

PART I



CHAPTER 1

The Content and Uses of Trade Union Publications

These volumes are addressed to those who want to understand the behavior of American trade unions. An understanding of trade unionism may be sought out of sheer scientific curiosity or for immediate administrative purposes. A trade union official preparing for a convention discussion of some policy problem may want to trace the previous discussions of this subject in his own union or to find out how the problem has been dealt with in other unions. An employer confronted by a new type of union demand may want to discover why the union attaches importance to the demand and how far the demand has been granted by other employers in his own industry or other industries. A labor relations board, engaged in untangling a jurisdictional dispute between rival unions, may want to learn the past history of the dispute. Research departments of business firms, unions and government agencies may thus find it necessary to undertake broad investigations of trade unionism in addition to the studies carried on by research workers in universities.

The general accessibility of trade union publications makes them a useful source for almost any investigation of union behavior. On some subjects they contain far more material than could readily be assembled in any other way. This becomes increasingly true as an investigation extends into past periods which are reflected only dimly and incorrectly in men's memories.

The object of this chapter is first, to describe briefly the types of material contained in the official publications of international unions¹ and second, to discuss the relevance of this material to the main questions which may be asked concerning trade unionism. A particular effort will be made to distinguish investigations for which union publications are the main source of information from investigations in which their role is to supplement information obtained from other sources.

The content of trade union publications differs greatly from union to union and from time to time within the same union.

1. Because of its wide currency among trade unionists and students of trade unionism, the term "international union" is used throughout this study to include both true internationals, i. e., unions with one or more Canadian locals, and national unions whose membership is confined to the United States.

The summary statements made below should be taken as no more than general tendencies from which a particular union may deviate widely. The reader interested in a particular subject or a particular union must go to later chapters for a detailed analysis of the publications. This summary can only introduce the reader to these chapters; it cannot serve as a substitute for them.

THE CONTENT OF THE PUBLICATIONS: CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS

Most of the unions studied held annual conventions during their early years. As the unions grew in size and strength, however, the interval between conventions tended to increase. The increased cost of assembling delegates from hundreds of locals in all parts of the country was no doubt partly responsible for this tendency. The development of a full-time staff of national officials with wide discretion to manage union affairs between conventions, and in many unions the adoption of the initiative and referendum technique for deciding policy issues, also made frequent conventions less essential to union government. Apart from the state and national federations, which meet annually, annual conventions are now found chiefly among the smaller or younger internationals. Among the large and well-established internationals biennial conventions predominate, triennial or quadrennial conventions are not unusual, and even longer intervals are sometimes found.

Almost of all of the unions have published some account of their convention proceedings from the very beginning. While the unions remained small, these accounts were relatively short. The early proceedings of the Railway Conductors, for example, contained about twenty pages, as compared with some fifteen hundred pages at the present time. Most of the early proceedings included the reports of international officers and standing committees, a list or summary of the resolutions introduced in the convention and a notation of the action taken on them. The discussion of delegates on these matters was reported only in summary form, if at all. As growing union strength made more money available for publication, however, more and more unions began to publish verbatim reports of convention discussions. This tendency has been particularly marked since 1920, and at present more than half of the unions studied publish verbatim proceedings. Covering a convention which usually lasts from one to two weeks, these proceedings frequently run to four or five hundred pages. In the

building trades, railroad trades, clothing trades, and coal mining unions the proceedings sometimes exceed a thousand pages. The unions which do not publish verbatim reports usually include in their proceedings speeches to the convention by visitors and major union officers, reports of officers and important committees, a list of the resolutions submitted and the action taken on them, and an account of the routine business transacted by the convention.

Officers' Reports

The reports of officers and committees are usually the most valuable part of the convention proceedings for the student of union behavior. The number of reports presented and the types of material which they contain vary a great deal. Material which in one union appears in the president's report may in another union appear in the reports of vice-presidents and organizers, or of the executive council, or of the legislative committee. In the eighties and nineties, when the secretary-treasurer was in many unions the principal paid officer and the president was only the nominal head, the secretary-treasurer's report contained general information which would now appear in the president's report. It is necessary, therefore, to discuss these reports as a group and to arrange the discussion on the basis of types of information rather than on the basis of authorship.

The officers' reports usually give a very detailed account of the current condition and problems of the union and of the significant developments since the last convention, including such matters as: organizing activities and their results; membership changes; locals admitted and suspended; problems and achievements of particular locals or districts of the union; changes in employment, wages and conditions in the industry; the wage program and wage achievements of the union; disputes adjusted and agreements negotiated with employers; the history and outcome of important strikes; the administration of benefit plans; jurisdictional disputes with other unions; problems of relations with the AFL or CIO headquarters; arbitration awards, decisions of government agencies and court decisions affecting the union; problems of internal union government; and other problems confronting the international organization as a whole. While most of this ground is usually covered in the president's report, a great deal of detailed local information is often found in reports of organizers, district presidents and international vice-presidents with regional responsibilities.

Almost all of the unions studied publish financial statements, usually in the report of the treasurer or secretary-treasurer, and these statements are customarily audited. The danger of misappropriation of funds was illustrated repeatedly in early union experience, and international officers were gradually hedged about with constitutional provisions requiring multiple signature of checks, use of approved depositories, preparation of periodic financial statements and auditing of these statements by a public accountant. About three-quarters of the unions analyzed, including almost all of the older unions, publish very detailed reports showing amounts received from each local; the distribution of receipts among the general, benefit, strike, reserve and other types of union fund; and expenditures from each fund, detailed by objects and months or quarters. This material is sufficiently complete that one could write from it a satisfactory financial history of international unions in the United States. The financial condition of local unions is in general not reported in the publications of the international. Some internationals, however, have provided for a regular audit of the accounts of locals by an international official, and summaries of the position of each local are sometimes published either in the convention proceedings or the union journal.

