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Labor History of Syracuse-Final Project 2002

Labor History of Syracuse, New York

Contents

Abstract and Acknowledgements

Introduction

Part I Early Syracuse Labor History

The Union Movement & Case Studies

The Bakers and the Boss Baker Exchange

Paternalism and Solvay Process

The Building Trade Strike of 1913

Part II Labor Through the World Wars

The Remington Rand Case

Part III Labor's Civil War

Labor's House Divided & Case Studies

U.E. and I.U.E. at General Electric

Steel and Sheet Metal at Carrier

Part IV The Post-War Industrial State and Labor Unrest

**The Decline of Manufacturing : Allied, General
Electric, General Motors, and Carrier**

The New Economy and New Labor

Conclusion

Acknowledgements

This project has been the most time consuming thing that I have ever attempted. I would like to acknowledge my family for making it possible. Without their support and understanding, I would have struggled to find the drive and organization to go on. I would also like to thank Cara Burton at the Solvay Public Library and the Solvay Process Collection, Susan LaCette at Catherwood Library, Sue O'Brien at The Living School Book, all the folks at the Local History Department at the Syracuse Public Library, and Rebekah Ambrose at the Onondaga Historical Association for their invaluable assistance.

Abstract

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF GREGORY HART
for the degree of Master of Arts in Labor and Policy Studies.

TITLE: LABOR HISTORY OF SYRACUSE, NEW YORK.

This thesis will explore major issues that influence the labor movement overall and the Syracuse, New York area in particular. This work will concentrate on manufacturing since it was the dominant labor activity. The central question is; given the difficulties encountered by the labor movement over time, does the labor history of Syracuse, New York reflect the struggles of organized labor of the past one hundred and fifty years?

The first part will be to examine the early labor history. The need for people to organize and to form unions is important to understand. The early labor organizations were faced with the task of establishing and defining the relationship with employers. Almost as equally foreboding a task was defining the relationship labor organizations had with their members, with other labor organizations and the community. The period of 1870 to 1915 will show the trends of how employers and government reacted to the growing agitation among the working class. I will include here specific events that occurred in this time period in Syracuse, New York. These will include an examination of the cases of the lockout of the unionized bakers in 1889, the welfare capitalism of the Solvay Process Corporation, and the building trades strike in 1913.

The second part is the era from 1915-1945. The Great Depression, the New Deal and the CIO had significant ramifications for the labor movement. The Wagner Act also known as the National Labor Relations Act became a powerful tool in the hands of labor. The rights of employees to organize would have the protection of law. These catalysts affect organized labor and the Syracuse, New York area. In this chapter will use a case study of the Remington Rand strike of 1936.

The third part will be examining the period from 1945-1970. This period was witness to Taft-Hartley, the "Red-Scare" and the entrenchment of the business unionism model in employer-labor relations. The inter-union conflict between the AFL and CIO became a full-fledged civil war. In this chapter I will use the ouster of the United Electrical Workers Union (U.E.) from representing General Electric workers at Electronics Parkway in Syracuse. I will also write about the ouster of the United Steelworkers from representing Carrier Corporation employees in 1960.

The fourth part concerns the decline and rebuilding of the labor movement in a time of post-industrialization, globalization, and the technology revolution. The buffeting of the national economy by these trends has led to necessary changes in the strategic position of organized labor. This has been happening in Syracuse. I will examine the closing of major Syracuse industries such as Allied-Signal, Carrier Corporation/United Technologies and General Motors. The role and the challenges to organized labor and workers overall will be examined.

Introduction to Syracuse Labor History

In the union offices that I used to work at, they were converting old documents to electronic media. The office staff wanted to do away with a number of old metal file cabinets to make space. I looked over five cabinets lined up at the garage door. They were sturdy and well made. I noticed that Remington Rand made them, probably in the office equipment plant in the Tonowandas many years ago. I asked if anyone was familiar with the story of the thousands of workers that took on Remington Rand in the 1936 strike. Nobody was. That became a motivator for me in working on this project. The topic of labor history has been a topic of great interest to me for many years. I have found that the struggles of working people for their share of the “American Dream”, to be a compelling one. The workers from many diverse backgrounds, who found commonality in their work and sought fair treatment and a living wage in exchange for their toil. This story follows the struggle of workers at the onset of the industrial revolution, through the development of industrial pluralism, up to the challenges of the new economy in a new century. The determination of working people to stand up and risk what they had, however meager, showed their gritty courage. This is about the strength and determination of the workers, it is the backbone of our country and a story that needs to be told and retold. There have been many fine works written on the labor movement by renowned historians, such as David Brody, David Montgomery, Melvyn Dubofsky and others, that have

told this history. This project utilizes the foundations set by the distinguished labor historians to analyze the fundamental problems facing organized labor in different eras. These fundamental problems continue to this day. This work will be written in an overview of national events and local events along with specific case studies. This is not a comprehensive history of Syracuse labor. It is representative of the struggles of the labor movement.

I brought one of those Remington Rand cabinets home. I have it in my study. It is a reminder of the sacrifice that people were willing to give in the fight for dignity, respect and justice.

The Question

The central question is; given the difficulties encountered by the labor movement over time, does the labor history of Syracuse, New York reflect the struggles of organized labor of the past one hundred and fifty years? The issues that workers have historically encountered concern how to achieve unity and solidarity in order to address fundamental conflicts with employers over control of the workplace. How were the workers to balance the need for cooperative effort with the American trait of stubborn individualism? These are the conflicting images that influence organized labor's effectiveness. These issues also explain the evolution and development of what the union was to become and what that means to the workers.

The chapters will further address the sub-problems of the different eras and the particular trends encountered in them. There was the opposition of the employer to the rights of workers. There was a belief that property rights were the domain of the employer and they superseded any worker rights. The war on labor led to violence. The adversaries of the labor-left would utilize their positions of power and wealth to wage this war. ¹ How were the workers, employers and government to react the dramatic changes in the American economy? These factors lead to the way that labor organizations acted and reacted. The internal conflict within labor would transform the nature and composition of labor and political organizations. Politics, race, gender and ethnicity proved to be stumbling blocks to worker unity. Would this new movement be a class-based, ideologically driven, established to solely focus on the workplace, or some kind of combination? The maturing of the labor movement led to its decline. The new economy has reinvigorated the questions of what directions and strategies to employ. This thesis is entitled: The Labor History of Syracuse. In it I will explore these and other major issues that influence the labor movement overall and the Syracuse area in particular. This work will concentrate on manufacturing since it was the dominant labor activity. It will also follow developments in three industries; Carrier, General Electric, and Solvay Process/Allied Chemical. There were remarkable events that propelled this community along in history. It is in these environs that events unfolded that make

Syracuse labor history fascinating, unique, yet remarkably similar to stories across the country.

The first part will be to examine the early labor history. The need for people to organize and to form unions is important to understand. The early labor organizations were faced with the task of establishing and defining the relationship with employers. Almost as equally foreboding a task was defining the relationship labor organizations had with their members, with other labor organizations and the community. The period of 1870 to 1915 will show the trends of how employers and government reacted to the growing agitation among the working class. Was Syracuse typical of this? I will include here specific events that occurred in this time period. These will include an examination of the cases of the lockout of the unionized bakers in 1889, the welfare capitalism of the Solvay Process Corporation, and the building trades strike in 1913.

The second part is the era from 1915-1945. The Great Depression, the New Deal and the CIO had significant ramifications for the labor movement. The Wagner Act also known as the National Labor Relations Act became a powerful tool in the hands of labor. The rights of employees to organize would have the protection of law. How did these catalysts affect organized labor and was the Syracuse area similarly affected? In this chapter I will use a case study of the Remington Rand strike of 1936.

The third part will be examining the period from 1945-1970. This period was witness to Taft-Hartley, the “Red-Scare” and the entrenchment of the business unionism model in employer-labor relations. The inter-union conflict between the AFL and CIO became a full-fledged civil war. What did this mean for the labor organizations and was this the case in Syracuse? In this chapter I will use the ouster of the United Electrical Workers Union (U.E.) from representing General Electric workers at Electronics Parkway in Syracuse. I will also write about the ouster of the United Steelworkers from representing Carrier Corporation employees in 1960.

The fourth part concerns the decline and rebuilding of the labor movement in a time of post-industrialization, globalization, and the technology revolution. The buffeting of the national economy by these trends has led to necessary changes in the strategic position of organized labor. Has this been happening in Syracuse and how has labor reacted? I will examine the closing of major Syracuse industries such as Allied-Signal, Carrier Corporation/United Technologies and General Motors. The role and the challenges to organized labor and workers overall will be examined.

The Story of the Labor Movement in Syracuse

The story of American labor history goes back to the roots of America. The Colonies were a place that would present a new world for workers, particularly skilled artisans and craftsmen. The opportunities were presented

free from the yoke of the European feudal system. Many of the workers came over as indentured labor. “It has been estimated, indeed, that at least half, and probably more, of all the colonists who came to the New World arrived under some form of indenture and took their place as wholly free citizens only after working out their terms of contract.”² The agrarian economy needed the apprentice, the tradesman and the laborer. The indentured laborer would seek to have their own land and the tradesman their own business when their debt was paid. In Syracuse, there was the practice of taking young boys into the trades such as; coopers, carpenters, cigar-makers and blacksmiths. These youth could be unwanted children or orphans. There were many cases of these boys running off.³ The advertisements in the papers described the runaways and often offered a reward. The southern states would augment the need for labor by importing slaves. There, the number of wage earners was low and they were valued members of the economy.

The City of Syracuse and Onondaga County offer interesting and important boundaries for the problem of this thesis. Syracuse, New York is situated in the middle of the state. It is the crossroads between the New York City and the Capital District to the east and Buffalo and Rochester to the west. The city was well known as the “Salt City”, the “Candle City”, the “Typewriter City”, the “Gear City” and the “Air Conditioning Capital of the World”. The research will be addressing overall trends in the labor movement and how they specifically affected the Syracuse area. It is a typical

community that began to grow as a result of a natural resource, which was salt. It was also a transportation center, a way station, and a destination. It is an urban surrounded by a rural area. It has experienced trends of immigration that brought new members to the community.

The growing pains and growing possibilities of the nation were evident in Syracuse. The dramatic changes that came as a result of the Industrial Revolution forever transformed the city and the surrounding area. Labor's story was and continues to be central to Syracuse, New York. The boundaries of the timeframe will be from 1850 to the present time, but to properly understand the labor history of Syracuse it is necessary to travel further back in time and examine the forces that shaped this community.

The Beginning

Geology was kind to the Central New York region. In prehistoric times, a vast saline sea covered the region. Sand and mud settled to the bottom and formed layers of the limestone and salt that would mean a great deal to future residents. The Ice Age dramatically arranged the landscape as the glaciers advanced and retreated. Enormous sheets of ice sculpted the deep etchings of the Finger Lakes and the rounded basin of Lake Ontario. They also formed drumlins of glacial till. As the glaciers melted they formed waterways from their massive runoff. A great freshwater lake called Lake Iroquois covered the land.⁴ That lake receded, leaving behind the great swamps of Cicero, Montezuma, and a swamp that became Syracuse.

The settlers of the area were the Iroquois, specifically the Onondaga people. The French explorers Samuel de Champlain, Pierre Esprit Radisson, Father Simon LeMoyne, and Count Robert de Frontenac visited them. They attempted to either invade the region or persuade and convert the inhabitants. The Revolutionary War led to tracts of land, Indian land, being deeded to soldiers as compensation for service. The first white settlers benefited from the fertile fields of the Onondaga Valley, the timber from the virgin prime forests, and especially the salt that came from the saline swamp.

White Gold and Clinton's Ditch

Salt was a critical element in the preservation of food before the day of refrigeration. Salt would retard spoilage. The native people were wary of the place where grass would not grow. According to legend, the Jesuit missionary Father LeMoyne took the brackish "devil water" and was the first to boil it down to salt.⁵ The white settlers braved the disease of the swampland to boil the saline to salt. The salt kettles brought traders and more families to the area, but the commerce in salt was hampered by the lack of transportation. The Syracuse people needed a way to further distribute the salt.

In the 1820's two engineering marvels happened, the outlet to Onondaga Lake was widened allowing the swampland to be drained and the Erie Canal was built. The surveying and engineering for the project was led by a Central New Yorker, James Geddes. He and Joshua Foreman were

instrumental in making sure that the “most eligible and direct route of the canal” would go through what would become Syracuse.⁶ The Erie Canal was a technological wonder in its day. It would also provide the transportation link to ensure the survival of the fledgling community. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 brought an influx of new people to the area.

The salt industry was growing. “In a few decades 160,000 chords of wood a year were going to fire the boilers.”⁷ Men were needed to cut the wood, boil the saltwater, make the barrels and transport the salt. The salt boilers were rough, hardboiled men. In a newspaper report of 1825, a traveler describes a night in Syracuse. “I lodged for a night at a miserable tavern thronged by a company of salt boilers from Salina forming a group about as rough-looking specimens of humanity as I have ever seen. Their wild visages, beards thick and long and matted hair, even now rise up in the dark distant and picturesque perspective before me.”⁸ There was talk of expanding production by using a new method of solar evaporation. It was becoming a destination for immigrants. For example, in 1820, total County population was 41,467 and the number of foreign persons was 99 or .23 percent of the population. In the next census of 1830, the County population had increased to 58,973 and the foreign population had increased to 668, which is 1.13 percent of the population. By 1850, the population of Onondaga County had risen to 85,890. The foreign population had increased to 16,829, 19.59 percent of the overall population.⁹ The Irish and the Germans were the first to settle

and establish enclaves in different parts of town. Poles, Italians and Ukrainians followed them. Their strong backs were needed to build the city.

The Erie Canal was the project of Governor DeWitt Clinton. The massive undertaking would require planning, the best technologies of day, and hard physical labor. The project would create an east-west passage from the Hudson River across the state, to Buffalo and Lake Erie. It would run through, what would become, the city proper. On April 21, 1820 the first canal boat, the Montezuma, arrived to cheering crowds.⁹ Businesses sprang up to provide for the needs of this new commerce. Construction was everywhere. The swamp had been drained and the Villages of Salina and Syracuse incorporated and later joined to form the City of Syracuse.

Abolitionists, Free Soil, and The Republican Party

The Central New York area became an important hub of political activity. This activity would greatly influence the inhabitants and their views on labor.. The abolitionist movement had a meeting in Syracuse in 1835. The movement was dedicated to abolish slavery. At that meeting Gerrit Smith, William Lloyd Garrison, and others formed a local chapter of the Anti-Slavery Society.¹¹ Garrison was the founder of the Society and the editor of the abolitionist paper *The Liberator*. Gerrit Smith was one of the wealthiest landowners in the surrounding area and a leading philanthropist. He would have frequent visitors such as Garrison, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and John

Brown.¹² This group would also include Unitarian Reverend Samuel J. May of Syracuse, and Rev. Jermain Wesley Lougen, himself a fugitive slave. The Central New York area would become a central location for the Underground Railroad and other anti-slave activities.

The Republican Party was officially developed in a political meeting in Ripon, Wisconsin in February of 1854. It was later formally adopted in a convention in Jackson, Michigan that same year.¹³ It can be argued convincingly that the birthplace of the Republican Party was Central New York. The area was certainly attuned with the ideology of the party that would espouse free labor, equality and free soil. “The Republicans’ rapid rise to power could never have been achieved had their ideology not incorporated the basic values of the northern public.”¹⁴ The New York Whig party split over the slavery question so too did the Democrats. The door was open for “radicals” of all types to establish a new party. This party was also about capitalism and expanding economic measures to aid industry. David Montgomery defined this radicalism as “an entrepreneurial orientation coupled with a strong belief in nationalism and utilitarianism.”¹⁵

The Syracuse area founded the Free Soil Republicans. They were so called because they opposed the extension of slavery into the new territories of the West. This new party successfully ran a candidate for the supervisor of the town of Camillus in 1852. Hundreds signed a petition that established the party as opposed to the Fugitive Slave Law, and for “the cause of

Freedom and Humanity.”¹⁶ The following year, James M. Munro was elected to the New York State Assembly and was reelected the next term. He was the first Free Soil Republican elected to a state position. New Yorkers William Henry Seward, Horace Greeley and Thurlow Weed would plan and shape what would become the Republican Party. The New York State Convention was held in Syracuse in October 1855.

The Republican Party greatly influenced the coming debates over capital, labor, and unions. Lincoln would state in 1859, “Labor is prior to, and independent of capital... in fact capital is the fruit of labor.”¹⁷ Even in this period the Republicans were fractionalized between the “radicals” and the conservatives, the former factions of the Democrats and the Whigs. What would unify the party was the Max Weber belief in the Protestant ethic of life, combined with the “emphasis on social mobility and economic growth. It reflected an adaptation of that ethic to the dynamic, expansive, capitalistic society of the ante-bellum North.”¹⁸ The Republicans would emphasize that equality could be strove for, but it was then up to the individual to make the most of it. The success of some or the failure of others in society depended on their efforts and abilities. It was in this social mobility that the Republicans placed much faith in.

One of the founders of the party was New York newspaperman Horace Greeley. He was fully aware of the conditions of the laborers in the shops and their dreadful conditions. He advocated the establishment of limits to a

days' work and providing governmental work as a last resort if the need arises. His view of the workers reflected the Republican view the laborers were not " a distinct class with its own interests - rather, they were merely nascent capitalists, whose aim was to acquire capital and achieve economic independence." ¹⁹ The laborers could join together to petition their employers peacefully, but if the condition of work or wages were inadequate, then he should move west or take another job. The move west became a platform of the party and a legislative initiative that resulted in the Homestead Act of 1862.

President-elect Abraham Lincoln passed through the City of Syracuse on his way to Washington DC in 1861. He appeared at Vanderbilt Square Station and stated that Syracuse was a fine town and that he would like an opportunity to spend some time here someday.²⁰ The next time that he passed through was on midnight April 26, 1865. Thirty thousand people waited for hours for the funeral train of the slain President to pay their final respects. ²¹ The President had kept his promise.

Union Beginnings

The end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, witnessed a beginning of unions. They began as established associations or societies of tradesmen. The original purpose was to create mutual aid groups that would provide assistance in the event of illness, accidents, death, or aid

to the widows and orphans in the event of death. Although it was specifically against the guidelines in some associations to discuss or address wages and relations with employers, “it was inevitable that these societies should in time be concerned over employment problems.”²² The groups came to realize that they needed to act in a concerted manner. They needed to maintain wage levels and to curtail employers from lowering standards by hiring unskilled or semi-skilled workers to drive down the cost of labor. Another main concern was the lowering of the hours worked in a day. The organizations of printers, carpenters, shipwrights, cordwainers, tailors, coopers and weavers began to develop in cities and act like unions.

In Syracuse, there was an awakening of these concerns beginning in the 1830’s. The Union House was formed in 1836 as a mutual aid society of the “laboring class”. Funds were raised and distributed to assist the ill or widowed.²³ The Industrial Association, consisting of different tradesmen, was formed on February 2, 1843. They came together with a “plan of forming associations for mutual protections and securing the laboring classes their rights.”²⁴ The trades then organized themselves into more formalized labor unions.

The organizations also provided a meeting place in order to have recreation and education. The Union House became a center of social life for the workers and their families. The unions held concerts, picnics, balls, lectures, and other “social amusements”.²⁵ Speakers came to Syracuse and

lectured to a packed House. Later, the Temple of Industry and in the early 1900's the new Labor Temple was built and provided the same activities. The Knights of Labor opened their own hall for lectures and opened a reading room.²⁶ Through these events the union fostered a true sense of solidarity.

One of the leading questions of the time was surrounding the union as a legal entity. The workers and the employers had differing opinions. Workers were undeterred by numerous losses in court cases that determined that the combination of employees was a conspiracy, and therefore illegal. There was much judicial prejudice in the courts that influenced the interpretation of the social and economic doctrines. In 1842 a landmark court ruling was made in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The case was *Commonwealth v. Hunt* and it established that unions were not conspiracies. The agreement of the Journeymen Bootmakers Society to withhold their labor from certain employers was not necessarily a criminal conspiracy. Chief Justice Shaw stated; "The legality of such an association will depend upon the means to be used for its accomplishments."²⁷ This case seemed to set a legal precedent in legitimizing the existence of unions.

In Syracuse, the legal right to form unions was not challenged but the right to strike was questioned. The tendencies of workers to lay down their tools and to leave a worksite had an effect on employers. There would be heated exchanges in the newspapers on the issues of work stoppage, from both sides. The newspaper itself would give little space to labor. *The Syracuse*

Daily Standard ran an editorial entitled “Strikes”, on May 10, 1853. The editor questioned the wisdom of leaving their work since they would either lose their job or come back for lower wages. The paper stated, “Labor is like the common products of the soil governed by supply and demand.”²⁸ In a response to the successful strike by the Printers Union against the paper an editorial the following year stated; “the condition of some mechanics (are) improved by an increase of wages, but this rule does not hold good with Journeymen Printers of Syracuse. With few exceptions, the more wages the more time is spent in the taverns and the more business they have at the police office.”²⁹

Conclusion

The labor story of Syracuse reflects the trends that were happening in the labor movement. The Salt City’s first industry began with the boiling of salt in kettles. Evaporation became the method used and by 1862 the peak production was 9,053,874 barrels at 56 pound to a barrel.³⁰ The people came to cut the wood and work in the salt works. There were at times 3,000 men employed in the works and the area covered 6,000 acres. Metal workers came and made the kettles and tools. The coopers came to make the barrels for the transportation of the salt. Workers hollowed logs to make pipes to transport brine. The canal had opened the area to building. Carpenters, masons and others tradesmen were arriving

The Salt Boilers and the laborers walked off the job with wage disputes. The union they had was more of a loose association. For example, in 1859 the Salt Boilers wanted an increase from the rate of \$1.50 per 100 bushels to \$2.00 per 100 bushels. ³¹ They did not get it, and returned to work. The salt field laborers would be exempt from service in the Civil War, but that would not stop them from striking during the war years. In May 1864, the laborers walked off the job for the increase to \$2.00 a day. The Company countered with \$1.75 and refused to go higher. The laborers came back for \$1.75. ³² There were other strikes in the early pre-industrial era by the stone cutters, bricklayers, carpenters, masons and printers and the cigar makers. These marked the beginning of the conflicts that were to come.

Syracuse as the Candle City began as a home industry for Anton and Rosina Will and their four sons in 1855. ³³ This grew to the Will and Baumer Candle Company that by 1922 was the “largest candle plant in the world.”³⁴ Other candle producers opened for business in Syracuse such as Uhle-Kramer, F. Marty Candles, the Cathedral Candle Company, Mack-Miller and Muench-Kreuzer. These companies produced high quality candles for churches and home use employing hundreds of workers.

The typewriter era was significant in the labor history of Syracuse. Hundreds of workers got jobs in the four typewriter factories located in what came to be known as “Typewriter City”³⁵ One of the larger manufacturers, L.C Smith, built an impressive seven story factory at 700 East Washington

Street. Smith was originally a gun maker that was presented the concept of a new ball bearing typewriter by inventor Alexander Brown.³⁶ He abandoned guns for typewriters.

The labor history of Syracuse had begun. The traits of independence and the ability to stick together would reappear time and time again in the future. The notion of a class based struggle and the definition of union would continue in this cradle of republican values. How would the full force of capitalism in the industrial revolution affect the workers? The impact of immigration was beginning to be felt as Syracuse was taking on an ethnic character. The laboring people of the Syracuse area were soon to be tested, pushed and pulled by segmentation and solidarity.

Part I : Early Syracuse Labor History

Introduction

The end of the Civil War was a dramatic milestone of American history. The Union was preserved. The North exhibited the industrial capacity to produce ordnance of all types, ships, trains, wagons and war

materiel. The South had little in the way of industry and relied on the export of agricultural goods to provide for the war effort. The Confederate States relied heavily on the labor of slaves to produce those products. The war would change America as the industrial era was being incorporated into the economic power of a reunited nation. This process had been going on for many years, in the textile mill industries of New England, the mines, and factories of the country.

America at the end of the Civil War was still predominately agrarian. The country had deep traditions of landowning, farming, and that traditional value system. The land was a place where the work and the daily life fit together. “They grow out of the necessities of nature and the traditional norms of the cultural life. Industrialization however divorces work from life, as the imperatives of technology and its machines overwhelm nature and culture.”¹ The Homestead Act of 1862 would seek to open the West to settlement by a new generation of farmers, by allowing them to purchase up to 160 acres of land for \$1.25 an acre. Temporarily, the number of workers and farms would increase. Their numbers however would be overshadowed by increase in urban areas. “Almost 11 million Americans deserted farms for cities between 1870 and 1920, and of the more than 20 million immigrants who came to the United States, the vast majority also became urban workers.”² These forces of urbanization, immigration, and the move from the agricultural life were shaping the society.

The creation of a large wage-earning population came as the revolution in technology was increasing the speed of transportation, communication, and all manners of industry. New processes and machines would change the steel and other labor and capital-intensive industries. The skills necessary to run and repair the new machines would replace the craft skills. There would be a need for people to manage that had industrial management skills in operating modern enterprises. Melvyn Dubofsky states that; “The proportion of workers described as unskilled tended to decline, falling to 31.5 percent of the male labor force and 28.9 percent of the total labor force by 1920.”³ These workers were needed to feed the immense appetite for labor. The employment figures of people working in the manufacturing sector would balloon from 2.5 million in 1870 to 11.2 million in 1920. This was a remarkable forty percent of the workforce.⁴ The economy was also moving towards larger employers whose ventures reached across states.

The Civil War years would mark close integration of the government and the business interests. Great fortunes were made from the profits of wartime industry. The Homestead Act distributed 50 million acres to farmers but the government would give 100 million acres to the railroad interests (for free).⁵ The war provided business the leverage to demand tariffs on foreign goods and to allow the introduction of foreign contract workers for use as cheap labor and strikebreakers.⁶ Fostering and protecting capitalistic development was becoming the goal of the government and the courts.

The workers came from the countryside and from many different countries to fuel the need for labor in the Industrial Revolution. The Civil War years would witness an influx of western and northern Europeans, workers who were seen as more skilled. In the decade of the 1880's, there were five million new immigrants through the United States.⁷ There also was a change in the nations of origin. People from the countries of southern and Eastern Europe, Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Greece, and Russia came to America. Was the exodus from the farms of the United States and Europe simply to survive and provide for their families? Economic cycles, working conditions and the living conditions would all play into the conflicts that would follow. How did these workers cope with the changes in life? What hindered worker efforts to collectively address the grievances of the new industrial order?

The growth of labor unions in this period and the outbreaks of violence both serve to show how workers would react to industrialization. I will also provide the background of the labor conflict in the Syracuse area. Were the issues and the results similar? The solidarity that was required to fight the injustice was difficult to obtain and to sustain. I will examine two cases in the Syracuse area of labor unrest and one of paternalism.

Wages and Conditions

The French traveler, Alexis de Toucqueville, wrote a collection of his observations in *Democracy in America* from the early 1830's. In this book, he

states that Americans are willing and able to devote themselves to productive industry.⁸ However, he warns that as the production process becomes more specialized the worker skill becomes less important. Also as the skill decreases the power shifts to the employer, the manufacturing aristocracy. “Thus at the very time at which the science of manufacturers lowers the class of workmen, it raises the class of masters.”⁹ The wages in the post-war era would be influenced by the boom and bust economic cycles (along with inflationary and deflationary periods), the state of the labor markets, and the profits of the capitalists. The workers would be at the mercy of the fluctuations in the economy. The wage earners, who could be many in the family unit, could be thrown out of work. They would lose their housing and suffer in poverty. There was no unemployment insurance or any programs to cope with these severe upheavals. The wage and earnings of the period between 1860 and 1890 was, at best, moderate. “The real annual rate rose from just under \$300 (1860) to just over \$425 (1890).”¹⁰ The data also ignores the fact that the skilled workers were getting a larger share of the increases. Those large numbers of immigrants would influence the economy. The excess labor force would depress wages.

The capitalists would fare much better in the economic crises than the worker or the small businessperson. The years witnessed periodic panics and depressions in 1837, 1857, 1873, 1893, 1907, 1919, and 1929. The Astors, Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, and Morgans would be insulated from the ravages

of depression and seek to expand their empires. “During the crisis of 1873, Carnegie was capturing the steel market, and Rockefeller was wiping out his competitors in oil.”¹¹ There was no need or obligations to provide for the employees in times of distress. The government would, however, provide millions in land and bonds to the wealthiest of Americans

There were no agencies to regulate the hours or the working conditions of the workers. The workers began in the 1830’s demanding the right to a ten-hour workday. The struggle for establishing shorter hours would unify different elements of the civic, religious and labor communities. The issue of working shorter hours and allowing the workers to spend time with their families and their communities resonated with many people. The other argument was that shorter hours would benefit the health of the workers and provide more jobs. Employers, however, took it as a threat to the ability to run their businesses. Strikes would occur, as workers walked out in protest of excessive hours. The movement spread to many cities and areas of the country. Finally the Federal Government introduced a ten-hour day for all public works, when President Van Buren established that standard by executive order in 1840.¹² The 1860’s witnessed the beginning of the eight-hour movement. In good or bad economic times there was little expenditure on safety. The expensive machinery was to be utilized to the maximum, regardless of hours worked or the fatigue of the workers. The mortality rates of American workers were very high. “From 1880 to 1900,

35,000 workers were killed annually and another 536,000 were injured.”¹³ In America’s mines and factories, people were being worked to death and killed by their jobs. This was a strong motivator to establish labor organizations to fight for the right of safety in the workplace.

Early Labor Organizations

The American labor force was slowly becoming more urbanized and also more severely impacted by those tumultuous periods of economic crises and panics, booms and busts, recessions and inflation. Gains that were made by workers in the boom times were lost in the depression times. The next step in the evolution of organized labor was the developing of an association of unions in the same craft or trade that would have the same goals and backgrounds. These associations of unions would become beneficial to workers seeking to set standards in training, wages and benefits. The cooperation of like-minded unions would add leverage to negotiations. At the same time, the effort was being made to form a union that crossed craft lines to include different types of unions. There was a dream of building a national labor union.

One of the first general labor activities were the mixed trades assemblies that formed in Philadelphia and New York in the eighteen twenties and thirties. The same thing was happening in the New England Workingmen’s Associations, and tempered by reformers, in the Industrial Congresses of the

eighteen forties and fifties.¹⁴ The movement began to take shape as central trades councils in the major manufacturing cities. The number of councils and their associated groups would grow. There was an organizing meeting held in New York City, in 1836 to establish a national union. The goals of this new union “were to advance the welfare of the laboring classes, promote the establishment of trade unions in every part of the country, and publish such information that would be useful to mechanics and workingmen....As a result of the zeal of local societies, city trades councils and the National Trades’ Union, there were in the country as a whole an estimated 300,000 unionized workers.”¹⁵ This fledgling movement would not last. It would fold in the coming recession of 1837.

The Syracuse Labor Movement

In Syracuse, the trades and craftsmen would begin to band together in 1836. The venue called the Union House would host the earliest recorded meeting of the Mutual Aid Organization. This was formed “for the purpose of forming a society of the laboring class to take into consideration the raising of funds”¹⁶ for the less fortunate among the membership. The groups would come to realize that they would need to act in a concerted manner to maintain wage levels and to curtail employers from lowering standards by hiring unskilled or semi-skilled workers to drive down the cost of labor. Another main concern was the lowering of the hours worked in a day. The

Industrial Association, consisting of different tradesmen, was formed on February 2, 1843. They came together with a “plan of forming associations for mutual protections and securing the laboring classes their rights.”¹⁷ The trades would then organize themselves into more formalized labor unions one by one, through the rest of the 1840’s and 1850’s

The Cigarmakers Local No. 6 was the first and strongest labor organization in Syracuse.¹⁸ The Union was founded in 1854 and the first convention was held in Syracuse in May 1854. This was an affiliation of seven local unions. The president of the Syracuse union, Theodore Fitzgerald, was elected to head the union-group. In 1864 the National Cigarmakers Union is formed in New York City. The Syracuse local was invited and joined the union. The 1867 convention was held in Buffalo, New York. The Syracuse local union president, John J. Junio was elected president of the newly named Cigarmakers International Union.¹⁹ However, like many other unions, the depression of 1873 destroyed the union. The economic condition forced the union into a strike that was broken by the employers and the union collapsed.

In this period events were happening in Syracuse that reflected the labor movement in the nation, which centered on control and power in the workplace. The workers would collectively bargain with employers for wages, benefits, along with terms and conditions of employment. The strikes and boycotts were the common action or reaction to offensive employer conduct.

Some of the earliest strikes occurred in the late 1850's. For example, the Journeymen Boot and Shoe Makers (Cordwainers), with over one hundred members struck to refuse a 12 to 25 percent pay cut. Half of the employers settled with rescinding the pay cut. The Cordwainers then set up their own cooperative shoe company. The union members made and sold union shoes and were the stockholder/owners of the company.²⁰ The Journeymen Printer's Union of the City of Syracuse called a strike at the newspapers for increased wages. The strike effectively shut the newspapers down in Syracuse. The papers begrudgingly settled with a pay increase.²¹ Masons, bricklayers, plasterers, hod carriers, and typographers all walked off the job on wage or other union issues. The 1860's witnessed a solidifying of the leadership of the trades unions as they established themselves and set standards. For example, the Journeymen Tailors Union of America, Local Branch #45 was formed in 1863 in Syracuse.²² It was originally called the Syracuse Tailors' Protection and Benevolent Union for mutual aid from the "merchant tailors". It was "due to their energetic and active members, they became one of the strongest and most prosperous unions in the Empire State."²³ The Sewing Women of Syracuse Protective Union formed in 1865 to provide the same type of mutual protection and benefits for females.²⁴

The National Labor Associations

The time had again arrived for a national association of different unions to consolidate their resources and power. The group of labor leaders

called for a convention of the National Labor Congress. When it convened in Baltimore, there were representatives from different unions and trade associations. The plan for the National Labor Union that came out of that meeting was to be an inclusive union of skilled tradesmen, operating in their trade unions. The eight-hour movement would be a key platform of the union. The movement captured the imagination of people by advocating the payment of ten and twelve hours wage for the eight-hour day.²⁵ The workers would have the same amount of money in their pockets and more time to spend it. There would also be a place for the unskilled workers, women workers and farmers. The guiding force of this new organization was William H. Sylvis, who was chosen as president in 1868. Tragedy struck in 1869 when Sylvis died. The union basically collapsed in the next economic downturn. It was unable to provide leadership and guidance to local unions or organize new local unions. The union Sylvis had helped develop, transformed into the National Labor Reform Party. The party would embrace the eight-hour workday movement and greenbackism. The National Labor Union had shown that a coordinated effort by labor could get the workers to embrace a number of issues. The effort was made to include all workers in the labor movement.

The financial panic of 1872/1873 severely impacted workers. Millions were unemployed, homeless and downtrodden. Countless others were forced to endure wage cuts. There was no relief from uncaring employers or from a government that had no desire for social policy. There was no safety net in

place to provide for these workers and their families. In cities across America demonstrations and riots broke out for food and work.

This period has been referred to as “the Great Upheaval” of strikes, and violence. The so-called Gilded Age is characterized by historian Melvyn Dubofsky as a “Time of Chaos”.²⁶ There was trouble in the minefields of Pennsylvania. A secret society called the Molly Maguires was combating wage cuts with violence. In January of 1874 in Tompkins Square in New York City, the police savagely rode into a demonstration of thousands beating dozens. The railroad strikes of 1877 broke into open insurrection with bloody battles being fought between strikers and soldiers.²⁶ The industrial revolution had arrived with a vengeance. The growing pains of an industrializing nation were much more serious than in the past in the agrarian based economy. The pent up frustrations of a people that have been kept down was evident in the streets of America. This is the backdrop of the next national labor union.

The Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor began a small secret society of tailors that evolved into the nation’s largest labor organization of the day. The Knights of Labor were founded on “the concept of a new labor solidarity that would make it possible to include in a single unified order, without regard to nationality, sex, creed, or color, all the nation’s workers.”²⁸ The utopian vision of a new industrial compact was further exemplified by their emphasis on cultural improvement, education, civic responsibility, temperance and self-improvement. The Knights were not opposed to

capitalism, but to the suffering and inequalities brought on by it.

The religious undertones of the movement were reflected in the Baptist minister background of the founder, Uriah S. Stephens. The first Grand Master Workman infused the labor movement with his own brand of new unionism. In emphasizing the universality, and nobility of labor he would advocate a single union. In their view, the strike was not an effective method of negotiation. Arbitration would be the correct method of settling disputes. "Creed, party, and nationality, are but outward garments and present no obstacle to the fusion of the hearts of worshippers of God, the Universal Father, and the workers for man, the universal brother"²⁹ Stephens would resign his post to turn to politics.

The Knights of Labor would turn to Terence V. Powderly as their next Grand Master Workman to lead them in 1879. Powderly was a complex man of many interests and talents. He was a tradesman, a union leader, and a successful politician as a six-year mayor of Scranton, Pa. This man would build on the organizing successes to mobilizing hundreds of thousands nationwide. The method of joining was easy. A wage earner would go to a Knights assembly and join. The influx of such a great number of all types of workers was a challenge to the organization. The Order sought to have centralized control, but the burgeoning numbers of assemblies diluted that control. When Powderly took over, there were 9,300 members and by July 1886 there numbers were 700,000.³⁰ The remarkable growth in numbers

reflected the pent up frustrations of the workers and their hope that there was an organization that could address their problems. The numbers would just as rapidly decline when those hopes were dashed.

The new leader would continue Stephens' ideas and policies. The strike was looked down upon as a method of economic action. Ironically some of the success of the Knights of Labor stemmed from the high profile victory in a strike over Jay Gould and his railroad. Instead the Knights of Labor sought a policy of cooperation, both within the ranks of the workers and with the employers. Various district assemblies set up consumer and producer cooperatives.³¹ Arbitration would be the preferred method of disputes. The stringent opposition to striking was a downfall of the Knights of Labor. The business cycle would again downturn the economy in the 1880's and the workers were again faced with the kinds of job losses and wage cuts that they had faced in the past. Strikes broke out all over the country and the Order was flooded by request for help by assemblies and unions. Powderly could not employ his theories when dealing with employers such as Gould and the Chicago stockyard and meatpacking owners who broke high profile strikes by the Knights further eroding their status.³² The economic forces were beyond the control of the union. Fragmentation of the membership was evident by the defection of tradesmen to the rival American Federation of Labor and the internal struggles for control.

Powderly was unable to counteract the forces against the Knights of

Labor. The union had been a beacon of hope for many looking for help in ameliorating the forces of the industrial revolution. They were also the preeminent example of union democracy in their time. The producing classes were to be glorified for the nobility of their toil. The Knights blended a vision of a cooperative future with the nostalgia of the way things were before the industrial revolution. They sought to value the workers and their place in the community, to rise above the class struggle of labor. The failure and the decline of the Knights of Labor would provide valuable lessons for future labor movements.

The American Federation of Labor had beginnings in the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions. This loose association was establishing common ground for trade unions. The formal organizing of these trades unions into a cohesive organization came in 1886. At that time, there were concerns about the way that trade unions were being treated in the Knights of Labor. The position of the Knights was that the union was open to all: trades, skilled and unskilled. The trades wanted to address issues that pertained to them. These included issues such as “the legal incorporation of trade unions, the abolition of child labor, enforcement of the statutory eight-hour day, prohibition of contract labor, uniform, apprentice laws, and repeal of the conspiracy laws.”³³ The labor organization that would come from that beginning, would survive the tumultuous boom and busts cycles to this day. Why did they succeed where others have failed?

A.F. of L. President Samuel Gompers had a deep-seated distrust of politics and the political system. Gompers believed that the goals of unions would be supplanted by the political dealings necessary in a party.³⁴ He felt that the way to success was a blend of Marxian emphasis on trade unions and economic action. This would achieve the goal of business unionism by concentrating on shop issues, raising wages and bettering working conditions.³⁵ This did not include the rapidly expanding ranks of industrial workers. The A.F. of L. and Gompers would strongly oppose the organizing of unskilled workers for decades.

The emphasis on “bread and butter issues” would ensure the survival of the Federation but the cost was the opportunities that were missed by the stringent, conservative leadership. The A.F. of L. created a privileged labor class that would represent the trades, to the detriment of the mass majority of workers. The vanguard of the labor movement was the highly skilled workers who consistently comprised 14 to 18 percent of the workforce.³⁶ In the workplace, they were allotted more independence and they had more autonomy. As often as they would lead the charge, they would zealously protect their own privileged positions. An example of this is Gompers’ approach to volunteerism. This was to oppose government regulation of benefits and working conditions because those would be negotiated contractual issues.³⁷ The fact that an overwhelming numbers of workers desperately needed those protections (and union representation) did not

register. The business unionism created a union bureaucratic system, a countervailing force that became an image of the contract negotiators on the other side of the table. The exclusion of the unskilled, people of color, and women caused great fragmentation between the left and the right in the union movement. It would take many decades to attempt to heal those rifts.

Samuel Gompers came to Syracuse in August 1899. The Painters Union, Local #31, had their annual picnic at Lakeside Park. Nearly 6,000 people heard the A.F.L. president speak on the issues of the day.³⁸ Gompers did not disappoint the crowd. He gave a thoughtful and persuasive speech entitled “The Work and Aspirations of Labor.” In this speech Gompers discussed the problems of the day: economic, social, the concentration of wealth, and child labor. The answer to these problems was organized labor. “Organized labor presents to the world today the only real and at the same time peaceful solution of the great problems....The American Federation of Labor, the grandest organization ever formed by workers, preserves the broadest and most comprehensive platform upon which the workers can stand, irrespective of private opinion, theory or judgment, regardless of condition or class, under the broad and comprehensive banner upon which is inscribed “Liberty for all, slavery for none,” and fair dealing between man and man, working forward and upward..”³⁹

The Knights of Labor and the promise of an inclusive labor movement were gone. The A.F.of L. was closed to the millions of unskilled workers in

this country. In Chicago, on June 27 1905, a new organization was born. Union and socialist leaders such as William D. “Big Bill” Haywood, Charles Moyers, Eugene V. Debs, Thomas J. Hagerty, William Trautman, Daniel DeLeon, Mary “Mother” Jones, along with two hundred others, attended the first Industrial Union Congress for the International Workers of the World. The purpose was to establish an all-inclusive industrial union. The leaders had become disillusioned with, not only the conservative and “aristocratic” A.F.of L., but with other unions that were cooperating with employers.⁴⁰ They sought to unite all workers, regardless of skill, national origin, or gender, in a battle to abolish the wage system and the capitalistic system. The revolutionary positions were unmistakable in this new attempt at working class solidarity.

