature of the politics and organizations of the left in the nineteen-forties. In both the Communist and Trotskyist organizations, party discipline was stronger and more rigid than anything that would be feasible today. Whether party policy was arrived at relatively democratically, as in the Trotskyist organizations, or relatively undemocratically, as in the Communist Party, every member was bound to carry out the program as effectively as possible without any public criticism.

There was also a bitterness between the organizations

that goes beyond the confines of ordinary political debate, much less comradely debate, which must be understood to be able to distinguish the rhetoric of the time from the political reality and to be able to understand the judgments, correct and mistaken, made by the CP, the SWP, and the WP.

The period of World War II was over thirty years closer than our time to the Bolshevik Revolution, the struggle between Stalin and Trotsky, and the rise to power of fascism and nazism. The period of the thirties had been the period of the Moscow trials and the final destruction, through imprisonment, assassination or exile of the leadership of the Russian Bolshevik Party at the time of the revolution. Trotsky had been assassinated by an agent of the Stalinist regime in 1940. The contacts between Communists and their opponents on the left in the United States were often violent. I recall that my last appearance on a street corner platform in New York in the spring of 1939 was attended by the physical overturning of that platform by a band of young people from the Young Communist League who successfully attempted to break up the meeting.

Under these circumstances the harsh rhetoric of the left organizations was not entirely rhetoric. It was often meant literally. It also colored the judgments of these organizations and their evaluation of persons and events. There was also involved, especially in the case of the CP, the deliberate distortion of events and their meaning to achieve acceptance of party policy.

The sharp turn in Communist Party policy as a result of the German invasion of Russia and the shattering of the Hitler-Stalin pact and the attendant embarrassments and difficulties are generally known and have been widely documented. Some aspects of that change, however, need to be mentioned. It has generally been assumed that during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact the CP encouraged indiscriminate strikes to interfere with American military production and, more generally, to encourage militant opposition to the American status quo. The Allis-Chalmers and North American Aviation strikes are cited as examples. In fact, there are different degrees of militancy in different unions. In unions where CP influence or control was dominant (United Electrical Workers, National Maritime Union, the

furriers union, west coast longshoremen, etc.), there was no great incidence of strikes during the 1939-1941 period.\* Strikes with which the CP was associated tended to appear in unions which the CP did not dominate, but in which they had significant points of strength which they wanted to extend.

That would indicate that in those industries in which CP influence was decisive they behaved like all labor bureaucrats. Their first concern was to protect their organizational base. Their militancy was largely verbal. In those unions in which the CP did not exercise control on the national level, the ability of the CP people in the union to develop militant strike policies was pretty clearly a reflection of the basic militancy of the rank and file workers in the situation. All accounts of the Allis-Chalmers and North American Aviation strikes indicate that this is empirically true. But it is also an extension of a point made earlier, that militant programs were always seen to be essential to union electoral victory, that a militant stance (real or fictitious) was imposed on union activists by the rank and file and not the reverse. I do not mean to imply that rank and file workers imposed strike militancy on CP union activists before June 1941. The CP was not that responsive to working class pressure, as their policies following June 1941 made quite clear. Simply that CP militancy before 1941 was subordinated to the bureaucratic needs and realities of union leadership.

CP militants in the labor movement, however, were aware of how different policies would be received by workers. Bob Travis recalls that both he and Wyndham Mortimer

\*“Matles produced a clipping from *The New York Times* dated June 12, 1941, which reported that of all strikes in industries holding military contracts from January to June 1941 — before the Soviet Union was attacked by Hitler — not one strike had involved the UE; and that of more than 2 million man-hours lost in labor disputes in war industry, the UE was responsible for none.” James J. Matles and James Higgins, *Them and Us*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974, page 207. *The New York Times* was wrong and, naturally, Matles did not try to correct the record. UE locals 441, 1145, and 1225 at Phelps-Dodge, Minneapolis-Honeywell, and Sklar Mfg. conducted strikes during this period. Nevertheless, it remains true that there were remarkably few Communist-led strikes in the “defense” period. Cochran, *Labor and Communism*, pages 164-66.

opposed, within the CP, the unconditional support of the no-strike pledge. Both of them were opposed to strikes during the war but they thought some other way should be found to express an anti-strike point of view, such as compulsory arbitration.<sup>2</sup>

The key to Communist policy during the war was the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> There is a rather simple political justification for it. If you believe that the Soviet Union is a socialist society; and if you believe that socialist revolution anywhere depends for its success on the survival of the Soviet Union in the form that it had in the nineteen-forties; then a case can be made for a policy which places the military defense of the Soviet Union above all other considerations. This, of course, is not the classic Leninist position either on the defense of the Soviet State or on the role of Marxists in an imperialist war. However, we can assume that it was a point of view that was acceptable to the members of the Communist Party.

The public defense of CP policy, on the other hand, tended to avoid discussions of socialist revolution and leaned heavily on traditional bourgeois patriotism and defense of the democracies (the U.S., Great Britain, and the Soviet Union) and the defeat of fascism.

The contrast between the CP's position before and after June 1941 is relevant both to understanding the Party's position during the war and how it was received by auto workers who came into contact with party activists and party publications.

In *The Communist* of July 1941, William Z. Foster, CP Chairman, had an article entitled, "Yankee Imperialism Grabs for the Western Hemisphere,"<sup>4</sup> in which he wrote:

The present war constitutes a violent redivision of the world among the great imperialist powers. The main motive power behind the savage struggle for markets, raw materials, colonies and strategic positions is the ever-deepening general crisis of the obsolete and rotting world capitalist system. Assertions that either group of the warring powers is fighting for democracy and civilization are an insult to the people's intelligence. . . .

United States imperialism is up to its eyes in this bloody and ruthless struggle for empire. It is already in

the war economically, financially and diplomatically, and its Wall Street government is now watching for a favorable opportunity to violate the will to peace of the American people by plunging the country into the war fully as an active belligerent. The strongest imperialist power, naturally the United States is setting itself no modest goals in the war. It, too, is fighting for world hegemony.<sup>5</sup>

The contrasting position appeared in the October 1941 issue of *The Communist*:

. . . production today — all production, every phase of economic activity — has become a battlefield for national defense, for the defense of the United States. . . .

The chief reason for this lies in the fact that production for the defeat of Hitler Germany, for the crushing of fascism and the triumph of democracy, *now serves a true national interest*. It serves the interests of the United States, of the entire nation and all of its people, and not just the interests of the employers. It serves the interests of the national independence and freedom of our country, of the progress and well-being of our people. . . . For the immediate and ultimate class aims of the American workers, which are in accord with and advance the genuine national interests of the country, necessitate and demand that Hitlerism — which is now the worst and most deadly enemy of the international working class, of all peoples and nations — shall be smashed and wiped off the face of the earth. . . .<sup>6</sup>

The battle of production should therefore be carried on under the following slogans: For National Unity in Defense of the United States! For Full Participation of the United States in the Anti-Hitler Coalition! All Aid to the Soviet Union, Great Britain and China! Mobilize the Entire National Economy for Maximum Production to Crush Hitler and Hitlerism! Expose and Combat the Pro-Hitler Appeasement Forces That Are Sabotaging Production and National Defense! For the Unity of American Labor in the United National Effort Against Hitler! Develop Labor's Organized Strength, Initiative and Activities for Maximum Production for National Defense! . . .<sup>7</sup>

Labor can accelerate the establishment of harmonious and cooperative relations with the technical and production managements by continuing to display greater and ever greater initiative and creativeness in the battle of

production, in increasing its output to the maximum in the shortest possible time, in pressing for and winning greater support for such policies as set forth in the Murray Plan and in strengthening labor's organizations and independent activities in promoting national defense and national unity. . . .<sup>8</sup>

This is not simply a change in policy resulting from changing circumstances. Britain, the United States, and China (ruled then by Chiang Kai-Shek) had been transformed from imperialist powers to great democracies by virtue of Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union. At the same time Hitlerism had been promoted from one among many imperialist powers to the main, the sole enemy. However one may justify defense of the Soviet Union as legitimate working class policy, defense of American imperialism and class peace on the grounds of national defense and defense of democracy was not quite the same thing, either practically or theoretically. To auto workers who were confronted with this change, there was no visible change in the class character of the American government or American society by which it could be justified. As time went on such face-saving expressions as "technical and production managements" were abandoned and we find Earl Browder saying, "It is strange but true that the working class of this country has the task to force better profits on unwilling employers."<sup>9</sup>

The consequences of the CP position on the war and defense of the Soviet Union in terms of concrete day-to-day policies put the Communists in the extreme right wing of the labor movement. (Among other things, this makes for a rather ambiguous terminology. Historians still tend to call CPers and supporters of the CP in the union movement, left wingers. It has little relation to fact or theory.) The Communist Party endorsed an absolute no-strike pledge so complete that they opposed even the strike against Montgomery Ward, a strike which Harry Bridges ordered his longshore members to break.<sup>10</sup> This was one of the rare strikes during the war that the labor leadership endorsed because of both the extreme reactionary policies of the company and the lack of any connection between retail sales and war production. *The Daily Worker* stated that "Those who violate the no-strike pledge are scabs and should be so treated. Scabs were never

handled with kid gloves.”<sup>11</sup>

CP supporters also pressed for incentive pay plans, that is, piece work, a form of payment which the auto workers had been trying desperately to eliminate from the industry. It was denounced as speed-up and defended as the only way under the wartime wage freeze for workers to earn more money. But, although there was no denying that its purpose was to increase production, rarely did supporters of CP policy speak as frankly as Harry Bridges in 1942:

The majority of the time of officers, of grievance committeemen, of the unions as a whole must go to winning of the war. How? Production. I'd rather say speed-up, and I mean speed-up. The term production covers the boss, government and so on. But speed-up covers the workers — the people who suffer from speed-up are the workers. To put it bluntly, I mean your unions today must become instruments of speed-up of the working-class of America.<sup>12</sup>

Politically, the CP was the least critical segment of the labor movement in its relations with the Roosevelt administration. It accepted proposals to draft workers, it urged endorsement of a fourth term for Roosevelt without setting any conditions, it accepted infringement on the civil liberties of Americans and the rights of workers.<sup>13</sup> It denounced opponents in the labor movement as Trotskyites, spies, traitors and saboteurs, encouraging government action against militants and dissidents. The outstanding example is CP support for the trial of Teamster and Trotskyist leaders under the Smith Act in 1941, an act under which CP leaders were themselves tried and convicted in the postwar years.<sup>14</sup>

Even those labor bureaucrats who collaborated with Communist supporters during the war were often made uneasy by the extreme conservatism of the CP. Sam Sage, who worked with CPers to break and prevent strikes, noted:

The funny thing was that as a natural effect of Russia being dragged in on our side because Germany attacked her, we found the Stalinists aligned with us. They went all out. In fact, we had to hold them in check many times. They would have gone overboard on this stuff. You could only go so far and then you began to alienate the workers in

the shop. The Stalinists would have gone so far as to even throw collective bargaining out the window if you could get more planes.<sup>15</sup>

Although the policies of the Communist Party and its supporters are easy to document, the influence of the Party is something else again. Universal problems of gauging political influence are compounded by problems created by the organizational practices of Communists and Trotskyists, above all, confidentiality of membership. When information is available, such as membership figures, it is inherently suspect. The CP is not the only organization that falsifies or exaggerates membership figures for the government, for the public and for its own members.

A study by Nathan Glazer probably comes as close as anything to true figures of CP membership.<sup>16</sup> The first wartime figure presented is one for April 1942 for which date a membership of 50,000, of which 44,000 were registered, is given. It follows a membership of 55,000 (registered) for January 1938, which is the highest figure to that date.<sup>17</sup> However, Glazer notes, "I have one membership report — that for 1942 — in the exact form in which it was given to high party officials. In that report it is asserted the party has a membership of 50,000, of which 44,000 have registered, and this is the highest party membership in history."<sup>18</sup> This obviously puts the 1938 figure in question as well as the second wartime figure, 65,000 for January 1945. The absolute numbers would not matter very much. What is significant, however, is an indication whether the influence or membership of the party was growing or declining. That is, for all practical purposes, unavailable in numerical terms.

Glazer has other estimates on party membership in certain industries. In the auto industry his figures indicate 407 members in May-July 1928, 550 in May 1935, 1,100 in 1939, and 629 in April 1942.<sup>19</sup> The figures indicate a decline in membership during the first year of the war but that is not very helpful. The figures are of doubtful accuracy. Even if accurate they do not indicate whether the decline was the result of party policy during the Hitler-Stalin pact or after the pro-war turn. Bert Cochran indicates that CP union influence declined during the Hitler-Stalin pact period.



In organizational control, they suffered noticeable losses from the high point of the late thirties, but losses difficult to measure statistically. . . . They had been cut down in the auto unions so that their hold or influence was limited to a number of scattered, though important, local unions.<sup>20</sup>

There were periods of very successful recruiting during the war years in Michigan auto plants. Roy Hudson reported recruitment of 300 new members in Michigan early in a drive for 500 members.<sup>21</sup> Of the 300 recruits, 225 were auto workers. However, the CP had great difficulty holding its new members, especially those from the working class. Although the party generally grew during the thirties and forties, Glazer notes that "even though the party increased five-fold since the late twenties, there had been no such increase in the cadres in important industries."<sup>22</sup> This in spite of the fact that the CP (like the Trotskyists) placed special emphasis on recruiting proletarians in heavy industry. "In Michigan, for example, with its consistently high industrial membership, turnover was also frightfully high. In January 1945, two-thirds of the membership in Detroit, John Williamson reported, had been in the party less than a year. The party there had as high a membership as ever."<sup>23</sup>

There were known centers of CP strength in the Detroit area. Local 155, an amalgamated local on the east side of Detroit, was controlled by John Anderson and Nat Ganley. Ganley was an open spokesman for the CP during the war years. The Plymouth local 51, with "Pop" Edelin and others, was a CP stronghold. In the huge Ford Rouge local 600, CP influence was strong in several of the buildings or units. This gave the CP, in addition to its own members and the circulation of its own press, access to local union newspapers and regular union channels of communication and influence. Much CP influence in the UAW spilled over from their control of other unions. "One third of the C.I.O.'s executive committee, leaders of well over a million workers (a quarter to a third of the C.I.O. as a whole) were identifiably of the left, if not members of the Communist Party."<sup>24</sup>

The activities of the Communist Party in the auto industry undoubtedly influenced the frequency of wildcat strikes and the vote on the no-strike pledge. But much of

that influence was indirect and some of it counter-productive. Starobin discusses one aspect of the problem.

In the early thirties the Soviet model could be hailed as relevant to the planlessness of America, floundering in crisis. By the end of the decade American Communists had to answer for the hollowness of Soviet democracy, for Stalin's perversion of what the West had believed socialism to be. The U.S. Party defended Stalinism. Failure to have done so would have been unthinkable, given the dynamic and the cohesion which arose out of its own concept of internationalism. Yet the defense was costly. The hold which the Communists had acquired in American life, especially in intellectual and cultural life, became tenuous and uncertain. The protestations that American socialism could be constitutional, democratic, and consonant with the historic American heritage were hard to believe. No matter how nimbly the Party leaped from projecting "collective security" in 1937 to the isolationism of the "phoney war" period in 1940 following the Soviet-German Pact, then to "national unity" on behalf of defending America in concert with Russia in 1941, and finally to the desperate projection in 1944 that the Cold War could be avoided, the American Communists could no longer claim that their hard work in helping to organize America was proof of their integrity as socialists; this integrity had been undermined.<sup>25</sup>

The dedication, energy, and ability of men like Nat Ganley and other spokesmen for the CP were not sufficient to counteract the effect of the relation of the CPUSA to the Soviet Party. The mass quacking at conventions whenever Ganley got up to speak was not simply a right wing tactic. More often it was the reaction of union militants who simply refused to accept the protestations of patriotism.\*

But there is another element of the problem faced by the CP which Starobin does not see. It stemmed from "the protestations that American socialism could be constitutional, democratic, and consonant with the historic American

\*The quacking, made popular by Walter Reuther in the union faction fighting, stemmed from the cliché, if he walks like a duck and talks like a duck, he must be a duck.

heritage," that is, that socialism was no longer revolutionary. From the time of the Seventh (and last) Congress of the Comintern which adopted the program of people's front (with bourgeois parties) and collective security (with the imperialist powers) in 1934, the CP became dominated by parliamentary concerns and attempted to achieve respectability within the framework of the American two-party system. This is not to say that the CP was not willing to mount militant campaigns. But they were limited to areas such as union organizing and civil liberties and did not include a frontal challenge to American capitalism. As a result, the party recruits during the period of growth in the thirties and forties reflected the party's politics. They tended to have a rather abstract allegiance to socialism and a more concrete allegiance to left-wing Democratic politics and the posts and privileges that came with CP influence in the labor and other movements.