Most of the unions studied have engaged in attempts to influence federal and state legislation. There was a marked increase in this type of activity during and after the first World War and another marked increase after 1933. Unions of government employees, which must look primarily to legislation rather than collective bargaining for betterment of their members' condition, devote their conventions very largely to a discussion of statutes recently enacted, or pending, or desired by the union. The railroad unions are also particularly active in promoting legislation, as are the unions of seamen, marine engineers, coal miners, retail clerks, barbers, and a number of other groups. The report of the president, the legislative representative or the legislative committee usually discusses in some detail the measures which the union has supported and opposed since the last convention. There is discussion also of problems which have arisen in the administration of existing labor legislation and of the ways in which the union has attempted to influence the administrative process. With the rapid growth of labor legislation in recent years, problems of interpreting and enforcing existing laws have grown steadily more important relative to problems of securing new legislation. Interest in federal legislation appears to have increased relative to interest in state legislation, but this impression may arise from the fact that

international union activities in Washington are more fully reported in their publications than activities at lower levels of government. Efforts to influence state legislation and municipal ordinances are frequently focussed through state and city federations of labor, many of which publish no proceedings and none of whose publications was included in the present study.

In some of the older craft unions, notably in the building trades, the officers' reports contain much detailed information on the administration of the union since the last convention. Perhaps most important are the details of appeals by members from decisions of local officers and the disposition of these appeals by the international officers. Some unions reprint virtually every letter which has been exchanged in connection with appeal cases. Other types of material frequently included are rulings by the international officers on disputed points of union law; lists of members admitted, fined and suspended; correspondence of the international officers with government agencies and other outside groups; and administration of the benefit funds, including in some cases the name of every member to whom benefits were paid, the amount paid and the circumstances. In most of the building trades unions this material constitutes more than ninety per cent of the convention proceedings and is very largely responsible for their formidable size.

This is by no means a complete enumeration of the content of officers' and committee reports. Some convention proceedings contain reports from the editor of the union journal, the general counsel of the union, the committee on officers' reports, the auditing committee and other committees. It should also be noted that not all officers' reports are submitted to union conventions. Where several years elapse between conventions, the officers sometimes prepare annual reports for the intermediate years, which are published either in the union journal or under separate cover.

Discussion of Resolutions

Next in importance to officers' reports are the resolutions submitted on matters of union administration and policy, including proposed amendments to the union's constitution. The unions which do not publish verbatim proceedings ordinarily list the resolutions received and indicate the action of the convention on each. As noted below, this material was not indexed because it consists of a multitude of very small items. It indicates the issues with which the union was concerned at a particular time, but it does not reveal the background of the issues or the conflicting opinions with-

in the membership concerning them. Much more useful are the verbatim proceedings, which, in addition to the text of each resolution, usually include the report of the resolutions committee (with a minority report where one was made), the discussion of the delegates on the issue, and the vote of the convention where a vote was taken. While much of this material was also omitted from the index through the exclusion of discussions containing less than five hundred words, most of the major issues debated in the conventions have been covered.

The divergence of opinion within a union on policy issues is probably not fully reflected in its convention discussions. Members of the resolutions committee are appointed by the international officers and are likely to favor their policies. Resolutions critical of existing union policies may be reported unfavorably, merged with other resolutions, or withdrawn under pressure. The most important decisions may be reached behind closed doors among the leaders of important factions in the union and may leave no trace in the convention proceedings. The prestige and political power of the international officers sometimes inhibits expression of contrary views by delegates, many of whom are inexperienced and others of whom are candidates for preferment in the union hierarchy. Careful reading, combined with a knowledge of convention strategy and of the personalities involved, is often necessary to detect the actual divisions of opinion which may lie beneath an appearance of harmony. There are, however, notable exceptions to this statement. In the Cigar Makers, the Electrical Workers, the Ladies' Garment Workers, the United Mine Workers, the Typographical Union and the Printing Pressmen, to cite only a few examples, there has frequently been virulent criticism of the international officers even when the latter were firmly in control of the union, and dissenting opinions have been rather fully aired.

The factional conflict which appears occasionally in almost every union and which is endemic in some unions is reflected in the resolutions submitted and the discussion on them. A major dispute can usually be seen gathering for some years before it reaches full intensity. When the crisis of the dispute is reached, there may be violent dissension on the convention floor or a sudden appearance of harmony due to the fact that one faction has been overpowered or has decided to withdraw from the convention. The aftermath of such a struggle frequently lingers on through several subsequent conventions. The years in which major crises have occurred in various unions are indicated in the analyses of their publications in later chapters.

Brief mention may be made of two other types of material. Convention proceedings typically contain a number of speeches, usually on very general subjects, by government officials, officials of other internationals and union federations, and other well-wishers. A good deal of space is also taken up by discussions of representation in the convention, points of procedure, the site of the next convention, and matters of routine union administration. Both types of material are largely barren from a research standpoint. The great majority of the items indexed were secured from officers' reports and almost all of the remainder from discussions of resolutions.

THE CONTENT OF THE PUBLICATIONS: OFFICIAL JOURNALS

While establishment of an official journal is usually one of the first acts of a new union, there have been numerous exceptions to this rule. In a few cases the journal antedated the union. The Carpenters' journal, for example, was created as a device for recruiting local carpenters' unions into an international organization, and was later taken over as the official organ of the international. Several other unions, including the Federal Employees, the Textile Workers, and the Trainmen, took over magazines which had previously been published under other auspices. On the other hand, some internationals had no journal for a considerable period after their formation. The period between the organization of the union and the creation of an official journal was thirty-seven years in the case of the Typographical Union, thirty-five years for the Bricklayers, thirty-one years for the Flint Glass Workers, eleven years for the Cigar Makers, seventeen years for the Longshoremens, thirty-one years for the Marine Engineers, and eleven years for the Textile Workers. In these cases the convention proceedings are of particular importance, since they provide the main record of the union's life before the journal was started.