The I.W.W. organized the bypassed and forgotten, the industrial workers in the East, the transient agricultural workers in the West, textile workers, miners, and hoboes. William Haywood would become the central figure in the I.W.W. “We are going down into the gutter,” Haywood shouted, “to get at the mass of workers and bring them up to a decent plane of living.”⁴¹ This opened a dramatic chapter in America’s labor story. The I.W.W. would never represent many workers at one time. There were, by estimate, 60,000 members at the peak. However hundreds of thousands joined and left over the years.⁴² The tactics that they would use and the dedication of the organizers to action would become legend. The significance

if the I.W.W. was that a labor organization was willing to go where no other would, and speak out for the forgotten workers. The battles fought previewed the continuing struggles of industrial unionism. It was unsuccessful in igniting a class war or in the assaults on the wage system. In the aftermath of the I.W.W. years, the capitalistic system, the A.F.L and their brand of business unionism still existed and the I.W.W. was defunct. The Syracuse labor story has no mention of the I.W.W. from my research.

Knights of St. Crispin

There was an event in Syracuse that illustrates the unity that working people would exhibit. The Knights of St. Crispin were a national organization of shoemakers that were established along industrial lines. The membership reached to “ 50,000 and were amazingly effective in enforcing a closed shop through a series of successful strikes.”⁴³ The Knights represented a number of shoe manufacturers in the Syracuse area, two of them being the Gray Brothers and Leonard, Vroman, and Bowers. On April 9, 1871 the Gray brothers fired three women. This was for allegedly inferior work, although they had not been warned about the quality of their work. Many thought it was for union activity and they protested vigorously on that day. The workers said they couldn’t be fired in such a manner for the Daughters of St. Crispin union represented them.⁴⁴ The brothers stated that for “reasons themselves satisfactory”, they discharged the three women. Very soon the firing became known to the workers and forty women walked out. The affair became known

at Leonard, Vorman and Bowers, where one of the proprietors expressed sympathy for their rival. The men and women laid down their tools and walked out.⁴⁵

On the next day, the president of the Knights, John A.G. Brown, sent a letter to the two companies along with an open letter to the Syracuse Daily Standard. In this letter he states that the union demands that the three women be reinstated. “The working classes of these United States maybe made of clay, but they are not made of mud. The blind submission to the tyranny dictates of a few can no longer be tolerated.”⁴⁶ The companies responded the next day to the union and in the newspaper that the Gray brothers discharged the three women for reasons they felt sufficient. The letter states that they were not aware of the organization of the Daughters of St. Crispin and now that they were aware, “ we will not recognize or employ any person or persons belonging to that Order. We cannot under any circumstances reinstate the persons discharged.”⁴⁷ The Knights would keep the workers out on strike until April 21 when the women were reinstated and the notice appeared in the Standard “that the company and the union had settled their disagreements honorably.”⁴⁸ This example illustrates the relatively strong position of craft unions. The work was of a nature that it was difficult to simply replace the workers. The workers showed solidarity in the united front shown to the two different employers. However, the Knights did not gain recognition for their union or for the Daughters from the owners.

Syracuse Unions and the Central Body

The despair of the 1870's panics resulted in mobs of hungry and homeless people. There were food riots and unemployment riots in major and secondary cities across the country. There was a great deal of blame unrest was placed on foreigners as "agitators and revolutionaries" that "controlled" organized labor. There was also conflict between ethnic groups. The unions did have many members that were born in other countries and Syracuse unions had Germans, Irish, Italians and Polish rank and file, and officers. For example, the Bakers Union Local 30 had President James Murphy, from Ireland, Vice President Herman Hupp from Baden Germany, and Christian Schmid the Financial Secretary/Treasurer also from Germany.⁴⁹ Another example was the Iron Molders Union Local 80, where President Patrick Walsh and Recording Secretary W. M. Gibbons were from Killa, Ireland and active in the Syracuse Socialist Labor Party.⁵⁰

The Syracuse economy suffered in the 1872 depression like the rest of the country. There were no gigantic steel mills (Sanderson-Holcomb Steel was a medium size mill) or textile complexes in Syracuse, but the economy was distributed across a wide variety of smaller scale employers that were diverse in nature. There were breweries that employed hundreds such as the Greenway, Haberle, Crystal Spring, Kearney's and National.⁵¹ There were candle makers such as Uhle-Kramer, Will and Baumer, and F. Marty

Candles. There were shoemakers such as Nettleton, Gray Brothers and Leonard, Vroman, and Bowers, along with many other trades. The Trades Assembly that had been formed in 1864 dissolved, along with many member unions in the downturn of 1870's.⁵²

Representatives of five local unions meet at Ryan's Hall on March 5, 1884. These men were officers of the Typographical Union Local#55, Iron Molders Union Local # 80, the Stonecutters Association, Painters and Paperhangers, the Journeymen Tailors Association, and the Cigar Makers' International Local # 6.⁵³ The purpose of the meeting was to lay the ground work for a new central labor organization. The men were G.L.Guetig, G.A.Calvert, J.C.Kratz, D.W.Daley, M.Case, M.Joyce, W.E.Morgan, M.Smith, and J.Walsh. This group selected George Guetig of the Typographers as president, George A. Calvert of the Typographers as first secretary, and A. Clark as treasurer.⁵⁴

The new organization was "a union of Unions, a congress of interests, a gathering together of representatives of all labor organizations in Syracuse and immediate vicinity to discuss calmly and dispassionately affairs in the local labor world as they may arise."⁵⁵ The purpose of the newly formed Central Trades and Labor Assembly was the "submission to arbitration and the amicable settlement of all grievances with employers."⁵⁶ The Assembly sought to aid, advise or even disapprove a strike by a member union.

The Assembly shortly doubled in size with twelve unions representing

1,500 workers. In 1896, there were thirty-five unions represented in the central body. The unions were coming back. The Cigarmakers International adopted a union “blue” label that distinguished the quality product from the cheap tenement house cigars made with slave piecework wages.⁵⁷ The Tailors had been locked-out and the union broken in 1877 by the merchant tailors. They re-formed in 1885 and became the stronger Tailors’ Protective Union of Syracuse.⁵⁸ By 1899 the list of unions represented in the Central Body included: Ale Brewers, Bakers, Confectioners, Barbers, Bartenders, Beer Drivers, Bookbinders, Boot and Shoe Workers, Glass Blowers, Brewers, Brewery Workmen, Maltsters, Coopers, Laborers, Carpenters, Carriage and Wagon Makers, Cigarmakers, Cigar Packers, Coremakers, Electric Workers, Flour and Feed Workers, Iron Molders, Horseshoers, Stonecutters, Tailors, Plumbers, Gas and Steamfitters, Mailers, Machinists, Meat Cutters, Metal Polishers, Brass Workers, Milk Peddlers, Mince Meat Workers, Tile Layers, Musicians, Painters, Photo-Engravers, Printing Pressmen, Clerks, Dry Goods Clerks, Sheet Metal Workers, Engineers, Firemen, Stereotypers, Team Drivers, Theatrical Workers, Truckmen, Printers, Garment Workers, Stock keepers, Shippers, and Janitors.⁵⁹ In September 1899 the Assembly affiliated with the American Federation of Labor over the objections of the several remaining Knights of Labor unions. The support they professed for each other would be sorely needed in the years ahead.

Bakers and Boss Baker Exchange

In 1889 a feud broke out between union bakers at different locations in the city and the association of owners referred to as the Bakers Exchange. The conflict tested the resolve of the trade labor movement in Syracuse and the ability to mobilize. The union and the bosses had agreed on a wage scale for workers and a ten-hour day in May of 1886. The scale was to be \$18 a week for foremen, \$12 for bench hands, \$10 for third class bakers, and \$15 for cake bakers.⁶⁰ The employers declared on February 2 , 1889 that the wage scale from February 15 on would be different. The scale would be \$13 for foremen, and \$10 for all others.⁶¹ They put in effect even lower scales in the months of December through May. The reason given for the lower scale was that the workers in Syracuse were paid more then the bakers in other cities and that in the winter people were baking more and demand was lower. The union Bakers would not agree to this and on February 18 they were locked out of their workplaces.⁶² The eleven members Bakers Exchange sought to run the bakeries with non-union and unskilled workers. The Exchange stated that they may consider additional wages, but the condition was the Bakers must quit the Central Trades and Labor Assembly.

This was the first major challenge to the Central Trades and Labor Assembly. The organized labor community closed ranks behind the locked out Bakers in this attempt to crush their union. On February 22, The Syracuse Daily Standard wrote, "War is Declared!"⁶³ The union Bakers would start

their own cooperative bakery. They answered the charges that they were agitating for an eight-hour day by stating they were locked out; they had demanded nothing and were willing to work ten-hour days.⁶⁴ On the same day one of the bakery owners, Sebastian Eichanlaub, broke with the Exchange and asked the union men to return for the previously established wages. They returned. The remaining Boss Bakers began to solicit around the state for non-union bakers.

“Union-Made Bread” was the sign on three wagons that rolled through the city. The Bakers had worked the night in borrowed kitchens baking bread. The wagons quickly sold out.⁶⁵ A few grocers placed orders with the union co-op in order to place the Union Made Bread sign in their window. Circulars were being passed out that identified the union supporters. The union was considering a boycott of the non-supporters, which caused great distress among the Grocers Association. The Exchange requested a meeting with a committee from the Union and they agreed to meet. The Bakers were receiving assistance from the local labor community and from the national union. On February 25 the Bakers local president, Henry L. Davis, greeted August Delabar. He was the National Secretary of the Bakers’ Association who had come to Syracuse to assist the workers and to provide additional strike funds.⁶⁶ On this day the two sides met and hammered out a tentative agreement. The agreement would allow the union men to return to work a ten-hour day at the previous wages. All future questions of dispute would be

settled by arbitration by a panel comprising of the Bakers Union, the Boss Bakers Exchange, and the Central Trades and Labor Assembly.⁶⁷ Curiously this proposal sat without being embraced by the members of either side, as there were other issues that were not ironed out up front. The union would continue the fight. They also met with some non-union bakers that had arrived from New York City. They persuaded them that the lock out was nearly over and offered to pay their passage back to the City along with a week's wages.⁶⁸ The offer was accepted.

The union continued to target the grocers that were selling the non-union bread. In March they declared a boycott of fifty-two stores that were selling products from the Exchange. This was supported by the Central Trades and Labor Assembly, but was vehemently opposed by the Grocers Association. They decried in an open letter to the Syracuse Daily Standard the "labor agitators that dictate what a grocer can sell and not sell!"⁶⁹ Nevertheless the boycott was having the desired results. On April 3, there was a five-hour marathon session from 7:30 PM to 12:30 AM. The union and the Boss Bakers finalized the solution of their remaining differences. The Exchange agreed to employ only union men, but reserved the right to choose the union men to employ. The "cracker men" that produced crackers at Young and Larabee would remain in the Bakers Union. The wages would revert to the old agreement, but the Exchange would be allowed to hire non-union foremen as long as they did not bake.⁷⁰ Both sides would ratify this

agreement. The significance of this struggle was that remarkable solidarity shown throughout. The workers fought a bleak situation of wage cuts, a lockout and an attempt to break the union. The victory established a legitimate organized labor presence in Syracuse. Control and power in the workplace no longer resided solely in the hands of the employers.

Paternalism and Solvay Process

The Syracuse labor story builds further on the foundation of salt. The salt industry was a critical one. The peak of production occurred in 1862, when over 3,000 men produced 9,053,874 bushels at 56 pounds a bushel in the enormous 6,000-acre salt works.⁷¹ In the post-Civil War era alternative sources were being developed to the massive and time-consuming evaporation process. Salt was beginning to be mined in other parts of the country and the decline had begun in Syracuse. The natural formations of salt and limestone would play a role in the remarkable story of Solvay Process.

Rowland Hazard had come from an old Rhode Island family. He had made his fortune in the New England woolen industry. In 1874, he sought to expand his holdings by getting into the lead mining business by purchasing Mine LaMotte in Missouri. It was here that he began to develop his idea of paternalism that he would pass on to his son Frederick R. Hazard. They believed the blend of fairness and control would increase employee productivity and job satisfaction. He set to work by “shortening the working hours, developing a bonus system for good work, he built decent housing for

the miners and established a school.”⁷² Hazard also believed that improved working conditions would increase quality, productivity and profit.

He then hired an engineer, William Cogswell from Central New York, to run the mine. After running the mine for a few years he learned of a process developed by two Belgium brothers, Ernest and Alfred Solvay. This process would utilize salt brine and limestone (along with coal, coke and ammonia) to produce soda ash and many related chemical products that are used in leather, glass and soap production.⁷³ The abundance of limestone, freshwater from Onondaga Lake, brine from the salt fields, and readily available rail and water transportation made Syracuse a prime location. The need and opportunity for a domestic chemical production of alkalis was apparent. By 1877, America was purchasing soda products worth nearly five million dollars a year from foreign countries.⁷⁴ Cogswell and Hazard negotiated a licensing agreement with the Solvays to bring the process to Syracuse and officially incorporate on September 21, 1881. The construction of the plant began along the western shore of Onondaga Lake in 1882, in a community they called Solvay. The community grew with the corporation. The population of the Town of Geddes in 1890 was 593, by 1900 the new Village of Solvay grew to 3,493 then to 5,139 in 1910 and 7,352 in 1920.⁷⁵

The engineers and the workers practically invented and improvised the equipment needed to run a modern chemical plant. Edward N. Trump, the highly touted engineer that became the plant’s first manager described the

scene in 1902. “The Works were finally started in January 1884 with only three or four men who had ever seen the inside of an ammonia soda works and with men who were either farmers or salt boilers.”⁷⁶

Devices and processes to gather the raw materials needed to be developed. The Sement-Solvay Company was formed to focus on the production of coke and ammonia at the Works.⁷⁷ The *Syracuse Daily Standard* reported in 1886 that “the machinery and apparatus are mostly of the oddest aspect, enormous receptacles of iron twenty feet in diameter and sixty feet in high being the most conspicuous.”⁷⁸ The brine in Onondaga lacked the sufficient salinity. The process needed 100% brine. The Company sank test wells around the area searching for salt. Cogswell found it in Tully. The salt beds were the most extensive salt deposits in North America.⁷⁹ He devised a method of pumping water through the wells into the salt beds and then through twenty miles of pipeline to the plant.⁸⁰

The Company built an aerial cable road to transport hundreds of tons of limestone daily from the Split Rock quarries to the plant. The “Bucket Line” crossed over Village streets that were protected by heavy iron screens.⁸¹ Early 1912, the limestone was exhausted in Split Rock and the Company mined the limestone in Jamesville. The activity in Solvay was unlike any ever seen before in the area.

The workers that came to Solvay reflected many different ethnic backgrounds. The Irish settled Solvay first. The English, Irish and Germans

got the first jobs at the Works. The Irish became the group that initially got the better jobs as “gang” or crew leaders.⁸² There were ethnic rivalries between the English speaking workers that got the better jobs and the subsequent groups of Tyroleans, southern Italians, Polish, Hungarian and Bulgarian workers. There was even conflict between the southern Italians and the Tyroleans. In a story about the Split Rock quarry, the *Syracuse Post-Standard* of April 5, 1903 states that of the four hundred employed there, most are foreigners “comprising of ten peoples; Poles, Hungarians and natives of Northern Italy predominating.”⁸³ Any problems stemming from this diversity was kept in check by the presence of a uniformed company policeman and “the men know that any riotous conduct will be followed by instant dismissal...this has a strong tendency to keep their passions in bounds.”⁸⁴ Some of the main reasons to hire immigrants were that they spoke very little English; they kept to themselves, and were less prone to unionize.

A predominant worker group was the immigrants that came from the region on the northern Italian-Austrian border of Tyrol. The Italians or the Austrians would administer the region at different times in history. These workers came to the United States with Austrian papers. The Tyroleans often settled in small mining communities across the country such as Hazelton, Pennsylvania and Wheeling, West Virginia.⁸⁵ The first Tyroleans were hired at Solvay Process when it started up in 1884 when a small group came from New York City looking for work. The industrious workers were told to contact

any others from their villages who wanted to work and they would be hired at the Process. Workers returning to Tyrol were also told to actively recruit anyone who wanted to work and send them over.⁸⁶ The Company also used middlemen or padrones to bring workers from the old country. This sort of chain migration was happening across the United States. The desire for a new life was strong, but so was the need for kinship and community that the ties from the old life would provide.

Rowland Hazard would pay competitive factory wages for the area. “From the late 1880’s until 1911, the average wages for day laborers, lime kiln workers and soda ash workers ranged from 12 to 25 cents an hour. Between 1915 and 1919, the range averaged from 19 to 60 cents an hour.”⁸⁷ However, the working conditions were extremely hazardous. There were frequent accidents, exposures and deaths due to the dangerous chemicals involved. The first day of production was marked by a number of the workers, managers and engineers almost suffocating from the escape of carbonic acid gas. Operations engineer H.R. Cooper was seriously injured from a fall, as was Cogswell.⁸⁸ E. N. Trump and F. R. Hazard wrote a pamphlet of “Solvay Process Company Rules and Regulations and General Remarks” for all employees in English, Italian, Polish, Hungarian and Bulgarian. This pamphlet would detail various safety rules and procedures. The first and foremost was, “Intemperance, the company strictly prohibits the use of alcohol on Company grounds. No person addicted to the use of intoxicating

liquor shall have charge of explosives, boilers, engines or important equipment and machinery.”⁸⁹ This was clearly addressed the traditional immigrant drinking habits.⁹⁰ The Company also provided an employee handbook in the different languages.

General Manager William Cogswell urged Rowland Hazard to implement an eight-hour day. Working conditions as they were, fatigue added to the danger. The company on December 12, 1891 passed out a ballot to workers canvassing them if they wanted to go to a three shift, eight-hour operation. The new system would adjust the pay scales to compensate the workers nine and three quarters hour pay for eight hours work.⁹¹ The measure passed and was implemented.

In October of 1898, Frederick R. Hazard succeeded his father as the President of Solvay Process and all affiliated companies. The Hazards lived and worked in Solvay and sincerely strived to treat the workers fairly. F.R. Hazard said, “the Solvay Process Company spends a considerable amount of money each year in furthering the interests of its employee and considers itself fully repaid by the care and devotion of its employees.”⁹² Hazard believed by implementing a system of services for the workers, the reward would be mutually beneficial.

In a 1915 speech, given to the Process superintendents, Hazard spoke about the human element and the mechanical apparatus of production. In this speech, the F.R. Hazard blend of altruism and practical paternalism can

be picked up on.

“Without the human element to manage the apparatus, the inanimate objects have very little value. Therefore the maintenance of the human element in the lives and health of this group of men and all our employees wherever situated becomes of the most vital importance.”⁹³

He went on to state the number of associations and clubs there were for the young people and how important they were. He concluded with this thought.

“I want to ask each one of you to ask himself if he is doing his part in the maintenance of the human race; in the elevation of the boys and girls, of his neighborhood, of his acquaintances and the bringing up of a generation of men and women who will properly take their places in the economic fabric of the country. Gentlemen, I think that I have said enough to show you that personally I regard this side of our work as more important if anything than the other side.”⁹⁴

This period of labor history was fraught with strife and strikes at such places as Homestead, Pennsylvania and Pullman, Illinois. The phony paternalism of George Pullman was used to keep the workers in virtual slavery by over-charging them for goods and services in his company town. Wages were meager and arbitrarily cut in recessionary times. F.R. Hazard had visitors come from United States Labor Department to study why there were no strikes or labor unrest at Solvay Process.⁹⁵ Hazard shared with them the employee programs that he had set up. When it came to the workers, he seemed to have a respect for their contributions to the Process. In the 1916 superintendents speech he said,

“Labor should be justly rewarded. No civilization can permanently survive which is founded on injustice inflicted on one class to the temporary advantage of another. Water seeks its own level and such inequities must fade away. In the practice of our associated companies we have sought to

equitably reward labor and to create safe and attractive working conditions realizing that labor and capital are partners in our great undertakings and must work together in friendly and intelligent cooperation in order to accomplish our joint destiny.”⁹⁶

He would speak at the Central Trades and Labor Assembly “that capital and labor must work hand in hand and that one was useless without the other. We are all fellow workmen.”⁹⁷ All indicators showed that this was more than lip service. Solvay Process did not ban unions or union activity, it simply did not happen. It took nearly 70 years before the first work stoppage shut down the sprawling complex.⁹⁸

Frederick Hazard built on his father’s example and implemented a wide variety of services for his workers. This was the Hazard method of paternalism. The Company pioneered health care benefits for the workers. The first aid station was well staffed by doctors and well equipped. In 1891 the company purchased an onsite ambulance and built a hospital room. After 1885, Solvay Process paid hospital bills for injured workers and allowed them to remain on the payroll until they could return to work.⁹⁹ The Company also provided for the family of the worker. They partially financed the salaries of a doctor, nurse, nutritionist, dentist, and dental assistant for the Solvay schools.¹⁰⁰ Other healthcare services included home visitation by the Company nurse, pre-natal and child-care clinics.

The Company took a paternal approach towards housing and services in the Village of Solvay. This stemmed from having greatly influenced the development the Village. F. R. Hazard was influenced by the trend of social

progressionism.¹⁰¹ He did not dictate the values and behavior of people. He sought to control conditions. He hired a social worker, Mary Hamson, to inspect Solvay worker's homes and to collect data.¹⁰² In response to the findings of some squalid conditions, the Process began building housing for purchase or rent by the workers. Hazard had been involved in incorporating the Village of Solvay and was elected village president in May, 1894.¹⁰³ Later, he was the Acting Chief of Police and expanded the school system and library. This was an office that he held for 11 years.¹⁰⁴ It was his endorsement of annexation by the City of Syracuse that cost him the 1909 election to Democrat Francis L. Worth by 13 votes. He never ran for another political office.

The Company aided the employee in establishing savings accounts. They encouraged workers to deduct even small amounts from their pay and assumed the record keeping costs. This was called the Solvay Thrift Club.¹⁰⁵ The company also instituted a profit-sharing program. "The participation plan was based on an employees salary and length of service, as well as the company's profits. When the company did well, the Hazards would reward the employees with exceptionally generous profit-sharing."¹⁰⁶ Solvay Process was also one of the first companies in the nation to have a pension plan for the retired workers. Dissatisfied with the plan, F.R. Hazard scrapped it in 1902 and began a better one named after his father. Hazard also started cheap commuter service called "the Soda Ash Special" to Syracuse and back.

He provided inexpensive meals at the in-plant employee restaurant supplied in part by the company-owned Tully farms. By 1919, the monthly total reached over 33,000 meals.¹⁰⁷

Frederic and his wife Dora Gannet Sedgwick Hazard believed strongly in the welfare work that resulted in mutual benefit to the workers and the company. Mr. Hazard contended, “The most effective way of improving the condition of his workmen is so much through efforts directed to the men themselves as through the work which is being done for their children.”¹⁰⁸ It was in this area that Mrs. Hazard would exhibit a “missionary zeal”. The wives of the Company officials, for the purpose of doing charitable works, formed the Solvay Guild. The Guild held lavish fundraisers that were social events. The monies raised, along with funds from the Company went to a great number of classes and training for the workers and their families (and village residents) held in the Guild Hall and Guild House. The classes included cooking, sewing canning dancing dramatics, woodworking, embroidery, piano lessons, home nursing, childcare and gymnastics.¹⁰⁹ There were additional classes in the industrial arts and mechanics along with training for parlor and chambermaids. These classes included an “Americanization class” that worked on English skills and helped prepare workers for the citizenship exam.¹¹⁰ The Guild House would also house one of the first day care nurseries where village women and working women could leave their children.

The list of the Hazards' philanthropic good works in Solvay, Syracuse and in national causes goes on and on. They were referred to as the "First Citizen" and "The First Lady" of Syracuse. The Solvay Process Corporation, under F.R.Hazard's leadership, provided workers with fair wages and very good benefits. The attention to the needs of the workers and their families created a strong and committed workforce and also kept the Process non-union. The control of the workplace was still very tightly in the hands of the managers and engineers. Also there was a very distinct class distinction between the officers and the workers that was no worse than the social strata of the time. His father stated in 1884 that the Company must let the workmen know that they received these benefits, "As a gift from the Company over and above wages paid and are only given to those that have conformed to the rules." ¹¹¹ F. R. Hazard believed in a modern noblesse oblige influenced by the "Progressive Era". He felt that the employer had a responsibility to provide health, education and recreational facilities for the workers and for the community. In following this belief, the Solvay Process avoided the labor turmoil that shook America in the late ninetieth and early twentieth centuries.

It is clear that Solvay was, in a sense, a company town with the Process omnipresent in political, economic and social life. Unlike his contemporary industrialists Henry Ford and George Pullman, Hazard didn't seek to reshape the culture of the workers, control their every activity, or

force them to purchase from the company store. It is also clear that the benefits and wages that the company paid were enough to keep the workers satisfied and living in Solvay. The largely immigrant workforce was a close-knit community that was integral in the creation and success of Solvay Process. On February 27, 1917 Frederick R. Hazard died of blood poisoning as a complication of dental surgery. The community grieved the loss of an innovative and philanthropic leader. The services held for him were overflowing with people. Thomas M. McGaffney, the president of the Central Trades and Labor Assembly, said this about Hazard, "In the Solvay Process Company the employees were unskilled, but where skilled men were needed, Mr. Hazard invariably hired union men."¹¹² With the passing of Hazard and other members of the family, the remaining owners agreed to a merger with other chemical companies. The Solvay Process Company and Sement-Solvay joined with three others to form the Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation in December, 1920. An era was closing for the workers of Allied and the future brought a desire to organize a union.

The Building Trades Strike of 1913

Just as the workers at Solvay Process were working with the engineering "brain trust" to develop the American chemical industry, a few miles away in Syracuse labor unrest was unfolding. The workers were organizing at a heated pace at the end of the 1890's. In 1899, in a five month period, street cleaners, horseshoers, team owners, milk-peddlers,

hackmen/cabdrivers, pavers/gutters/curbsetters, newsboys, bartenders, butchers foundry helpers, coremakers, retail clerks, and janitors all organized.¹¹³ The strongest unions in the Syracuse area were construction trades with a strong immigrant presence. The increase in manufacturing would further stimulate the need for commercial and residential buildings. Peter J. McGuire, the leader of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, visited Syracuse in May of 1887. His appeal was to organize the carpenters. The new unionism of McGuire and Samuel Gompers was an emphasis on union benefits, better wages, and a shorter workweek. He urged the carpenters to band together to remedy wage levels that were “only a little better than common laborers.” He further stated that the Carpenter Union doesn’t believe in “the dagger, assassin or the bomb..we have the intelligence if only we organize.”¹¹⁴ He went on to praise the Germans that attended his speech at City Hall. He spoke to them in German and pledged to send a German organizer to work with them.¹¹⁵ The trades organized along ethnic lines, an example was the German carpenters local. The Italian Laborers and Hod Carriers were also organized and were one of the largest immigrant labor unions in the city with over 2,000 members.

The trades worked to establish shorter workdays for many years. The movement for ten-hour days evolved into the eight-hour movement. Employers steadfastly opposed the shorter day, especially in the construction business. The contractors insisted that it was absolutely necessary to get as

many hours in the summer days as possible. The Brotherhood of Painters and Decorators threatened a general strike on hours on March 1, 1889. The “Boss Painters” offered a raise from \$2 a day to \$2.25 to retain the ten-hour day.¹¹⁶ The strike was averted with the raise and an understanding that the painters could make arrangements with different employers about the nine or ten hours. The Carpenters then won a nine-hour day arrangement in a strike the following month.

Economic issues would trigger a large-scale strike in 1913 that is significant in its scope, the parties involved, and the violence that ensued. The construction trades had been dissatisfied with wage levels for some time. The 200 members Plumbers Union were the first to go out on strike for an increase of \$.50 a day that would bring them to \$5. a day.¹¹⁷ The 50 member Iron Molders were the next union to go out for an additional \$.25 a day that would bring them up to \$2. The locals of the Hod Carriers and Building Laborers issued demands for a raise of 5 1/2 cents per hour. The unions that would be forced out due to a strike included; the Bricklayers/Masons with 200 members, the Plasterers also with 200 members, and the 15 member Stationary Engineers. The other unions that had pending strike calls at the outbreak of the strike were the Carpenters who were demanding 5 1/2 cents an hour increase, the Sheet Metal Workers who wanted 7 1/2 cents an hour, the Glazers demanded 5 cents an hour, Iron Workers- 25 cents per hour, Carriage Wagon and Auto Workers - \$1.50 a week. There were, all told,

5,236 workers involved in this general work stoppage.¹¹⁸ This was the largest concerted work stoppage in Syracuse up to that time.

The Hod Carriers and General Laborers were composed of three locals; the largest was the Italian Local # 30, the German Local # 88 and the Irish Local # 30. (The hod is a device used to carry bricks or mortar around the job site for the masons.) They had a late-night meeting in St. Peter's Catholic Church on April 30, concerning the impending strike. The strikers met at 6 A.M. at the Union Hall on James Street to divide up the task of monitoring work sites in the city to make sure there was no work being done. The Hod Carriers over the next few days would march through the city. The union men would carry Italian and American flags and sing or chant in Italian.¹¹⁹ They confronted and argued with unorganized workers and sometimes converted them to join the strike. There was a story that there were workers for the Water Department that were confronted by strikers. They had just settled with the city and received a wage increase. They were allowed to continue working by the union men.¹²⁰ The marches and confrontations would escalate the tensions of the situation.

The main point of conflict was the wage issue. The contractors banded together in the Builders Association. They opposed a raise for the Hod Carriers on the grounds that there had been raises over the past two years. In August of 1911, they had raised the wages from 20 cents per hour to 22 1/2 cents, and then up to 26 to 27 cents per hour. They would consider another

“increase, but not all at once.”¹²¹ The business agent of the Hod Carriers Union, Michael Ferrante disputed the builders by stating that the wages in Syracuse trailed the wages in the other New York State cities. The Builders appealed to the police to protect the nonunion job sites. The Chief of Police, Martin Cadin, demanded that Ferrante order his men to desist from parading in the streets. The strikers could not interfere with workers performing their duties, except for members of their own union. The discussion with those workers could only occur at lunchtime or after work. Ferrante was warned that the consequences of any rioting “would be serious for the strikers.”¹²² The Chief issued an order to police to monitor the worksites and protect the workers. Mayor Edward Schoeneck later stated that the strikers had asked for permission to meet at the Public Market area. His office refused to allow such a meeting stating that it was “against public policy to sanction public demonstrations... furthermore the strikers at no time had permission to parade.”¹²³

The solidarity of the strike was beginning to break down. The Carpenters had settled for a two-year agreement that granted them their demand of 5 cents an hour increase brought them up to \$.50 per hour. They returned to work on Monday, May 5.¹²⁴ The Carriage Wagon and Automobile Workers also settled with their employers and received their demands. With the exception of the 555 workers that were forced out, the main strike was with the Hod Carriers and Laborers. There was a promise of a walk out by

the Sheet Metal Workers if their demands were not met and the 400-strong Iron Workers were still on strike call awaiting a negotiator from the International. The Builders Association was using a strategy of divide and conquer to drive wedges between the different unions. The trades unions appear to have deserted their brethren.

The violence began on May 5, with confrontations with police in the city. There were groups of strikers marching to worksites. Police were called and scuffles broke out between them and the strikers.¹²⁵ Paving rocks were thrown and police were using their clubs. Police were ordered to “protect” the non-union worksites, a move that no doubt delighted the Builders Association. An additional three patrol cars were dispatched to follow the strikers along with other increased patrols.

The events of the next day became known as “The Battle at St. Mary’s Circle.” The strikers met the morning of May 6 for their walk through the city. Mounted patrolman Michael McCarthy spotted a group of five hundred singing and marching from Union Hall on James Street. He attempted to cross the street to reach emergency alarm box No. 34. He was swept from his horse, but managed to get to the telephone box and alert the Police Station. Deputy Chief William O’Brien led twelve men in automobiles to head them off on Highland Avenue where a group of twenty-five non-union workers were working.¹²⁶ O’Brien had his men line up across the street as the strikers approached. His order to stop was ignored as rocks flew and a Patrolman,

Jacob Schmitt, “was struck down by a blow from a pickax handle.”¹²⁷ O’Brien shouted above the din that they would draw their weapons if they did not fall back. The strikers did fall back and were headed to the Hookway warehouse and to St. Mary’s Circle where they suspected non-union men were working on the new residence of Bishop Grimes.

The strikers had caused the police to divide their forces. There were only a dozen policemen at the worksite when the confrontation began. The union men, who were armed with pick and shovel handles, started to hurl rocks at the police and the non-union workmen.¹²⁸ The call for reinforcements quickly brought forty more police to the scene. In the melee that followed the police and strikers were going down from clubs and rocks. A policeman managed to pull his weapon, and fired into the air. The crowd was silent until someone shouted in Italian, “He shot into the air!”¹²⁹ The battle then resumed with the police firing at will. Bullets, smoke and rocks filled the air.

The strikers were broken into two groups; one pushed down Madison Street and one pushed the other way along Montgomery Street. A fire truck, Hose wagon No.1 of the Syracuse Fire Department, appeared and water was used to disperse the crowd on Madison Street.¹³⁰ This was the first instance of fire hoses used for crowd control in Syracuse. When the ambulances arrived, the battle was over. In twenty minutes seven police were wounded seriously and many more with minor injuries. The worst injury was a fractured skull suffered by patrolman David Tumpowsky, who was in critical condition.¹³¹

The strikers had seven suffering from gunshot wounds and as many as two dozen others from other injuries. Giuseppe Vasta suffered the most serious wound. He was shot in the abdomen and was considered terminal. Bystanders, such as iceman Martin Lull, were shot. A stray bullet went through the “auto top (of the police automobile) within an inch of his head”¹³² of Commissioner of Public Safety, H. E. Hessler. There may also have been many more injured men that simply ran off.

In the aftermath of the battle there were numerous arrests, anywhere from fourteen to twenty four people. There were different accounts of the total of arrests among the Syracuse newspapers. Among the arrests was the Hod union business agent, Michael Ferrante. There had been no gunshot wounds among the police, but they implied that there was an exchange of gunfire from the strikers. The arrested men had no weapons in their possession. Someone, only identified as a “prominent attorney”, found an empty 25-caliber shell casing at the scene and the police held this as evidence that they were under fire.¹³³

The unprecedented violence was dealt with force by the city administration. Mayor Schoeneck issued orders that the saloons in the Italian colony were to be closed until further notice, the police were under orders to shoot to kill at the first sign of rioting, and he called out the National Guard.¹³⁴ Three military companies, the Company C Infantry, Battery E Light Artillery and First Cavalry Troop D, were called to arms for

the first time in the history of the city.¹³⁵ The commander, Major Harold Brown, issued a proclamation banning “unlawful assemblages” in the city.

The events of May 6, set many things in motion. The Italian Consul , Cesare Scionfietti, rushed from Rochester to help calm the situation. The consul, along with Ferrante and others, spoke to 500 angry men at the union’s Lazetta Hall.¹³⁶ They helped persuade them to allow the union to try to settle the strike through mediation. Governor Sulzer had dispatched P.J. Downey from the State Bureau of Mediation to Syracuse. Accompanying him was Dominick D’ Alessandro; the general president of the International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers.¹³⁷ These men would begin to meet with Mayor Schoeneck, Chief Cadin and the Builders Association to iron out an agreement.

The support of other labor groups in the city weakened with the outbreak of violence. The solidarity of the trade unions was crumbling and the ethnic rivalry with the Italians surfaced. Ferrante had blasted the police actions as a cause of the bloodshed. John Muirhead, the President of the Building Trades, stated that the “laborers themselves were partly to blame...They had no business marching in the streets like an army.”¹³⁸ Charles A. Yates, the secretary of the Central Trades and Labor Assembly, stated that he believed that the police “were a little too hasty. (but the) strike has degenerated into a mob...The shooting has inflamed these naturally warm blooded men.”¹³⁹ The implication was that the Italians were partly to

blame due to their irrational tempers and lack of understanding of American labor customs. The Assembly did not aid the Hod workers but were supporting the striking Plumbers. Also on this day , Giuseppi Vasta died. His last words to Fr. John B. Cuneo were those “words of forgiveness for the one who shot him”¹⁴⁰

The story of Vasta is a sad and tragic one. The laborer had arrived in America in 1906 and had settled in Syracuse. He soon sent for his oldest daughter Rose to join him. After saving for years, Vasta was able to send for his wife and younger daughter from Italy. They were in transit on the high seas when Giuseppi was shot in the abdomen and died. There was no way to get communications to her. After delays in the trip, she arrived on May 16 to hear of the loss of her husband. The labor community turned out in great numbers in the “largest funeral the history of the city.”¹⁴¹ There was over a thousand marchers and mourners led by four marching bands and many featured speakers.

The strike of the laborers was in trouble. The Builders Association was clearly in the advantaged position. The issue of wages polarized each side. The union demanded an increase from 22 1/2 cents an hour to 32 1/2 cents due to the fact that the wages outside New York City averages 37 1/2/ cents. The Builders Association disagreed and cited their own statistics that the rate outside the City was 24 1/2 cents.¹⁴² The police and the National Guard were guarding the worksites and there were increasing numbers of

strikebreakers being brought in. Arbitration plans and threats of boycotts and general strikes flew back and forth across the bargaining table. The disunity of the strikers was clear as more of them went back to work. The *Syracuse Journal* declared on May 15, that the “Bottom drops out of the strike of Hod Carriers”. The Builders declared that they no longer needed the union and that all positions were filled with workers. The union pressed the Building Trades Council and the Central Trades and Labor Assembly for a general strike against the non-union labor. The Assembly offered to negotiate with the Builders Association. They worked out an offer of an increase of 2 cents an hour on June 18, 1913. The workers returned to work. The cost to the union was high. The riot reinforced the perception with the public that the “foreign element” and the unionists were dangerous and radical. The workers lost a brother to a bullet and many wounded and over \$191,000 in lost wages. The City was forced to pay the police \$2,500 in additional overtime and had to pay \$7,000 for the Militia deployment.¹⁴³ Of all the union workers that went on strike or threatened to strike, the Hod workers received the least.

This strike has many lessons. The workers in Syracuse learned what many workers had learned across the country. They learned that the power of the state would support and defend the interests of capital and the interest of “order and property”. In this small scale, the conflict was telling of the struggle of unions with solidarity and fragmentation. The Builders

Association was able to manipulate the situation to isolate an ethnic group to be the focus of attention. They settled with other unions and caused fragmentation between the trades at a time when solidarity was most necessary. The press was a willing participant as the stories were one sided about the violence in the streets. This also affected public opinion, which would not support people that would resort to the violence. The government put the National Guard and the police at the service of the Builders and sent a message to the trades by guarding the worksites.

Conclusion

The struggle of workers to be heard was very strong in this period. Syracuse has episodes that were very representative of this. The Knights of St. Crispin and the Daughters of St. Crispin were cordwainers that took pride in their craft. The arbitrary firing of three of their contemporaries was enough to send them off the job not only at Gray Brothers but also at rival Leonard, Vroman, and Bowers. The settling of the disagreement didn't result in the recognition of the union, but it must have resulted in the recognition of the ability of the workers to stand together.

During the conflict with the Boss Bakers, there were other labor struggles in Syracuse. The Shoemaker's Assembly-Knights of Labor represented the workers at Nettleton Shoes. They reluctantly walked off the job on February 27, 1889 for increased pay. The Shoemaker's Assembly

Grievance Committee worked with the owner, Mr. Nettleton, to restructure piecework pay scales for the different shoemakers.¹⁴⁴ At the same time the Painters struggled with the “Boss Painters” over reducing hours. The union succeeded in achieving a pay raise for a standard 9-hour day, with an extra hour open to negotiation on an employer-to-employer basis.¹⁴⁵ The same struggle occurred with the Carpenters and the Master Builders Exchange in April 1889. They were also successful in setting the 9 hour standard for their workers.¹⁴⁶ This issue of hours was extremely important in the early labor movement. The establishment of an eight-hour day was championed by the early National Labor Union and bolstered by Eight Hour Leagues in some states.¹⁴⁷ The unions in Syracuse were in step with their counterparts in other parts of the country in seeking to reduce the length of the workday.

The paternalism of the Hazards and Solvay Process succeeded in keeping the company union-free. Another company in Syracuse, Pass and Seymour, was emulating the same approach to employee relations. James S. Pass called his system “Industrial Humanics” and it was a topic that he would write about and lecture on.¹⁴⁸ This large manufacturer of electrical equipment formed a Mutual Benefit Society that provided for the workers in case of sickness, injury or disability which rendered them unfit for daily labor.¹⁴⁹ It also provided for funeral benefits in case of death. The Society also planned entertainments, dances, and picnics. This approach was utilized in the other business that James and his son Richard S. Pass were involved in.

Onondaga Pottery, which became Syracuse China practiced “Industrial Humanics” and went without a union for over 100 years until 1971.

Solvay Process was unique in a number of ways. One was, the extent of the paternalism that Hazard established and the continued commitment to it up to his death. Another was the nature of work itself. The Bakers or Cigarmakers in Syracuse didn’t influence the workers at Solvay Process. They weren’t influenced by labor unrest in similar jobs because there were no similar chemical factory jobs in the area. Also the immigrants, in particular the Tyroleans, were more interested in preserving community, kinship and culture than with unionism.