Combined with this political conservatism was another feature of CP policy which was shared with the Trotskyists — an elitism which saw posts in the union movement and contact and influence with leaders as more important than simply rank and file support or activity. Much of the influence of the CP in the forties in the UAW was exercised indirectly through advice and assistance to very traditional types of labor bureaucrats. In such situations the CP (like the Trotskyists) could be very self-effacing, helping to write programs, sending advice in private correspondence and meetings, without public commitments. It was similar in some respects to CP support of President Roosevelt, which never went publicly to the point where it might embarrass the recipient. One result of this kind of support to union leaders (like Thomas, Addes, and Frankenstein) was the appearance of much more influence than was actually wielded. The Trotskyists very often called people like Addes and Frankenstein Stalinists and fellow travelers with what seems, with hindsight, relatively little justification. The coincidence of patriotic and bureaucratic policy between conservative American trade unionists and CP activists was not the result of the bureaucrats deferring to the CP. They were quite capable of working out their own form of capitulation to American capitalism, using the CP to write a leaflet here, corral a few

votes there, and act as a trial balloon on another occasion.

The CP recruited many auto workers during the war and had considerable influence in the auto union. They were especially successful among black workers. Although on a national scale they attempted to restrain the militancy of the black movement, on a personal level and on the shop floor, CP members were the most consistent and principled element in the labor movement in fighting for the rights of black workers.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, I think it is possible to say that there was at the same time a decline of CP influence in the rank and file. CP ties with union bureaucrats served to widen the gap with the membership in a period when the union in general was being rapidly bureaucratized. When the CP, after the war, came under attack from the union bureaucrats, there were practically no members ready to stand up for the democratic rights of the CPers in the union.

The Trotskyists were divided into two organizations during World War II. The larger group that was orthodox in its support of Trotsky's policies was the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). It was connected with the Fourth International although formal ties had to be severed because of legal restrictions in the U.S. The dissident Trotskyist group was the Workers Party. The two groups had split in 1940 over the question of defense of the Soviet Union, a dispute brought on by the Stalin-Hitler Pact and the Soviet invasions of Poland and Finland. In 1940 both wings accepted Trotsky's definition of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers' state. At its first convention in 1941, however, the WP adopted the position that Russia was a "bureaucratic collectivist" society. It was a position that had certain ambiguities but, at the very least, removed from any consideration of either tactics or principle the need to support or defend the Soviet Union.

The SWP was the larger of the two organizations and the one with deeper roots in the auto industry. Membership is very difficult to estimate, but it is unlikely that the SWP had more than 2,000 members nationally. However, the organization had influential people in Detroit, Flint, and elsewhere in the auto industry. John Anderson at the Fleetwood plant, Irwin Bauer at Budd Wheel, both in Detroit, Kermit and Genora Johnson in Flint (she had been the head of the

Women's Emergency Brigade in the GM sitdowns and he had been the first president of the local to which the Chevrolet plants originally belonged) gave substance to SWP influence in the UAW.

The fundamental position of the SWP was that the United States was fighting an imperialist war and that the war was imperialist on both sides. They supported defense of the Soviet Union and of certain colonial nations, such as China. But they also held the Leninist position that such defense by the working class did not involve lessening or limiting the class struggle against its own bourgeoisie.<sup>27</sup>

In the heat of the "war for democracy," the New Deal is melting away. Its much-vaunted social reforms, the CCC, NYA, WPA, etc., its social and labor legislation are being liquidated. The government war agencies have been tucked away in the pockets of Big Business. Reactionaries of the vilest stripe are being coddled by the administration, not only at home but internationally. The State Department is maintaining toward Petain, Franco and Mannerheim an attitude singularly fraternal for a government that is urging the masses to fight and die "against fascism."<sup>28</sup>

In the labor movement, the SWP was critical of the labor leadership for relinquishing labor's rights and for supporting the war.

The program of the UAW leadership: support of the war, coalition with the Roosevelt war government, elevation of the War Labor Board as super-arbiter; surrender of the independence of the labor movement — this program the membership accepts at the present juncture of affairs. But the inevitable consequences of this program are the weakening of the union, the demoralization of the membership, inability to organize the new unorganized war industries, general stagnation and decay, the worsening of working conditions and the lowering of wages and living standards. *The leadership has already reconciled itself to these consequences, but the membership is determined to resist them.*<sup>29</sup>

They were, naturally, especially critical of the CP and

of all labor leaders associated with the CP for acceptance of an unconditional no-strike pledge and for support of incentive pay and other retreats from working class gains.

Their public face as an organization was clearly anti-capitalist and anti-war. Eighteen leaders of the Party were convicted in 1941 under the Smith Act of conspiring to overthrow the Government of the United States. The trial took place after the German invasion of Russia. The testimony of James P. Cannon, National Secretary, was published by the SWP as a primer of the Party's views on capitalism, socialism, revolution, the war, etc. Responding to questions from his defense counsel, Cannon indicated the Party's anti-war position:

Q. Will you state the reasons why the Party would not support a war conducted by the present government of the United States?

A. In general we do not put any confidence in the ruling capitalist group in this country. We do not give them any support because we do not think they can or will solve the fundamental social problems which must be solved in order to save civilization from shipwreck. . . .

Q. What kind of war would you consider a war waged by the present government of the United States?

A. I would consider it a capitalist war. . . . Because America is today a capitalist nation. It is different from the others only in that it is stronger than the others and bigger. We do not believe in capitalist policy. We do not want to conquer any other country. We do not want to gain any colonies. We do not want bloodshed to make profits for American capital.

Q. What is the Party's position on the claim that the war against Hitler is a war of democracy against fascism?

A. We say that is a subterfuge, that the conflict between American imperialism and German imperialism is for the domination of the world. It is absolutely true that Hitler wants to dominate the world, but we think that it is equally true that the ruling group of American capitalists has the same idea, and we are not in favor of either of them.<sup>30</sup>

The concrete carrying out of this anti-war program, however, involved certain contradictions and ambiguities.

The SWP supported the military defense of the Soviet Union and they therefore favored shipment of war materials to Russia. (Some of the Party militants became seamen on the Murmansk run, which delivered war materials to the port in northern Russia.) But this did not really involve anything over which SWP members could have any significant influence. What did modify the Party's influence in the UAW was a political-organizational policy of caution designed to preserve the positions and influence of Party militants in the UAW. This may have been, in part, a consequence of the Smith Act trial which wiped out their strong influence in the Minneapolis Teamsters' Union (with the approval and collaboration of Teamster President Dave Beck). It may also have been the result of a judgment, not entirely unreasonable under the circumstances of a major world war, that there was little anyone could do until the war was over and that a major aim was to preserve the Party cadres for future struggles.

One consequence of this was that SWP members did not play a significant role in organizing the Rank and File Caucus before the 1944 convention of the UAW, although union members close to the SWP did function actively in the Caucus. It is difficult, however, to draw a line separating the policy of caution from the general elitism that was characteristic of the Trotskyist movement which led them to prize posts in the union and contacts with union leaders above direct influence with the rank and file — although trade union policy was never viewed in this form. Theoretically, influence with leaders was a means to influence the ranks and influence among the ranks was a means to achieve leadership or to influence leaders. In practice it never worked out that way. It can be argued that this elitism, which dominated the SWP and the WP, as well as the CP, was more important than the obvious differences in concrete political policy in separating the militants of the left from rank and file workers and led to the loss of support and isolation from the working class of all of these organizations after the end of World War II.

The Workers Party was opposed to all sides in the war. After the German attack on Russia in June 1941, the Political Committee of the WP said in a statement:

The struggle that every class-conscious and militant worker must conduct against Stalinism and its agents, and conduct now with redoubled energy, is an integral part of the struggle that labor in this country must conduct against those who are still its main enemies — the American imperialists, the ruling class, and their war-mongering spokesmen.<sup>31</sup>

The statement concluded with the slogans that summarized the Party position:

Against the imperialist war camp of Berlin-Rome-Tokyo!

Against the imperialist war camp of Washington-London-Moscow!

On with the fight for the only sacred and just cause — the victory of the Third Camp, the camp of the suffering peoples, the camp of the exploited workers of all lands, of the disinherited and oppressed masses of the colonies!

Long live the coming victory of freedom and peace, the victory of the international socialist brotherhood of the people!<sup>32</sup>

After Pearl Harbor the Party issued an anti-war statement of the National Committee of the WP which stated its opposition to both sides in the war.<sup>33</sup> In January 1942 the Party organ, *Labor Action*, published an article by the National Secretary, Max Shachtman, critical of the SWP for not responding to Pearl Harbor with an official, public, anti-war statement.<sup>34</sup>

The WP was for prosecution of the class struggle and, like the SWP, for an independent labor party. Its attitude toward the working class ranged from abstract statements of working class militancy to concrete complaints about the backwardness of the workers. In February 1942 one of the leading labor strategists of the Party wrote:

Labor's perspective for this war is only "blood, sweat, tears and toil" insofar as the Roosevelt Administration has plans for it. But the economic conditions, the class interests, the rich traditions, the glorious opportunities for expansion, and the growing political consciousness of the American workers, indicate that labor has for itself, in a



groping, unclear fashion at present, to be sure, a different perspective. For the American labor movement is now the mightiest in the world. It hasn't gone through the terrible defeats and demoralization of the European working class. It is fresh, growing, militant and unafraid, as its history shows.

Labor has come of age in America.<sup>35</sup>

A few months later, in an analysis of the 1942 UAW convention, the Party's Labor Secretary began his discussion with:

The most significant occurrences of the recent United Auto Workers' convention demonstrate anew the woefully inadequate political preparation of the American workers for playing a class role in the Second Imperialist World War.<sup>36</sup>

In his conclusion he noted:

Fully 95 per cent of the delegates to the UAW convention disagreed with the antics and the proposals of the leadership. Yet this leadership came away with the victory. The militants among the delegates talked and talked and pounded. But their fury and militancy accomplished comparatively little. The reason is easy to see. These militants had no political or organizational program. They do not understand capitalism and bourgeois-democratic society. They confuse politics with parliamentarianism. They do not think in terms of working class politics and of the urgent need for militant and independent working class political action.<sup>37</sup>

The attitude of the WP toward the CP, and, in particular, the validity of its judgments appear different thirty years later than they did at the time. As was indicated earlier, there was justification for the intense hostility between Communists and Trotskyists in the historical and political developments of the preceding two decades. However, the intensity of that hostility tended to distort judgment. For example, reports from the 1943 UAW convention clearly exaggerate the role and influence of the CP (as the CP exaggerated the role and influence of the Trotskyists).

The Addes-Frankenstein group was definitely the camp of the Stalinist Communist Party. . . . This was a faction that followed the Stalinist political line with a high degree of consistency under the direct leadership of the Stalinist whips on the floor of the convention.<sup>38</sup>

The Addes-Frankenstein faction was made up in large part of the Stalinists (the Communist Party-liners), was supported by them and in the main organized by them.<sup>39</sup>

There is no basis in fact for these judgments. In part, I suppose, it was a reflection of a paranoia directed at the CP. In part, also, it reflected an unwillingness or an inability to see American labor bureaucrats dominated by an eagerness to support American capitalism who only incidentally made common cause with genuine CP members and supporters. These distortions of judgment help to explain the movement of Max Shachtman and the WP, over a number of years, to a position of bitter anti-Communism. From being opposed equally to both imperialist camps, the dominant wing of the WP moved toward viewing Communists as the main enemy, to the point where Shachtman ultimately found the McGovern wing of the Democratic Party too soft on Communism and preferred the Johnson-Humphrey-Jackson wing.

Organizationally, the WP was much weaker than the SWP in working class centers such as Detroit, northern Ohio, and so on. Their membership, buttressed by the bulk of the youth organization (the Young People's Socialist League, Fourth International), was only slightly smaller than the SWP but it was overwhelmingly middle class and concentrated in New York City. As a result, there was an organized drive to "proletarianize" the Party by colonizing young students and others in key industrial centers. Detroit was one such center. In the summer of 1942 a half dozen young members from the east joined the single Detroit member to form what became one of the most active and influential branches of the WP. Over the next few years contacts were made, occasional recruits, and a degree of influence attained in a few locals in the Detroit area at Ford and Chrysler plants and some independents. The Detroit branch distributed an average of 5,000 copies per week of the weekly paper, *Labor Action*. These were usually distributed at plants where members worked or

where strikes had taken place. Whenever the members fell behind and thousands of undistributed copies accumulated, a distribution was arranged at the huge Rouge plant of the Ford Motor Company, where it was a simple matter to distribute thousands of copies in a single afternoon.

Generally speaking, all sorts of left-wing papers circulated freely in the plants during the war. There was rarely evidence of hostility on the part of workers and most often there was interest. Whether specific policies and attitudes were acceptable to workers or not, radical ideas, socialist ideas, anti-capitalist ideas, and anti-war ideas were common currency among Detroit auto workers during World War II.

The WP also had some influence in scattered locals around the country such as Brewster Aircraft in Long Island City, N.Y., and a Buick plant in Chicago (Local 6).

The WP tended to be more aggressive in seeking out militant workers during the war. The difference in organizational policy with the SWP might simply have been the result of its lack of an industrial base that could be threatened by rash actions in wildcat strikes and the like and its need to establish significant working class contacts. In this it was helped by the extremely reactionary Detroit daily papers, all of which attempted to intimidate striking workers by publishing their names and addresses, threatening them with blacklisting. It was remarkably easy to make contact with such workers all through the war. In 1944 such contacts began to provide the basis for organizing the Rank and File Caucus.

Caucus allegiances in the UAW were sometimes contradictory, and some aspects of the problem will be dealt with in Chapter 6, but generally the Trotskyists in the union functioned in the Reuther caucus (but with considerable criticism of the Reuther leadership), while the Communists functioned in the Addes-Frankensteen caucus.

Once again, it is impossible to make a quantitative judgment of the extent of the influence of the Trotskyist and Communist organizations. The influence, however, was real on two levels. In certain specific situations the left parties had power and a degree of control. But more generally, they made available to large numbers of auto workers ideas about socialism and capitalism that went beyond the specifics of

wartime problems. It is reasonable to assume that auto workers absorbed these ideas and transformed them in ways that suited their own purposes and the possibilities available to them.

# 5

## MECHANICS AND MINERS

In addition to the parties of the old left there were also two trade union organizations that exerted an influence on auto workers and their willingness to strike during the war. These were the Mechanics Educational Society of America, a small union centered in Detroit and led by Matthew Smith, and the United Mine Workers of America led by John L. Lewis.

The MESA actually predated the UAW. It was formed in 1932 to organize skilled workers in Detroit and the industrial midwest and in 1933 established itself in Detroit with a successful strike. "The name is peculiar because of the fact that even to mention the word 'union' in any plant in Detroit was very unhealthy. . . . The name was chosen deliberately to confuse the bosses." <sup>1</sup>

The three main spark plugs and organizers of that society or union, as it really was, were Matthew Smith, a member of the Socialist Party; John Anderson, a member of the Communist Party who ran for governor on the Communist Party ticket; and John Wiseman, a German immigrant. All of these people were foreign born: Matt Smith, John Anderson and John Wiseman . . . [T]he Mechanics Educational Society started organizing in April or May of 1933 and by October of 1933 had called a strike involving probably four or five thousand mechanics in hundreds of plants scattered throughout the Detroit area. They won that strike and got union recognition for practically all the job shops in the Detroit area. . . . Now it is true that the MESA did not succeed in organizing and getting recognition for their union in General Motors, Ford and Chrysler; but they did call effective strikes in Fisher Body in Detroit and in Buick in Flint. . . . And many of the workers

who participated in the MESA strike of 1933 became the leaders of the 1937 sit-down strikes, both in Detroit and in Flint.<sup>2</sup>

When the UAW began to organize on an industrial basis, two developments modified the MESA. One was the withdrawal of leading Communists and other leftists in order to be in what they determined to be the mainstream of the American labor movement. "There was one local on the east side, which later became local 155 of the UAW with John Anderson as the leader. And then we had a group in the Fisher Body local. . . . What we had in Fisher Body 23 became local 157 of the UAW."<sup>3</sup> "Bert Cochran, who was a leader of the MESA in Cleveland and conducted strikes there, brought his entire section of the MESA, or brought a large part of the MESA in the Cleveland area, into the UAW in early 1937."<sup>4</sup>

This added to the intense competition with the CIO which led to the second factor, a retreat from a policy of craft unionism to a policy of industrial unionism. By the beginning of World War II, the relative strength of MESA and UAW had been established, with the MESA very much the smaller. Although it organized on an industrial basis, most of the shops under MESA contract were tool and die shops. Only a handful were production shops, including a Detroit plant of Kelvinator (later American Motors).

Although there was considerable tension and conflict between MESA and the UAW and the auto workers overwhelmingly chose to go with the UAW, the MESA was generally respected among auto workers for its pioneer organizing and for its uncompromising militancy.

The MESA was distinguished from all other unions by its structure.