A distinction should be drawn at the outset between the publications of the CIO internationals and those of most other unions. The great majority of the CIO internationals publish weekly newspapers rather than monthly magazines. Many of these were originally published as special industry editions of the *CIO News*, official organ of CIO headquarters. While most of them have now become independent publications, they retain a marked family resemblance. They usually contain a good deal of material identical with that appearing in the *News*—news stories on CIO activities and national events of significance to labor, as well as

articles, cartoons, columns of political comment and other features. To this is added news stories on developments within the union in question—the organizing, lobbying and bargaining campaigns being conducted by the international office, agreements negotiated with employers, the progress and outcome of strikes, and other outstanding local and national developments. Emphasis throughout the CIO publications is on news stories and editorialized news comment, giving a labor interpretation of national affairs as well as a coverage of more strictly union activities.

The journals of the other internationals are much more heterogeneous and therefore more difficult to describe. They tend in general toward a magazine format and a monthly publication period. But the size of the journal, the publication period, the format, the kinds of material included and the quality of the material vary from union to union and from time to time within the same union.

Certain types of material appear at one time or another in almost all the journals studied. The most important of these are: editorials and editorial comment; letters from members; news of local union activities; news of the activities and problems of the international organization; articles on trade unionism, economics, government and related subjects; official union notices; reports and documents of interest to members; articles on technical aspects of the trade; and more general material intended to inform or amuse the worker and his family. But while all trade union journalism is based on these elements, their quality and the proportions in which they are blended exhibit the widest variation. This variation may best be described by examining in turn each of the types of material listed.

Editorials

The journals usually give between two and four pages to editorial comment. While this is a small part of the space in most journals, a relatively large percentage of index entries was derived from editorial sections because of the relatively great length of the individual items. There does not seem to have been any marked trend in the amount of space given to editorials over the period studied. In some journals, including those of the Trainmen, Switchmen, Machinists and Musicians, the editorial section has been much reduced during the past twenty years; but in others, notably that of the Teamsters, it has been very considerably expanded. Many journals show an intermittent expansion and con-

traction of the editorial section with changes in editorship and editorial policy.

The most noticeable change over the period has been in the general content of editorial discussion. Until the first World War, the attention of most editors was confined rather closely to immediate union problems—organizing methods, economic objectives, union administration, relations with other unions, and similar matters. Along with this, as a minor theme, went very general discussions of trade unionism and other economic, political and social subjects. Editorials of this second type were due usually to personal interests of a particular editor, and were found most frequently in the journals of the Cigar Makers (1880-1912), Machinists (1895-1915), Patternmakers (1892-1928), Firemen (1882-1894), Switchmen (1903-1909), Trainmen (1889-1922) and Western Federation of Miners (1903-1914). During and after the first World War, and even more markedly after 1933, the growing involvement of trade unions in the processes of government led to a marked increase in editorial comment on national politics, legislative struggles, administration of labor legislation, national economic policy, and international affairs. This trend has perhaps been most noticeable in the journals of the Teamsters, Textile Workers, Bricklayers, Trainmen, Firemen, and Railway Clerks. Most journals continue to give a good deal of editorial space to immediate problems of union organization and policy. General discussions of political and social theories, however, occur less frequently than they did thirty or forty years ago.

Editorials generally express the views of the international officers and particularly of the international president, who is frequently the nominal editor and sometimes the actual editor of the journal. In large unions whose presidents are heavily burdened with other duties there has been a tendency toward the development of a specialized editorial staff, but even in these cases the international officers exercise supervision over editorial policy. In any struggle within the union, the journal is usually the organ of the dominant faction and shows scant sympathy to the opposition. Where the editor is elected a heterodox individual sometimes comes into office; but if he continues to follow an editorial policy opposed to the administration of the union, his career as editor is likely to be short. Examples are the expulsion of J. Vance Thompson, an IWW sympathizer, from the Seamen's Union in 1921 after less than a year as editor of the *Seamen's Journal*; and the removal of F. M. Cassidy, a socialist, from the editorship of the *Journal of the Switchmen's Union* in 1909 because of his failure to support

the policies and leadership of the union. The Typographical Union, on the other hand, which has a well-organized two-party system, frequently elects an editor from one party and a president from the other. In this event, the editor may use the journal to attack the policies of the president and to seek his defeat at the next election.

Letters from Members

Letters from corresponding secretaries of local unions and from individual union members formed a large part of most union journals in their early years. Other types of material were scarce, and editors exhorted the membership to come to the aid of the journal with letters. As other material became more plentiful, however, most of the journals reduced the proportion of space allowed for correspondence. Several important unions, including the Bricklayers and Musicians, have eliminated correspondence from their journals, and the newspapers of the industrial unions have rarely carried correspondence. A number of unions, including the Typographical Union, Patternmakers, Postal Clerks, and Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers, continue to maintain a flourishing correspondence section; but they are now in the minority in this respect.

Personal and social news bulks much the largest in the correspondence columns of most journals, and virtually all the correspondence in some journals is of this sort. Letters from the corresponding secretaries of locals are particularly likely to be filled with personal trivia. In some journals, however, one finds frequent discussions of local working conditions, local union activities, and problems of union organization and policy. This is true particularly of unions which use the referendum, since discussions of proposed referenda in the correspondence section of the journal to some extent take the place of discussions on the convention floor. Examples are the Machinists, the Typographical Union, the Paper Makers and, in the period 1880-1912, the Cigar Makers. In a few journals, notably those of the Cigar Makers, Locomotive Firemen, Western Federation of Miners, Patternmakers and Machinists, letters dealing with theories of trade unionism and political economy form a large proportion of the total. In general, letters dealing with theoretical issues, and even letters discussing union policies and problems appear to have become less frequent during the past twenty-five years. Such correspondence as remains in the journals is concerned increasingly with personalities and social events.