The Trades Strike of 1913 was a violent one that ended up fostering trade union disunity and ethnic unrest. The large number of southern Italians in the Hod Carriers and Laborers Union must have felt betrayed by the trades that failed to support the strike. Some of the other trades, such as the Machinists, used the general strike to settle their dispute. When violence broke out, the unions and the Trade Assembly were quick to condemn the Hod Carriers and Laborers. The intensity of the violence by the police and the intervention of the National Guard broke the strike. The Builders’ Association then was able to divide and conquer. This strike had the beginnings of a united, general strike that was capable of wresting real concessions from the powerful group of employers. Unfortunately, the lack of real cooperation and strategy resulted in defeat. This was all too common in

the overall labor struggle.

Part II : Labor Through the World Wars

Overview

Introduction

The events that occurred in the period of the twentieth century through the world wars were remarkable in their scope and drama. The tumultuous tide of history shaped and reshaped organized labor, America, and the world. The struggles of working people in the United States are certainly dramatic in this period. The shifting economic, political and military events act as a backdrop that illustrated the poignant battle of

workers seeking dignity and justice. The cooperation of the World War I era led to the laissez-faire of the “Roaring Twenties.” The Great Depression led to the election of a Democratic president and the New Deal. During the New Deal the National Labor Relations Act unleashed the power of organized workers. This was evidenced by the mass of industrial workers that flocked to the banners of the CIO. The World War II years were a period of national unity in answer to the challenge of supplying massive armies on different continents.

The scope of this period is breathtaking and has filled volumes of research. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a point of reference to the Syracuse labor story. This overview will give an analysis of the challenges that workers faced for justice. Given the turmoil of the times, how did this generation cope with these challenges and forge the modern labor movement? At times it was an all out hot war between workers and the companies that they worked for. The battleground was frequently at the plant gates and in the streets with the police, soldiers, hired company private armies or a combination of all three. At other times, it was a cold war waged in the courts with injunctions and the “red-baiting” prosecutions of left-leaning unionists. Exile or prison loomed for unionists and leftists. Still at other times, the struggle was a civil war fought between unionists on different sides of ideological or organizational divides. The American Federation of Labor, led by first Samuel Gompers and then William Green, battled the unions of the

left and opposed their politics. In the 1930's the AFL continued to oppose the organizing of industrial workers and battled with the offshoot Committee of Industrial Organizations.

The War to End all War

The war on labor preceding World War I had been unrelenting. In what Foster Rhea Dulles termed "An Era of Upheaval," American cities were rife with turmoil. The prolonged depression of the early 1870's would lead to unemployment demonstrations and food riots. The government responded with swift and deadly force in such places as Tompkins Square in New York and Haymarket Square in Chicago a dozen years later. In the 1890's the Homestead and Pullman strikes were examples of ruthless employers using any means to break the unions and the workers ability to organize and collectively bargain.

The war in Europe began to bring the United States economy out of an economic downturn. The depression of 1914 was, in part, brought on by the disruptions of the existing trading networks. The downturn was ameliorated by the influx of European orders. The labor situation was anything but tranquil due to rising prices and stagnant wages. In the pre-war years the number of strikes increased dramatically from 1,589 in 1915 to 3,789 in

1916.¹ The workers were beginning to have leverage in the labor market as the flood of immigration from Europe stopped, and labor shortages began.

The Woodrow Wilson government sought an accommodation with organized labor. President Wilson had exhibited a more conciliatory approach towards organized labor. He attacked the “antiquated and impossible” laws that governed employer and employee relations. He called for legislation to improve workplace safety and conditions, hours and “the freedom to act in their own interest.”² Workers began to have some success in Congress. The American Federation of Labor had lobbied hard for the Clayton Act. Passed in 1914, this law was hailed by AFL President Gompers as the “Magna Carta” of labor by excluding unions from anti-trust provisions.³ The Act was a step to curtail the use of anti-trust injunctions during work stoppages, but it did not stop them. The Congress would also pass the La Follette Seamen’s Act that would improve working conditions of America’s merchant fleet. The Adamson Act of 1916 would establish an eight-hour day, along with overtime pay provisions, for the interstate rail workers.⁴ The unions and the workers had begun to gain some hard fought victories. These meager victories, however, still only benefited the minority of workers that were organized in the AFL and other unions. A vast majority of semi-skilled and unskilled workers were outside the protection of unions. Still, the AFL gained strength in this period. From 1910 to 1917 there was an increase of 800,000 members, which brought total enrollment to over three million.⁵ It is worthy to note

that a majority of these gains came from organizing drives in four areas, the railway shop, building trades, clothing and mining industries.⁶ Gompers would seek to solidify these gains when war broke out.

The United States entered World War I on April 2, 1917. The President appealed to labor leaders to support the war effort. There was great concern in 1917 because the numbers of strikes were on a record pace of 4,450.⁷ World War I launched a war effort of massive proportions. Millions of troops would have to be equipped and fed. Industry geared up for the production of millions of weapons, tanks, trucks and airplanes. Millions of tons of shipping were needed. The cost of the shipbuilding project, which also consisted of building huge shipyards, was over \$2.5 billion. The war effort price tag reached \$13.771 billion by May of 1918.⁸ The workers of the United States were called on for unprecedented levels of production.

In Syracuse, the State Fairgrounds became a massive new training center for a burgeoning group of recruits. 12,000 Syracuse area men served in the armed services in WWI.⁹ The people on the home front faced shortages and rationing like the rest of America. Syracusans were generous in support of the war effort. The Liberty Bond drive in Syracuse netted \$8.5 million, \$1.5 million over the goal.¹⁰ The concept of the Community Chest was developed in Syracuse to raise funds for the Red Cross and local projects. The 1917 pledges totaled \$1.1 million and in 1918 \$2. million was raised.¹¹

Area industries stepped up production of needed war materiel and workers were on overtime. Solvay Process and Semet-Solvay were critical in the production of needed chemicals. In 1914 the Company received a \$1million order from Russia for trinitrotoluene or TNT.¹² The company built a munitions plant in the 1,000 acre Split Rock site. This plant was one of eighteen in operation and produced a fourth of the nation's explosives.¹³ Three thousand workers were stationed at "the Rock." The men that worked there were easy to identify. The picric acid chemicals used by the men discolored white skin yellow and black skin green. There was also a high security force of three hundred armed patrolmen constantly trained in fire fighting.¹⁴

In July 1918 a bright light filled the evening sky followed by a thunderous noise. A fire had broken out at Split Rock. As workers desperately tried to extinguish the blaze, a ton of explosives were set off. The explosion broke windows miles away in Syracuse. In seconds, fifty men were killed and over one hundred others were sent to the hospital with burns and broken limbs.¹⁵ Some of the workers were never identified due to the terrible destruction that left only human parts. The only consolation was that the fire did not spread to the storage area known as "Canada." Four hundred tons were kept there, enough to completely destroy the entire city of Syracuse.¹⁶ Even as workers were cleaning up the disaster, crews were rebuilding the

destroyed buildings. It was the worst industrial accident in the history of Syracuse.

Wilson sought to establish industrial peace and believed that the unions could help to achieve this. The government would protect the gains of the recent years as well as allow union representation on the various Boards and Commissions. The War Labor Board heard 1,250 cases and most were settled for the labor side. The number of strikes and lockouts diminished and collective bargaining was up.¹⁷ The coffers of the U.S. Treasury were opened up and war contracts provided the incentive and the money to keep the factories running. Gompers strongly supported the war effort in every way. The labor leader viewed the war as an opportunity to gain influence, power and respectability for the AFL. He attempted to position the AFL squarely in “the mainstream of American values.”¹⁸ In taking this position he vigorously opposed the class struggle of the left. He had made the statement to the Socialist faction at an AFL Convention that “morally you are unsound; socially you are unsafe, and industrially you are an impossibility.”¹⁹ The path was open to take serious action against them.

To Make the World Safe for Democracy

The Socialists were beginning to make slow but steady inroads in the pre-war years. Americans doubted the structure and the values of the capitalist, industrial machine. The Socialist Party had shown remarkable strength in the election cycles of 1910-1917. In Syracuse, there had been a

good deal of Socialist-Labor activity. The Socialist-Labor Party staunchly supported the Eight Hour movement and brought speakers to Syracuse to advocate for it.²⁰ The popular leader of the local Party was Erasmus Pellenz. He ran with a full slate of candidates in the local elections of 1899 and the platform was one of full employment with assistance for the working classes and the poor.²¹ Pellenz came in a distant third with 1,500 votes and the rest of the candidates lost also. He then accepted the position of Fire Marshall in the Democratic administration of Mayor McGuire. The Socialist-Labor Party bitterly denounced Pellenz as a “Judas.”²² His desertion was a severe blow to the Party. In another local development, the president of the Central Trades and Labor Assembly, Charles H. Corregan, ran for U.S. President on the Socialist-Labor ticket in 1904.²³ Nationally in 1910, Socialist Victor Berger was elected United States Congressman. “In 1911 seventy three Socialist mayors and twelve hundred lesser officials in 340 cities and towns”²⁴ were elected. In 1917, ten Socialists were sent to the New York State legislature and party votes rose in many cities.²⁵ During the war the Socialists showed signs of fracture and decline. The Party was officially opposed to the war. The left of the Party, embodied by the supporters of the I.W.W. and other groups, had left or were driven out. The right wing of the party defected to support Wilson and the Democrats. “The Socialist Party (would lose most of) the entire body of intellectuals, publicists, public figures, union leaders ...as a result of World War I.”²⁶ The remnants of the Party were to come under

intense pressure from the Government for opposing the War. The Congress passed the Espionage Act, and Wilson signed it in 1917. The scope of the Act was expanded in 1918 and became the Sedition Act. The Act would be used to curtail free speech and jail opponents of the draft and war. The government banned dozens of newspapers and periodicals from the mails.

In June 1918 Socialist leader Eugene V. Debs spoke outside a prison after visiting three Socialist draft protesters. In his remarks to the crowd he denounced war in general. He was arrested and jailed under the Espionage Act. His appeal to the Supreme Court was heard in 1919 and the court unanimously upheld the conviction. "Use of the Espionage and Sedition Acts by federal troops and overzealous U.S. district attorneys in a combination of random and carefully directed prosecutions aimed at destroying the Socialist Party and the I.W.W., resulted in over 2,100 indictments (and) over 1,000 convictions." ²⁷ The war in Europe had a chilling effect on dissent and opposition in the U.S.

The government used the war to break the Industrial Workers of the World. The I.W.W. was an all-inclusive organization that was militant and syndicalist. Their opposition to the war was less vocal than with the Socialists, but it was the nature of the organization that struck fear among the capitalists. Before and during the war years, mining and lumber strikes drew unwanted attention to the condition of the workers. The threat to the war effort was enough for Federal forces to act. The Justice Department

raided I.W.W. offices across the country in September of 1917. They were gathering evidence that was used to make numerous arrests and indict one hundred and one leaders in a trial that would last five months.²⁸ They were all found guilty and the I.W.W. was broken.

The Post-War War

The AFL had enjoyed unprecedented success during the war years. The membership would top 4,125,000. The unions were having success with workers associated with railroads as well as packinghouse workers, sea and dockworkers, electrical workers and machinists.²⁹ Things began to change when the fighting stopped. The National War Labor Board was shut down, and the truce that was the cornerstone of labor relations began to crumble. The unions sought to retain the gains of the past, and the corporations sought to regain the control over the workplace and the workers by eliminating collective bargaining. The return of the hundreds of thousands of soldiers from Europe would flood the labor market. White men would again claim many of the jobs that had been performed by women and minorities. Race riots broke out in cities across the country. A huge general strike was held in Seattle that shut the city down. The AFL, the Socialists, Communists, and the remnants of the I.W.W. combined to put 100,000 people in the streets for five days. Mayor Ole Hanson called in troops to quell the strike and to battle the “reds”. The reaction of the government was predictable. The mayor stated

that the “Seattle strike was an attempted revolution. That there was no violence doesn’t alter the fact. The intent, openly and covertly announced was the for the overthrow of the industrial system; here first, then everywhere.”³⁰ This was something that the government and the corporations would not allow.

One of the main enemies that the government set its sights on was the Communist Party. The fear of the effects of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia was deeply felt by the government and the business community. The left of the Socialist Party had splintered into the Communist Party of America and the Communist Labor Party. The spectre of Soviet-style revolution was a reason for action, and the “Red Scare” was on. The Attorney General of the United States was A. Mitchell Palmer. In early 1919, there was a rash of bombings that included thirty letter bombs to prominent citizens.³¹ Palmer’s own residence was bombed. He took aim at “radicalism” in the form of foreigners, the Communist Party, and the I.W.W. The weapon that he would use was deportation.

Palmer had deep-set fear of the Communist threat. In his view, the efforts of the Justice Department to “tear out the radical seeds and poisonous theories” had not been supported properly by Congress. The Attorney General wrote that the threat posed by these “criminal aliens” to our Republic and to our American life was great. “The Department of Justice discovered upwards of 60,000 of these organized agitators of the Trotsky

doctrine..the Government is now sweeping the nation clean of such alien filth.”³² The first wave of deportations was to be of thirty-five I.W.W. members implicated in the Seattle strike. The Secretary of Labor had the power to block the deportations. Labor Secretary William B. Wilson went to Ellis Island and reversed twenty-five of the orders. He stated that merely belonging to the I.W.W. was insufficient grounds for deportation.³³ Palmer was successful in rounding up members of the Union of Russian Workers and deporting 235 of them, along with Emma Goldman, to Russia on December 21, 1919. The Attorney General and his special assistant J. Edgar Hoover aggressively went after foreign-born members of the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party. Thousands of warrants were issued and dozens of raids were unleashed across the nation. This wave of the “Red Scare” subsided in 1920, but the fear of immigrants and aliens remained and closed America’s doors to the masses in war-torn Europe.

Strikes

In addition to the Seattle strike was the Boston police strike, New England textile strike, the New Jersey silk strike, the coal strike and the widespread steel industry strike. American steel producers were very powerful corporations. Led by men such as Judge Albert Gary of U.S. Steel and Charles Schwab of Bethlehem Steel, production and profits had soared in the war years. U.S. Steel had gone from \$81million profit in 1913 to \$273 million in 1916 and \$493 million in 1917.³⁴ After the war, the steel companies

felt that they no longer had to adhere to any decisions handed down by the War Labor Board. They would run the business as they wanted.

The unions had made some progress in organizing steel, but had failed to make the most of their wartime advantages. The effort had been the AFL's bid to really move into industrial unions. The Federation established a National Committee for Organizing Steel and Iron Workers in August 1918.³⁵ The leaders of the National Committee were William Z. Foster, a former I.W.W. organizer and future Communist Party leader, and John Fitzpatrick. Their left-wing views would be used as examples of the revolutionary threat that the strike posed. The momentum towards confrontation grew in the summer of 1919, and in September the strike came.

The National Committee claimed that 275,000 workers were out the first day and a total of 350,000 workers at the peak of the strike.³⁶ The steel producers pulled out all the time tested strike breaking tactics. They played ethnic and racial groups against each other by hiring scabs by the tens of thousands. There was widespread misinformation and redbaiting directed at the public and the workers. The Department of Justice became involved in the hunt for Bolsheviks in the strike. Many of the ethnic groups in the steel mills were looked on as foreigners and thus dangerous to the American way of life. The steel companies also invested a great deal in spying on their own workers. They hired firms, such as Corporations Auxiliary Company, that

had hundreds of “agents” involved in the strike.³⁷ They hired private armies and utilized public law enforcement and military when necessary.

The defeat of the steel strike and many of the others in 1919 shifted power back to the employers. The loss was crippling to efforts to organize the mass production industries. The post-strike labor relations also saw a revival of the use of court injunctions and restraining orders to curtail union activity. The employers’ public relations war cast many in the labor movement as left wing and un-American. In the aftermath, the country slid into depression from 1921-1922 that threw millions out of work. The AFL declined in membership from the peak of over five million to 3.5 million in 1923.³⁸ The Federation took a defensive position that further eroded the labor movement into the next decade.

The Roaring Twenties

In 1920 the Republicans took over the White House. The conservative laissez-faire economic policies led to an atmosphere of pro-business governing. The years after 1922 were marked by increased production and rising expectations. The Treasury Secretary under Presidents Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge was one of the richest men in America, Andrew Mellon. He pushed for and succeeded in getting a massive tax cut through Congress. This time the workers felt the prosperity. There were wage increases and an abundance of consumer goods to choose from. The nation had closed its doors to immigrants in the 1920’s. The flood of “14 million

between 1900 and 1920”³⁹ slowed to a trickle of 150,000. Even this low number was determined by a strict quota system. This served to stabilize the labor markets.

Productivity gains due to changes in technologies were also changing the American workforce. There were introductions of labor saving devices in the textile, coal industries and agriculture that would displace thousands of workers.⁴⁰ In spite of the economic boom, a stubborn unemployment problem persisted and wealth accumulated at the top. “Six million families (42 percent of the total) made less than \$1,000 per year. One-tenth of 1 percent of the families at the top received as much income as 42 percent of the families at the bottom.”⁴¹ The post war economy was greatly benefiting the wealthiest while the effects on the poorest were negligible.

Syracuse and New Technologies

The revolution in automobile and transportation technologies had beginnings in Syracuse. The “Cradle of Industry” was the Lipe Machine Shop on 208 South Geddes Street.⁴² Charles E. Lipe, a Cornell University engineering graduate, set up this 20,000 square foot building as an incubator of many inventions. For example, it was in this shop that John R. Montague developed a machine for removing the shells from rice and coffee beans. It was also there that Alexander Brown developed a new and practical typewriter that was easy to operate. Brown was an accomplished inventor

with 150 patents that worked with gun maker L.C. Smith. After being sold on the new typewriter, Smith converted his factory from guns to typewriters.⁴³

Charles Lipe had invented a two-speed gear for bicycles and realized that there could be other applications. Henry Ford came to the shop on several occasions for help on power transmission problems. Brown worked together with Lipe to further develop “equalizing gears” that compensated for differing distances of travel between wheels, a differential.⁴⁴ The Company that came from this invention was Brown, Lipe and Chapin Gear Company. Another inventor and Cornell engineering graduate, John Wilkerson, developed an air-cooled automobile engine. It was a meeting in the shop between Wilkerson and die-cast producer Herbert H. Franklin would lead to the making of the Franklin Motor Car.

Sold on the concept of an air-cooled automobile, Franklin, Wilkerson, Brown and Lipe agreed to build a prototype.⁴⁵ In 1901 the first Franklin was built in the Geddes St. shop. Franklin set up a small factory on Marcellus St. to build cars. By June 1902 they were ready to build and sold thirteen cars.⁴⁶ From this humble beginning, H. H. Franklin grew the car company with a reputation for high quality, engineering excellence and reliability. A large factory was built on Geddes Street that would eventually be the city’s largest employer. During World War I, the Federal Government invested \$1million in the plant to produce tank transmissions and airplane parts. The plant

suspended auto production as 5,000 workers produced this new generation of war machines.⁴⁷

Employment levels dropped after the war, but gradually increased to 3,200 workers when Franklin had its best year in 1929 and built 15,000 cars. The Company borrowed liberally from the example of F. R. Hazard and had paternalistic relations with their workers. The Company had a monthly news magazine that detailed life in the factory. *The Franklin News* gave the details of events happening such as promotions, production records, sales and business forecast as well as personal notes of weddings, births and deaths of employees.⁴⁸ The *News* would also keep the factory up to date on the progress of the factory basketball and baseball teams as well as the latest on the employee band and outings. The *News* would also explain programs like the Franklin Benefit Society. The Society was much like the Mutual Aid Society of Solvay Process. For their monthly dues, a member was covered for injury, illness or death on the job.⁴⁹ The Franklin employee programs weren't as comprehensive as those at Solvay Process, however they were just as effective in keeping out a union.

The Great Depression came as Franklin was expanding into new models. The Company was having severe capital problems and lost \$1million in 1931, and things got worse. By 1934, there were 233 employees and \$2million in debt.⁵⁰ Franklin was forced to file for bankruptcy on April 3,1934. The court appointed receiver, Giles H. Stilwell, desperately tried to

reorganize the debt and get additional capital. Syracuse Mayor Rolland Marvin worked out an agreement to restructure the City tax debt and also tried to find additional capital. Despite the promise of a new investment group to purchase and reopen the plant, the end came on November 17, 1935. The Mayor reluctantly directed the city lawyers to foreclose on the property.⁵¹ The sleek Franklin was no more. There were other experiments prior to the Great Depression in automobile production in Syracuse, such as the rear engine Julian and the motorcycle/car the Ner-a-car. However, it was the Franklin that captured the imagination of Syracuse of becoming the Detroit of the East.

Brown, Lipe and Chapin continued on in the gear business. Supplying Franklin, and General Motors. They built a new factory on Marcellus Street in 1911. G.M. bought out the operation in December 1922 and eventually moved to Detroit. Willard Lipe developed the rollway bearing for railroads and cylindrical bearings for other commercial applications.⁵² Thousands of these bearings were made for the military in World War I. Another gear company, the New Process Rawhide Company, opened as makers of rawhide gears for new electrical trolley cars. They built a new factory on Plum Street and began producing a wide variety of rawhide and metal gears as New Process Gear. During World War I, they were producers of tank transmission gears along with airplane and gun carriage parts.⁵³ New Process survived the

Great Depression by partnering with Walter Chrysler to produce three and four speed transmissions for Dodge trucks.⁵⁴

Electrical workers had more jobs in the Syracuse area as the young electrical industry began to grow. Pass and Seymour manufactured electrical switches and equipment. With so many automobiles on the road there was a need for a system of direction. The Crouse-Hinds Company developed a wide variety of traffic electrical equipment as well as industrial and commercial electrical devices.⁵⁵ Cyrus A. Dodge moved to Syracuse from Vermont and patented a washing-style machine in 1877. The Company added an electrical motor and reorganized as the Syracuse Washing Machine Company in 1919 and eventually became the Easy Washer Company.⁵⁶ General Electric and Carrier Corporation also came to the Syracuse area and employed thousands of workers.

The chemical industry continued to expand in new technologies in the post-war era. It was, however, the death of Fredrick R. Hazard that had a profound effect on the workers of Solvay Process. The Solvay-Sement Companies had produced munitions during the war and expanded the output of organic chemicals.⁵⁷ They closely cooperated with other companies for the war effort. During the 1920's there were 500 mergers in the chemical industry alone.⁵⁸ The era of the tightly knit family business in Solvay was coming to an end.

Solvay Process and Semet-Solvay merged with three other companies on December 17, 1920 to form Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation. Despite the fact that the two largest companies of the merger were the Solvay companies, the new Chief Executive Officer came from one of the smaller companies. Orlando Weber began a consolidation and cost reduction program. Many in the management group in Solvay were fired as Weber restructured. The executive offices were moved to New York City in 1924 and more of the Solvay group was fired.⁵⁹ Allied was very profitable in this period, but the cuts in research, chemists, and engineers caught up with them. By 1930, Allied dropped to the third chemical corporation in America after Dupont and Union Carbide.⁶⁰

The company programs that flourished under Hazard were cut and eliminated. By 1917 the Process had one hundred and sixty people working on the welfare and recreation programs costing between \$250,000 and \$300,000 a year.⁶¹ The programs were cut that had no ties to production. Closed were the reading rooms, dormitory, gym, the band, the Americanization and Mechanics Schools, and other community programs such as day care and health care in the schools. The company news magazine was called *Solvay Life*. The people were caught up on the comings and goings of people at the Process. The news of the sprawling site was discontinued in July 1921. The editor wrote an article for the last issue called "Good-Bye *Solvay Life*." He stated that the magazine will be discontinued but, "let us all

trust that the fine spirit that has been manifested in *Solvay Life's* pages each month will continue and that the future will bring us all back together again in the prosperity that every Solvayite so richly deserves. Well not say "Good Bye" but "Till we meet again."⁶² The end had indeed arrived and the way of life that was Solvay Process had faded away.

The American Federation of Labor

The AFL was suffering from a steadily weakening position. When Gompers died in 1924, the new president was William Green of the United Mine Workers. He inherited an organization that was concentrated in a few industries such as coal, rail, printing, street rail, water transportation, and music. As a percentage of the workforce, representation declined from 19.4 in 1920 to 10.2 in 1930.⁶³ Thousands of jobs in textiles and coal were leaving the unionized North and moving to the unorganized South. Millions of Americans in industry did not have access to a union and entire unions were fading away as their memberships declined. This weak position can be explained by a number of factors.

The Federation was tied to the model of trade unionism that had been the key to survival of the many years. The competition of the AFL with the Knights of Labor and the I.W.W. had frozen the organization in time. They were unable or unwilling to adapt to the changing economy. The Federation was stagnant and failed to organize new members because of that position. The Federation was unable to break from the business unionism of the war

years. Gompers had been effective in establishing organized labor as “mainstream.”⁶⁴ The war years, and a cooperative Wilson administration, had created a dynamic of labor-management cooperation. This relationship had been promoted for the good of the nation and for the war effort. In the post war era, this cooperation collapsed in the face of a wholesale assault unleashed by the corporations. The steel strike is an example of the failure and shortcomings of the AFL. As a result, the AFL in the 1920’s evolved into an organization that thoroughly endorsed capitalism and billed itself as the cooperative auxiliary of business.⁶⁵

Despite the failures, they were the predominant national union organization. With the demise of the I.W.W. and other political/labor groups, the Federation had the responsibility to represent the interests of all of the labor movement. However, there were independent unions not affiliated with the AFL such as the Railway Brotherhood. The AFL would have little or no influence in the left, nor did it try. The organization had participated in the assault on the left to rid the AFL of leftists and to destroy their rivals in the Communist Party and their trade unions.⁶⁶

The decline of the Federation can also be explained by the lack of participation in politics. The organization did endorse the 1924 candidacy of Senator Robert LaFollette and the Progressive Party.⁶⁷ However, the AFL failed to pursue a full-scale political action agenda in the post war era. They typically reverted to not endorsing candidates. The growing conservatism of

the Federation was evidenced by the failure to endorse Democrat Al Smith the New York Governor. This was despite his excellent record on labor issues.⁶⁸ The neutral political strategy failed to recognize the incremental success that the labor movement had been winning in the political arena pre-war and during the war years. The election of conservative governments after Woodrow Wilson further contributed to this inertia.

The American Plan

The corporate offensive consisted of a full-scale denial of labor organization and representation. The failure of the steel strike stopped industrial union organizing, and the breaking of the Seattle general strike served to tie the unionists with the “reds” and revolution. The depression of 1921 further eroded labor’s gains. Corporations pushed aggressively for the open shop.⁶⁹ The open shop policy was more than the option to belong or not belong to a labor organization. The open shop came to mean that no matter how many employees belonged to a union, a company would grant no recognition. There sprouted up open shop associations across the country, fifty in New York State, eighteen in Massachusetts, twenty in Connecticut, forty-six in Illinois, seventeen in Ohio, and twenty-three in Michigan. The Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Metal Trades Association, and others would tie a sense of nationalism and “traditional values” into the American Plan.⁷⁰ This Plan

would effectively use fear and false promises as sales tactics. The public was told that the Plan was a true example of democracy. Though a person could choose to join or not to join a union, the Plan “exposed” the labor organization as corrupt or dangerously foreign in nature. Individualism was the way to success.⁷¹ Collective bargaining was “un-American.” The significance of this is that this was a concerted effort to coordinate employers and to use anti-union tactics in conjunction.

One of the common tactics used by business in suppressing union activity was the yellow-dog contract. The yellow-dog contract was forced on employees as a condition of employment.⁷² These contracts stated that the signer was not a union member, and would not join a union while in the employ of the company. They could also state that the signer would not aid in organizing a union. The yellow-dog contract would be upheld in the courts as legal.⁷³ The companies would fire “agitators” or anyone else talking union, and then blacklist them. Their names would circulate to the other employers and make it nearly impossible to find work.

The employers would also hire agents to infiltrate and spy from within. In 1937, the United States Senate held public hearings of Senator LaFollette’s Civil Liberties Committee investigating the abuse of legal and constitutional rights by companies hiring industrial spies. This Committee came about, in part, due to the anti-union assaults in the Remington Rand strike in Syracuse. “The La Follette Committee concluded that espionage was

the most efficient system to prevent unions from forming, to weaken them once they gained a foothold, and to wreck them when they tried to test their strength.”⁷⁴ These “detective” or security agencies would also be very useful in the event of a strike. They would be called on to recruit the strikebreakers who would use violence to clear the way for the replacement workers. The Committee found that in a representative list of well-known companies, they had spent between 1933 and 1936 \$9,440,000 for spies, strikebreakers and munitions.⁷⁵ General Motors in this timeframe spent \$830,000.

Welfare Capitalism

Another tool that the employers used was welfare capitalism. John D. Rockefeller Jr. had commissioned the “Rockefeller Plan” in the aftermath of the infamous Ludlow massacre of 1914 in an effort to quell public outrage. He stated, “The fundamental idea of Welfare Capitalism is that the only solidarity nature in industry is the solidarity which unites all those in the same business establishment.”⁷⁶ In the different forms it would take, the central theme of welfare capitalism was to establish a new system of employer-worker relations. This system would provide the appearance of employee representation and possibly a wide range of benefits. For example, General Electric rewarded seniority with added incentives for pensions and vacations. G.E. also sponsored many different clubs and provided beneficial terms to purchase life insurance.⁷⁷ The employees could participate in joint-committees that addressed such things as workplace safety, hours,

grievances, and other conditions.⁷⁸ The employers retained complete control of the process and keep out a union. These company unions would be a battleground the unions would fight for decades.

Courts

Injunctions and other court orders were another way business and government dealt with labor. An important turn of events happened in this period in the U.S. Supreme Court. Former conservative Republican President William Howard Taft became Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1921. President Harding was able to appoint conservatives George Sutherland, Pierce, Butler, and Edward Sanford to the High Court.⁷⁹ These justices would have a very important influence on the area of labor law for many years to come. The Clayton Act's supposed protections for secondary boycotts and from injunctions faded away. In 1921, the Court would rule against unions in the decision of *Duplex Printing Press v. Deering* that nothing in the Act legalized secondary boycotts or protected unions from injunctions relating to conspiring restraint of trade.⁸⁰ In the years to come, employers would seek more injunctions than in the pre-Clayton years. The AFL listed 389 injunctions issued by federal and state courts from 1921 through 1928. This did not include the lower courts. The linkage to restraint of trade removed the tool of using boycotts by labor against employers. The Court also invalidated minimum wage laws as unconstitutional. The majority stated the minimum wage was a "violation of the constitutional safeguards of

liberty of contract.”⁸¹ The invalidating what little labor rights there were greatly reduced the abilities of the labor movement to operate or execute work stoppages. The average number of strikes in the year 1922-1925 was thirty-four, with the average number of workers involved forty-three. In the years 1926-1930 the average number was eighteen with eleven workers involved.⁸² It is clear that in limiting strikes and boycotts the actions of the courts were having the desired result.

The Great Depression

The economic house of cards collapsed in 1929. President Herbert Hoover sought a policy of wage and price stabilization. In a meeting with the President, many heads of industry pledged that they would not cut wages.⁸³ Labor leaders endorsed the same policy. However, the government made no move to shore up employment. An effort by New York Senator Robert Wagner for an employment-services bill was vetoed by Hoover. The President preferred to have private organizations and local governments deal with the unemployment, homelessness and hunger. The downward spiral of unemployment affected millions and eventually dragged down the whole economy. Local governments were overwhelmed by demands for help. The magnitude of the situation became evident as the unemployment numbers increased monthly. On the day that Hoover left office, 15 million Americans or a third of the workforce was out of work.⁸⁴ The numbers of the remaining workers that were on part time can only be guessed. For example, the coal

industry had collapsed. Wages and days worked plunged as prices dropped. Poverty and starvation haunted the coalfields of Illinois, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

The AFL was moribund. The only sign of life was the rejection of the long held advocacy of volunteerism. The AFL had stuck to the belief that policies, such as unemployment insurance, should be voluntarily negotiated in bargaining agreements. They believed that it was intrusive of the state and would oppose legislation dealing with them. In the tide of joblessness, the relief that unions could provide for their out of work members was minimal. The AFL was under increased pressure to endorse a governmental policy of unemployment relief. In the spring of 1932, Green and others met with Gerald Swope. The General Electric President unveiled to them his plan that would establish a comprehensive social insurance plan that would be financed by the corporations and their employees. It would be mandatory for companies of fifty workers or more to provide retirement, disability, unemployment, and life insurance.⁸⁵ The second part of his plan, which he would briefly touch on, was the establishing of industrial cartels. The trade associations of the industrial sectors would do the economic planning. (It is interesting to note that Swope had gone to President Hoover in September of 1930 with a plan for public works. The massive two billion dollar program would build hospitals, schools, prisons, roads and rubbish disposal plants.

The proposal fell on deaf ears.)⁸⁶ The AFL endorsed unemployment insurance in November of 1932, formally turning away from volunteerism.

Syracuse and the Great Depression

The many breweries of the Syracuse area were shut down as a result of Prohibition in 1920 and hundreds lost their jobs. The agreement between the Brewery Union and the brewers crumbled. Only the Easterle Brewing Company and the L. House Brewery Company stayed open producing soft drinks.⁸⁷ On December 5, 1933, Utah passed the Twenty-first Amendment eliminating the Eighteenth and Prohibition was officially over.^{salt2satellites} It was, however, too late for many of the smaller breweries in Syracuse. They never reopened their doors. The Haberle, Zett, Bartels, Greenway and Moore & Quinn did re-open for business.⁸⁸

Syracuse was experiencing the same terrible economic conditions the rest of the country was. The closing of H.H. Franklin along with many other businesses threw thousands out of work. The State of New York established the Emergency Relief Act of 1931.⁸⁹ The Onondaga County Board of Supervisors immediately put it into effect. A local banker, Crandall Melvin, became the director of this area program which soon had 15,000 men and women working on public projects.⁹⁰ By the time the ERA was replaced by the Works Project Administration in 1933, the workers had a long list of projects completed. These include Griffin Field Lakeshore Drive, Onondaga Lake Parkway, the French Fort, Pratt's Falls, Highland Park, the Syracuse

Airport, and many others. The Civilian Conservation Corps had thousands of area young people enlisted doing such things as building the state park in Fayetteville.⁹¹ A large project downtown to build an elevated track for the railroad got underway in 1933. It took three years, cost \$17 million, and provided 1,200 jobs to area workers when they needed that most.⁹²

Many people learned to rely on each other more in these difficult times. For example the close knit Tyroleans in Solvay formed the Tyrol Club on Lamont Avenue. Frank Boldrini, Guido Mabboni, Sylvester Maestri, Anthony Marascalchi, and many others formed this social club/mutual aid club.⁹³ The employment at the Works was “up and down.” When there were orders the Company put on a lot of men, when the orders were filled the men were laid off again. The workers faced weeks of part-time work and weeks without work. The Tyrol Club acted as a base to provide aid to Allied workers and their families in need.⁹⁴ In 1931, Easy Washer, contracted through General Electric to build a washer for them. Giving them work through the Depression. Many of the other factories, such as Easy Washer, worked the reduced workweek of anywhere from two to five days, depending on orders. This allowed the companies to keep the qualified employees and gave the workers opportunity for some income.

The Communists

Despite the best efforts of the Palmer raids and the deportation of “reds,” the communists did not disappear. The influence of the Communist

Party in the twenties and thirties was a very important one in labor's story. The fracture of the Socialist Party had led to the forming of Communist Party and the Communist Workers Party. The Communist International (Comintern) was formed in Moscow in 1919.⁹⁵ There was also a section within Comintern called the Profintern or Red Trade Union Internationals. Both organizations would be very influential to the communists around the world. The Communist Party ordered the two factions to join together in 1921.⁹⁶ The new party would be led by a secretariat in the U.S. The main leaders were general secretary Earl Browder and labor secretary William Z. Foster. The main goal of the Comintern and the Profintern was to direct, aid, and assist the various communist parties. These workers and their allies would educate and lead the masses. The trade unions would be the revolutionary advance guard.

The CP would take direction from Lenin and Comintern to work within the AFL. Foster developed the Trade Union Education League to “bore from within” the existing structure and form the radical opposition to the “reactionary” leaders.⁹⁷ The CP perceived weakness in the conservative AFL leadership that was and out of date and was having a very difficult time in the 1920's. The TUEL tried to place members in unions to fight for control. Most however would be marginalized or expelled. Still, the communists worked diligently to be the organizers and the agitators in the unions. They

were on the docks, garment districts, and mines. The communists were busy tirelessly working with and for the downtrodden and unrepresented.

The policy of “boring from within” did not work. The decision was made by Comintern to change strategies. The new directive was to form rival labor organizations to challenge the “reactionary” AFL. This dual unionism drained the activists and progressives from the established unions. The Great Depression had a withering effect on the Communist unions. For example, in 1929 the Detroit auto district the Party claimed 12-14,000 members. The total soon dropped to 6,167 by early 1930.⁹⁸ New members that were recruited were often the unemployed. The Communist Party was directed by Comintern to organize and lead Unemployed Councils. “Into these Councils shall be drawn representatives of the revolutionary unions, shop committees and reformist unions, as well as unorganized unions.”⁹⁹ The Unemployed Councils announced a Workers’ Unemployment Insurance Bill and worked for the unemployed and homeless. The Councils turned out thousands of unemployed people to marches and rallies across America over the next few years. The most notable was on March 6, 1930, a day of large demonstrations and violence in some cities. The Communists sought this linkage to show that capitalism was the cause of the misery and communism had solutions. The armies of the unemployed were out there waiting for relief and looking for answers..

The Tide Turns

Two significant events for labor occurred in 1932. First was the passage of the Norris-La Guardia Act. This law was the result of years of work to overturn yellow-dog contracts and injunctions. Republicans Senator George Norris of Nebraska and Representative Fiorello La Guardia of New York hammered the bill through the two chambers, passing it with veto-proof majorities. President Hoover, in an election year, signed the bill into law on March 23, 1932.¹⁰⁰ This remarkable turn of events came as the backlash to inaction was gaining momentum. The local governments and the states were beginning to push for solutions to the great problems. For example, Wisconsin had passed a “little Norris-LaGuardia” in 1931, also Pennsylvania and Ohio had passed restrictions on injunctions. The Norris-LaGuardia Act gave organized labor back a valuable tool to work with.

The second significant event was the election of Franklin Roosevelt as President. The AFL made no endorsements in the fall election. Green was neutral, but labor leaders John L. Lewis, William Hutcherson, and Matthew Woll endorsed and worked for the Republican candidates.¹⁰¹ The election was a pointed rebuke to the failed policies of the Republicans. Roosevelt received 22,809,638 votes and 42 states, and Hoover received 15,758,901 and 6 states. The Electoral College had a majority for Roosevelt of 472 to 59.¹⁰² The New York Governor brought with him a majority of Democrats in both Houses of Congress. It was the most remarkable shift in the history of American

politics. The era of change had begun. Many of the institutions and programs that began in the New Deal are with us today. Social Security, unemployment insurance, child labor laws, social welfare, minimum wages and maximum hours, and the right to bargain collectively all came out of the New Deal.

The NIRA and NLRA

The new administration wasted no time in an ambitious \$3.3 billion program entitled the National Industrial Recovery Act. The President stated on June, 16 1933 that the priority was “to put people back to work, to let them buy more of the products of farms and factories and start our business at a living wage again.”¹⁰³ This program for industrial reorganization and public work contained a vital section for workers. Section 7(a) established the workers’ right to organize and to bargain collectively through parties of their choosing. This right was used by many thousands of workers to organize, largely in the established unions.

The AFL had organizational problems. One problem was the torrent of people seeking representation. Another was the policy problem of organizing industrial workers into craft unions. The AFL would only allow industrial workers chartered into “temporary” federal unions until the jurisdiction issues could be resolved. “Between 1932 and 1934, the number of federal charters outstanding rose from 307 to 1798.”¹⁰⁴ The United Mine Workers of

John L. Lewis recruited hundreds of thousands of new members and succeeded in collective bargaining the soft coal mines in the South.

One of the problems of the NIRA was that all parties were not in line with the policies. The developing of industrial codes and the acceptance of Section 7(a) was far from universal. The National Labor Board had no enforcement mechanism for violations by the parties of the NIRA. Labor disputes simply went unresolved.¹⁰⁵ Employers refused to attend hearings and the Board had no power to subpoena records or witnesses. Thousands of union members left their new unions as organizing campaigns and election results were ignored.¹⁰⁶ In 1935, the Act was declared unconstitutional.

Senator Robert F. Wagner (N.Y.-D) introduced a bill in February of 1935, the National Labor Relations Act. He stated “the right to bargain collectively is at the bottom of social justice for the worker, as well as the sensible conduct of business affairs. The denial or observance of this right means the difference between despotism and democracy.”¹⁰⁷ This law incorporated the protections of Section 7(a), close loopholes, and establish a NLRB that had more power to deal with organizing and collective bargaining dispute. The Wagner Act would be the centerpiece of labor law. Samuel Gompers had declared the Clayton Act to be the “Magna Carta” of organized labor. It did not work out to be, but the Wagner Act was the Declaration of Independence.

Wagner had believed that the “greatest barrier to the freedom of choice of workers is the employer-dominated union which has grown with amazing rapidity since the passage of the Recovery Act.”¹⁰⁸ These company unions were used to avoid the outside labor union. The company union was financed and dominated by the employer. The growth of them in this period showed how concerned the companies were. There were 653 company unions as of November 1933. Of these 412 had been established or partially established since the enacting of the NIRA.¹⁰⁹ This situation would be addressed through the NLRA. The Board issued disestablishment orders of company unions. The largest number of charges came in 1937-38, from 1939 on a total of 1,709 of these plans ended as a result of Board orders.¹¹⁰ Real union activity was growing. The workers were organizing like never before. Union membership grew from 4,164,000 in 1936 to 10,762,000 in 1942. Charges of Unfair Labor Practice grew from 865 in 1936 to 4,967 in 1942.¹¹¹ The workers were on the march and the labor unions would have to run in order to catch up.