Our constitution and bylaws are much different than any other organization inside the AF of L-CIO. . . . We have a rank and file committee that is a national committee with convention authority and they have the final say on anything in the MESA and full control of the officers. We call it the National Administrative Committee. In order to be a member of that committee you must actually work in the plant. You cannot be a full-time paid official, not the local or the national.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the full-time officers of MESA could be hired and fired by the National Administrative Committee, which consisted of people working full time in the shops. However, although the MESA was considerably more democratic than even the UAW in its democratic heyday, the form cannot be taken as equivalent to the substance. Matt Smith was the General Secretary of the MESA, its leading official and public spokesman. Although he was subject to the control of the National Administrative Committee, he, in fact, dominated the Committee through the force of his personality and his politics. Much of what MESA represented to Detroit workers was embodied in Matt Smith.

Smith had been active in the Amalgamated Engineers Union in England, organizing apprentices.<sup>6</sup> In 1917 he had taken part in an unauthorized wartime strike.<sup>7</sup> "Socialist, atheist, iconoclast, Matt refused to become a citizen of the United States on principle: 'I'm an internationalist, a citizen of the human race.'"<sup>8</sup> "Smith came to the United States from England in 1927. He took out first papers shortly after his arrival but never completed the naturalization process.

"'Maybe I don't feel I would make a good citizen. Perhaps I will wait a few more years to make sure,' he said jokingly. . . .

"He was known to have pacifistic leanings in the first World War. Of the present conflict, he says that 'the job of winning it must be done.'"<sup>9</sup>

The MESA was one of the few unions during World War II that never gave a no-strike pledge. It also participated frequently in strikes. The vituperation directed at Matt Smith by the Detroit newspapers for daring to lead his union in strikes and for being an alien in addition, an alien on principle, was unparalleled. It was also familiar to any resident of Detroit, as was the ability of the MESA to preserve its gains. An example of what appeared in the Detroit newspapers is the following from a *Detroit Free Press* editorial:

No, this blow for Hitler and Hirohito has not been struck by an American, thank God!

This strike against the Government of the United States has been called by a foreigner.

Matthew Smith, executive head of the Mechanics' Educational Society, is a radical labor agitator who came to

this country from England in 1928 because he was starving 'over 'ome.'

Smith has refused even to apply for American citizenship and jeers at the very idea. He will have you know that he is a citizen of the world. . . .

When the AFL and the CIO went on record through their national officers that there would be no authorized strikes during the war, Smith thought that very stupid of them. He refused to make any such pledge. "Such action," he said at the time, "would prevent us from exploiting labor in war time."<sup>10</sup>

The eyes and limbs and lives of American youth is the price we will have to pay.

In our book there is just one word to describe this refusal to give our boys the weapons they need. . . .<sup>11</sup>

In reporting an MESA strike in 1942, the *Detroit News* gave an indication of what so infuriated the press, the government and the labor leaders:

Labor leaders here, however, wondered whether Smith was so vitally interested in the fate of the eight electricians, or whether he seized upon their dismissal to advertise his "we can strike if we want to" policy to skilled workers now enrolled in the UAW-CIO, whose wage rates were recently frozen by the WLB.<sup>12</sup>

It was not often, however, that the press would expose the fact that workers were likely to be attracted to a policy of rejecting the no-strike pledge.

During the war, in part to protect itself against the major unions which were functioning with considerable government support, the MESA became involved in attempting to organize a third labor federation, the Confederated Unions of America (CUA). It never became a serious force on the American scene and ultimately became more of a problem than the MESA was willing to be involved with. Too many of the independent unions which became part of the CUA were company unions or extremely right wing. The MESA withdrew after a couple of years.<sup>13</sup>

Much of the philosophy of Matt Smith and the MESA was presented in testimony before a Senate subcommittee investigating production in Detroit:



Sen. Ferguson. How many members have you in the Detroit area?

Mr. Smith. . . . about 32,000, mostly skilled men.

The Chairman. And how many have you in the country at large?

Smith. . . . probably about 64,000 now. . . .

Sen. Ferguson. . . . Did you organize [the MESA]?

Smith. No; I wouldn't say that. . . .

Sen. Ferguson. Who was really the organizer?

Smith. Some very unscrupulous employers in this area must be given credit for organizing our union. . . . Any place you cannot organize, you must be patient and allow the boss to do it for you. He is usually tempted to do just that.

The Chairman. Has your organization signed the non-strike pledge?

Smith. Oh my goodness no. . . .

We would not, and we don't intend to refrain from striking, as we have not as yet met any employers that are worthy of being given that pledge. I am afraid they might be tempted to touch some of our members and discriminate against them, and if they ever do that, the full weight of our organization will be used, peacetime, wartime, in season or out of season, to protect our membership.

Sen. Ferguson. No matter what happens with the country, your membership comes first.

Smith. Listen, Senator, I come from a country that had 91 wars in 100 years. I am getting a bit cynical about them. I know we have always been right, but just expect me to be just slightly disillusioned. . . .

I am a little cynical about the Versailles Treaty, about the depression that occurred in Germany by the Versailles Treaty. I am rather dubious about what would happen in any country during an acute depression. I know what nearly happened in this country, in Louisiana; we nearly got dizzy after Huey Long. . . .

The Chairman. How do you feel about Yalta?

Smith. I think the Big Three were trying to imitate another Big Three — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. I don't know whether they are doing a good job or not. . . .

Sen. Ferguson. Do you get in the plants at all?

Smith. I get in all the plants.

Sen. Ferguson. Where your operations are?

Smith. I have no trouble at all in getting in any plant

where we have a contract. At the beginning, of course, we had some difficulty, but if we couldn't get in the plant, I brought the boys out of the plant to talk to me, and then after that I was allowed in the plant. [Laughter.]

Sen. Ferguson. In other words, you called a strike.

Smith. That is right.

Sen. Ferguson. A walk-out. Then you would be able to get in with them.

Smith. That is right. I mean we understand each other. We understand that we are in an unremitting economic war with the employers. They perfectly understand.

We are not similar to the organizations that gave evidence today. We are always trying to encroach on the managerial prerogatives. . . .

We don't know what those prerogatives are. They change from year to year. And, as far as we can, we will encroach until we eliminate the management, if that becomes necessary.

Sen. Ferguson. In other words, you want to take over the management.

Smith. If the management is incapable of resisting us in our desire to take over. . . .

Sen. Ferguson. You are of the opinion, in the plants you are now having unions, that they are incapable of management, and it is your union's duty to take over that management.

Smith. Oh, no; you mustn't speak for me, Senator. . . . Don't put words into my mouth. We are out completely for the managerial prerogatives, and the managements we deal with are quite honest about it. They are trying to see that no union activity is carried on in their plants. So somewhere between those points we declare an occasional armistice, and we call them contracts. . . .

We are both amiable. Everybody knows we are not dishonest. We are not saying we are going to show them how to run the plants, but if they abdicate, we shall advocate somebody taking them over, preferably us, but most of our managements are too astute to let us get that far.

Sen. Ferguson. . . . It has been stated here by the C.I.O., if I state them correctly here, that their province is not to take over management. They stop at foremen. Is yours the same?

Smith. No. We have some foremen organized and will



Matthew Smith. (*Detroit News*)

continue to organize foremen in our union.\* We think the line, the economic line, should be drawn between all the people who make any contribution to the national economic pool. That takes in managers, superintendents. And opposition should be people who live on unearned income and the stockholders.

Sen. Ferguson. In other words, you take in your union all of management?

Smith. No; we haven't been able to persuade them to come in, but we do take foremen. [Laughter.] . . .

Sen. Ferguson. The only people, then, you wouldn't take in are the stockholders?

Smith. That is right. I don't think they live good enough lives, else we mix with all kinds of people. We draw the line somewhere. [Laughter.] . . .

Sen. Ferguson. You think most of your members think the same thing?

Smith. It just depends how persuasive I have been. I don't know; I keep on being elected by giving out that philosophy. That is all I can tell you, Senator.

Sen. Ferguson. And, at least, it is worth \$7,500 a year. [Smith's salary.]

Smith. It is worth a lot more. That is what I get. [Laughter.] . . .

[An exchange developed on the degree of efficiency in Detroit factories.]

Smith. Our production is retarded in the Detroit area from possible potential production for various reasons: No. 1, there is an acute shortage of labor during wartime. The average man and woman in the plant is not saturated and permeated with the fear of losing their jobs. That fear is not there. The substitute, of course, should be that they want to go in for all-out production because of the war effort. My members, peculiarly enough, have been conditioned from the first time they started work, to the incentive of wages. They work for wages. They don't know how to work for idealistic causes. They don't know how to work for the four, five, or six freedoms; they work for cash.

During the war, because of the acute shortage of labor, they were, for the first time in 10 years, in an economic position to bargain with the employers and extract

\*The inclusion of foremen may be as much a skilled trades traditional practice as socialist principle.

more remuneration than ever before since the World War I.

This bargaining potential was taken away from them by Government action. I personally object to that. I don't agree that, under a system of free enterprise, there should be any wage stabilization. It appears to me that free enterprise means that you may get \$10 a week or \$100 a week. It depends upon all kinds of economic factors. It depends upon the number of people available for each job. It depends upon your capacity to bargain or fight it out with the employer. But there is nobody says that this relative state of justice or injustice is hereby stabilized. That should not be. . . .

Now, it is my opinion the wage stabilization was put over and probably retarded production 10 to 20 percent. It would have been much better, in my opinion, to let this bargaining go on and wages go up; dividends would go down, and, of course, the wages we did receive would be taxed to death, but we would have the pleasure of the money passing through our hands. [Laughter.] And, also, when the war was over and the taxation ceased, we would have the increments we had made by bargaining during a favorable economic position for unions. . . .

Sen. Ferguson. Who would you have own the capital fixtures and the plant?

Smith. Oh, probably the workers.

Sen. Ferguson. The workers?

Smith. Sure, if necessary. Nationalization with democratic control may be the method, but don't ask me to draw a blueprint of the future. All I know is that this system is pretty damn lousy and can't get very much worse.

Sen. Ferguson. What you are advocating is that the state own the capital fixtures?

Smith. I am not. I am advocating that some other motive rather than acquisitiveness be the dominating factor in our economic life. . . .

I do want to say why I think that production is down. I want you to get a picture of a man working in the plant now. Of course, he compares everything to pre-war. For the first time the foreman is polite to him. The foreman tries to persuade him to come in 6 or 7 days a week. In a rather mysterious way, instead of being just a piece of material, as he was before the war, to be discarded whenever necessary, he suddenly finds he has been put on a pinnacle and treated in a civilized fashion.

For the first time he is getting wages where he can

feed his wife and kids and buy some luxuries, and he is having comparatively decent times.

Somebody comes along and says that, "What you ought to do is to concentrate on finishing this war as quickly as possible in order that you can go back to the bad old days of peace when you could work 3 months a year. You could be laid off. You could exhaust your unemployment insurance. You could go down to the welfare and plead for a basket of groceries. You could be kicked off the lawn of the White House, perhaps. All these things could happen to you."

Now, those are peacetime amenities of civilization that are not very attractive to the average war worker. The average war worker that I talk to will pay lip service, as the labor union and management leaders did here today, that they dedicate their whole lives to the successful prosecution of the war. But the average man, in my opinion, just below the surface, is very apprehensive as to what is going to happen to him when the war is over. He knows that 51 percent of world production prior to the war, machine-tool production, was in the United States. The only thing he doesn't know is, when. Nevertheless, he is apprehensive. He has a right to be apprehensive. Everybody is telling him he shouldn't worry about the post-war period; he should concentrate on winning the war, and if he is thrown into the gutter, well, Nature has a way of throwing its filth into the gutter; he should stay there.<sup>14</sup>

In wide-ranging testimony Smith defended the idea of a peaceful road to socialism. He opposed incentive pay. He opposed both the check-off of union dues and maintenance of membership on the grounds that it made unions soft and less concerned with the needs of their members.

The views of Matt Smith have been quoted extensively, not because they were acceptable to all of the members of the MESA or to auto workers generally, but because they were widely circulated in the Detroit area in the reporting of these hearings and in the earlier years of the war, in the frequent and vitriolic attacks on Smith whenever the MESA was involved in a strike.

Auto workers were familiar with the willingness of the MESA to maintain and extend its gains through the use of strikes. But MESA went even further than an occasional strike against a particular employer. In February of 1944

the MESA called out its members in 30 plants in the Detroit-northern Ohio area in protest against a decision of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). "The NLRB had granted the United Automobile Workers (CIO) permission to hold an election at the Willys tool room in Toledo where MESA had bargaining rights."<sup>15</sup> Matt Smith charged the NLRB with favoring CIO and AFL unions, refused to respond to subpoenas requiring his appearance at hearings, and, in general, made headlines across the country over his union's rejections of the no-strike pledge.<sup>16</sup> Although they had very little in common, Smith was compared to John L. Lewis in this action, probably because Lewis, in a much larger series of strikes the previous year, had been at the center of a massive confrontation with the federal government.

John L. Lewis, the United Mine Workers, and miners generally have always had a special relationship with and meaning for auto workers. In discussing this, it should be clear that I am not discussing the internal history of the United Mine Workers, Lewis' ruthless achievement of power in the union at the expense of the near destruction of the union in the twenties, and his dictatorial control of the union structure through control of the union's executive board, of which a clear majority were Lewis appointees who were not subject to election by the ranks.

Miners and auto workers were connected in three ways.<sup>17</sup> Many auto workers were former miners who came from what was later known as Appalachia for the easier work and better pay of the auto shops. The miners' union was a mainstay of the CIO, providing money, organizers and other kinds of assistance to the newer, younger unions, such as the UAW. (To unions which did not pre-date the CIO, such as the Steelworkers, the UMW contributed as much of an undemocratic and bureaucratic structure as it was possible to get away with.) Finally, John L. Lewis, with his impressive appearance and flair for both strategy and public controversy, had captured a warm place in the hearts of auto workers. In the forties, workers still remembered and discussed a meeting in the back room of a bar near the Dodge plant in the thirties at which Lewis handed over \$50,000 to a group of Dodge workers with the simple injunction to organize Dodge.

"A wildcat anthracite strike which began December 30,

1942, and continued through January 22, 1943, provided the catalyst for nationwide coal miner unrest in 1943."<sup>18</sup> It involved between 15,000 and 25,000 of the 80,000 anthracite miners.<sup>19</sup> There are various interpretations of the causes of that strike. On the face of it, it was in protest against a 50-cent dues increase announced by the union. That this was the cause is rejected by Saul Alinsky<sup>20</sup> and Art Preis.<sup>21</sup> Alinsky seems to reject the idea that miners would strike against their own union. Preis seems to be trying to prove, in the narrowest terms, that the miners were striking against the government. J. R. Sperry's analysis seems to me to be closest to reality. He insists that the initial cause was the dues increase, but that much more was involved.

. . . the anthracite wildcat strike accurately demonstrated the intensity of coal miner anger at the wage policies of the Roosevelt administration, and at the outset the strike was primarily a reaction to Lewis's ineffective leadership.<sup>22</sup>

Although Lewis was charged across the nation with manipulating and encouraging the strike (and the official strikes which followed), he tried desperately to bring it to an end. It was a significant challenge to his leadership. At one point Thomas Kennedy and local district leaders proposed "that wildcat strikers be dropped from the rolls of the UMW, while Lewis primarily directed his vindictiveness at the anthracite strike leaders."<sup>23</sup> The dues increase was forgotten in the subsequent events, but Lewis found himself forced to demand a significant wage increase for the miners in order to reassert his control of the situation. He announced a demand for a \$2 a day wage increase for both anthracite and bituminous miners when their contracts expired on March 31 (bituminous) and April 30 (anthracite), 1943. As Sidney Lens has noted, "Lewis reflected the mineworkers' militancy and, although he did not yield to it entirely, he was wise enough to run with labor's tide rather than against it."<sup>24</sup>

On January 15, 1943, the National War Labor Board ordered the strike to end. The miners responded by extending the strike. The Board referred the strike to President Roosevelt who then, clothing himself in the mantle of "Commander in Chief," ordered the miners to return. They took a



few extra days and finally returned to work on January 22, responding to government and union pressure and Lewis's pledge to demand a substantial wage increase in the next contract.

On January 30 miners were enraged by the award of a 23-cent per ton price increase to western Pennsylvania soft coal operators by the Office of Price Administration. In this period, CIO and AFL leaders were publicly and privately attempting to pressure the administration into a modification of the Little Steel Formula. Instead, on February 9, the NWLB rejected a wage increase for packinghouse workers at the major meat packers, among the lowest paid of unionized workers.