The letters which deal with theoretical and policy problems are significant in that they provide almost the only direct indication of the opinions of rank-and-file union members to be found in the publications. They do not, of course, provide a balanced picture of membership opinion. The members who write letters to the journal are probably not a representative sample of the total membership. Moreover, publication of heterodox opinions is frequently restricted or prevented as a matter of editorial policy. Many union constitutions prohibit discussion of religion, politics, and other divisive topics, and the editor may interpret "divisive" rather broadly. The editor of the *Maintenance of Way Workers'* journal, for example, stated in 1904: "No letter can be given space in the *Advocate* which makes public any of the private affairs of the order; neither will any be published which tend to produce friction or discord among the members, such as discussion of racial, religious or partisan topics."² Some editors, on the other hand, have gone to considerable pains to publish opinions on opposite sides of controversial questions. The excellence of the *Cigar Makers'* journal before 1912, for example, was due largely to its frequent publication of letters critical of union policies—often answered, to be sure, by a reaffirmation of the official position in the editorial columns.

News of Local Union Activities

Reports of local union activities formed an important element in most of the journals in their earlier years. In the beginning these reports consisted mainly of the letters from local corresponding secretaries which were mentioned above. With the development of paid organizers, special organizers' pages were set up in many journals, including those of the Machinists, Patternmakers, Textile Workers, and Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers. In these pages each organizer described his movements about the country, the strength and problems of the locals visited, conditions in union and non-union plants in each area, and strikes and negotiations in which he participated.

These types of material have become relatively less important during the past generation, and have disappeared entirely from many journals. This probably reflects the fact that most large internationals now have so many locals that it would be impossible to print even a representative sample of local activities, and also reflects the decline in the functions of local unions relative to the

2. See below, p. 67.

internationals. In most unions, officers' reports to conventions now provide a much better indication of developments in the locals than does the union journal.

National News Stories

News stories of national scope, on the other hand, have become increasingly important in most of the journals. Many journals from their inception carried stories of outstanding strikes, organizing drives, legislative campaigns and other activities of the international office. Not only have these stories become more numerous, but an increasing amount of attention has been paid to national events of significance to labor. This concern with national affairs is evidenced in editorial discussion, as indicated above, and also in the amount of space allotted to general news stories and news comment. Emphasis on news is of course most marked in those unions which publish weekly newspapers. Even among the monthly journals, however, many now place primary emphasis on national news. The journals of the Teamsters, Firemen, Bricklayers, and Boot and Shoe Workers—to mention only a few—attempt to give a general news coverage and to present a labor interpretation of national affairs.

Articles

Discussions of trade union history and theory, and of other political and economic problems, have been common in the journals from the beginning. Most of this material is reprinted from other sources. The most important sources are other union publications, notably *Labor* and the *American Federationist*, but there is some copying also from trade association journals, government reports, magazines and newspapers. Editors in search of "filler" have wielded the scissors on a wide variety of publications. Some editors, however, have been successful in inducing members and friends of their union to write articles especially for its journal. Outstanding in volume of original articles are the journals of the Bricklayers (1898-1909), Firemen (1886-1894), Cigar Makers (1880-1912), Western Federation of Miners (1903-1914), Boot and Shoe Workers (1900-1907), Textile Workers (1923-1937), Trainmen (1896-1922), Machinists (1895-1915 and since 1935), Electrical Workers (1926 to date), Teachers (1926 to date), Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and Ladies' Garment Workers (throughout).

Whether the volume of general articles, essays and commentaries printed in union journals has increased or decreased over the

period as a whole is very difficult to say. In some cases this type of material has expanded until it completely dominates the journal; examples are the journals of the Machinists' and Switchmen's unions. In other journals, including those of the Bricklayers, Patternmakers and Retail Clerks, much less space has been given to such material during the past decade than in earlier periods. The volume of articles, and particularly of reprinted articles, included in a journal often changes markedly with changes of editorship. An editor with definite ideas on editorial policy and time to spend in writing and seeking material may drastically reduce the amount of secondary material included.

Other Types of Material

The five types of material already described—editorials, letters from members, accounts of local union activities, national news stories and news comment, and articles on general subjects—make up much the greater part of the journals and include almost all the material of interest to the student of trade unionism. The remaining types of material may be discussed much more briefly.

Official notices and announcements occupied a large proportion of the space in many journals during their early years. Included under this head are such things as lists of locals and their secretaries, instructions from the international secretary or president to the locals, lists of strikes, lists of "unfair" shops, notices of coming referenda and results of past referenda, lists of locals admitted and suspended, lists of members expelled, suspended and reinstated, lists of travel cards or permits issued, notices of decisions of the international officers on appeal cases and points of union law. While much material of this sort continues to appear, its relative importance has considerably diminished.

Some journals publish a considerable amount of documentary material. Most of the railroad unions, for example, reprint arbitration awards and other important decisions under the Railway Labor Act. Unions of government employees frequently reprint material from the Congressional Record. Excerpts from court decisions, injunctions, government reports, and important speeches are printed in many journals. Some unions publish the texts of collective agreements negotiated with employers; others, notably the Typographical Union, print local union wage scales. In some unions, the journal carries frequent reports of officers' activities in addition to the periodic reports of officers to conventions. This is true also of financial reports, which appear regularly in a considerable number of journals.

Unions whose membership consists largely of skilled workers frequently carry many articles on technical trade subjects. This has been true notably of the Marine Engineers, the railroad operating trades, the printing trades and the building trades, but the tendency is by no means confined to manual occupations. The Musicians' journal in recent years has contained articles describing the technique of playing various instruments; the Teachers' journal contains material on educational methods; and even the Retail Clerks' journal for many years contained departments headed "Window Display," "Advertising," "Merchants' Corner," and "Snappy Suggestions for Salespeople."

General educational and recreational material intended to appeal to leisure-time interests of the worker and his family is included in many journals. The Electrical Workers' journal, for example, has since 1926 contained sections on general science and health hints, art appreciation, cartoons, serialized novels, and a woman's page containing household and fashion news. The journals of the railroad unions also contain a good deal of this type of material.

Summary

The main trends in the content of union journals since their inception may now be summarized. The tendency has been away from lengthy sections of official notices, detailed news from local unions, lengthy correspondence sections, and general discussions of systems of political economy and methods of political change. The trend has been toward news of the problems and activities of the international union, editorial comment on national affairs, and educational and recreational material designed to increase the attractiveness of the journal to members and their families. Several types of material, notably editorials on day-to-day problems of the union, articles on technical trade subjects, and articles and editorials reprinted from other journals, appear to have remained relatively stable throughout the period.