The Committee of Industrial Organizations

The debate over industrial union organizing raged in the AFL convention of 1935. Arguments centered on jurisdictional matters and the protection of the craft and trade unions. The effort to organize the mass production workers was defeated. A group of eight unions formed the Committee of Industrial Organizations with the purpose of “education and

advising (to) promote the recognition and acceptance of modern collective bargaining on the mass production industries.”¹¹² The indomitable head of the United Mine Workers, John L. Lewis, led the Committee. The AFL suspended the unions in the CIO in 1936. The AFL offered re-admission of the original eight unions if the remaining new unions would be absorbed into the established AFL unions. The CIO membership had grown to 3,700,000 as compared to 3,400,000 AFL members in 1937.¹¹³ The deal was rejected and the CIO unions were expelled. The rift between strong willed opponents would split the labor movement into bitter opposing camps for decades. The rift would be more than the difference between industrial unionism and craft unionism. It was about power and who would wield it. The union rivalry would be a divisive tool that the employers would use against workers over and over again.

Labor was on the march. In 1936 and 1937 dramatic events were unfolding. The new Congress of Industrial Organizations had initiated very active organizing campaigns in steel, rubber, electrical and auto. The rubber workers in the tire complexes in Akron numbered in the tens of thousands. The combination of the Depression, wage cuts, shortened workweeks, and speedups had the workers at the breaking point.¹¹⁴ Short, spontaneous sit-downs spread from tire plant to tire plant between 1933 and 1936. The big strike finally came at Goodyear in February of 1936.¹¹⁵ The workers on the shop floor forced the United Rubber Workers and the CIO into action.

Goodyear capitulated within a month on the union demands but still withheld recognition. The lesson of the sit-down was not lost on the workers in other sectors.

The steel workers had experienced many defeats in their attempts to unionize. Open warfare at Homestead 1892 and the steel strike of 1919 set the tone for the violent confrontations. Steel was gradually recovering from the Depression. The steel workers were still toiling under poor wages and very dangerous conditions. In June 1936, the CIO established the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee. The CIO soon unleashed hundreds of organizers in the big steel cities. The campaign organized over 100,000 members in 150 locals by the end of 1936.¹¹⁶ The sheer force of numbers was overcoming the Steel counter-campaign of company unions, anti-union propaganda and red baiting. On March 1, 1937, Lewis and U. S. Steel chair Myron Taylor announced an agreement that recognized the union. The SWOC was "the bargaining union for its members. (It is) granted a ten percent wage increase, an eight hour day and a forty hour week."¹¹⁷ Over one hundred other companies followed the lead of U.S. Steel and voluntarily recognized SWOC. Union membership swelled by 300,000. This development was a resounding victory for Lewis. SWOC head Phillip Murray and the Steelworkers would have to battle the smaller producers, known as "little steel," for years to come. The companies would use the time-honored formula of strikebreakers, police, and violence to attempt to intimidate unionism. The

worst was the Memorial Day 1937 Massacre at Republic Steel in Chicago. Police opened fire on unarmed, peaceful demonstrators, killing ten and shocking the nation. By 1941, aided by the NLRB, the CIO had virtually organized the entire industry . SWOC had grown to a remarkable 600,000 strong.¹¹⁸

The AFL was ineffective in dealing with the auto workers. The workplace conditions such as speed up were a critical for the workers. The AFL was despised by many for their anti-strike and craft union approaches. The man that they sent to organize the industry in 1933 bragged to the companies that he had never voted to strike and always opposed them.¹¹⁹ The initial flood of workers (210,000) who joined the AFL auto locals with the passage of the NRA melted to 528 by October of 1934.¹²⁰ The autoworkers were disillusioned with the AFL and in 1936 joined the CIO.

The UAW and CIO had to scramble to keep up with the workers who were ready for a strike. Sit-downs were often spontaneous, sometimes planned disruptions of workplace production. The conditions of employment for autoworkers had pushed them to the breaking point. Authoritarian management and inhuman speeding up of the lines made the workers willing to risk their jobs. The sit-down was the best leverage that the workers had. The sentiment in the UAW and CIO was to wait until the organizing drive was further along. The workers had been successful in sit-downs in small auto plants in South Bend and other places. The real test was the sit-down at

Fisher Body plant in Cleveland and Fisher Body #1 and #2 in Flint. In December 1936 the great G.M. sit-down was on. The workers and the union began to organize and execute the strike. This sit-down of unprecedented numbers would garner nationwide attention. The Fisher plants were soon joined by sit-downs and regular strikes throughout G.M. The corporation projection of 224,000 units in January was cut to 60,000. A mere 151 vehicles were produced nationwide in the first 10 days in February.¹²¹ Despite counter attacks by G.M. in the courts and on the streets, the strikers survived. They were even able to strengthen their hand by capturing the huge Chevrolet plant #4.

Talks were set up by Michigan Governor Murphy, between G.M. and John L. Lewis. GM agreed to recognize the UAW as the sole bargaining agent in the GM plants. They also agreed to take up the grievances of speed-ups, to drop injunction proceedings, and not to discriminate against the strikers.¹²² After forty-four days it was over. There were many in the rank and file that viewed this as a hollow victory. They did not see tangible results in facing down this powerful corporation. Sit-downs would continue to disrupt GM. There were 170 sit-downs at GM in the months between March and June 1937.¹²³ The CIO and UAW would battle internal elements for control of the union. The leverage of sit-down strikes was traded away for collective bargaining and industrial peace. The end result of this momentous struggle

was the successful contract with G.M. and the eventual organizing of Chrysler and Ford.

The Remington Rand Case Study

Introduction

The case of Remington Rand in Syracuse labor history was similar to many other labor/management struggles of the 1930's. All around the United States, workers were facing this same fight for fair representation and the right to collective bargaining in the workplace. In 1936, a group of unions at different locations of the Remington Rand Corporation were calling for a collective bargaining agreement. The corporation, led by President James H. Rand Jr., opposed a contract and sought to break the unions. The method that he would develop was dubbed the Mohawk Valley Formula to eliminate unions. What happened was a struggle of workers against an employer who battled the union in the plant, on the street and in the courts. The case went to the Supreme Court as a challenge to the National Labor Relations Act. This case showed the indomitable spirit of workers in tough situations and it will be primarily covering the events in Syracuse. However, the events of this case reach out to the other workers, plants, and communities of Remington Rand.

Remington Rand

Remington Rand was formed in 1927 when the Remington Typewriter Company merged with the Rand Kardex Company to become Remington Rand Inc. The Delaware registered corporation had their executive offices in Buffalo and New York City, New York. It would later merge with Sperry Electronics in 1955 to form Sperry Rand. In between those years, Remington Rand became the world's largest producer of office equipment. The product line would include many models of typewriters, adding, bookkeeping and accounting machines, file cabinets, insulated cabinets and safes, office and school furniture and chairs, and many types of carbon paper, ribbons, and binders. The main manufacturing plants were in Syracuse, Illinois, Tonawanda, North Tonawanda (and later Elmira) in New York, Middletown, Connecticut, and Norwood and Marietta, Ohio. There were other smaller plants in Michigan, Massachusetts, Canada, England, Germany and India. This was one of the first multi-national corporations.

The President of the company was James Rand Jr. Under his guidance, Remington Rand would seek to consolidate their position in the marketplace by greatly expanding sales and speeding up production. Rand would also join the popular corporatist program of the late 1920's and early 1930's and institute various "welfare capitalism" programs. These benefit programs were designed to provide for some basic social, economic and health needs. At Remington Rand, the Company would sponsor various social and

sporting activities. The concept of loyalty was an important one. “Loyal workers, in the corporation’s mind, don’t strike, don’t join in slow-downs and perhaps more importantly, don’t challenge or resist management’s authority on the shop floor.”¹²⁴ The Company provided those certain programs. Social ones such as concerts and sport teams and benevolent ones such as a mutual aid society.¹²⁵ In return, they expected that the workers exhibit loyalty and cooperation, and allow the Company complete control of the workplace.

The Depression resulted in big layoffs at Remington Rand. In 1933 only 25 percent of the Remington Rand workforce of a few years prior was still on the payroll. Profits dropped from \$1,411,000 in 1931 to a loss of \$3,036,000 in 1932.¹²⁶ James Rand Jr. was an advocate of laissez-faire economics. In his view, the business community was best suited to pull the nation from the Depression. Rand put forth a plan for corporate America to hire back workers and unilaterally reinvigorate the economy.¹²⁷ He believed that government regulation would only exacerbate the situation. The company would bring workers back, but the effort was short lived. The economy could not support expanded production in any one industry and business alone could not reverse the deflationary spiral.

The N.I.R.A.

In 1932 the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt brought an administration that was determined to act. Following inauguration in March 1933 the administration began work on an economic plan called the National

Industrial Recovery Act. This plan was to allow industry to act in concert to write codes of competition, to allow labor to have a number of safeguards in order to organize workers in unions, and allow the President to set hours and other conditions of employment. This law was passed in June of 1933. The significance of this law was the Section 7(a) that built on the right to organize from the War Labor Board of World War I and the statement of labor policy of Norris-LaGuardia.¹²⁸ The administration had given the working men and women a much needed hand, the right to organize. They would also establish a National Labor Board to oversee and settle labor disputes.

Companies believed that they had the right to establish company unions under 7(a). The company-dominated unions could not perform the union duty of collective bargaining. For the most part, they were an “employee-representation” group that was a tool of management to foster anti-union activity and to provide the sheerest semblance of representation. The growth of these company sponsored unions rivaled that of trade unions from 1933-1935.¹²⁹ To further insure that there would be no outside interference in *their* business, Remington Rand also instituted company unions. These were called Employee Representation Plans and were instituted in the different Remington Rand plants to check the growth of legitimate labor unions. The paternalism of Remington Rand was effective in keeping the unions out. Also, the Remington workers faced the high levels of unemployment, layoffs and discriminatory personnel policies. The Depression

had shown the clear class lines between management and labor. It was the Remington Rand workers that chose to join the newly created federal labor unions that were affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. These federal unions came about as an effort by the A.F.L. to organize the workers in mass production industries with charters and then absorb them into established trade unions. The number of charters issued, from 307 to 1798 illustrates the growth of the federal unions between 1932 and 1933.¹³⁰

The Strike of 1934

In 1933, the workers in plants of Remington Rand in Syracuse and Iliion, New York, Middleton, Connecticut, and Norwood, Ohio formed an alliance. All four plants had been chartered by the A.F.L. as Federal Labor Unions.¹³¹ Representatives from those plants met on August 12th, 1933 to coordinate their efforts. The result was a charter issued in March 1934 by the Metal Trades Department of the A.F.L. to the District Council Office Equipment Workers.¹³² This organized the Remington Rand plants as affiliates in the office equipment industry. This organization showed that the Remington workers were a unit for the purpose of collective bargaining.

The unions tried to open discussions with the company. A meeting was held between representatives of the four plants and officials of the company, including the four plant managers. The workers wanted a comprehensive agreement concerning hours, rates of pay, and working conditions. The company representatives would not discuss these items, despite the warning

that refusal might result in a strike. They would also continue to resist recognition of the unions as bargaining agents. The union brought its case before the Regional Labor Board, which recommended that the parties “proceed at once to negotiate an agreement.” Remington Rand ignored this. In a subsequent hearing before the National Labor Board, Remington Rand continued to refuse to negotiate with the unions. Before this, the weakness of the NIRA became apparent when, in trying to force Weirton Steel to allow their workers to choose union representation instead of a company union, the company refused. The NLB requested that the National Recovery Administration sanction Weirton, but nothing happened.¹³³ An enforcement mechanism was non-existent.

Frustrated, the unions called a strike in the four plants on May 9, 1934. In Syracuse, 1,000 workers laid down their tools, walked off the job, and set up pickets. The workers at the other three plants also walked out for a total of 6,000 workers.¹³⁴ “The pickets were orderly and without demonstrations,” according to the *Syracuse Herald*.¹³⁵ Chief of Police Martin L. Cadin withdrew the police strike detail later in the day. Joseph E. Straub, the plant manager, announced a one-month shut down in Syracuse. Vern M. Crofoot, the president of the Syracuse Typewriters Workers’ Union (Federal Labor Union) stated, “ The men are striking for recognition of the Typewriter Workers’ Union as representatives of the Remington Rand workers. The union employees feel that the refusal of the employer to sign a proposed

agreement as submitted by union representatives is being done to break our union.”¹³⁶

Rand announced that orders for the striking plants would be routed to European factories. He further stated that Remington Rand had “faithfully complied” with the NRA and labor law. It was a few “outside union officials” who had insisted on inserting the term “union” into the memorandum of agreement between the company and employees. By doing so they had caused the present trouble. “The company has always dealt with any employee or representative of employees at any time.”¹³⁷ said Rand. However on May 20, when A.F.L Vice President George T. Bowen gathered representatives of the four plants and tried to persuade Rand and company officials to attend, they refused.¹³⁸

After weeks of negotiating, the company and the unions came to an agreement. The agreement was the first of its kind between the unions and the company. It covered wages, hours and terms of employment as well as a pledge to deal with the unions as representative of their members. The company held out for the open shop and the right to deal with other employees and employee groups. The company also insisted on including an understanding “that any discrimination or intimidation on the part of any employee toward another employee shall be just cause for discharge.”¹³⁹ This would come back to cause trouble for the unions in the future. The unions were also able to have this agreement cover other Remington Rand plants

that were joining the union association at Tonawanda/ North Tonawanda, New York and Marrieta, Ohio.

N.L.R.A.

The pressures of the Great Depression mounted on the country. The promise of the N.R.A. was to establish order in the commerce of the nation. What happened was the failure of the Act to provide the necessary guidelines. In the area of labor relations, corporations complained about the labor provisions and openly disobeyed them. In May of 1935, the Supreme Court declared the National Industrial Recovery Act unconstitutional. In the case of *Schechter v. United States*, the court ruled that the code system “was an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power to the executive branch of government.”¹⁴⁰ The job of designing a new labor policy for the New Deal after the NIRA debacle fell to Robert Wagner. Wagner had sat at the head of the National Labor Board and was deeply involved in labor policy.

Senator Robert F. Wagner, from New York, grew up in a small village near Wiesbaden, Germany and moved with his family to the U.S. at the age of nine. Living in the German section of Manhattan, his whole family worked all manner of jobs to survive. His struggle from immigrant, to a law degree, to the United States Senate, gave Wagner a special perspective on working people. The Senator wanted to write the protections of Section 7(a) of the N.I.R.A. into a separate law. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 established a national labor policy. This policy would simply protect the

workers' right to bargain collectively by forming a union and electing representatives. The Act would define unfair labor practices by employers that would be subject to challenge. The administration of the new Wagner act would be with the National Labor Relations Board. The quasi judicial functions of the board would be to determine the appropriate bargaining unit and to oversee the election of representatives, issues cease and desist rulings, and petition the courts to enforce their rulings.¹⁴¹ The President and other New Dealers were not too enthusiastic with the bill because the perception was that labor was getting special treatment. The end of the N.R.A. however led the administration to embrace it. The corporations would vigorously oppose the Act as an infringement on management control. Remington Rand would take the job of challenging the constitutionality of it.

Leading up to the Strike of 1936

The Remington Rand workers and their union representatives were nervous in 1935. There were rumors concerning the purchase of a plant in Elmira, New York. The rumors were also circulating of product lines, indeed the entire Ilion plant, moving to Elmira. The company had been working on a new model typewriter in Ilion called the Madame X. It was understood that it would be produced in Ilion. In early 1936, tools, materials and the person in charge of the project, left Ilion for Elmira.¹⁴² and a plant called the Elmira Precision Tool Company. Remington Rand officials denied that the company owned the new plant. James Rand wasn't replying to inquiries. The Ilion

plant manager, Ross, met with union officials and issued a statement that “Remington Rand has no intention of manufacturing in Elmira.”¹⁴³ This did little to calm the fears of the workers. What the unions did not know was that the company had filed a report with the Security and Exchange Commission in February 1936. In this report they stated, “Manufacturing facilities have been increased by the purchase of a plant at Elmira, New York.”¹⁴⁴ The consolidation of manufacturing was already occurring.

The Remington Rand unions joined together to form a separate committee within the District Council. It was called the Remington Rand Joint Protective Board of the District Council, and they would handle issues specific to the company. The President would be Vern Crofoot and the unions involved were the Federal Labor Unions, Machinist Unions, Polishers, Molders, Draftsmen, and Sheet Metal Workers at the seven plants. The breakdown of the workers in each plant. (NLRB ex. 64)

Plant	Production and Maint. Workers	Union Membership
Syracuse	1500	1402
Ilion	1800	1478
Tonawanda (and North T.)	515	475
Middletown	1200	1050
Norwood	1500	852
<u>Marietta</u>	<u>125</u>	<u>49</u>
Total	6640	5306

The NLRB stated that this Joint Board was the unit suitable for collective bargaining for all the unions.¹⁴⁵ They pressed the company to meet to review the terms of the 1934 agreement, the Elmira issue, and the rates of pay. They

asked for meetings on February 20, March 30, and finally arraigned a meeting for April 24, 1936.

Neither Rand nor Vice President R.E. Benner appeared at this meeting. Instead, H.T. Anderson, the Norwood plant manager, came with a telegram that authorized him with “full power to act for the company.”¹⁴⁶ The Joint Board pressed the Elmira issue with Anderson to no avail. The importance of this was that it had become known that twenty-eight tons of dies for the new product had been sent from Ilion to Elmira on April 23. Was Elmira a Remington Rand plant? If it were, then the unions would contend that the terms of the June 1934 agreement would apply to them as it had to Tonawanda. The Tonawanda plant and the North Tonawanda plant were considered one unit and had come under the agreement in 1935. The Joint Board asked for a 20 percent raise across the board. Anderson declared that the company would not consider a general wage increase. This is despite language of the previous agreement that wages would increase when things got better. Frustrated, the Joint Board requested that the affiliated unions conduct a strike authorization vote. A strike vote was taken, and of 3768 votes cast 3200 were affirmative strike authorization votes.¹⁴⁷ The Joint Board notified Rand on May 10, 1936 that the vote had taken place and they could avert a walkout with a conference of the people that can settle the disagreements.¹⁴⁸ The company made no reply, but they were making plenty of plans.

The Strike of 1936

The events came to a showdown between the union workers of the Joint Board and the anti-union Remington Rand Corporation and the aggressive President, James Rand Jr., The workers had staked claim to the right to select their representatives, and to have those people collectively bargain for them. They had the A.F.L. and the newly passed N.L.R.A. on their side. The Corporation had the financial resources of Remington Rand at their command. They had the money to hire the Syracuse anti-union law firm, Bond, Schoeneck and King that doubtlessly believed that since the NRA was declared unconstitutional so would the NLRA. They could and did hire a number of strike breaking “security” companies. They believed that the employer had the property rights and the right to establish and execute policies without interference. Rand felt no obligation to negotiate or to explain company decisions. The battle lines were drawn.

When workers arrived for work at 7:30 AM, May 21, 1936 they were told that there would be a ballot distributed, and they were to fill it out. The purpose was to gauge the concerns of the employees toward a work stoppage. This ballot was distributed to the seven plants and they were customized for each city. It read,

Remington Rand has been notified in writing by a union official that 90% of the organized employees have voted to strike unless the company meets the demands of the union. No demands are stated. On Monday the Supreme Court decided that one group of workers cannot dictate to any other worker. The organized group is not a majority of Remington Rand employees. For example out of 1700 employees in the Cincinnati (Norwood) Plant only 54 voted to strike. That means only 3% are trying to dictate to the other 97% in

the Cincinnati plant. The Supreme Court ruled that such a thing is unlawful. If a majority of the employees in Syracuse want to continue work under present conditions, Remington Rand will keep the plant open at any costs and will take steps necessary to protect everybody in his or her right to work. A straight vote is the simplest, fairest, most direct way to learn the desire of the employees in Syracuse. The results of this ballot will determine the continued operation of the Syracuse plant.

DO YOU WISH TO WORK OR DO YOU WISH TO STRIKE?

Are you dissatisfied with present working conditions? Yes___ No___

Are you in favor of a strike? Yes___ No___ ¹⁴⁹

The union representatives protested this balloting as interference in the affairs of the union and were told that the managers were directed to “disassociate” from the payroll anyone interfering with the vote. Vern Crowfoot called this a “coercion vote dealing with working conditions and a direct violation of the NLRA.”¹⁵⁰ After being rebuffed by management, he sent word to the shop floor to stop work until management withdrew the balloting. Two hours of stalemate ensued. Finally, plant manager J.E. Straub had this notice put up around the shop. “Starting at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 21, 1936, this plant will be closed down for the usual two week summer vacation to renovate and reorganize this plant. J.E. Straub, superintendent of the plant.”¹⁵¹ The workers were normally given 2-6 weeks advance notice of vacation shut down and it was normally in July or August.

The Syracuse plant manager was J.E. Straub. He called the *Syracuse Herald* mid-day and informed them “The Syracuse plant of Remington Rand is to be moved to Ilion and consolidated with the Ilion typewriter plant. This will include foreman, certain other key employees, and

the factory manager, J.E. Straub, who will be in charge of the Ilion plant. Moving operations will begin immediately and the Syracuse plant will be used for rebuilding second hand typewriters.”¹⁵² The announcement must have shaken the rank and file workers who had gone to work in the morning and were locked out and closed down within a few hours.

Syracuse Mayor, Rolland B. Marvin was a dapper, well-known Republican. He was frequently mentioned as a potential candidate for the governor’s position in 1936.¹⁵³ Upon hearing of the Remington trouble, he immediately began making telephone calls. The threat of losing over 1,700 jobs and millions in payroll and taxes was a powerful incentive to action. Marvin called the union leaders and others to a meeting in his office. After extended telephone discussions with the mayor, Rand (who refused to meet or talk with the unions) modified his position to down size Syracuse. He gave the workers forty-eight hours to “eliminate as employees a number of troublemakers.”¹⁵⁴ The seventeen “troublemakers” included union presidents Vern Crofoot, Stephen M. Estey, Clair R. Bellows and other officers. The seventeen were supported by a unanimous vote at the union hall at 118 West Onondaga Street, but Rand sent discharge papers to their homes the next day.

Rand and his chief spokesman Earl Harding embarked on a campaign of misinformation concerning the Syracuse plant. Rand contacted the Associated Press and issued a statement that there was no strike in

Syracuse, and the A.F.L. had misrepresented and distorted the labor situation. This was partly true because the strike had not officially begun due to the vacation period at all Remington Rand plants. Furthermore, he said that the consolidation with Illion had been in the works for months and “no action by Syracuse workers will in any way affect the decision of Remington Rand.”¹⁵⁵ Harding blamed the Syracuse workers for the “lack of backbone to get rid of the troublemakers.”¹⁵⁶ Harding further stated the Mayor was also to blame for allowing labor unrest now and during the 1934 trouble. Federal and New York State mediators contacted Rand that morning about the strikes at the plants and they were told that there were no strikes. Rand told the mediators that he had absolutely no intention to meet with the Joint Board and added that “Of course, I am getting sick and tired of these men dictating to me as to how, when and where they will work.”¹⁵⁷

Despite the strong statement concerning the consolidation of Syracuse, Rand offered a last chance later that same morning at 11:30 am. He had worked out an arrangement via the telephone with Mayor Marvin for a secret ballot. The ballots would be mailed on Friday and returned to the mayor’s office by the next Tuesday to be counted. The ballot would include a third question: “Are you ready to return to work when called?”¹⁵⁸ Rand said that if the vote was favorable that the employment levels in Syracuse would remain where they were. The Mayor and the Chamber of Commerce urged the workers to carefully consider the proposal and thoughtfully fill it out. The

former Chamber president William Allen Dyer even booked radio time for addresses targeted at the workers and their families to consider the “Remington Peace Offer.”¹⁵⁹ The other side of this was the threat that an unfavorable vote would result in the loss of the jobs.

In a full-page ad in the Syracuse papers addressed “To the Community of Syracuse,” the company did its best to blame the union for the present situation. The company made a case that the union was making unreasonable demands. The demands for increased wages were outrageous considering that throughout the Depression “Remington Rand has been run for the employees only.”¹⁶⁰ In fact, in May, the corporation had the largest annual net income in its history for fiscal 1935. Orders were up 40 percent over the previous year and shareholders were receiving dividends.¹⁶¹ Rand also argued that the “outside agitators” did not represent a majority of the workers, and as outsiders they did not represent the interests of the community. After being rebuffed on the removal of the officers, Rand wanted to gauge the resolve of the Remington Rand workers. He also saw an opportunity to further divide the community against the workers and reopen the plant.

Meanwhile, the unions of the Joint Board called a strike to begin on the morning of May 26. The leaders sent telegrams to the company offering to sit down and discuss the terms of the 1934 agreement, the need for a collective bargaining agreement that included a 20 percent raise, and the

Elmira question. The company and Rand did not respond. The unions also came out against the ballot proposed by Rand. The workers were urged not to participate. That same morning, the Mayor went through with the vote and the results were 396 against striking and 5 for.¹⁶² Despite the optimistic May 26 *Syracuse Herald* headline, “Rand Workers Vote To Return,” the disappointing turnout pointed to a long struggle ahead. Plant manager Straub declared that the plant would reopen for business on Thursday May 28. Marvin pledged police protection for any returning worker and indeed turned out a large contingent of seventy-five officers. As the strike wore on, the unions would point out the city taxpayers were paying \$500. a day for Remington Rand police protection.¹⁶³ On the opening days of the strike, very few workers returned. The pickets were orderly and the atmosphere was strangely peaceful. It would not last.

Strike Breakers and Strike Makers

Vern Crofoot would get a chance to refute the company’s claims in the May 27 *Syracuse Journal*. He was given most of a page to answer the misinformation of the previous few days and give the union side of the story. Crofoot also was given a chance to respond on a radio talk that was transcribed in the *Syracuse Labor News*. He gives the facts about Elmira and the impasse with the company.

“Elmira, through public subscription purchased the Willis-Morrow plant and presented it to Remington Rand with the understanding that the company would engage in the manufacturing of office equipment in that city. When the company shipped twenty-eight tons of new dies and tools to Elmira

it was a direct violation of Section 16 of the signed agreement. The company did this by producing tools in job shops and repeatedly stating this typewriter would be made in Illion.

The union has no desire to prevent expansion by Remington Rand, but it does insist that the same working conditions that have prevailed in the five plants should prevail in Elmira or any other place the company may locate. This is but simple justice, as we do not believe that one plant should be played against another to the detriment of workers in all plants.

We are ready to talk to Mr. Rand anytime, anyplace. We are American citizens and, despite all the talk about communism and Moscow by Mr. Harding who claims to be Mr. Rand's personal representative, we believe that every straight-thinking person of this city has faith in our Americanism and integrity."¹⁶⁴

However, Remington Rand could not be matched in their ability to drive the news. Rand and public relations man Earl Harding were able to direct the labor struggle through actions and through statements. Their purpose was to continually put the union on the defensive by fragmenting the workers. The tactics used would pit strikers against strikers, strikers against non-strikers, strikers against their leaders, and strikers against the community. In the beginning of the conflict, Rand directed that seventeen union officials were fired. He called them the "outside agitators" who were not looking out for the best interests of the workers and their families. The company maintained that only they had the workers' interests at heart. The unions maintained that the discharge of the seventeen without a hearing was a violation of the NLRA. The rights of workers, under Section 12, are the rights of a union representative to discuss and endeavor to settle grievances.¹⁶⁵

The unions of Remington Rand were getting unsolicited support from one group, the Communist Party. The A.F.L. affiliates would sternly warn

their members not to associate with the CP members who were leafleting and supporting the pickets. In Tonawanda where there was a good deal of CP activity, Rand tarred all strikers with the CP label. Rand stated in the *Tonawanda Evening News* “we discharged 17 communists who started a riot in our Syracuse plant to prevent workers from exercising their American right to vote.”¹⁶⁶ Remington Rand also paid for a full-page advertisement in the *Saturday Evening News* that included a section of the CP’s *Daily Worker* that endorsed the Remington Rand workers’ struggle against the company.¹⁶⁷

In Syracuse there wasn’t a large CP presence. The unions were active in separating themselves from the support of the communists or left-leaning sympathizers. The union would call the Syracuse Police Department on occasion during the strike to have CP leaflet distributors removed from their building or pickets.¹⁶⁸ On June 8, the union responded to the “inferences” made by the company of Communist activity in the strike. They issued a statement that the A.F.L. “does not tolerate communists within their ranks.”¹⁶⁹ They went on to deny that there was anyone being guided or even sympathetic to the CP among the strikers, especially the seventeen fired employees. Vern Crofoot went to the length of releasing the religious, fraternal and political affiliations of the seventeen. He, himself was a “member of the East Genesee Presbyterian Church, a member of the Loyal Order of Pilgrims (Washington Lodge), an enrolled Republican 18 years, an enrolled Democrat for the past 3 years and graduated Savannah High

School.”¹⁷⁰ It was a step he must have felt he needed to take considering the actions of the company at the other plants.

The *New York Post* labor editor, Edward Levinson, chronicled the life and times of Pearl L. Bergoff in a book entitled *I Break Strikes! The Technique of Pearl L. Bergoff*. In this book, the author showed how the self-declared “king of the strike-breakers” turned all manner of criminal activity into “legitimate” multi-million dollar operations. Bergoff hired strikebreakers from the ranks of the criminal world. They are divided into two groups, the nobles and the finks. “The nobles attack the strikers and attempt to stir them to violence, and protect the lowly finks and keep them from deserting when the job gets too hazardous.”¹⁷¹ Rand hired Bergoff to work in this strike. He also hired Foster’s Industrial and Detective Bureau, Nathaniel Shaw Agency, Raymond J. Burns of Burns Detective Agency, and the Railway Audit and Inspection Service. Together they engaged in a wide variety of strikebreaking, surveillance, and undercover work at all the Remington Rand locations.¹⁷² The *Syracuse Labor News* ran a story on the violence at the Middleton, Connecticut plant. The Railway Audit and Inspection Service had a convicted felon as the hiring agent there. Joe Brown, “who had served a stretch at Dannemora, was hiring any of his prison pals who cared to come up.”¹⁷³

They would hire the “nobles and finks” as well as “missionaries”. These operatives would work the taverns and coffee shops where the strikers would

congregate. To further explain the lexicon of strikebreakers, the “roper” was an agency spy that gained insider confidence and gets information on union activity and the “hooker” was a spy agent that got workers to spy on other workers.¹⁷⁴ They would spread misinformation on the strike relating to the company and the union. They would try to break the resolve of the strikers by placing doubts in their minds. During this strike there would be “an intensive and personalized propaganda campaign. Syracuse was the scene of wide-spread missionary activity.”¹⁷⁵

Bergoff sent sixty “missionaries,” including twenty women, to Syracuse for a special assignment. They would be issued identification cards stating that they worked for the Remington Rand Typewriter Company – Personnel Department and a letter of introduction. Their job was to visit the homes of strikers and try to induce them back to work or to influence their families to pressure them back. The women tried to get the woman of the house aside “to properly gauge their reaction to the work stoppage.”¹⁷⁶ The questions on the phony “survey” were,

“Do women want strikes? Did your husband stop work because he wanted to or was he forced by someone else? Are strikes instigated by permanent employees or by outside agitators? Do strikes encourage drunkenness? Do strikes endanger family life and health?”¹⁷⁷

These field agents had the backing of the plant manager Straub who stated, “If anybody doubts your identity, have them call me up.”¹⁷⁸ He fielded over three hundred calls and affirm the legitimacy of the “representatives.”

The Battle in the Streets

The opening days of the strike were peaceful ones. The large number of pickets, over five hundred at times, walked two by two and quietly spoke with any worker walking into the plant. The police were around the building keeping a close eye on things. There was also a contingent of sixty guards inside the plant. There were few workers walking into the large Gifford Street building, probably to the chagrin of the managers. The Company made another “final decision” public on May 30, 1936. They stated, “The factory, it is definitely decided now, will be consolidated with the Ilion N.Y. plant. The strike ends all hope of keeping a part of the plant at Syracuse, one of the demands of the strikers.”¹⁷⁹ There was also an advertisement that the overseas plants would be expanded to handle the business slated for the striking U.S. plants.¹⁸⁰ Rand again attempted to place blame on the unions and the strikers for “forcing” them to do what they had been planning to do in Syracuse all along.

The company continued to move equipment out of Syracuse. On June 2, railroad carloads were taken out of the plant. J.E.Straub stated that it was to make way for newer equipment. On Friday, June 5, more equipment was moved out. Straub said that he was not sure where the machinery was going, but it was good machinery. “If this strike keeps up, we’re liable to move all the machinery.”¹⁸¹ In that same day’s paper. Remington Rand announced that there would be a “new” reopening. This time there would be fewer than half

the openings available. Workers seeking one of the 800 remaining jobs would have to re-apply now. The company offered a \$15 bonus for employees who came back to work.¹⁸² The next day they promised to find jobs for any "loyal" employee displaced from Syracuse, and they would pay relocation costs.

The tension began to build. The threats of losing jobs and the uncertainty of the plant's future began to take their toll on the strikers. On the evening of June 8, the home of Ross Stein, a supervisor at the plant, was fired upon. Stein was home when three shots hit his house. He called the New York State Police who investigated.¹⁸³ Police in Manlius stopped a car that had six strikers inside. They were in the vicinity of a house of a "non-union" man Milton Butler that had been stoned and were caught with cobblestones in the automobile.¹⁸⁴ The next day patience ran out.

There had been rumors of five hundred strikebreakers coming to Syracuse to run the Gifford Street plant.¹⁸⁵ The police were escorting sixteen workers through the picket lines when, according to police, strikers rushed the police lines. Salina Street traffic stopped as various scuffles broke out. The crowd of strikers and onlookers was reported to be five thousand.¹⁸⁶ The police responded with tear gas and they charged the crowd. They escorted the strikebreakers from the scene. Seth Hunter, a strikebreaker, was brought home by the S.P.D. to Seymour Street where a group of strikers picketed in front of his house shouting and jeering.¹⁸⁷

The next day, there was a confrontation between strikers and imported strikebreakers. Street fighting broke out shortly after 4 p.m. The pickets around the plant were in the hundreds, when a group of strikers attempted to charge into police line in front of the strikebreakers. There was confusion when Captain Jeffery J. Malane lobbed tear gas into the scene.¹⁸⁸ A group of strikebreakers made a break for the Onondaga Hotel where the company was putting them up. The strikers caught up with them, and a street brawl ensued in the intersection of Jefferson and Onondaga Streets. Traffic in the city snarled to a halt until the melee was brought under control with more tear gas and arrests.¹⁸⁹

Rand and Harding demanded the Mayor and Governor Lehman call out the National Guard to regain order. The Chief of Police, Thomas Carroll, instructed the strike detail to “stop using kid gloves with these strikers. Swing your clubs. Break up the violence.”¹⁹⁰ Rand claimed that the police detail was inadequate to protect the plant. The company went to court to limit the pickets. It got a temporary injunction on July 18 from Judge Robertson that limited the pickets to four. The *Syracuse Labor News* blasted the ruling and the fact that Judge Robertson was formerly a partner at Bond, Shoeneck, and King the law firm representing Remington Rand.¹⁹¹ One of the first arrests were Mrs. Jane Bellows (wife of Clair Bellows) and Mrs. Mollie Galipeau. They were arrested for disorderly conduct and bail was set for

\$1,000. each. They were accused of waving a rubber rat at a strikebreaker going into the plant.¹⁹²

The events of July 23 showed that the strike had indeed gotten serious. A patrolman on strike detail, John Hanley, was walking the beat around the Gifford Street plant. He noticed something that had just been tossed by a passing automobile. It was a small paper bag. When Hanley moved the bag, a pair of small sticks came out along with a small triangular piece of dry ice that was smoking.¹⁹³ As he leaned over; it exploded throwing Hanley ten feet across the sidewalk. The blast left Hanley with “two compound fractures of the left leg, a part of his great toe on his left foot blown off, his legs seared and burned from ankles to hips, his body cut and bruised, and one eye swollen and cut.”¹⁹⁴ Additional police and rescue people were quickly on the scene. The police took four strikers into custody for questioning. They were later released.

The reaction was one of outrage. The Mayor condemned the “act of terrorism” and vowed that Chief Carroll would dedicate every available detective to work on this case. SPD veteran officer Harry Gilmore told the *Syracuse Labor News* that, “The bomb was the most peculiar thing I had ever seen. It tears Hanley’s clothes to shreds, breaks plant windows, digs a two inch hole in concrete, and the man is alive to tell the story!”¹⁹⁵ SPD Sergeant Arthur Holden stated, “It wasn’t dynamite and it wasn’t a confined bomb because we found no traces of metal.”¹⁹⁶ Rand and Harding claimed that

ninety-eight windows were broken or damaged by the blast. They condemned the bombing as yet another “lawless act that was perpetrated by outside paid agitators.”¹⁹⁷ Remington Rand renewed the assault on the strike as being un-American and demanded tighter controls on the strikers. This included banning the union people from the leased parking lot across the street from the plant.

The perpetrators were never arrested. Did the strikers make the bomb, or was it another act meant to inflame tensions? In testimony before Congress at the LaFollette Commission, plant bombings were discussed. There were similar incidents at other locations. “Phony Lou” Cohen described some of the ways to break a strike and discredit the leaders. “ One of them is to plant bombs. Bomb material and guns can be planted on the strike leaders and then they can be captured or discovered by the police”¹⁹⁸ The Joint Board condemned the bombing and denied that union members were involved. They took up a collection for the policemen’s family.

This was not the only dynamite incident in this strike. There had been a stick tossed into the front porch of a worker a few days prior.¹⁹⁹ There was also another device, “of 4 to 6 sticks” in front of the plant on September 14.²⁰⁰ There was yet another on the evening of December 2nd that ripped a nineteen-inch hole in the sidewalk in front of the plant and shattered two hundred windows in the area. SPD brought in Bradley H. Kirshberg, the Director of the Science Laboratory for the NYS Police Bureau of Criminal

Investigation to help with the crime. He determined that the bomb must have originated from the inside of the plant from the 6th or 7th floor.²⁰¹ The police also had two eyewitnesses that stated in their affidavits that they were walking in the vicinity and had noticed no vehicles or other people just prior to the explosion.”²⁰²

The summer of 1936 was an unusually hot one. The summer scorches depleted the reservoir levels. On the street the Remington Rand workers in Syracuse were holding firm. Only a few workers had returned to the plant. The company had new hires and strikebreakers and tried to show a semblance of normalcy. On August 22 a large group of strikebreakers came out of the plant at closing time escorted by armed Burns’ guards.²⁰³ They approached a group of strikers and attacked them. The police intervened in the battle and arrested strikers only.²⁰⁴ There were scuffles, stone throwing, and other incidents at various times throughout the strike like this one.

The Strike Continues

Rand was waging a propaganda war. The unions were getting support from their A.F.L. unions and the local Central Trades and Labor Assembly. The favorable stories were those that were questioning the glaring contradictions in the words and actions of the company. However, Harding would have stories available at the right time and he was driving the news. In a telling example of how they attempted to control the news, at one A.M. on the evening of the blast that injured Hanley, Harding called the *Syracuse*

Post Standard. He asked the editor if he had a statement from the Mayor. The editor sent two reporters, and they found out that Marvin was gone on an overnight twenty miles away in Cazenovia. Harding again called and demanded to know if the paper had a statement from the Mayor. The editor told him that the Mayor hadn't been at the scene and was in fact out of town. Harding replied, "That don't make any difference whether he was there or not. Get him out of bed and make him make a statement."²⁰⁵ Harding arranged radio addresses and paid advertisements full of misinformation for himself, Straub, and Rand. The company-sponsored "Employees' Independent Association" championed the right to work and the back to work appeal with paid advertising and letters to the editors. The company steadfastly refused to meet with the union representatives.

The NLRB and the Battle in Court

The newly re-created National Labor Relations Board was envisioned to be an independent federal agency to administer the National Labor Relations Act. The Board worked within the judicial system to enforce the rules where there were violations. The old Board under the NIRA was reduced to investigating and writing letters. The new Board would be able to seek remedies in court. It was a surprise to both the friends and the enemies of the Act, how the cases came to be settled. In the first year there were 865 complaints. Of these, 60 percent were settled informally and 30 percent were withdrawn or dismissed.²⁰⁶ A large number of cases were settled by enforcing

compliance to the Act. This showed that there could be a new peaceful way to promote the democratic principles representation and collective bargaining.

In June 1936, the unions at Remington Rand filed a charge with the NLRB Region Three in Buffalo, New York. The Joint Board filed the charge contending that Remington Rand had violated the National Labor Relations Act, Section 8, subdivisions (1), (2), (3) and (5) in not bargaining with their employees. The NLRB on July 11, 1936 then issued a complaint against Remington Rand “alleging the respondent committed unfair labor practices”²⁰⁷ in violation of the mentioned Section 8 and also Section 2 (6) and (7). This began a long series of legal wrangling that would last for many years.

Remington Rand, represented by Bond, Schoeneck, and King, responded by denying the unfair labor practices and stated that the employees in question were engaged in local and intrastate manufacturing and thus not covered by the Act. They also filed a complaint in Federal District Court to stop the Board from proceeding with actions and hearings on the grounds that the “Board had no jurisdiction over the respondent and further that the Act was unconstitutional.”²⁰⁸ The question of constitutionality comes from the challenge of a majority of workers to decide for all the workers and the right of the employer to freely contract with all the employees for their labor. A temporary restraining was issued, then after a hearing it was set aside. The Board appointed Charles A. Wood as the Trial

Examiner and began hearings into the actions of the strike in October, November, and December of 1936.²⁰⁹

The investigation showed that the Joint Board in their make-up and their methods were the duly elected representatives of the workers for collective bargaining. The Board would also show that the company was incorrect in the assertion that they were an intrastate concern. The Remington Rand plants were decidedly interstate in nature. For example, the Syracuse plants' outgoing shipments were nearly all interstate and incoming shipments were 80 percent interstate.²¹⁰ The hearings would take place in the cities of the six striking plants. Both sides eagerly anticipated the Board's decision.