In March, Lewis began contract bargaining with the bituminous coal operators. Among the demands presented were retention of the basic 35-hour, five-day week; a \$2 per day wage increase; and portal-to-portal pay, that is, pay for the time spent travelling from the mine entrance to the work face. On March 15, Lewis indicated that the union was prepared to strike to win its demands. Some time later, testifying before a Senate committee, he indicated that the no-strike pledge was not necessarily binding. In April, "Roosevelt in a comprehensive executive order designed to 'hold the lines' re-emphasized the imperative necessity of 'freezing wages and prices.'"<sup>25</sup> This, in effect, was an order to the NWLB not to breach the Little Steel Formula. Lewis offered to withdraw all the wage demands if the operators would guarantee a six-day week for the life of the contract. This was supported by John Steelman of the Federal Conciliation Service. He quickly disappeared from the negotiations. On April 22 the Secretary of Labor certified the dispute to the War Labor Board. Lewis refused to recognize the Board or appear before it. The Board ordered uninterrupted production of coal. The miners responded by beginning walkouts in Alabama and western Pennsylvania. Lewis announced that if there was no new contract agreed to by the termination of the old one, the miners would not "trespass" on the property of the operators on May 1.

President Roosevelt threatened to use all his powers to keep the miners working. Despite his threats, on May 1 all the union bituminous mines were shut down. Roosevelt

ordered government seizure of the mines on May 1 and turned them over to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes to operate. (That turnover was in part fictional since, apart from Ickes himself and an American flag flying at each mine, the operation continued, at Ickes' instruction, to be run by the old owners and managers.) "Ickes then declared the miners were working 'for the government' and ordered them back to work.

The miners didn't budge. . . . On Sunday night of May 2 Roosevelt was scheduled for a nation-wide radio address to the miners. Just before the President's broadcast, Lewis called a press conference and announced that starting Tuesday morning, May 4, another 15-day truce would be observed. . . .<sup>26</sup>

The miners, in their local unions, voted to return to work for the truce period and waited until May 4, rather than May 3, to return to the pits.

CIO and AFL officials had voted with the government on the War Labor Board. They had publicly denounced the miners' strike and Lewis. "UAW-CIO President R. J. Thomas said that the miners' walkout was 'a political strike against the President.'"<sup>27</sup> The attacks on Lewis and the miners in the press all across the country were fantastically bitter and vituperative. If the strike had not been political at the start (which it was) it was made political at the insistence of all the elements in government, business, and the labor movement which opposed it.

Nevertheless,

In Detroit on May 2, the day of Roosevelt's radio call to the miners, a thousand delegates representing 350,000 members of the United Auto Workers in Michigan overrode their national officers and adopted by overwhelming vote a resolution to support not only the UMW's demands but the strike as well. The UAW national leaders, which included President Thomas and Vice-President Reuther, introduced and backed a minority resolution opposing the strike. . . . But the delegates would not be swayed. Only a half dozen or so . . . openly voted against the majority resolution to back the coal strike.<sup>28</sup>

This sentiment was further reflected by numbers of resolutions passed by local UAW unions supporting and encouraging the miners.<sup>29</sup>

The battle between the miners on the one hand and the government and mine operators on the other extended through most of 1943, with the bitterness of the attack on the miners in the press steadily mounting. But the working class response was almost as solid as the miners'.

On June 1, 530,000 miners went on strike. The operators, becoming aware that they could no longer rely solely on the power of the NWLB to take care of the miners' demands, began to negotiate. Settlements seemed to be taking shape around \$1.50 per day portal-to-portal pay, a wage increase that would crack the Little Steel Formula. The NWLB ordered negotiations to cease until the miners went back to work. The union ordered a return to work on June 7 to continue to June 20. In the negotiations that followed (with the mine operators, not with the government which nominally owned the mines), agreement was reached on \$1.30 per day in portal-to-portal pay.

At the same time, flushed with anti-labor sentiment, the House of Representatives passed the Smith-Connally War Labor Disputes Act, an anti-strike bill that gave statutory power to the NWLB. On June 18 the NWLB turned down the agreement between the UMW and the mine operators. The miners began striking as soon as the word went out, not waiting for the deadline of June 20. Once again the strike was complete. Despite the fact that the UMW had won \$1.50 portal-to-portal pay from the Illinois mine operators and \$1.30 in Pennsylvania, the labor members of the NWLB had joined in rejecting the proposed contracts.

Two days after the strike began, Lewis announced another truce, a return to work until October 31, but conditioned on the government continuing to operate the mines. On June 25 Roosevelt vetoed the Smith-Connally Act, on the grounds that it was not strong enough, and Congress passed it over his veto. Complicated maneuvers and threats continued for the remainder of the summer, including the threat to apply the sanctions of the new law against Lewis and the UMW. Further agreements were reached with the Illinois mine operators, again rejected by the NWLB. Wildcats

began to spread. In October, Ickes announced the return of the mines to the private operators. The strikes became general before the October 31 deadline, with neither Lewis nor the government able to contain them.

Ultimately, the coal operators and the government accepted defeat. On November 20 the NWLB handed down a decision which ended the Little Steel Formula, accepting the portal-to-portal pay with minor modifications.

The ability and willingness of the miners to take on the government in a series of battles and to emerge with a significant victory was evident to everyone in the country, not least of all the auto workers. It was not that this convinced the auto workers that the no-strike pledge was a false policy. It was that it confirmed what was a widespread sentiment to begin with. The obvious dual class standard of the government in the rigidity of wage controls as opposed to the flexibility of price controls was simply brought out into the open by the miners' strikes. It may have convinced some waverers among the auto workers. But, more importantly, it lent legitimacy and strength to those who opposed the no-strike pledge. It also undercut the power and prestige of the UAW leadership as a result of their openly taking sides with those who were attacking the miners.

# 6

## CULMINATION AND CONTRADICTION

In 1941 there had been more strikes than in any year since 1937 and more workers involved than in any year since 1919. A substantial drop in the number of strikes took place in 1942, the first full year of American participation in the war. However, as the war continued, the number of strikes kept rising. In 1943 there was a sharp rise in the number of strikes, more than doubling the number of man-days idle. These figures include the coal strikes. In 1944 there was another increase in the number of strikes to the highest point in this century. There was, however, a smaller increase in the number of workers involved and, reflecting the shorter duration of the wildcat strikes, a decline in the number of work days lost.<sup>1</sup>

Included in the increased number of strikes in 1943 were large and important strikes in the auto industry. In May there were strikes at five Chrysler plants in the Detroit area.<sup>2</sup>

The strikes in the auto industry, coming in a year of widely publicized miners' strikes, were accompanied by growing hostility to the no-strike pledge. An interviewer reported that Chrysler strikers' attitude toward the no-strike pledge was that, "Without exception, so far as I was able to discover, they maintain that they have never agreed to any such thing."<sup>3</sup> Supporting this tendency was a statement by John L. Lewis in March that he held the no-strike pledge no longer binding.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps adding to the irritation of workers were signs of increasing threats and pressure against strikers. On two occasions Brig. Gen. B. Smith ordered Alabama draft boards to reclassify striking workers to remove their deferments.<sup>5</sup> The demand that surfaced in the Florida Senate for a one-year prison term for strikers or those who cause strikes

in war work was not unusual.<sup>6</sup> Such demands increased in number and vindictiveness as the war continued and the number of strikes mounted.

That the problem of discriminatory use of the draft against militant workers had become pretty general was indicated by the adoption of a resolution on the problem at the 1943 convention of the UAW. It charged, among other things, that local draft boards were dominated by professionals and businessmen, that "management has used the draft for discriminatory purposes against active union members, has shown favoritism in protecting from the draft, workers less essential than others being inducted,"<sup>7</sup> etc. It called for the establishment of Labor-Management Committees on deferment at the factory level.

Other kinds of pressure against workers surfaced in the coal strikes. "Thirty coal miners — local union presidents, checkweighmen, committeemen, and ordinary rank and file militants of the United Mine Workers of America in Southwestern Pennsylvania — have been indicted by a federal grand jury at Pittsburgh on charges of violating the notorious Smith-Connally law."<sup>8</sup>

At the end of 1942, Buick local 599 in Flint called for a special convention to rescind the no-strike pledge. Support came from the Brewster Aircraft local 365 (Long Island City, N.Y.) and local 719 in Chicago.<sup>9</sup>

In July 1943, the convention of the Michigan CIO adopted a generally militant program and urged the national CIO to rescind the no-strike pledge if the Little Steel formula were not broken and genuine equality of sacrifice were not adopted.<sup>10</sup>

At the UAW Convention in October 1943, however, the leadership was able to keep a tighter rein on the delegates. The majority and minority resolutions introduced on the no-strike pledge were both for unconditional retention of the no-strike pledge. The difference between the majority resolution, introduced by Victor Reuther, and the minority resolution, introduced by Shelton Tappes of Ford local 600, was trivial. The majority called for government operation of plants in which management did not bargain in good faith. The minority called for political action to accomplish labor's ends. Finally, the majority accepted the political action

clause of the minority resolution and the two were joined together in one resolution. The discussion was minimal, with Emil Mazey of the Briggs local 212 and Jackson Crump of local 599 speaking against the pledge. The pledge was reaffirmed in a hand vote.<sup>11</sup>

In 1944 the conflict between the UAW leadership and rank and file workers who wildcatted with increasing frequency was intensified. There were also other signs that workers were looking for new directions in their search for an end to governmental restrictions and for ways to assert their own power.

At a Detroit conference on March 4 and 5, 1944, delegates representing 85 Michigan AFL and CIO unions formed the Michigan Commonwealth Federation. The name was patterned after the socialistic Canadian Commonwealth Federation and it reflected growing disenchantment with the Roosevelt government and labor's ties to the Democratic Party.<sup>12</sup> The MCF was bitterly attacked by the UAW leadership but the local union leaders who dominated the MCF were quite timid in their opposition to CIO-Democratic Party politics. They ran a few candidates that year, being careful not to oppose Roosevelt and other choice Democrats endorsed by the unions. Although they faded fairly quickly from the scene, the unionists who formed MCF reflected a deep-rooted desire for an independent labor movement, a desire that was later to surface in the unsuccessful campaign of UAW Vice-President Richard Frankenstein for mayor of Detroit.<sup>13</sup>

Major strikes began to appear with greater frequency in 1944. In February 6,500 workers at Chevrolet Gear and Axle (UAW local 235, Detroit) and 5,600 workers at the Ford Highland Park plant (local 400) incurred the denunciations of UAW leaders for taking part in wildcat strikes. In March a mass meeting of members of the Aircraft Unit of the Ford Rouge local 600 proposed to call a city-wide conference to begin a movement to rescind the no-strike pledge. (The Aircraft Unit consisted of about 10,000 workers on Pratt-Whitney aircraft engines, part of the near-100,000-member local 600. The president of the unit in 1944 was Larry Yost, who became one of the leaders of the Rank and File Caucus.) Later the same month the executive board of local 212 voted for a special convention to rescind the no-strike pledge. Other

locals passed similar resolutions.<sup>14</sup>

Wildcat strikes at the Ford Rouge plant in March led to a call for disciplinary action against the strikers by R. J. Thomas, directed against local 600. Over 100 workers were disciplined by the Ford Motor Company for strike action.<sup>15</sup>

In May, a strike at the Chrysler Highland Park plant, local 400, resulted in the International Union removing the local union officers and placing an administrator over the local. When the three-month statutory limit on such suspensions of local union officers was up, the local membership overwhelmingly re-elected the offending officers. President of the local was William Jenkins, a socialist who also became a leader of the Rank and File Caucus.<sup>16</sup>

During the summer of 1944, Allied victory in the war against Germany and Japan seemed only a matter of time. The beginning of cutbacks in war production were made, to add to the bitterness and insecurity of workers in the war plants. In this period, contacts were being established to form the Rank and File Caucus in preparation for the coming UAW convention. The leaders and organizers of the Rank and File Caucus were local union officers. Some of the initiators had been associated with the Workers Party, but most had been independent militants.

The convention of the Michigan CIO in July provided the means for opponents of the no-strike pledge to make contact and to plan. The convention itself was controlled by the CIO leadership. Forewarned by their defeat on the no-strike pledge the year before, the leaders came prepared. "A massive array of CIO and UAW top officers poured it on the Michigan delegates hour after hour in denunciation of any attempt to abrogate the no-strike pledge. They were joined by army and navy brass hats, clergymen and especially selected Purple Heart war veterans."<sup>17</sup> About two thirds of the delegates voted to sustain the pledge.<sup>18</sup> However, the groundwork was laid for the coming UAW convention. A Rank and File Caucus was established with a three-point program:

1. Rescind the no-strike pledge.
2. For independent political action.
3. Remove the brass-hats from the international leadership and substitute for them officers who represent the rank and file.



While all caucus members paid lip service to the labor party, there was serious, if undercover, opposition to the MCF and an independent Labor Party at caucus meetings. Chief center of the opposition was the Buick Local 599, for which the spokesman was Ed Geiger, educational director of the local. Local 599 was supported in their stand by some delegates from the Olds local in Lansing.<sup>19</sup>

There was only one plank in the program that all caucus members supported, the no-strike pledge. Beyond that there were differences between socialist, anti-war unionists and those who had ties to the Democratic Party and the Addes or Reuther caucuses in the UAW.<sup>19</sup>

Working to organize a caucus from the Detroit area were: John Zupan, a committeeman from the Willow Run Bomber local 50, a dedicated socialist who had come to the Detroit area from the coal regions of Pennsylvania where he had worked in a zinc smelter. He had considerable intellectual abilities and a concern for political theory and analysis. These are traits that can be often found in workers, although they are rarely given the opportunity to flourish.

Larry Yost was the chairman of the Aircraft Unit at the Ford Rouge plant who had become prominent as a result of major wildcats in his unit. He was a rare individual who had an instinctive affinity for sensing what working people were willing or anxious to do, and it made him a natural mass leader. He had been a moderate socialist, more or less affiliated with the Socialist Party, but he had no great depth of principle or belief and after the war years he became a strong Reuther supporter and bitter anti-Communist. He later drifted off into middle class occupations.

William Jenkins was president of Chrysler Highland Park local 490. He was an old-time SPer with strong anti-war beliefs. He had been something of a Reuther supporter before the no-strike pledge fight and returned to the Reuther camp after it was over. His militancy was principled and consistent.

From the Flint area, the following people played key roles in organizing the caucus:

F. R. "Jack" Palmer, who was head of the Flint MCF and on the educational committee of Chevrolet local 659, and a principled and dedicated socialist.

Bert Boone, President of Chevrolet local 659 and a

former Wobbly (member of the Industrial Workers of the World), part of a strong and interesting core of Wobblies and socialists who functioned for many years in the Chevy local.

John McGill, a more traditional union militant, a former president of Buick local 599.

A steering committee was set up in Grand Rapids at the State CIO convention with McGill as chairman and Boone as secretary. Also on the committee were Yost, Bill Jenkins and Jack Carter of AC Spark Plug (a GM division) in Flint. Looking at these names, it strikes me that, at least in part, they reflect the desire of radicals to involve non-radicals more closely in the activity of the caucus and also to broaden the appeal of the caucus by putting forward the most prominent individuals available and those least connected publicly with left political groups.<sup>20</sup>

At the end of July, Bill Jenkins and his entire slate were restored to office in Chrysler local 490. In August another strike at the plants of Chevrolet Gear and Axle led to the suspension of the local officers and the appointment of an administrator over the local. The plants were shut down again in less than a month, and Reuther and the administrator insisted on the ending of the strike without negotiating any of the union demands.<sup>21</sup> Here, too, the local officers were overwhelmingly returned to office as soon as the 60-day suspension was over.<sup>22</sup>

Clear indications of growing anti-no-strike pledge sentiment were emerging from the elections of delegates to the UAW convention at the end of the summer. One such shift was reported from the Ford Highland Park local:

So unpopular is the pledge today in Highland Park that all the opportunist office seekers of Local 400 are pushing each other over in their haste to jump on the bandwagon and scrap the pledge, including several who only one month ago were its firm upholders, like the Johnson brothers, who refused to run on a slate against the pledge, and William Oliver, recording secretary, who voted at the state CIO convention to maintain the pledge, but is elected one month later, pledged to the membership to fight against it.<sup>23</sup>

This may be one of the sources of the seemingly

contradictory behavior of the delegates at the 1944 convention, the contradiction between long-established caucus loyalties and the pressure of rank and file workers forcing some of the delegates to vote against caucus policy.

The UAW convention opened on Monday, September 11, 1944. It was evident in advance that the no-strike pledge would be the crucial question. One sign of this was the adoption of Convention Rule 11, which provided that all committee reports be restricted to minority and majority "with the exception of the No-Strike Pledge issue."<sup>24</sup> The discussion of the pledge began on the morning of the third day with the presentation of three resolutions to the convention.

The majority resolution was read by Norman Matthews of the Packard Local, chairman of the Resolutions Committee. It was supported by committee members Nat Ganley, Shelton Tappes, Ben Ambroch and William Dieter. It read:

WHEREAS: On December 7, 1941, our country was attacked, and ten days later organized labor, by its own motion and without a single request from the President of the United States, gave him a committment that for the duration of this war organized labor would not engage in strikes. We asked for no partisan advantages for ourselves as the price of our patriotism. We needed\* so-called "tri-partite" agreement as a condition for defending our country from attack, and,

WHEREAS: Labor gave this committment because we realized that we could not protect our earnings and conditions in the shop and remain free labor without protecting our nation from the Axis threat to dominate the world and,

WHEREAS: Because of our No Strike Pledge, the President of our country was able to state in his Labor Day message: "American workers can observe this Labor Day in the proud knowledge that in the battle of production their free labor is triumphing over slave labor. It was their determination to safeguard liberty and to preserve their

\*There seems to be a typographical error at this point, with the word "no" missing.