THE USES OF TRADE UNION PUBLICATIONS

Wise use of the publications just described depends on a clear perception of their biases and limitations. These are the official, therefore partisan, records of the union's struggles and achievements. They are partisan as between the union and employers, between this union and other unions, and between the dominant

faction in the union and insurgent groups. Because they are intended primarily for circulation within the union, they are likely to be more revealing than statements prepared for the purpose of influencing government agencies, employers or the public. But they are circulated for purposes of education and control, and make extensive use of symbols and precepts which require evaluation by the investigator.

Since the art of using union publications consists so largely in reading between the lines, their value depends to an unusual degree on the person using them. A document which to an untrained reader would be valueless or actually misleading, may in the hands of a skillful analyst become highly suggestive. The judgments which follow concerning the research usefulness of the publications assume a high level of insight and critical skill on the part of the investigator.

It is difficult to appraise the usefulness of trade union publications without at the same time discussing the usefulness of other types of documentary evidence and of direct observation. This would involve, however, a methodological essay not properly part of the present work. Other documentary sources will clearly be found useful for particular purposes. Thus, students of trade union government can learn much from the minutes, correspondence and other internal records of local and international unions. Studies of union objectives will benefit from examination of the texts of collective agreements, reports of bargaining conferences with employers, and briefs and testimony presented to government agencies. News stories in the daily press may indicate the tactics of a union and its opponents in a particular political or economic struggle. The *New York Times Index* will be found a valuable supplement to the present index for many purposes. Studies of the economic effects of union policies, and particularly of union wage policies, can draw on a steadily increasing supply of statistical data, either published or available in the files of business firms and government agencies.

It is equally clear that the totality of documentary material furnishes only one approach to the study of unionism. For certain types of problem, notably problems of union administration and politics, the participant-observer approach is probably most valuable. In other cases, interviews and systematic observation of test groups may yield information which could not be obtained otherwise. The value of direct observation, of course, is confined to studies of current behavior; for periods even a short distance in the past, reliance must be placed almost entirely on written mate-

rial. An attempt is made below to distinguish those aspects of current behavior for which the documentary approach is primary from those for which its function is to supplement the results of direct observation. With this exception, attention is concentrated entirely on what the publications here in question reveal about trade unionism, without attempting to compare their contribution with that of other sources or to venture on a general discussion of research methods.

The problems with which the student of trade unionism is concerned have been arranged for the present purpose in six groups: union government, union objectives, union beliefs and theories, union tactics, the economic effects of unionism, and the political and social effects of unionism.³ The usefulness of trade union publications will be discussed with reference to each of these groups of problems in the order listed.

Trade Union Government

A national trade union, like any large democratically-constituted organization, faces the problem of developing leadership which is sufficiently strong to counter external aggression and provide efficient internal administration, and which is yet closely responsive to the popular will and effectively prevented from trenching on the essential rights of the members. The problem is analogous in some respects to that of democratic government of a nation, and such (in the broadest meaning of the word) political concepts as federalism, civil rights, constitutionalism, bureaucracy, party politics and responsible government, may profitably be applied to the study of trade unions.

The mechanisms through which an international union is nominally controlled are usually set forth in great detail in its constitution. The actual control structure and the deviations of governmental practice from the constitutional norm are never explicitly described but must be judged from indirect evidence.

Several types of material throw light on the problem of responsible government in trade unions. Most of the discussions of union officers which appear in the publications are highly laudatory. Mingled with the praise, however, is occasional criticism,

3. This classification follows in general the pioneer analysis of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (2nd ed.; London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1902). Other groupings of problems readily suggest themselves—for example, the adaptation of trade unions to technological and political changes. On examination, however, such groupings can usually be resolved into the six categories listed above.

often followed by the reply of the officer to his critics. The reply is sometimes more revealing than the criticism, as in the case of the president of the Pressmen's Union who, when charged with having made a fortune during his tenure of office, replied in effect that the figure of two million dollars was too high. There is considerable discussion of whether an officer exceeded his authority in taking a particular action. Instances of the removal of local officers and even of international officers are not infrequent. Reports of appeals taken by members from actions of local officers, and the disposition of these appeals by the international executive board, provide significant information on how far the constitutional rights of members are protected in practice.

In addition to the financial reports already mentioned, there has been in most unions extensive discussion of the level of dues, the division of dues between the locals and the international, the justifiability of special assessments, the salaries of international officers, and other aspects of financial administration.

The division of functions and powers between the international and the locals has been discussed extensively in most unions. An outstanding example is the recurrent discussion in United Mine Workers' conventions of whether district officials should be elected by the locals in the district or appointed by the international officers. The growing authority of the international headquarters in most unions can be traced in amendments to the constitution and in the convention reports of international officers. The circumstances under which international officers have revoked the charters of locals or disciplined them in other ways are also described in detail in the publications.

Factional struggles and personal political rivalries in unions can be followed to some extent in convention discussions and in letters and articles in the journal. The issues nominally in dispute, however, are frequently not the real issues, and the discussion may be so vituperative that it throws little light on the real issues. One occasionally finds a complete statement of the background of a dispute, particularly where two factions are so evenly balanced that neither is able to prevent publication of its opponent's position. On the whole, however, union publications are much less useful in studying union politics than in studying union administration. The political process must be observed directly, though documents may be useful in providing initial clues and in checking the results of direct observation.

The relative merit of craft unionism and industrial unionism has rarely been discussed by unionists in abstract terms, but

almost always in connection with some practical proposal for merger, affiliation or secession. The desirability of merging with other unions in the same industry was discussed extensively by the Switchmen and Brakemen during the nineties and by the Machinists between 1900 and 1920. The Papermakers, which was at the time an industrial organization, split in two during the early nineteen hundreds because of dissension between the skilled machine-tenders and other workers who felt that their interests were being subordinated to those of a craft group. Since 1935, discussion of the problem has been largely incidental to discussion of affiliation with or withdrawal from the AFL and CIO.