The decision came on March 13, 1937. In over one hundred pages the Board detailed the results of the investigations into the events of the strike. In a stinging conclusion the decision came down to "two very plain facts: the unwavering refusal of the respondent to bargain collectively with its employees, and the cold deliberate ruthlessness with which it fought the strike which its refusal to bargain precipitated."²¹¹ The Board referred to the tactics that the company engaged in at the different plants with great disdain: "The respondent, through Rand, its president, has exhibited a callous, imperturbable disregard of the rights of its employees that is mediaeval in its assumption of power over the lives of men and shocking in

its concept of the status of the modern industrial worker.”²¹² Rand’s Mohawk Valley Formula came under great scrutiny.

The remedy was complicated by the company actions of the past months. The Norwood plant was closed, Elmira opened, Iliion expanded, and Middletown and Syracuse were reduced. The company would have to rehire all the workers that were active on May 26, 1936. Arrangements would have to be made to offer workers preferential hiring, by seniority, into jobs at the expanded plants. The company would have to also make whole all strikers for lost wages. The order listed a number of cease and desist orders. Among them, they were ordered to stop interfering with union activity, stop supporting/establishing a company union, and stop refusing to collectively bargain with the chosen representatives. The Board ordered the Company to reinstate and make whole the fired union leaders, to reinstate and make whole the current strikers (1,200), and compensate for all lost wages the rest of the workers (4,000) that were out at any time of the strike. It appeared to be a complete victory for the workers.²¹³ Rand defiantly stated that he believed the Board decision wrong and continued to question the validity and ability of the Board.²¹⁴ They would have to go to court to enforce the order and to await the test of constitutionality.

The Perkins Formula

On March 17, James Rand agreed to meet with the U.S. Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins. She had been trying to set up a conference to attempt a mediation of the conflict. With the Board's decision just out, Rand was looking for another way out of the remedy. The Secretary met with Rand and then included the president of the A.F.L., William Green in the talks. What came of the discussions was an alternative "peace plan." The "Perkins Formula" was, in fact, an alternative to the Board decision. The terms addressed the number of employees who would be reinstated/compensated. The number would be the 1,200 that were still out on strike.²¹⁵ The president and other officers of the AFL, along with the IAM leaders, approved of the formula. They recommended that the offer go to the rank and file of the Remington Rand plants. They would be the people that would decide, however the pressure from the company, the union, the public and the government would be for them to settle.

This case brought to light the different approaches and jurisdictions of the government in labor cases. The Labor Department was not independent and was directly answerable to political pressures. The Executive Branch was still toiling with the effects of the Depression and had a need to settle this strike and move on. The Board was going by the NLRA and operating in that independent area between the judicial and the executive. In this case, it would be an uneasy convergence where the ruling would still exist and move

through the courts while the case was basically settled and the people were back to work.

Concurrently, the U.S. Senate conducted high profile investigations into the events of this and other labor struggles. The LaFollette Committee was calling witness and conducting fact finding into the abuses of worker rights and free speech committed during work stoppages.²¹⁶ This Committee investigated this for three years ending in 1939. The Committee cited for contempt of Congress the officers of the Railway Audit and Inspection Service for failing to appear before the Senate and for destroying documents.²¹⁷ In an telling exchange with the Pinkertons, Senator LaFollette challenged their statement that they only “investigate and execute labor espionage on Communists and Communist sympathizers.” To which the Senator responded. “You men have been sitting here for hours telling this Committee that your spy activities are principally directed towards Communists, yet you admit that you have never turned up a Communist and none of you can tell me what a Communist is.”²¹⁸

The rank and file members of Remington Rand voted and accepted the terms of the Perkins Formula on April 21, 1937. They accepted the plan despite the superiority of the Board decision. The agreement appeared to offer a fast track to union recognition, the settlement of wage and hour disagreements, and a bargaining agreement between the union and the company. The strike was over, yet the company dragged the reinstatement

process out for years. Three significant events happened just prior to the vote within a twenty-one day period. First, a grand jury convened in Middletown, Connecticut, to investigate the violation of the Byrnes Act by James Rand Jr. and Pearl L. Bergoff by transporting strikebreakers across state lines.²¹⁹ Secondly, the Supreme Court ruled on the case of the NLRB *v.* Jones and Laughlin Steel Company on April 12, 1937.²²⁰ This ruling upheld the constitutionality of the NLRA. Thirdly, the NLRB announced that it would continue court action to enforce the March decision.

The Aftermath of the Strike

The Syracuse plant opened with half of the jobs that had been at the factory. The Syracuse workers had shown incredible solidarity in the face of adversity. Months into the strike, a plant that had produced 3,400 typewriters weekly was producing practically nothing. The leaders in Syracuse, Vern Crofoot, Clair Bellows, and the rest, were able to keep the network among the workers strong. Very few of the workers went back in during the strike. One reason that Syracuse fared better than the other plants is that it was located in the largest community (209,000 people) with multiple employers. The plants in the other communities were the predominant employer. When the “back to work” campaigns started, Remington Rand was able to ratchet up the pressure. Another reason Syracuse did not fold was that the Mayor and the city government didn’t go along with the “formula” on how to break a strike. The initial position of the

city was to attempt to come to a solution to the conflict. As time went on the media-savvy Marvin understood what Rand and Harding were trying to do. When he received that press telephone call on the night of the first bombing he had no comment until he knew the facts. When Marvin found out that Harding was responsible, he was furious. Marvin called him up and told him “not to pull any more funny work on him!”²²¹ After this event, the Mayor made a point to attempt to defuse the effects of the violence and not let the situation get out of hand.

The other plants didn't fare as well. Norwood was closed and the strike had practically broken the unions in Middletown, Tonawanda and Ilion.²²² The unions had settled, but took the NLRB to force Rand to live up to the agreement. The Company was forced by court decisions to hold a number of settlement conferences to finally pay up. Despite this, Remington Rand took the case to the Supreme Court and on May 23, 1938 the Court refused to hear the case. This, in effect, upheld the Appellate Court rulings. Never the less, Remington Rand was doing just fine financially. The fiscal 1937 annual report was “the most outstanding in corporate history. Sales surpassed \$45 million and profits exceeded \$3.5 million.”²²³ The company had been able to absorb the turmoil at seven key plants, get some of them running, conduct a vicious anti-labor campaign and still turn a profit.

On Friday AM June 16, 1939 the acting factory manager, H.E. Day had a posting placed around the shop. It was also sent home to all employees.

“Remington Rand announces that in accordance with its policy of concentrating its manufacturing to obtain increased efficiency, it is today closing the Syracuse plant and hereby discontinue the services of all Syracuse employees.”²²⁴ The workers would stop work gather their belongings and leave. The rest of the plant would be relocated to Ilion. Rand had his revenge on the workers and the union of Remington Rand-Syracuse. The plant opened again briefly in the war years to produce small arms. The new union was the United Electrical Workers of the CIO.

Remington Rand Conclusion

This case presents a stark contrast in the distribution of power that was typical of the battles that were being fought across this country. This class struggle would not be on even ground. The company had unlimited resources to wage their war. The Report of the La Follette Committee listed 1,475 companies between 1933 and 1936 engaging in hiring industrial “espionage, strikebreaking, (and) guards.” The cost of these “agents” and munitions in 1933-37 for 300 clients came to \$9.5 million dollars.²²⁵ The union was relying on the NIRA and then the newly passed NLRA to establish a rule of law. The industrialists were able to fight, delay, and ignore the law. In the meanwhile the unions and their resources were stretched to the breaking point. In some places, Ilion for example, it did break.

It was in Ilion that many of the aspects of the “Mohawk Valley Formula” came together. Examples of these are; misinformation, threats,

“back to work committees”, spies, missionaries, strikebreakers, control of the media, martial law and control of the government. Remington Rand broke the Iliion strike on June 12, 1936. Rand would have a re-opening celebration in Iliion. He heaped praise on the people who crushed the strike; “Two million business men have been looking for a formula like this and business has hoped for, dreamed of and prayed for such an example as you have set. It will go down in history as the Mohawk Valley Formula.”²²⁶ Representatives from the National Association of Manufacturers came to Iliion and Rand revealed his formula. Rand would have it published in a Labor Relations journal. Here are the nine steps as printed in the *Syracuse Post Standard* and the NLRB case.

The Mohawk Valley Formula

First: When a strike is threatened, label the union leaders as “agitators” to discredit them with the public and their own followers. In the plant, conduct a forced balloting under the direction of foremen in an attempt to ascertain the strength of the union and to make possible misrepresentation of the strikers as a small minority imposing their will upon the majority, At the same time, disseminate propaganda, by means of press releases, advertisements and the activities of “missionaries”, such propaganda falsely stating the issues involved in the strike so that the strikers appear to be making arbitrary demands, and the real issues, such as the employer’s refusal to bargain collectively are obscured. Concurrently with these moves, by exerting economic pressure through threats to move the plant, align the influential members of the community into a cohesive group opposed to the strike. Include in this group, usually designated a “Citizens Committee”, representatives of the bankers, real estate owners, and business men, i.e., those most sensitive to any threat of removal of the plant because of its effect upon property values and purchasing power flowing from the payrolls.

Second: When the strike is called raise high the banner of “law and order”, thereby causing the community to mass legal and police weapons against a wholly imagined violence and to forget that those of its members

who are employees have equal rights with the other members of the community.

Third: Call a “mass meeting” of the citizens to coordinate public sentiment against the strike and to strengthen the power of the Citizens Committee, which organization, thus supported, will both aid the employer in exerting pressure upon the local authorities and itself sponsor vigilante activities.

Fourth: Bring about the formation of a large police force to intimidate the strikers and to exert a psychological effect upon the citizens. This force is built up by utilizing local police, State police if the Governor cooperates, vigilantes, and special deputies, the deputies being chosen if possible from other neighborhoods, so that there will be no personal relationships to induce sympathy for the strikers. Coach the deputies and vigilantes on the law of unlawful assembly, inciting a riot, disorderly conduct, etc., so that, unhampered by any thought that the strikers may also possess some rights, they will be ready and anxious to use their newly acquired authority to the limit.

Fifth: And perhaps the most important, heighten the demoralizing effects of the above measures—all designed to convince the strikers that their cause is hopeless—by a “back to work” movement, operated by a puppet association of so-called “loyal employees” secretly organized by the employer. Have this association wage a publicity campaign in its own name and coordinate such a campaign with the work of “missionaries” circulating among the strikers and visiting their homes. This “back to work” movement has these results: It causes the public to believe that the strikers are in the minority and that most of the employees desire to return to work, thereby winning sympathy for the employer and an endorsement of his activities to such an extent that the public is willing to pay the huge costs, direct and indirect, resulting in the heavy force of police. This “back to work” movement also enables the employer, when the plant is later opened, to operate it with strikebreakers if necessary and to continue to refuse to bargain collectively with the strikers. In addition, the “back to work” movement also permits the employer to keep a constant check on the strength of the union through the number of applications received from employees ready to break ranks and return to work, such number being kept secret from the public and the other employees, so that the doubts and fears created by such secrecy will in turn induce still others to make applications.

Sixth: When a sufficient number of applications are on hand, fix a date for an opening of the plant through the device of having such an opening requested by the “back to work” committee. Together with the Citizens Committee, prepare for such opening by making provision for a peak army of

police by roping off the areas surrounding the plant, by securing arms and ammunition, etc. The purpose of the “opening” of the plant is threefold: To see if enough employees are ready to return to work; to induce still others to return as a result of the demoralizing effect produced by the opening of the plant and the return of some of their number; and lastly, even if the maneuver fails to induce a sufficient number of persons to return, to persuade the public through pictures and news releases that the opening was nevertheless successful.

Seventh: Stage the “opening”, theatrically throwing open the gates at the propitious moment and having the employees march into the plant grounds in a massed group protected by squads of armed police, so as to give the opening a dramatic and exaggerated quality and thus heighten its demoralizing effect. Along with the “opening” provide a spectacle-speeches, flag raisings and praises for the employees, citizens, and local authorities, so that, their vanity touched, they will feel responsible for the continued success of the scheme and will increase their efforts to induce additional employees to return to work.

Eighth: Capitalize on the demoralization of the strikers by continuing the show of police force and the pressure of the Citizens Committee. Both to insure that those employees that have returned to work will continue to work and to force the remaining strikers to capitulate. If necessary, turn the locality into a warlike camp through the declaration of a state of emergency tantamount to martial law and barricade it from the outside world so that nothing may interfere with the successful conclusion of the “Formula”, thereby driving home to the union leaders the futility of further efforts to hold their ranks intact.

Ninth: Close the publicity barrage, which day by day during the entire period has increased the demoralization worked by all of these measures, on the theme that the plant is in full operation and that the strikers were merely a minority attempting to interfere with the “right to work”, thus inducing the public to place a moral stamp of approval upon the above measures. With this, the campaign is over-the employer has broken the strike.²²⁷

This case was an example of an all-out war waged on workers and their union by an unscrupulous and viciously anti-union employer. The struggle for union recognition was a battle fought by the working men and women of this country. Still in the throes of the Great Depression, they would risk their jobs for their rights. It was a huge risk, for that precious job was

the roof over the heads of their families and food on their table. It was the solidarity of people that were fed up. They sat down, they marched and they struck in places like Akron, Flint, and Syracuse.

The World War II Years in Syracuse

In his Labor Day message of September 3, 1944, President Roosevelt paid tribute to the remarkable men and women that kept the factories at home producing unprecedented war material. “Free labor is triumphing over tyranny.”²²⁸ In another message, AFL Secretary/Treasurer George Meany stated, “The flood of war production is proof positive that there is no complacency on the part of labor.”²²⁹ In Syracuse, War Manpower District Director Earl Mason and the Syracuse War Planning Board District Director Thomas J. Corcoran directed wartime production and planning. According to Corcoran, there were 140,000 workers in the Onondaga County area and 57,000 of them were employed in essential war production.²³⁰

The increased war production combined with the manpower demands of war resulted in a tight labor market. In fact, there were serious labor shortages despite the thousands of women that worked in the seventy-five area defense plants.²³¹ Local labor leaders such as John J. Maurillo, the CIO Regional Director at the Greater Syracuse Industrial Union Committee, and George Cooper at the Syracuse Federation of Labor pledged cooperation. The Syracuse unions had promised to refrain from strikes at essential workplaces during the war. Only five strikes occurred in the area and they were in

non-essential workplaces.²³² The severest criticism of the wage ceiling came from John L. Lewis. The United Mine Worker leader fought throughout the war years against the wage formula. Lewis condemned the AFL, CIO and Railroad Brotherhoods for going passively along with the ceiling formula while rationing and inflation eroded workers' purchasing power.²³³ The UMW went on strike during the war raising the ire of the Roosevelt administration and the public.

Workers used the newfound leverage to organize into unions, often without employer opposition. William Bliss was an International Representative and Hugh Harley was an Organizer for the United Electrical Workers District 3. They found a lot of work in the Syracuse area. On August 20, 1942, a charter was issued for U.E. Local 320 at General Electric. Working with union president, Fred L. Hunneyman, and officer Richard J. Sullivan the union initially represented 250 workers producing turbines.²³⁴ Remington Rand re-opened the plant in Syracuse in 1942 to produce military pistols. Bliss and Harley helped get a charter for the workers. On March 15, 1944, new Local 318 U.E.-C.I.O. was formed with John Hogan, President; Dominic Misita, Vice President; Dimenica Gangemi, Financial Secretary; May Housman, Recording Secretary; and Francis Garafolo, Treasurer.²³⁵ The workers at Carrier contacted the A.F.L. in 1943 and were issued a Federal Labor Union charter. They produced heating and cooling military applications during the war at the factory on Gifford Street. The workers at

Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation organized under the United Mine Workers District # 50 in 1943.²³⁶ Vital chemical production at the sprawling Solvay works continued throughout the war. During WWII, women worked in the factory for the first time. Modesta Armani, Appolonia Artini and Monica Buselli drove trucks, loaded railroad cars, and made barrels like the men did.²³⁷ General Motors reopened the Marcellus Street plant in 1936; only 6 workers remained from the original gear plant. By 1939, the factory employed 1,300 workers. The U.A.W.-C.I.O. organized the plant in 1943 when the factory was gearing up for production of machine guns.²³⁸ Employment levels reached 3,700 people during the war.

Other local companies worked diligently on the war effort. Pass and Seymour, the electrical manufacturer, and Onondaga Pottery did not unionize in this period. They did, however, cooperate to produce a top-secret ceramic anti-tank mine. The M-5 was designed and produced in Syracuse and over 1 million were shipped overseas during the war.²³⁹ Onondaga Pottery was also kept very busy producing dinnerware and cups for military messes around the world. The New Process Gear Corporation and Bristol Laboratories were also not organized. They were major suppliers of military truck, jeep, tank gears²⁴⁰ and penicillin respectively.

Conclusion

The decades between the wars were truly the most dramatic in the history of the labor movement. The crumbling of the Great War arrangements between Gompers, the Wilson government, and business led to the chaos of 1919. The confrontation with organized labor was accompanied by the assault on the left. The IWW, the Communists, and other leftist organizations were raided and their members detained and extradited. The AFL stood practically alone, and in a weakened state. This was a goal of the business agenda, to eliminate or marginalize organized labor.

Workers were shaken from the Roaring Twenties into a Great Depression. The spectre of joblessness, poverty, and homelessness was very real. For the first time in a generation, Americans doubted the capitalistic system and feared for the future. The election of FDR set the stage for unprecedented labor resurgence. The policy of the New Deal was to get people working. Much would also be done to ensure business would be able to recover. The difference was that labor would be granted legal protections that would permit them to fight for protections. The battle would be intense in the 1930s and 1940s. Business did not willingly cede the total control of the workplace that they had become used to. The labor war continued, often in the street with bricks and bullets. Eventually the accommodations with unions were made to achieve industrial peace going into the war.

This period spans the despair of the strikes of 1919 to the march of workers into World War II. The American workers provided the material, and

the blood, to battle on almost every continent. The struggle for workplace justice would renew again after the war.

Part III

Labor Civil War : Labor's House Divided

U.E. and I.U.E. at G.E. Case Study

Steel and Sheet Metal at Carrier Case Study

Introduction

The labor movement in the United States has shown the resilience of working people. In the good times and the bad, the workers succeeded when they stuck together for a common goal. The desire for a voice in the workplace, a fair wages, and decent working conditions continue to be the motivating factors for people. Sometimes, however, the conflict *between* workers became a roadblock to progress. This overview is about the conflicts within labor's ranks that proved to be extremely detrimental to the labor movement. The split between the American Federation of Labor and the breakaway Committee of Industrial Organization had severe negative effects on the labor movement. There would also be a split in what became the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The Cold War that the United States was engaged in would find its way into the workplace. The CIO itself expelled

unions that had communists in leadership positions. The tragedy for working people was when the fissure became a chasm in the ranks of organized labor.

The Great Depression and the AFL

The collapse of the economic structure dislocated millions of workers. By 1933 there was 25 percent of the workforce, or thirteen million people, out of work.¹ The conditions for organized labor were grim. Dues paying members were dropping off the rolls by seven thousand a week.² Years of wage and hour contract struggles were being wiped out almost overnight.

The Roosevelt Administration initiated industry and labor reforms that it hoped would lead to recovery. The National Industrial Recovery Act contained a key provision for worker self-determination. It was Section 7(a). This section gave workers the right to form their own unions and to bargain collectively. Many industries would react by forming company sponsored “unions.” Growth in company-unions exceeded trade union growth from 1933 to 1934.³ However, workers by the tens of thousands were clamoring for representation in the four industrial Federal Unions that the AFL had set up. These would be a general union under the control of the Federation. Eventually, the AFL leadership directed the field staff to divide newly organized workers into the appropriate jurisdictions of the respective craft unions.

The AFL responded to the opportunity to organize new members with plodding incompetence. An example was the story of the 4,500 rubber workers who organized themselves in the summer of 1933. They applied to the AFL for a charter. The AFL eventually sent an organizer who divided the workers into 19 different and separate locals.⁴ The workers then had to wait for their appropriate union representative to appear. In this way the AFL leaders “let power slip through their grasp as their hesitancy, fear of militancy, and respect for outdated jurisdictional boundaries caused them to dismay or betray millions of mass-production workers.”⁵

In 1933 to 1935, the craft unions increased by 13 percent, but the four federal labor unions increased their membership by 130 percent over that same period.⁶ As quickly as the numbers expanded however, they melted away as workers became disillusioned with the process. A showdown developed between the forces of craft and industrial unionism.

John L. Lewis and the CIO

The president of the United Mine Workers was John L. Lewis. He had become convinced that the future of the labor movement was tied to organizing the industrial production workers. At the 1934 AFL convention he centered the discussion on organizing policy. In the Resolutions Committee, Lewis fought for Industrial Charters for aluminum, auto, cement, radio, and

rubber workers.⁷ He further proposed that the task of organizing the 550,000 steel workers be taken from Mike Tighe, the head of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers. That union had dwindled to 7,700 members and had not organized anything in years.⁸ These proposals were beaten back by the other leaders of craft unions.

The president of the AFL was William Green. He was elected in 1924 to succeed Gompers, who had just passed away. The Executive Council of the Federation had been gaining power, and during Green's term more power flowed there.⁹ The Council proposed that industrial union charters be explored, but said the jurisdictional issues would need to be sorted out. The point raised by the industrial unionists was that in the factories workers performed a wide variety of tasks that crossed different trade areas. Lewis pleaded with the craft unions to subordinate their jurisdiction concerns "for the greater consideration of safeguarding American labor in mass production industries and regenerating and again restoring to normal the lowered prestige of the AFL before the American people."¹⁰ The plea fell on deaf ears.

In the 1935 AFL Convention in Atlantic City, Lewis again took the offensive. In the Resolutions Committee, he sought to calm fears of impinging on the craft unions. The industrial unions needed the charters and the organizing effort. Lewis said, "The Federation must promote the organization of industrial, national, and international unions in the mass production industries with jurisdiction over all workers employed in their respective

industry irrespective of craft or trade.”¹¹ The debate raged, but the result was Lewis’s defeat by the “old guard” in vote after vote. The day after the convention, Lewis met with eight other union leaders and formed the Committee of Industrial Organization. They cemented the arrangement in a subsequent meeting of eleven labor leaders in November 1935.¹² The purpose of the Committee was the “encouragement and organization of the unorganized workers in mass production industries...to foster recognition and acceptance of collective bargaining in such unions. To counsel and advise them and to bring them under the banner of the AFL.”¹³ The challenge was on to the power of the AFL.

Lewis versus Green

Green began a series of letters with Lewis and the others. The relationship of Green and Lewis quickly deteriorated. The chain of events that followed was surely driven by stubborn differences in philosophy, but also by ego and pride. Green had letters hand delivered to the eleven leaders admonitions to desist from further organizing activities. He accused the CIO of the greatest of union sins, that of dual unionism. He stated that “from your actions bitterness and strife would inevitably follow.”¹⁴ The “old guard” expected the minority faction to fall in line.

Lewis demonstrated a masterful understanding of the news media. He responded to Green by releasing the letters to the press for maximum effect. The November 23, 1935 Sunday editions carried the story that Lewis was

resigning as vice president of the American Federation of Labor.¹⁵ He presented his case on the national stage with press conferences, interviews and radio addresses. The publicity was priceless as the Committee set in place organizing efforts in auto, steel and rubber.

Lewis was attempting to change the “old guard” through public and member pressure. In steel, he provided experienced organizers and \$500,000 of a \$1,500,000 fund for the drive.¹⁶ He pledged that the steel workers would be an industrial union completely under the Amalgamated banner. Tighe was pressured by his members, as well as persuaded by Lewis, to join the CIO and the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. The defection of the A.A. to the CIO further intensified the rancor. The events were leading to the expulsion of the CIO unions.

Trial and Split

In July 1936, the newspapers anticipated that the labor factions were headed for a public showdown.¹⁷ The AFL leaders were intent on establishing grounds for expulsion of the CIO. There were daily stories in the press foreshadowing an expulsion at the July 16 Executive Council meeting. Lewis and the CIO leaders ignored the meeting. There was still a sense that it was a public relations exercise. Lewis stated, “It is inconceivable that the Executive Council could split labor.”¹⁸

John Frey, the head of the AFL’s Metal Trades Department, read the charges on July 16. The bill of particulars were a list of dire violations of the

bylaws of the Federation. These violations included committing “dual unionism,” infringements on established jurisdiction, violations of the AFL constitution, and communism.¹⁹ The AFL ordered the CIO to answer these charges in a hearing to be held on August 3. Lewis and the others defied and derided the order. The CIO was given until September 5 to submit or be suspended from the AFL. It became apparent that the split in labor’s ranks was unavoidable. Neither the AFL nor the CIO would back down from their positions and subsequent “peace” feelers failed.

In Syracuse, the labor community was taken aback by the developments. The Syracuse Federation of Labor was deeply involved in aiding the workers in the Remington Rand strike. *The Syracuse Labor News* held out hope for reconsolidation even as they reported on the organizing efforts of the CIO. For example, they ran a story that Sidney Hillman and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers donated \$100,000 to the CIO. Hillman stated, “When the ACW went into the movement to help organize the workers in the basic industries, we did so because we knew that there could not be an effective labor movement in this country until this organizing task was undertaken.”²⁰ *The Syracuse Labor News* also reported that there were many labor organizations that disagreed with the expulsion. “Three Internationals; Hotel Employees Restaurant Employees, American Federation of Teachers, and the Mine, Mill, and Smelting Workers, State Federations, scores of Central Labor Councils, and local unions have registered their protests with

the AFL over the expulsions.”²¹ There was, however, no record of the Syracuse Labor Federation filing a protest.

The November 1936 AFL Convention finalized the split as John Frey and others stood to blast Lewis. Green said, “ The ten CIO unions are now outside the AFL of their own free will. There are outside because they would not go along with Federation laws and procedures.” ²²

The Aftermath

As organized labor split into rival camps, the conflict between the unions was just beginning. The AFL survived the loss of the CIO unions and moved to organize their own dual unions, such as the Progressive Miners. The AFL stepped up it’s own organizing efforts. AFL enrollment by the end of 1937 was a million members over the 1933 total.²³ The CIO stepped out into the mainstream of the labor movement and organizes tens of thousands of workers. They were issuing charters to new unions, such as the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers and the Marine and Ship Building Workers. They soon chartered unions in auto, rubber and steel. The CIO also challenged the trade unions with a Construction Workers Organizing Committee. The CIO decided to charter their own labor councils of affiliated unions.²⁴ The factionalism intensified when unions raided rivals, leaders fought one another, and the rivals appealed to the government to sanction the other.

The AFL responded to raids and dual unions in construction by issuing Federal Labor Union charters, and sometimes they were to questionable organizations. For example, they issued a charter to the Tri-state Metal, Mine and Smelter Workers Union in Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri. This despite the Department of Labor calling them a company union that had assaulted organizers from the CIO's International Mine, Mill and Smelters Union.²⁵ Labor's civil war was a fratricide that labor could not afford. In May 1937, the AFL Executive Council urged "relentless war on Lewis' CIO. The AFL should open up the coffers to carry forth without limit aggressive organizing campaigns. In addition, the AFL shall expel all CIO unions from Central Labor Councils and State Federations."²⁶ The stubborn pride of the leaders and their lack of vision held the labor movement back with years of infighting. The jurisdictional disputes between the competing unions caused a great deal of unneeded raiding, scabbing and betrayal.²⁷ The labor-labor disputes were frequently worse than the battles that would rage between capital and labor.

General Electric in Syracuse Case Study

U.E. and I.U.E.

Introduction

The story of the electrical industries and the labor movement is an important one in the labor history of Syracuse, New York State and the nation. The large companies; General Electric, Westinghouse, and Radio Corporation of America (RCA) employed hundreds of thousands of workers and dominate the landscape of cities in the northeast for decades. The presence of General Electric in particular was very strong in the Mohawk Valley corridor that would run from the Capital District, through Schenectady, Utica and Syracuse. This case is about the background of the electrical products industry, primarily General Electric. It is also about the struggle for representation by the workers and the establishing of the United Electrical Workers. The labor movement was gaining strength and moving to have considerable influence in the electrical industry only to be weakened by internecine conflict with the expulsion of U.E. and the formation of IUE.

Unions were faced with considerable challenges in World War II and post-war years. The United States Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act over President Truman's veto. This provided an opening shot in renewing the war to curtail union organizing and activity. The country was becoming concerned about the threat of communism and influence of communism in American life. The House Committee on Un-American Activities began to hunt for communists in hearings and investigations. The focus came on the labor unions that had communist leaders and members. The internal war in the labor movement came to a head in these turbulent times. The Congress of

Industrial Organizations would battle left-leaning unions to “moderate” their views. Some would be expelled. The American Federation of Labor and the CIO raided the weakened unions to capture the members for their own unions. The fragmentation continued as the union members themselves battled each other for the control of their union.

General Electric

The electrical industry began at the end of the 1800’s and really came into it's own in the beginning of the Twentieth Century. The wave of invention set loose a new, technology-based “Second Industrial Revolution.” The cities became electrified and the demand for all manner of electrical equipment was accelerating. Consumers soon drove demand for manufactured products for the home. The companies invested heavily in research and engineering in developing these products along with production and sales.²⁸ The big electrical companies became the first international companies and dominated the marketplace for decades.

General Electric pioneered centralized employment systems for hiring, firing, laying off and promoting employees.²⁹ Due to the large number of workers needed, an employment management department screened, interviewed and tested potential employees. The company designed compensation to include incentives and step raises. The electrical industries

paid wages that were better than comparable work in the area. This was termed “community wage,”³⁰ and helped them retain skilled workers. G.E. instituted a seniority system in the 1920’s. The rewards of the system included such things as semi-annual bonuses, life insurance, and pensions that were seniority based. Layoffs were also structured to retain the senior workers. In this era of welfare capitalism, G.E. and many other companies sought to address their employees concerns about job security and to reward loyal employees. The other underlying motivating factor was to keep out labor unions.

The Great Depression in the Electrical Industry

The turmoil that was the Great Depression changed everything. The companies were faced with severe problems. The economy as a whole declined in value-added manufacturing over 50 percent between 1929 and 1933. The electrical industry value-added declined 70 percent over the same period.³¹ The loss of orders forced the companies to slash the workforce. They attempted to offer job sharing and reduce the workweek, but still the layoffs continued. General Electric eliminated important benefits such as the company matched unemployment fund, the semi-annual bonus, the home mortgage assistance, paid blue-collar vacations, and the off-shift bonuses.³² Here was the irony of welfare capitalism, when the need was most imperative then the company was forced to decide on the allocation of the capital. It

became evident that the decision was to be for the stockholders and not the workers when they needed it most.

General Electric-Syracuse

In August of 1944, a big announcement was made in Syracuse, New York. The senior management team of president Gerald Swope, board chair Owen D. Young, and Dr. W.R.G. Baker came to unveil plans to build a giant, new General Electric plant in Syracuse.³³ There was a Chamber of Commerce dinner put on to provide some details about the plan. The Syracuse mayor, Roland Marvin, and members of the business community had been meeting for ten months negotiating and planning. The 155-acre “Electronics Park” would be a pivotal place for peacetime production of radios and televisions, as well as research and development. The company stated that the Park would provide thousands of good jobs for the returning soldiers and be headquarters of the electronics division.³⁴ This was one of the major concerns of labor, political and business leaders; the conversion to a peacetime economy. In September 1944, War Manpower Commission District Director Thomas J. Corcoran and War Production Board District Director Earl Mason, were so concerned that the Electronic Park may be completed before the end of the war. They directed their staffs and General Electric to come up with ideas to find the people to fill 4,500 to 5,000 jobs.³⁵ They also called in the realtors to find housing for them.

There was already a G.E. presence in Syracuse. The government had built a complex on Thompson Road that was valued over \$15 million.³⁶ The Company was building turbines and generators there. By April of 1947, the 1,800 employees moved to the \$25 million dollar park in Liverpool.³⁷ *Colliers* magazine called the Park “the greatest electronic center in the world {where} complete radio stations, television relays, marine radar, communications for ships, airplanes, trains and trucks are made. Products from the tiniest electron tubes to transmitters that girdle the globe are conceived, engineered, and precisely made at Electronics Park.”³⁸ Syracuse had arrived as the latest jewel in the G.E. crown.

The employment picture was good for Syracuse. However, it was evident that there was a tendency for employment fluctuations in consumer and defense electronic products. By January of 1949 there were over seven thousand employees at the Park.³⁹ There was an announcement in April, 1949 that employment would rise to nine thousand as the television picture tube business expanded.⁴⁰ This also brought a major expansion of the buildings at the Park. The military awarded G.E.-Syracuse with many defense contracts over the years further expanding employment. By 1953 when G.E. celebrated its 75th anniversary, total employment in Syracuse was eleven thousand.⁴¹ The payroll and the involvement in the community was substantial. By 1956, the annual payroll was \$65 million.⁴²

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union

In the 1930's, many workers were fed up with the paternalism of the company and began demanding steady hours and fair compensation. This union came about through the persistence and energy of dedicated unionists. In the big plants, such as Lynn, Mass. and Schenectady N.Y., groups of former I.W.W. members, socialists, and communists began to agitate for a union.⁴³ For example, in Schenectady, the tight-knit, skilled machinists were Eastern European and were associated with the communist led Trade Union Unity League.⁴⁴ The ties between the TUUL and the Communist Party were very close, with top union officials holding high positions in the party.

In Philadelphia at a large Philco factory, a young organizer led the eight thousand workers to self organize into an independent union.⁴⁵ James Carey appealed to the AFL for a charter and was issued a Federal Labor Union charter in 1933. These Federal Labor Unions, as discussed in previous chapters, were a local union with no national or international affiliation. They were, in a sense, a temporary arrangement to establish an entity to be divided among the appropriate trade union jurisdiction in the future. The leaders of the loose association of Independent Unions and Federals met in 1933. They formed the basis of U.E. and select Carey as the Chairman.⁴⁶

Carey pressed for an industrial union charter from the AFL. He was stymied in his efforts and chafed at the red-baiting that was directed at the electrical workers.⁴⁷ He appealed to John L. Lewis for support. Rebuffed at

the 1935 convention for industrial worker charters, Carey's union was offered Class B membership in the AFL's IBEW with no benefits and greatly reduced voting rights.⁴⁸ Frustrated with the AFL (and having his local Federal Union expelled), Carey led the U.E. to join the CIO in November, 1936.

U.E. was one of the first new industrial unions to be issued a charter from the CIO. It became an organizing star, organizing large industrial sites such as G.E. Schenectady, G.E. Lynn, and the Westinghouse-East Pittsburgh complex.⁴⁹ G.E. Syracuse was organized August 20, 1942.⁵⁰ The G.E. managers announced their willingness to negotiate a national agreement with U.E. for all G.E. plants. Westinghouse took a harder anti-union stance but would also negotiate a national agreement. By 1941, "the union had won signed contracts from G.M., Allis-Chalmers, Remington Rand (including the re-opened Syracuse factory), RCA, Phelps Dodge, Colt Firearms, Hoover, Singer, Pratt and Whitney, and Minneapolis-Honeywell, to mention only the best known U.E. organized firms."⁵¹ The union had grown from 15,000 to more than 300,000 members. Soon, there were new challenges facing the new union.

The "Red" Union

There were constant battles with the IBEW-AFL over union raiding and collusion with employers that foreshadowed trouble ahead. The U.E. was

charged by IBEW president Dan Tracey (and future Assistant Secretary of Labor) of being a communist union in a Congressional hearing in 1939. U.E. was a “puppet of the communist executive board...and a branch of the communist party.”⁵² The union staked out positions on the left, such as an abrupt about-face to oppose intervention in Europe after the German-Soviet non-aggression pact. The union leaders’ condemnations of some New Deal programs and war preparedness further strained relations with the CIO and the Administration. U.E. officers, James Maltes, and Julius Emspak, were identified as communists, but strongly denied CP membership. There were other U.E. officials; such as the president of District 4 in New York, James Macleish, the president of District 8 in St. Louis William Sentner, and David Davis business agent for Local 155 in Philadelphia, who openly proclaimed their affiliation with the CP.⁵³

Internally, the union politics were being questioned. James B. Carey, one of the founders of U.E., was voted out as union president in 1941.⁵⁴ However, he retained his position of CIO Secretary-Treasurer in the new Phillip Murray administration. The left wing of the union viewed Carey as a threat. He openly questioned the direction of the union and the reasoning behind the foreign policy positions in the *U.E. News*. Behind the scenes he worked diligently to build new alliances in U.E. and to undermine anything that U.E. accomplished. When World War II broke out, many differences were put aside for the war effort. The Popular Front of Communists,

Socialists, Democrats, and New Dealers came together for the war years. They only temporarily sidestepped the major conflict that was to come internally in U.E. and with the CIO.

Post-War, the Right Wing, and the Left Wing

There were forces on the right that were gathering against U.E. The changing political climate ushered in a Republican Eightieth Congress. Business interests, such as the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce, agitated to “reform” labor law. The result was the Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947, more commonly known as Taft-Hartley. It was passed overwhelmingly in the House and the Senate by a veto-proof margin.⁵⁵ A key provision of the Act was a compulsory affidavit that swore the signer was not a communist.⁵⁶ The CIO condemned this but eventually most union leaders complied. However, the U.E. officers resisted signing. The Cold War with the U.S.S.R. was beginning. U.E. opposed the Marshall Plan⁵⁷ and other Truman Doctrine policies. To the chagrin of the CIO, U.E. leaders later supported Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party in the presidential race of 1948. It is worthy to note that in the period from 1937 to 1947 Julius Emspak was on the CIO Resolutions Committee that make and supported CIO foreign policy.⁵⁸ In many areas, U.E. ultimately supported CIO policy to some degree. Murray also appointed Emspak to the five member CIO-PAC which directed CIO political activities.⁵⁹ The centrist

Phillip Murray attempted to pull U.E. to the center allowing him to hold off the “right wing”. The reactionary pressures grew in the CIO, and in the nation, to address Communist influence in organized labor.

The CIO Executive Board gave Murray new powers to control local and state industrial labor councils. Power became more consolidated with the CIO leadership. They also came up a policy statement regarding communism. It read, “The CIO rejects the efforts of the Communist Party or other political parties and their adherents to interfere in the affairs of the CIO.”⁶⁰ Murray was desperately trying to keep the CIO together by bridging the differences between the two sides.

The U.E. union leadership was being challenged by the “right wing”. Carey led an insurgency that attempted to take control of the union. Between 1946 and 1949 the U.E. right wing waged an aggressive battle. This became a call to action for the groups such as the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the United Electrical Members for Democratic Action to begin challenging on the local union level. They contested every position at the local, district and international levels. They gained strength and nearly won the presidency in 1949.⁶¹ A combination of right wing attacks and raids by other CIO unions, such as UAW and USWA, led the Executive board of U.E. to issue an ultimatum to CIO President Phillip Murray. It stated that if the CIO did not stop the affiliates assault on U.E. membership, the union would withhold per capita tax payments from the CIO.⁶² They also authorized the

officers to sign the Taft-Hartley affidavits and agreed to boycott the November 10, 1949 CIO convention.

In that convention, the CIO expelled the electrical union, the longshoreman and eight other smaller communist-led unions. Murray stated, “We can no longer tolerate the Communist Party masquerading as a labor union.” In his speech to the convention, UAW president Walter Ruether, said, “We have come here to cut out the cancer and save the body of the CIO.”⁶³ The CIO issued a charter for a new electrical industrial union called the International Union of Electrical Workers or IUE.⁶⁴ It was to be headed by James B. Carey CIO Secretary/Treasurer and Murray protégé. The CIO had repeated the sad history of dividing the labor movement into feuding factions.

The battle was on between the CIO backed IUE and U.E. in this brutal battle of dual unionism. The CIO funded the IUE with \$800,000 by 1950, they also picked up the costs of newsletter publication, staff time and legal aid.⁶⁵ The IUE began with filing for elections at the General Motors electrical plants in early 1950. They then focused on Westinghouse. Eventually General Electric and RCA were battlegrounds. IUE questioned the loyalty and patriotism of their U.E. opponents. Using arguments like U.E. was a branch of the Communist Party, U.E. was anti-religious, and that a vote for U.E. endangered any defense work the plant may have.⁶⁶ There were even handbills that featured President Truman and quoted other government

officials that would make it appear that the government endorsed IUE. One by one the big worksites went for IUE, and that included Syracuse, New York.

The Catholic Church

The role of the Catholic Church was an important factor in this conflict between unions. The Church had endorsed the rights of workers to organize to protect themselves. Pope Pius XI published the encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, in 1931 on economic and social issues.⁶⁷ At the same time, the church was staunchly anti-communist. This was reinforced by the persecution of Catholics and clergy in the creeping Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe after the War. The Church was influential with many rank and file workers who came from Irish, Italian, and Polish neighborhoods. In U.E., Catholics would comprise over half of the members.⁶⁸ They were generally good trade unionists, but they were also socially and culturally conservative.

Catholics gathered much of their information from the pulpit, the radio, and the print media. There were publications such as *Labor Leader*, *Commonweal*, and *The Catholic Worker*. In Syracuse, *The Catholic Sun* was published weekly since 1899. On the radio in the 1930's, Father Charles E. Coughlin was a Detroit priest with a Sunday radio show. The show was said to be so popular that "in some neighborhoods one could catch the entire broadcast by overhearing the radios blasting in one house after another."⁶⁹

His populist message initially supported labor and unions. However with the founding of the CIO his sermons would turn against the unions claiming that they had fallen into the hands of the communists.⁷⁰ He also turned harshly against the New Deal and Jews. In July 1936, Father Coughlin came to Syracuse as the principle speaker at a rally of the National Union for Social Justice. The rally was held at Griffin Field on Onondaga Lake Boulevard. There were bands, speakers and it was broadcast live on WSYR radio.⁷¹ The church and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists eventually came out against Coughlin. They purchased radio time and refuted and discredited his sermons. Father John Ryan of Catholic University said that Coughlin's explanations of economic ills were 50% wrong and his economic remedies were 90% wrong.⁷² The popularity of Father Coughlin in the rallies and on the radio greatly influenced many working class Catholics in places like Syracuse.