American heritage for coming generations that made possible the greatest production achievement in the world's history" and,

WHEREAS: Our great International Union has stood steadfast for war victory despite provocation caused by the treasonable actions of many of our managements who took advantage of our no strike commitment and, who are responsible for most of our "wild cat" strikes, and,

WHEREAS: President Phil Murray of the CIO has made it clear that: "The No Strike commitment has not thwarted the development or growth of the organized labor movement of the United States" and,

WHEREAS: The reactionary forces behind Dewey and Bricker would like nothing better than the rescinding of the No Strike Pledge by the largest war workers union in America during this final phase of the crucial presidential election and,

WHEREAS: Our No Strike Pledge strengthens the political bargaining power of the organized labor movement for the duration of the war, which we must have to win a proper wage policy and proper War Labor Board policies, and,

WHEREAS: Our soldiers, sailors and marines engaged in an amazing offensive on all fronts call upon their brothers on the production front to keep them supplied with fighting weapons for the final push to victory, and,

WHEREAS: In his September 4th message of thanks to the war workers of this country, General Eisenhower said, "Now as never before there must be no shortage of tanks, trucks, ammunition or fuel. The possibility of such a failure on your part does not enter into my calculation" and,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That for the duration of the war the UAW-CIO reaffirms its No Strike Pledge to the Commander-in-Chief of our armed forces and to our country.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: This Convention remembers the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. That attack will be

answered when we force the unconditional surrender of Japan after the defeat of Germany. Only then will the war be over. Our No Strike Pledge continued for the duration of the war, in all plants, will guarantee an uninterrupted flow of war materials to our armed forces in the Pacific. Any other course would harm our country, our union and the workers we represent. New conditions may affect our No Strike Pledge after the defeat of Germany.

Hence immediately upon the termination of the war against Germany, the International Executive Board shall, together with the National Board of the CIO, and after consultation with the other boards of organized labor in the United States who gave the pledge, review and decide a further policy on the No Strike Pledge for the balance of the war to drive Japan to unconditional surrender.<sup>25</sup>

Victor Reuther, secretary of the Resolutions Committee, read the minority resolution, joined by committee members H. A. Moon and Harold Johnson.

**WHEREAS:** The membership of the UAW-CIO in keeping with our unswerving loyalty to our nation and our fighting men, has from the inception of the Nazi-Fascist attack on freedom given unselfish and unstinting support to the war effort of our country and its allies, and,

**WHEREAS:** Our union was the first to propose all-out conversion of manufacturing facilities to war production. With the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, we gave a pledge to maintain continuous production and to withhold, for the duration of the war, our right to strike. In plants which produce billions of dollars worth of war material annually, our membership has worked hard and continuously to provide our fighting men with the most effective equipment in immense quantities at the earliest possible date and,

**WHEREAS:** As a result of the efforts of American labor, of which our membership is a major part, our American army is today the best equipped army on the face of the earth. The death blow now being rained on the armies of Hitler and Japan by our armed forces is in part the result of our membership on our production front. Not only have we supplied our own army with the physical

materials of victory, but we have helped equip and make possible the brilliant triumphs scored by the armies of Britain, Russia and other nations arrayed against Hitlerism. The soldiers of all nations, GIs and generals, are universal in their praise of the production efforts of American labor, and,

WHEREAS: The war effort of our membership has not been limited to production alone. Our members have given of their blood to succor our wounded; we have contributed generously to Red Cross and other war relief agencies; we have bought War Bonds to our utmost limit; our members by the thousands have served voluntarily in civilian defense and other war-time domestic activities. We have almost 300,000 of our members serving in the armed forces. Daily the War and Navy Departments announce the names of UAW-CIO members who have been maimed or killed in battle, men of labor who have died for their country. On the basis of this record, this convention of the UAW-CIO rejects as viciously unfair falsehoods the concerted propaganda of selfish interest [sic] which seek to belittle and besmirch our contribution to the war effort. We hurl these lies back into their teeth. Our war record is complete and not subject to challenge and,

WHEREAS: Unlike the vested interest of big business, we have not indulged in war profiteering; we have not sought to exploit the nation's struggle for partisan gains or aggrandisement. Unlike the owners of industry we did not demand nor have we received guarantees of substantial profits, salaries, and postwar tax rebates. The measure of our contribution to the war effort has not been gauged by monetary rewards. On the contrary we have continued to labor diligently and unceasingly despite the deterioration of our wage and living standards, and,

WHEREAS: The UAW-CIO views the war against Nazism and fascism as a part of Labor's continuous struggle for security. We reject any contention that there is any conflict between the war effort and the recognition of labor's legitimate demands for economic justice.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That this Convention reaffirm its no strike pledge for the duration of the war. We shall do everything in our

power to maintain continuous top production and to bring to a speedy and successful termination of the war against all axis nations.

2. While re-newing our no strike pledge, we declare it to be our position that the successful maintenance of continuous production is a responsibility of management and the government as well as of labor. Desirous as labor is to maintain continuous production, this cannot be attained as long as management continues to provoke stoppages by taking advantage of the no strike pledge; nor can continued production be assured until the government, through the War Labor Board and other appropriate agencies, measure up to their responsibility to provide speedy and satisfactory adjustment of labor's grievances, and to protect the labor movement against management efforts to take advantage of the no strike pledge to weaken the labor movement and undermine its standards. Continuous production requires fulfillment of a tripartite responsibility. We demand that management and the government measure up to theirs. Slogans and lip-service will not insure continuous production; only genuine collective bargaining and fair-play can achieve that end.

3. The UAW-CIO, while ready and anxious to make every sacrifice for our nation, is unwilling to sacrifice our union for the profits of the owners of industry. In view of announced plans of the War and Navy departments to cut war production from 40 to 60% immediately after the defeat of Germany, this convention sets forth the following to be its policy between the period after the defeat of Germany and the end of the war against Japan.

(a) The no strike pledge will remain in effect in those plants wholly or partially engaged in war production.

(b) In those plants reconverted to the exclusive and sole manufacture of civilian production the pledge of labor not to strike shall not be binding and the International Executive Board is empowered in accordance with the provisions of our constitution to authorize strike action where, in the interest of safeguarding and extending the rights of labor, such action is required.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: That this convention

support the positions of Philip Murray and R. J. Thomas who condemn those individuals inside or outside the labor movement who propose to extend indefinitely labor's war time no strike pledge in time of peace.<sup>26</sup>

Ben Garrison, of the Ford Highland Park local 400, introduced what was called the Super-Minority Report.

WHEREAS: On April 7 and 8, 1942, delegates representing the organized workers in the state of Michigan assembled in a study conference in Detroit, Michigan and,

WHEREAS: A ten-point "Victory through equality of sacrifice" program was agreed upon embodying the following:

1. Corporation profits limited to 3%.
2. Income of individuals or family not to exceed \$25,000 annually.
3. Rigid price control to prevent inflation.
4. A fair and just rationing program.
5. Wage increases commensurate with increases in cost of living.
6. Dependents of our fighting men be granted a living wage.
7. A moratorium be declared on all debts during the period of reconversion.
8. A Labor Production Division be created within W. P. B.
9. Representatives of Labor, Government, Agriculture and Industry to constitute a committee in discussions on winning the peace.
10. On the assurance that the above will become law, the members of the UAW-CIO would take all time over 40 hours per week in the form of non-negotiable War Bonds and,

WHEREAS: In consideration of promises made that the foregoing would be enacted as the law of the land, labor would agree to substitute conciliation, arbitration and mediation of disputes through the medium of a War Labor Board, in the place of Labor's most precious right, the right to strike and,

WHEREAS: Because the 10-point program was by-passed



by both industry and government after Labor made its commitment, labor has been forced to take a retreating position by both the public and our membership. On the one hand, the public has been propagandized by an anti-union press and on the other hand, an anti-union force within industry is continuously provoking wildcat strike action in an organized endeavor to smash the union movement and,

WHEREAS: In the face of this, Labor has patriotically continued to sacrifice while the moneyed interests and large corporations have drawn tremendous surpluses and instituted a policy of abrogation of collective bargaining, which if allowed to continue will surely mean the disintegration of all labor unions as has been the fate of the labor movement in Germany, Italy and other fascist countries.

WHEREAS: The general membership of our International Union has never been given an opportunity to express their opinion through a referendum vote on this all important question.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That we assembled in this great convention rescind our no strike pledge and further we,

RESOLVED: That a referendum vote of the membership be conducted by the International Executive Board 60 days after adjournment of this Convention to either uphold or reject the action of this Convention and be it finally

RESOLVED: That the Education Department be instructed to immediately institute an educational campaign both by press and radio to acquaint our membership and the general public with the position taken by this Convention.<sup>27</sup>

All the self-serving "whereases" in the resolutions proved unimportant in the vigorous debate that followed. The exaggerated patriotism was punctured by the delegation from Briggs local 212, which whipped out small American flags, waving them wildly in derision at the remarks in defense of the pledge by local 600's President Grant.

Some of the local leaders who entered the debate on the

side of rescinding the pledge were Paul Silver of local 351, and Jess Ferrazza of Briggs local 212 (Emil Mazey was serving in the armed forces at this time). Only one member of the International Executive Board, Swanson from the Buick local in Flint, supported the super-minority report. The top leadership of the union was overwhelmingly in favor of the majority report.

The debate took all of Wednesday and ended with a roll call vote on the super-minority resolution. It was defeated by a vote of 6,617.845 to 3,750.855.<sup>28</sup>

That evening the various caucuses met to rouse their followers and to plan strategy. The Rank and File Caucus meetings were poorly attended all through the convention, a relative handful finding their way there compared to the packed halls of the Addes-CP and Reuther caucuses. After the defeat in the first vote, the consensus in informal discussion was that the Rank and File Caucus should support the lesser of the two remaining evils, the Reuther resolution which called for a minimal retreat from the no-strike pledge. However, when strategy was discussed in the steering committee, Max Shachtman, National Secretary of the Workers Party, proposed that the caucus stand firm and call for the defeat of both the minority and majority resolutions. As an observer present on the scene, I was intrigued by the instantaneous acceptance of the proposal. Such a departure from conventional tactical wisdom did not even seem to require any debate. The rest of the night was spent getting a leaflet printed which said, simply, "Vote No on Minority and Majority Reports. Rank and File Caucus." A copy was placed on each delegate's seat before the convention opened on Thursday morning.

The vote on the minority resolution was so overwhelming that there was not even a request for a roll call vote. It was Reuther's low point in the history of the UAW. The more militant rhetoric of the minority resolution could not conceal the fact that it differed from the majority resolution in the most trivial way. It was simply brushed aside by the delegates, gaining support from only hard core Reuther supporters.

The vote on the majority report, however, changed the entire complexion of the convention. On a roll call vote, it

was defeated by a vote of 5,232.853 to 4,988.892.<sup>29</sup>

On the platform there was total dismay. With honored guests and dignitaries from the government and from the CIO present, the leadership had been unable to deliver its own membership. What was worse, the UAW no longer had a no-strike pledge. The union had been taken by surprise.

It is impossible, at this late date, to do more than guess at why the delegates voted the way they did. I believe that the majority wanted to rescind the no-strike pledge (or were obligated to their local membership to vote that way). However, caucus loyalties prevented many of them from voting for the super-minority report, so they discharged their responsibilities by voting down the majority report.

The vote was followed by a period of intense maneuvering. The majority and minority of the Resolutions Committee joined to propose that the convention vote separately on two propositions, one, on a simple motion to reaffirm or rescind the pledge, and, two, a motion on whether to hold a membership referendum on that subject. Garrison refused to accept the proposal of a new majority on the committee and proposed instead that the convention reaffirm the pledge for the duration of the war and hold a membership referendum within 90 days. The ability of the Rank and File Caucus to make itself felt in the votes that followed was probably seriously diminished by Garrison's concession of retention of the pledge pending the referendum.

After considerable debate, Garrison's motion to reaffirm the no-strike pledge pending a referendum was defeated and the majority's motion to reaffirm the pledge was carried. At this point, the Addes-CP majority of the resolutions committee opposed holding a referendum, and Victor Reuther and Johnson supported Garrison's motion, which was carried in a roll call vote. The minority resolution was:

RESOLVED: That this convention authorize a referendum vote of the entire membership commencing 90 days after the adjournment of this convention; that a committee of nine be appointed by the convention to conduct a referendum vote through the United States mails. This committee shall be selected by the convention Resolutions Committee on the basis of three members

representing each point of view.

FINALLY RESOLVED: That, while we recognize the democratic rights of the International Officers and International Representatives to express themselves on this question, it shall be made mandatory that none of the International Officers or International Representatives shall use Union funds, the International Newspaper, the International Education Department, or any other agency of the Union in propagandizing their position on this issue.<sup>30</sup>

One of the concerns of the leadership in the timing of the referendum was that it not embarrass President Roosevelt in his campaign for reelection. In any case, the referendum was delayed beyond the convention mandate and was not held until January and February of 1945. In a meeting of the International Executive Board following the convention, R. J. Thomas expressed his concerns about the convention and how the union's leaders would conduct themselves in the referendum.

President Thomas commented in general on the fervor and attitude of the delegates attending the convention in Grand Rapids. In his opinion both groups were equally responsible for the unrest which existed at the convention. He feared for the future welfare of the organization. When considering the present status of our country, and the provocations of management all over the country, it was easy to comprehend the reason for the worker's almost open animosity towards all officers, Board Members and general staff at the Convention. He cautioned the Board against playing "politics" with such situations.<sup>31</sup>

The people who had organized the Rank and File Caucus were feeling quite confident at the end of the UAW convention. They had accomplished more than anyone had expected. They chose a new steering committee which reflected the fact that their contacts had extended far beyond the borders of Michigan. Chairman of the committee was Larry Yost, a popular figure, but not one able to do consistent organizing. Secretary of the committee was Art Hughes, President of the Dodge Truck local 140, a traditional unionist

of a type whose support would be needed for a successful campaign on the referendum. Filling out the steering committee were Max Weinrib of Chicago local 719, Bob Burckhardt of Toledo local 12, and James Barricks of Buffalo local 501.

A decision was made to publish a paper in the campaign against the no-strike pledge. The editorial committee consisted of Johnny Zupan of Willow Run local 50 as editor, and Larry Yost and Art Hughes as the Detroit members of the steering committee. Altogether, three issues of a four-page tabloid called the *Rank and Filer* were published, in January and February 1945 and a final issue after the referendum was over, in April.

A nine-point program, which had been adopted by the caucus at the convention, appeared in each issue:

1. Rescind the no-strike pledge.
2. Break the WLB by removing UAW members from regional and national War Labor Boards.
3. Smash the Little Steel Formula by hitching wages to the rising cost of living.
4. Begin today to build for an independent labor party tomorrow.
5. Wage Policy and Reconversion:
  - A. An industry-wide wage policy guaranteeing equal pay for equal work throughout the nation.
  - B. Fight general unemployment by instituting a thirty-hour week at a livable wage.
  - C. Fight seasonal unemployment with a guaranteed annual wage.
  - D. Adequate pay for all workers, to be based on seniority.
  - E. Reduction of age limits on Social Security retirement.
6. Elections for all national union department heads, such as Ford, GM, Chrysler, etc.
7. Establishment of a national UAW daily paper.
8. Fifty per cent of all international union assessments to be retained by the local unions.
9. Elect officers who support the program of the workers in the shops.<sup>32</sup>

The range of the program clearly indicates the intention of the Rank and File Caucus to function beyond the no-strike pledge referendum as a major contender for power in the UAW.<sup>33</sup> In this they were totally unsuccessful. The paper did not go beyond its third issue and the caucus was not able to survive the end of the war in 1945 and the reconversion period. Most of the caucus supporters were caught up in the drive for power by Walter Reuther, on one side or the other (although most became Reuther supporters) and the caucus simply faded away.

The rest of 1944 was spent by the referendum committee and the International Executive Board maneuvering over the details of the referendum. Meanwhile strikes were continuing to mount. In February of 1945 there were major strikes at Briggs and Dodge.<sup>34</sup> The Dodge strike extended into March and spread to other Chrysler plants.<sup>35</sup> It was effective enough to force the WLB, for the first time, to negotiate grievances while the workers were still out on strike.

The balloting in the referendum took place in February. Members received a double postcard, the ballot part of which was returnable, postage free, to the International office in Detroit. The International Executive Board approved the following wording:

Do you favor the action of the Ninth Convention of the UAW-CIO, which reads as follows:

“Resolved that this Convention reaffirm for the duration of the war the No Strike Pledge to the Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces and our country.”