Descriptions of jurisdictional disputes and dual unionism abound in the publications. These problems arose at one time or another in almost every union studied, and some unions have had dozens of such struggles during their lifetime. The usefulness of this material is increased by the fact that different sides of a dispute can be examined by going to the publications of each of the participants, something which is rarely true of internal factional conflicts. A serious difficulty in studying inter-union disputes from the publications is the sporadic character of reporting and the frequent failure to record the outcome of a dispute—particularly where the result was unfavorable to the union in question. Additional information can sometimes be obtained from the proceedings of federations—notably the AFL and its trade departments—if the dispute came before them for adjustment. An especially large amount of material on jurisdictional disputes is to be found in the publications of the Carpenters, Electrical Workers, Machinists, Teamsters, Marine Engineers, Railway Clerks, Switchmen and Seamen. Outstanding instances of dual unionism are described in the publications of the AFL and CIO Longshoremen, the AFL and CIO Automobile Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the United Garment Workers, the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (AFL) and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (CIO), and the various unions of boot and shoe workers.

Trade Union Objectives

Trade union publications are the most accessible source and, for periods some distance in the past, almost the only source of information on the specific economic and political objectives which unions have sought and won. The other principal source is the texts of collective agreements, of which the United States Department of Labor has the largest collection in this country.

Information on union objectives appears mainly in those sections of the officers' reports which deal with collective bargaining and promotion of legislation. A good deal of material is found also in convention discussions; journal articles on outstanding campaigns such as the eight-hour day movement; lists of strikes and discussions of strike demands; editorial discussions and news stories on negotiations with employers and legislative measures; and the texts of collective agreements, arbitration awards, statutes and decisions of administrative agencies reprinted in the journals. Here one finds, set forth in many thousands of pages, the contract terms which have been sought from employers and the position which unions have taken on legislation governing wages, hours, working conditions, labor relations and other matters.

The pattern of union objectives stands forth rather clearly from the relative number of references secured under various index headings. The most obvious fact is the concentration of unionists' attention on direct and immediate economic benefits. Wages and hours are referred to far more frequently than any other union objectives. Next in importance are proposals concerning immigration and alien labor, industrial safety, workmen's compensation, union recognition and prevention of employer discrimination against union members, restriction on the use of injunctions in labor disputes, tariff legislation, and other government action to increase demand, regulate output, or raise prices in particular industries.

Government regulation of industry is rarely advocated in a general way or on grounds of principle. During the eighties and nineties there was much anti-trust agitation in union journals. But since that time, most regulatory proposals advanced by trade unionists have been intended to achieve direct benefits—usually a gain in employment—for a particular working group. The railroad brotherhoods want restraints on the competition of road and water transportation with the railroads. The Mine Workers want stabilization of prices and regularization of output in the coal industry. The Brewery Workers cooperated with the brewers in seeking repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. The Seamen want subsidies for an American merchant marine. Most unions in manufacturing industry want tariff protection for their products. Union proposals for industrial regulation, in short, are generally advanced on behalf of the industry and are frequently supported jointly by employers and the union. The material thus appears to support the thesis that a mature trade union concentrates on enlarging and controlling the job opportunities available

to its members rather than on broad projects of political and social reform.

Statements of union demands are frequently accompanied by explanations of the reasons for the union's position. This material requires careful analysis to distinguish between stated and actual objectives and to discover the specific content of general slogans.

More valuable than the explicit justifications of union policy are the factual descriptions, frequently introduced only incidentally or perhaps appearing in another part of the publications, of the economic and political circumstances attending the union's demands. Examples are the extensive discussion of working and living conditions on shipboard in the Seamen's union, of the impact of technological change in the Musicians, Cigar Makers, and Flint Glass Workers, of the migration of industry to the Southern states in the Textile Workers and Hosiery Workers, and of salary conditions in the Railway Clerks. From these descriptions the investigator can draw his own conclusions about the relation between economic circumstance and union policy.

The abundance and variety of the material poses difficult problems of classification and interpretation. The outside investigator tends to impute to trade unions a set of logical objectives and to fit specific union actions into this arbitrary framework. He tends to assume that he already knows the mental pattern from which certain demands have emerged. Such an assumption is clearly unjustified and is likely to yield very misleading results. Apprenticeship regulations, for example, may appear at first glance to be a method of restricting the number engaged in a trade and securing a monopoly return; closer examination indicates, however, that they do not usually have this result.⁴

It is necessary to adhere as strictly as possible to the inductive method, and to allow both categories and interpretation to emerge from the data instead of being deduced logically and then read into the data. It is significant that the writers who have generalized most successfully about trade union objectives—notably the Webbs, Commons, Hoxie, Perlman and Slichter—have applied a careful inductive approach to a wide range of documentary and other material.

4. See the discussion of this problem in S. H. Slichter, *Union Policies and Industrial Management* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1941), Ch. 2.

Trade Union Beliefs and Theories

Trade union publications contain few explicit statements of political or economic theory. The index headings which were constructed to cover such statements yielded relatively few references. In general, unionists' beliefs concerning the operation of political and economic institutions are implicit in the arguments advanced in support of specific policies and demands. For example, there are few discussions which an economist would recognize as dealing with wage theory. But certain assumptions about wage determination and about the relation between wage rates and employment underlie most union arguments for wage increases. It is not necessary here to debate the relation of these assumptions and beliefs to trade union action.⁵ Without passing judgment on this matter, one can attempt by inductive methods to trace the patterns of thought to which trade unionists adhere. Such an analysis of the implicit political economy of trade unionism is an interesting and important task.