Father Charles Owen Rice was a friend of CIO president, Phillip Murray, and an ally of James B. Carey. He was referred to as "the chaplain to the CIO." In fact, he was the chaplain of the Pittsburgh chapter of the ACTU and was instrumental in establishing other chapters. This organization was founded by "labor priests," labor organizers, and social reformers to champion worker's issues. ACTU became more concerned with the influence of communists in the labor movement and was preoccupied with rooting them out. Father Rice feared that the CP would bring down the CIO with "their

slavish pro-Soviet line, weaving the labor movement into the political communist movement.”⁷³ They were determined not to let that happen.

In Syracuse, the Roman Catholic faith was the predominant religion. For example in the 1930 Syracuse population of 125,391, 71,227 were Catholic. In the County population of 152,054, there were 83,349 Catholics.⁷⁴ The churches were also heavily Roman Catholic. Catholic Churches outnumbered their closest rival, the Methodists, twenty-seven to sixteen.⁷⁵ The Syracuse ethnic neighborhoods reflected this with tall spires reaching up high in working class areas. The largest group was the Italians on the North Side, followed by the Polish and other Eastern Europeans on the West Side, and the Irish on Tipperary Hill. It was probable that some influence of the common faith would affect the outlook of the workers in the events to follow.

“Red” Union or “American” Union

Syracuse had been a solidly Republican community. Republican Congressional candidates had won their seats handily. Republican candidates for governor also won consistently in Syracuse and Onondaga County, The exception was Democratic Governor Herbert Lehman, who carried the city in 1932 and 1934.⁷⁶ Politics of the left and the Communist Party had never been very popular in Syracuse. In the presidential election of 1936, the CP had their greatest vote total ever with 383 votes for Earl Browder.⁷⁷ Syracuse had not supported Democratic presidential candidates either. Instead, it went for Hoover, Landon and Wilkie.

The Syracuse labor unions distanced themselves from the communists. In the protracted Remington Rand strike of 1936, the union leaders forbade their members to associate with CP members. Communists were also prohibited from the picket lines and from meetings.⁷⁸ The union went so far as to call the police to arrest CP members passing out handouts in the strike area. In an article in the labor newspaper *Mid-State Weekly*, U.E. Local 320 at GE Business Agent Mark Clancy lashed out at communists leafleting his members. “We don’t need any help from that outfit. We would thank them to mind their own business. Our local is the largest in Syracuse and we can take care of our members and their relations with the company without their help.”⁷⁹ With a representation vote looming, this was certainly an attempt to distance themselves from the CP.

In the early 1950’s there were lurid stories of “communist moles” in the “mass organizations such as church groups, PTA organizations, labor unions, and women’s clubs.”⁸⁰ It wasn’t so much the 213 registered CP members in Onondaga County⁸¹ that were the major concern, it was the “subversives” that were infiltrating the every day life of Americans. The “red scare” was in the news concerning General Electric. The G.E. Lynn, Massachusetts plant was the target of CP organizing drives.⁸² The article in the April 8, 1949 *Syracuse Post-Standard* said that FBI informants charged that the jet airplane engine plant was rife with communists. At GE-Syracuse, rank-and-file retiree Edward Gorney recalled, “ FBI agents came on the shop

floor and removed workers. Those workers did not return to work at GE. It was quite a big deal and very unsettling. We didn't know what those fellows had done, but it must have been bad.”⁸³

The events leading up the expulsion of U.E. from the CIO, and in the aftermath of the split was the cause of concern and dismay among the rank and file. Workers were caught in the middle of conventions, maneuvering, and union politics unlike anything they had known. Workers were aware that their U.E. union was being challenged by IUE-CIO. GE retiree Angie DeSantis recalled a big pre-election IUE meeting that was held. “There were thousands of people. The IUE supporters and organizers said they had all sorts of evidence that the U.E. leadership were communists. There was even government evidence that the Communist Party dominated UE. There was a real sense of fear. We suspected that there was FBI right there at the rally, and they probably were! We didn't believe that the local U.E. union leaders were communists. However, that didn't stop workers from harassing U.E. shop stewards and representatives. I felt sorry for them. They certainly didn't deserve it because they were doing the best they could under the circumstances.”⁸⁴ The rank and file members, however, did not appear to be dissatisfied with the local leadership. They were caught up in the anti-communist hysteria. The IUE petitioned the NLRB for a representation election.

The vote to choose a bargaining agent at GE-Syracuse was held May 26, 1950. The margin for IUE was overwhelming, 4,390 for IUE and 255 for U.E. Local reaction was relief and support for the union IUE Local 320. GE retiree, Ed Jenneys, remembers that the rank and file was adamant about “throwing the reds out and keeping them out. Everyone was sick of all that “red”talk. Mark Clancy and the rest of the U.E. officers couldn’t overcome the effects of the IUE campaign.”⁸⁵ He was only vaguely aware of the ideological differences between the UE and IUE. Ed Gorney recalled that, “The new union people, such as John Brady and John Stanley could really stir up a crowd. Stanley had a booming voice and could really use it.”⁸⁶ The thing that mattered the most according to Ed Jenneys was “taking care of the union members, the training of officers and reps and administering a contract.”⁸⁷ The retirees agreed that the union structure and services improved greatly with IUE.

Aftermath

The IUE/UE war lasted for years and taxed the resources of both organizations. Elections were held at different factories of GE, Westinghouse, RCA and others with many victories for IUE. There were additional petitions and elections in factories with close margins. This resulted in constant turmoil. Syracuse was be a cornerstone of IUE and there wasn’t another election held here.

Conclusion

The UE had successfully organized an entire industry. Because of union raiding and the bitter war of attrition with IUE, UE numbers plummeted. The union membership that was over 500,000 in the late 1940's fell to 203,000 in 1953, down to 71,000 in 1957 and hit bottom in 1960 at 58,000.⁸⁸ In their criticisms of UE, the CIO never assaulted their abilities as unionists. There were no charges concerning their abilities as organizers, nor negotiators for benefits, wages, security and seniority.⁸⁹ The question came down to the fear that communists dominated one of the largest industrial unions, and others. Did the union leaders take their orders from Moscow and the CP? The fear of monolithic communism in search of world domination was perceived to be real. The facts were that CP-USA comprised only one twentieth of 1 percent of the population.⁹⁰ It was the hysteria of the "red-scare" and the fierce reaction of the right wing that fanned the fires of the civil war.

Another factor in the civil war was the blind self-interests of the U.E. opponents. The 1941 U.E. Convention elected a new president of U.E., but James Carey would not accept defeat. He used his position in the CIO to undermine the U.E. leadership at every turn with the CIO and in U.E. local unions. The coalition he joined to assault U.E. had doubts about him. Father Rice supported Carey, "but over the years found him of damn little assistance."⁹¹ Reverend Thomas Darby referred to him as a "chameleon" that

changed his ideology as the surroundings dictate.⁹² Carey was driven to regain the top job at the union whether or not he had to destroy the union to achieve his goal. Father Rice himself came to regret and apologize for the corrosive red-baiting of this era.⁹³

The U.E. leadership espoused left-wing political rhetoric and continued to push progressive politics in the union publications even when it was being used against them. They may have miscalculated the deep anti-communist fears that affected the rank and file. Albert Fitzgerald, James Maltes and Julius Emspak were the democratically elected leaders of U.E. It was up to the members of the union to remove them if they disagreed with their administration of the union. The tactics of the right-wing were red-baiting, threats, and false-hoods to stir up dissent. When that failed, it was time to work on dual-unionism.

The CIO and Philip Murray failed to see the devastating effect that this chasm would have on the labor movement. The CIO had been aided immensely by the hard work of the dedicated unionists that had also been communists. The swing to the right for the CIO meant abandoning the cornerstone of their promise of industrial democracy. The CIO answered dissent with U.E. like the AFL did with them, with expulsion. They expelled nearly one fifth or 750,000 members of their organization.⁹⁴ The labor movement lost momentum.

The civil war between the unions had long-term negative effects on the workers and their communities. The winners in the labor civil war were the right wing political ideologues such as McCarthy and Nixon, as well as the corporations such as GE, Westinghouse, G.M. and R.C.A. The anti-union political right would be able to twist the “red scare” into a litmus test of loyalty. The “American” unions surely would not tolerate communists in their organizations; if they did then they weren’t “American”. The workers would lose, as the electrical industry would use the fratricide to further fragment the workers. Solidarity would be practically non-existent. The industry was covered by a “crazy-quilt pattern of bargaining which left the G.E. and Westinghouse workers nearly as divided as they were in the non-union years of the 1920’s”⁹⁵ The communities lost when the workers were isolated and became powerless to negotiate their future.

Carrier Corporation in Syracuse Case Study

Steel Workers and the Sheet Metal Workers

Introduction

In the civil war between labor organizations the conflict was intense and bitter. The expulsion of the Congress of Industrial Organizations unions resulted in the worst-case scenario for everyone concerned, which was dual unionism. The American Federation of Labor continued to form their own versions of industrial unions, Federal Labor Unions. The AFL in 1948 had 239,865 members in FLU affiliates, and added 212 new FLUs.⁹⁶ The CIO formed their version of craft unions. The labor organizations raided other union's locals in an attempt to replace them. It is certainly true that there were some legitimate changing and realigning of unions per the democratic will of the workforce. It was more frequently a calculating move to expand the influence of a union at the expense of another union. As the larger plants and the major producers were becoming unionized they would be targets. The raids fragmented and divided the workers when unions made promises of wage improvement, job security, and better working conditions⁹⁷ in order to encourage secession. For example, when the CIO expelled the "red" unions, the previously solid UE electrical industry began to fragment. By 1963 the declining number of union workers at General Electric were represented by IUE, SMWIA, UAW, IBEW, American Federation of Technical Employees, IAM, IBT, USWA and UE.⁹⁸ The reduced bargaining power and increased friction between the factions did not bode well for the workers.

This case is about a union versus union conflict. In June of 1959, the 3,000 plus workers of Carrier Corporation let the AFL-CIO know that they wished to join an international union. They had a Federal Labor Union charter, but had become dissatisfied with it. What happened next was a chain of events that illustrated the competition between unions for already organized workers. This case would also end up in the Supreme Court and disrupt a bitter Central Labor Council.

The Central Labor Council

In Syracuse, the Central Trades and Labor Assembly of Syracuse and Vicinity had welcomed all labor unions to join. Founded on March 16, 1885 at Ryan's Hall, the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor cooperated on grievances against employers and work stoppages.⁹⁹ With the demise of the Knights, the Assembly affiliated with the AFL and became the local chapter. The Assembly became the Syracuse Federation of Labor and built the Labor Temple at 309 S. Franklin St. by selling \$5 shares to individuals.¹⁰⁰ By 1948 the Federation comprised sixty-four locals representing over 30,000 workers, including almost 3,000 at Carrier.

The CIO unions formed their own association after the expulsion. It was called the Greater Syracuse Industrial Union Council, and it represented 30,000 workers in the Syracuse area and 125,000 in the upstate district.¹⁰¹ The relations between the two associations was not cordial. They did, however, sit together with representatives from the independent Railroad

Brotherhood, IAM and the UMW District 50 on the Joint Labor Committee.¹⁰²

This committee met bi-monthly to work on common community issues such as the Community Chest and other charity projects. They also worked on politics. In the 1948 election, despite the objections of some unions to President Truman, the Joint Committee turned out the vote for Truman and the endorsed liberal Democratic candidate for Congress, Richard T. Mosher.

¹⁰³ The Truman victory and the close Mosher loss showed the unions the influential political power in their possession. Even though Mosher was the only candidate that the Joint Labor Committee had agreed on, it encouraged them to build on the success. T.J. Thompson, Committee chair stated; “We proved that labor can be a factor in an election in Syracuse, and it will be a factor in future elections.”¹⁰⁴

In a meeting between the councils in December 1953 there was a no-raid agreement made. It was tested repeatedly in the months to follow. The national AFL and CIO agreed to a merger effective December 5, 1955. The 10,200,000 AFL members joined 5,800,000 CIO members joined together when George Meaney and Walter Reuther together cracked down a giant gavel at the merger convention.¹⁰⁵ One of the reasons was to combine the political strength of labor into a unified front. The combination of Federation’s Labor League for Political Education and the CIO’s Political Action Committee was expected to be a potent power.¹⁰⁶ The state and local

organizations were to be merged by December 5, 1957. It was hoped that it could be accomplished well ahead of that date.

The councils were having a difficult time merging in Syracuse. Talks started in January 1956, and the political committees combined. The parties could not agree on the make-up of the officers and the committees. Syracuse Industrial Union Council president, John Ewaniszyk stated that the merger must be an “honorable merger of joining two equals.”¹⁰⁷ The Syracuse Federation of Labor maintained that since their membership was much larger than the Council, they deserved more say. Executive Secretary George Cooper called for a survey of the local unions to assess their numbers. He stated that the CIO “wasn’t justified in demanding a majority voice in representation, officers and committees.”¹⁰⁸ There was also further conflict concerning raiding. The CIO Lithographers and the AFL Typographers were competing in the city’s many print shops. The CIO-IUE was in conflict with the AFL-IBEW. There was also the jurisdictional fight between the Steelworkers and the Sheet Metal Workers at Carrier. Ewaniszyk sent a letter to Cooper’s successor, Nicholas Ferrante, that “there cannot be a successful merger of the Syracuse AFL Labor Council and the Syracuse Industrial Union Council CIO” until the Sheet Metal Workers desist from their interference with the legally elected Steelworker local union.¹⁰⁹

An AFL-CIO representative, Lane Kirkland, came to Syracuse in March of 1961.¹¹⁰ He came to mediate the disagreement between the councils

and to expedite the merger. Syracuse and Albany were the last two cities in New York that had failed to merge. Kirkland met the parties at the Onondaga Hotel, and Ewaniszyk brought up the situation at Carrier. Kirkland wanted no part of it and stated that the conflict at Carrier “had no place in the merger discussions. It would have to be brought before the top labor officials at the AFL-CIO.”¹¹¹ Kirkland left Syracuse with no merger agreement. The AFL-CIO was so frustrated by June of 1961 that it issued an order to merge by October or both charters of the Council and the Federation would be revoked.¹¹² A main point of contention continued to be the conflict surrounding the union at Carrier.

Carrier

Willis Carrier, a Cornell University graduate, and six associates founded Carrier Corporation. Carrier had a new process for conditioning the air and controlling heat and humidity. From his small factory in Newark, New Jersey he pioneered the practical application of this process.¹¹³ His first commercial success was Onondaga Pottery in Syracuse. Carrier was interested in expanding his operations. He was interested in Central New York and Central New York was interested in Carrier.

The H.H. Franklin automobile plant on Geddes Street was empty. The world-class, air-cooled automaker had gone bankrupt, a victim of the Great Depression.¹¹⁴ The loss of 3,500 jobs had hit the community hard. The city

wanted to lure Carrier there. Mayor Rolland B. Marvin had started a clean up of the plant as part of a W.P.A. project. He proposed to deed the plant over as a condition to relocate. Carrier wanted to defray the cost of the move and the renovation of the plant. He sent Lemuel Boulware to Syracuse to work out the details with Marvin. The city and the Chamber of Commerce agreed to come up with a \$250,000 “Carrier Fund” to give to the company in April 1937.¹¹⁵ In the announcement culminating the successful negotiations, Boulware stated “the new plant would be profitable within a year in Syracuse.”¹¹⁶ The city had added an important new industry to the area.

In the post-war years Carrier again expanded. The company wanted to build a new factory. The United States Navy had built a large plant north of the city on Thompson Road in 1942 for ten million dollars. General Electric had been the occupant during the war producing turbines there. However, G.E was building a new Electronics Park and moved there. On October 2 1947, it was announced that Carrier Corporation and Syracuse University would get the title of the Thompson Road factory and land from the War Assets Administration.¹¹⁷ S.U. planned to open a school of engineering in that area of active manufacturing. Carrier sought a location with room to grow.

Carrier announced a major expansion in April 1950. The new building cost \$3.25 million and became the Thompson Road Building Number Two (TR-2).¹¹⁸ By 1952, Carrier offered to purchase the rest of the 110-acre area from S.U. The university had decided to move the engineering school to the

main campus. Carrier president, Cloud Wampler, proudly stated, “Syracuse was the air-conditioning capital of the world!”¹¹⁹

The FLU

The Federal Labor Union 23983, formed in 1944, represented about 3,000 union members at Carrier Corporation. By the late 1950’s it became unpopular with the membership. The union leadership had come under attack from the membership for the “misappropriation of funds” by advancing themselves their yearly union salaries.¹²⁰ In a turbulent two and a half hour meeting on May 17, 1957, rank-and-file assembler Francis Brewster and others made the accusations. They stated president Dominick Catalino and the rest of the officers of acted improperly in that action. This was the beginning of unrest and dissatisfaction with the FLU. The workers had complaints about the way that the about working conditions also.¹²¹ Robert Watson, a rank and file worker, recalled that the FLU was weak. “The company could do whatever they wanted and could ignore whatever they wanted. The joke was that the company gets the good deal and we get the flu. They didn’t have much to worry about from the FLU. We wanted an international union that could back us up and improve wages and benefits.”¹²² The workers contacted the AFL-CIO to inquire how to link up with an international. union would address grievances

The Election and Vote

President George Meany sent representative Peter McGavin to Syracuse to have an election to determine if there was interest in affiliating. On June 12, 1959 there was a special meeting held at the Onondaga War Memorial to discuss and vote on affiliation. The vote was 800 to 9 in favor of affiliation.¹²³ The next step in the process was the choosing of the union with which to affiliate. Meany wanted the election to be held July 1. If there was no majority winner, then the two top vote getters would have a run off election on July 8. The interested unions would have to make a case to the workers. The unions involved were the clearly favored United Steelworkers, the Sheet Metal Workers International Association, The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the International Union of Electrical Workers, the International Association of Machinists and the FLU.¹²⁴ The parties wanted to hold the vote on the Carrier grounds. The unions also agreed in the event of their loss, not to submit their name for the National Labor Relation Board election. In the meanwhile, Carrier had petitioned for an election under supervision of the NLRB.

The election of July 1 was a victory for the United Steelworkers. The voting for the interim union to represent Carrier workers was USW 1,640, SMWIA 732 and IAM 568.¹²⁵ The regional representative for Steel, John Kowalski, hailed the win as a win for the workers and looked forward to the NLRB election to certify the results. As far as the AFL-CIO and George Meany was concerned the Steelworkers were the union at Carrier.¹²⁶ The

next order of business was the NLRB. In the meanwhile the FLU officers, Dominick Catalano and the treasurer Harry E. Ryder, filed an action with the NLRB to block the transfer of the union funds to the new union.¹²⁷ They contended that the \$70,000 should be returned to the members since the charter of the union had been dissolved. Catalano maintained that the FLU was still the only certified bargaining agent, and that Meany and the AFL-CIO had acted unlawfully.¹²⁸ The charge was found to be of no merit, but it was indicative of the internal conflict that was fermenting. One group was winning and another was desperately clutching to hold on.

The NLRB held an election to certify the union. The runner-up unions that campaigned in July had agreed to decline to run in the NLRB election.¹²⁹ SMWIA reneged and refused to have their name withdrawn. They campaigned bitterly against each other as delays dragged on to January 1960. The day came on January 7 in a vote taken on the Carrier site. With 98 percent turnout of 3,035 votes, USW won with 1,531 to 1,432 for SMWIA.¹³⁰ The Steelworkers had won by seventeen votes. Steelworkers Local 5895 had officially arrived and was certified on January 15. USW soon filed legal proceedings against the SMWIA and a public relations firm because of letters and pamphlets distributed during the campaign.¹³¹ Union representative John Kowalski stated in his affidavit that the materials attacked him personally as well as “portrayed the Steelworkers as radicals, law breakers,

and Communist-orientated.”¹³² The conflict between the rivals was just heating up.

The Strike of 1960

The negotiations for the first contract began with Carrier on January 28. They did not go well. Francis Brewster was now the president of Local 5895. There were major disagreements over conditions in the plants. There were concerns among the workers that the company was working overtime to build inventory in the event of a strike. The union opposed this tactic. On February 28, over 2,000 union members met at Club 320 on Old Liverpool Road and passed two resolutions. The first was that the workers would resist working the overtime, and the second was if reprimands or other discipline came as result, the union would take whatever steps necessary including walking out to counter it.¹³³ At 2:30 pm, on March 2 it was announced that the five top union officers had been reprimanded for inducing employees not to work overtime.¹³⁴ The company posted the names of Francis Brewster, Francis Sopper (union vice-president), Arthur Calland (union recording-secretary), Larry Swindowski (union financial-secretary), and Paul Hazelgrove (union treasurer) on the bulletin boards in the shop. By 6:00 pm 400 of the second shift walked off the job. Carrier “excused” the rest of the second shift at 10:00 pm to “avoid the potential for bodily harm and property damage.”¹³⁵ The union leaders called the walkout a strike and the company closed the plant.

The strike began with Carrier taking a page from the General Electric playbook. They took out two full-page ads in the Syracuse Sunday paper. In presenting their side of the story, they portrayed the Steelworkers as guilty of “coercion, intimidation, and threatening against the majority of employees that do not support this walkout.”¹³⁶ They were also “utterly irresponsible” toward the workforce and the community in forfeiting \$410,000 weekly payroll.¹³⁷ The tactic they used was to communicate directly with the workers, their families and the community at home through the media.

Meanwhile the union was still negotiating. In proposal and counter-proposal, the parties came up with a “memorandum of understanding” that would allow the workers back while the contract negotiations continue. There would also be a revised, interim grievance procedure put in place.¹³⁸ In a meeting on March 27, the workers overwhelmingly approved going back to work. Union president, Francis Brewster, was incensed when he learned he would have to serve the original suspension.¹³⁹ A few hours later, Brewster and other officers went on WHEN television at 11:20 pm to declare the strike was back on.¹⁴⁰ The company stated that the gates would be open for any one who chose to come back. A majority of the workers came back the first day and by April 15 over 90 percent of the workers were back on the job.¹⁴¹

The workers that were there were confused. Robert Watson said, “ We didn’t know what to do or what to expect. So we went back to work. We

weren't really sure why we were out to begin with. The company even made an offer to loan workers \$200 interest free to help out with bills. It's not a big deal now, but back then it was a lot of money"¹⁴² The union had not prepared the membership for this strike, nor had they communicated to the members the strategies and goals. There were three hundred and eighty strikers on the street and no contract.

This strike precipitated unfair labor charges from both parties. The Steelworkers filed an appeal that charged Carrier with violations under Section 8 of the National Labor Relations Act. This pertained to the five-day suspension of Francis Brewster, and the disciplinary actions against the other four officers.¹⁴³ This charge was dismissed by the regional director. Carrier filed charges concerning the strikers' actions. The first was a charge of "threatening and intimidating Carrier employees" that were attempting to go into or leave the plant.¹⁴⁴ This charge was dismissed, appealed by the company, and dismissed again.

The second charge dealt with the union strikers "inducing the New York Central Railroad employees not to handle Carrier products."¹⁴⁵ This charge would end up in the United States Supreme Court. The railroad had a small rail line that ran to Carrier for deliveries and to other area factories. The railroad spur crossed a public road (Thompson Road) and then went through a locked gate into a chain-linked fenced in area that was Carrier property and the rail right of way. This particular gate was locked except

when used by these rail workers. On March 11, the regular switch crew made the regular runs to the non-striking plants. The train returned to Carrier, this time manned by a supervisory crew and bringing fourteen empty railroad cars to Carrier. The strikers knew that the company was using these cars to ship out products and attempted to stop the train. They were unsuccessful. The train instead hitched up sixteen cars of finished goods and tried to move out. The strikers tried to stop the train. They stood on the sides of the train yelling at the crew, they sat down on the track and blocked the road with their cars. When the Onondaga County sheriffs came to break up the impasse, scuffles and arrests ensued.¹⁴⁶ The company filed an unfair labor practice with the NLRB and the judgment was found against the Steelworkers in violation of Section 8(b)(4) of the NLRA. The Supreme Court heard the case, and they ruled for the Steelworkers. This important case gave unions the ability to picket the neutral parties when those parties work is related to the normal operation of the struck plant. Judge Byron White wrote for the majority. He said,

“The location of the picketing is an important but not the decisive factor. The railroad gate adjoined company property and was in fact the railroad entrance gate to the Carrier plant. For the purposes of Section 8(b)(4) picketing at a situs so proximate and related to the employer’s day-to-day operations is no more illegal than if it had occurred at a gate owned by Carrier.”¹⁴⁷

As important as this ruling was, it was bittersweet for the Steelworkers for it came after the strike was over.

The Steelworkers desperately tried to keep the local together. The nearly four hundred were still on the picket line, but a majority of the rest of the workers crossed it every day. The union set up food vouchers and provided strike benefits and loans to the strikers. The union continued to negotiate a contract with Carrier but nothing was resolved. Robert Watson recalls; “Most of the people I worked with felt lousy to cross the line. The feeling was that the union was screwed up about this whole strike and people had bills to pay. I was in Building 1 (TR-1) and got transferred to Building 2 (TR-2). The people there came up to me in the first week and told me that this was a Sheet Metal Workers building. They said they knew TR-1 was a Steel building, but I had better support Sheet Metal or keep my mouth shut.”¹⁴⁸ Outside the plant, there was stalemate and turmoil. Francis Sopper replaced Brewster as local union president. The Steelworkers then expelled Brewster and four others from the union for opposing the way the strike was being run.¹⁴⁹ Brewster and the others sued the Steelworkers local over their removal.

Steel vs. Sheet Metal: Round Two

It was suspected that the Sheet Metal Workers had been agitating in the plant for a new representation election. The Sheet Metal International flatly denied that they were engaged in an “organizing drive at Carrier and had not at anytime sanctioned one.”¹⁵⁰ That activity was a violation of the AFL-CIO no raiding policy. This did not stop an employee committee from

collecting signatures for a new representation election. Herbert Harrington and August Bonito, spokesmen for the committee, stated that they had collected 1,374 signatures. They felt they needed over 1,600 before petitioning the NLRB for a new election.¹⁵¹ They made a point to state that neither the company nor Sheet Metal had done anything to influence the activities of the committee. Both men had been active in the previous representation campaign for Sheet Metal. Harrington stated, “Steel has been our union for over a year now, and we still don’t have a contract. Most of us don’t like working without a contract and feel that Steel hasn’t done anything for us.”¹⁵²

The Sheet Metal Workers filed a petition for a representation election at Carrier with the NLRB. Committees formed at the plant supported Sheet Metal, USW, IAM and IUE to varying degrees. The Teamsters, an independent union, also were interested in organizing the plant. Merle D. Vincent Jr., the NLRB regional director, stated that he would notify the company and the interested unions concerning the upcoming vote.¹⁵³ The SMWIA decided that the time was right to send in the organizing team to Syracuse. They stated that they had experience with Carrier since they represented a Carrier furnace plant, as well as Carrier equipment installation and fabrication shops. This call for election raised a bitter issue of raiding within the AFL-CIO.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council unanimously ordered SMWIA to immediately stop organizing the Carrier plant in June 1961.¹⁵⁴ Later, in

November, the Industrial Union Department of AFL-CIO called for the expulsion of SMWIA for raiding.¹⁵⁵ The Sheet Metal union leadership ignored these actions. The director of organizing (and future General Secretary) Edward J. Carlough showed his distain towards the CIO unions. He said, “It now appears that Steel and its allies in the Industrial Union Department have decided to unleashed a campaign of deceit and calumny against American labor’s great union. I am not surprised that Steel, UAW and the IUE and their kind have descended to the sewer level in an attempt to discredit the SMWIA.”¹⁵⁶ There was talk in the plant, according to Robert Watson, that “Sheet Metal was the union the company wanted. The talk was that the company paid for or printed the union handouts, as well as contributed financially.”¹⁵⁷

In the days preceding the election, Carrier workers received an appeal by the USW president David McDonald. In it he wrote that the “callous and selfish intervention of the Sheet Metal Workers in this case has caused great distress and condemnation in the halls of labor.”¹⁵⁸ The Sheet Metal Workers brought in top trades union officials to Syracuse to speak with workers. They were Frank Bonadio, the Secretary/Treasurer of the National Building and Construction Trades Department AFL-CIO, B.A. Gritta Secretary/Treasurer of the Metal Trades Department AFL-CIO, and Peter Gavin Executive Secretary of the National Maritime Trades Department AFL-CIO.¹⁵⁹ It must have struck some people as odd that only a few days after condemning the

raiding and calling for expulsion, that top AFL-CIO labor people came to Syracuse to campaign for SMWIA.

The vote was held on November 21, 1961 for union representation at Carrier. The vote occurred at the cafeterias in the Thompson Road complex and at Geddes Street. The choices on the ballot were the Sheet Metal Workers, the United Steel Workers, or No Union; with a clear majority required.¹⁶⁰ The winner was the Sheet Metal Workers with 1,721 votes to 864 for the United Steel Workers. Joseph P. Molony, the USW District 4 Director blasted the “disgraceful” conduct of their rivals. “The Sheet Metal victory is a victory for Carrier Corporation and a black day for American Trade Unionism.”¹⁶¹ SMWIA Local 527 was born.

Aftermath

The Steelworkers position was untenable. The union stopped the food and energy assistance programs that were set up for them.¹⁶² The remaining strikers picketed the USW union office at 104 Magnolia St. to protest. In January 1962, the union picked up the charter of Local 5895.¹⁶³ After two years and a half of constant struggle, it no longer existed. The workers who had stayed out had been permanently replaced by the company. Many had found new jobs and many had left the area. Others stated that they would never return to Carrier. There were also some that wanted to be called back to work. It was up to the Sheet Metal Workers to bring them back. The

AFL-CIO issued a resolution for SMWIA to bargain on their behalf. Alan Roberts, the district director of the Sheet Metal Workers, stated that it was up to the new Local #527 to negotiate them back.¹⁶⁴ The Local was busy negotiating a contract and the issue of the outstanding strikers was hardly a pressing issue with the rank and file or the new union leadership. Robert Watson recalled, “The fact of the matter was that the people still out on the street were the last people the union or the company wanted back in the shop”¹⁶⁵ The lawsuits of the strikers against the Steelworkers and Carrier dragged on for many years.

As far as the Labor Council was concerned, finally on September 27, 1961 an agreement was reached and ratified. The 85 local unions and over 50,000 members became the Greater Syracuse Labor Council AFL-CIO.¹⁶⁶ The strains of the AFL and CIO local battle affected the relations among the delegates. The atmosphere was made better by the pro-active stance by some unions when the strike broke out. The Council organized a boycott of Carrier products and assisted in maintaining the picket line. They also were the conduits for \$750,000. in strike funds that came from the AFL-CIO.¹⁶⁷

Conclusion

This conflict in Syracuse labor history between the Sheet Metal Workers and the Steel Workers is representative of the bitter civil war between workers. The factionalism that was a result of the 1930’s split of the

CIO unions from the AFL initially was not detrimental to the labor movement. The industrial unions had a champion and the CIO surged ahead to organize entire industries such as auto, rubber and steel. The AFL awoke from the moribund state to answer the challenge of the upstart. It became evident with the dual unionism, the raiding of each other's union workplaces, the CIO expulsion of the "red" unions, the red scare, and Taft-Hartley that organized labor was in trouble. The momentum that labor had stopped and the labor movement became business unionism and what was left of solidarity became segmented.

The workers at Carrier wanted a new union that would better represent the needs of the workers. They wanted help to obtain a fair share of the prosperity they were producing. Instead, they stepped into years of turmoil between workers, lawsuits, and a strike. The Carrier workers became pawns in the game of representation. In this game everyone came out losers, except the corporation.

Part IV

The Post-War Industrial State and Labor Unrest The Decline of Manufacturing : Allied, General Electric, General Motors, and Carrier. The New Economy and New Labor

Introduction

This final chapter of the Labor History of Syracuse will examine the events of the second half of the past century. The war years were successful ones for organized labor and for Syracuse labor. The labor movement in the 1930's featured battles over representation. The 1940's and 1950's solidified the union positions in collective bargaining agreements. Union membership continued to grow in membership numbers and in percentage of the labor market (the peak year was 1953 with 32.5%).¹ Success at the bargaining table enabled workers to buy consumer goods at a dizzying pace. For example, automobile ownership leaped from 10 million in 1949 to 24 million in 1957.² American workers were embracing capitalism because the unions and the labor leaders were the junior partners in this new prosperity.

In the post-war era, Syracuse followed the new industrial relations model in using collective bargaining and became increasingly less militant. In what economist John Kenneth Galbraith called "the new industrial state", the technostructure of the corporations and the workers was a hierarchical

design. The economy was a remarkable engine of mass production and the corporations were the bureaucracies that managed that production. The collective bargaining agreement became the framework that the parties defined the subjects for mandatory bargaining. Those items were wages, benefits working conditions and work rules. Subjects such as investment, pricing, technological changes and plant location fell into the area of voluntary bargaining.⁴ Labor lawyer Archibald Cox referred to this system as industrial pluralism.⁵

Former Labor secretary Robert Reich referred to the corporations as the “national champions.”⁶ They established themselves as the symbol and the strength of America. U. S. Steel had the motto; “As the nation goes, so goes steel.”⁷ In 1953 President Eisenhower gave the nod to former General Motors and General Electric president Charles E. Wilson for Secretary of Defense. When asked by Congress if he would have a problem making a decision about the United States that may run counter to the interest of G.M. he replied; “I cannot conceive of one because for years I thought what was good for the country *was* good for General Motors, and vice versa.”⁸ The new corporate state created millions of jobs. They were white and blue collar and they joining a burgeoning middle class. Syracuse was well represented with these “national champions”. General Motors, Chrysler, General Electric, Carrier, Allied Chemical, Crucible Steel-Colt Industries, Crouse-Hinds and others were high profile unionized manufacturers in Syracuse.

In the past twenty-five years the industrial economic model changed nationally, and in Syracuse. The economy was shocked in the 1970's by two oil shortages. The competition from other nations, such as Japan, other Asian, and European countries, placed great pressures on American producers. The foreigners made products that Americans wanted, the quality was good and they were often cheaper. A trickle of imports became a torrent. Local producers could not set their prices since their competitors had also mastered high volume production. A series of new business strategies began to develop and take hold. Corporations began to move production to non-union, low cost areas. Downsizing and outsourcing were some tools for cost cutting. Mergers and plant closings cut hundreds of thousands of jobs from the workforce. Unions in traditional heavy industries such as steel, rubber, auto, and electrical were reeling.

This part of Labor History of Syracuse will examine these trends in manufacturing and manufacturing unions in the post-war era and how Syracuse followed those trends. The events of the era are clear in the examples of Allied, Carrier, General Electric, and General Motors.

Post-War Industrial State

The landscape following the Second World War was considerably different from the one following World War I. After WWI, the labor-capital cooperation fostered by the Wilson administration had evaporated. The

efforts of the War Labor Conference Board and National War Labor Board to aid the process of a post war program of industrial relations failed.⁹ President Wilson campaigned hard for Democrats in the 1918 mid-term elections only to suffer the loss of both the House and Senate to the Republicans. The combination of a Republican, anti-labor, pro-business Congress, exploding labor conflict, (In 1919 there were 3,000 strikes involving over 4 million workers.¹⁰) and a weakening economy slipping into recession rolled back labor war gains. In 1920 and 1921 the organized labor rolls lost 1.5 million member.¹¹

In contrast, at the end of WWII organized labor was in a stronger position. In 1945, 35 percent of the workforce was organized and those unions were solidly entrenched in the big mass production industries.¹² Politically, organized labor had a solid block of New Deal supporters in the Democratic Party and they were still the majority party until 1946. The unions still had a Democrat in the White House, even though President Truman was less accommodating towards labor. Legally, the National Labor Relations Act along with the National Labor Relations Board and National Defense Mediation Board were fully functioning entities to resolve labor-management disputes.

The unions had achieved an active level of participation in the economic structure. Business, for the most part begrudgingly, accepted the management/organized labor model of representation and collective

bargaining. However, the business interests, and Congress soon sought to limit the power of unions.

The Strikes of 1946

The turbulence of the post-war era was driven by the transition back to a peace economy. Wage and price controls that had been in effect to control inflation were gone. The returning military men and women, along with the rest of America, were pent up consumers ready to buy after years of Depression and war. Some workers were being laid off as factories were converting back to peace-time production and others had their weekly pay cut by the reduction to 40 hours. They felt they were being unfairly burdened with the cost of conversion while the government was also subsidizing it. ^{dulles}

³⁵⁴ In January 1946, massive strikes affected telephone (17,400 Western Union telephone operators),¹³ the meat supply (185,000 Packing House Workers-CIO, 300,000 total), the automobile industry (General Motors UAW-CIO, 175,000), steel (United Steel Workers 750,000),¹⁴ along with rail and the electrical industry(UE-CIO). In the year after V-J Day the country experienced 4,630 strikes involving 5 million workers and cost over 120 million missed workdays.¹⁵

In Syracuse the strikes had a disruptive effect, but it was of a low-key nature. The first strike was transportation when the regional bus drivers

went on strike. The people who relied on the busses to get around the region were impacted. This was settled on January 3, 1946.¹⁶ Initially, the telephone operator strike that started January 5, had no effect on service. After a few days however, the shortage of operators had an effect and the telephone calls began to fail getting through.¹⁷ The telephone operators agreed to go back to work on January 14, for a 30 day period while a new pact was negotiated. The Syracuse area was experiencing meat rationing again. By January 20, the meat workers effectively shut off supply to the butchers, markets and restaurants.

The General Motors strike by the UAW-CIO lasted 113 days. The Brown, Lipe, Chapin-General Motors plant was on strike in this national dispute. There was little to report. The local management and local labor leaders maintained “cordial relations.”¹⁸ The strike was a quiet and orderly one. The same held true at General Electric. From January 6 through March 14, United Electrical Workers were on strike. There was little to report in Syracuse. For, like the G.M. strike, the focus of negotiations was elsewhere on the national agreement.

The immediate results of the 1946 strikes were that the steel workers, autoworkers and electrical workers all received an 18.5 cents an hour raise. They also were effective in setting a standard in negotiating that other unions could emulate. The strikes also showed what a successful strategy that work stoppages had been. Organized labor was able to shut down entire

sectors of the economy. The unions were unable to force the corporations to either absorb the increased cost of labor, rather than pass on the cost, or to open the finances as advocated by Walter Reuther. The negative consequences of the strikes were that for the first time since the Depression public attitudes began to turn against unions.¹⁹ In the fall elections Democrats lost majority control Congress. The day that the Eightieth Congress convened for business, seventeen bills addressing labor policy were brought forward.²⁰ The Labor Management Act of 1947, better known as Taft-Hartley, was passed by the House and Senate. President Truman vetoed the bill, but was overwhelmingly overridden. The politicians had sensed that the country was weary of the strikes and unions were too powerful. Business had a useful new tool to utilize against labor.

The 1950 Strikes

The decade of the 1950s was a critical one for the labor movement. The post-war years were giving away to a tremendous period of growth. Despite the passage of Taft-Hartley, union membership and labor density was still on the rise. The decade of the 1950s also was the time of merger between the AFL and CIO. Walter Reuther, the president of the UAW, had succeeded Philip Murray as head of the CIO in 1952.²¹ The merger of increasingly similar organizations in 1955 marked another important milestone in the labor movement. The concentration of the labor groups reinforced the more

conservative elements. The emphasis was less on being a social movement or a class struggle and more on the bread and butter issues of the unions and their members. The unions were positioned between the liberal state (big government) and the corporate structure (big business). “Big labor” opted for collective bargaining that expanded and reinforced member gains. Issues such as, location of factories, directing the workforce, and new technologies were relegated management responsibility and were not negotiable. The passage of the Labor Management Disclosure and Reporting Act of 1959 further reinforced union bureaucracy by mandating increased levels of record keeping and reporting to address union corruption.

In the summer of 1950 there were three concurrent work stoppages in Syracuse that had thousands of workers on the picket line. The magnitude of the strikes were greater than 1946 and the violence of the General Electric strike was something that had not happened in Syracuse in years. Between the work stoppages at Allied Chemical and Dye, Crucible Steel and General Electric there were over 14,500 workers idled.²² In addition there were thousands of salaried people that were put out of work. Wages, benefits such as pensions and working conditions were stumbling blocks in these negotiations. Companies were not always willing to establish pension plans and fund health insurance because of the escalating cost. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the first study of benefits cost, found that the employer

cost of pensions and benefits as a percentage of total labor compensation rose from 5.9 in 1959 to 11.9 percent in 1979.²³

The Allied Strike

In 1945 when the fighting was finished, Solvay took a look at its practically worn-out plants and realized that they would have to rehabilitate the factory. Over the next 12 years, Allied Chemical spent nearly \$60million on modernization and expansion of the Solvay Works.²⁴ United Mine Workers District #50 was established at Allied in 1943 with no objection from the company.²⁵ Some things did change at the factory. The family nature of the old Solvay Process had gone away. The employee programs were ended and the old Process management was terminated. Mario Tomassetti, long time Solvay writer and local historian, recalls; “The atmosphere was different after the war. The men came back different. They viewed the Process as just a job and not their family. Their families were in the community, and they would provide for them at Allied or someplace else.”²⁶ The work remained and the generations of chemical workers were there to perform it. The nature of labor-management relations changed as wages, benefits and working conditions were negotiated.