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

(Mail this Ballot not later than February 17, 1945)<sup>36</sup>

Both in its reference to the convention's action and to “the Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces” the wording of the ballot was not neutral. (All through the war — and since — there was a tendency to invest in the phrase, Commander-in-Chief, a meaning far beyond the constitutional provision that the military forces of the United States be subject to the *civilian* control of the President.)

At the time, I wrote of the irregularities in the balloting, including the report that in Lansing, Mich., ballots went to management people at the Olds and Reo plants. The Olds management returned the ballots; the Reo management did not. "Auto workers all over the country are reporting cases in which two to five ballots are received by a single person, often a person who has not been a member of the union for a year or more. . . . The unfairness of the vote is made even worse by the wording of the ballot. . . . Since the vote is being conducted in the manner of a plebiscite, it would indeed be surprising if the sentiment of the majority of the auto workers made itself felt."<sup>37</sup>

Looking back on the election, it is my belief that, although irregularities did, in fact, take place, they were not of a kind which would indicate major fraud. In spite of the biased wording of the ballot, the election, supervised by a committee that had three members, one-third, from the anti-pledge point of view, reflected with reasonable accuracy the views of those members who voted. I find it hard to believe that the ballot wording would have deceived or swayed more than a tiny handful of UAW members. The debate over the referendum was loud and long. It took place on the shop floor, in the local unions and in the daily papers. And, while the overwhelming weight of propaganda from the press and from the government and other sources was for retention of the pledge, auto workers were not deceived over what they were voting on.

There were 1,036,254 members eligible to vote, plus 150,000 in the armed forces. This was the average membership during the June-September period, 1944.<sup>38</sup> The yes vote, for reaffirming the no-strike pledge, was 178,824; the no vote, 97,620.<sup>39</sup> Something over a quarter of a million members had cast valid ballots.

The heaviest vote for rescinding the no-strike pledge came from Regions 1 and 1-A (the Detroit metropolitan area), 1-C (the Flint-Lansing area), and 7 (Canada, where, because the government had not cooperated in maintaining union membership, the no-strike pledge had always been shaky). These regions were followed by Region 1-B, a southern Michigan tier of counties which included Pontiac, Jackson, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, and Benton Harbor. The

TABLE 13. Regional breakdown of UAW membership.<sup>40</sup>

<u>UAW-CIO Region</u>	<u>Average Membership June-Sept., 1944</u>
1	195,559
1-A	145,101
1-B	80,074
1-C	58,236
1-D	46,063
2	20,660
2-A	59,455
2-B	47,069
3	74,751
4	81,740
5	38,307
6	25,217
7	26,007
8	21,685
9	53,159
9-A	63,173
	<hr/> 1,036,254

Armed forces: 150,000

TABLE 14. Military Ballots.<sup>40</sup>

YES
10,575 — 93.1%
NO
781 — 6.9%
Total mailed: 72,444
Total voted: 11,356
% participated: 15.8%



TABLE 15. No-Strike Pledge referendum vote by regions.<sup>40</sup>

YES VOTES			NO VOTES		
<u>Region</u>	<u>No. Votes</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>No. Votes</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
1	26,580	54%	1	22,732	46%
1-A	26,169	54.5%	1-A	23,512	45.5%
1-B	11,087	63.9%	1-B	6,402	36.1%
1-C	9,299	56.6%	1-C	7,139	43.4%
1-D	8,683	74.3%	1-D	2,998	25.6%
2	3,678	74.2%	2	1,279	25.8%
2-A	8,787	74.6%	2-A	2,996	25.4%
2-B	6,750	71.8%	2-B	2,652	28.2%
3	13,732	78.6%	3	3,730	21.4%
4	18,691	71.4%	4	7,466	28.6%
5	6,351	72.3%	5	2,430	27.7%
6	3,306	87.4%	6	476	12.6%
7	4,792	54.2%	7	4,040	45.8%
8	4,178	83.8%	8	810	16.2%
9	6,071	71%	9	2,478	29.3%
9-A	<u>8,599</u>	72.6%	9-A	<u>3,240</u>	27.4% [sic]
Totals:	178,824			97,620	

heaviest vote for maintaining the pledge came from Regions 6 (California and Utah) and 8 (the southeastern United States).

The *Rank and Filer* headlined the vote: "35% AGAINST STRIKE PLEDGE."<sup>41</sup> It went on to comment,

A most significant feature of the vote which aided the bureaucrats tremendously was the surprising number of auto and aircraft workers who did not vote. To understand why the vote was so small is to understand why the pledge was upheld.

Thousands upon thousands of UAW members who are opposed to the no-strike pledge did not cast any ballots in the referendum. Where, for example, were the thousands of Chrysler workers in Detroit who showed what they thought of the no-strike pledge by walking out of their plants in protest against a company speed-up? Where were the Briggs workers, the Ford workers who have not hesitated in the past to use the strike weapon to protect their rights?

Only one answer can be given: The majority of UAW members did not think that rescinding the no-strike pledge would result in any considerable change in the policies of the union leadership or in the status of the union.<sup>41</sup>

In any case, the situation in March 1945 was as follows: A majority of the auto workers who voted, voted to retain the no-strike pledge while the country was at war. However, the overwhelming majority of the auto workers did not bother to vote. At the same time, in the period that the vote was taking place, the winter and spring of 1944 and 1945, a majority of the auto workers went out on wildcat strikes. "*Business Week* noted that the votes were being counted when there were more workers on strike in Detroit than at any time since the start of the war."<sup>42</sup> And Art Preis also notes that, "When the war came to a close on August 14, 1945, the American workers had chalked up more strikes and strikers during the period from December 7, 1941, to the day of Japanese surrender three years and eight months later, than in any similar period of time in American labor history."<sup>42</sup>

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in 1944, in the industries manufacturing automobiles and automobile equipment, there were 388,763 workers involved in strikes and these made up 50.5% of the labor force.<sup>43</sup> In 1945 the

corresponding figures were 473,700 workers, making up 75.9% of the labor force.<sup>44</sup> The 1945 figures obviously include the half of the year which followed the end of the war, when strikes increased in number. None of these figures include the aircraft industry and so do not coincide with membership in the UAW. However, as was indicated earlier, these figures are on the conservative side in that they do not include many in-plant walkouts and sit-ins.

In any case, the contradiction remains whether one views the UAW as a whole or takes a narrower slice of industry such as workers in the automobile industry, or, even, auto workers in the Detroit metropolitan area; a majority of workers went out on strike in a period when a referendum was indicating close to two-to-one opposition to wartime strikes.

It is not victory or defeat but this contradiction that culminates the wartime struggle over the no-strike pledge in the UAW.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is rare for history to provide so clear-cut and well-documented a contradiction. On the one hand, a majority of auto workers voted to sustain the no-strike pledge. On the other hand, a majority of auto workers went out on wildcat strikes.

It should be a fruitful source of analysis and understanding. But traditional social science cannot easily deal with this kind of contradiction. The facts strike a powerful blow against sociological surveys and academic views of consciousness. The UAW referendum was a pretty good version of a sociological survey — a simple statement of belief on a clearly stated subject. And yet, even while the survey was being made, the events belied the results of the survey. There had been some understanding that opinion surveys are static and their results cannot be projected too easily into the future. T. Lupton, for example, noted:

The interview is often useful as a means to ascertain attitudes, opinions, and beliefs, but it is not possible to proceed logically from statements about attitudes to descriptions of actual or probable behaviour. Attitudes expressed in an interview may not affect the choice made. Many choices involve a clash between attitudes stated with equal conviction in the situation of the interview.<sup>1</sup>

But here is a situation in which they do not even have validity in the present and the recent past. Part of the contradiction is illuminated by the following:

We tackled Jimmy on this apparent conflict of views — asking him why it was that he could support an Act which

intended to curb the use of union power while, in his own work situation, he advocated the greater use of that power. He then made it clear that he didn't think *all* strikes were a bad thing "because some do have a good foundation, you know the workers have got reason to strike — but some I believe are Communist inspired and so if the Act can stop that sort of strike then I'm all in favour of it." It becomes clear that it is not working-class action that is being rejected but working-class action as it is projected by the mass media. Not *militancy* but "mindless militancy." Jimmy and his mates are *told* that strikes are bad, that workers are led by Communists and they believe it. To an extent, that is. Certainly they believe it to the point of arguing it in a pub or of answering a public opinion pollster. But when it comes to daily activity at work they *know* that strikes can be justified. Maybe they won't go on strike but they won't decide *not* to strike because "strikes are bad for the country" or because "strikes are the results of agitators." Their decision to strike, or not, will be geared to their own particular situation. It is this tension between generally propagated abstract ideas and practical necessity which explains why — even at a time when wider and wider sections of the workforce were involved in strike action — public opinion polls continued to find so many workers who considered strikes "a bad thing."<sup>2</sup>

One of the problems of academic social science is the difficulty it has in dealing with any kind of contradiction. Contradiction is viewed as a problem to be straightened out, to be interpreted away. On the other hand, a dialectical view of reality not only assumes contradiction as normal and natural, it views contradiction as the source of all development, change, and movement. It makes contradiction central to its concerns.

The one major investigation into the effect of "affluence" upon the British working class, for example, begins with the assumption that the sort of understanding which workers have of their situation can be analysed in terms of its overarching *consistency*. Given this assumption "models of consciousness" can be arrived at in which one set of ideas are seen to relate in a formal logical manner to others. The problem with this view of things is that it fails

to root "consciousness" in the structure of the real world where experience is more characterised by *contradiction* than consistency.<sup>3</sup>

One question that is raised by the no-strike pledge referendum is: who are the militants? It has long been the received wisdom of the left (and the right, as well) that the more militant workers are also more "conscious" (whatever that word means) and are therefore also the more active in union affairs. That is, militancy is defined as some combination of a radical point of view on particular questions and activism in the union. It is not too distant from the point of view of many leftists that abstention from the political process is a sign of backwardness. People who do not vote for Republicans or Democrats and yet cannot be enticed to vote for Marxist candidates are perceived as needing education. To put it crudely, conscious militancy is to some degree related to participation in the parliamentary system. In the UAW referendum many workers, a substantial minority, voted to rescind the no-strike pledge. It seems reasonable to conclude, however, that the workers who did not vote at all exhibited a greater degree of militancy than those who did. First, of course, there is the fact that acting in a militant way (striking) in the face of considerable sanctions demands more dedication and courage than simply expressing a point of view (especially in a secret ballot). But there is a more important element involved than that. It is not a matter of standing in judgment on workers, measuring their militancy on a scale of 10, or any similar nonsense. It is a matter of finding out why workers behave the way they do and what that indicates for the future. And in that context it is important to understand the significance of abstention from the vote.

To the many thousands of auto workers who wildcatted but did not vote in the referendum, the referendum did not matter. At least it did not matter enough to exert a very minimum effort. But to say that it did not matter is quite ambiguous. I believe it is valid to surmise that it did not matter because to most workers the union structure (like the institutional structure of society generally) is an alien reality. Union leaders are seen as "politicians." Union leaders, politicians, businessmen, intellectuals, are seen as "them," as opposed to

“us.” The kind of satisfactions workers can expect to receive from “them” tends to be marginal. Things may get a little better or a little worse, but the fundamental reality of life at work is not likely to change.

The basic argument against this view is that the abstention of voters contributes to the powerlessness of those voters. This view, however, is both reformist and false.<sup>4</sup> It is reformist because it argues that people should take seriously minor adjustments in the system. In the case in point, the adjustment involves the difference between contracts that have no-strike pledges and a union leadership that is not likely to authorize many strikes and a more sweeping pledge that covers all exceptions. In one sense, of course, everything matters, every improvement, no matter how slight. But this sustains the idea that *fundamental* changes are simply an accumulation of *trivial* ones, and that all expenditures of energy are equally valid.

The view is false, both in unions and in the society generally, that power resides with voters in proportion to numbers of votes. It is interesting to note in passing that the rejection of the parliamentary process in the United States on a significant scale dates from the turn of the present century. After a quarter of a century of extraordinarily violent and revolutionary struggles on the part of workers, farmers, and others, struggles which were beaten down by military force, and after two successive defeats of William Jennings Bryan for the presidency, running on a populist program, there was a significant and continuing drop in the proportion of eligible Americans who took part in the electoral process. This reflects, it seems to me, a cynical but accurate estimate of the value of the electoral process to workers and poor people generally. It is inherently critical of this society (or, more narrowly, the unions). It is more revolutionary (actual or potential) than the urging of workers to get out and vote, no matter how valid the cause. *Objectively*, however they interpret their actions in their own minds, workers who reject the institutional framework and take action outside of that framework are expressing a revolutionary potential. To put the matter negatively, workers do not have sufficient loyalty to the institutions of this society (including “their” institutions) to prevent them from abandoning those institutions in

a revolutionary situation.

The vote in the UAW referendum indicates a contradiction between activism and activity, but it is a contradiction that is imposed from the outside and is not inherent in working class activity. It is only a rigid and artificial definition of activism that produces the contradiction.

However, at least among those who voted to retain the no-strike pledge, there was a real contradiction between a verbalized belief and activity. There were many, many workers in the UAW who thought the no-strike pledge a necessary thing and who, nevertheless, went on strike. It is in this area that the most significant conclusions can be drawn.

The first conclusion is that belief does not govern activity. Marx and Engels noted:

The question is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment *considers* as its aim. The question is *what the proletariat is*, and what, consequent on that *being*, it will be compelled to do. Its aim and historical action is irrevocably and obviously demonstrated in its own life situation as well as in the whole organization of bourgeois society today.<sup>5</sup>

There is a contradiction between the workers' being and the workers' consciousness. It would be quite remarkable if this were not so in a capitalist society.<sup>6</sup> If that was where the matter rested, with the control by the ruling class of all the significant means of education and communication, then this whole discussion would be meaningless because it wouldn't matter in the slightest what workers thought. But the domination over the production of ideas is never enough for those who rule, because the reality of workers' lives is in contradiction to the ideas that dominate the society. It is the contradiction between being and consciousness which produces change. The hostile and alienating nature of work in this society (in addition to all the institutions inside and outside the factory designed to sustain the discipline of work) forces workers to resist their daily reality, individually and collectively. The response to that resistance tends to expose the mythology of freedom and equality and continually transforms the consciousness of workers. This is especially true of workers who have not yet been socialized into the accepted



and institutionalized forms of resistance, such as the union grievance procedure, government boards and so on. It is likely that those sections of the working class who were relatively new to the factories, such as the southerners and women, were least likely to accept the discipline of factory work and the discipline of the union. This is borne out by the complaints of spokesmen for the military and spokesmen for the union.

Workers during World War II were generally aware of the class nature of the American government, its favored treatment of corporations, its oppression of workers through a myriad of institutions — price controls, wage controls, restrictions on job transfers, the draft, housing priorities, etc. (To say that they were aware does not mean that they were able to express this awareness in these abstract, intellectual terms.) When they went on strike and when they saw others such as the miners and the MESA members go on strike, they could not help but feel the terrible pressure of management, union, government and press, all of which denounced them as unpatriotic, subversive, red, and so on. Going on strike made it necessary to modify their views on other things.<sup>7</sup> Being workers made it necessary for them to go on strike.

The second conclusion is that activity modifies belief. What exists, in fact, is a continually developing contradiction between being and consciousness. They act upon each other. It would be nonsense to say that consciousness has no effect on activity, if only to delay or restrain activity. But activity continually emerges to assert itself as the overriding element in that combination. That this is borne out by the way that auto workers behaved during World War II does not make it new. Marx and Engels were aware of it a century earlier:

Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a *revolution*; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the *ruling* class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.<sup>8</sup>

They did not think of the working class as revolutionary "because they consider the proletarians as *gods*,"<sup>9</sup> or because they thought that workers could be convinced of socialism by revolutionary intellectuals. They assumed workers who were ground down by their life under capitalism. "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole. . . ." <sup>10</sup>

What can be said of auto workers, then? That they were forced continually to overcome their limitations, to do battle with their union leaders and their government despite their patriotism and their prejudices. "There can be little question that if the total picture of national unity and the no-strike pledge had been presented to a democratic vote of the American working class it would have been roundly defeated." <sup>11</sup>

But what was the meaning of these struggles? Weren't they, after all, simply narrow strikes over economics and working conditions? I think that to deal with this it is necessary to go beyond the self-imposed limitations of traditional social science, to avoid "the obscurantism of pure empiricism." <sup>12</sup> The contradiction between being and consciousness has a corollary, the contradiction between objective and subjective reality.