The factors influencing wage rates and the consequences of raising or lowering wages are discussed much more extensively than any other economic subject. The content of this discussion is less than its volume would suggest, since many of the same arguments are repeated in one union after another. This very repetition, however, indicates the general prevalence of certain beliefs about wages throughout the trade union world. Next in importance are discussions of working hours and unemployment. Discussions of "the business cycle" occur very rarely before the thirties; but unemployment has been recognized as a major problem from the beginning of unionism and the publications contain proposals for every sort of remedy from thrift and temperance to abolition of the capitalist system. In the discussions of wages, hours, and unemployment there is naturally a great deal of overlapping—for example, all three may be combined in a proposal to reduce weekly hours from forty to thirty without reducing weekly earnings. The other economic subjects most frequently discussed in the publications are tariffs, taxation, money and credit, and the distribution of wealth.

The publications contain extensive criticism of the capitalist system coupled with advocacy of socialism or some other alterna-

5. See the discussions of this subject in Vilfredo Pareto, *The Mind and Society* (English translation of the *Trattato di Sociologia Generale*) (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935); Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 1937); and Robert M. MacIver, *Social Causation* (Boston and New York: Ginn and Company, 1942).

tive. Criticisms of the existing order are usually a good deal longer and more detailed than proposals for a substitute and the bulk of this material has therefore been indexed under the heading "capitalism, criticisms" rather than under "socialism" or "communism." The question of social classes and class struggle has been raised both explicitly and in discussions which tacitly assume a basic similarity or difference of interest between worker and employer. Related to this are frequent discussions of the tactics of social change and the proper relation of trade unions to political parties. The question whether labor should organize its own political party or bargain with the Republican and Democratic parties has been discussed at some length in almost all the unions studied. In general, the most extensive political discussions occur in the publications of unions which have either contained strong left-wing elements or have faced strong competition from left-wing unions; examples are the Industrial Workers of the World, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Ladies' Garment Workers, the Seamen and the Longshoremen. There has also been active political discussion, however, in unions in which leftist sentiment has never achieved major proportions, including the Cigar Makers, the Machinists, the Marine Engineers, and several of the railroad unions.

The other subject most frequently expounded in the publications is the philosophy, objectives and achievements of trade unionism. While some of these expositions have descriptive value, most of them are essentially statements of faith.

The difficulties of exploiting this material are formidable. Discussions which appear to be on the same subject may not really be so because of the use of undefined general terms which carry different meanings in different contexts. The views of a particular writer may not reflect those of other members of the union. On political subjects in particular, several conflicting viewpoints are usually in existence at any time, and their relative prevalence among workers may be quite different from their prevalence in trade union literature. These difficulties, however, are inherent in the subject and not merely in the documents. Satisfactory interview material would be even more difficult to obtain and could not be obtained at all for past periods.⁶ Documentary

6. The fact that many present-day union leaders have been in office for twenty-five or thirty years is no objection to this statement. The views of these men have changed substantially since their younger days, and the changes can probably be traced more accurately by reading what they have said in print during the past thirty years than by listening to what they say now about the past. The views which they now hold bias their memories, and they are apt to do less than justice to their earlier views.

sources, carefully handled and properly supplemented by direct observation, probably provide the best approach available to the political economy of trade unionism.

Trade Union Tactics

The ways in which unions go about getting what they want are revealed by descriptions of union activities. Reports to union conventions by legislative committees, legislative representatives and other international officers indicate the methods by which legislation can be promoted or blocked. For example, the reports of the president of the Machinists' District 44, which includes machinists employed in navy yards and other government establishments, consist very largely of a detailed account of his legislative activities—what congressmen he interested in each measure, what groups were at work on the opposing side, and what the final outcome was. The proceedings of other unions of government employees and of the railroad brotherhoods are also particularly rich in this sort of material.

Reports of instances in which a union has supported or opposed a candidate for political office occur quite frequently in the publications. Officers' reports and journal editorials contain occasional statements on presidential elections, relations with the major political parties, and the union's attitude toward state and local labor parties. The actual relations between union leaders and political party organizations, however, like the internal politics of the unions themselves, must for the most part be observed directly. This is particularly true of state and city politics.

The publications contain many accounts of organizing campaigns and a very large number of reports of individual strikes. These accounts are not very analytical, however, and tend to emphasize sensational incidents. Most of the innumerable strike stories center on reasons for the strike, use of strikebreakers by the employer, outbreaks of violence, and other outstanding events. Rarely do they give a clear picture of the tactics employed by both sides and of the factors which determined the outcome of the strike. Indeed, if the strike is lost, news of it may disappear suddenly from the journal, and only after months or even years is there a brief notice that the strike has been called off. This tends to be true also of organizing campaigns which failed and of other unsuccessful union ventures.

With respect to collective bargaining tactics, the publications contain many descriptions of the sequence of moves and counter-moves by employer and union which preceded the signing of a

particular agreement. There are also occasional instances in which a union officer has tried to generalize about the technique of collective bargaining and about such related subjects as the area of the agreement, the location of responsibility on the union side, and the problems of enforcement.

The publications contain also a great deal of material on employer tactics in dealing, or refusing to deal, with trade unions and on other aspects of employers' personnel policies. This material is heavily weighted with adverse criticism and some of it is mere name-calling. Whether or not the descriptions of employer practices are accurate, they indicate the way these practices appear to trade unionists, and in labor relations this is a more important factor than the actual intent of the employer.

The Economic Effects of Trade Unionism

Turning from the operation of trade unions to the effects of union operations, one encounters an array of problems on which union publications are of only minor assistance. This is so partly because the data required are peculiarly varied and complex, and partly because the unit of investigation is frequently a plant or an area rather than an industry, which is the unit covered by most union publications.

The difficulty of studying the economic impact of trade unionism is primarily one of measurement rather than of analysis. Economists would agree that the problem breaks down into such sub-problems as the effects on the structure of the labor market, the size and composition of the working force, the incidence of employment and unemployment, the level and structure of wage rates, the length of the working day and week, the level of manhour output, the rate of technical progress, the location and structure of industry, and the nature of competition in product markets. Moreover, economic analysis provides an abundance of hypotheses concerning the possible effects of trade union activities on each of these matters.