A strike at Allied was narrowly averted in 1947. The company and the union agreed to a general wage increase with six paid holidays. The issue of pension benefits was put off for another day. It was coming for the workers were increasingly concerned about their life after retirement. It was in 1950 that a strike finally came to Solvay. The main issues were wages and pension. The union negotiators were Russell Tallman, President of Local 12457, James Partelto, Vice President and Ernest Blye, Grievance Committeeman. From the UMW District #50, the Organizing Committee Chair, A.D. Lewis, the Regional Director of Region 6, Joe Mayo, and the District #50 Representative, Andrew Hiznay. The company negotiators included C.K.McFedridge, Personnel Director, Roy Barnes, Assistant Personnel Director and Lyle M. Hornbeck , Allied Legal Council.²⁷

The union and the company negotiated fourteen hours straight right up to the end of the contract on June 13, 1950. The company wanted a no strike clause for the two-year pact. This clause had been in the prior two contracts. The company offered 4 cents an hour increase each of the two years. They were confident that the workers would accept it.²⁸ The union wanted 10 cents an hour increase for each contract year. The no strike clause was rejected. The union countered with a proposed 15-day limit to the no strike. The union wanted additional enhancements to the Cost of Living Adjustment and the health benefits. The biggest hurdle was the pension plan. The union demanded reasonable attention be paid this issue. It had been

pushed aside in 1948, but this time around the membership wanted it. The union wanted a minimum pension of \$100. a month fully paid by the company for workers with 20 years of service.²⁹

The company rejected this proposal. They countered that the company has had pension benefits since 1908 and they had been modified a number of times. The current formula was 1 percent of an average monthly salary over the past 10 years multiplied times the number of years of service, with a minimum of 15 years. The company also deducted one half of the Social Security benefit from the company pension payment.³⁰ In 1950, pensions were the key issue in 90 percent of the work stoppages. The coal and steel industries struck over pensions in the first quarter.³¹

The workers voted on the proposal on June 13. The results were 1,441 against and 45 for acceptance.³² For the first time in the 66 year history of the Solvay works, the workers were on strike. Pickets appeared at midnight. UMW District # 50 Strike headquarters was established across the street from Allied at Pozzi's Hotel at 1701 Milton Avenue.³³ Pozzi was the well-known padrone that had assisted the Hazards in bringing many of the Tyroleans to work at Solvay Process.

The company wanted to re-open talks. The union committee headed by Russ Tallman met all day with the company at the offices of Bond, Schoeneck, and King, the notorious anti-union lawyers for the company. The sticking point continued to be pensions. Who would control the retirement

plan and would the pension plan be open for all employees or just for union members? Allied proposed that their plan was the fairest and if the United Mine Workers settled they promised to work together to revise it at a later time, if necessary. Tallman left the session and stated that; “they got practically nowhere.”³⁴ The strike dragged out over the summer with neither side budging. The sides met regularly and a federal mediator became involved. There were no recorded incidents of violence on the picket line, nor did the company attempt to run the plant.

At 5am Sunday, September 17, an agreement was ironed out after an 18-hour session that began Saturday night. Union and Allied negotiating committees, along with federal mediator James J. Carrol, had been meeting at the Onondaga Hotel.³⁵ Some of the terms of the tentative agreement were; the no-strike clause would be in effect for the duration of the two-year pact, the union workers gained a 10 cents an hour raise immediately and an additional increase of 5 cents an hour on June 12, 1951, a COLA bonus along with basing future COLA increases on the index from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.³⁶ The pension continued to be a deadlock issue. The union and company agreed to continue to work on it with additional talks after the contract vote on Saturday, September 23. On Friday it was becoming apparent that there was a strong possibility that the rank and file would reject the proposal. Allied did an about face and agreed to the pension

demand of the union if the workers came back to work. Allied, however, retained the right to administer the pension plan.

That Saturday the United Mine Workers District #50 at Allied overwhelmingly approved of the contract. The 102-day strike had been the longest work stoppage, up to that point, in Syracuse history.³⁷ The workers stuck together in their first strike. The union leaders, with the help from the UMW, had kept the strike going and negotiations on track. The significance of this long strike was, that despite a long history with the company, the recently organized union was able to negotiate a good contract. The strike was overshadowed by the events of another work stoppage.

The 1950 General Electric Strike

General Electric was embarrassed by the results of the 1946 strike. They had been bested by U.E. in the national contract and vowed never to repeat those mistakes. The new management team of Charles E. Wilson and Ralph Cordiner viewed the unions differently. Former officers Gerald Swope and Owen D. Young had willingly accepted UE and allowed unopposed recognition. They believed that cooperation, rather than resistance, was a better strategy.³⁸ The new post-war General Electric management viewed unions as deficient in four ways. “First, that it failed to appreciate and help the company satisfy its need for low unit cost of production; second, that it blocked the company’s pathways of communication to its employees; third, that it propagated dangerous notions about GE and the free enterprise

system; and fourth, that in case of UE it was led by Communists.”³⁹ The company developed a new strategy for direct communication with the employees and to bypass the union in doing so. General Electric management turned to a figure familiar in Syracuse, Lemuel R. Boulware.

Boulware was a former Carrier sales and advertising executive in Syracuse. Before that he was assistant sales manager and later general sales manager of Easy Washer, a washing machine manufacturer in Syracuse.⁴⁰ Boulware had been with General Electric for years when he filled the newly created position of vice president of labor and community affairs. His new approach to labor relations was termed Boulwarism. The company would leave the “eastern bazaar haggling” for a pre-fabricated, detailed, bottom line contract negotiating. Boulware described it as a “truth in bargaining” approach.⁴¹ The second part of the approach was direct communication with employees in the form of mailings, postings and newsletters that would emphasize the company-provided benefits. General Electric marketed GE jobs to their workers or “job customers.”⁴² The publicity campaign also presented to the public the benevolent face of the company.

In 1950, IUE represented workers at many of the largest General Electric plants, including Syracuse. The inter-union battle between UE and IUE, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, still raged. There was no cooperation between the rivals in devising a bargaining strategy with GE. IUE president, James Carey, believed that he could gain the upper hand on GE and UE. The

plan was to put IUE in control by calling a series of rolling strikes at General Electric without calling a company wide walk out.⁴³ Less than a year after the UE expulsion from Syracuse, IUE Local 320 was getting ready to take on GE.

Syracuse was called on to vote on August 18, 1950. IUE-Local #320 president, John Brady, and business agent Harold Martin prepared for the vote at union headquarters at 104 Magnolia Street. The union demands were; 10 cents an hour wage increase, 9 paid holidays without reservations, guaranteed job rates for all piece workers, piece-work calculated daily for better pay out, improved seniority language, continuous workers to be paid holidays and time-and-a-half pay, arbitration of all unsettled grievances, and expanded union skilled-trades apprenticeship programs.⁴⁴ The strike vote was taken and the union was authorized to call for a strike, which they did to begin September 1.

Tension was high on September 1. The unity of the strike was immediately put to the test. There were 14,500 employees at GE-Syracuse, but only 7,500 of them were in IUE Local # 320.⁴⁵ The situation was confusing from the start. General Electric announced the intention to keep the site open. Anyone wishing to return to work was welcome back. On the first day, GE stated that 1,500 union workers crossed the picket line. The union president, Brady, countered that only two hundred had crossed “mistakenly” and when they realized that there was a strike they came back

out.⁴⁶ The situation was described as “muddy” according to the union officials with workers coming and going across the picket line.

John Stanley, a union representative, appealed to the rank-and-file to stand strong by stating; “We can’t back down now. If we do we’ll be worse than slaves!”⁴⁷ General Electric responded with full- page ads in the *Syracuse Post-Standard* and *Syracuse Herald-Journal* stating the reasonable position of the company and the unreasonable position of the union. Lemuel Boulware countered the union demands in a statement to the *Herald-Journal*. “The company is unwilling to compete any longer in the never ending race to keep up with the union leaders’ demands which go up so unreasonably beyond the best interests of our employees.”⁴⁸

The tempers began to fray on the picket line when more union people crossed it. On September 5, there were scuffles on the line as strikers attempted to stop cars coming into plant parking lots. Onondaga County Deputy Sheriffs came in to arrest the strikers. Fights broke out and a number of strikers were arrested. Three strikers and a Deputy were injured.⁴⁹ The next day union workers effectively slowed entrance into the G.E. parking lots. The traffic around the plant was snarled for miles around the plant.⁵⁰ Tempers again flared as strikers beat and rocked cars and fought with Deputy Sheriffs. In the morning battle, John Brady was injured when a car coming into the parking lot hit him.⁵¹

The response from General Electric was swift. The manager of the Electronics Park, Dr. W.R.G. Baker, closed the plant. He condemned the “gangster acts of the strikers (as) vicious hoodlum acts.”⁵² The company also used photographs of strikers vandalizing cars in their full-page ads. “What is happening to *your* job?” was the title of one ad that questioned the union leadership and their motivations in shutting down GE-Syracuse.⁵³ At this same time strike votes were held at GE plants in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Bridgeport, Connecticut. The large Pittsfield local voted against a strike and did not go out.

General Electric and IUE continued to negotiate a national agreement and on September 15 announced an agreement on contract terms. The union workers would get their 10 cent an hour general wage increase along with a pension benefit increase to \$125 a month. The agreement also featured an increase in the paid holidays to 7 and a cost of living index wage adjustment.⁵⁴ A letter was sent to the homes of the workers from Dr. W.R.G. Baker urging them to approve the pact and to come back to work.

IUE announced a meeting to be held at the Syracuse Civic Center and John Brady characterized it as “stormy”.⁵⁵ The GE workers let their dissatisfaction be known at this meeting. The rank-and-file and their leaders were upset over the national agreement. The only improvement, they pointed out, was the COLA adjustment. All other items were the same as the company proposal in August. They were dissatisfied with the lack of

attention paid to temporary layoffs, piece work rates, pay for skilled trades, and job postings.⁵⁶ They voted to stay out on strike because the GE-IUE signed agreement did not settle local issues. Brady and Harold Martin lashed out at the company's communication campaign. Brady stated that the company's statements and advertisements only served to prolong the strike.⁵⁷ General Electric again went on the offensive with radio and newspaper advertisements. "Why was IUE-Syracuse the first to go on strike and the last to come back to work? Why has the union leadership allow the violence that threaten people and jobs in Syracuse?"⁵⁸

IUE-Local 320 called another special meeting on September 21 at the Civic Center. The special guest for this meeting was IUE president James Carey. There was also to be a vote held on returning to work. For 50 minutes Carey addressed the workers, assaulting the "psychological warfare against the workers by W.R.G. Baker."⁵⁹ Carey acknowledged the fact that "not all local unions cooperated in the rolling strikes strategy, but in fact 32 out of 49 answered the call. I thank Local 320 for your militancy."⁶⁰ The business of the meeting turned to the ratification vote. Former union official, Jefferson Town, raised the issue of the union staying on strike for three weeks for no tangible results. The vote was taken on returning to work and it passed.

The strike of 1950 was over. The rank-and-file primarily settled for the GE final offer. They gained wage and benefit enhancements. However, what was lost was less evident. The IUE leadership showed the results of the

fractious inter-union warfare with poor planning and judgment. The union could not pull the rank-and-file members together at the different locations, nor could they deliver a coordinated effort among the locals. The coalition of groups that comprised the anti-communist opposition were Catholics, secular Socialists, Trotskyists, and other discontented members.⁶² These groups had little in common with each other or a common vision for the future of the union. This internal disfunction would become more evident in the strike of 1960.

The 1950 strikes showed that even in the age of industrial pluralism, the conflict between labor and management was just below the surface. The corporations were not willing to give in on pension issues, nor were they willing to discuss sharing decision-making with the union in the workplace. The magnitude of the unrelated walk-outs show the dissatisfaction the workers had with their compensation and benefits.

The General Electric Strike of 1960

In a previous section of this thesis the 1960 strike at Carrier Corporation was analyzed. Carrier fought USW to a standstill in a protracted and bitter strike. Carrier set a modern Syracuse precedent by opening the doors on the first day of the strike and keeping them open. Anti-union strategies such as strike-breaking, court injunctions, and unfair labor

practices were being utilized by business. The 1960 General Electric strike came a few months later.

IUE represented 70,000 of General Electric's 240,000 employees at 65 plants.⁶² The problems that the union workers faced in 1960 were not unfamiliar ones. The union was hurt by the economic downturn of 1957-1958. There were 30,000 IUE-GE workers laid off as a result of the recession.⁶³ The contract re-openers of 1958 and 1959 substituted a company controlled savings plan in place of scheduled wage increases. The boom and bust nature of the consumer electronics industry placed IUE at a disadvantage going into negotiations. The second problem was one the IUE workers also knew well; it was the continuing conflict of IUE and UE. One of the biggest blows to UE came in March 1954 when the huge GE-Schenectady works went IUE. In 1959 UE reciprocated. They petitioned and won a representation election at the GE foundry at Elmira, New York.⁶⁴ The inter-union war was not as active as it once was, but the strategies of IUE were clearly influenced by the position of its rival.

IUE president James Carey began planning the nationwide strike well in advance of the 1960 contract negotiations. The IUE local union leaders, especially the big locals, sometimes countered the dictates of the International at strike time. Carey pushed through changes to the IUE Constitution at the 1958 convention.⁶⁵ The changes to the strike vote policy

and other policies shifted power back to the International and away from the independent locals.

IUE took the communication offensive with a page from the General Electric playbook. The union leadership began to communicate with the public and the GE workers through a nationwide closed-circuit presentation to the local unions and the press.⁶⁶ They also sent out materials to the local unions such as professionally made films, handouts, and exhibits designed to persuade “workers, customers, and even stockholders.”⁶⁷ This was meant to gain the upper hand in union and community relations by showing the reasonableness of the union side. Negotiations began in July 1959.

The company presented an offer for the three-year pact that featured; 3 percent raise in 1960 and 4 percent 18 months later, additional insurance and pension benefit enhancements, GE demanded an end to the COLA and flatly refused to negotiate on retaining the “inflationary” COLA provision.⁶⁸ They also turned aside the union proposal for supplemental unemployment pay benefits for union workers. GE was also adamant in turning away demands for a closed shop. Every year the employees had an “escape” opportunity out of the bargaining unit. In the spring of 1960, 168 had escaped.⁶⁹ This loss of membership was becoming an intolerable situation.

The company was confident of Carey’s and IUE’s weakness. The mercurial Carey was increasingly frustrated. A sympathetic National Labor Relations Board Trial Examiner reported that Carey showed “an explosive

temper, several times to the point of threatening physical violence..and a few times wholly unrestrained in his opinion of some of the Company's negotiators.”⁷⁰ Carey, the union politician and the survivor, must have realized the poor position he was in. He was negotiating from a position of weakness without a unified rank and file behind him. The forces of fragmentation he unleashed on UE were coming back to haunt him.

General Electric Syracuse

In Syracuse, Local # 320 had a special meeting at 3 PM at the Onondaga War Memorial on September 25, 1960. President Loren Vinal spoke before the 2,500 plus union members who showed up. “I want to make it clear that you are here for a vote of confidence for the union. You are here for the strike vote. Benefits are what makes GE a good place to work. I’m not saying GE is not a good place to work. We’re interested in making it better!”⁷¹ He bitterly assaulted the company decision to remove the Cost of Living Adjustment clause from the contract. He noted that it had been a component of IUE contracts for 10 years. The Syracuse strike vote was announced as 1,287 against the contract and 1,290 for the contract.⁷² Other big locals at Schenectady, Pittsfield, Bridgeport, and Burlington voted for the agreement.⁷³ IUE claimed that only those five voted to accept out of 46 locals.

On October 1 the company and the union met with federal mediators to try to head off a strike. In Syracuse, both sides glumly predicted a long walk out. John T. McCarthy, GE-Syracuse manager of employee and plant

community, called a news conference. In it he stated, “ I believe it will be a long strike, like at Carrier. I also believe that many of our employees will chose to return to work, which is their right.”⁷⁴ The reference to Carrier was a chilling one to GE workers since the Carrier strike divided that local with most of them crossing the picket line. McCarthy went on to say; “GE will keep all of its local installations open for those who wish to work.” IUE president Vinal accepted the challenge and replied; “The union will picket peacefully and without violence, but we will tolerate no strikebreaking activities from Onondaga County Sheriff Sarto C. Major.”⁷⁵ The reference to Sheriff Major was about the forceful way the sheriffs enforced a so-called “no man’s land” around the gates where pickets were excluded. The Steelworkers contested it during the Carrier strike and IUE members also tested it.

In the Midtown Hotel in New York City, Carey, federal mediators, and GE representatives met to try to head off the strike. There was no give or take on either side. At one point Carey leaned across the table and said “This could all be settled so easily. We don’t want a strike. You’re forcing one on us.”⁷⁶ The company realized they were in a superior bargaining position and announced that GE nationwide would remain open. For the employee coming back to work, they would receive all wage and benefit enhancements from the last proposal.⁷⁷ General Electric implemented the final offer at its non-union plants. The plants represented by IAM and UAW voted to accept the contract.

For example the UAW represented plant in Evandale, Ohio voted to accept 2,125 to 375 opposed.⁷⁸ The IUE workers at GE were on their own.

October 3 was date the old contract expired. In Syracuse, General Electric had expanded to twenty-four buildings around Syracuse. The majority of activity still happened at the Electronics Park. It would be very difficult for Onondaga County Sheriffs to police every site around the clock. General Electric was determined to keep the large parking lots open. Sheriff Major turned out 210 deputies and special deputies to provide strike control.⁷⁹ Cars were backed up for miles on the strike's first day as cars "broke down" on the Parkway or at the entrance to the parking lots. There were also incidents of minor "bumper rocking" and two strikers were injured. John Stanley told the local press that the strike was "very effective" and that he was pleased that only a handful of strikers had crossed the picket line.⁸⁰⁺ Clyde Harrison, GE Industrial Relations manager, countered by stating that he wondered how Mr. Stanley could be pleased with thousands of employees being denied their livelihoods. He further contested Stanley's count of employees that crossed the picket line. There were "800 GE employees that choose to come to work."⁸¹ Elsewhere things were bleak. Local 301 in Schenectady did not go on strike. They continued working until October 6. In Bridgeport, half the workers crossed the picket line on the first day and by October 14 all but 10 percent were back to work. At Burlington, 88 percent were back in the factory with in the first 10 days.⁸² In Syracuse, over 1,000

crossed the line on the second day. Local 320 had to do something to stem the desertions.

John Stanley

John Stanley worked 39 years at GE-Syracuse. From 1947 to his retirement in 1986 he was an officer or representative of IUE-Local # 320 for many of those years. He was a high profile, commanding presence on the Syracuse labor scene. His earned reputation was someone who was unafraid to be on the frontlines when the need arose. Stanley's father was Pennsylvania coal miner. John tried that job until he was 17 years old when he enlisted for World War II.⁸³ When he came back, he didn't want to return to the mines. His brother persuaded John to come to Syracuse where a large General Electric complex was ramping up to make televisions and he got a job there. By 1952, Stanley graduated from LeMoyne College with a degree in economics and was the Business Agent of Local #320.⁸⁴ Rank and file retiree Ed Jennings recalls Stanley. "He was a man and a leader we respected greatly. He had one of those thunderous voices that immediately got your attention. When he got your attention, he wouldn't play word games or political correctness. He was blunt in his message to the union reps and to the company: do right by the men and women of Local #320."⁸⁵ In the 1960 strike, GE made an effort to vilify him. The full page "open letters" that appeared daily was often directed at him.

The Strike

The union needed to stem the tide of workers crossing the picket line. In 1950, pressure on the picket line forced the company to close the site. The union leadership was painfully aware of the bleak scene a few miles away at Carrier. The Steelworkers were still walking in front of the factory, and a majority of the workers were inside. On October 4 violence broke out on the picket line when strikers prevented other hourly workers from entering the plant. It was a “near riot” as dozens of union strikers got out of their cars and left them locked and in gear on the highway blocking the entrance to the parking lot.⁸⁶ Strikers battled with police and with workers crossing the line. Dozens were arrested, including John Stanley for inciting a riot. The deputy sheriffs used tear gas and water hoses to break up the large crowd.⁸⁷ The next day it was more of the same, but this time it was Loren Vinal’s turn to be arrested.

Both sides threatened legal action. The union said that the Sheriff with GE’s cooperation was inciting the violence. The company sought to limit the pickets and had their lawyers, Bond, Schoeneck and King, file for that action.⁸⁸ The company suspended Vinal, Stanley, and others for behavior on the picket line. Incidents of violence began to grow. There were threatening telephone calls, strikers being hit by cars and incidents of vandalism. An example is when non-striking IUE union member Rose Perez had windows broken in her living room by rocks in the middle of the night.⁸⁹

On October 7, the strikers again sought to shut down the GE site. They again used the tactic of blocking the highway and parking lots by shutting off their cars, leaving them in gear, locking them, and walking away. This time there were 75 to 100 cars locked and left. The deputies were ready this time. They smashed the driver side window, took the car out of gear, and had tow trucks bring them into a quiet corner of the GE parking lot.⁹⁰ The delay because of this tactic was over two hours, but General Electric would not shut down the site. There were dozens of arrests including IUE vice-president Raymond Baird, and union stewards such as Katherine Allen.⁹¹ Sheriff Sarto Major states that if the violence continues, he would contact the Governor to send in the State Police.

John Stanley called a meeting at IUE union hall. He sought to turn out a large number for a mass picket event. Defiantly he stated; “We are going to be intimidated by the Manufacturers Association, (who had strongly condemned the union’s tactics), Sarto Major, or General Electric!”⁹² The next day, October 11, Stanley was arrested at the union hall before the mass picket could be organized. The charge was inciting a riot. Stanley was arraigned, he plead innocent, and was released on \$2,500. bail.⁹³ General Electric suspended 5 more for strike related infractions. GE’s Clyde Harrison stated that the destructive actions of the union strikers blackened Syracuse’s reputation. They offered for “evidence” in a full-page ad 50 examples of union harassment and violence. The company also offered the union to come back to

work under the terms of the expired contract as a new contract is negotiated.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, more production IUE workers were crossing the picket lines and GE was winning the public relations battle.

Leo Jandreau, the business agent of Local #310 in Schenectady, went to New York City to persuade Carey to accept a “truce” offered by General Electric. GE wanted IUE to agree to the wage package and the removal of the COLA provision. The other items would be negotiated when the workers returned.⁹⁵ Carey refused. Jandreau and the rest of Local #301’s leadership returned to Schenectady, called off the strike, and returned to work. Bitter accusations flew between Carey and Jandreau. Carey compared Jandreau to Benedict Arnold and Jandreau countered; “Carey has nothing in mind than to fight to the end with GE regardless of the consequences even if this fight to the end means the dissolution of the union. We will not be subdued by a dictator.”⁹⁶ The GE strike and the position of IUE was deteriorating rapidly.

Carey made a proposal to the company to increase the wage package in exchange for the concession on the COLA and abandoning the other union positions. GE refused. Finally on October 20, Carey agreed to a memorandum of agreement that settled the strike on the pre-strike terms.⁹⁷ The strike was officially settled on October 24 when the workers returned to work. It was total capitulation from IUE and the union leadership. IUE had failed in clearly defining the goals in the strike and the tasks at hand for the workers and their locals. IUE was more autocratic and less rank and file oriented

than UE, but they still were unable to present a solid front in the strike. Fractured local unions simmered for years with internal discontent as a result of workers crossing the picket lines. Ed Jennings recalls; “The local leadership did not take a big hit on this strike. Most of the people, except for the scabs, were satisfied with the way the local operated in the strike. It was Carey and the rest that messed up in this one.”⁹⁸ Despite the accepted premise that the late 1950’s and early 1960’s were prime years for the labor movement, the workers at General Electric (and Carrier) faced employers that were ready to battle their unions.

Aftermath

The conflict was not over in Syracuse however. The membership of Local#301 authorized to continue the strike if the suspended workers were not returned to work. The GE “31” were fired or suspended workers that GE’s Dr. Haller called “thugs, goons and lawless hoodlums” and the union called “victims”.⁹⁹ The union officers were returned to work, somewhat defusing the situation. However, it took months to get the other terminated workers back. One of the workers, Angie DeSantis recalls; “the charges against me were lies. I was fired because I supported my union. I went though hell to get my job back. I had to take polygraph tests, and write letters to meet with GE people. The union was very good. They provided the lawyer, provided health

insurance and paid my weekly salary. I eventually got my job back and ten months back pay.”¹⁰⁰

The IUE filed unfair labor practices during the strike in regards to “Boulwareism.” The union argued that GE violated the National Labor Relations Act by coming to the bargaining table with an inflexible, fixed position. There was an additional charge of bargaining directly with the employees and bypassing the union. The trial examiner issued a report finding that GE had indeed violated the NLRA.¹⁰¹ There was no remedy for the union since they had accepted the terms of the contract. GE modified the approach to contract negotiations to learn how to negotiate from a fixed position without it appearing to be fixed.

Conclusion

The post-war era was one of rising wages and rising expectations. The solid position of workers continued through the Viet Nam era. For example, in the period from 1963 to 1973 real wages of American workers increased 2.6 percent annually.¹⁰² The collective bargaining agreement became the critical document in labor relations and the centerpiece of union activity. Labor unions and business stabilized entire sectors of the economy by pattern bargaining in rubber, auto, electrical, and other industries. The unions also bargained with multiple employers to stabilize trades and industries such as steel construction and mining.¹⁰³

Unions became increasingly concentrated on internal union affairs and less on organizing, mobilizing and community building. The examples of work stoppages in this golden era of “national champions” showed that the workers were still in a tooth and nail struggle for their fair share. This struggle in Syracuse was similar to the one faced by workers across the country. The strikes of 1960 at GE and Carrier showed the increasing lack of solidarity in the rank and file. The Internationals and the local unions were becoming detached from the workers. They had removed the “movement” from the labor movement.

The End of The Post-War Industrial State

A bright spot for organized labor in the post-war era was the expansion of public sector workers. A myriad of programs delivered services and benefits to millions of Americans. Social Security, Veteran benefits, defense and education were all areas that required skilled and administrative workers. The public sector jobs grew twice as fast as the private sector jobs. Public sector employment grew from 3 million in 1941 to 15 million by 1960.¹⁰⁴

In a dramatic victory for organized labor, President Kennedy signed Executive Order # 10988 in 1962. This allowed public sector workers to organize and bargain collectively. The Civil Service Reform Act in 1977 codified the federal policy regarding public sector workers and established

the Federal Labor Relations Authority to oversee administration of the Act.

¹⁰⁵ One important difference between the public and private sector workers was that work stoppages are restricted for the public sector. It is an unfair labor practice to “call, or participate in a strike, work stoppage, or slowdown or picketing of an agency in a labor-management dispute if such picketing interferes with an agency’s operation.”¹⁰⁶

The mid-1970s were the years generally identified as the beginning of serious decline of organized labor and the end of the post-war industrial state. The United States increasingly became dependent on foreign oil. The U.S. had gone from importing 5 percent of oil needs to 50 percent by the mid 1980’s.¹⁰⁷ The oil embargo of 1973 shocked the American economy and sent inflation upward. Foreign competition in other areas hammered American corporations. Steel, auto, electronics machine tools, textiles, toys and shoes are examples of American industries affected by the flood of imported products. Foreign corporations learned the lesson of high volume production from the American industries that revitalized them. The result of this competition was declining market share and profit for domestic producers.

An event also that marked the end of the post-war industrial state was the election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980. The man that stated; “Government is not the solution to the problem, government *is* the problem.” was in charge of the Executive Branch. His administration began work on cutting back or dismantling federal agencies and rescinding regulations.¹⁰⁸

The relationship between government and labor deteriorated as anti-union appointees appeared in the NLRB, the Department of Labor, other agencies, and the courts. The President was soon able to show his antipathy towards organized labor.

The Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) was the union for the air traffic controllers at airports across the country and the Federal Aviation Administration employed them. The union rejected the contract proposed by the FAA and called a strike for August 3, 1981. PATCO believed the threat to shutdown the nation's air travel was powerful leverage for substantial improvements in wages and benefits. The Civil Service Reform Act forbade strikes of this nature. The Federal Labor Relations Authority had the right to act in this case to punish PATCO, if necessary, and decertify it. There was also a "related federal statute that made it a felony for federal workers to participate in a strike against the government."¹⁰⁹

Union president Robert Pali ignored the illegality. He, and the rest of the PATCO leadership, believed that the union was so indispensable that settlement would be rapid. Pali placed the FAA proposal before the members and it was rejected by a 95.3 percent rate.¹¹⁰ In Syracuse, PATCO Local #256 rejected the proposal 35 to 1.¹¹¹ Airport traffic was light on the first days of the strike. Traffic in and out of Syracuse was down 25 percent.¹¹² This was partly due to the airlines curtailing flights for the first days. Syracuse's

Hancock International Airport was making due with retirees and supervisors.

Dennis Rice, president of Local#256, was optimistic. He hoped that the machinists union was going to honor the picket line. Later, AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland, left it up to the local unions to honor the pickets.¹¹³ Rice also echoed the PATCO position that the FAA could not run the air traffic with military and retired air traffic controllers. He was confident they would be back to work soon.

President Reagan immediately took action. He had the FAA notify the strikers to return to work within 48 hours or be terminated. 1,200 workers returned to work, but 11,500 remained on strike and were fired.¹¹⁴ President Reagan took the high moral ground when he made this statement to the press; "I'm sorry for them. They took the oath not to strike. I take no joy in this."¹¹⁵ PATCO in Syracuse planned a large rally at Hancock. The Greater Syracuse Labor Council predicted 1,000 union members would attend. On August 12, 250 union members and sympathizers walked the picket line with the striking Air Traffic Controllers. On the public relations front the strikers were placed in a very bad light as pampered, greedy union workers willing to jeopardize the nation's air safety for a few dollars. The union demands became known. They sought; a \$10,000 increase in wage, a 32 hour work week, and the opportunity to retire after 20 years regardless of age at three

fourths pay.¹¹⁶ President Reagan was characterized as “bold” and “decisive” in standing up to the union.¹¹⁷

Air traffic returned to almost normal within days. PATCO continued to emphasize the danger to the airways with amateurs in the towers. In Syracuse, U.S. Army traffic controllers began training to augment the two non-striking PATCO members, supervisors and retirees. Dennis Rice observed; “There is no way they can walk into the job. I was military and it took me three years to get certified.”¹¹⁸ The Airline Pilots Association president Captain John O’Donnell countered that the air lanes and the pilots system were safe.¹¹⁹

PATCO bore the brunt of the government’s actions. Injunctions were sought and given to the government against the union and the officers. Unfair labor practices were filed against PATCO. Finally, the union was decertified by the Federal Labor Relations Authority.¹²⁰ The anti-union stance taken by the Executive branch against the PATCO workers marked a significant event in labor-management relations. The government had busted a union. Organized labor was in serious trouble as government and business worked openly on the pro-business agenda

The American corporations developed strategies to deal with foreign competition. One was the protecting of U.S. markets by imposing limits or duties on imports. The government did this either via negotiation or unilaterally. This approach was not favored by “free traders” and the risk of

reciprocal retaliation was real. Another approach was downsizing or “rightsizing” the company. To regain profit and the competitive edge, the corporation aggressively cut costs, facilities, wages and workers. This had a direct impact on union jobs. For example, between 1980 and 1984 employment in durable goods fell by 500,000 jobs while union membership fell by 1 million jobs. In that period, non-durable goods lost 300,000 jobs and 400,000 union jobs.¹²¹ Concessionary bargaining became a management approach as American industry shed 100’s of thousands of jobs to get “lean”.

In another approach, companies set up factories in low union density, right to work states. General Electric began planning in the 1940’s to re-deploy their factories. GE moved from the older, larger locations to newer smaller facilities in border-states, the Deep South and offshore. The construction of new plants cost GE \$1.5 billion between 1946 and 1955 alone.¹²² Later, American corporations imported goods back into the U.S. from their offshore partners. “The total value of American imports from American owned factories rose from \$1.8 billion in 1969 to almost \$22 billion by 1983 adjusted for inflation.”¹²³ The new lexicon of business included outsourcing, subcontracting, and temporary workers.

U.S. corporations also sought to return or to maximize profitability by financial maneuvers. Mergers, leveraged buyouts, hostile takeovers, and corporate breakups became commonplace in the 1980’s. “Of the country’s 500 largest manufacturers in 1980, one in three had ceased to exist as an

independent entity by 1990. The *Fortune* 500 employment rolls dropped from 16 million in 1980 to 12 million in 1990 and one third of the 500 had received ownership bids.”¹²⁴ Deregulation, tax breaks and relaxed antitrust enforcement created a very pro-business environment.

In the labor history of Syracuse, there were a number of cases that illustrate the problems that unions and workers were facing at the time and continue to face. Union workers at Allied, Carrier, General Electric, and General Motors all became involved in the problem.

Mergers, Downsizing, and Plant Closings

One of the first early examples of a corporate merger/acquisition strategy was at Easy Washer. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Easy Washer was a Syracuse success story. Cyrus A. Dodge moved to Syracuse from Vermont and patented a washing-style manual machine in 1877. The company added an electrical motor and reorganized as the Syracuse Washing Machine Company in 1919 and eventually became the Easy Washer Company.¹²⁵ The company grew in the 1920’s and kept the workers busy in the Depression with reduced workweeks. There were a number of expansions at the plant on the corner of Solar and Spencer Streets. By 1950, Easy Washer had five buildings, two miles of conveyors, and 2,000 workers were putting out 1,500 washers a day.¹²⁶

There were no recorded strikes at Easy Washer. UE District 3 organized the plant in 1944 without management opposition. UE Local 321, was later voted out in favor of the United Auto Workers. Labor-management relations were described as “constructive and cordial” in the annual reports that had the company in very good financial shape.¹²⁷ In an abrupt move to diversify the company into other areas the management arraigned a merger with United Chemical and Material Corporation in 1955. This new company had six plants and 2,500 workers.¹²⁸ United Chemical sold Easy Washer to the Murray Corporation in 1957 and they moved jobs from Syracuse to Scranton, Pennsylvania.¹²⁹ By the time Murray sold Easy Washer to the Hupp Corporation in 1963, there were only 700 jobs left in Syracuse.¹³⁰ Hupp only wanted the Easy Washer name. They closed the plant in Syracuse and consolidated production in the mid-west. The workers at Easy Washer experienced early what many workers would experience.

Two notable Syracuse acquisitions happened in 1979 and 1980. Carrier had a “hostile merger” with United Technologies, and Cooper Industries purchased the Crouse-Hinds Corporation. At Carrier in 1979 the company received an unwanted merger offer to make Carrier a wholly owned subsidiary within United Technologies Corporation. UTC, based in Hartford, Connecticut, was a concern of commercial and military products that included; elevators, jet engines, and helicopters. Carrier management

rebuffed the offer setting off a series of legal maneuverings of suits and counter-suits to block the “midnight raid.”¹³¹

There was great trepidation in the local community over the takeover. Syracuse politicians, of both parties, along with the Chamber of Commerce, and community leaders spoke of support of Carrier’s efforts to remain independent. “Carrier is Syracuse and Syracuse is Carrier”, said City Councilor Edward Nowakowski at a gathering.¹³² SMWIA Local#527 union leadership, while supportive of Carrier, did not take a public position. Willis Carrier moved his new company to Syracuse in 1937 and he lived at 2570 Valley Drive until his death in 1950. Carrier, the company, was a fixture in the local economy and ingrained in the civic life of Syracuse. The concern was that control of Carrier would shift to Hartford, and “absentee management” would ruin the company.¹³³

United Technologies sought to allay the fears over the merger. UTC took out a series of full-page ads on the Syracuse newspapers to address them. They stated, “These fears are groundless...United Technologies is a sensitive, sensible corporation. We will not hurt Carrier, or its employees and their families, or the community.”¹³⁴ The legal roadblocks were crumbling and the increased stock offer persuaded stockholders to accept the merger. Carrier became an integrated UTC division by the end of 1979.

Crouse Hinds was a smaller, local Syracuse company that found itself pursued by various “suitors” in 1980. The “home town” company was a world

leader in manufacturing traffic control systems, special lighting and electrical products.¹³⁵ Belden Corporation, InterNorth Incorporation, and Cooper Industries all were interested in acquiring Crouse Hinds. Crouse Hinds attempted a number of legal efforts to stave off the “suitors”. They realized it was not possible to remain independent through injunctions and appeals. The Crouse Hinds board of directors approved the merger agreement with Cooper Industries in December 1980.¹³⁶ The merger with Cooper, a diversified machinery manufacturer headquartered in Texas, was approved by the stockholders.

Allied

The United Mine Workers District # 50 and the United Steel Workers Association merged in 1972. USWA Local 12457 represented Allied workers. Since the big strike of 1950, other work stoppages happened at Allied. There was a one-day strike in 1976, a four day wildcat over safety issues in 1978, and an eight week shutdown in 1979 on economic issues.¹³⁷ In 1979, the Steel Workers coordinated bargaining in Syracuse with associated Allied quarries in Buffalo. Overall, the labor-management relations were good.¹³⁸ Many of the workers at Allied had grown up in the family environment of Solvay and Solvay Process. Even though much of the top plant management were not from the area, many of the supervisors and other managers were.

Allied changed their name from Allied Chemical to Allied Corporation in 1982.¹³⁹ The stated reason was that Allied sought to diversify into

electronics and electrical products along with oil, gas and health care. These were not traditional Allied endeavors. Edward Hennessy Jr. the Chairman and CEO of Allied, stated that this move would “ensure the long term survival of Allied.”¹⁴⁰

Union officials had been told time and again that Allied in Solvay was safe. There were no plans to close the cornerstone of the company.¹⁴¹ Allied had signed a new railroad agreement with Conrail concerning the transportation of raw materials and finished goods from Solvay. “This signifies that Allied Syracuse will grow strong for another ten years.” said plant manager Mark S. White.¹⁴² At the 100th anniversary celebration commemorating the opening of Solvay Process, Hennessey reinforced the corporation’s pride and confidence in the Solvay works and the workers.¹⁴³

Allied dropped a bombshell on the workers and their families on April, 24, 1985. The announcement was that the Allied plant in Solvay was closing. “The End of A Era in Solvay”, said the headline of the Wednesday, April 24, 1985 *Post-Standard*.¹⁴⁴ The products made in Solvay were in less demand, in particular synthetic soda ash in the production of glass products. The Solvay plant was the only plant in the U.S. making synthetic soda. Soda ash was mined in other parts of the country. The cost of transporting it had kept Solvay viable in the past. Allied asserted that this weakness was the reason to exit from the soda ash business. They planned on closing the plant,

completely dismantling the buildings, and leaving the area a grassy field.¹⁴⁵ This was to happen within a years time, an ambitious time table.

The impact was going to be devastating to the Solvay community. The workers were in shock. Of the 1,400 workers, three quarters of them were the sole breadwinners in their families.¹⁴⁶ Wages at the plant averaged \$13 an hour with an annual payroll of \$38 million and additional area purchases approaching that figure.¹⁴⁷ These were wages that were going to be hard to replace. The community faced an unprecedented challenge. The Allied properties, and their assessed value of \$7.1 million, provided substantial revenues to the school, village and town.¹⁴⁸ For instance, Allied's \$465,169 payment to the Village of Solvay was equal to 47 percent of the property tax revenues. The \$1.2 million in school taxes provided 34 percent of the total tax. Taxes paid to the Town of Geddes totaled \$172, 519 or 11 percent of revenues.¹⁴⁹ It was an impact the small village was hard pressed to overcome.

The Steel Workers immediately tried to intercede. There had been no negotiation with the union prior to the announcement. Local union president Joseph Seymour, USWA Sub-District Director Joseph Ianucci, and District 4 Director Louis Thomas announced the union was willing to negotiate with the company to keep the plant open.¹⁵⁰ They were rebuffed by the company. There would be no negotiating the closing. Louis Thomas refused to believe it. "Allied said it was closing and nothing can be done about it. I won't accept that for the next nine months. I can't take for granted that there is nothing

we can do about it. What can be done to ensure that people have jobs? Save it? Sell it?"¹⁵¹ In the meanwhile, Joseph Seymour began negotiating the plant closing provisions concerning severance, pensions, medical, and education.¹⁵²

A community task force was formed from business, labor and politics to find a solution. They contracted with Cornell University to help analyze the markets for Solvay products. Their findings were that there was still a market for Solvay products.¹⁵³ Allied had begun in 1984 to sell off parts of the Solvay works. They sold the sodium bicarbonate plant on Willis Avenue to Church and Dwight.¹⁵⁴ Allied sold the large, limestone Jamesville Quarry to General Crushed Stone, and the Tully brine works to Linden Chemical and Plastics.¹⁵⁵ The sodium nitrate plant went to General Chemical. With the loss of a number of profitable products sold off, the soda ash business looked even worse. Richard Knowles, a USWA union representative at the time and the present USWA Sub-District Director, recalls the following events. "The Allied Corporation officers flew the task force on the corporate jet to Morristown, New Jersey. Edward Hennessey Jr. made a forceful presentation on the future of the Solvay plant. The Corporation demanded an unrealistic return on investment of 18 percent. The Solvay plant could not perform at that level considering the age of the plant and the need for additional investment. Allied just wanted out."¹⁵⁶ The reality of the situation was beginning to set in for the workers.

On September 19, 1985 Allied Corporation and Signal agree to merge and form Allied Signal. The new corporation would have \$13.5 billion in assets, \$17 billion in revenues, and 168,000 employees.¹⁵⁷ Richard Knowles contended that the closing of the Solvay works was one of the conditions of the merger. “Signal operated the Green River facility in the mid-west. Soda ash was mined there and Signal wanted Solvay closed to make Green River more profitable. I understood as a condition, the plant had to be the shutdown within a year of the merger announcement.”¹⁵⁸ On January 1, 1986 the layoffs began and the shutdown was completed by May. Within a few years the buildings were dismantled, even the magnificent Guild Hall, and much of the site was a grassy field.

Times were difficult in Solvay after the closing. Richard Knowles recalled; “Allied did help during and after the closing. The union negotiated a good severance package.”¹⁵⁹ New York State came in and helped the community with retraining money and grants for an Empowerment Zone. Mario Tomasetti, a local historian who was with the mayor’s office at the time, remembers; “The revenues were a big question then. The State came up with money to help cover shortfalls. The community was able to lure a number of smaller industries to the site with the tax credits and inexpensive power. The jobs didn’t pay what Allied paid, but they were jobs and we were able to shore up the tax base.”¹⁶⁰ The story of Allied had come to an end and an end of an era in Solvay.