It is necessary to draw a third conclusion from the events of World War II, that events have to be understood objectively rather than simply in terms of subjective motivation. When workers say that they are treated in a discriminatory way and they need improved working conditions or increased wages and that this does not contradict their desire that the United States win the war, that is an empirical fact. But if we limit ourselves to the perception of the participants we make a mockery of the study of historical events. When thousands of workers are striking for a variety of ends, all of them rather local and narrow, the accumulation of strikes makes for a qualitative change in the objective reality. Objectively it is a threat to the existing social structure, no matter what the participants believe. And if the government and other major institutions respond on that level then continuation and escalation of the strikes reinforces that threat. Taking into account the tendency toward exaggeration in political rhetoric, the attacks upon the working class by corporate

executives, Congressmen and Senators, and the Executive Branch of the government clearly posed an awareness of a subversive threat. This was buttressed by the introduction and passage of anti-labor legislation and anti-subversive legislation. Was this simply a way of using the war to weaken unions? Enriched by the hindsight of the post-Watergate exposures, it would be dangerous to conclude that that was all that was involved. At least in terms of the narrow concern of defending their own society and their own rule, at least some of the fears of working class activity must have been rooted in an accurate perception of where working class wildcats could lead. It is a strange and unfortunate reality that revolutionaries have historically had less confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the working class than have had the rulers of capitalist society.

In any case, the firings, the use of the draft against militants, arrests and harassments, were directed not against what workers thought but at what workers did. And, in turn, what workers thought was changed by what those in power did. The wildcat strikes were, in fact, political strikes because they were directed against the government. The government, through military and other personnel, made sure to make that clear.

In the end, not very much seemed to be changed. There were massive legal strikes at the end of the war. The unions emerged from the war infinitely more bureaucratized than they were at the beginning. The UAW moved rather quickly to end the factional divisions and turn power over to the one-party machine of Walter Reuther. The power of the workers within the union structure continued to erode. American capitalism did not seem very threatened as it moved into the Cold War.

However, it seems to me necessary to draw as much as possible, rather than as little as possible, out of the struggle over the no-strike pledge. As was noted earlier, such well-documented contradictions are rare enough in history. The narrower the interpretation, the more likely it is to be locked within the framework of acceptance of the status quo as an overriding given.

At the very least, certain negative conclusions can be drawn. The revolutionary potential of the working class is

not limited by day-to-day levels of activity or by the superficial consciousness of workers, singly or in groups. Workers often act in contradiction to their own statements of belief. Expressions of satisfaction with life (they are rare enough), patriotism, hostility to radicalism of a formal sort are totally useless in determining the future direction of American working class activity. The contradiction between being and consciousness is what produces change but it is change that tends to be sudden, explosive, and spontaneous.

There is no indication that I am aware of that thirty years later American workers have resolved their contradictions and have lost their revolutionary potential. If anything, the hostility to work, to politics, to government, among workers has become deeper and sharper than at any time since the Great Depression.\*

There is a combination of elements involved in examining the reality of class, class consciousness, and class activity.† The need to generalize and to condense can lead to confusion and misunderstanding unless terms and their use are clearly understood.

When we talk about what a worker thinks, we are talking about something very specific. But no two workers think exactly alike or have identical work or life situations. So that when we talk about group or class consciousness we are not talking about simply generalizing from the individual (although examining an individual in depth can give us significant insights into the general). And we are not talking

\*“There is now convincing evidence that some blue-collar workers are carrying their work frustrations home and displacing them in extremist social and political movements or in hostility toward the government.” *Work in America*, Report of a Special Task Force to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, undated (1973), page 30.

†“Proletarian class consciousness is, therefore, *the worker’s consciousness of his social being as embedded in the necessary structural antagonism of capitalist society, in contrast to the contingency of group consciousness which perceives only a more or less limited part of the global confrontation.*” Istvan Meszaros, “Contingent and Necessary Class Consciousness,” in *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971, page 101. Emphasis in original.

about an average consciousness or about a total which adds up all the individual consciousnesses. We are talking about a very complex and changing reality.

A worker sits at home filling out his ballot on the no-strike pledge. He might be married or single, he might have relatives in the armed forces or not. He comes from a particular family, region, ethnic background, etc. He is, let us say, listening to the war news on the radio while he is examining his ballot. He may have doubts, he may be unsure, but hearing the casualty reports it might seem reasonable to him to support the pledge.

The next day, at work, his foreman tells him that they have temporarily run out of work for his machine and that he should grab a broom and keep busy by cleaning up the aisles. The worker resents an order to do unnecessary work just for appearances sake, talks to a few of his fellows, and walks off the job. There seems to him no contradiction between that attitude and his vote of the day before. After all, it was the foreman who caused the strike, not the worker.

If there were ten other workers involved, they may have had 10 different combinations of attitudes for joining the strike. These could range from aggressive militancy through a belief or sense of class solidarity to lack of interest or fear. One source of consciousness is simply the presence of other workers, that is, the visible signs of class. A worker, sitting at home, is a citizen (although he has many characteristics, even as a citizen, which are working class). The same worker, at work, or at a meeting, is part of a group and, unlike groups of lawyers, businessmen, students, etc., is compelled to think in group terms. His work requires it; and his life experience requires it. Georges Friedmann saw this in his critique of the famous Hawthorne experiment:

Observing methodically a group of workers taken at random, the investigators are thus led to recognize that the mainspring of their inner, spontaneous, secret organization, of their personal inter-relations, and of their behavior inside the factory, is the defense of their collective economic conditions. They think they contribute most effectively to this — on the basis of a system of piece wages and bonuses — by restricting output. Such an attitude clearly implies a solidarity among workers which

transcends individual psychological distinctions, antipathies, membership in such and such a group or clique and even, very often, their immediate financial interest. The practice of restriction of output, the recognition of a certain duration of work as a "norm of conduct," unites them more or less consciously into a collectivity surpassing the internal differences and limits of a firm, even one as vast as Western Electric. The investigators grasped the intrinsic importance of restriction of output, but did not see that here they confronted a socio-economic fact [Is it too much to add — political fact?] going beyond the company's horizon and relating the workers' attitude to that of other workers, in other factories, in other industries — in other regions, and even in other countries. Far from being explained by the purely internal factors of the firm, this phenomenon involves the economic and social conditions of the industrial wage worker within the total society to which he belongs.<sup>13</sup>

This is the irreducible minimum of class consciousness, from which leaps in consciousness and activity develop. But although it is always there, it is extremely difficult to record, or even see. An observer could spend a week, a month, or even a year in the department of a factory and see nothing but conflict, horseplay, and apathy among the workers. The production standards and modes of behavior would, of course, be taken for granted and assumed to stem from management decisions or some agreement by management and union that took place at some distance from the factory floor. The actual role of present and former workers in that department in establishing, or helping to establish, the reality of life and production in that department would not be visible. What the observer would see would be factually true, but fundamentally false because key elements of reality would be missing.

Another complication is the definition of class and the use of terms related to class. I do not want to present some final authoritative definition since that is not what is involved in this discussion. E. P. Thompson's definition is a useful place to start.

By class I understand an historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected

events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness. I emphasize that it is an *historical* phenomenon. I do not see class as a "structure," nor even as a "category," but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships.<sup>14</sup>

"Class" is one of the most useful conceptions in social science. It is especially useful to Marxists. But it needs to be understood in all its complexity and "disparate and seemingly unconnected events." For example, one can say, "The workers went on strike"; or "The working class overthrew the Czarist government." There is an assumption of totality which is not contained in those sentences. *All* the workers, each and every last one of them, did not overthrow the Czar. *All* the workers, each and every one of them, did not go on strike, or, at least, did not want to. Is talk about "workers" and "working class" then only revolutionary rhetoric? I do not think so. I think these are valid uses of the terms — but they cannot be understood as absolutes, any more than, "The French people overthrew the monarchy," can be understood as an absolute.

In any group of workers, some are more active than others. There are many reasons for this: background, skill, family obligations, etc. Age is always an important factor. I have seen older workers discuss actions that needed to be taken to deal with certain problems, agreeing that a strike was needed, but noting that they were unable to initiate such action, that younger workers with fewer responsibilities would have to do it. That is a fairly general, although not absolute, pattern, for revolutions as well as strikes. It tends to be the young who initiate and lead. The older workers follow.

There are also numbers of workers who oppose militant or revolutionary activities but go along out of fear of reprisals. There are workers who are apathetic who either take part in strikes out of inertia or who simply go home to wait out the events. All these are part of the class and have to be assumed in discussing class activity and class consciousness.

What is crucial, however, is the role of the politically active and effective workers in initiating events and in bringing the majority of the class along. Again: "politically active

and effective" must be understood free of the myths of the old left. I have indicated above that by politically active and effective I do not mean (necessarily) union activists or people who are effective speakers or who otherwise relate to parliamentary institutions, in or out of the unions. A handful of workers can initiate a wildcat strike if they sense that a majority of the workers will go along and that those who will not go along will not be effective. Parliamentary majorities are not what is involved. Informal shop floor organizations and the dispersion of leadership among any group of workers is what is involved. Workers might choose a careerist type to represent them in the grievance procedure while choosing a young militant to represent them on a picket line. Leadership within the class is not a full-time job or the attribute of particular individuals. It is apportioned out depending on the tasks that need doing.

This is one of the reasons that opinion surveys are relatively useless in determining working class consciousness. Working class consciousness, as a guide to future activity, as an indication of revolutionary potential (apart from the fact that it changes from day to day), is not an average of what all workers believe, or a division of the class into proportions of 100. It is an historically developing reality made up of many elements. "The question," in the words of Marx and Engels, "is *what the proletariat is* and what, consequent on that *being*, it will be compelled to do."

Their *being* compelled auto workers (not to mention miners, mechanics, and others) to strike during World War II in violation of their patriotic sentiments. Their *being* and those strikes contributed to modifying their beliefs and limiting their patriotism. Abstractly, there were no limits to what American workers could do during the war. Concretely, I believe that the activities of workers were limited to wildcat strikes for two reasons.

One was the fact that sufficient concessions were made to prevent the lid from blowing off. An irregular pattern of concessions in response to some strikes, adjustments by the government, etc., both served to encourage further strikes and to discourage going beyond strikes. Physical police or military force against strikers tended to be used sparingly.

Two was the quick incorporation of the accumulated



militancy of the war years into major official strikes very shortly after the war ended. The General Motors strike led by Reuther in particular served to channelize the wartime militancy of the UAW.

As a conclusion to this discussion I would like to relate the wartime wildcat strikes to the two major postwar revolutionary events of the industrial world: the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the French Revolt of 1968. Both began with student demonstrations and were transformed into social revolutions by the intervention of workers on a mass scale in wildcat actions that led, in Hungary, to the creation of workers councils and, in France, to the near destruction of the DeGaulle government. There was nothing in the observable consciousness or overt activity of either the French or Hungarian working classes that could possibly have led to a prediction of coming revolution. If anything, all the conditions led almost all observers to assume the reverse.

How, then, did these revolutions take place? The assumptions that would make those events intelligible, that would remove them from the category of historical accidents that are of no interest to observers, are the assumptions that I have tried to apply to the wartime wildcat strikes in the auto industry. They indicate, it seems to me, a fundamental class solidarity and a huge hidden reserve of consciousness and activity which can produce similar spontaneous outbursts on a vast social scale in the United States. This is not a prediction that these events *will* occur. It is, rather, a suggestion that those who are concerned with fundamental social change would do better to base themselves on a working class revolutionary potential than on the limited empirical evidence of the day-to-day.

# REFERENCE NOTES

## CHAPTER 1 (pages 1-15)

1. The source for this is many discussions with Jessie Glaberman, who was one of the pickets at Phillie Cigars. A similar switch in the middle of a meeting of the Wayne County CIO Council is described by Sam Sage, Oral History Interview, Wayne State University Archives on Labor and Urban Affairs, page 26.
2. *New York Times*, December 9, 1941.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1941. "With the outbreak of war on December 7, several strikes then in progress were immediately called off and several threatened strikes, even where strike votes had been taken, were cancelled." *Strikes in 1941 and Strikes Affecting Defense Production*, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 711, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1942, page 1.
5. *New York Times*, December 8 and 9, 1941.
6. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1941.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, December 9, 1941.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1941.
12. *Ibid.*, December 16, 1941.
13. *Ibid.*, December 17, 1941.
14. *Ibid.*, December 18, 1941.
15. Joel Seidman, *American Labor from Defense to Reconversion*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953, pages 80-84.
16. *New York Times*, December 24, 1941.
17. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1941.
18. Minutes of the Meeting of the UAW-CIO Executive Board, March 28, 1942, Cleveland, Ohio. Addes Papers, Wayne State University Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs. Emphasis in original. See also Nelson M. Lichtenstein, *Industrial Unionism under the No-Strike Pledge: A Study of the CIO during the Second World War*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, undated, pages 251-252.

19. See Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step*, New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1964, pages 152-153.
20. In an interview in 1976, McGill said that it was not George Addes, it was Victor Reuther. "Sometimes you mention a name and you mean somebody else, that's probably it. . . . It was Vic Reuther." Glaberman interview with John McGill, Francis "Jack" Palmer, and Lawrence Jones, Flint, Michigan, December 12, 1976. A rough transcript of this interview/discussion is now in the Glaberman Collection at the WSU Labor Archives.
21. No-strike clauses were already in UAW contracts at this time, although not with prohibitions as absolute as the war-time pledge.
22. John McGill, OHI-WSULA, pages 15-17.
23. Preis, *op. cit.*
24. Nelson Lichtenstein, "Defending the No-Strike Pledge: CIO Politics During World War II," *Radical America*, Volume 9, Numbers 4-5, July-August 1975, page 55. Footnotes in original omitted.
25. Norm Bully, OHI-WSULA, pages 14-17; John W. Anderson, OHI-WSULA, pages 58-60; Ted LaDuke, OHI-WSULA, page 29; Frank Marquart, OHI-WSULA, pages 20-28.
26. John W. Anderson, OHI-WSULA, pages 58-60; Ted LaDuke, OHI-WSULA, page 29.
27. Addes Collection 52A, Box 21, Folder: Minutes, WSULA.
28. For comparable developments in the different situation of Great Britain, see Angus Calder, *The People's War*, New York: Pantheon, 1969, especially pages 393-396.
29. Matthew Josephson, *Sidney Hillman: Statesman of American Labor*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1952, page 481. This is a totally uncritical and rather stupid book. It has the advantage of exposing Hillman's role while trying to put him in the best light.
30. *Ibid.*, page 484.
31. *Ibid.*, pages 508-509.
32. *Ibid.*, page 580; Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977, page 158.
33. *Detroit News*, November 8, 1942.
34. See Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, pages 54-55.

## CHAPTER 2 (pages 16-34)

1. See "Statement by Edward L. Cushman, Director for Michigan, War Manpower Commission, to Special Senate Committee Investigating National Defense, March 9, 1945," in *Investigation of National Defense Program Part 28, Manpower Problems in Detroit, Hearings before Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program*, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., March 9-13, 1945, G.P.O., 1945 (hereinafter *Manpower Problems in Detroit*), page 13626.

2. See Barton J. Bernstein, "The Automobile Industry and the Coming of the Second World War," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, Volume 47, Number 1, June 1966.
3. *Manpower Problems in Detroit*, page 13527.
4. There was also a slight counter-movement of working wives who quit jobs to increase their husbands' chances of deferment in the draft. See *New York Times*, February 6, 1942.
5. Lyn Goldfarb, *Separated & Unequal*, Washington, D.C.: URPE, undated (1976), page 12.
6. *Ibid.*, page 6. The source cited for this is Sheila Tobias and Lisa Anderson, "What Really Happened to Rosie the Riveter: Demobilization and the Female Labor Force 1945-1947," paper presented at Berkshire Conference, New Brunswick, N.J., March 2, 1973, page 6.
7. *Negro Women War Workers*, Bulletin No. 205, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946, page iii.
8. *Ibid.*, page 18.
9. See the testimony of Robert G. Waldron, Director of Industrial Relations, Hudson Motor Car Co., page 13143, and Col. George E. Strong, Air Corps, Commanding Officer, Central District, Air Technical Service Command, page 13433, in *Manpower Problems in Detroit*.
10. "The U.A.W. leadership perceived this lack of trade union spirit to be a serious problem, and in the spring of 1944 established a Women's Bureau as part of the International's War Policy Division. . . . [T]he Bureau sought to investigate the indifference of women to union affairs, and hoped to encourage women to become active U.A.W. members.  
 "This lack of union participation is difficult to understand in a city like Detroit where 51% of women working were employed before the war, and 78% intended to continue working when the war ended. . . .  
 "An explanation may be found by examining women's dual role of worker and as homemaker." Goldfarb, *op. cit.*, pages 18-19.
11. "An auto local with 9,000 members in Chicago was unable for four or five months in a row to muster a quorum of 125 workers at a Sunday meeting." Sidney Lens, *Left, Right and Center*, Hinsdale, Ill.: Henry Regnery Company, 1949, page 340.
12. The experience of Jessie Glaberman.
13. Sam Sage, OHI-WSULA, page 32. His disbelief that women would wildcat in this way not only reflects the general sexism, it also reinforces it by defining these women, not as militant workers but as undisciplined workers who won't follow union procedures. See also *Manpower Problems in Detroit*, page 13620, for report of a

- strike at the Chrysler Kercheval plant in defense of women's jobs; Joseph Pagano, OHI-WSULA, page 13; Leonard Woodcock, OHI-WSULA, page 27.
14. Jess Ferrazza, OHI-WSULA, page 22.
  15. Ed Jennings, "Wildcat! The Wartime Strike Wave in Auto," *Radical America*, Volume 9, Numbers 4-5, July-August 1975, page 85.
  16. See Norm Bully, OHI-WSULA, page 21.
  17. Carl Bolton's career ended as strangely as it began. He returned to a career of crime. In the late fifties he and a confederate were convicted of robbery and sentenced to long terms at the state prison in Jackson.
  18. Stan Weir, "American Labor on the Defensive: A 1940's Odyssey," *Radical America*, Volume 9, Numbers 4-5, July-August 1975, page 177.
  19. *Ibid.*, page 169. The title of this piece, "American Labor on the Defensive," indicates the limited view that Weir has of workers, whom he tends to see through organizational blinders.