The difficulties appear when one attempts a quantitative test of these hypotheses. Union policies are only one of many factors operating simultaneously on wages, hours, labor productivity and employment. Even with the best effort to take account of the influences of other factors, conclusions about the effects of unionism can rarely be more than informed conjecture. The problem is further complicated by the fact that unionism itself may have a mixed effect; for example, some union policies may tend to raise man-hour output and others to lower it.

The statements about a union's economic achievements which appear in its publications are subject to obvious biases. More valuable are factual statements about wages, working methods and other characteristics of the industry at various points of time. These can be used, however, only in studies for which an industry is the unit of investigation. For many types of study a different type of unit is appropriate. The best unit for studying the effect of a trade union on labor productivity, for example, is a plant or a department within a plant, while studies of the effect of unionism on labor market structure must take a local labor market as the unit.

An industry can serve as the primary unit for studies of the effect of unionism on wage levels and wage structure, on working hours, on the location and structure of industry, and on the character of competition in the product market. For such studies, trade union publications frequently provide a good general introduction to the industry and may also provide specific pieces of information which would be difficult to find elsewhere. For example, in an investigation undertaken by one of the writers into the effect of union policies on the wage structure of the pulp and paper industry, the publications of the two unions in the industry provided information on the plants covered by union contracts, the date on which each plant was first brought under contract, the wage changes in each union plant year by year, the union's wage objectives for each year, and its general technique of negotiation with employers. In this case the information obtained from the union publications and from subsequent interviews with union officers was an indispensable element in the investigation. In general, however, one can say merely that union publications provide a limited amount of usable material which must be collated with a much larger volume of material drawn from other sources.

The Political and Social Effects of Trade Unionism

Any complete appraisal of trade unionism must take account not merely of its economic effects but also of its political and social consequences. Work in this field involves not only the difficulties already noted with respect to economic studies but additional difficulties due to the lack of an adequate framework of analysis and the scarcity of reliable data. To a much greater extent than in the case of economic studies, the data needed are qualitative, unrecorded in any published source, obtainable only by direct observation based on a relatively small unit of study, and subject to erroneous interpretation by the observer.

The contribution which can be made by trade union publications is more limited than in any of the fields previously discussed. They reveal a good deal about workers' attitudes toward their jobs and their supervisors, and about the changes which unionism makes in these attitudes. They also indicate some of the effects of unionism on the political attitudes and political participation of workers, on the content of legislation, and on public administration. Most studies of the political and social effects of unionism, however, require direct observation of a plant, a community, a local union or a group of workers over a considerable period. Union publications can, at best, make only slight additions to the results of direct observation.

It is relevant here to point out that many investigations not concerned primarily with trade unionism can profitably make use of trade union materials. A student engaged in tracing the development of a political or social theory, for example, may want to examine its prevalence among trade unionists at a particular time. A scholar concerned with representation of economic interest groups before legislative or administrative agencies may want evidence of the activity of trade union leaders in such matters. A student of constitutionalism may find interesting parallels between the problem of combining individual liberty and responsible government in the trade union and in the political state. With a view to this use of the material, many of the concepts used in branches of social science other than economics have been included in the system of index headings adopted here. Under these headings political scientists, historians, social psychologists and sociologists will find material on working-class life and thought which is relevant to a wide variety of problems.

Conclusion

The types of investigation surveyed above divide themselves into two groups. In one group are studies of the internal politics of trade unions, studies of union tactics, and studies of the economic, political and social effects of union activities. These investigations must be pursued primarily by direct observation and by using types of documentary material not found in union publications. Trade union publications may suggest hypotheses at the outset of such investigation and may supplement the other sources in some particulars, but their contribution is strictly subordinate.

In the second group are studies of union objectives, studies of the beliefs and theories of trade unionists, and studies of certain

aspects of trade union structure and administration. In these types of study, union publications not only help in framing initial hypotheses but also provide a large part of the subject-matter to be investigated. Some field investigation will usually be found necessary, but in many cases the great bulk of the evidence needed can be wrung out of the publications. The major scientific usefulness of trade union publications lies in these three areas, and above all in the analysis of trade union objectives.

An important issue in this connection is the usefulness of studies which trace the experience of a particular union, as compared with studies which draw together the experience of all unions on a particular subject—for example, wage policies, or policies toward hiring and discharge. These may be termed single-union and single-phase studies respectively. Both types of study are historical, although the single-phase study involves a more difficult task of historical generalization, since it must interpret the experience of a considerable number of unions. The single-union study has the advantage of comprehending the total trade union situation in a craft or industry. Observation of changes in this situation over time may yield hypotheses about social causation which could not be obtained in any other way. On the other hand, an analysis of one union cannot yield generalizations about unionism in general, and it is doubtful whether even a series of single-union studies can provide a basis for such generalizations. A single-phase study can yield valid generalizations about the one subject with which it is concerned, but since it comprehends only this segment of union experience, it has difficulty in relating this aspect to other aspects of unionism and in developing adequate hypotheses about causal relationships.

The single-phase type of study appears much more difficult to do and probably is somewhat more difficult. Moreover, in the absence of a subject-matter index, single-phase studies have in the past required an excessive amount of reading and sifting of material. Whether for these or other reasons, the specialized literature of American trade unionism is made up predominantly of single-union studies. Scarcely any union of importance remains uncovered by a monograph, doctoral dissertation or article, and some of the older unions have been covered several times. These studies, however, differ greatly in method of approach and quality of results. They vary all the way from pseudo-historical narratives which do little more than recount dates and places, to analytical studies which attempt to describe the total development of the union and to place it in its economic context. Because of this

unevenness, they have not provided a firm basis for more general work on trade unionism. Scholars who have attempted broad synthetic studies, while they have made such use as was possible of the single-union studies, have been obliged to go behind them and to rework the primary materials in their own way.

The number of single-phase studies which have appeared during the past twenty-five years is much smaller, but their average quality is appreciably higher. It seems likely that future progress toward an understanding of trade unionism will be achieved mainly through studies of this type, though careful single-union studies can also play a valuable role. To facilitate an increased flow of cross-sectional, generalizing studies was the major object of the present undertaking. Whether the tools provided are adequate to the task the user of the index must judge.