General Electric

General Electric Syracuse was second only to Schenectady in employment in New York State. Total Syracuse payroll in 1966 totaled 17,000.¹⁶¹ In consumer and commercial electrical products there were fluctuations in production schedule. The military products also has fluctuating employment levels as contracts were started and completed. Thousands were laid off and then rehired. GE gradually shrunk the Syracuse operations through closings of product lines or transfer of the product lines to plants in the South or off-shore. By 1977, employment at GE-Syracuse had dwindled to 5,400 people.¹⁶² The employment levels did however stabilize during the Reagan years. The G.E-Syracuse Military equipment Operations Division had big sonar contracts for new Seawolf nuclear submarines and over the horizon radars.¹⁶³

At the same time G.E. would begin to exit home products production in Syracuse. In November of 1986, the company announced the closing of the Cathode Ray Tube plant and the elimination of 800 jobs.¹⁶⁴ This despite the high quality of the product and the productivity of the workers. The company wanted to exit the picture tube business to limit the risks of “changes in technology, competitors process and foreign currency exchange.”¹⁶⁵ GE wanted to continue selling televisions, however they contracted Matsushita to produce them. Matsushita could get picture tubes from China, India, or any low cost producer. General Electric began cutting the picture tube division

earlier in December 1984. They stopped the production of 9, and 13-inch tubes and eliminated 350 jobs.¹⁶⁶

Union officers at IUE Local #320 were limited in the things they could do. Union president Arthur Smith was informed of the severance package and benefits available. Retired Business Agent, John Stanley, stated; “The GE picture tube produced in Syracuse is the best in the country, the best in the world. But you can’t compete with the foreign market. GE still makes a profit from its tubes. But they’re not profitable enough. The current management policy is that if we’re not No.1, forget it.”¹⁶⁷ The Republican U.S. Representative, George C. Wortley, stated that the loss of the picture tube plant came as a result of domestic competition.¹⁶⁸ The workers would not be eligible for special federal benefits and extended unemployment.

By 1990 the Department of Defense contracts were coming to an end, and there was little work coming in to replace it in the Heavy Military Department. The company merged with RCA in 1986. There was a re-alignment of the Military Electronic Systems Operations. The result was the loss of 170 jobs to New Jersey and the closing of another building.¹⁶⁹ There were more job losses in the 1990’s. as GE shed 870 jobs in Heavy Military. David Costello, Business Agent and President of Local #320 blasted GE in the *Post Standard*. The layoff package, he contended, was a contractual issue that would be negotiated. Frustrated, Costello stated; “GE gave the people nothing..but the street GE went outside the company for

contracts on this work. They shifted the work, purchased parts, and farmed those jobs out.”¹⁷⁰

The Syracuse *Post-Standard* on November 24th, 1992 reported that G.E.-Syracuse and the other GE Aerospace plants had been sold to Martin Marietta. The new company had 94,000 employees in 37 states and 17 foreign countries.¹⁷¹ They also reported; “since 1990 G.E. has slashed the local workforce by 46% from 6,300 to 3,400 employees.”¹⁷² The General Electric era was over in Syracuse. David Costello met with the new Martin management team. He related the frustration of the rank and file about the erosion of jobs in Syracuse. He said; “We can’t do any worse than we’re doing now.”¹⁷³

On September 27, 1993, the huge two and a half story GE sign and logo that faced the New York State Thruway was taken down from Building #7.¹⁷⁴ Millions of people had driven by the welcoming beacon. The downsizing of the facility was nearly complete. There were additional layoffs. Martin Marietta merged with Lockheed to form Lockheed Martin. The Electronics Park was turned over to local government. They, in turn, leased some of the empty buildings to small or start up companies. The union workforce now numbers less than 300 members.

General Motors

The General Motors plant in Syracuse was Inland Fisher Guide. 1,400 UAW union workers produced high quality plastic parts for many GM product lines. These were good paying union jobs that paid on average \$19 an

hour in 1992. There was uncertainty in the future of General Motor plants across the United States. “Fisher Guide Syracuse is in good shape.” Said personnel director Joseph Welsh in November 1986.¹⁷⁵ The plant had done well in the corporate wide performance evaluations and had invested capital in the plant.

The GM-UAW partnership in 1987, with the aid of New York State Assemblyman Michael Bragman, applied for and received \$740,000. from the New York State Development Corporation for modernization and upgrading of the Syracuse plant.¹⁷⁶ According to State Economic Director Vincent Tese, General Motors invested \$10 million in state of the art computerized injection molding machines in Syracuse. UAW Regional Director, John S. Geer Jr., stated that; “The grant tells me that the workforce at Fisher Guide is much more secure today than it was Monday.”¹⁷⁷ In November 1987 GM applied and received another grant from the New York State Economic Development Skills Training Program. This \$360,000 was for training of the workers.¹⁷⁸ The State aid and the investment seemed to secure the future of the Syracuse plant.

General Motors announced plans in 1991 to close 21 plants in North America and reduce payroll by 74,000 by 1995. The corporation had lost \$1 billion in 1992.¹⁷⁹ The workers in Syracuse believed they would make the list to stay open. On December 3, 1992 Inland Fisher Guide public affairs director William Winters grimly announced the closing of the Syracuse plant by the

end of 1993.¹⁸⁰ This was one of seven announced plant closings affecting 18,000 workers. Two factors that the company gave for the closing were; Syracuse was too far from the assembly plants in the mid-west and the plant facility was outdated since it was built in 1952.

The UAW workers at Local # 854 strongly disagreed with that assessment. Rank and file worker, Timothy Kerr, recalls; “We were told for years that Syracuse was a good, productive plant. We were a middle of the pack performer. The new computerized (plastic injection) molders that were brought in must have increased productivity. The facility shouldn’t have been an issue, it was in good shape with easy access to rail and interstate transportation.”¹⁸¹ Local observers like Joseph Russo, vice president of economic development at the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, stated; “the parts will be outsourced to smaller more efficient suppliers.”¹⁸²

The loss of Inland Fisher Guide Syracuse was devastating to the workers, their families and their community. The loss of \$50 million in payroll and \$29 million additionally spent locally on supplies was a blow to Syracuse still in recession.¹⁸³ Inland Fisher Guide was the largest taxpayer in the Lyncourt School District. In 1992 they paid \$206,593 or 7.4 percent of the District’s budget. GM also paid Onondaga County \$197,506 in taxes in 1992.¹⁸⁴ GM-UAW workers gave generously to the United Way (\$181,000) and volunteered many hundreds of hours in community service.

The Inland Fisher Guide plant closed and General Motors was forced to clean up the site for dumped PCB contaminated oil, and other chemicals. GM could not find a buyer for the site. The interior of the plant was divided up to provide space for start-up industries, or an “incubator”. Assemblyman Michael Bragman, who went on to become the number two person in the New York State Assembly, attempted to get the training money back from GM but to no avail. There was interest in the Legislature to have corporations guarantee levels of employment if they take State funds and if they fail the funds revert back to the State. Timothy Kerr was one of the last toolmakers at Inland Fisher Guide. “My job in the last weeks was to prepare the dies for shipping. The dies were shipped to Mexico, not to some of the other Fisher plants in (Adrian) Michigan or in other mid-west states.”¹⁸⁵

Some workers charged that the UAW “sold them out.” The union and the company negotiated and signed a special plant closing agreement to expand the geographic areas so workers did get preferential hiring treatment. What this meant was if there was no GM plant in the region, the worker was not obligated to go outside the area. They could collect supplemental sub-pay that would amount to 85 percent of their regular wage. The normal region for Syracuse included only the GM-Delco plant in Rochester. However, the expanded area of 150 miles in this case included the Tonawanda (Buffalo area) GM-Powertrain plant, which had many job openings for the Syracuse workers.¹⁸⁶ The workers that refused to transfer

would be given a formal leave of absence for personal reasons and forgo any benefit eligibility.¹⁸⁷ Barb Kulak, a machine operator at GM for 16 years, “They just changed the rules as they went along, and we came out on the short end of the stick.”¹⁸⁸ Timothy Kerr recalls; “The union and the company cut a deal to expand the area because they wanted to limit the claims of people. If they went to the places that had job openings, it was good for GM. If the worker decided not to leave his home and family and become a GM gypsy, then he lost out on some benefits. I felt I had no choice but to go to Tonawanda. The UAW did not fight these closings. That’s the thing that really bothers me.”¹⁸⁹

The union president of #854, Jim Ciotti, defended the UAW position. “We had more job offers than we had people who wanted jobs. We’re not going to be paying people to sit home when there are other GM facilities that need people. That’s just draining the corporation, and if the company doesn’t make money then they’re just going to continue closing plants.”¹⁹⁰ This attitude was reflected by the UAW regional director, Tom Fricano. “That’s not fair criticism. Quite frankly, I’m a little tired of the people saying that their union sold them out.”¹⁹¹ The end came on October 28, 1993 and the GM workers had to get on with their lives.

Carrier

United Technologies won the bruising fight to capture Carrier. The consolidation of control continued over the next few years. There were many Carrier managers and technical people fired to make way for UTC-Hartford people. Syracusan Robert F. Allen was the head of Carrier division and stated; “UTC has no intention of moving any of Carrier’s six operational divisions from Syracuse.”¹⁹²

In 1985 the Sheet Metal Workers Local #527 was in serious trouble. The International was preparing to seize control of the local union. The Financial Secretary / Treasurer, John Denega, was found to have embezzled \$116,380. in union funds. This was the biggest theft of union money ever discovered by the Department of Labor in the upstate New York area.¹⁹³ The local union was in financial disarray and as a result there were no strike funds. The International also let it be known that the local would not receive strike funds.

The 1985 negotiations began with UTC stating on September 5 that Carrier workers were the highest paid in the air conditioning industry. United Technologies said they must cut cost, especially labor costs, to remain competitive.¹⁹⁴ The UTC proposal eliminated the Cost of Living Adjustment, a wage freeze for three years, and concessions on work rules and seniority. The company proposed modest increases in the pension plan, dental plan, starting an employee savings plan, and new plant closing language.¹⁹⁵ In a somewhat

stormy contract meeting on November 2, the members were given these facts by the negotiating committee. The committee refused to make a recommendation and the rank and file narrowly accepted the contract. The room air conditioner products made in Building (TR) 2 were moved to Brazil in 1986. The coil business in TR-5 also closed with no recourse. There was no negotiating with the company and the union lost 800 jobs.

Three years later UTC posted record profits in the second quarter. Income was \$196.2 million on \$4.5 billion of sales.¹⁹⁶ The 1988 contract negotiations again focused on concessions. The workers were not in the mood for more concessions and the closing of TR-2 had not set well with them. Union business manager, Robert Demmerle stated; “We took nearly a \$3 an hour cut in pay as well as losing our COLA and that’s enough.”¹⁹⁷ The company sought to eliminate the production bonus system. Production gains would be “shared” with the company in a new building-wide incentive called Improshare. This was to be paid to all hourly, salary, direct and indirect workers. The members of Local #527 rejected the contract 2 to 1. Carrier spokesman Rick Whitmyre responded by announcing that the contract was the “last, best, and final. The company is open for business and all our employees are welcomed to come to work.”¹⁹⁸ The strike held and Carrier came back with an enhanced offer that the members accepted. They accepted a buy out of the incentive system with a personalized bonus for production

workers. This, in effect, created a two-tier wage level since the new hires had no ability to acquire this bonus.

Carrier-UTC followed the General Electric model by dividing production globally into many markets and moving to right-to-work southern states. There was a partnership established with Daewoo in South Korea¹⁹⁹ as well as one with Toyo in Japan. The Carrier move to Brazil in May 1986 was a preview of partnerships and acquisitions in France, Spain, India, China and Mexico.²⁰⁰ Willis Carrier's company appeared to outgrow Syracuse. A statement by UTC chairman Harry Gray, at the time of the takeover, was that Carrier headquarters would stay in Syracuse forever. In 1990, UTC announced that Carrier Global Headquarters would move to Hartford, Connecticut.²⁰¹ In eleven years Carrier Syracuse experienced a decline in the workforce from 6,400 to 4,300 and it wasn't over yet.

Despite world-class quality, record productivity gains and investments, Carrier announced that they were closing the Carlyle Compressor plant in their newest building, CC-1.²⁰² This announcement in July 1990 eliminated 309 jobs with no chance of negotiating with the company. Carrier stated that the reason the CC-1 plant was closing was that the P model compressor produced there was not competitive in the residential market. Robert Demmerle said; "The Carlyle Compressor was a Cadillac and the Company wanted a Volkswagen, a cheaper, lower quality unit."²⁰² Demmerle was incensed with the closing because he said the company had reneged on an

agreement not to move another business unit out of Syracuse. The problems with the residential compressors had been known since the early 1980's. Carrier instead built an new 350,000 square foot plant in Arkadelphia, Arkansas to build a new style scroll compressor. "They are a bunch of liars." Demmerle declared. "They knew that the unwritten agreement after the other plant closings and concessions was that something would be brought to Syracuse. Here was the perfect opportunity and we got nothing."²⁰³ A rank and file worker, Jack Valenti's statement to the *Syracuse Post-Standard* was accurate and prophetic. "You see it's not about productivity or quality that caused this. They aren't satisfied with the bottom line profits."²⁰⁴

Carrier continued to downsize the Syracuse campus. The TR-1 plant with 543 jobs moved to Huntersville, North Carolina after a bruising battle with the union. On April 1,1998 Guy Fauconneau, Carrier president of North American operations, declared that they were "changing the focus of the rotary chiller business. The new, focused factory would produce chillers using lean manufacturing principles."²⁰⁵ The only way that Syracuse could save over 200 of those jobs would be to open the collective bargaining agreement that had just been approved in November 1997. The "addendum" proposed by the company became a hotly contested issue. The company's proposal; eliminated incentive pay for 14 months, changed the grievance process, reduced job classifications, subcontracted a majority of manufactured parts and allowed subcontractors to work on site, hire temporary workers for up to

six months a year, restricted the movement of workers between the buildings, established a different length of contract for the TR-1 workers, and restricted the workers from joining the other Sheet Metal Workers on the picket line if there were a work stoppage.²⁰⁶ The union leadership responded by not talking to Carrier. The fear was that opening dialog could be construed as agreeing to open the contract. Carrier could then state they negotiated to impasse and implement the changes. Herb Cooley, Carrier industrial relations manager, recalled in an interview; “The addendum was meant to be a starting point of discussion. The company wanted to stay in Syracuse. By failing to even begin talking, the union forced Carrier to do what it had to for the chiller business.”²⁰⁷

The conflict between Carrier and the union continued over a year. The union filed labor charges, there were restraining orders, the purchase of the North Carolina building, a flurry of law suits, the moving of some operations to North Carolina, and more legal maneuverings. There was also a change in union leadership as Bruce Evans was elected business manager. Finally in March 1999, Local #527 and Carrier agreed to a settlement agreement. Evans recalls; “This \$5 million settlement was the best we could do. The company stated we could wait for the next round of court dates and this offer was gone. Even if we won the next round in Federal Court and Carrier was ordered to return the business to Syracuse, they claimed they would simply

exit the business. It was never coming back.”²⁰⁸ Union employment at the Carrier site presently has dwindled to 1,250.

The New Economy

The American economy began a transition that fundamentally changed the focus from a goods producing, manufacturing sector to service producing sectors. Employment in the service sector, for example, grew 182 percent since 1960 while employment in durable goods production increased only 19 percent over the same period.²⁰⁹ The development of new technologies in information, communication, design, and production revolutionized how goods and services work in the economy. A majority of newly created jobs featured a variety of tasks and are less scripted in their job descriptions.²¹⁰

Productivity also increased along with patents and copyrights. For example, speech synthesis and voice recognition programs changed telephone communications. There may be fewer telephone operators, but an increased need for technical support and more skilled workers to utilize it. In manufacturing, computerized machine tools could replace an entire department of manual machines. The shift from “high volume to high value” according to former Labor Secretary Robert Reich has been a rough one.²¹¹ Reich contended that the increasingly globalized economy evolved into something new. Instead of a product import-export exchange, trade became a “global web” of components, information and technologies that transcend

borders. I offer the 104-millimeter screw compressor made at Carrier, Syracuse as an example. Some critical components are made in Syracuse. Some of these components are sent to Shanghai, China to a smaller sister plant. The twin screws are made in England, motors from the mid-west and bearings from Canada. These Syracuse assembled compressors go to 30-ton chillers made in McMinnville, Tennessee and Carrier France as well as applications in Germany.

However, the occupations projected to experience the greatest growth throughout this decade are not all technical or knowledge based. The top ten occupations according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics are; food service, customer service, registered nurse, retail sales, computer support specialists, cashiers (except gaming), office clerks (general), security guards, computer software engineers/applications, and waiter/waitresses.²¹² For the most part these are not occupations unions have successfully organized. In this economy despite the loss of 165,000 jobs in 12 months ending September 2001, employment in managerial, technical, and professional occupations grew by 636,000-jobs.²¹³ “At 80.5 million, (this sector) currently accounts for 60 percent of all jobs in the American workforce.”²¹⁴

This new economy has created millions of new jobs. Many are in the category that Reich referred to as “symbolic analysts” or knowledge workers involved in “problem-solving, problem-identifying, and strategic-brokering activities.”²¹⁵ There have also been millions of jobs created in the lower end of

the economic strata. Employment in the contingent, or as the Department of Labor refers to it the “help supply industry”, grew to 3 million in 1998.²¹⁶ Another example is retail sales added 583,000 jobs in the year ending September 2001.²¹⁷

Despite this remarkable growth in the 1990’s and into 2000, the income gap has widened considerably. In a recent study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Economic Policy Institute, 45 states have widened their gaps between the high-income and low-and middle-income families in the past 20 years.²¹⁸ New York has the dubious distinction of having the widest gap of income inequality with the richest 5 percent increasing income 68 percent and the poorest 5 percent actually *losing* 6 percent of income.²¹⁹

What are the ramifications of the demographics of the “new economy” to organized labor including the Syracuse labor community? What are the strategies being used to build a labor movement for the 21st century?

New Voices and New Labor

In October of 1995 the president of Service Employees International Union, John J. Sweeney, was elected the president of the AFL-CIO. The “New Voices” ticket also included Richard Trumka, from UMW for Secretary/Treasurer, and ASFME’s Linda Chavez Thompson for Executive Vice-President.²²⁰ They defeated Lane Kirkland’s hand picked successor Tom Donahue. The excitement of that campaign generated renewed interest in the

labor movement. Sweeney challenged the paralysis that had crippled organized labor. The concept that they could not organized without changes in labor law and labor law couldn't be changed because labor was weak politically. The New Voices called for organized labor to mobilize politically, relentlessly organize, and building bridges with labor's allies. Building a "seamless garment (by) organizing for economic security and social justice in our workplaces, in our communities, and every level of the political process."²²¹

The political disaster of 1994 was the defeat of many liberal Democrats in Congress and new Republican majorities in both houses. The election cycle in an off-year election typically loses 15 to 25 seats for the party in power. The House campaign strategy, engineered by Newt Gingrich, resulted in a 52 seat shift to the Republicans.²²² The policies that became the Contract with America were unabashedly pro-corporate, and anti-regulatory. Those policies were causing cuts in social services and dismantling the social safety net. Organized labor soon felt the heat as legislation designed to dismantle OSHA, FLSA and NLRA was introduced.

On Monday, February 19, 1996 the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Gingrich came to Syracuse. He first stopped off at Syracuse University's Maxwell School. In a lecture that was linked up with the University of Texas-Austin, Gingrich lectured on the American economy. "America is a wildcatting, individualistic, entrepreneurial culture. A country

that is aggressively entrepreneurial has to think differently. Government has to be driven by the people and communities, not bureaucracy.”²²³ He attended a \$250 a plate fund-raiser at the Hotel Syracuse for Republican Congressman James Walsh’s re-election campaign. He raised \$150,000. for the good soldier Walsh.²²⁴ On a typically frigid-cold and snowy day, thousands converged to the Hotel area to protest the visit of Speaker Gingrich. The Speaker predictably scoffed at the rabble. Gingrich was a perfect target from the political right. He was controversial and arrogant. In the street, thousands of people from different backgrounds gathered together. They listened to speakers from organized labor, community groups, student and environmental groups. There were folk singers, street theater and a soup line, all to draw attention to the gathering of protesters. This was a significant event that affected the labor movement in Syracuse. The rally was a brainchild of the United Steel Workers of America. The enthusiasm of a high profile action became infectious. Community groups, trade unions, production unions, service unions and public sector unions would all begin to be aware of each other’s issues and how much they truly had in common. There was a real sense of shared interests with the other groups and standing together in the snow. The rally came off perfectly.

The Gingrich visit invigorated the sedentary labor movement in Syracuse. The Central Labor Council began to come to life. A full time field coordinator, Stephanie Walker, was hired to help in this work. It became

clear after visits by Sweeney and Trumpka that organized labor was changing tactics. Members were again becoming active and appointing more delegates. These activists began coordinating efforts and working on events and actions, as well as assisting community groups. Actions such as; Workers' Memorial Day which honors the deceased area workers killed on the job, leafleting in support of the strawberry workers and the plight of agricultural workers, anti-sweatshop info-picketing at local department stores that were selling sweatshop garments. These, and many other actions, raised local attention to these issues and enabled the CLC to get press packs out and into the news cycle.

Labor and Politics

It was the 1996 Congressional elections that placed union activity on an upward trajectory. The Greater Syracuse Labor Council endorsed former Cortland Mayor and Cortland County Democratic Chair Marty Mack as the Democratic candidate for the 25th Congressional seat held by Walsh. The dynamic Mack was a sharp contrast to the dour Walsh. James Walsh however was a hometown Syracusan from a prominent political family and Mack was from the sparsely populated neighboring county.

The AFL-CIO's strategy in 1996 was to energize the Democratic union base, stop the Republican revolution, and regain Congress. Seats like the 25th would be contested. Even if the chances of ousting the incumbent weren't good, a race like this would tie up money and time that could be spent on

another race. The AFL-CIO sent Robert Mechum, an experienced campaign coordinator, to Syracuse to help the local unions better assist the candidate. The local union political committees gained valuable knowledge on how to run a political campaign. This experience would serve the unions well in the future.

Mack's campaign faded down the stretch. In part because of the counter-attack of the Republican National Committee and their allies on organized labor. Even though the election results were Walsh 55 percent and Mack 44 percent Walsh wasn't in a conciliatory mood toward the "union bosses and their distortions trying to tell the rank-and-file how to vote."²²⁵ The 1996 elections marked a return to the game for organized labor. The AFL-CIO alone spent \$35 million on TV and grassroots efforts with mixed results.²²⁶ Labor made a difference in a number of races, but the House and Senate remained in Republican hands. However, from the AFL-CIO to the local unions, organized labor began to redefine labor issues and regain the labor supporters.

By the election of 2000 organized labor was making a difference in many elections. The labor movement mounted the largest get out the vote (GOTV) mobilization in history. Labor "registered 2.3 million new union household voters-up from half a million in 1998, made 8 million phone calls to union households, and distributed 14 million leaflets at union job sites."²²⁷ Over 100,000 union GOTV volunteers from labor councils, local unions, and

state federations furiously worked to deliver the vote for candidates and on ballot initiatives. For example, in Michigan union members cast 43 percent of the votes cast statewide and in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Missouri union household voters made up 30 to 32 percent of the voting electorate.²²⁸ The mobilization and coordination of pro-labor forces was the success story of the 2000 election.

Organizing

The Sweeny led AFL-CIO made organizing a top priority. They pledged an all out effort to reinvigorate organizing by having affiliates substantially increase resources for organizing. The AFL-CIO created a new Organizing Department with a \$20 million investment and challenged each union to dedicate 30 percent or more of their budgets on organizing.²²⁹ The Federation began a program called Union Summer. This program accepted college students, union members and activists to become assistants in organizing campaigns for workplace rights and social justice. The Union Summer Activists (USAs) are provided housing and a \$210 a week stipend for the three weeks they are in the program. Since 1996, 2,300 activists have been through the program.²³⁰ The success of Union Summer also led to Senior Summer, with retired union members helping in campaigns, and Seminary Summer with seminarians and other religious people learning the issues of working people.

The AFL-CIO announced in 1999 the aim of organizing a million new union members a year.²³¹ This ambitious goal has not been met in the Sweeny years. The Federation used persuasion, and pressure of all kinds with affiliates to step up efforts. The numbers show that despite increases in 2000, organized labor membership actually dropped 68,000 in the last 5 years. Union density dropped from 14.9 percent in 1995 to 13.5 percent in 2001.²³² The labor union affiliates and the local unions have not all done their share. There are 66 affiliated unions but only 18 member unions accounted for 98 and 97 percent of all organizing in 1998 and 1999 respectively.²³³ One of the major victories for organized labor came from SEIU. The Service Employees scored impressive representation elections on the West Coast, 75,000 home care workers in Los Angeles County alone.²³⁴ They were also able to utilize large scale organizing tactics successfully in San Francisco and Seattle.

Syracuse Organizing-Landis Plastics

In this period there were some organizing victories in Syracuse. The Teamsters Local #1149 became the representatives of the drivers at Onondaga Beverage. CSEA Local 1000/AFSCME was successful, with the help of local clergy, in organizing municipal employees in the DeWitt suburb. SEIU organized a parking garage and a nursing home. SEIU Local 200 United was able to obtain an agreement with Syracuse University to be neutral in the effort to organize the remaining non-union workers, and to allow graduate employees to join the union.²³⁵ It was the effort of the United

Steel Workers of America and the workers at a plastics plant that was the highest profile and symbolic of the problems of organizing.

In the aftermath of the closing of Allied, great efforts were made to bring alternative manufacturing to Solvay. Landis Plastics Inc. appeared to fit the bill. The plastic producer made containers for Cool Whip, yogurt, and other food items. Based in Chicago Ridge, Illinois, LPI was a privately held corporation founded by Henry Landis II in 1954.²³⁶ In February 1993, Landis and New York State announced an agreement to locate a \$14 million factory in Solvay. Governor Mario Cuomo announced the State would provide \$1.9 million in low cost loans and grants. The next day Landis applied to the Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency (OCIDA) for \$6.5 million in taxable bonds to finance plant construction.²³⁷ The County further agreed to help finance the demolition of old Allied buildings left on the site. OCIDA contributed \$300,000 for tearing the Allied Research Building and the Detergent Laboratory Building.²³⁸ In addition, Solvay Electric issued \$3 million in bonds to upgrade their facilities in order to produce low cost electricity to new manufacturers.

The promise of 400 stable, good-paying jobs seemed too good to be true to a community rocked by plant closings and down-sizings. Henry Landis II promised that average wages would be in the \$13 an hour range with an additional \$7-\$12 an hour in benefits.²³⁹ There were plenty of workers in the region's labor pool with plastic injection molding experience, especially with

the closing of General Motors. In October 1994 Landis Plastics Inc.-Syracuse opened for business.

Problems at the plant soon began to arise. The hiring practices targeted single females with dependents. These workers were easier to manipulate because they really needed the job. Women comprised 98% of the lowest paid production jobs and were barred from moving into higher paying technical or trade jobs.²⁴⁰ The average pay on the production line was \$6.75 an hour, but the workers were subject to an arbitrary demerit system that routinely lowered hourly pay as a disciplinary measure. For example a worker with a sick child that had to leave work early for doctor appointments could face a cut pay of \$.50 an hour. Despite the lingering effects of recession, there was a high level of turnover at the plant as hundreds came and left the factory. The turnover rate of 77 percent was the highest of any similar factory in New York State.²⁴¹

The LPI safety records also came under scrutiny. Kathy Saumier got a job at Landis in 1995. She soon became angry at the poor training and the speed-up conditions. The working conditions resulted in many of her co-workers getting injured. She recalled arguing with a supervisor that a new worker she was training wasn't ready for a busy labeling process. This worker came to Saumier crying and fearful of getting hurt. Saumier's concerns were brushed aside and her co-worker ended up getting injured. "They treat the people on the floor like slaves. Everyday I'd listen to the

women there complaining. They're afraid of losing their jobs. Someone had to do something."²⁴² So many people were getting hurt that Kathy came to a decision to be a whistle-blower. She became known as the Norma Rae of Syracuse, a reference to the heroine of a film about a working-class union organizer.²⁴³ Saumier enlisted in the USWA organizing campaign and contacted the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Investigations by OSHA revealed a shocking injury rate. In 1996 there were 90 injuries including fractures and back sprains, and four workers had suffered amputations.²⁴⁴ This injury rate was 7 times the national average and the amputation rate was 100 times higher than in a New York factory.²⁴⁵ The OSHA investigators uncovered a pattern of deliberately not reporting injuries and a callous disregard of worker safety. There were 63 injuries in 1995 and 1996 that had not been properly recorded in the OSHA 200 log, and LPI had been specifically warned about this in previous inspections.²⁴⁶ For this violation and a list of 70 flagrant deficiencies, LPI was fined \$720,000. in January 1997. The New York State Workers Compensation Board also took action against Landis Plastics in November 1996. LPI was fined \$48,000. for not reporting 21 work related injuries to the state.²⁴⁷ No employer in New York State had ever been assessed a penalty such as this. Further investigations began; OSHA referred this case to the Justice Department for possible criminal charges, the New York State Attorney General looked into additional charges, and the United States Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission became interested in the charges of gender discrimination.

Kathy Saumier, the whistle-blower, became a target at work. Landis fired her on February 10, 1997 alleging that she had sexually harassed a male co-worker. Landis human resource manager, Linda Russell, told Saumier the charges against her, but refused to tell who filed them or when it occurred. Saumier's termination came a week after Landis notified OSHA of their interest to contest the \$720,000. fine. Since Saumeir filed the complaint she had the right to have her lawyer (USWA lawyer Mairead Connor) cross-examine the company representatives during the hearing.²⁴⁸ As an ex-employee, she lost that right. There were other open union supporters that were fired. Clara Sullivan and Richard Bentley were also terminated on sexual harassment charges.²⁴⁹

The Syracuse Labor Religion Coalition became involved in the Landis Plastics campaign. Central New York clergy; Bishop Thomas Costello, Rabbi Daniel Jezer, and Reverend Dale Hindmarsh attempted to meet with Landis officials but were rebuffed. Bishop Costello stated; "All summer (1996) long we have listened to the workers here at Landis Plastics. Their stories of abuse, discrimination and injury have touched our hearts."²⁵⁰ The clergy began a prayer vigil outside the plant every Thursday to protest the treatment of the workers like "dismissing pregnant workers to cut health-care costs and dismissing who were getting workers' compensation for

broken bones and back injuries.”²⁵¹ The Workers’ Memorial Day rally and march on April 28, 1996 began at St. Cecilia’s Catholic Church through Solvay to a media event in front of the Milton Avenue plant. Landis Plastics appeared to be on the ropes.

Despite the overwhelming bad press, fines and investigations, Landis Plastics defeated the USWA organizing campaign. LPI management used intimidation in the form of disciplining or firing of the union supporters and coercion in the form of mandatory meetings that preached anti-union information. Landis made clear the possibility of closing the plant or cutting the workforce if the union was voted in. The company was able to negotiate down some fines. For example, OSHA dropped the \$720,000 fine to \$425,520 because Landis began putting in safety and recording procedures in place. Labor Secretary, Alexis Herman stated; “I am pleased that Landis has agreed to resolve this matter in a way that will ensure maximum protection for its workforce. All workers should have the assurance that the place that they work is safe and healthful.”²⁵² The NLRB suit concerning unfair labor practices and wrongful terminations were fought and delayed by Landis. The high employment turnover rate worked in favor of the company. Many of the new workers coming in were screened and given anti-union indoctrination. By the time the company allowed the terminated workers back, they could no longer affect the organizing effort. Richard Knowles, USWA Sub-district Director, was actively involved in the Landis campaign. “We weren’t getting

anywhere with the majority core of the Landis workers. They were strongly anti-union. The normal organizing campaign may last a few weeks to a few months, but this one was dragging on for over two years. We spent over \$500,000. with no election in sight. The decision was made to let it go.”²⁵³The Landis’ were the most vilified and defiantly anti-union characters on the Syracuse scene since James Rand. They were able to delay and subvert the process and intent of representation elections.

In 1999, the USWA tried to organize another area company. Eagle Comptronics was a privately held company that produced devices for the cable television industry. Growing from 25 people in 1978 to 600 employees. The workers at this Buckley Road facility requested the assistance of the USWA in organizing their plant. District Director, Louis Thomas, sent a group to Syracuse. Union supporters concentrated on working conditions and the jobs that people do, and paid sick days, pensions, and profit sharing. The company had “informational” meetings on how the union would negatively affect the workplace. Anti-union activists pushed the existing medical plan and the 4 percent raise that everyone got in 2000. The campaign had been going for six months when the representative election was held on April 18, 2000 and the union lost by a substantial margin. I asked Richard Knowles what the difference between the great organizing battles of the 1930’s and 1940’s, and the difficulties of organizing today. Clearly discouraged, he said; “Back then the people had full heads and empty stomachs. They were close

enough to the Great Depression to understand the power of sticking together. Now, the opposite is true. I don't mean to sound cynical, but people get a \$6 to \$8 dollar an hour job and think that they have it made."²⁵⁴

The difficulties of organizing workers were felt on a national scale at Nissan in Smyrna, Tennessee. In a high profile election, the workers voted against union representation by 3,103 to 1,486.²⁵⁵ The most powerful union of autoworkers was unable to make its case concerning worker safety, the treatment of employees and retirement benefits. The UAW Organizing Department faced anti-union tactics by Nissan that included threats of closing, and 4 to 5 hour mandatory anti-union meetings. Bob King, the head organized, said; "Nissan management's law-breaking and the campaign of fear and intimidation offers dramatic proof of the obstacles workers must overcome in the face of a hostile employer."²⁵⁶ The UAW organizers vowed to begin the campaign again. However, the union is yet to organize any of the Japanese "transplant" auto plants in the United States.

Conclusion

The main question of this thesis has been; given the difficulties encountered by the labor movement over time, does the labor history of Syracuse, New York reflect the struggles of organized labor of the past one hundred and fifty years? A number of events have been examined, such as strikes and closings, along with trends in areas of organizing and inter-union conflict. The artisans and craftsmen joined together to form associations.

Their labor served as a bond that tied them together to stabilize the labor market, and their compensation. Unions formed and assisted with establishing a formal relationship with employers. The thriving union scene would wane in the tumultuous depressions and panics. Workers in the industrial age, in Syracuse and many other places, took to the street to fight for the right to organize. The inter-union conflict and malaise chipped away at the effectiveness of unions. The economic trends further deteriorated the position of organized labor. The labor history of Syracuse does indeed fit into this pattern of events.

The conclusion of this thesis draws inexorably to the future. Is the Syracuse labor community prepared for the challenges of the new century? Are these challenges representative and reflective of what workers are facing now and tomorrow? The workers of today are constantly pushed and prodded for greater productivity, greater cost reduction, and generating greater profit for the employer. How do they regain a balanced work, home and community life?

The AFL-CIO is the single largest labor organization in the United States. It represents, through the 66 affiliate unions, 13 million of organized labor's 16 million workers. The Federation established 50 state federations (and one in Puerto Rico), as well as 625 central local councils.²⁵⁷ Recently there has been an effort, called the New Alliance, to coordinate the activities and complement the strengths of the CLCs. The new regional groups are

called labor federations. The Central New York Labor Federation includes Utica, Ithaca, and Oswego area CLCs. The AFL-CIO also maintains various Departments that address the concerns of certain sectors (such as Building Trades), and also the areas of Organizing, and Working Women. The Working Women Department, headed by Karen Nussbaum, is America's largest women's organization since the AFL-CIO represents 5.5 million women. The Federation is the centerpiece in the progressive movement for worker's rights, for the organized and unorganized. Despite the dilemma in union density and raw numbers, the AFL-CIO has the moral authority and the resources to lead a new progressive labor-community alliance.

This new emphasis on mobilization and organizing has reinvigorated organized labor in the community. A program began in early 1997. CLCs began planning through collective action to "help bring economic security and justice to working families and a healthier political and social environment to the community as a whole."²⁵⁸ The resulting framework became the Syracuse effort to rebuild the labor movement from the grassroots. At the 2001 AFL-CIO Convention in Las Vegas, Syracuse along with Cleveland, Denver, Houston, Kansas City, Mo., Los Angeles, San Diego, St. Paul, Minn., and Washington D.C., were recognized as Union Cities. The CLCs were praised for achieving that outreach and mobilization of union and community activists that achieved positive results.

One of those results in mobilizing is a program called Street Heat that turned out many activists to aid in organizing, rallies and events. Another was that Syracuse labor turned up the intensity in every election cycle since 1996. Candidates for City, County and State offices as well as regional offices have come to the CLC for endorsement. They must sign a right to organize pledge and support workers trying to form workers. “Where elected officials respected our ability to turn out workers and contributions, now we have moved to the next level.” Said field coordinator Mark Spadafore.²⁵⁹ Another result was the Central New York labor community added active chapters of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute, and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. The outreach extended to the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, the Syracuse Labor-Religion Coalition, and student anti-sweatshop groups at Syracuse University.

The public opinion of organized labor has increased steadily over the past few years. According to a Gallup poll, the approval rating of 66 percent in 1999 is a 10-point increase from the low of 55 percent from August 1981.²⁶⁰ There was a 6-point increase from 1997 through 1999 alone. This renewed public view has positive effects when unions engage in organizing campaigns, strikes, or community actions. There were intriguing patterns of approval in the poll. For example; between 1981 and 1999 the percentage of women approving of labor unions increased from 59 to 71 percent, regionally approval increased in the South from 49 to 65 percent and the Midwest from

54 to 72 percent, and among non-whites from 63 to 78 percent.²⁶¹ The significance of this positive opinion means there has been increased identification with the economic and political goals of the labor movement.

It can be said from the polling numbers that organized labor has been making inroads with working people. Part of this can be credited to the widening income gap between the haves and have-nots in this country. A recent study entitled “Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends” by the Economic Policy Institute and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities addressed the income gap. In the past twenty years, all but five states have had historic widening of the income gap. Not only has the income disparity grown between the high-income and low-income, but the gap between average-income and high-income has grown significantly.²⁶² The 2000 Census statistics show that the booming 1990s left Central New York with a less prosperous middle class and more urban dwellers in poverty. The poverty rate rose reaching 12.1 percent in the region and 27.3 percent in the city of Syracuse.²⁶³ Many of the jobs that have replaced the disappearing manufacturing jobs were low-wage. The higher wage technology or service jobs were out of reach for most impoverished Syracusans due to educations and skills.

Contrast this data with the compensation packages of corporation executives and it becomes clearer who is making the money. It is becoming clear to many that large-scale layoffs (even at formerly no-layoff paternalistic

corporations like Kodak and IBM) are good for the corporation bottom line and executive paychecks, but bad for workers and their communities. In 2001, CEOs of companies that announced layoffs of 1,000 or more workers were rewarded with 80 percent higher earnings. These hard-working job-cutters averaged \$23.7 million in total compensation in 2000, compared with \$13.1 million for CEOs as a whole.²⁶⁴ The Federal minimum wage is \$5.15 an hour and it takes an Act of Congress to raise it. If the minimum wage had grown at the same 571percent rate as executive compensation since 1990, it would be \$25.50 now.²⁶⁵

One of the hallmarks of the labor movement has been the ability to adapt and persevere. There is no single strategy that can address the concerns of the entire workforce. Different strategies and constant presence in workplace issues will be needed. The AFL-CIO, affiliates, and other unions must continue to press relentlessly to organize. It will not be easy. The Bureau of National Affairs reports that of the 2,849 NLRB representation elections held in 2000, 52.1 percent were successful.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, workers are facing increased threats of closing and relocating to intimidate them during organizing campaigns. In those campaigns, the success rate drops to 38 percent.²⁶⁷ If the success rate is 50 percent, then the unions need to double their organizing efforts in all areas. Manufacturing, public sector, temporary workers, service, agricultural, along with white-collar professional and

technical workers all must be included in the forward moving labor movement.

In the end, will all these organizing, mobilizing, political and coalition-building efforts be successful? There are pundits on the right and in the center who believe the labor movement has expired. "America today is more than ever an equal opportunity society, where individuals can raise on their merits, a condition that makes unions irrelevant."²⁶⁸ The political right and their allies, the National Right to Work organizations, fight to push deceptively named "Right to Work" "Paycheck Protection" and "Team Act" laws federally and in the states. "Big Labor's power in the government and private sector rests on the twin pillars of compulsory unionism: monopoly bargaining and forced payment of dues."²⁶⁹ Many centrist, free-trading, New Democrats believe that organized labor's role in the New Economy will be providing training. Through apprenticeship and union-based training programs unions can return to a hiring hall supplier of skilled workers.²⁷⁰

I believe organized labor will survive and succeed. Labor history, especially the labor history of Syracuse, has shown that people are willing to fight for what they believe is right. Examples in this thesis include; the hard men of the salt fields walked off their jobs when they were wronged, the bakers and their battle with the boss bakers would not accept a cut in pay, the Hod Carriers took their fight to the street, so did the Remington Rand workers, as well as Kathy Saumier and the Landis workers. In many if the

case studies I examined the results were defeat or mixed results. People of meager means were willing to risk everything for fair treatment and their right for dignity in the workplace. The corporations may market employment with them as a golden opportunity, but millions of workers know different. The white-collar workers have seen “that corporate structures and priorities have transformed the workplace into a new sweatshop. (In which they) toil in a contemporary business culture of overwork, stress, insecurity, and under-reward.”²⁷¹ The union blue-collar workers have been downsized, and their work outsourced to smaller non-union low-wage workers. The low-wage workers live the effects of poverty, while business interests fight the living wage and increases in the minimum wage. These are the people that will become organized. They will write the next chapter of labor history.

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