### CHAPTER 3 (pages 35-61)

1. See Cochran, *op. cit.*, page 163.
2. Joseph Pagano, OHI-WSULA, pages 30-32; James Couser, OHI-WSULA, page 18; Richard Frankenstein, *Manpower Problems in Detroit*, page 13414.
3. *Manpower Problems in Detroit*, pages 13557-13558.
4. Orrin H. Peppler, OHI-WSULA, page 19. Peppler did not recall any strikes at Buell Die and Machine Co. However, Romney reported a wildcat there. *Manpower Problems in Detroit*, page 13600.
5. Leonard Woodcock, OHI-WSULA, pages 24-25.
6. *Manpower Problems in Detroit*, page 13404.
7. Leonard Woodcock, OHI-WSULA, page 26.
8. Leonard E. Klue, OHI-WSULA, pages 22-23.
9. Edward Purdy, OHI-WSULA, page 14.
10. Sam Sage, OHI-WSULA, page 32.
11. *Ibid.*, page 34.
12. Jess Ferrazza, OHI-WSULA, page 17.
13. *Ibid.*, pages 15-16.
14. F. D. "Jack" Palmer, OHI-WSULA, page 33.
15. *Ibid.*, pages 34-35.
16. Norm Bully, OHI-WSULA, pages 22-23.
17. *Ibid.*, page 23.
18. *Manpower Problems in Detroit*, page 13433.
19. *Ibid.*, pages 13286-13287.
20. *Ibid.*, pages 13300-13301.
21. *Ibid.*, pages 13301-13302.

22. *Ibid.*, pages 13302-13303. "Government statistics do not reflect the true picture of the times since they do not include the thousands and thousands of one-hour and three-hour stoppages that occurred throughout the country, without workers even leaving the plant." Sidney Lens, *op. cit.*, pages 355-356.
23. Leonard Woodcock described a case where Air Force officers dealt with women strikers by isolating them and bullying them one by one, OHI-WSULA, page 27; Sam Sage reported on his collaboration with military intelligence in a potential strike situation, OHI-WSULA, page 35.
24. See Jess Ferrazza, OHI-WSULA, pages 16-17, and John Anderson, OHI-WSULA, page 106.

#### CHAPTER 4 (pages 62-81)

1. "The outbreak of war completed the destruction of the Socialist Party as a political entity." Daniel Bell, *Marxian Socialism in the United States*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967, page 180.
2. Interview with Bob Travis by Ken Lawrence, July 28, 1976.
3. See Joel Seidman, "Labor Policy of the Communist Party During World War II," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Volume 4, Number 1, October 1950.
4. Volume XX, Number 7. This article appeared after the German invasion of Russia, an embarrassment occasioned by the necessarily leisurely pace of monthly publication.
5. *Ibid.*, page 581.
6. Volume XX, Number 10, pages 851-2. This article was unsigned, indicating the status of a policy editorial. Emphasis in original.
7. *Ibid.*, page 855.
8. *Ibid.*, page 865. In the *Daily Worker* the contrast appeared on successive days. An editorial in the *Sunday Worker* of June 22, 1941 noted: "President Roosevelt's message to Congress brings American-German relations nearer to that climax, toward which both Hitler and the White House have been steadily moving.

"The message is merely one more act in that 'one step after another' system pursued by the Administration, which is leading toward a break in diplomatic relations and heading toward armed conflict. . . .

"The imperialistic stakes for which the White House and the Wilhelmstrasse are playing offer no benefit to the people. Those people want none of this war. They will have to state this strongly, to stay the hand of the war crowd."

The front page of the *Daily Worker* of June 23, 1941 was devoted entirely to support of the Soviet Union after the invasion and very quickly the CP couldn't get the U.S. into the war quickly enough.

9. *Wage Policy in War Production*, New York: Workers Library Publishers, April 1943, page 8.
10. Preis, *Labor's Giant Step*, page 222.
11. June 19, 1944.
12. Quoted in Lens, *op. cit.*, page 344. Bob Travis notes that incentive pay policy "may have been a mistake on our part. Maybe we shouldn't have been so gung-ho on production during the war, because I think that tactic lost a lot of support. . . ."  
"What about the piece rate that you were telling me about? Did that actually get established in the war industries?"  
"No."  
"It was just the party's thing?"  
"Yes. It lost out, too. Wherever the hell they had piece rates throughout the industry, they were still struggling to get rid of the goddam things. And we should have helped them get rid of them. . . ."  
"What kind of arguments did the party people make for that line?"  
"I don't know. 'Unity,' I guess, and 'win the war for the poor Russian guys.' Production, that's all, that's what they wanted." Ken Lawrence interview, July 28, 1976.
13. See Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1957, chapter IX.
14. George Morris, "The Trotskyite Fifth Column in the Labor Movement," *The Communist*, Volume XXIII, Number 8, August 1944. "The July issue of the *International Teamster* reprints a substantial section of this writer's column in the *Daily Worker* exposing the Trotskyites."  
"The straightforward stand of this union that Trotskyites are on par with enemy spies and saboteurs and should be treated as such is a timely advice to other organizations." *Ibid.*, page 717. See also Joseph R. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972, pages 46-47, 12.
15. OHI-WSULA, page 28. "Even Phil Murray accused them of 'excessive appeasement of anti-labor forces.'" Lens, *op. cit.*, page 344. See also Howe and Coser, *op. cit.*, page 409.
16. *The Social Basis of American Communism*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974.
17. *Ibid.*, page 92.
18. *Ibid.*, page 209. Joseph Starobin has a somewhat different assessment: "By the midpoint of the Second World War, American Communism had reached its zenith in numbers, and its influence far exceeded its own strength. From 7,000 members in 1930, the Communists could point to nearly 100,000 members, which included some 15,000 in the armed forces (many of them former members of the recently dissolved Young Communist League." Starobin,

- op. cit.*, page 21. It is my belief that Starobin's figures are inflated. However, if they include YCL members and not only those members who registered and paid dues, it might be reasonably accurate — understanding that the larger the figure, the lesser the significance, since the larger figure would include marginal, less disciplined, and less effective members.
19. *Ibid.*, page 115.
  20. Cochran, *op. cit.*, page 208.
  21. "The Party Recruiting Campaign in Michigan," *The Communist*, Volume XXII, Number 4, April 1943.
  22. Glazer, *op. cit.*, page 116. "By the middle of the war, the character of the membership was changing, with a significant influx of white-collar workers, professionals, and even business men, together with an increase in the working class membership, which the Party deemed essential and distinctive. Some characteristics of the fifteen thousand new members who came in during 1943 are worth noting. Whereas at the end of the previous year, 43 percent of the Party's membership consisted of industrial workers, 62 percent of the 1943 recruits were in this category. In 1942, half of the membership had been trade unionists; in 1943 this number rose to 56 percent. Just below a quarter were in 'basic industries.'" Starobin, *op. cit.*, page 24.
  23. *Ibid.*, page 117.
  24. Starobin, *op. cit.*, page 38.
  25. *Ibid.*, page 28.
  26. See Cochran, *op. cit.*, pages 244-247.
  27. See Felix Morrow, "Lenin's Teachings on National Wars," *Fourth International*, Volume III, Number 4, April 1942.
  28. Art Preis, "The Wailing Liberals," *Fourth International*, Volume III, Number 7, July 1942, page 201.
  29. E. R. Frank, "The Auto Workers: A Step Forward," *Fourth International*, Volume III, Number 9, September 1942, page 262. Emphasis in original.
  30. James P. Cannon, *Socialism on Trial*, New York: Pioneer Publishers, March 1949, page 43.
  31. *Labor Action*, June 30, 1941.
  32. *Ibid.*
  33. *Ibid.*, December 15, 1941.
  34. M.S., "The Strange Silence of the Militant," *Ibid.*, January 12, 1942.
  35. Jack Wilson (B. J. Widick), "Labor in the War," *The New International*, Volume 8, Number 1, February 1942, page 15.
  36. David Coolidge (Ernest R. McKinney), "Afterthoughts on a Union Convention," *The New International*, Volume 8, Number 8, September 1942, page 233.



37. *Ibid.*, pages 236-237.
38. David Coolidge, "A Firsthand Report of the UAW Convention," *Labor Action*, October 18, 1943.
39. Max Shachtman, "The Progressives at the UAW Convention," *ibid.*, October 25, 1943.

#### CHAPTER 5 (pages 82-97)

1. Elizabeth McCracken, OHI-WSULA, page 2. This is the main source of information for this section.
2. John W. Anderson, OHI-WSULA, pages 39-41. (This is not the same John Anderson who is referred to in the text.)
3. Elizabeth McCracken, OHI-WSULA, page 13.
4. John W. Anderson, OHI-WSULA, page 41. Bert Cochran, in the World War II years, became the leading trade union strategist of the SWP. He left to form his own group in the 1950s.
5. Elizabeth McCracken, OHI-WSULA, pages 35-36.
6. Elizabeth McCracken, OHI-WSULA, page 3.
7. *Newsweek*, February 21, 1944, page 69.
8. Frank Marquart, *An Autoworker's Journal*, University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975, page 56.
9. *Detroit News*, November 9, 1942, page 5.
10. The *Free Press* was not above lying. This last "quote" is an obvious distortion of something Smith often said, that labor had a chance to exploit the wartime labor shortage.
11. *Detroit Free Press*, February 7, 1944. See also *Free Press*, November 8, 1942, February 8 and 10, 1944; *Detroit News*, November 10, 1942, February 8 and 11, 1944.
12. *Detroit News*, November 9, 1942.
13. McCracken, OHI-WSULA, pages 33-35.
14. *Manpower Problems in Detroit*, pages 13246-13253.
15. *Newsweek*, February 14, 1944, page 67.
16. *Ibid.*, February 14 and 21, 1944. See also *Detroit Free Press*, *Detroit News*, *Detroit Times*, February 5-12, 1944.
17. For an interesting comparison with miners in wartime Britain, see Angus Calder, *op. cit.*, pages 431-443.
18. J. R. Sperry, "Rebellion Within the Ranks: Pennsylvania Anthracite, John L. Lewis, and the Coal Strikes of 1943," *Pennsylvania History*, July 1973, page 293. Saul D. Alinsky, in *John L. Lewis*, New York: Vintage Books, 1970, chapter 12, "Lewis vs. the People," gives the starting date as two weeks after the New Year. Art Preis, in *ibid.*, chapter 18, "How the Miners Won," gives the date as January 2, 1943.
19. Sperry, *op. cit.*, page 294.
20. *Ibid.*, page 282.

21. *Ibid.*, page 174.
22. *Ibid.*, pages 294-295.
23. *Ibid.*, page 305.
24. Lens, *op. cit.*, page 358.
25. Alinsky, *op. cit.*, page 296.
26. Preis, *op. cit.*, page 182.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, page 183.
29. *Ibid.*, page 184.

## CHAPTER 6 (pages 98-120)

1. See Table 12, page 36.
2. George W. Blackwood, *The United Automobile Workers of America 1935-51*, Dissertation, University of Chicago, December 1951.
3. *Labor Action*, May 31, 1943.
4. *New York Times*, March 27, 1943.
5. *Ibid.*, March 20 and April 3, 1943.
6. *Ibid.*, April 20, 1943.
7. *Proceedings of the Eighth Convention, 1943, of the UAW*, page 115.
8. *Labor Action*, August 2, 1943.
9. *Ibid.*, December 21, 1942 and January 11, 1943.
10. *Ibid.*, July 12, 1943.
11. *Proceedings of the Eighth Convention, 1943, of the UAW*, pages 403-414.
12. Martin Harvey (Martin Glaberman), "Michigan CIO Leaders Move for Labor Party," *Labor Action*, January 3, 1944.
13. Preis, *op. cit.*, pages 246-247; L. Smith, "The Michigan Commonwealth Federation," *The New International*, Volume X, Number 6, June 1944, pages 178-182; *Labor Action*, March 20 and 27, 1944.
14. Preis, *op. cit.*
15. *New York Times*, March 9, 10, and 16, 1944; Preis, *op. cit.*, page 228; *Labor Action*, March 20 and April 3, 1944.
16. Martin Harvey, "Lowdown on the Chrysler Strike," *Labor Action*, June 5, 1944.
17. Preis, *op. cit.*, pages 230-231.
18. M. Harvey, "Michigan CIO Retreats from Its 1943 Militancy," *Labor Action*, July 24, 1944.
19. "Michigan CIO Militants Set Up Caucus," *ibid.*
20. I took part in the discussions which formed the caucus, but as a non-UAW member did not vote on any questions.
21. *Labor Action*, August 7 and 14, 1944.
22. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1944.
23. *Labor Action*, September 11, 1944.

24. *Proceedings*, 9th Convention of the UAW, pages 56-59.
25. *Ibid.*, pages 147-148.
26. *Ibid.*, pages 149-151. The reference in the last section is to proposals from Earl Browder and Harry Bridges.
27. *Ibid.*, pages 153-154.
28. *Ibid.*, page 468.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, page 221.
31. Minutes of the International Executive Board meeting, October 1-6, 1944, Addes Papers, WSULA, Box 23, Folder: Minutes.
32. *Rank and Filer*, January 1945, page 2, WSULA.
33. *Labor Action*, December 4, 1944.
34. *New York Times*, February 10, 25, 26, and 27, 1944.
35. *Ibid.*, March 1-6, 1945; *Labor Action*, March 12, 1945.
36. Minutes of International Executive Board meeting, November 28-30, 1944, Addes Papers, WSULA, Box 23.
37. "Irregular Balloting in the UAW No-Strike Voting," *Labor Action*, March 5, 1945.
38. See Table 13, page 117.
39. See Table 15, page 118.
40. Ganley Collection, Folder 7-29, "UAW Referendum Committee Final Report," WSULA.
41. *Rank and Filer*, April 1945.
42. Preis, *op. cit.*, page 236.
43. *Monthly Labor Review*, May 1945, page 961.
44. *Ibid.*, May 1946, page 726.

## CHAPTER 7 (pages 121-134)

1. T. Lupton, *On the Shop Floor*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1963, page 202. "Finite principles are the most that understanding can pick out — and these being essentially unstable and tottering, the structure they supported must collapse with a crash." G. W. F. Hegel, *The Logic of Hegel*, London: Oxford University Press, 1892, page 79.
2. Theo Nichols and Huw Beynon, *Living With Capitalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, page 131. Emphasis in original.
3. *Ibid.*, page 171. Emphasis in original. "Contradiction is the root of all movement and life, and it is only in so far as it contains a Contradiction that anything moves and has impulse and activity." G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1951, Volume 2, page 67.
4. "... opportunism mistakes the actual, psychological state of consciousness of proletarians for the class consciousness of the proletariat." Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, London:

- Merlin Press, 1971, page 74. Emphasis in original.
5. *The Holy Family*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956, page 53.
  6. Marx made clear in *Capital* that, "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, *i.e.*, on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital." Moscow: Progress Publishers, undated, Volume 1, page 604. This was no idealistic view of how workers could escape the effects of capitalist domination. But with the recognition that there "grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself." *Ibid.*, page 715.
  7. See Sherry Mangan, "State of the Nation; Minority Report," *Fortune*, November 1943.
  8. *German Ideology*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968, page 87.
  9. *The Holy Family*, page 52.
  10. *Capital*, page 604.
  11. Lens, *op. cit.*, page 346.
  12. Christopher Lasch, "The Family and History," *New York Review of Books*, November 13, 1975, page 34. "This analysis establishes right from the start the distance that separates class consciousness from the empirically given, and from the psychologically describable and explicable ideas which men form about their situation in life." Lukacs, *op. cit.*, page 51.
  13. Georges Friedmann, *Industrial Society*, New York: The Free Press, 1964, page 322.
  14. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York: Vintage Books, 1966, page 9.

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James Couser	F. D. "Jack" Palmer
Joseph B. Ditzel	Orrin H. Peppler
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Bert Foster	R. J. Thomas
Nat Ganley	Raymond Vess
Richard Harris	Leonard Woodcock
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(Both of the above are in Martin and Jessie Glaberman Collection, Archives of Labor History, WSU.)

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